



# Islamabad POST

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Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

**EU-Ukraine security agreement to advance 'peace': Zelensky**

Detailed News On Page-07

**Pak-China ties are role model for world: Naqvi**

Detailed News On Page-08

**Sri Lanka's head coach steps down**

Detailed News On Page-06



## To contain terrorism, smuggling Pakistan to declare Durand Line as international border

"We must secure our country, and these crossing points compromising our security," says defence minister

STAFF REPORT / DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a major policy shift, Pakistan has decided to officially declare its borders with Afghanistan as "international", to restrict the influx of militants and smuggled goods into the country, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said on Thursday. The government seeks not only to curb economic losses caused by the smuggling of oil, fertilisers, and other goods from Afghanistan into Pakistan, but also to thwart the infiltration of terrorists, avert potential breaches, and implement security checks at the borders. "All traffic from Afghanistan will only be allowed entry into Pakistan with a valid passport and visa," said Asif talking to a private news channel, hinting at the end of the longstanding practice of Afghans entering Pakistan without proper documentation. The statement comes as Pakistan has witnessed a significant surge in cross-border attacks on security forces in recent months with the militants using advanced weaponry and equipment. Islamabad has time again called on the interim Afghanistan government to prevent its land from being used by the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and other militant organisations for carrying out attacks against Pakistan. "We must secure our country, and these crossing points have been compromising our security," the defence minister said in today's interaction. He further pointed out that after the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan, there had been a spike in terrorism, with most incidents tracing back to Afghan soil. "Currently, all terrorism is emanating from Afghan territory," Asif said that formal borders, where passports were required for crossing, were a standard global practice, noting that despite Pakistan's repeated requests for cooperation, Kabul was yet to respond adequately. "Our borders with China, Iran, and India operate with strict regulations, and it should be the same with Afghanistan," he asserted. Replying to a question, Asif said they were cognisant of the fact that there were families on both sides of the Pakistan-Afghanistan

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## Pakistan to 'participate' in Doha talks on Afghanistan

Sources say special representative, assistant secretary to represent Pakistan in talks scheduled for this weekend

AGENCIES

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has decided to participate in the United Nations-hosted talks on Afghanistan in the Qatari capital scheduled for this weekend, reported a private news channel citing diplomatic sources. Earlier this month, Taliban authorities also confirmed their participation in the third round of the Doha talks scheduled to start on June 30, a Taliban spokesperson had told AFP after snubbing an invitation to the previous round. The sources said Pakistan's Special Representative on Afghanistan Asif Durrani and Ahmad Naseem Waraich, assistant secretary for West Asia in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, will represent Pakistan in the talks. It should be noted that Pakistan has

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting regarding promotion of Pakistan-Azerbaijan economic ties. - DNA

## Govt plans to drop another power bomb

NEPRA is scheduled to review and make a decision on this request today

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: The government is preparing to impose an additional burden on electricity consumers with a proposed increase in electricity prices. The Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPPA) has submitted a request to the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) for a hike of Rs 3.41 per unit. NEPRA is scheduled to review and make a decision on this request during a hearing on Friday. The CPPA's request is based on the monthly fuel adjustment for May. According to the CPPA, a total of 12,267 billion units of electricity were generated last month, with a production cost of Rs 9.12 per unit. The proposed increase in electricity prices is aimed at covering the rising production costs. NEPRA will consider the request and decide on the potential increase after the hearing. If approved, this hike will further impact electricity consumers, adding to their financial burden.

## Discussion under way for trade agreement

# PM Shehbaz calls for cementing economic ties with Azerbaijan

Says Pakistan geographically offers a natural economic corridor to the sea for Central Asian states

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday instructed the formulation of a comprehensive strategy to strengthen cooperation and trade partnerships with Azerbaijan in the fields of economy and investment. Chairing a high-level meeting on enhancing relations with Central Asian states, particularly Azerbaijan, the prime minister stated, "Pakistan geographically offers a natural economic corridor to the sea for Central Asian states." He highlighted the enduring fraternal relations between Pakistan and Azerbaijan, which have spanned decades. He believed that there were significant opportunities for trade and investment between Azerbaijan and Pakistan. "Foreign investment in the country is on the rise due to the government's business and investment-friendly policies," the prime minister mentioned. The prime minister directed the development of a comprehensive action plan to boost trade

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## KP approves formation of Judicial Commission to probe May 9 incidents

Provincial cabinet okays creation of 565 police posts for DI Khan sub-division Kalachi to improve law and order

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cabinet, which met under chair of Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, has approved the formation of Judicial Commission to probe the May 9, 2023 incidents. The provincial cabinet also approved the creation of 565 posts for police in DI Khan sub-division Kalachi. The new vacancies include

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## Briefs

### Qaisara denies reconciliation with Shujaat

She also blamed Shujaat's sons, accusing them of spreading lies against their family

DNA

LAHORE: Qaisara Elahi denied any family reconciliation with Chaudhry Shujaat or PML-Q. The wife of Ch Parvez Elahi stated that Shujaat Hussain had no role in Parvez Elahi's release from jail. She stressed that these claims are false and that Parvez Elahi was released by the grace of Allah, with justice served by the courts. She spoke her husband's message to Chaudhry Shujaat, saying that nothing will change until their stolen mandate is returned. Both Munis Elahi and Chaudhry Parvez Elahi will remain with the PTI, she held.

### No heatstroke death toll in Karachi

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Karachi Commissioner Syed Hasan Naqvi has refuted the death toll claims being made with regard to the ongoing heatwave in the port city, clarifying that the actual count is not as high as is being reported and has not been confirmed by any source. The commissioner, during a press conference on Wednesday, revealed that 10 people had died due to heatstroke in the last two days while around 1,700 heatstroke cases have been reported in the city. While sharing details about the recent deaths from heatstroke, Naqvi said that eight deaths occurred on Monday and two on Tuesday. Meanwhile, Edhi Foundation had revealed an estimate of 568 deaths heatwave-induced illnesses with concerns.

## 'Absolutely ridiculous': PTI

# Court rejects Imran, Bushra Bibi's pleas to suspend sentence

Ruling ends hopes of former prime minister's release; court to hear appeals against conviction on July 2



COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: A district and sessions court in Islamabad Thursday rejected the pleas seeking suspension of the sentences handed down to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi in the iddat case. The verdict drew strong condemnation from the PTI, which called it "absolutely ridiculous", and its leaders -

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## Reserved seats case

ECP lacks authority to kick out any party from polls: SC judge

"Why shouldn't we consider [candidates] as belonging to PTI?" CJP Isa asks ECP's lawyer

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Supreme Court's Justice Athar Minallah said Thursday that the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) lacks the authority to kick out any party from the elections.

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## Bolivia coup attempt fails

DNA

BOGOTA: Bolivian armed forces pulled back from the presidential palace in La Paz on Wednesday evening and a general was arrested after President Luis Arce slammed a "coup" attempt against the government and called for international support. Earlier in the day, military units led by General Juan Jose Zuniga, recently stripped of his military command, had gathered in the central Plaza Murillo square, home to the presidential palace and Congress.

# Govt to bring resolution in NA countering US motion

Foreign Minister says, We must show our sovereignty and unity. We must show we mean business

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar informed the National Assembly on Thursday that the government would bring a resolution in the House to counter the resolution passed by the US House of Representatives on June 25. Winding up the discussion on a cut motions, he said, "The government has taken note of the resolution passed by the US House of Representatives on Pakistan. We will also pass a resolution in response to the US's resolution, and the draft resolution will be shared with the opposition and treasury benches." He said, "We must show our sovereignty and unity. We must show we mean business... I will request all to come together and present a clear resolution in response to the US resolution." The deputy prime minister also read out a statement earlier issued by the Foreign Office saying, "Pakistan has taken note of the passage of House Resolution 901 by the US House of Representatives on June 25. We believe that the timing and context of this particular resolution do not align well with the positive dynamics of our bilateral

Continued on Page 06

## JUI chief demands snap polls

JUI-F chief questions why interference from Iran is resolved within a week while Afghanistan is treated differently

STAFF REPORT

PESHAWAR: Maulana Fazlur Rehman, the chief of his own faction of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F), has rejected the government's decision to launch an operation against terrorists and extremists, stating that the tribal jirga also declared the "Azm-e-Istehkam" operation as destabilising and expressed no confidence in it. In a media briefing following a tribal jirga in

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PRCS Chairman, US Ambassador discuss humanitarian efforts

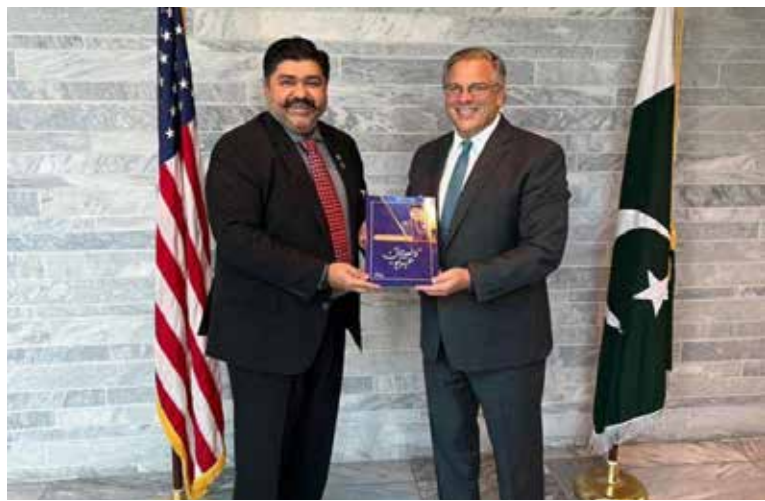
Chairman Laghari engaged in discussions with Envoy Blome about potential areas where the United States can support PRCS's humanitarian initiatives

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD : Chairman Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS), Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari, held a productive meeting with His Excellency Ambassador of the United States, Mr. Donald Blome, at the US Embassy in Islamabad.

times of disaster and emergencies, Chairman Laghari underscored the pivotal role played by the United States in aiding PRCS's relief efforts. He highlighted the significant contributions made by the United States in addressing various calamities, including earthquakes and floods, which have afflicted Pakistan in recent years.

ongoing work to support vulnerable communities across Pakistan. Chairman Laghari expressed optimism regarding continued commitment from the United States, particularly in the recovery phase following the devastating Monsoon 2022 floods in Pakistan. He outlined key areas where support from the United States could significantly bolster PRCS's humanitarian efforts, including healthcare, water sanitation & hygiene, and women's empowerment through livelihood assistance, maternal and child health initiatives, and leveraging innovation, technology, Climate change and Research for capacity building and community welfare projects.



ISLAMABAD : Coordinator to Prime Minister on Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam presenting a souvenir of national wildlife species of Pakistan to Second Secretary Development, Canadian High Commission, Lukas van Arragon who called on her in Islamabad.DNA

RCCI observes World MSMEs Day

RAWALPINDI : The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI), in collaboration with the State Bank of Pakistan Banking Services Corporation Rawalpindi observed Micro Small & Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) Day. The theme of the day was 'MSME Finance: Catalyst for Inclusive Growth' aimed to acknowledge the vital role of MSMEs in inclusive economic growth, employment generation and poverty reduction.

Seminar discusses India's transforming power dynamics

ISLAMABAD :The shifting dynamics of power and influence in India, due to the setback for BJP in the recent elections, reflect a symbolic change but it remains inconclusive and merely marks the beginning of a transformation process. Although it may appear that the BJP's popularity has declined due to the advances made by the INDIA alliance, but in substance the opposition's approach towards most issues fundamentally mirrors that of the BJP.

Punjab aims for enhanced health insurance

DNA

LAHORE : Punjab Health Minister Khawaja Salman Rafique announced the government's intent to enhance the universal health insurance program during a meeting at the Punjab Health Initiative Management Company on Thursday.

Agriculture top priority for govt: Tanveer

ISLAMABAD : Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research, Rana Tanveer Hussain on Thursday said the agriculture sector is a top priority for the government. Discussing the Opposition's cut motions on the Ministry's demands for grants, he said that efforts were underway to incorporate research and modern technology into the sector to boost per-acre yield.

position for raising critical points. He highlighted that food security was a major global challenge today and the current government had focused on agriculture, which formed the backbone of the national economy. He said several initiatives have been undertaken for farmers, including subsidies for the Kharif crop, overseen by a cabinet committee headed by the finance minister, ensuring transparency. He said the prime minister has directed the swift completion of these measures.

noted improvements in agricultural output and ongoing technology transfer efforts, with collaborations with China and Belarus. "Plans are in place to send students to China and double the per-acre yield," he added. He emphasized the importance of agricultural research, stating that the federal government has allocated Rs.5 billion, with 26 universities and research centers working on this front.

DC chairs meeting to review arrangements for Muharram

LARKANA : Deputy Commissioner (DC), Larkana Dr. Sherjeel Noor Channa on Thursday presided over a meeting related to security measures and maintaining religious harmony during holy month of Muharram-ul-Haram. The meeting was also attended by Senior Superintendent Police (SSP) Larkana, Ulema of various schools of thought, officials of law enforcement agencies, Police officials, Tehsil Municipal Officers (TMOs) and other relevant officials.

Court Notice

ایمانت چاہئے، اگر ان کا صاحب سول جج، لاہور ہائی کورٹ، لاہور کی عدالت میں پیش ہوگا۔

IGP takes initiatives for police welfare

IGP said that Punjab Police are spending Rs10 million daily from their resources on the welfare of the constabulary

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: The Punjab Inspector General of Police (IGP) Dr Usman Anwar said that the police station is the basic unit of the Punjab Police, and upgrading its functioning to provide immediate policing services and justice to the citizens is the mission. IGP Dr Usman Anwar said that the entire force should perform their duties with more hard work, dedication, and sincerity and accelerate the process of crime eradication.

ships worth Rs1 billion to the children of the police force," he maintained, adding that a new series of promotions based on merit has started in the police force, and there will be 700 more promotions in PHP soon. Similarly, hundreds of merit-based promotions will be given in all wings, including Safe City Authority and CTD. The IGP said that the National Police Foundation is starting a housing project to solve the housing issue for police employees, which will provide thousands of employees with their own homes.

police teams for successfully tracing the heinous crimes with cash rewards and commendation certificates. 71 officers and personnel from Faisalabad and Sahiwal regions were encouraged with commendation certificates and cash rewards. In the ceremony held at the Central Police Office, the IGP awarded cash prizes and commendation certificates to 17 teams from Okara, 8 from Sahiwal, 5 from Pakpattan, 7 from Faisalabad, 2 from Toba Tek Singh, and 1 team from Jhang.

Muhammad Rizwan Ahmed Khan, SP Investigation Allama Iqbal Town Mughes Ahmad Hashmi, ASP Gulberg Muhammad Raza, and other officers were also present. Meanwhile, IGP Dr Usman Anwar has said a police station is a basic unit of police and upgrading its functioning to provide immediate policing services and justice to the citizens is the mission. The IGP said this while speaking at a ceremony held to give cash prizes and commendation certificates to police teams here on Wednesday.

the constabulary. We are providing educational scholarships worth Rs1billion to the children of the police force. New series of promotions based on merit has started in the police force, and there will be 700 more promotions in PHP soon. Similarly, hundreds of merit-based promotions will be given in all wings, including Safe City Authority and CTD. National Police Foundation is starting a housing project to solve the housing issue for police employees, which will provide thousands of employees with their own homes, the IGP said. He encouraged police teams for successfully tracing the serious crimes with cash rewards and commendation certificates. About 71 officers and personnel from Faisalabad.

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## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### JUNE

June 02/Italy National/Independence Day

June 04/Finland Armed Forces Day

June 06/Sweden National Day

June 10/Portugal Portugal Day (National Day)

June 10/Jordan Arab Revolution & Army Day

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

June 12/Philippines Independence Day

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

June 13/Zambia Armed Forces day

June 17/Iceland National Day

June 18/Seychells National Day

June 25/Croatia National Day

June 25/Mozambique National Day

June 26/Azerbaijan Army Day

## Hotels & Restaurants



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



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



## Emergency

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



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Railway Exchange 9270831-5  
WASA Rawalpindi.5555489  
CAA.....9281092



## Hospitals

CMH.....5611111  
MH.....561116  
Cantt Hospital...9270907-11  
DHQ.....5556311-4  
RGH.....9290301-7  
Holy Family.....9290322-7  
PIMS.....9261170-79  
Polyclinic.....9218300-09  
Shifa International 4603666



## Departments

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

## Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

# Workshop 'An insight into Thai hospitality' organised

Specially for this workshop, the Royal Thai Embassy had invited lecturers and chef from Wandee Culinary Art School and Wandee Culinary Technological College, a renowned culinary school accredited by the Ministry of Education of Thailand

## DNA

RAWALPINDI: Miss Kamolwan Sriposil, Charge d'Affaires and Mr. Pornarong Buddhavadhana, First Secretary of Cultural Affairs from the Royal Thai Embassy in Islamabad organized a training and workshop titled "An Insight into Thai Hospitality" in collaboration with College of Tourism & Hotel Management (COTHM), Rawalpindi campus. Specially for this workshop, the Royal Thai Embassy had invited lecturers and chef from Wandee Culinary Art School and Wandee Culinary Technological College, a renowned culinary school accredited by the Ministry of Education of Thailand. The school has also been approved to be the "National Testing Center" in Thai cuisine chef qualification by the Ministry of Labor of Thailand. Mr. Pasit Sriyaphai, Deputy Director, Miss Chounchom Songkraopan, Chef and Miss Sukanya Saisuan, media personnel graciously traveled from Thailand to impart their knowledge, expertise, skills and wonderful tips to more than a hundred COTHM's students in the arts of Thai hospitality and Thai cooking. Mr. Pasit began with an in-depth lecture on the principles and practices of Thai hospitality. He emphasized the cultural values that underpin Thai hospitality, such as respect, humility, attention to details and a genuine desire to make guests feel at home. These values are seamlessly woven into every aspect of Thai service, from the welcoming gestures to the meticulous preparation of food. He also demonstrated the service character for food and beverage students. One of the highlights of the day was the culinary workshops, where the students had the opportunity to prepare traditional Thai dishes under the guidance of experienced chefs. The workshops included the preparation of two iconic Thai dishes: Golden Cup and Creamy Red Curry with Chicken. The "Golden Cup" is a Thai Appetizer found in Thai heritage since King Rama V. During his trip to Penang, there was a gathering event with a wealthy person. There were various appetizers so called "peranakan top hat". It was made into crispy cup in European



hat shape with yam, shrimp, crab, cucumber, and corn mixed with sauce. Later on, people brought this cooking back to Thailand and cooked this dish widely by adding more ingredients. The second dish, "Creamy Red Curry with Chicken" has unique characteristic with condensed texture and salty sweet



taste. In addition to the culinary workshops, the Royal Thai Embassy also featured a display of delicate fruit and vegetable carvings, which is an integral part of Thai cuisine. This traditional art form involves transforming ordinary fruits and vegetables into intricate and beautiful sculptures. In addition, there was also a display of Thai products and ingredients. Many of these ingredients can be found in supermarkets all over Pakistan. From fragrant herbs and spices to specialty sauces and fresh produce, the display highlighted the quality and variety of ingredients that form the backbone of Thai cuisine. This

showcase not only enriched the culinary experience, but also provided insights into the cultural and economic aspects of Thai cuisine. In addition, the Royal Thai Embassy is pleased that COTHM and Wandee Culinary Art School are in talks for further academic collaborations.

## Romina calls for safeguarding GB's natural heritage

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam on Thursday underlined urgency of 'collective action' for safeguarding the Gilgit Baltistan (GB)'s globally significant natural heritage. Romina Khurshid Alam said, "Pakistan's northern region is home to unique biodiversity and ecosystems of global repute. But, they are grappled with several significant threats stemming from both natural and human-caused factors." Addressing as a keynote speaker at a national seminar on the 'Biodiversity Safeguarding Initiative: Global Assessment of the State of Nature and Biodiversity Safeguarding Actions in Northern Pakistan' here, the PM's climate aide stressed that tackling escalating risks to the resource-rich biodiversity and ecosystems was a need of

the hour to protect the biodiversity and resource-rich ecosystems for overall environmental and human sustainability and development. Spelling out the threats to the sustainability of biodiversity and ecosystems, Romina Khurshid Alam said, "Continuing loss of habitat and fragmentation, deforestation and land degradation, soil erosion, water and soil pollutants and contamination, illegal wildlife poaching and trade, unsustainable agricultural practices, use of chemical fertilizers in farming, unsustainable production and consumption patterns and climate change are among the key pressing challenges facing the unparalleled biodiversity in the country's north." She emphasized the need for urgency of collective action for safeguarding the region's natural heritage comprising unique

biodiversity and natural ecosystems. "Northern Pakistan is blessed with unparalleled biodiversity, but it is under threat. Through collaboration and shared responsibility, we must work together to protect our ecosystems and conserve the biodiversity in the country, particularly in the northern parts for sustainability of the environment, of our own and future generations," PM's coordinator Romina Khurshid told the participants. She also hailed the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN-Pakistan) for organising an important seminar on the Biodiversity Safeguarding Initiative for sharing the project achievements and collectively focuses on the conservation of biodiversity in the country. "On behalf of Government of Pakistan, I extend our heartfelt gratitude to Italian Agency for

Development Cooperation (AICS), Government of Italy, Government of GB, IUCN Pakistan and local communities for making this possible to achieve important benchmarks in safeguarding the biodiversity of the fragile ecosystems of northern Pakistan through the joint initiative of national importance," the PM's climate aide said during her address. Gilgit-Baltistan is the biodiversity rich region of Pakistan, being home to the national animal of Pakistan Markhor. Unique flora and fauna of this region is exceptional with the highly conservation orientated local communities. Community based Trophy hunting programme has become most interesting and rewarding initiative that has not only increased the population of key Cites species and in-turn elevated the lives of local communities.—APP

## Operation against eight illegal housing schemes

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) on the directives of the Divisional Intelligence Committee has launched operation against illegal housing schemes in Taxila. According to a RDA spokesman, the Task Force had accelerated its ongoing operation against illegal housing schemes. The RDA Enforcement Squad while conducting operation took action against eight illegal housing schemes namely Aroua Housing Scheme, Al-Khan Enclave, Land Sub-Division, Wah Residencia, Fahad Builders (office of illegal schemes Education Town/Wah Hills), Al-Madina Land Sub-Division, Education Town/Wah Hills/Kashmir Town and Khawas Town. The schemes are located in Mouzas Lab Thatha, Niko, Bhoti Pind, Buddu, Gari Afghana, and Bajar, Tehsil Taxila, District Rawalpindi. The Enforcement Squad sealed and demolished the site offices and land subdivisions of the illegal housing schemes, the spokesman said. The operation was conducted on the orders of Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Muhammad Abdul Aamir Khattak, Director General RDA, the Additional DG RDA, the Deputy Commissioner, Rawalpindi and the City Police Officer, Rawalpindi. The spokesman informed that despite warnings to cease illegal advertisements, booking of the plots, and development work, the owners of the housing schemes continued to operate booking offices in violation of the rules. The DG RDA said that under the Commissioner's guidance, the crackdown on illegal housing societies would continue to prevent fraud and protect the citizens from exploitation. She said that the RDA had advised the citizens not to invest illegal housing schemes and visit the RDA website www.rda.gov.pk to check status of all legal and illegal housing societies.—APP

## Police recover 5.5 kg charras; arrest 6 accuse

RAWALPINDI: The district police in a crackdown against drug peddlers managed to recover 5.5 kg charras and arrested six accused, said a police spokesman here on Thursday. He informed that Taxila police recovered 1260 grams hashish from an accused namely Amjad, 1200 grams hashish from Arshad and 530 grams hashish from the possession of Ahsan. The Newtown police conducted raids and recovered 1500 grams hashish from an accused Arsalan and 540 grams hashish from Sameer Sadiq. The Civil Lines Police also recovered 560 grams hashish from a drug peddler namely Tayyab Shabbir. The accused would be challaned with concrete evidence, he said adding, actions against drug peddlers would continue to eradicate the scourge of drugs.—APP

## Dengue larva; 8842 spots positive, says report

RAWALPINDI: Dengue Prevention and Control, District Administration Rawalpindi has released its report containing statistical data of dengue presence during the first half of the current year. The report, issued here on Tuesday shows the increasing trend of presence of dengue larva which requires continued surveillance and response actions. Over 22 lakh houses were checked out of which 7312 have been detected positive. Report shows that 573000 spots were visited by the dengue eradication teams and found 1530 positive spots. According to the report, Rawalpindi Municipal area ranks top in the district with the highest 2416 houses detected positive of dengue larva presence, followed by Rawalpindi Cantonment area with 2262 positive cases. Murree, with comparatively windy and cold weather has shown lowest positive cases with only 160 houses. Above 760,000 houses and spots were fined while taking punitive actions by the administration. Dr Sajjad, DCP and Focal Person Dengue Prevention and Control in a brief interaction with APP said that continued surveillance for dengue control was underway to maximize awareness dengue issue among the masses.—APP

## Palm oil imports decline by 25.36 percent

ISLAMABAD: The imports of palm oil into the country declined by 25.36 percent during the first eleven months of the current fiscal year compared to corresponding period of last year, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. Pakistan imported palm oil worth \$2,531.531 million during July-May (2023-24) against the exports of \$3,391.488 million during July-May (2022-23), according to PBS data. In terms of quantity, the palm oil imports decreased by 3.52 percent by going down from 2,839,098 metric tons to 2,739,137 metric tons.—APP

## Shaza Fatima urges Swedish companies to invest in IT

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja on Thursday urged Swedish companies to invest in Pakistan's Information Technology and Telecom sector. "The present government is taking steps to promote Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in the country, as the growth of ICT is a vital factor for progress," she expressed these views while addressing the Roundtable on IT and Digitalization with Swedish tech companies held at the Ministry of IT & Telecom. Ambassador of Sweden to Pakistan Henrik Persson and representatives of Swedish companies including Ericsson, Need Insights,

LCC/Talkpool, Quixel, Saab, and Mahaana Wealth Ltd were present on the occasion. Shaza Fatima said, "Ministry of IT & Telecom is working on fulfilling Digital Pakistan vision through multiple cross sectoral initiatives including laws, policies and rules and regulations for enablement of true digital landscape." The Minister of State for IT said, "Digital Pakistan Policy is paving way for taking Digital transformation to the next level." She said, "The government is committed for provision of affordable and quality ICT services to masses. Shaza Fatima said that atmosphere for investment in Pakistan is conducive." She said, "Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) is facilitating investment in Pakistan, urging Swedish tech companies to invest in IT & Telecom sector of Pakistan." Later, detailed views were exchanged with Swedish delegation on digitalization, connectivity, IT & Telecom infrastructure, IT exports, startups, e-governance, e-rozgar, gaming and animation, and skills development. The Swedish tech companies' representatives proposed that like Sweden Pakistan needed to expedite steps on policy level in IT sector. They said that Pakistan needed to produce skilled people in IT field, adding that Swedish companies were ready to give training to Pakistanis in IT field.—APP

## JUNE 2024

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## Briefs

## Punjab govt conducting first school census

ISLAMABAD: Punjab's Education Minister, Rana Sikandar Hayat Thursday said that all-out measures would be taken to standardise the education system in public schools of Punjab where for better policies, the first school mapping programme to collect data about all school kids will be conducted soon transparently. Talking to a Private news channel, he stressed on conducting school census at the national level, adding that the Punjab government is taking the lead among all other provinces and recently with the direction of Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Sharif school mapping was being conducted to count kids. Through NADRA data will be checked about the enrollment data of students at every district level, he said, adding that long-term policy-making for government schools and enhancing the quality of education will be the top priority of the Punjab government. He also praised that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has also announced the formation of a 19-member Education Task Force to address the pressing issues related to the national education emergency which is another historic step. He said that collective efforts of all provinces related to out-of-school children's need of hour, adding, that Punjab government authorities are collaborating with other provinces in this regard. Replying to a question, he mentioned that the government is also conducting an inter-provincial education conference next month to devise a national strategy to bring improvement in the education system across the country. He said education ministers of all the provinces and other stakeholders would be invited to the conference and to find out consensus-based solutions to address the education system. To another question, he stressed the need to devise a strategy for education and skill-based training programmes for public schools, adding that the prime minister had a vision of creating employment opportunities for the youth.—APP

## Kashmiri delegation stages protest

ISLAMABAD: Kashmiri delegation on Thursday staged a strong protest in front of the UN office against systematic violations of human rights committed by Indian forces in illegally Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). The protest, which was organised to commemorate the international day in support of victims of torture, inhumane and degrading treatment, was attended and addressed by head of the Kashmiri delegation Altaf Hussain Wani, Sardar Amjad Yousef the executive director, APHC general secretary adv. Parveez Ahmed Shah, Shamim Shal, Dr. Waleed Rasool, Ms. Gazala Habib, Ms. Haiqa and others, said a press release received for Geneva. Highlighting the plight of torture victims and their families, the speakers said that thousands of innocent Kashmiris including men and women had been subjected to third degree torture in prisons, interrogation and detention centers. The Indian government, they said, had remorselessly been using torture as 'instrument of control' to suppress Kashmiris' legitimate struggle for right to self determination. Referring to the structures of violence stretched all across the Kashmir valley and beyond in the form of military camps, they said that these military camps were virtually turned into torture centers where innocent Kashmiris were brought and beaten, given electric shocks, forced to eat dirt or drink filthy water. Terming systematic abuse by the Indian armed forces as a grave existential threat to local population, they said brutal and inhuman torture techniques, employed by Indian troops, paramilitary forces and police personnel, had left thousands of Kashmiris disabled for life. This egregious reality of Kashmir, they said, had unfortunately escaped the attention of local and international observers.—APP

## Half a million women in Pak suffer from blindness

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Al-Shifa Trust (AST) said on Thursday that there are at least 2.2 billion blind or visually impaired people in the world and the complication may have been avoided in at least 1 billion of these cases. Vision impairment is four times higher in low- and middle-income areas than in high-income areas and according to WHO estimates, vision impairment results in an annual global productivity loss of \$411 billion, posing a significant financial burden. The prevalence of blindness and vision impairment is higher in females than males; presently, almost half a million women in Pakistan are suffering from blindness and vision problems. Impairment, said Brig. (R) Prof. Dr. Sabihuddin, Head of the Cataract Department at Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital, Rawalpindi. In a ceremony to celebrate June as Cataract Awareness Month, Brig. (R) Prof. Dr. Sabihuddin said that AST annually performs 52 thousand surgeries, free of charge. He added that the government should step up, as existing facilities are insufficient to handle the influx of eye patients. He noted that, with the rising population and an increase in average age, the number of cataract patients is increasing in the country, and a large number of women have blindness as they have no access to eye facilities. According to Dr. Sabihuddin, Pakistan is one of the top countries when it comes to diabetes, which is also driving up the rate of eye disease. He said cataracts are age-related degeneration and can



not be controlled. Therefore, the government should strengthen the eye departments in all state-run hospitals, including those established at the district level, and support all such initiatives. He added that AST performs almost 100 to 120 surgeries daily, it has thirty air-conditioned operation theaters, twenty-five expert doctors, six anesthetists, and state-of-the-art diagnostic facilities. He stated that

the outreach program frequently organizes surgical camps in remote areas, conducting almost 100 surgeries daily. "We have the best facilities and expert doctors to treat the complicated cases," he said, adding that ophthalmology and cataract surgery are the largest departments of the hospital, providing specialized care to patients with different conditions. Dr. Sabihuddin said AST

has all the latest technologies and expertise, and our hospitals in Sukkar, Kohat, Muzaffarabad, and Chakwal are performing 52 thousand cataract surgeries annually, free of charge. He announced that the Cataract Department has completed one million surgeries since its founding. Resource Generation and Communication Department of AST, Cataract Surgery and General Ophthalmology

Department organized an activity in which students from the School of Public Health and Department of Optometry, Pakistan Institute of Ophthalmology participated. Staff members, and media personnel also attended the cataract awareness event. Ms. Suman Hamad, GM of Resource Generation and Communication at the trust, also participated in the event.

## ANF recovers 344 kg drugs in four operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting four operations countrywide here on Thursday, nabbed three accused and recovered 344 kg of drugs. According to an ANF Headquarters spokesman, about 316.7 kg of ice and 17.2 kg of opium were recovered from Nokundi Chagai. Around 6 kg of hashish was recovered from a motorcycle rider intercepted near Sohrab Goth town in Karachi. In the third operation, 2.9 kg of hashish was recovered from an accused rounded up near Qayyumabad in Karachi. In the fourth operation, 1 kg of ice was recovered from the possession of an accused arrested on DG Khan Road in Multan. Cases have been registered against the arrested accused under the Anti-Narcotics Act.—APP

## Gold rates up by Rs 400 per tola to Rs 241,000

ISLAMABAD: The price of per tola of 24 karat gold increased by Rs 400 and was sold at Rs 241,000 on Thursday against its sale at Rs 240,600 on last trading day. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs 343 to Rs 206,619 from Rs 206,276 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs 189,400 from Rs 189,086, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported. The price of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs 2,850 and Rs 2,443.41 respectively. The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$9 to \$2,304 from \$2,313, the association reported.—APP

## IFA cracks down on hazardous soda drinks

ISLAMABAD: As temperatures soar this summer, the sale of potentially harmful beverages has surged as people seek relief from the heat. Crowds have been seen flocking to soda and drink shops, many of which are selling their products without meeting health standards. When contacted to Islamabad Food Authority (IFA), the Deputy Director Operations (DDO) of IFA, Dr. Tahira Saddique, revealed that many beverage sellers were not maintaining a proper healthy environment. In a recent operation, the IFA seized a large consignment of faulty soda bottles. Food Authority team destroyed 4,000 bottles on the spot and imposed heavy fines for supplying contaminated water.—APP

## First tourism delegation sets off from Kashgar to GB

ISLAMABAD: A total of 18 tourism industry insiders from Kashgar has set off on their 5-day visit to Pakistan. This is the first outbound tourism team from Kashgar invited by the Travel Agents Association of Pakistan (TAAP). They traveled to Gilgit-Baltistan region of Pakistan via Khunjerab port in Xinjiang, according to Gwadar Pro. Since the beginning of this year, the number

of tourists to Kashgar has risen sharply. The consumption enthusiasm of domestic tourists has extended to overseas destinations, and Kashgar is also attracting an increasing number of international tourists. According to the statistics from the Khunjerab entry-exit border checkpoint, since the port opened on April 1 this year, the number of entry-exit passengers has been steadily increasing,

surpassing 5,000 people, marking a 454% increase. Out of these, 246 passengers traveled to Pakistan and other South and Central Asian countries, with 69% being Chinese citizens and 31% foreign citizens. During the visit, the delegation will hold discussions with their counterparts from TAAP and related tourism enterprises in Pakistan, laying a solid foundation for the future regular promotion of

China-Pakistan entry-exit tourism market cooperation. Ma Jiong, one of the organizers of this visit, stated that the delegation will assess the tourist reception capacity of northern cities in Pakistan from six perspectives: food, accommodation, transportation, sightseeing, shopping, and entertainment. They aim to develop tourist routes suitable for ordinary tourists.—APP

## 40 locally manufactured freight trains with Chinese tech put into operation

ISLAMABAD, June 27 (): Some 40 freight wagons were successfully produced, batched, and put into operation in Pakistan, Gwadar Pro reported on Thursday. These wagons were locally manufactured using Chinese technologies, as reported by Inner Mongolia First Machinery Group Co., Ltd. Through technology transfer from Baotou Beifang Chuangye Co., Ltd., a subsidiary company of First Machinery, the excellent performance and quality of those wagons have won wide praise from Pakistan Railway companies and all sectors of society, according to the report. The successful implementation of the project opens a new chapter for Pakistan by establishing local production capacity for freight trains. It signifies the expansion of the international trade business of the Chinese company from "product abroad" to "product + service abroad", adding new competitiveness to the development of overseas markets, as stated in the report. According to the Pakistani side, local production of these wagons represents a crucial step towards reducing dependence on imports and conserving foreign exchange. "New design allows freight trains to transport containers efficiently, enhancing their versatility. In the past, the low speed of freight trains resulted in considerable delays in the transportation of commercial goods. The inclusion of these new wagons in our fleet will increase the speed of freight trains to 100 km per hour," said an official from Lahore Railway Station. The delivery of those wagons is part of the 820 wagon project signed between Beifang Chuangye and Pakistan Railways on December 23, 2021. The project includes 800 high capacity wagons and 20 brake vans, covering CBU, SKD and CKD technologies. By 2023, a total of 200 vehicles have been delivered. The final batch of CKD products will be shipped from Tianjin port in June 2024. The production and delivery of SKD and CKD vehicles in Pakistan will be finished within the year. According to Beifang Chuangye, all 820 new vehicles will be integrated into the Pakistani railway system by the end of the 2025-26 fiscal year.—DNA

## CPEC 2.0 to bolster Pakistan's 5E initiative: Planning Minister

DNA

ISLAMABAD: CPEC 2.0 will bolster Pakistan's 5E initiative, said Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal while addressing a seminar held here by KASB Ktrade Securities. The 5Es initiative is centred around five key pillars, which include exports, E-Pakistan, environment and climate change, energy and infrastructure and equity and empowerment. The seminar themed "CPEC 2.0: Business Collaboration Between Pakistan and China". Ahsan Iqbal highlighted the opportunities of the new phase of CPEC featured by B2B cooperation with a view to the outcomes of Pakistani PM Shehbaz Sharif's visit to China earlier this month. According to Gwadar Pro, the Planning Minister summarised that over 1000 business meetings were held during PM's visit to China, which has brought together over 150 companies from Pakistan and over 200 firms in China in a grand business confer-

ence. In terms of the first "E", exports, he cited the success of sesame seeds and chillies. "The exports of sesame seeds to China just started around 3 years ago, and today we have an export of \$300 million. Similarly, exports of chillies have expanded exponentially. There are huge potential for Pakistani products to hit the Chinese market," he said. In building E-Pakistan, the Planning Minister mentioned the framework agreement signed with China's technology giant Huawei during PM's China trip, under which Huawei will provide free training to 200,000 Pakistani youth in the field of information technology, including artificial intelligence. Green energy agreements such as hydrogen were also signed, which will empower Pakistan's endeavor in the 3rd "E", Energy & Infrastructure. The cooperative projects aiming to promote livelihoods in backward communities in Pakistan were aligned with the "Equity & Empowerment" goal, supporting Pakistan's efforts in poverty eradication. Under the framework of cooper-

ation in "Environment & Climate Change", he told the audience that 1,000 Pakistani researchers and students will be sent to China to get training in China's agriculture technology centers and bring technologies back to Pakistan. In a response to worries of the so-called "downgraded" relations between Pakistan and China, he refuted the narrative by stressing the joint efforts to build an "upgraded" version of CPEC as has been announced by bilateral leadership. He called for alarm to such propaganda and urged Pakistani businessmen to seize the opportunity of CPEC 2.0. "As Chinese companies are looking for joint ventures in other countries, it provides opportunities for Pakistani businessmen to identify partners in China and attract their industry relocation", he said. "We just have to 'upgrade' our own efforts to take advantage of the opportunities", he said, pointing out the necessity for stability and continuity of policies for national development.

## Meteorologist advise safety of crops

ISLAMABAD: Chief Meteorologist Sardar Sarfaraz Thursday predicted for first pre-monsoon rains of the year are expected to knock on the country from today and continue till July 30 in which advised the citizens to take precautionary measures to secure crops and precious lives. Talking to PTV news channel, he said the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has forecast that Karachi, Islamabad and other cities of the country to experience light to heavy rain showers accompanied by thunderstorms on Thursday and Friday, adding, bringing much-needed relief from the intense heatwave affecting the city. He advised the farmers to manage their activities keeping in view the fresh weather, besides asking the tourists to remain extra cautious to avoid any untoward situation during the rainy spell. "All concerned authorities are advised to remain alert and take necessary measures to avoid any untoward situation," he added. Replying a question.—APP

## Over Rs 50 bln disbursed under Benazir Kafaalat scheme

ISLAMABAD: The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) has disbursed over Rs.50 billion among over 47,00,000 beneficiaries from across the country so far under the Benazir Kafaalat quarterly payments (April-June). "Till June 26, over Rs. 50 billion has been disbursed among over 47,00,000 beneficiaries which make 70 per cent of the total beneficiaries", said an official source. The disbursement of the quarterly tranche (April-June) of Benazir Kafaalat cash assistance to the beneficiaries is continued across the country in two phases to disburse Rs. 10,500 per household among over nine million registered beneficiary families. In the first phase, the payments were being issued among the

beneficiaries in all districts of Islamabad, Balochistan, Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan. The payments are also being disbursed in Peshawar, Mardan and all districts of Malakand and Hazara Division in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, all districts of Karachi Division and District Hyderabad in Sindh province and Gujranwala, Sahiwal, Rawalpindi and all districts of Sargodha Division and District Vehari in Punjab. While the payments to the beneficiaries in the remaining districts are being issued in the second phase. The beneficiaries can receive their payment through the nearest centers after receiving the message from 8171. The beneficiaries, in case of any complaint, can approach the

nearest BISP Tehsil offices or call the toll-free helpline number 080026477 of the Benazir Income Support Programme. The special control room has been activated in the BISP headquarters to address the complaints of the beneficiaries promptly. However, the beneficiaries can also contact the officials on WhatsApp numbers including 03018472841 (Hyderabad District), 03018472838 (Karachi Division), 03175370095 (South Punjab), 03202399616 (Central Punjab), 03028238564 (North Punjab), 03492883482 (Balochistan), 03155212820 (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa), 03155213094 (Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan). The messages from the Benazir Income Support Programme

are sent only from 8171, and messages from any other number should not be trusted. The officials of BISP have been directed to ensure the smooth disbursement of Kafaalat payments to the women without any deductions. The staff has been deputed to monitor the process of payment disbursement and take immediate action against the agents responsible for deductions from the beneficiary's payments. The BISP is currently supporting 9.3 million deserving families and acting as a lifeline for those facing economic hardship. The Unconditional Cash Transfers (UCT) program, also known as the 'Benazir Kafaalat Programme', is the core initiative of BISP and was launched in 2008. —APP



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## Kim-Putin deal

IS it checkmate? When the Kremlin announced Russian President Vladimir Putin's state visit to North Korea, the West was sceptical about what would be accomplished. The "ceiling" on the visit appeared to be the continued flow of North Korean weapons to Russia. The possibility that Russia and North Korea would do more was pushed aside. Few people seemed to be connecting the dots. Earlier, at the St Petersburg economic forum, Putin warned that Moscow could arm states (and groups) that could then attack the West. It was Russia's retaliation, as the West had approved Ukraine striking targets in Russia using Western weapons. Then Putin flew to Pyongyang. Old shackles on Russia-North Korea relations were broken. A new alliance was formed. At the core: a mutual defence deal pledging protection and support in the face of "aggression". The details are sparse. But the idea that Russia could defend North Korea if hostilities break out or that North Korea could come to Russia's defence in war is moving the tectonic plates of geopolitics. It changes the calculations nations will make in Asia – and globally. To start with, Russia seems to be taking a page out of America's playbook. For months, the United States and Saudi Arabia have reportedly been quietly negotiating a deal that would integrate Washington and Riyadh on a new axis. Part of the deal would reportedly see the US sign a defence treaty with Saudi Arabia, similar to what America has with Japan, South Korea and the Philippines. It means if Saudi Arabia ever goes to war, America will defend it. Russia has signed effectively the same deal with North Korea. A new kind of superpower competition may have begun, where the US and Russia are dangling their "ace card" in front of nations, pledging to defend them in wartime, to bring these countries into their corner. And there is little stopping others, like China, from introducing similar arrangements. It further pulls the world back into a pre-World War I set-up, where the zigzag of defence treaties across Europe forced the great powers to fight one another. For the international community, already on edge with the wars in Europe and the Middle East, the Russia-North Korea deal raises the stakes considerably. A war between North and South Korea would now threaten to pull in the world's two largest nuclear powers. With the US sworn to defend South Korea, and Russia pledging to defend North Korea, a conflict on the Korean peninsula would put Moscow and Washington on a collision course. A future Korean war must be averted at all costs. In effect, the North Korea-Russia deal could act as a deterrent and ensure the stand-off between North and South Korea, which never formally ended, remains "frozen" for a long time, because of fear of what could result from war breaking out. Then, of course, there is the big challenge surrounding China. For decades, North Korea has been firmly in the Chinese camp. But the new deal brings Russia and North Korea together in a way that could jeopardise China's interests. This might be what Russia intended. Because, from Serbia to Georgia, China has been making strategic inroads in Russia's sphere of influence. In Georgia, for instance, China has won the bid to build one of the nation's most strategic ports on the Black Sea. Russia drawing closer to North Korea could mark the start of a new strategy, where it takes on China in the shadows, attempting to draw nations out of China's camp, the same way Beijing is doing with nations in Moscow's camp.

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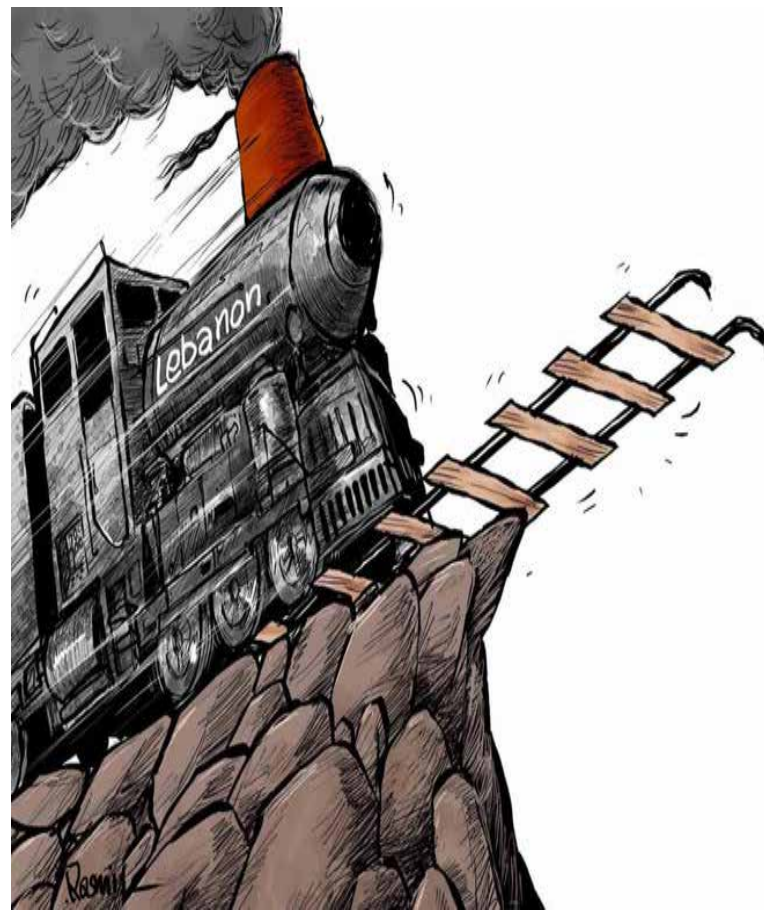
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## The French turn right

IT is said that in the event of an international security crisis, the Americans go to DEFCON 1, the Brits convene a meeting of the COBRA emergency committee and the French raise their national alert level from "surrender" to "collaborate." That is perhaps unfair: in the darkest days of the 1940s, with most of Western Europe under the Nazi jackboot, the brave men and women of the French Resistance shouldered the burden of defiance almost alone. What is true, however, is that when their backs are to the wall, the instinctive French reaction is to execute a sharp political turn to the right. In November 1799, with the revolutionary First Republic financially bankrupt and widespread discontent on the streets, the Corsican general Napoleon Bonaparte led a coup and had himself appointed first consul – and, eventually, emperor. Napoleon is, of course, best known for his military genius, conquering most of Europe until he met his Waterloo, but domestically he was very much a man of authoritarian bent. He concentrated power in his own hands, introduced censorship, closed all opposition publications and brutally repressed dissent in a regime that the American historian David A. Bell has described as "soft despotism." A century and a half later, the French were at it again. While the Regentate enjoys and deserves our enduring respect, it was in 1940 that the "collaborator" jibe was first deployed. The collaborator-in-chief was Marshal Philippe Petain, a mentor of Spanish dictator Francisco Franco with political views two goose-steps to the right of Attila the Hun. Conveniently for Hitler, who lacked the resources to subdue all of France, Petain set up a government in the town of Vichy and offered to do it for him. The Vichy regime was authoritarian and repressive and reversed the liberal policies that had made Paris the avant-garde capital of European arts and culture. Moreover, if there were any Jews, communists or other "undesirables" to be rounded up and carted off in cattle trucks to the death camps of Eastern Europe, Petain was the man for the task: with his enthusiastic help, the Nazis murdered at least 72,500 French Jews. You would think by now that the French would have learned a lesson, but evidently not. They vote on Sunday in the first round of National Assembly elections and, if the polls are accurate, then a majority of its 577 members will belong to National Rally, the far-right party led in the assembly by Marine Le Pen. To be fair to Le Pen (and we are fair to everyone here), she has done much to sanitize the legacy of her father Jean-Marie, who founded the party as the National Front in 1978. A rare combination of antisemite and Islamophobe, he was repeatedly convicted of assault when he was a law student. He was president of a student association whose members specialized in street brawls with anyone they suspected of being a communist, and he even managed to have himself thrown out of that. The old boy is also a serial loser: he served with the French Foreign Legion in Indochina (defeat) and Suez (humiliation) and five times he has tried and failed to become French president. He turned 96 last week, so he is probably past all that now, although he could try a bid for the White House – his relative youth might be a bonus. The daughter is an altogether smarter operator, who knows a liability when she sees one. She deposed her old man as party leader in 2011, threw him out entirely in 2015 and changed the party name to National Rally in 2018.

# Olive branch by PM and US resolution

Qamar Bashir



Pakistan's Foreign Affairs responded with a standard statement, criticizing the resolution, viewing it as interference in Pakistan's internal affairs, emphasizing Pakistan's commitment to democratic processes and sovereignty, asserting that the election was conducted fairly and in accordance with the law. Khawaja Asif, Pakistan's Defence Minister reacted strongly stating that Pakistan does not need external validation for its electoral processes and highlighted the importance of non-interference in domestic affairs while reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to democratic principles and processes

ON June 27, 2024, two significant developments occurred in Pakistan's political landscape. First, the Prime Minister extended an olive branch to the PTI, offering to engage in dialogue to ease the situation for the incarcerated PTI founder, who the leader of the opposition in the National Assembly referred to as their prime minister. Second, the U.S. Congress passed a resolution urging the Pakistani government to rectify the alleged electoral wrongdoings from the 2024 elections, which reportedly brought to power a party that only won 17 seats while the opposition, which won 180 seats, remained sidelined. These developments, while seemingly unrelated, are indeed interconnected. The Prime Minister's sudden willingness to negotiate with the PTI raises several questions, particularly about the scope and mandate of such negotiations. The PTI's demands include the release of their founder and other leaders, supporters, and workers; the re-allocation of National Assembly and Punjab Assembly seats based on Form 45 results; the restoration of PTI's party status and appropriate seat allocation in legislative bodies based on Form 45; ensuring all institutions operate within constitutional confines; and the restoration of fundamental rights for the people of Pakistan. Neither the Establishment, nor PML(N) or PPP are in a position to accept these demands, as doing so would practically mean the end of the PML(N) government both at the center and in Punjab. It would entail the reversal of all decisions made by these governments and initiate a process of accountability for all those directly or indirectly involved in delaying the elections against the constitutional provisions. This accountability would extend to those who were involved in allegedly fabricating cases against PTI leadership, supporters, and workers, and those involved in rigging, altering, or fraudulently fabricating the election results. Additionally, it may imply shifting of all roles which are currently manned by the army to civilian domains. In this scenario both the governments and parliaments are in a dire and difficult situation. The pressure against their alleged illegitimacy was never more stronger than it is now domestically, and now this pressure is mounting internationally as well. The recent example is the passing of Human Rights Resolution 901 by the US congress. The strongly worded resolution is enough to give

sleepless nights to all those who allegedly manipulated the elections results and its words were like pouring honey in one's ears for those who are claiming that their mandate was stolen by the state operatives. The resolution is rare, as it involves one sovereign country passing a resolution against another in support of democracy and human rights. It calls upon the U.S. government to ensure that any alleged electoral wrongdoing in Pakistan is addressed. The resolution demands that, failing this, the U.S. government withhold recognition of any government formed as a result of manipulated elections until an independent investigation verifies that the elections were free and fair, ensuring that the outcome reflects the true will of the Pakistani people. The resolution urges the U.S. government to use its influence to secure the release of individuals detained for political activities or free speech, allowing journalists, candidates, and activists to operate without fear of detention or violence. Most importantly, the resolution states that until alleged electoral wrongdoings are addressed, U.S. security assistance to Pakistan's military should be contingent on adherence to human rights standards, including respect for free speech and political freedoms. Pakistan's Foreign Affairs responded with a standard statement, criticizing the resolution, viewing it as interference in Pakistan's internal affairs, emphasizing Pakistan's commitment to democratic processes and sovereignty, asserting that the election was conducted fairly and in accordance with the law. Khawaja Asif, Pakistan's Defence Minister reacted strongly stating that Pakistan does not need external validation for its electoral processes and highlighted the importance of non-interference in domestic affairs while reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to democratic principles and processes. Perhaps, Khawaja Asif had a short memory, but the people of Pakistan do not. He was the same Khawaja Asif who, when the Cypher case was initiated against Imran Khan, criticized Khan for jeopardizing Pakistan's indispensable relationship with the U.S., emphasizing the critical importance of maintaining strong ties with the world's only superpower. However, in response to the US resolution on electoral integrity in Pakistan, he adopted a defiant tone, rejecting the resolution as undue interference in Pakistan's internal affairs. The brushing aside of the resolution without ap-

preciating that though non-binding, the resolution has served as a diplomatic signal to Pakistan would not be proper, as for the U.S. government, it underscores the need for ensuring accountability and transparency in Pakistan's election process and using diplomatic, financial, economics and business tools to ensure compliance of the resolution. For the American people, it reflects public concerns about the democratic practices in Pakistan and their support for human rights advocacy. Internationally, it sets a precedent for other countries to pass similar resolutions in their respective countries to mount pressure on Pakistan to adhere to democratic standards and ensure upholding of fundamental rights of the individuals, civil society, political parties and the media, besides emphasizing due process of law, equal justice and fair treatment. Let us assume a hypothetical scenario, where the U.S. and Europe have suspended financial, economic, trade, commercial, and security ties with Pakistan until election-related issues are resolved. In such a scenario, politically, Pakistan would face increased diplomatic isolation, weakening its influence in international forums and exacerbating internal instability. Economically, the loss of access to vital loans and financial aid would exacerbate Pakistan's existing economic challenges, leading to skyrocketing inflation and potential default on international debt. In the worst case scenario, foreign investment would dry up, causing significant capital flight and a decrease in foreign direct investment leading to further depreciation of PKR, inflating import costs and exacerbating economic instability culminating in widespread unemployment, business closures, and severe disruptions in supply chains. This would push many into poverty and potentially cause a humanitarian crisis. In terms of security and defense, the suspension of ties would critically weaken Pakistan's defense capabilities by cutting off access to advanced military technology and equipment. The choice rests with the government to resolve the Election Related issues in a transparent and verifiable manner acceptable to all stakeholders to forestall any possible domestic turmoil, and international isolation.

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

## De-Dollarization to De-Colonialization

Dr M Ali Hamza



There were 54 points been addressed during the summit, but top 3 most important takeaways include i) New financial system; to enhance the voice of developing nations. Under the current US dollar system every country is on the mercy of the US govt. and this remains the biggest motivation for BRICS; creating independent payment system that uses local currencies in trade...

THE landscape is rapidly changing for the US dollar, with two significant events set to reshape the global economic future. Firstly, the announcement of a new BRICS payment system is supposed to challenge the US dollar's dominance in international transactions. Even more impactful is the end of a 50-year agreement between the United States and Saudi Arabia, which previously mandated that Saudi oil exports be conducted exclusively in US dollars. As of June 9, 2024, Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince has opted not to renew this partnership, opening Saudi trade to other countries and currencies. This development is a substantial blow to the US dollar's status as the world's reserve currency. For the past five decades, the US govt. has enforced oil sales in dollars, cementing its role as the global reserve currency; a strategic move initiated by President Richard Nixon in the 1970s. This shift signals the end of an era where the US stood as the sole superpower. On June 5, 2024, Reuters reported that Saudi Arabia has joined a China-led central bank digital currency project, indicating a further move away from conducting the world's oil trade in US dollars. US Congressman Thomas Massie recently highlighted these changes in a podcast, stating, "We can control as long as they use our currency, but I think it is going to end at some point using our dollars as reserve currency." He noted that before sanctions, 70% of Russia's transactions were in US dollars, which has dropped to less than 20% post-sanctions. Ironically, each new sanction by the US govt. nudges the world closer to de-dollarization. This trend is similar in the US's microchip dispute with China. In an effort to block China's access to advanced American microchips, the US imposed sanctions. In response, China invested heavily in its domestic microchip industry, rapidly narrowing the innovation gap. Means, the best thing to ever happen to the Chinese semiconductor industry was getting sanctioned by the US govt.

Recent actions, such as the REPO Act for Ukraine, where Congress decided to seize Russia's sovereign assets in the US, have raised concerns about the long-term viability of holding US dollars. This move involved confiscating significant amounts of treasury debt that Russia had purchased, an act viewed by many as immoral. Such actions make other countries wary of buying US debt, fearing similar treatment. China, once the largest holder of US treasury bonds; at its peak China held over 1 trillion USD worth of treasury bonds, has significantly reduced its holdings in favour of gold, anticipating it could be the next target of US sanctions. These developments have spurred the BRICS nations to establish their own payment system. Speaking at the 2024 St. Petersburg Economic Forum, Vladimir Putin emphasized the growing use of the Ruble in Russian export settlements and announced efforts to create an independent payment system within BRICS framework, that aims to be free from political pressure and external sanctions. Western media spins it and often portrays Russia as isolated, but the forum saw participation of 21,300 attendees from 139 countries, signalling strong support for the BRICS initiative. There were 54 points been addressed during the summit, but top 3 most important takeaways include i) New financial system; to enhance the voice of developing nations. Under the current US dollar system every country is on the mercy of the US govt. and this remains the biggest motivation for BRICS; creating independent payment system that uses local currencies in trade and get free from the US sanctions and outside political pressure. ii) Israel and Palestine; as war in Gaza has become the latest political issue separating BRICS and United States. US has been providing unconditional support to Israel and frankly has proved useless in ending the war in Gaza but BIRCS alliance will fightback and pursue the path of statehood for Palestine; something 88% population or

139 most populous countries of the world wants to see. iii) End of US sanctions; the ministers at the summit express concern saying 'the use of unilateral coercive measures which are incompatible with the principles of the charter of the UN and produce negative effects on economic growth, trade, energy, health, and food security notably in the developing world'. The statement does not name any specific country, but you need no special classes of calculus to understand who they were referring to. You just need to remove yourself from the western media bubble and start to observe global trends, you will notice that majority of the world are united in what they want; the economic freedom. A significant number of countries are seeking economic freedom and a multi-polar world, allowing them to trade with multiple nations. Saudi Arabia is seriously considering full BRICS membership to diversify its trade partners and currencies. A recent study by the Atlantic Council's GeoEconomicsCenter indicates that while the US dollar remains the world's primary reserve currency, the reliance on it is increasingly being questioned. Pakistan, from the day of its inception, has been an ally of the US. There could be certain strategic and regional factors paved the way for Pakistan to rely heavily on the US. But at the same time Pakistan should have realised by now that the US will stand by you only as long as it cannot find an alternative. For instance, during the entire Afghan war, Pakistan was considered an important ally, but as the war ended, so did the US-Pakistan cooperation. Secondly, Pakistan should have realized that its alliance with the US has resulted in nothing but economic, political, and, most critically, social degradation. Despite appearing sovereign, the reality is that we remain heavily influenced by Western powers. This is the right time to push toward BRICS membership; in letter and spirit, using all diplomatic channels, so in the wave of de-dollarization Pakistan earns freedom from dollar colonialization.



## Briefs

## Pakistan to declare Durand...

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border. Rationalising the decision to implement visa and passport restrictions, he compared them to the families divided in Kashmir since the partition of the subcontinent. Addressing other divided borders, Asif mentioned that similar issues exist along the Sialkot borders – with India – and the working boundary, where families are split. Responding to recent comments by Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUIF) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman, Asif said with due respect he disagreed with Maulana's statements regarding China. "I accompanied Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on his visit to China, and I was present during his meetings with the Chinese president and prime minister. China's commitment to cooperation with Pakistan is unequivocal," Asif said, making it clear that no one should have any confusion about it.

## Pakistan to 'participate' in Doha...

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times and again requested the Taliban government to stop cross-border terrorism from Afghanistan into Pakistan by preventing its territory from being used by the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and other terrorist groups. The diplomatic sources said the Afghan Taliban's interim government had boycotted the second Doha talks of 2024 over the participation of women and civil society representatives. It would be the first time that Afghanistan's interim administration will sit face to face with special representatives on Afghanistan from different parts of the world, they maintained. The sources said prior to the Doha talks, the United Nations held consultations with representatives of the Afghan civil society present inside and outside Afghanistan. After completion of the talks, representatives of the civil society members and women would hold discussion with the special representatives on Afghanistan on July 2.

## Govt to bring resolution...

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ties and stem from an incomplete understanding of the political situation and electoral process in Pakistan. Pakistan, as the world's second-largest parliamentary democracy and fifth-largest democracy overall, is committed to the values of constitutionalism, human rights, and the rule of law in pursuance of its own national interest." He said that Pakistan believed in constructive dialogue and engagement based on mutual respect and understanding. Such resolutions, he noted, were neither constructive nor objective. "We hope that the US Congress will play a supportive role in strengthening Pakistan-US ties and focus on avenues of mutual collaboration that benefit both our peoples and countries," he added.

## JUI chief demands snap polls

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Peshawar on Thursday, Fazl explained that the jirga was convened before the Azm-e-Istehkam operation decision made by the government and that it was not on the agenda. However, the jirga deemed the operation destabilising and expressed its lack of confidence in it. He pointed out that armed groups have spread to several areas, controlling traffic and setting up checkpoints, with police in the southern districts avoiding leaving their stations at night. Fazl highlighted the sacrifices made by the people of Swat, who were displaced from their homes. "Youth have become unemployed, and women are begging. Those whose homes were completely destroyed were given token compensation of 400,000 rupees, but they have not received money yet," he said.

## SA torch Afghanistan to reach maiden WC final

Rashid Khan's side were dismissed for only 56 while batting first

## SPORTS DESK

BARBADOS: South Africa eased past Afghanistan by nine wickets in the first semi-final on Thursday at the Brian Lara Stadium, Tarouba, Trinidad, during the ongoing T20 World Cup 2024. This is the first time South Africa, who are unbeaten in the tournament, have qualified for the final of a World Cup (T20 and ODI). The only other time the South Africa's men's team reached a final of an ICC event was way back in 1998, when the Proteas clinched the inaugural ICC Knockout Trophy (now called the Champions Trophy) at Dhaka. Chasing a modest target of 57 runs, South Africa reached home in 8.5 overs for the loss of one wicket. Quinton de Kock (5 off 8) was dismissed early by Fazalhaq Farooqi but captain Aiden Markram (23 off 21) and opener Reeza Hendricks (29 off 25) ensured that South Africa got over the line comfortably. Earlier, Afghanistan won the toss and decided to bat against South Africa. Batting first, Afghanistan were bowled out for only 56 runs in 11.5 overs after a superb bowling display by the Proteas.



Marco Jansen and Tabraiz Shamsi claimed three wickets each, meanwhile Kagiso Rabada and Anrich Nortje claimed two scalps apiece. In a sorry batting display, only Azmatullah Omarzai got into double figures with 10 runs. Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Mohammad Nabi and Noor Ahmad were

all dismissed for a duck. 56 all-out is the lowest total by a team in a T20 World Cup semi-final match. This is also Afghanistan's lowest total in T20s. This is also the lowest total-ever in a knockout match in men's T20Is. Previous lowest was Botswana's 62 all-out vs Uganda in 2023 ACA Cup semis.

Lowest totals by a full-member team in T20 World Cups 55 - ENG vs WI, Dubai, 2021 56 - AFG vs SA, Tarouba, 2024\* 60 - NZ vs SL, Chattogram, 2014 70 - BAN vs NZ, Kolkata, 2016

"Think the guys played really well and executed well. For us, it was just sticking to the plan and bowling our best ball. The assessment was the wicket was giving us a few to work with and we just wanted to keep it simple. We will enjoy [the win] and be on it again tomorrow," Marco Jansen said after bagging the Player of the Match award. Both teams made no changes to their lineup for this match.

**TEAMS: South Africa (Playing XI):** Quinton de Kock (wk), Reeza Hendricks, Aiden Markram (c), Heinrich Klaasen, David Miller, Tristan Stubbs, Marco Jansen, Keshav Maharaj, Kagiso Rabada, Anrich Nortje, Tabraiz Shamsi

**Afghanistan (Playing XI):** Rahmanullah Gurbaz (wk), Ibrahim Zadran, Azmatullah Omarzai, Gulbadin Naib, Mohammad Nabi, Karim Janat, Rashid Khan (c), Nangegiala Kharote, Noor Ahmad, Naveen-ul-Haq, Fazalhaq Farooqi.

## Court rejects Imran, Bushra Bibi's pleas...

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who were hoping for Imran's release today – staged a protest outside the Adiala jail, where the court had been set up to ensure the security of the ex-prime minister. Additional Sessions Judge Afzal Majoka announced the verdict today, reserved on Tuesday, with the hearing on the main plea related to the annulment of their conviction set to take place on July 2. The PTI founder and Bushra were each sentenced to seven years in prison in February earlier this year after a trial court found their nikah to be fraudulent as Khawar Maneka, Bushra's ex-husband, moved the court against the couple's marriage. In the 10-page order, the court mentioned that there was no reason to suspend the sentence. "...[there is] no ground for suspension of [the] sentence is available to both the petitioners. Accordingly, both the petitions under section 426 Cr.PC are dismissed," it said.

## ECP lacks authority to kick out...

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"Election Commission does not have the authority to exclude any political party from [taking part in] elections," Justice Minallah said as a 13-member full court, headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa, heard the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) plea against the Peshawar High Court (PHC) verdict denying them reserved seats. The bench comprises Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah, Justice Muneeb Akhtar, Justice Yahya Afridi, Justice Amin-ud-Din Khan, Justice Jamal Khan Mandokhail, Justice Muhammad Ali Mazhar, Justice Malik, Justice Athar Minallah, Justice Syed Hassan Azhar Rizvi, Justice Shahid Waheed, Justice Irfan Saadat Khan and Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghan. During the hearing today, Justice Muneeb questioned which party SIC Chief Hamid Raza associated himself with, whereas Justice Mandokhail inquired whether a candidate can change his party after withdrawing his nomination papers.

## PM Shehbaz calls for cementing...

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efficiency and expand current trade between the two countries. During the meeting, the prime minister was briefed on initiatives aimed at enhancing trade volume, capacity, and trade and investment between Pakistan and Azerbaijan. It was highlighted during the briefing that there was substantial potential for energy cooperation with Azerbaijan, and discussions were ongoing for a preferential trade agreement between both countries. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar, along with Minister for Planning and Development & Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal, Federal Minister for Industries and Production Rana Tanveer Hussain, Federal Minister for Privatisation and Investment Abdul Aleem Khan, Federal Minister for Power Sardar Owais Khan Leghari, Federal Minister for Petroleum Dr Musadik Malik, Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan, Special Assistant to PM Tariq Fatemi, and other senior officials attended the meeting.

## KP approves formation...

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5 sub-inspectors, 10 assistant sub-inspectors, 50 head constables and 500 constables. On the occasion, KP CM said the creation of new posts was aimed at improving the law and order situation in the area. The cabinet also approved the introduction of a traffic warden system in other divisional headquarters on the lines of Peshawar, Swat, and Abbottabad. And for this 1,179 posts to be created for traffic warden in new divisional headquarters. The traffic wardens posts include superintendent of police, traffic officer, senior warden, warden, head constable, and junior patrolling officer.



ISLAMABAD: Muay Thai sport performance by the Afghan Refugee Students on the occasion of World Refugee Day in the Federal Capital. – Online

## Sabalenka looks to end grass drought at Wimbledon

PARIS: World number three Aryna Sabalenka will look to put the disappointment of two Wimbledon semi-final finishes behind her as she launches yet another bid to conquer the final frontier and win the first grasscourt title of her career. However, her preparations for the tournament have been less than ideal. She was forced to retire from the Berlin Open this month due to a shoulder injury, weeks after suffering from illness in a shock French Open quarter-final defeat to 17-year-old Mirra Andrejeva. While it remains to be seen how she will recover from her recent setbacks, on paper, Sabalenka is still firmly among the favourites to lift the Venus Rosewater Dish. Since winning her maiden Grand Slam title at the Australian Open in 2023, Sabalenka has established herself as one of the most consistent players in major tournaments. She made it to the French Open and Wimbledon semi-finals last year, as well as the US Open final, and began 2024 by defending her Australian Open title.

Over the past two years, she has stamped out some of the erratic shot-making decisions that have plagued her game in the past, while her big-hitting style is also very well-suited to the grass. It is surprising that she has only ever made it to two grasscourt finals on the WTA Tour, but despite her lack of success on the surface, Sabalenka said she remains confident in her ability. "We just don't play enough time on grass so I don't have enough time to win a title," the Belarusian told reporters this month, speaking ahead of her first-round win over Daria Kasatkina in Berlin. "It's not like I feel bad, I've made some good results on the grass and I feel really good. I think grass actually suits my game really well. "So it's not about the surface, it's about the month of tournaments, the amount of opportunities that I have on a grass court." Sabalenka boasts a good record against some of the other major contenders in Wimbledon women's singles draw, having beaten both 2022 champion Elena Rybakina and two-time finalist Ons Jabeur en route to semi-finals in 2021. The 26-year-old's biggest rival in world number one Iga Swiatek, who she has lost two finals to this year, is also less of a threat on grass. – Agencies

## Sri Lanka's head coach Silverwood steps down

CHRIS Silverwood has stepped down after two years as Sri Lanka's head coach after the Lankan team failed to qualify for the Super 8 stage of the T20 World Cup 2024 as they only won one of their four group games. Sri Lanka only defeated the Netherlands and lost against South Africa and Bangladesh in the group stage of T20 World Cup 2024. Their match against Nepal was abandoned without a ball bowled and they finished third in the Group D points table with just three points. Silverwood was appointed as Sri Lanka's head coach in April 2022, three months after he was sacked from Eng-

land's head coach position as they lost the 2021-22 Ashes in Australia. During his tenure, the Sri Lankan cricket team won the Asia Cup 2022 and were the runners-up of the 2023 edition of the tournament. In a statement released by Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC), Silverwood has revealed the reason behind his resignation. "Being an international coach means long periods away from loved ones. After lengthy conversations with my family and with a heavy heart, I feel it is now time for me to return home and spend some quality time together," stated Silverwood. The former head coach also expressed

his gratitude for Sri Lanka Cricket. "It has been a real honour for me to be part of Sri Lanka Cricket and I will be taking away many fond memories." Other than winning the Asia Cup 2022 with the team, Silverwood also saw the team winning an ODI home series against Australia and two overseas Test series against Bangladesh. In total, the Lankans won four Test series, lost two and drew two Test series while Silverwood was in charge. He also saw dealt with tough days with his team including the Cricket World Cup 2023 where Sri Lanka finished ninth in a 10-team group stage. – Agencies

## Vaughan accuses ICC of favouring India in WC

LONDON: Former England captain Micheal Vaughan accused the International Cricket Council (ICC) of favouring the Indian team in the ongoing T20 World Cup 2024. Earlier on, Vaughan also criticised the decision to hold the first semi-final between Afghanistan and South Africa in Trinidad, highlighting the logistical challenges faced by Afghanistan. "So Afghanistan qualify for the WC [World Cup] semi winning in St Vincent on Monday night... 4 hr flight delay on Tues [Tuesday] to Trinidad so no time to practise or get accustomed to a new venue... utter lack of respect to players I am afraid," Vaughan posted on X. "Surely this [Afghanistan vs South Africa] semi should

"Surely this [Afghanistan vs South Africa] semi should have been the Guyana one... but because the whole event is geared towards India it's so unfair on others, he said

have been the Guyana one... but because the whole event is geared towards India it's so unfair on others," he said. The second semi-final in Guyana on Thursday features India and England. However, weather forecasts predict a 60% chance of rain, likely to disrupt the match. While a reserve day was allocated for the first semi-final, no such provision exists for the second one. To mitigate potential delays, the ICC has allowed an additional 250 minutes for the semi-final to be completed, giving ground staff ample time to prepare the pitch if weather conditions improve. In the event of a washout, the team that finished higher in their Super 8 group will progress to the final. This scenario favours India, who topped Super 8 Group 1 with a perfect record, over England, who finished second with two wins out of three matches. – Agencies

Euro 2024: Georgia shock Portugal with historic 2-0 win  
In Euro 2024 knockouts, England will face Slovakia, Romania against the Netherlands, and Portugal against Slovenia

## OUR CORRESPONDENTS

GELSENKIRCHEN: Georgia pulled off a historic upset at the Euro 2024 by defeating Portugal 2-0 on Wednesday, securing their place in the knockout phase of their first major tournament. Khvicha Kvaratskhelia's early strike and a Georges Mikautadze penalty sealed the win. At 74th in the world rankings, Georgia faced off against Portugal, ranked sixth and Euro champions in 2016. Despite Portugal fielding a largely second-string team, the victory is Georgia's most significant since gaining independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. The match, held in front of thousands

of passionate Georgian fans, began with an explosive start. Kvaratskhelia capitalised on a loose pass from Antonio Silva, racing away to score just 93 seconds into the game. "This is the best day of my life," Kvaratskhelia, the Napoli winger, declared. "We have made history and no one believed that we would beat Portugal." Georgia's journey to Euro 2024 was anything but straightforward. After finishing fourth in their qualifiers, they won their group in the Euro Nations tournament and defeated Greece in a play-off. Under the guidance of coach Willy Sagnol, Georgia managed to secure third place in Group F, setting up a last-16 clash with Spain. Reflecting on the chal-

## Turkey defeat Czechs to secure Last-16 spot

HAMBURG: Turkey secured a place in the Euro 2024 last-16 with a hard-fought 2-1 victory over a resilient 10-man Czech Republic on Wednesday. Goals from Hakan Calhanoglu and Cenk Tosun ensured Turkey's progression, while the Czechs were sent packing. Midfielder Antonin Barak, 28, was shown a harsh second yellow card in the 20th minute, leaving the Czechs with a steep hill to climb. Despite their disadvantage, the Czech team showed impressive spirit and determination throughout the match. Calhanoglu broke the deadlock in the 50th minute with a precise low shot, marking his first goal in his third Euros. His strike ignited celebrations among Turkish fans, who had turned out in large numbers, creating a raucous atmosphere in Hamburg. Czech goalkeeper Jindrich Stanek, who appeared to injure his shoulder during a save, was unable to continue after Calhanoglu's goal. The match took another dramatic turn when 19-year-old Arda Guler missed a golden opportunity to double Turkey's lead. Moments later, Tomas Soucek equalised for the Czechs in the 66th minute, pouncing on a chaotic long throw-in to score. – Agencies

lenge ahead, Sagnol stated, "When you are the small team of the competition... you know you have nothing to lose... You have no weight on your shoulders." Portugal's star, Cristiano Ronaldo, was one of only three starters from their previous win against Turkey. At 39, he was keen to become the oldest goal scorer at a Euro tournament. However, Georgia's defence held firm, and Ronaldo's frustration showed when he was booked for arguing and later kicked a water bottle after being substituted. Portugal coach Roberto Martinez acknowledged the intensity of their opponents. "We didn't underestimate Georgia, but Georgia

were playing the game of their history," he said. Georgia's goalkeeper, Giorgi Mamardashvili, made crucial saves to maintain the lead. At full time, the Georgian squad celebrated exuberantly on the field, marking a momentous occasion in their football history. Elsewhere in Group F, Turkey secured their place in the last 16 with a 2-1 win over the Czech Republic. Georgia's win reshaped the knockout fixtures, with England facing Slovakia, Romania taking on the Netherlands, and Portugal meeting Slovenia. For Georgia, the road to this triumph was arduous, but their persistence paid off in a night to remember in Gelsenkirchen.



## Briefs

## Landslides and floods kill 14 in Nepal

KATHMANDU: Torrential monsoon storms in Nepal have triggered landslides, lightning and flooding killing at least 14 people, a disaster official said Thursday. Monsoon rains from June to September bring widespread death and destruction every year across South Asia, but the numbers of fatal floods and landslides have increased in recent years. Experts say climate change and increased road construction are exacerbating the problem. Among those killed on Wednesday were four people, two of them children, who were buried alive when three homes were swept away in a landslide in Lamjung district, west of Kathmandu, disaster official Dhan Bahadur Bhattarai told AFP. Other landslides killed four more people, while five people died after being struck by lightning, Bhattarai said, a spokesman at the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Authority.—APP

## Death toll from Indian toxic alcohol rises to 63

BENGALURU: The death toll from a batch of illegal alcohol that devastated a town in southern India last week has risen to 63, police said Thursday. Hundreds of people die every year in India from cheap alcohol made in backstreet distilleries, but this case in Tamil Nadu state is one of the deadliest in recent years. Others have been blinded after drinking the locally made "arrack" which was laced with methanol in the state's Kallakurichi district. Top district police chief Rajat Chaturvedi told AFP that 63 people had died in this case. More than 100 people were initially taken to hospital after the deadly batch was sold. Political parties in Tamil Nadu have traded blame for the deaths, with some opposition lawmakers expelled from the state legislature after staging a protest on Wednesday demanding Chief Minister M.K. Stalin resign. Poor labourers in Kallakurichi district regularly bought the liquor in plastic bags costing 60 rupees (\$0.70), which they would drink before work. This batch, however, was devastating. Some people went blind, while others collapsed in the street and died before they could make it to hospital.

Deaths from Indian toxic alcohol rise to more than 50 Tamil Nadu is not a dry state, but liquor traded on the black market comes at a lower price than alcohol sold legally. Selling and consuming liquor is prohibited in several other parts of India, further driving the thriving black market for potent and sometimes lethal moonshine.—APP

## China's Communist Party expels ex-defence ministers

BEIJING: The governing Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has expelled former Defence Minister Li Shangfu, who was sacked last year after going missing, and his predecessor as part of an anticorruption crackdown, according to state media. The expulsion of Li and predecessor Wei Fenghe for "serious violation of party discipline and the law" was reported by the official news agency Xinhua on Thursday, the purge coming at a time of increasing tension between China and the United States over the fate of Taiwan. Li was removed in October 2023 after only a few months in office following his disappearance from public view for almost two months. Xinhua reported that his case had been referred to military prosecutors, potentially setting up a trial that could lead to him getting life in prison. The party's powerful Politburo of senior leaders convened on Thursday to review Li's status. They ruled that Li had "betrayed his original mission and lost his party spirit and principles", according to state broadcaster CCTV.—APP

## ICCI President highlights business community issues

ICCI organizes conference on economic reform, draws participation from across Pakistan and Diplomats

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry organized a 2 day All Pakistan Chambers Presidents Conference entitled, 'Reforming Pakistan's Economy for Inclusive and Sustainable Development, participated by Presidents of Chambers from all across Pakistan, industry, trade leaders, diplomats, educationists, think tanks and media persons in large number. Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry also hosted a networking dinner in honour of the participants at Pir Sohawa, Margallah hills, a spot that offers an extensive and impressive view of the Capital. On the occasion, in his opening speech, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, 6 He expressed the hope that the conference will go a long way in addressing the grievances of the community which are badly hurting the economic condition of the country. He also explained that at the end of the conference a joint declaration will be issued and forwarded to all the relevant quarters including the Prime Minister, Finance Minister, Commerce Minister and the Army Chief. In his address, former Provincial Minister Punjab and Patron in Chief United Business Group, S.M.Tanvir described the conference an important milestone for the interaction and networking of the business community. He said that this is the best way to apprise the government of community's problems and finding



viable solutions of the economic problems. He through facts and figures stated that Pakistan enjoys immense investment potential and a number of foreign investors are keen to come and invest and the government is offering all the necessary facilities in this regard. Member National Assembly and renowned businessman Mirza Ikhtiar Baig termed the ICCI initiative as a credible job which brought together Chambers Presidents from all over Pakistan and enabled the business leaders to

unitedly put forward suggestions for the revival of country's economy. He also extended his congratulations to ICCI President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari and his team for organizing this significant event. He said that in the result of this important conference, the business community will put forward important message to the government for such needed measures for level playing field. As a PPP MNA from Karachi he assured that budget will be passed without any hurdle and that the IMF

package will also have a smooth sail. Chairman Founder Group ICCI Khalid Iqbal Malik called upon the government to simplify all the procedures pertaining to trade and remove all bureaucratic hurdles for ease of doing business. Secretary General United Business Group Zafar Bakhtawari underlined the need for reforming country's foreign policy aligned with friendship with all the countries instead of indulging in enmities for pulling the country from the existing economic turmoil. He said that

business community by sharing its vision and thoughts will continue to fulfill its responsibilities for the betterment of the country. Senior Vice President Faad Waheed Sheikh and Vice President Engr. Azhar ul Islam Zafar also highlighted the importance of the Conference by welcoming the honourable guests. It is noteworthy that more than thirty Ambassadors attended the dinner and appreciated the ICCI for representing the business community effectively and efficiently.

## Norway to accept patients from Gaza: Premier

FOREIGN DESK

LONDON: Norwegian Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store confirmed Thursday that the Nordic country will accept and treat injured Palestinians from the Gaza Strip, local media reported. Norway will participate in the international effort to help Palestinians who badly need hospital treatment, according to media outlet VG. The announcement comes after the World Health Organization (WHO) together with the EU said 9,000 Palestinians need urgent medical evacuation by the end of 2024, amid a brutal Israeli offensive on Gaza. In addition, Norway will contribute to aircraft transporting Palestinian patients to other countries. "In this way, we can contribute to helping many more people than we have the capacity to bring to Norway for treatment," Store told VG. The government decided that up to 20 patients with relatives from Gaza can be flown to Norway for treatment in Norwegian hospitals, the prime minister said. "The effort with medical evacuation from Gaza must be compatible with the Ukraine effort," he emphasized. "The humanitarian situation in Gaza is catastrophic. The health system has collapsed. Therefore, the most important thing Norway can do is to support the health and humanitarian work in Gaza and the surrounding areas, for example by strengthening the hospitals," Store highlighted. Last month, Norway officially recognized Palestine as a state. Already in December last year, health organizations and the UN warned that the healthcare system in Gaza has collapsed. Today, only 12 of Gaza's 36 hospitals are partially operational, according to the latest reports. More than 37,700 Palestinians have since been killed in Gaza, most of them women and children, and over 86,400 others injured, according to local health authorities. Almost nine months into the Israeli war, vast tracts of Gaza lay in ruins amid a crippling blockade of food, clean water, and medicine.

## French court upholds arrest warrant for Syrian president

PARIS: A French court on Wednesday upheld an arrest warrant against Syrian regime leader Bashar al-Assad, accusing him of complicity in a 2013 chemical attack in Eastern Ghouta. The Paris Court of Appeal rejected an application by France's National Anti-Terrorism Prosecutor's Office (PNAT) to annul the warrant, which argued that Assad has judicial immunity. "Prohibiting the use of chemical weapons is part of customary international law as a mandatory rule, and the international crimes that the judges are looking at cannot be considered as being part of the official duties of a head of state. They can thus be separated from the sovereignty naturally attached to these duties," so the arrest warrant remains valid, the court said in a statement. The case will now be returned to the investigating judges, with the prosecution having five days to appeal to the Court of Cassation.—APP

## Türkiye keeps interest rates at 50%

ANKARA: Türkiye's Central Bank on Thursday held the benchmark one-week repo rate stable at 50% for the third straight meeting, as expected. "Considering the lagged effects of the monetary tightening, the (Monetary Policy) Committee decided to keep the policy rate unchanged, but reiterated that it remains highly attentive to inflation risks," the bank said in a statement. The decline in the underlying trend of monthly inflation saw a temporary pause in May, read the statement. Türkiye's annual inflation rate accelerated to 75.45% in May, the highest since November 2022, according to latest data from Turkish Statistical Institute. Noting that domestic demand continues to slow, the bank said: "In addition to the high level of and the stickiness in services inflation, inflation expectations, geopolitical risks, and food prices keep inflationary pressures alive.—APP

## Interfaith harmony is Pakistan's top priority: Masood

WASHINGTON: Pakistan is stepping up efforts to bring people together and strengthen inter societal linkages, Ambassador Masood Khan has told a group of faith leaders representing different religions. The Pakistani envoy was speaking during a roundtable, hosted by the embassy, at which the discussion centered on promoting peace and understanding among different religious communities and assimilated societies. "Such gatherings," Masood Khan stated, "provide a platform for broader perspectives about each other's faith." He urged the participants to focus on commonalities, tearing down the barriers that divide the people. Participating in the dialogue were faith leaders, diplomats, representatives from the U.S. Commission on In-

ternational Religious Freedom (USCIRF), the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), think tanks, and civil society. Addressing the issue of religious minorities, Ambassador Masood Khan called the killing of minorities a crime against humanity. He assured the audience that the government was taking all steps to curb religious intolerance and stem the abuse of blasphemy laws to the occasion, former U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan, Anne Patterson, also said that interfaith dialogue could curb violent extremism. Daniel Spiro, representing the Jewish Islamic Dialogue Society (JIDS), emphasized the shared heritage of Abrahamic religions and the importance of treating all people with dignity. Dr. Surinder Singh Gill, Director Sikhs for America organization commended Pakistan for faci-

tating Sikh pilgrimages and the Kartarpur Corridor initiative, a peace gesture also lauded by the international community. Other speakers including Rizwan Jaka, Chairman of Adam Center, Mike Crowe, member of All Neighbors, Alok Srivastava from American Hindu Coalition and Ms. Karina Hou, social activist and renowned artist, and Ms. Ayesha Khan, a Pakistani American community leader, also echoed similar sentiments, calling for healing the tensions and promoting cooperation among societies. The speakers emphasized the significance of interfaith dialogue and the government's efforts to protect the rights of minorities in Pakistan. Despite the challenges, all faith leaders expressed confidence in continued progress and cooperation toward a more inclusive.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Ms. Shaza Fatima Khawaja addressing Roundtable on IT and Digitalisation with Swedish companies.—DNA

## EU-Ukraine security agreement to advance 'peace'

Zelensky said that Each step we take brings us closer to our historic goal of peace and prosperity in our common European home

WEB DESK

BRUSSELS: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said a long-term security agreement to be inked between Kyiv and the European Union on Thursday would advance "peace and prosperity" across the continent. Days after the EU said it was opening formal membership negotiations with Kyiv, Zelensky was in Brussels to meet with some of Ukraine's staunchest supporters in the face of the Russian invasion. "Thanks to you and to all the leaders of the EU for such historical outcome. We waited for this a long period of time," Zelensky told reporters in Brussels. He however pointed to the need to take the "next steps" including on air de-

fence. "We need them urgently on the battlefield." The security agreement being signed with the EU mirrors accords already struck by Kyiv with a raft of countries, including EU heavyweights Germany and France. "For the first time, this agreement will enshrine the commitment of all 27 Member States to provide Ukraine with extensive support, regardless of any internal institutional changes," he said in a post on X. "Each step we take brings us closer to our historic goal of peace and prosperity in our common European home," Zelensky said. EU Chief Charles Michel hailed the "positive" agreements. "It's very important so that we can give the message that we intend to support Ukraine for as long as it takes," Michel said, standing

next to Zelensky. Ukraine has signed 17 similar bilateral security agreements, including with the United States, Britain and Japan. They are not mutual defence pacts, but instead outline key countries' plans to support Ukraine with military, financial,



humanitarian and political aid over a number of years. A draft seen by AFP said the EU would look to continue financing weapons deliveries for Ukraine, keep training Kyiv's troops, and step up efforts to bolster the country's defence industry. But there were no concrete commitments of new aid from the EU, after some countries refused to make any pledge to definite. Instead, the pact says only that further annual tranches of support worth around the same as a five-billion-euro package for this year "could be envisaged" until 2027. As with the other pacts, it also includes a clause saying the EU would consult with Ukraine within 24 hours in case of a "future aggression" by Russia. Ukraine has portrayed the agreements as a bridge towards membership in the EU and NATO. The initiative to sign them was announced at

NATO's summit last year to appease Kyiv after it was refused a clear timeframe for joining the alliance. Meanwhile, compared to others in war-scarred east Ukraine, Galyna Poroshyna had been lucky to live in Toretsk, a mining town nestled in a relatively sleepy sector of the front line. Then, suddenly, the Russian assaults began, and life in the town, some 40 kilometers (25 miles) north of Donetsk city, deteriorated drastically. As rockets and air strikes started raining down on shaken residents this month, Poroshyna and her neighbors sheltered in basements, emerging between barrages to assess the damage. The Internet and electricity shut off. A shell landed near Poroshyna's home. Ukrainian forces struggled to hold positions that had been under their control for months.

## 292M people worldwide used drugs in 2022

LONDON: As many as 292 million people worldwide were drug users in 2022, up 20% in the last 10 years, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) said Wednesday. In its World Drug Report 2024, which compiled data from 2022, the agency said it was believed that one out of every 18 people worldwide aged 15-64 used drugs in 2022. In 2022, the most used drug was cannabis with 228 million people, followed by opioids with 60 million, amphetamines with 30 million, cocaine with 23.5 million, and ecstasy with 20 million, the report said. Emphasizing that there has been a significant rise in the number of people suffering from drug-related illnesses and waiting for treatment services, the report stated that 64 million people had various drug-related health problems in 2022. It was stated that one in 11 of those who suffer from such problems can find treatment, while this rate drops to one in 18 in female patients, and women are much more disadvantaged in this regard. The document pointed out that access to health services varies from geography to geography, underlining that while 49% of patients in South America have the opportunity to receive drug-related treatment, this rate decreased to 4% in Central Asia and Transcaucasia regions.

The report further highlighted fatal health problems associated with drugs, noting that 13.9 million people injected drugs in 2022, with 1.6 million having HIV, 1.4 million having both HIV and hepatitis C, and 6.8 million having hepatitis C alone. Injecting drug remains a significant factor in the global hepatitis C epidemic, with nearly half of those who inject drugs carrying the disease. Liver diseases caused by hepatitis C account for more than half of drug-related deaths. In 2019, approximately 500,000 people died from drug use, with hepatitis C-related liver diseases being a leading cause.—APP

## Over half of Sudanese face 'acute food insecurity'

PORT SUDAN: Some 25.6 million people, or more than half of Sudan's population, are facing high levels of "acute food insecurity", a report cited by the United Nations said Thursday. That figure includes 755,000 people who are facing famine, while 8.5 million face "emergency" conditions, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) said. Sudan has been gripped by war since April 2023, when fighting erupted between the regular military led by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and the powerful paramilitary Rapid Support Forces led by his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo. The war has killed tens of thousands, displaced millions and triggered one of the world's worst humanitarian crises. "Fourteen months into the conflict, Sudan is facing the worst levels of acute food insecurity ever recorded by the IPC in the country," the report said. It pointed to "a stark and rapid deterioration of the food security situation" compared with the previous figures published in December, with a 45 percent increase in people facing high levels of acute food insecurity. "The conflict has not only triggered mass displacement and disruption of supply routes... it has also severely limited access to essential humanitarian assistance, exacerbating an already dire situation," the IPC said. It further cited "highly dysfunctional health services, water contamination and poor sanitation and hygiene conditions". People trapped in conflict areas and those who fled the fighting, whether internally or abroad, are especially vulnerable to food insecurity, the report said. The IPC report comes a day after United Nations experts charged that both sides of the conflict were using starvation as a weapon of war. Four independent UN rights experts on Wednesday said foreign governments providing military support to both the army and the RSF were "complicit" in war crimes.—Agencies



## Briefs

### Tehran mayor pulls out of presidential race

TEHRAN: Iranian presidential candidate Alireza Zakani has formally pulled out of the country's presidential race, becoming the second nominee to announce his withdrawal in support of other contenders just a day before the election. The 58-year-old Zakani, the current mayor of the capital Tehran, made the announcement in a post published on his official X account on Thursday. He stressed that remaining on the path of late Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, who passed away in a helicopter crash along with his companions in the north-western province of East Azarbaijan on May 19, is of much greater significance than his candidacy. He pleaded with fellow candidates Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf and Saeed Jalili to unite in order to secure victory for the "Revolutionary Front". Earlier, another candidate Amir-Hossein Ghazizadeh Hashemi, 53, pulled out from the race. Hashemi is currently serving as the vice president. The remaining contenders in Iran's presidential race are Saeed Jalili, a former lead nuclear negotiator, Parliament speaker Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, former interior minister Mostafa Pourmohammadi, and former health minister Masoud Pezeshkian. - Agencies

### Arundhati Roy wins PEN Pinter Prize

NEW DELHI: Indian author Arundhati Roy has said that she is "delighted" to have been awarded this year's PEN Pinter Prize. Set up in memory of playwright Harold Pinter, the award is for writers of "outstanding literary merit" who take an "unflinching" look at the world. The announcement comes weeks after officials in India approved action against Roy under anti-terror laws for comments she made 14 years ago. Roy is a Booker Prize-winning author and has written about human rights issues in India as well as war and capitalism globally. English PEN chair Ruth Borthwick praised Roy for telling "urgent stories of injustice with wit and beauty". "While India remains an important focus, she is truly an internationalist thinker, and her powerful voice is not to be silenced," Borthwick said. Roy, 62, is an outspoken writer and activist and could face prosecution by the Narendra Modi government for comments she made in 2010 about Kashmir - a controversial topic in India. She is a polarising figure and has often been targeted by right-wing groups for her speeches and writings. Roy has been outspoken in her criticism about the ruling BJP government's alleged targeting of Muslims and has also spoken about India's declining press freedoms during Mr Modi's tenure. - Agencies

### Karachi's hellish heatwave broken by rains

**NAZIR SIYAL**  
KARACHI: As predicted by the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD), several Karachi areas Thursday received rainfall with gusty winds, providing relief to the people suffering from the scorching heat. The rain broke the spell of tormenting hot weather after the mercury hit 40°C around 2 PM in the city, as reported by PMD. According to the Met Office, the feels-like temperature reached 53°C, with the humidity at 47%. Earlier, the PMD had forecasted rain in the metropolis starting today (Thursday), indicating the possibility of rain in the city's suburbs, along with other areas, in the afternoon or evening.

# Pak-China ties are role model for world: Naqvi

All fool-proof security measures have been taken for Chinese nationals, he stressed

## FOREIGN DESK

NEW YORK: Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi reaffirmed that friendly bilateral ties between Pakistan, China were an example for the global community. He also highlighted that all strict measures have been taken for foolproof security of Chinese citizens. Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi met with Peoples Republic of China counterpart Qi Yanjun at the Chinese' mission office in the United Nations in New York. During the meeting, both sides exchanged views on Pak-China bilateral ties, security matters, cooperation between law enforcement agencies (LEA) and usage and training of the latest technology and tools. China will cooperate in the training and capacity building of Pakistan's LEAs.



China's counterpart Qi Yanjun hailed the establishment of SPU for the safety and security of foreign nationals, especially Chinese and ensured full support for SPU training and other matters. On the occasion, Mohsin Naqvi presented the progress report on the tragic incident of Dasu. Qi Yanjun commended Pakistan's professionalism and efforts for tracing of the case. Chinese counterpart invited Mohsin Naqvi to Global Security Forum to be held in September in China. Mohsin thanked Qi Yanjun by accepting the invitation. Federal Minister Mohsin Naqvi also invited his Chinese counterpart for Pakistan's visit. Mohsin Naqvi announced that China's interior ministry advisory group will visit Pakistan soon. The interior minister reaffirmed Pakistan-China friendly bilateral ties and hailed it as a role model for the global community. He also highlighted fool-proof security measures for Chinese nationals' security. It is pertinent to note that Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Chinese counterpart Qi Yanjun both are attending the 4th UN COP Conference in New York.

### They won't allow Imran to be released: Sheikh Rashid

AML chief claims PML-N President Nawaz Sharif will also change his narrative by end of next month

## MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Awami Muslim League (AML) chief Sheikh Rashid Thursday claimed that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan is unlikely to come out of imprisonment soon. "They won't allow PTI founder to be released at this moment," Rashid said while speaking to the media at a district and sessions court in Islamabad. The former federal minister's remarks come as Khan, who has been serving various sentences and has been behind bars since August last year, might have a chance to be free if a district and sessions court rules in his favour in response to his plea seeking suspension of his sentence in iddat case today. The former premier - who has previously secured relief in £190 million reference, cipher and Toshakhana cases - was handed down a seven-year sentence along with his wife Bushra Bibi in the said case after a trial court deemed their nikah fraudulent in February this year. However, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government has said that it will try to keep the PTI founder behind bars.

### PTI lawyer sent on judicial remand

## COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: PTI lawyer Fatehullah Burki has been sent on judicial remand in case pertaining to attack on Khawar Maneka, former husband of Bushra Bibi outside court. As per details, PTI lawyer Fatehullah Burki was presented before the Anti-Terrorism court Judge Abul Hasanat Zulqarnain. Burki's lawyer, Naeem Haidar Panjotra, argued against the police's request for an extension of physical remand however the court rejected the physical remand plea and sent the PTI lawyer on judicial remand. Earlier, a case was registered against PTI lawyers for allegedly attacking Khawar Maneka, former husband of Bushra Bibi outside court.

## Israel storms Gaza City, orders Palestinians to go south

The health ministry added that the death toll from the ongoing Israeli bombardments and shooting attacks, which started on October 7, climbed to 37,765 martyrs and the number of the wounded surged to 86,429 people

## NEWS DESK

GAZA: Israel stormed a neighborhood in Gaza City on Thursday, telling Palestinians as the tanks moved in that they must move south, and bombed the southern city of Rafah in what it says are the final stages of an operation against Hamas militants there. Residents of the Shejaia neighborhood in Gaza City said they were taken by surprise by tanks rolling in and firing in the early afternoon, with drones also attacking after overnight bombing. "It sounded as if the war is restarting, a series of bombings that destroyed several houses in our area and shook the buildings," Mohammad Jamal, 25, a resident of Gaza City, told Reuters via a chat app. The Palestinian Civil Emergency Service said there were reports of people killed and wounded in Shejaia but their teams were unable to reach them because of the ongoing offensive. Three people were reported killed there in the earlier bombing, with five killed in the Sabra neighborhood. The armed wing of Hamas ally Islamic Jihad said it had detonated a pre-planted explosive device against an Israeli tank east of Shejaia. Israel accuses the militants of hiding among civilians and says it warns displaced

people to get out of the way of its operations against the fighters. "To all residents and displaced people in the Shujaiya area and the new neighborhoods ... For your safety, you must evacuate immediately south on Salah Al-Din Street to the humanitarian zone," army spokesperson Avichay Adraee posted on X. Residents and Hamas media said the tanks had rolled in before the post and that people from the eastern suburb were running westward under fire as Israel had blocked the road south. There was no other immediate comment from the Israeli military. More than eight months into Israel's war on Gaza triggered by the Hamas-led cross border attack on Oct. 7, aid officials say the enclave remains at high risk of famine, with almost half a million people facing "catastrophic" food insecurity. "We are being starved in Gaza City, and are being hunted by tanks and planes with no hope that this war is ever ending," Jamal said. The death of another girl in Kamal Adwan Hospital late on Wednesday raised the number of children who have died of malnutrition and dehydration to at least 31, a Gaza health official said, adding that the war made recording such cases difficult. Israel denies accusations it has created the famine conditions, blaming aid agencies for distribution problems and accusing Hamas of diverting aid, allegations the militants deny.

## French far right dominates polls 3 days ahead of snap elections

## MONITORING DESK

PARIS: The French far right is leading opinion polls with three days left before voters cast their ballots in snap legislative elections called by President Emmanuel Macron following his party's defeat in European elections over two weeks ago. Marine Le Pen's National Rally is estimated to win more than 35 percent in the first round on Sunday, with a left-wing alliance following at 29 percent and Macron's centrists trailing at around 20 percent. France's political future was up in the air Thursday with the far-right surging in polls but other forces fighting to the end three days before a high-stakes parliamentary vote. Depending on the result, President Emmanuel Macron could be left in a tense "cohabitation" with a prime minister from an opposing party, or with a chamber unable to produce a stable majority for at least a year to govern the EU's second economy and top military power. Surveys suggest voters will hand the National Rally (RN) of Marine Le Pen over 35 percent in the first round on Sunday, with a left alliance trailing on up to 29 and Macron's centrists in the dust at around 20 percent. When he called the snap poll after a June 9 European election

drubbing by the RN, Macron had hoped to present voters with a stark choice about whether to hand France to the far right. But the lightning three-week campaign "wasn't going to turn around the major trends," Brice Teinturier, deputy director of pollster Ipsos, told Le Monde daily, adding that the "RN bloc is incredibly powerful". Even France's seasoned pollsters are struggling to translate that base level of support into a final result, as July 7's second-round run-off ballots - many expected to be three-way fights - can see voters shift allegiances and new alliances of convenience form. Higher-than-usual turnout could also transform the vote. Around two thirds of eligible voters plan to cast their ballots, which would be the highest level since 1997. By Thursday, polling firm Harris Interactive Toluna was predicting 250 to 305 seats out of 577 for the RN - putting an absolute majority in its grasp - while Ifop-Fiducial suggested the party could top out at 260. Le Pen already was planning for an absolute majority and RN head of government, telling the *Telegramme* daily that the president's title as commander-in-chief of the armed forces was "an honorific, because it's the prime minister who holds the purse strings." Therefore, "on Ukraine, the president will not be able to send troops", she added, undermining his warning to Moscow that France would keep all options on the table to thwart Russia's invasion of its neighbour. Her candidate for prime minister, Jordan Bardella, has already vowed not to send Kyiv long-range missiles and other weapons that could strike Russian territory, in a reversal of Macron's policy. The RN has also said it will not agree to form a government without an absolute majority - leaving open the possibility that no political force will be able to keep a prime minister in place. Hoping to defy the odds, current incumbent Gabriel Attal - named months ago by Macron as France's youngest-ever PM - will take on RN frontman Bardella and Socialist Party leader Olivier Faure in a TV debate on Thursday evening.

## Bolivia coup attempt fails after military assault on palace

Ahead of attack, Zuniga addressed reporters, citing growing anger following economic slump in Bolivia

LA PAZ: Bolivian armed forces pulled back from the presidential palace in La Paz on Wednesday evening and a general was arrested after President Luis Arce slammed a "coup" attempt against the government and called for international support. Earlier in the day, military units led by General Juan Jose Zuniga, recently stripped of his military command, had gathered in the central Plaza Murillo square, home to the presidential palace and Congress. A Reuters witness saw an armored vehicle ram a door of the presidential palace and soldiers rush in. "Today the country is facing an attempted coup d'état. Today the country faces once again interests so that democracy in Bolivia is cut short," Arce said in comments from the presidential palace, with armed soldiers outside. "The Bolivian people are summoned today. We need the Bolivian people to organize and mobilize against the coup d'état in favor of democracy." A few hours later, a Reuters witness saw soldiers withdraw from the square and police take control of the plaza. Bolivian authorities arrested Zuniga and took him away, though their destination was unclear. Inside the presidential palace, Arce swore in José Wilson Sanchez as the military commander, Zuniga's former role. He called for calm and order to be restored. "I order that all personnel mobilized on the streets return to their units," Sanchez said. "We entreat that the blood of our soldiers not be spilled." The United States said it was closely monitoring the situation and urged calm and

restraint. Tensions have been building in Bolivia ahead of general elections in 2025, with leftist ex-President Evo Morales planning to run against former ally Arce, creating a major rift in the ruling socialist party and wider political uncertainty. Many do not want a return of Morales, who governed from 2006-2019 when he was ousted amid widespread protests and replaced by an interim conservative government. Arce then won election in 2020. Zuniga said recently that Morales should not be able to return as president and threatened to block him if he attempted to, which led Arce to remove Zuniga from his post. Ahead of the attack on the presidential palace, Zuniga had addressed reporters in the square and cited growing anger in the landlocked country, which has been battling an economic slump with depleted central bank reserves and pressure on the boliviano currency as gas exports have dried up. "The three chiefs of the armed forces have come to express our dismay," Zuniga told a local TV station, calling for a new cabinet of ministers. "Stop destroying, stop impoverishing our country, stop humiliating our army," he said in full uniform, flanked by soldiers, insisting the action being taken was supported by the public. Zuniga told reporters later on Wednesday that Arce had on Sunday asked him to "raise something up" to boost his popularity, without offering evidence. Interior Minister Eduardo del Castillo later said Zuniga was seeking to court popular support and that the nine people injured in the attempt proved "this was not a drill." - Agencies

## Russia considering downgrading ties with NATO countries

The Kremlin issued a warning on Monday, cautioning Washington against the potential "consequences" of attacks inside Russia

MOSCOW: Russia says it is considering downgrading its relations with certain NATO countries due to the deeper involvement of the US and its allies in the Ukraine war. "The issue of lowering the level of diplomatic relations is a standard practice for states that face unfriendly or hostile manifestations," Russia's presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Thursday. "Due to the growing involvement of the West in the conflict over Ukraine, the Russian Federation cannot but consider various options for responding to such hostile Western intervention in the Ukrainian crisis." The Russian government has criticized the United States for continuing to provide military assistance to Ukraine. Washington recently approved Kiev's use of long-range missiles supplied by the West on targets inside Russia, further escalating tensions with Moscow. The Kremlin issued a warning on Monday, cautioning Washington against the potential "consequences" of attacks inside Russia. The Kremlin summoned the US ambassador to Russia after a Ukrainian attack using an American-supplied missile killed four people in Crimea. Peskov said Russia was considering different ways to retaliate against the United States and its Western allies. President Vladimir Putin has warned that one of Moscow's many available options to retaliate could be to supply arms to other countries to hit targets inside Western countries. In this regard, Putin's visits to North Korea and Vietnam signal a shift in geopolitical alliances to counter US efforts to maintain its hegemony across the globe. Putin and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping, another main anti-Western global power, have agreed to further deepen their "strategic partnership". In May, in his first China visit after he was sworn in for a fifth term as Russia's president, Putin and Xi vowed to make their currently strong bond even stronger to counter the US threat. - Agencies

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