



Islamabad POST

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Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

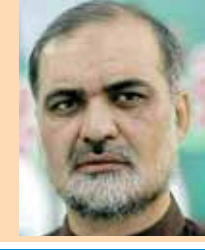
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"China-Russia ties at high level": Xi after meeting Putin

Detailed News On Page-08

Hafiz Naeem announces "Haq do Awaam ko"

Detailed News On Page-08



Kirsten submits 'confidential' report to PCB

Detailed News On Page-06



In meeting with Putin

Pak-Russia ties stand 'on own strength': PM

PM Shehbaz says bilateral ties neither driven by "geopolitical contingency" nor impacted by relations with other countries



ASTANA: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in an inaugural session of Pakistan-Turkiye-Azerbaijan Trilateral Summit alongwith President of Turkiye H.E. Recep Tayyip Erdogan and President of Azerbaijan H.E. Ilham Aliyev, on the sidelines of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Summit. - DNA

NEWS DESK / DNA

ASTANA: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Wednesday told Russian President Vladimir Putin that Islamabad and Moscow's relationship stood on its own, stressing the need to further boost bilateral cooperation. "Our relations stand on our own strength, neither our relations are driven by any geopolitical contingency nor are these impacted by our relations with other countries," the prime minister said. The premier is currently in Kazakhstan's capital of Astana to attend the twin Summits of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Council of Heads of State and SCO plus. PM Shehbaz emphasised the need to overcome financial and other banking issues to expand barter trade between Pakistan and Russia. In his exclusive meeting with the Russian president

Continued on Page 06

Belarusian President to visit Pakistan in October

DNA

ISLAMABAD: First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus Sergey Lukashovich, said that the President of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko will visit Pakistan in coming October to sign multiple Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. He said this in a meeting with Federal Minister for Commerce, Jam Kamal Khan, said a press release issued here on Wednesday. The meeting was attended by the Ambassador of Belarus to Pakistan Andrei Metelitsa, Secretary of Commerce Ahsan Ali Mangi and other officials and diplomats. Lukashovich also announced a Joint Trade Commission meeting in mid-September to enhance bilateral trade relations. Minister Jam Kamal Khan praised Belarus's advancements in tractor manufacturing and agricultural machinery. He highlighted Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's new approach to building trust within the business community both domestically and internationally. Additionally, Mr Lukashovich mentioned that 35 Pakistani businessmen

Continued on Page 06

INDEPENDENCE DAY OF BELARUS



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Industries Rana Tanveer Hussain, First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Belarus Sergey Lukashovich, Ambassador of Belarus Andrei Metelitsa and others cutting cake to celebrate Independence Day of Belarus, at Islamabad Serena Hotel. - DNA

UN chief calls for positive resolution in Khan's detention

We want to see current situation of Mr Khan evolve in a much more positive way, says spokesperson of Antonio Guterres

FOREIGN DESK

NEW YORK: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres wants to see the situation of former prime minister Imran Khan "evolve in a much more positive way," according to his spokesperson. When asked if the UN chief supports a recommendation by the UN Group on Arbitrary Detention to release the

Continued on Page 06

PTI "intra-party rift"

Imran Khan set to meet 'both factions'

Ex-PM believes US resolution was not "interference"; reiterates stance on Donald Lu's intervention

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) incarcerated founder Imran Khan has admitted to rifts, grouping within the party and will be meeting both factions today in Adiala jail. Refuting reports of any forward bloc within the PTI, Khan, while speaking to reporters in a courtroom at the Adiala facility, stressed that there were no major differences within the party. The PTI founder's remarks came as the former ruling party has been hit with internal turmoil as leaders are speaking against each other with the PTI's core committee also rejecting the existence of any division earlier this week. Last month, the party's Secretary-General Omar Ayub stepped down

Continued on Page 06

Iddat case verdict to be announced by July 12

Judge Muhammad Afzal Majoka heard the central appeals filed against the case

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The District and Session Court Islamabad emphasized on Wednesday that the verdict in Iddat Nkka Case against PTI founder Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Petrol pumps to shut on Friday

PPDA President warns the strike could last more than one day

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Talks between the Pakistan Petroleum Dealers Association (PPDA) and the government have failed, leading the PPDA to announce the closure of petrol pumps nationwide from Friday. PPDA President Abdul Sami Khan announced that the strike could last more than one day, advising dealers to keep fuel stocked at petrol pumps until July 4. The strike involves 14,000 dealers who will shut down their petrol pumps on July 5. Khan urged citizens to fill their vehicle tanks before the strike begins. "We met with the finance minister, the chairman of the FBR, and the chairman of OGRA, but the talks yielded no results, which is why we are striking."

PTI forms OIC advisory council

The council will monitor the intra-party elections across the world

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has formed six-member Overseas Investors Chamber (OIC) advisory council. As per notification, Sajjad Baraki has been appointed as the secretary. Muhammad Iqbal, Nasir Mir, Ghulam Jillani and Dr. Humayun Mohmand are also members of the council. Meanwhile, central secretary finance is also included in the council. The advisory council will consider and suggest amendments in policies and rules within 15-day and will also monitor the PTI's inter-party polls across the world.

Govt 'fulfils requirements' for fresh IMF bailout deal

"We hope to culminate this (IMF) process in the next three to four weeks," says state minister for revenue

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Pakistan is looking to clinch a staff-level agreement on an International Monetary Fund bailout of more than \$6 billion this month after addressing all of the lender's requirements in its annual budget, Minister of State for Finance, Revenue and Power Ali Perwaiz Malik said on Wednesday. The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N)-led coalition government has set challenging revenue targets in its annual budget to help it win approval from the IMF for a loan to stave off another economic meltdown, even as domestic anger rises at new taxation measures. In the budget, the government has increased the taxes on the already burdened salaried class, bought exporters into the normal tax regime, increased the petroleum levy to Rs70, and imposed new taxes on the real estate sectors, among others, to increase tax collection. "We hope to culminate this (IMF) process in the next three to four weeks," Malik told Reuters, with the aim of thrashing out a staff-level agreement before the IMF board recess. "I think it will be north of \$6 billion," he said of the size of the package, though he added

Continued on Page 06

PTA proposes mandatory local registration for SMCs

The new framework suggests that "personal data" be stored exclusively in Pakistan

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) has proposed a new regulatory framework requiring all Over-The-Top (OTT) services, including YouTube, Netflix, WhatsApp, Facebook, and X (Twitter), to register locally for a period of 15 years. According to a 14-page draft available on its website, the PTA recommends that OTT Communication Services operating in Pakistan obtain a 15-year license from the regulatory body. Malahat Obaid, the spokesperson for PTA, told a private news outlet that the draft paper has been published to

Continued on Page 06

Ex-senator among 5 killed in explosion

Former senator's vehicle targeted via "remote-controlled" bomb, says DSP Bakht Munir

DNA

BAJAUR: At least five people, including former senator Hidayat Ullah, were killed in a "remote-controlled" bomb explosion targeting a vehicle in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Bajaur district on Wednesday, according to police. The incident took place in Bajaur's Damadola village where the former senator's vehicle was targeted via a remote-controlled device, Deputy Superintendent Police (DSP) Bakht Munir said.

Continued on Page 06

Pakistan-US infantries begin anti-terror military drills

The scope of exercise envisages attaining marksmanship skills during urban warfare

STAFF REPORT



RAWALPINDI: Pakistani and American forces are involved in a joint military exercise aimed at exchanging tactical skills in order to combat terrorism. According to an ISPR statement issued in Rawalpindi on Wednesday, the Pakistan-United States Infantry Rifle Company Exchange Exercise-2024 is a bilateral joint exercise in counter-terrorism domain to exchange tactical skills aimed at combating menace of terrorism at sub-unit level. The two-week-long exercise commenced on 29 June 2024 at National Counter Terrorism Centre in Pabbi with participation of Infantry companies from both the countries. The exercise is aimed at sharing counter-terrorism experiences besides refining drills procedures vital for counter-terrorism operations. The scope of exercise envisages attaining marksmanship skills during urban warfare by understanding best practices adopted at sub-unit level. The inaugural event was witnessed by General Officer Commanding Kharian Garrison.



Invigorating Corporate Retreats

Coming Soon



BISP is a beacon of hope for poor women :Rubina

Rubina Khalid announced a new initiative in collaboration with NEVTTTC to provide technical skills training to deserving women and their families

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD : Rubina Khalid addressed misconceptions about BISP, stating that the program does not make people beggars. Instead, it aligns with global social security initiatives aimed at uplifting the poor. She highlighted that BISP embodies the vision of Shaheed Mohterma Benazir Bhutto for women's empowerment and criticized past attempts to rename the program as acts of intellectual dishonesty. She announced a new initiative in collaboration with NEVTTTC to provide technical skills training to deserving women and their families, aiming to improve their lives and integrate them into the economy. This initiative will help them play a significant role in the country's economic development. Addressing complaints about fund deductions from deserving women, Rubina Khalid revealed that

BISP has introduced a new payment system involving six banks to ensure transparency in fund disbursement. She added that stipends are now distributed through designated payment campsites, with BISP staff regularly monitoring the distribution process to resolve any issues promptly.

Rubina Khalid mentioned that President Asif Ali Zardari and Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari have issued special instructions to ensure that the rightful recipients receive their benefits with dignity. BISP is consulting with the State Bank of Pakistan to open bank accounts for all deserving women, enabling them to receive their stipends without compromising their self-esteem. She warned against fraudulent elements exploiting innocent women in BISP's name and announced that BISP is working with the Ministry of Information Technology on a digital solution to curb fraud. She reiterated

that 8171 is the only official BISP number and urged people to contact the BISP helpline at 080026477 for any complaints.

Rubina Khalid also briefed journalists on BISP's core initiatives, including Unconditional Cash Transfer, Benazir Kafaalat, Conditional Cash Transfer programs, Benazir Taleemi Wazaif, and Benazir Nashonuma. During the event's Q&A session, Rubina Khalid stated that BISP currently supports over 9.3 million of the poorest families, identified through a scientific method without human intervention. These households are re-surveyed every three years based on their economic situation, ensuring that those with improved conditions are excluded and more deserving households are included. She emphasized that BISP's main focus is on human resource development, aiming to provide trained individuals for employment both in Pakistan and abroad.



ISLAMABAD: Chairperson Benazir Income Support Programme, Senator Rubina Khalid, shares insights on BISP's core and newly launched initiatives during talk to media.—DNA

IGP issues relief for police employees

DNA

LAHORE : Inspector General of Police Punjab, Dr. Usman Anwar, met with police officers and their families, listened to the applications presented by them and issued directives for immediate resolution of their issues. During the meeting with the police employees and their families at the Central Police Office, he emphasized that the welfare of police officers' families is a top priority, instructing all supervisory officers to ensure timely relief through personal oversight. The IG Punjab directed the officers that all the officers should maintain close contact with the subordinate officers and solve their problems in time so that they can concentrate on their professional duties. He directed the AIG Admin to provide relief on the requests of the family of Constable Syed Muhammad (deceased) of Rawalpindi of recruitment of his son as junior clerk on family claim. He directed RPO Gujranwala to provide relief on the request of Inspector Zaeeruddin Babar (Retd.). The IG Punjab instructed the AIG admin to take action on the recruitment requests of sons of two officials including Sargodha police's sub-inspector Muhammad Saeed and Pakpattan constable Syed Maqbool Shah Gelani on the family claim. On the request of citizen Ayesha Bibi, the DIG Intelligence Special Branch was directed to take action after the inquiry. The IG Punjab directed AIG Admin to provide relief on recruitment applications of sons of Constable Muhammad Siddique and Head Constable Maqsood Anwar. Additionally, he issued relief directives concerning disciplinary, welfare, and other administrative matters.

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QUETTA :Governor Balochistan Jaffer Khan Mandukhail on Wednesday lauded the role of all minorities in the construction and development of the country, province and promotion of trade. He expressed these views while talking to a delegation led by Pakistan Muslim League-N Balochistan Hindu Panchayat President Raj Kumar called on him at Governor House here. The Governor said that the Constitution of Pakistan was the guarantee of equal rights and religious freedom to all citizens of the country. He said that therefore, while living within the same country, instead of representing the majority or the minority, we have to make joint efforts for the rights and powers of all citizens. He said that we were all equal citizens in the eyes of the constitution, apart from this, the people of Balochistan including Pashtoon, Baloch nations have their wonderful values and traditions, value human beings regardless of color, religion and race and took great care of all minorities in their daily life.—APP

PM appoints businessmen as honorary ambassadors: Ahsan

Says, business leaders should also be given representation at other important policy-making forums

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD : President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Ahsan Bakhtawari has commended the decision of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to appoint 48 eminent businessmen as honorary Ambassadors. He said that the business community also hails the government's decision of taking it on board for the purpose adding that the government should also give formal representation to the business community at other important policy-making forums

including the FBR. Speaking to a delegation of businessmen at the Chamber House yesterday, President ICCI said that the business community is the biggest stakeholder of country's economy. It is also generating respectable employment for millions of people. Services of those businessmen who are paying billions of rupees as tax must be recognized at the state level which will create a sense of security and pride in the business community. President ICCI said that the government should ensure the representation of the business community in the standing committees of the

Senate and the National Assembly on trade and finance so that suggestions from the business community can be included at the consultative level and effective policy can be formulated.

He added that the business community should also be granted representation in the Board of Directors of FBR to resolve the issues like broadening the tax net, enforcement of new taxes, recovery matters can be resolved amicably. The ICCI President further said that the government claims that tax refund cases worth billions of rupees are stuck across the country.

RCCI warns of inflation due to increased taxes

President Saqib Rafiq said that the increase in taxes will affect the business activities

DNA

RAWALPINDI : There are serious concerns of the business community on the fiscal budget 2024-25. The budget has put a multiple burden on the already existing taxpayers. The target of tax revenue has been set at 12,970 billion rupees, which is 40 percent more than the taxes imposed in the current year's budget. In a joint statement, President Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) Saqib Rafiq and group leader Sohail Altaf said that an important meeting on the post-budget situation will be held at

the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry on Thursday. The meeting has been called to assess the budget impact and the agreed plan of action for the future will also be discussed. Business organizations, associations, people associated with the industry and representatives will also participate in the meeting, they added. President Saqib Rafiq said that the increase in taxes will affect the business activities and the cost of doing business will increase manifold. Group Leader and former President Sohail Altaf said that the consultation process was not followed in this budget with the business

community. He said that the salaried class is already worried about inflation. In the budget, the upper limit of income tax for the salaried class has been increased to 45%, which is too high. Similarly, by imposing super tax, it goes up to 55%. . Sales tax rate on food items has been increased to 18% which will further increase inflation, poultry feed and cattle feed has been taxed at 10%, construction sector which was already under pressure due to Section 7E in this budget. Taxes on the construction sector have been increased. This will halt the overall growth and economic activities in the country.

KP govt decides action against illegal housing societies

PESHAWAR : Considering a threat to agriculture sector and environment, the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government on Wednesday decided to take action against illegal housing societies in the province as a meeting in this regard was called in with Finance Advisor, Muzammil Aslam in the chair. Muzammil Aslam told media persons that housing societies working without the No Objection Certificate (NOC) will be barred from development and high fines be imposed on them adding that these illegal housing societies were posing a great threat to the agriculture sector of the province. Advisor Finance KP further said that such illegal housing societies were harming food security and creating environmental problems. At the meeting, he said, a comprehensive strategy will be formulated against such housing societies. Solid steps will be taken to ensure all the legal requirements including obtaining of NOC for the housing societies.—APP

60 vehicles challaned over laws violations

FAISALABAD : District Secretary Regional Transport Authority (RTA) Tariq Mehmood Gill challaned 60 vehicles and imposed a total fine of Rs. 128,000 over violation of traffic rules and regulations. A spokesman for the authority said here on Wednesday that the secretary checked 145 vehicles and found 60 involved in overloading and overcharging in addition to using LPG cylinders and causing smog by emitting excessive smoke. Therefore, the secretary imposed fine on those over overcharging, overloading, missing of route permit, use of LPG cylinders and emitting excessive smoke.—APP

DC chairs meeting to review monsoon rain arrangement

QUETTA : Deputy Commissioner Hub Ruhana Gul Kakar, on special directive of Commissioner Kalat Division, here on Wednesday chaired a meeting to review the arrangements and preparations for pre-monsoon rains and disaster action plan to cope with possible flood situation. The meeting was attended by Assistant Commissioner Hub Muhammad Ali Durrani, Assistant Commissioner Winder Ameer Hamza Baloch Tehsildar Gadani Maqbool Xen Irrigation Jabar Zehri and officials of concerned departments.

The DC directed the heads of relevant departments to take precautionary measures and take all necessary steps to deal with the monsoon emergency and the possible flood situation. It was also decided in the meeting that cleaning of other drains including the main drain passing through Hub city would be ensured before the monsoon. She said that under the Disaster Action Plan, the District Health Officer (DHO) would set up health camps for health emergencies saying that low-lying areas and drains would be monitored

during the monsoon. The Deputy Commissioner said that instructions had been issued to the relevant departments to keep heavy machinery ready all the times to cope with the flood situation in time to prevent the public damage. The District Heads should use their skills to tackle the emergency situation in monsoon and to remain the public alert about the flood situation in advance and be prepared at all times so that pre-emptive measures can be taken in case of any kind of emergency, she said.—APP

Country prosperity links with industry growth

MCCI SVP, Nadeem Sheikh, VP, Asim sheikh, former presidents Kh Muahammad Hussain, Fazal Elahi Sheikh, president Small Traders Association Ehtasham ul haq and others were in attendance

MULTAN : General Manager (GM) Commercial Multan Electric Power Company (MEPCO) Jawad Mansoor said on Wednesday that the country's progress and prosperity was linked with the growth of the industry. Speaking at gathering of businessmen along with SE Multan Amjad Nawaz and SDO Nawan Shehr Sheikh Imran at Multan Chamber of Commerce & Industry (MCCI), he stated that the company would resolve their issues on priority and the load shedding management is scheduled keeping in view the cultivation hours of the crop and at least it is not conducted for 8 hours continuously so that farmers could work without facing any problem of load shedding. "The load management hours are scheduled considering cultivation timings of the farmers," he said and added that they had installed four grids worth millions of rupees at Musa Virk, Donga Bonga, Lodhran and Fatima Jinnah Town where demand notice had been paid since long but they could not install owing to shortage of material. The GM admitted that the MECPO could not come up to the expectation of the masses due a number of reasons adding that it was facing manpower, especially experienced lineman because no inducted was made in the last four and five years. Relying on a volley of questions, Mr Jawad replied that the government always keeps in mind the cost of electricity before revising the tariff and added that an increase of Rs 10 per unit has not been notified yet. He maintained that the consumers using 200 units per month are "protected" and the government extended subsidies to them while those using over 200 units are not protected. Jawad informed that MEPCO has 84 lac clients of whom upto 3 lac use 700 units because they have got installed four metres at their homes Regarding safety of the staffers, he explained that the company attached great importance with it and imparted training to them in this connection. Later, MCCI president Main Iqbal brought into notice of the GM Commercial a number of industrialists problems including the new connection, incorrect and excessive estimates of material, timely oil change of small transformers, poles without foundations which result in accidents during windstorms and rains. He asked why the customers were being charged for the cost of building foundation of the poles. MCCI president demanded that meter readers should also work on Eid Days just like doctors and policemen which are also services departments as MEPCO is. MCCI SVP, Nadeem Sheikh, VP, Asim sheikh, former presidents Kh Muahammad Hussain, Fazal Elahi Sheikh, president Small Traders Association Ehtasham ul haq and others were in attendance—DNA

Various areas mostly in KP suitable for tea cultivation: FAO

They were told that Pakistan is the largest importer of tea in the world and imports 252,000 tons of tea every year and by the year 2031

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR : Various areas in Pakistan and especially in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are suitable for tea cultivation, which have identified a GIS-based survey. This was told during a meeting of the Special Assistant to KP CM on Industries, Commerce and Technical Education Abdul Karim Tordher with Farrukh Toirov, Provincial Head and Deputy Country Representative of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), a subsidiary agency of United

Nations here at Agricultural University Peshawar on Wednesday. During meeting, the Special Assistant was briefed regarding the possibilities of tea cultivation and a comprehensive study conducted in this regard. Besides, Director Business Development, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Investment and Trade (KPBoIT), Iqbal Sarwar, Manager Tourism Gul Muhammad was also present on this occasion. They were told that Pakistan is the largest importer of tea in the world and imports 252,000 tons of tea every year and by the year 2031, the demand will

increase to 317,000 tons. According to the ground facts 271,406 acres of land could be purely utilized for tea cultivation of which most of the suitable areas are located in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. These suitable areas include Mansehra, Dir Upper, Dir Lower, Swat, Shangla, Kohistan Upper, Kohistan Lowe Kolai Palas, Batagram, Torghar, Abbottabad, Buner, Haripur, Malakand and Mardan. The utilization of the identified areas has potential to produce 190,000 tons of tea annually, which is 75% of the current requirement of the country. Speaking on

the occasion, the Special Assistant termed the technical study conducted by the international organization as very useful and beneficial, saying their priority is to develop this sector under the business model. The Special Assistant said that on behalf of the provincial government they will make efforts to practically use this study. He said that we will talk to the agriculture authorities to take effective measures in this regard. He added that similar comprehensive and technical study by the international organization will also be very useful for trout fish breeding.

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

JULY

July 01/Japan
Self Defence Day

July 01/Singapore
Armed Forces Day

July 01 / Canada
National Day

July 01/Somalia
Independence Day

July 04/USA
Independence Day

July 05/Algeria
Independence Day

July 09/Argentina
Independence Day

July 09/Mongolia
Revolution Day

July 14/France
National Day

July 15/Brunei
Sultan's Birthday

July 21/Belgium
National Day

July 20/TRNC
Independence Day

July 23/Egypt
National Day

July 26/Cuba
National Day

July 26/Liberia
National Day

July 30/Morocco
National Day

Hotels & Restaurants



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



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

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



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



Hospitals

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



Departments

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Critical thinking among youth must be promoted: Romina

The Prime Minister's National Mind Sports Initiative, the largest of its kind, reflects our government's commitment to fostering intellectual growth and mental agility, the PM's coordinator highlighted

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator to the Prime Minister Romina Khurshid Alam has said that chess is recognised globally for its benefits in enhancing cognitive skills and critical thinking among its players. However, encouraging chess at various levels including at educational levels can significantly help foster interest and participation among people of all ages to promote the game in the country. Addressing as a chief guest at the Mian Sultan Khan National Chess Championship Pakistan event, the PM's climate aide said, "Chess is a classic board game that's been around for centuries and is played by millions of peo-

ple worldwide. It's a game of strategy and tactics where two players, each controlling 16 pieces, compete to capture the opponent's king." The event was organised here on Wednesday by the Headstart School Gulmohar Campus Islamabad to encourage students to develop their cognitive skills and critical thinking. Romina Khurshid Alam said that this championship, with over 140 participants from across Pakistan, is a vital platform for promoting chess and nurturing young talent. The Prime Minister's National Mind Sports Initiative, the largest of its kind, reflects our government's commitment to fostering intellectual growth and mental agility, the PM's coordinator highlighted. "Our government has

opted whole of the government approach and we are integrating climate change awareness and sustainability through educational programs, sports, art on side and policies, planning, and climate finance on the other," said Romina Khurshid Alam. Romina Khurshid Alam highlighted, "Chess is not only a game of skill and intellect but also a rich cultural phenomenon with a deep history and significant competitive scene. Players of all ages and skill levels enjoy its challenges and the opportunities it provides for creativity and strategic thinking." "Chess also help players learn and make decisions based on evaluating multiple factors, such as the value of pieces, positional ad-

vantages, and potential threats and apply the same strategy to tackle problems in the day-to-day life. This also improves decision-making skills under pressure," the PM's coordinator added. Ms Khurshid Alam called for need to promote national chess game by establishing more local chess clubs in the country, where players would meet regularly to play, learn, and compete. These clubs can offer structured tournaments, coaching sessions, and social gatherings centered around chess. Besides, introducing chess into school curricula or after-school programs and setting up chess clubs in schools could also help students develop critical thinking, concentration,

and social skills while fostering a love for the game, she added. Earlier, Shedding light on the legacy of Asia's first Chess Grandmaster, PM's coordinator Romina Khurshid said that Mian Sultan Khan was a pioneering figure in chess and represented the subcontinent globally in the early 20th century, inspiring players across Pakistan and Asia. The Chess Federation of Pakistan's efforts to secure the Grandmaster title for Mian Sultan Khan, up to early 2024, are commendable, she emphasised. The PM's coordinator urged all stakeholders to extend all-out support to promote chess and other mind sports in Pakistan, enhancing youth development and international representation.



ISLAMABAD: PM's Coordinator on Climate Change, Romina Khurshid Alam visiting an Exhibition at PNCA in the Federal Capital. - Online

Chinese company to collaborate with local farmers for chili cultivation

ISLAMABAD: China's LTEC International Agriculture Development Co., Ltd. to collaborate with Pakistani farmers for cultivating chili across 10,000 acres of land for its export to China. The company, renowned for supplying high quality hybrid chili seed, has successfully harvested over 3 tons of dried red chili per acre in June across various regions of Pakistan including Sindh, central and southern Punjab. Dr. Muhammad Adnan, Executive Manager LTEC International Agriculture Development Co., Ltd. told Gwadar Pro that the yield of all contract farmers would be exported to China. This year more than 10,000 acres are under contract with them. He said they do a contract with local farmers, provide them with technical advisory service from nursery till harvesting/drying, then at the end they buy back chili from

farmers on premium price. He said their contract farmers are from all over Pakistan, particularly in Sindh, the central and south Punjab. They have model farms in all major chili growing areas where they hold training sessions for local farmers. Last month, their training was held at our model farms in Multan, Lodhran, Jalalpur, Vehari, Jampur and Layyah. LTEC training held at a model farm in Qasba Maral, Multan for local farmers. The objective was to showcase their 90+ chili varieties to farmers and to train farmers about effective chili picking and drying in order to get quality chili. They were also guided to manage various diseases in the field, he said. Adnan highlighted that their main objective is to increase chili acreage and produce quality chili for export because

Pakistan is not self-sufficient in dry chili. So increasing its cultivation is their main objective in Pakistan. In future along with exports, their focus is also to establish a food industry in Pakistan related to chili products. We have directly supervised 3,000 acres and successfully cultivated 16,000 acres of chili in Pakistan under our contract till now (2020-2024). Out of which 10,000 acre contracts are for this year (2024) thus meeting the needs of chilis in the Chinese market and making Pakistan self-sufficient in chili production," he said. Director, LTEC International Agriculture Development Co., Ltd. Chen Liyang said the Chinese Chili Contract Farming Project in Pakistan aims to improve agricultural practices and foster economic growth. Through this initiative,

they provide high-quality hybrid chili seeds, state-of-the-art production technology, and a supportive buyback program at competitive prices. Chen Liyang emphasized the comprehensive support empowers farmers to concentrate on crop production while ensuring sustainability through balanced fertilizer application and eco-friendly farming techniques. He said their efforts have yielded significant results, with successful chili cultivation spanning thousands of acres in Pakistan. "We are steadfast in our mission to make Pakistan a self-reliant producer of chili and to bolster foreign reserves through strategic export opportunities. We are committed to driving agricultural innovation, fostering sustainable development, and contributing to the economic prosperity of Pakistan."-APP

President call for women empowerment

He expressed the hope that SCB would continue to play a crucial role in Pakistan's economy, besides expanding its operations in the country.

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Asif Ali Zardari has called for financial autonomy of women and improving their access to financial services and credit to encourage women entrepreneurs. He added that economic empowerment of women would not only strengthen them financially but would also help uplift their families, besides contributing to the national economy. He said that banks should support women entrepreneurs as well as enhance their representation in the banking sector. The President gave these remarks while talking to the Group Chief Executive of the Standard

Chartered Bank (SCB), Mr Bill Winters, who along with his delegation called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, today. The delegation briefed the President about SCB's contributions to Pakistan's economy, the development and evolution of the banking industry, and the socio-economic development of the country. Welcoming the delegation, the President highlighted that Pakistan had taken steps to protect the environment and promote forestation. He informed that the Government of Sindh had planted mangrove forests and earned millions of dollars by trading carbon credits in the international market. He suggested that investing in the climate sector would help

protect the environment. He also called for investing in the agricultural sector as well as financing infrastructure projects in the country, especially small dams, barges and power plants. He said that banks should extend financial services and loans to farmers to increase their access to agricultural inputs. The President congratulated the bank on the completion of 160 years of successful operations in Pakistan. He said that the bank had played a commendable role in the evolution of the country's banking sector. He expressed the hope that SCB would continue to play a crucial role in Pakistan's economy, besides expanding its operations in the country.

Tough decisions vital for economic revival: Ali

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Finance, Revenue and Power Ali Pervaiz Malik said on Wednesday that the government had adopted a challenging of economic reforms for long-term stability in the country. Talking to a private news channel, he said that under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Pakistan is on the verge of economic revival. He said that performance of the stock exchange and reductions in inflation were the indicators of the positive impact of the government's economic measures. Additionally, he said that cabinet members, including prime minister, were foregoing their salaries and benefits as part of austerity measures.-APP

Pakistan consumes 55 bn plastic bags annually: Sherry

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson, Senate Standing on Climate Change, Senator Sherry Rehman on World Plastic Bag Free Day said that the country was consuming 55 billion plastic bags annually at an expected increase by 15 percent in its usage every year. The Chairperson Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change Senator in her message on the International Plastic Bag Free Day urged the nation to review the environmental impact of plastic bags and its indiscriminate use in Pakistan. Senator Rehman said Pakistan is facing a serious problem of plastic pollution as single-use plastic bags caused water stagnation, littering and damage to human, aquatic and wildlife. "Plastic bags take hundreds of years to decompose and their accumulation poses serious risks to the environment and health. All our small and big cities face major challenges in plastic waste management," she said. She underscored that several attempts were made to stop the use of plastic bags, however, due to lack of alternatives, slow implementation and lack of public awareness, no success was achieved in stopping the use of plastic items. "Every citizen needs to reduce reliance on plastic items including bags, support eco-friendly alternatives and strictly follow anti-plastic policies," Senator Sherry Rehman requested.-APP

Bani police net two bike lifters

RAWALPINDI, Jul 03 (APP): Police have arrested two bike lifters and recovered two mobile phones, three stolen motorcycles, Rs 14000 cash, weapons and other items from their possession, said a Police spokesman here on Wednesday. He informed that a team under the supervision of SHO, Bani Police Station managed to net two bike lifters namely Wahdatullah and Balach and recovered two mobile phones, three stolen motorcycles, Rs 14,000 cash, weapons and other items from their possession.-APP

Distt admin targets illegal encroachments in ICT

ISLAMABAD: On the directive of Deputy Commissioner (DC) Islamabad, Irfan Nawaz Memon, a large-scale anti-encroachment operation is underway in the federal capital to improve the condition of markets and widen the pathways for passersby. For this purpose, Assistant Commissioners (ACs) are actively involved in removing illegal structures across various areas, said the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Administration spokesman. In one action, Assistant Commissioner City, Farhan Ahmed, along with district teams, carried out a raid in Abbas Market F-6 and cleared temporary encroachments from the green belt in the area. In a similar effort, AC City led operations in the Blue Area and F-6 areas of the Federal Capital. They dismantled illegal structures and revoked the license of a hotel that had extended its seating area onto the footpath. Additionally, AC City supervised another operation in F-7 Markaz, working with the Directorate of Municipal Administration (DMA) to remove further illegal structures. During these operations, the DC issued a stern warning, stating that strict action would be taken against anyone occupying government or public spaces for personal use.-APP

45th death anniversary of folk singer Alam Lohar observed

ISLAMABAD: The 45th death anniversary of the legendary sufi and folk singer Alam Lohar was observed on Wednesday. He was born in 1928 in a village near Gujrat. Alam Lohar is famous for his rendition of Waris Shah's Heer, which he has memorized in 36 styles and forms. He was also honored with Pride of Performance Award in 1979. He recorded his first album at the age of 13 and has outdied all other singers in Pakistan in the 1970s. He died in a road accident on this day in 1979 in Lahore and was buried in Lalamusa.-APP



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Briefs

ANF seizes 6 kg drugs in 3 operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 3 operations managed to recover 6 kg drugs and arrested 5 accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here Wednesday. He informed that 3 kg hashish was recovered from an accused rounded up near the main bus stop Jamshoro. 2 kg hashish was recovered from 3 accused arrested in Clifton Karachi and 1 kg heroin was recovered from the possession of a woman netted near Manawala stop Lahore. He said, separate cases have been registered against the accused while further investigations are under process.—APP

Motorway Police returns two cell phones to a traveler

ISLAMABAD: National Highway and Motorway Police (NHMP) officials found and handed over two lost mobile phones worth Rs 140,000 to its owner here on Wednesday. According to details, a traveler near Palian on the Swat motorway contacted Motorway police and said that during a stay at a petrol pump in a service area, he had forgotten to leave his mobile phones. The NHMP North zone officials took immediate action on his request and after tracing the lost phones handed it over to him. The traveler expressed his gratitude and admiration for the Motorway Police's honesty and dedication to their duty. Muhammad Saqib, the spokesperson for the Motorway Police, highlighted the significance of this incident as a reflection of the department's commitment to ensuring the safety and well-being of the public. The Motorway Police continues to earn public trust through such acts of integrity, underlining their reputation as wardens of the motorways.—APP

IESCO maintains zero load-management in all circles

ISLAMABAD: Despite sultry and harsh weather conditions, Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) continued to maintain zero power load-management across its six operational circles including Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Currently zero load-shedding was being carried out across all six circles Islamabad, Rawalpindi Cantt, Rawalpindi City, Jhelum, Attock and Chakwal, told Operation Director Muhammad Aslam Khan here Wednesday. He said demand stood at 2,613 megawatt (MW) at 1400 hours against quota allocation of 2,700 MW from the national grid system. The company was withdrawing 2,515 MW, he said.—APP

Water inflow in rivers jumps to 487,600 cusecs

ISLAMABAD: Water inflow in all major rivers has significantly increased due to surging mercury level in northern areas and on Wednesday it stood at 487,600 cusecs against outflow of 326,400 cusecs. According to Indus River System Authority (IRSA), water inflow in river Indus at Tarbela dam jumped to 264,700 cusecs against outflow of 130,000 cusecs. Water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1485.35 feet and was 87.35 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Similarly, water inflow in the river Jhelum at Mangla dam touched 51,500 cusecs against outflow of 25,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1186.25 feet, which was 138.25 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. Moreover, water inflow at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 201,700, 195,400, 138,300 and 71,100 cusecs respectively. Similarly, water inflow in River Kabul at Nowshera stood at 89,400 cusecs while in River Chenab at Marala 82,000 cusecs.—APP

U.S Embassy hosts reception to celebrate U.S National Day

The evening brought together distinguished guests from Pakistan's government, corporate sector, academia, civil society, and diplomatic community to commemorate the shared values of freedom, democracy, and economic prosperity between the United States and Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: U.S Embassy in Islamabad hosted a festive reception to celebrate the 248th anniversary of the independence of the United States of America. Held under the theme of 'Made in the USA,' the event was an opportunity to underscore the enduring partnership between the United States and Pakistan and reaffirm the two nations' commitment to build a more prosperous future for their citizens. Ahsan Iqbal, Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives,

graced the event as the chief guest. The evening brought together distinguished guests from Pakistan's government, corporate sector, academia, civil society, and diplomatic community to commemorate the shared values of freedom, democracy, and economic prosperity between the United States and Pakistan. The event was a vibrant occasion filled with American cultural elements, including music, food, and traditions that reflect the rich diversity of the United States. A dazzling display of fireworks further enhanced the celebratory mood. United States and Pakistan share

a long history of partnership spanning multiple areas of cooperation. In the infrastructure and energy sectors, this collaboration is exemplified by several major dams constructed in Pakistan with U.S. support. In the private sector, dozens of U.S. companies employ hundreds of thousands of Pakistanis and provide critical research and development assets. Pakistan's education and health sectors are also strengthened through U.S. assistance. United States is proud to be Pakistan's largest export market; Pakistanis benefit tremendously from this trade relationship by supplying

billions of dollars worth of exports to the U.S market annually. Meanwhile, the U.S-Pakistan "Green Alliance" Framework is a transformative initiative to strengthen Pakistan's climate resilience and support its efforts for clean energy transformation. In his remarks, U.S. Ambassador Donald Blome noted the promising trajectory of the bilateral relationship, saying: "While at times we have had to tackle great challenges – such as floods, war, a pandemic, economic setbacks – those of us who have worked together to strengthen this relationship have always recognized the partnership is,

and has always been, part of a longer journey toward increased prosperity and security for our two nations, and that each step of this journey has been important." The reception underscored the strength of the U.S.-Pakistan bilateral relationship, highlighting the shared commitment to deepening economic ties, promoting cultural exchange, and fostering collaboration in areas of mutual interest. As the United States celebrates its independence, the two countries pledged to continue working together to address shared challenges and seize opportunities for a brighter future.

Power Ministry denounces fake bill propaganda against Awais Leghari

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Power Division has condemned the attempt to tarnish the reputation of the Federal Minister Sardar Awais Ahmad Leghari through the circulation of a misleading electricity bill in his name on social media. In a statement issued on Wednesday, the Ministry described this act as not only a blatant character assassination but also a manipulative tactic aimed at inciting public emotions. The Ministry clarified that the bill in question was not merely part of a false propaganda campaign but also evidence of Sardar Awais Ahmad Leghari's adherence to the law and commitment to his national duties. The bill pertains to an upper section of Fort Monroe Hill station, which is owned by the minister but has not been in use. The meter was legally locked in August 2023, a fact indicated in the unit column of the bill. In December 2023, the connection was legally disconnected after clearing all dues amounting to Rs. 10,766, as evidenced by the bill. The meter was legally reconnected in June 2024, but no units have been consumed due to the lack of usage since then. The Ministry emphasized that the minister has always performed his national duties with dedication and hard work, providing daily services without accepting any salary or additional benefits.

Gold rates up by Rs.800 per tola to Rs.242,300

ISLAMABAD: The price of per tola of 24 karat gold increased by Rs.800 and was sold at Rs.242,300 on Wednesday against its sale at Rs. 241,500 on last trading day. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also increased by Rs.686 to Rs.207,733 from Rs. 207,047 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat gold went up to Rs.190,422 from Rs. 189,793, 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 increased by \$21 to \$2,345 from \$2,324, the Association reported.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Chaudhry Salik Hussain chairing a meeting regarding inter-religious harmony during Muharram-ul-Haram.—DNA

CDA to launch 30 electric buses on Friday

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) is likely to launch the operation of 30 electric buses on different routes of the federal capital to facilitate the residents on July 5 (Friday). "The buses had arrived in Islamabad last month which will be operational to mitigate the problems being faced by the travelers of the twin cities," official sources in the CDA told APP. The sources said that the inauguration ceremony is likely to attend by senior dignitaries, officials of CDA and other relevant depart-

ments. Chairman CDA, Chaudhry Muhammad Ali Randhawa is not only putting maximum efforts to facilitate the residents of the federal capital by enhancing facilities but also beautifying the city on modern lines. They said that these buses would run on two routes including National University of Science and Technology (NUST) to Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) and 'PIMS to Bari Imam. The first route would start from NUST and end at PIMS after passing through G-11 Markaz, G-10 Markaz, G-9

Markaz, and G-8 Markaz, they added. They said the second route would start from PIMS and conclude at Bari Imam after passing through G-7, G-6, Melody, Aabpara, Ataturk Road, Serena Hotel, Foreign Office, Radio Pakistan, and the Diplomatic Enclave. The sources said that the authority has planned to run more buses in Islamabad as 70 more such vehicles are expected to arrive in the capital city from Karachi. After manufacturing, 60 more buses will be on their way to Islamabad from China. On the other hand, they said

that the remaining 130 buses would operate on 11 routes to connect rural and urban areas of the federal capital. Initially, they said 30 buses would operate from the Convention Centre where the CDA has installed a charging station with six charging points. While, for 70 other buses, which are about to reach Islamabad from Karachi, they said the CDA has set up the facility at the H-9 metro depot. The sources said that the CDA is also working on the construction of bus depots at three different places including at Zero Point, I-9, and Taramri.—APP

Imposing tax on wheat flour is a condemnable decision

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Dr Muhammad Hanif Mughal, Chairman of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Shadbad, said on Wednesday that the budget had disappointed the masses and businesses and pleased the elite. He said the anger in the masses is increasing due to budgetary measures, which can have severe political consequences. The budget has exposed the reality of the economic managers' bold statements and has also curtailed the chances of any economic improvement, he added. Talking to the party workers, Dr Hanif Mughal said that the budget had made no progress towards equitable taxation and sustainable government expenditure as promised. Rather, the taxation

system has become more cruel. At the same time, government expenditure has reached up to 25% of the GDP and is increasing. Half to two and a half per cent withholding tax has been imposed on flour and other wheat products, which is unacceptable. This will increase the price of a 20 kg bag of flour by 40 rupees and other wheat products by 200 rupees per bag. He said that the assurances of economic managers before the budget were a joke to the nation, and the people would not tolerate this insult. Dr Hanif Mughal said that the failed budget of the coalition government is an attempt to strangle the people, which will further worry the taxpayers while fattening the sacred cows. There is not even a sign of real economic reforms in the budget. It is clear from the budget that our policymakers

do not want to expand the tax base meaningfully and are content to make statements in this regard. He informed that the SPI data for the week ending 27 June indicates that the heaviest burden was borne by those earning an income from 22,899 to 29,517 rupees per month, followed by those earning 29,518 to 44,175 rupees per. While these two income groups would remain exempt from income tax, what needs to be taken into consideration is that these two groups would nonetheless suffer a decline in their disposable incomes. The income of these groups would decline given that the ambit of sales tax has been widened to include essential items, including milk and stationery. It is fair to assume that their kitchen budgets must be revisited and stark

choices made. Even though no tax has been imposed on retailers, the increase in taxes on real estate has been restricted to ordinary citizens. In contrast, the rulers have drastically increased their privileges. The assembly members will be given five hundred billion rupees in the name of the development budget, a political bribe. All this looting is done when efforts are made to take another loan from the IMF. The country has reached the extreme of economic fall due to the wrong priorities of the ruling class and the continued plunder of national resources. He said that according to economic experts, the real benefit of the new agreements for obtaining more loans will benefit the corrupt mafia. At the same time, the people will bear the burden.

Govt will bear consequences of heightened instability

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Mian Zahid Hussain, the Chairman of the FPCCI Advisory Board and National Business Group Pakistan, the President of the Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, the All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and a former provincial minister, stated on Wednesday that the recent federal budget is causing various sections to protest and it is driving the country towards deindustrialization. He said that the people have lost trust in authorities' promises, including that of the Finance Minister. Mian Zahid Hussain said that the gap between the people and

the government is widening, which needs to be bridged. Speaking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that continued load shedding of electricity is adding to people's woes. He said that such a budget has never been presented in the history of the country in which milk for infants has also been made expensive. Thousands of items now face additional customs duty, regulatory duty, withholding tax, and sales tax, which will significantly raise business costs and inflation. He pointed out that by eliminating the fixed tax regime and imposing sales tax on their local supply, the FBR has left the exporters, who bring \$30 bil-

lion into the country annually, at their mercy. In some cases, there has been ruthless discrimination between government employees and general masses which will never be accepted. He observed that in these circumstances, the Finance Minister has said that whenever the economy improves, the income tax on the salaried class will be withdrawn, but the increasing government expenditure can never help improve the economy. According to Mian Zahid Hussain, the people's income has been steadily declining for several years, while taxes continue to rise, leading to a decrease in their disposable income. As a result,

millions of people are struggling to meet their basic needs, including food. Electricity rates are higher than in developed countries, where laborers earn handsome salaries, he informed. According to Mian Zahid Hussain, reforming the electricity sector could have saved 1200 billion rupees, and privatizing failing government institutions could have saved another 1200 billion rupees. Despite the 62 lakh people living in erstwhile FATA and PATA, influential people are importing tax exempted raw material and other items in excess quantity resulting in problem for industries located in other parts of the country.

Exports up by 10.54 % to \$30 bln in FY 2023-24

ISLAMABAD: The exports from the country witnessed an increase of 10.54 percent during the fiscal year 2023-24 as compared to the corresponding period of last year 2022-23, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. The exports during July-June (2023-24) were recorded at \$30.645 billion against the exports of \$27.724 billion, according to latest PBS data. On the other hand, imports into the country declined by 0.84 percent to \$54.734 billion this year against the imports of \$55.198 billion last year. Based on the figures, the trade deficit during the current fiscal year under review was recorded at \$24.089 billion against the deficit of \$27.474 billion last year, showing a decline of 12.32 percent. Meanwhile, on a year-on-year basis, the exports from the country increased by 7.34 percent in June 2024 compared to the exports of the same month of last year. The exports during the month were recorded at \$2.529 billion as against the exports of \$2.356 billion in June 2023. On the other hand, the imports during June 2024 were recorded at \$4.919 billion compared to the imports of \$4.189 billion in June 2023, showing an increase of 17.43 percent, according to the data. On a month-on-month basis, the exports from the country decreased by 10.92 percent when compared to the exports of \$2.839 billion during May 2024. The imports into the witnessed a nominal increase of 0.08 percent when compared to the imports of \$4.915 billion in May 2024, PBS reported.—APP

Pak-France PERIDOT Research Programme

ISLAMABAD: Higher Education Commission (HEC) has invited applications from Pakistan's faculty members of public and private universities, for funding under the Pak-France PERIDOT Research Programme (Phase XI). According to the HEC, PERIDOT is the Franco-Pakistani Hubert Curien Partnership (PHC) Programme aimed at providing opportunities to Pakistani and French researchers to interact for executing joint research activities. The programme is being implemented in Pakistan by HEC and in France, jointly by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Development (MAEDI) and the Ministry of Higher Education and Research (MESR). The objective of this programme is to develop new scientific and technological cooperation between French and Pakistan's higher education institutions (HEIs) research laboratories by supporting the mobility of researchers from both sides. The joint research proposals have been invited from Pakistan's faculty members of public and private universities for mobility grant in three areas including 'Sustainable Energy, Environment and Climate Change', 'Agriculture, Food Security and Health' and 'Entrepreneurship, Humanities and Social Sciences'. The applications can be submitted to HEC till October 01 through the online portal which is now open for applications, the HEC said.—DNA

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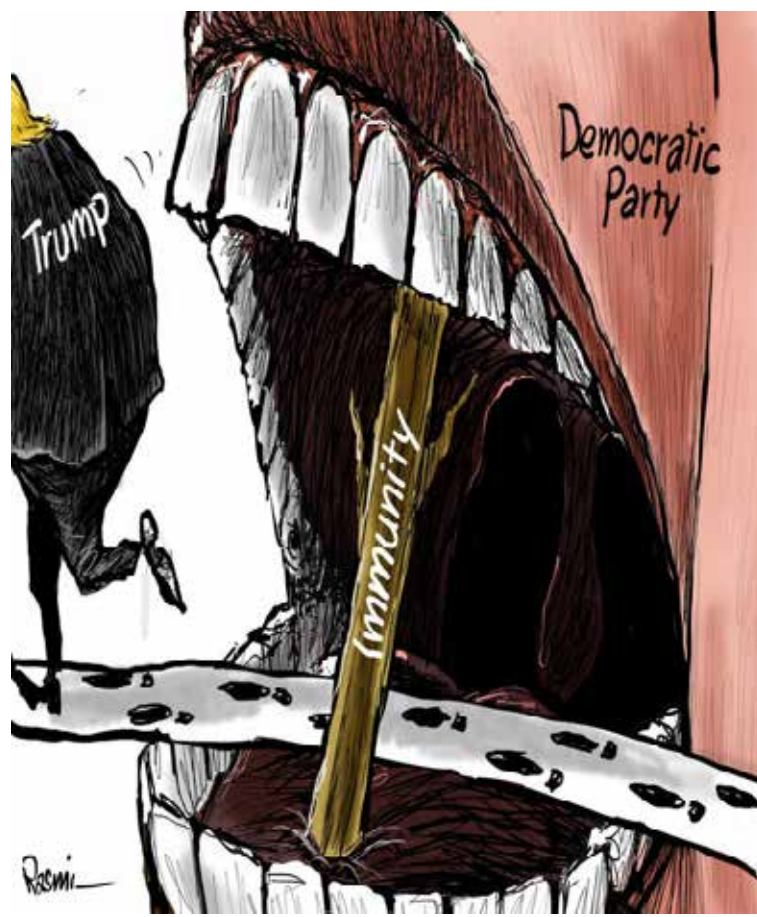
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China's wolf warriors?

WHERE have all the wolf warriors gone? There has been a rapid and punctuated evolution, and the usual Chinese species have mutated into American ones. I ask because Foreign Affairs just ran an article titled, "Have China's wolf warriors gone extinct?" The author defines a wolf warrior as someone who is a high-profile ambassador or foreign ministry spokesperson with a tendency to make "acerbic, sarcastic or negative" public statements. Instead of being tactful and circumspect, they prefer verbal confrontation. It happened to some Chinese diplomats, so the author argues, some time after 2019. But they have now largely disappeared just as they quickly appeared on the international scene. If those are the defining characteristics, I would argue that the species of diplomats haven't gone away, rather they have turned American. There is a difference, though. Chinese wolf warriors were almost always rebutting or reacting to criticism from a foreign source or concerted negative claims from multiple sources, usually Western governments, led by Washington. The US version is different. They feel free to round on foreign governments and leaders at the drop of a hat, often without provocation or a previous unkind statement from a foreign source. It's this arrogance that typifies American wolf warriors. And in that sense, they have always been there, part of the diplomatic flora and fauna that people take for granted, because America has been so high and mighty. Take, for example, Rahm Emanuel, US ambassador to Japan and former president Barack Obama's chief of staff, whose rudeness and explosive temper are legendary. As mayor of Chicago, he was described by one US publication as "the Mariah Carey of swearing". Since taking up his post in 2022, he has jumped at every opportunity to round on China. You might think he was working for the Japanese government – except, of course, the Japanese are never rude. Last month, taking a cue from US Treasury chief Janet Yellen, he denounced Beijing for exporting its domestic economic problems to the rest of the world, and declared the US would never tolerate China dumping its cheap goods. Well, Emmanuel, you say Chinese overproduction, I say American protectionism. Like all good wolf warriors worthy of the name, he has made liberal use of the social platform X to send rude messages ranging from China's economic downturn and the sacking of top ministers, to rising youth unemployment or Beijing's criticism of Japan's dumping of nuclear-contaminated water into open seas. Emmanuel has gone reliably wolverine every time. It's a good thing he wasn't posted to China, not that his colleague, Nicholas Burns, is far behind over there. Last week, Burns accused Beijing of fuelling anti-American sentiment, restricting Chinese citizens' access to US embassy social media platforms and making it harder for mainland students to attend US universities. Burns, your State Department's No 2 boss, Kurt Campbell, just said Chinese students were not welcome to study science and technology in US universities and should only pursue useless but expensive degrees in the humanities. Customs and other agencies have been detaining and refusing entry to Chinese students pursuing advanced technical degrees. Burns also claimed China had completely misread Western resolve in saving Ukraine and accused Beijing of helping to sustain Russia's economy. Doesn't that practically apply to every other country outside the West?



Forced displacement, a tragedy chasing Gazans

TENS of thousands of Palestinians faced a new tragedy on Monday evening, after Israeli occupation forces (IOF) issued displacement orders for approximately half of Khan Yunis residents. Thousands of Gazans rushed to evacuate their destroyed homes and tents following the new displacement orders, gathering in city center's streets and alleys and in Khan Yunis Hospital square, wondering about where to go next. Mahmoud Abu Daqqa said, he was displaced at least seven times, moving from one place to another since the beginning of the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip, noting that the last displacement was about four days ago when he was forced to leave Al-Muntazah district west of Khan Yunis following the instructions of the IOF. He told the PIC that he received a voice recording from the IOF asking him to evacuate, so he had to go out quickly without taking anything, revealing that he was then relocated near Nasser Hospital and did not know where he would stay and how he and his family would manage their affairs. The new displacement orders affected the towns of Khuza'a, Ahsan, Al-Qarara, Bani Suhaila, east of Khan Yunis, as well as the Al-Fakhari area, Al-Manara neighborhood, and Al-Najjar, which are large areas, almost at half of Khan Yunis. Early December 2023, the IOF invaded Khan Yunis and remained there for nearly five months, during which thousands of civilians were killed and more than 70% of the governorate's buildings, villages and infrastructure were destroyed. Um Muhammad Al-Najjar said crying, "Is it insufficient to be under bombardment, siege, and hunger? We have been displaced once after another. Where will we go, next? We live in worn tents and we have now been left with no place to install our tents on. They want to deprive us of stability and safety." Other families chose to remain in their displacement places in the same targeted areas. Salama Amer said, "Previously, I was displaced 10 times, and I no longer have energy for more, I will not leave my tent, because I do not have any money to transfer my few belongings. I will remain here along with my children, even if we could be killed." Hundreds of thousands of residents and displaced people returned to the various neighborhoods of Khan Yunis after the IOF, on May 7, invaded Rafah from which more than 1.5 million people were forcibly displaced. Just weeks after people had been forced to return to the destroyed Khan Yunis, the IOF issued new evacuation orders, forcing 250,000 people to displace, despite the fact that there is no safe place in Gaza, UNRWA said. The human rights researcher, Muhammad Sabah, told the PIC that Israel adopts a systematic policy of targeting civilian people of the Gaza Strip wherever they are, to deprive them of stability, even if it is temporary in the displacement centers and shelters.

Pakistan's path to leadership in the SCO

Qamar Bashir



Pakistan, with its young and cost-effective workforce, burgeoning IT sector, and vast natural resources, is poised to significantly benefit from and contribute to the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). The country's growing number of IT-literate men and women are providing valuable services globally and can also market their services in the SCO member countries, enhancing Pakistan's reputation as an emerging tech hub. The fully functional yet underutilized Gwadar port stands out as a critical asset for Pakistan. As a warm water port, it can provide essential access to the sea for landlocked...

SHANGHAI Cooperation Organisation (SCO) conference held in Astana, Kazakhstan from 3rd to 4th July on the central theme of "Towards a SECURE SCO," attended by the Prime Minister of Pakistan Mr. Shahbaz Sharif, will focus on several key themes and objectives aimed at enhancing regional cooperation and addressing global challenges including Security, Economic Development, Connectivity, Unity, Respect for Sovereignty, Territorial Integrity, and Environmental Protection. The theme encapsulates the SCO's broader goals of fostering peace, stability, and prosperity among its member states China, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, besides several observer states and dialogue partners that participate in various activities and meetings within the organization. The SCO, encompassing major powers such as China and Russia, holds significant influence due to its vast landmass, substantial population, and abundant resources. The total landmass under SCO is 34.5 million square kilometers which is 23% of the world landmass. With over 40% of the population, abundant energy resources, robust service sector and a growing technological landscape, significant military, economic, and political weight, makes the SCO a formidable counterbalance to Western influence, particularly that of the United States and NATO, allowing the SCO to present a unified front on various global issues.

While the SCO currently focuses on economic, political, and security cooperation, its potential to evolve into a NATO-like military alliance exists. The organization already engages in joint military exercises, counter-terrorism efforts, and regional security initiatives. As geopolitical tensions rise, the SCO could formalize its military cooperation mechanisms, transforming into a more robust security alliance. This evolution would however depend on the geopolitical dynamics and the willingness of member states to integrate their military policies more closely. The SCO has its downside as well. Its primary focus on Central Asia, South Asia, and East Asia, lacks direct representation from Europe, North America, and significant Middle Eastern countries, impacting its global influence and reach. This regional composition limits its ability to influence global geopolitics comprehensively and misses out on diverse perspectives from these regions, affecting the depth of discussions on global issues like

climate change and international security. Moreover, the absence of major Western economies restricts deeper economic integration into the global economy and limits opportunities for technological and scientific collaboration. Additionally, the lack of coordination with major global security frameworks like NATO can reduce the effectiveness of anti-terrorism efforts. By participating in the SCO conference, Pakistan aims to leverage its strategic location and historical ties with member states to further regional connectivity and economic integration, contributing to the overall stability and development of the Eurasian region. The SCO provides Pakistan with an ideal platform to shift from seeking aid to showcasing its strengths and assuming a leadership role. By leveraging its vast and underutilized land in regions like Balochistan and KP province, and managing its mighty glaciers to provide year long abundant water supplies, Pakistan can enhance its agricultural output and become a key exporter of agro-products to SCO countries and position itself as a leader in food security and sustainable resource management.

Pakistan, with its young and cost-effective workforce, burgeoning IT sector, and vast natural resources, is poised to significantly benefit from and contribute to the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO). The country's growing number of IT-literate men and women are providing valuable services globally and can also market their services in the SCO member countries, enhancing Pakistan's reputation as an emerging tech hub. The fully functional yet underutilized Gwadar port stands out as a critical asset for Pakistan. As a warm water port, it can provide essential access to the sea for landlocked Central Asian countries, fostering regional trade and connectivity. Establishing peace in Afghanistan and connecting Pakistan with Central Asian countries via land routes can significantly enhance Pakistan's geo-political and economic leverage. By capitalizing on these routes, Pakistan can facilitate trade, energy transit, and people-to-people exchanges, driving economic growth for itself and the region. In turn, this will solidify the SCO's role in promoting regional integration, stability, and development. If Pakistan wants to become the most influential member of the SCO, it should first put its house in order by taking steps like ensuring strong political stability and robust governance.

Stable political institutions and effective governance are critical for consistent participation in SCO activities and commitments. Additionally, aligning with the SCO's principles of mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, respect for cultural diversity, and pursuit of common development is essential.

Pakistan must demonstrate economic strength by fostering a strong and growing economy, promoting trade relations with other member states, and investing in regional economic integration initiatives. Effective management and utilization of its natural resources, including energy resources, agriculture, and technological advancements, will bolster its standing within the SCO. Pakistan should also enhance its counter-terrorism capabilities, contributing to the SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS) through intelligence sharing, joint exercises, and training programs. Besides, active participation in joint military exercises and security cooperation initiatives with other SCO member states can solidify Pakistan's role as a security leader within the organization. Strengthening diplomatic engagement with other SCO member states through active participation in meetings, summits, and forums, and playing a mediating role in regional disputes will further enhance its influence.

Promoting cultural, educational, and people-to-people exchanges by establishing academic partnerships, cultural programs, and scholarships for students from SCO countries can build soft power. Investment in infrastructure projects that enhance regional connectivity, such as transport corridors, railways, and ports, developing logistical capabilities, including efficient transportation networks and trade facilitation, is vital for supporting regional trade and economic integration. Actively proposing and participating in regional development initiatives, such as poverty alleviation programs, sustainable development projects, and technological cooperation, can demonstrate Pakistan's commitment to regional progress. Additionally, contributing to regional energy security through cooperative projects in energy production, distribution, and technology will enhance Pakistan's influence within the SCO. By taking these comprehensive steps, Pakistan can significantly improve its standing and influence within the SCO, contributing to the organization's goals of regional peace, stability, and development.

Don't expect a Labour govt to fix broken Britain

Thomas O. Falk

What followed was the brief stint of Liz Truss, which only added to the Tory woes. Her ambitious economic policies, particularly the unfunded tax cuts, spooked financial markets, triggering chaos and a precipitous loss of confidence both within her party and among the public. This left her premiership in tatters, exacerbating the party's crisis of leadership and direction. And then there's current prime minister Rishi Sunak. No honest person would argue that he is unqualified or as unserious as his two predecessors

TWICE in the last 50 years, the political landscape of Britain has been dramatically reshaped: first by Margaret Thatcher's Conservative triumph in 1979, and then by Tony Blair's New Labour surge in 1997. Now, the nation stands at the precipice of another transformative moment. It is a virtual certainty that after an often tumultuous 14-year reign, the Conservative Party's era is concluding. The expected wipeout election would be the culmination of self-destructive behaviour, but the ripple effects will go far beyond the Tory seats in Britain's parliament. Remember when, in the fervour of the Brexit campaign, promises flowed like a torrent from the mouths of its proponents? Britain was to rise again, a phoenix from the ashes of its European Union shackles, reasserting itself as a global power reminiscent of its past. Yet, here we are, about four years on from the withdrawal deal reached with Brussels, grappling not with the resurgence of a great nation, but with suboptimal economic figures, political instability and a disenfranchised populace.

The economic landscape post-Brexit is far from the renaissance that was promised. While in the first quarter of 2024, the UK's gross domestic product grew by 0.7 per cent, the highest quarterly growth rate among Group of Seven nations, this performance is an outlier compared to the overall slower growth trend observed over the years since Brexit. The UK's trade volumes have suffered a record five-year decline. A case can certainly be made that the aftermath of the global financial crisis, a worldwide pandemic and Russian President Vladimir Putin's aggression in Ukraine have not helped. However, much of the damage has been self-inflicted and it starts with our political leaders and parties. Once the bastion of British political stability, the party of Churchill is in disarray. The infighting, scandals and leadership challenges have left it frac-

tured, ineffective and distrusted. During the tumultuous tenure of Boris Johnson, the promise of robust leadership gave way to a litany of scandals, such as parties held at his Downing Street office during the pandemic and accusations of lying to the late Queen Elizabeth over the prorogation of parliament, casting a long shadow over his premiership. What followed was the brief stint of Liz Truss, which only added to the Tory woes. Her ambitious economic policies, particularly the unfunded tax cuts, spooked financial markets, triggering chaos and a precipitous loss of confidence both within her party and among the public. This left her premiership in tatters, exacerbating the party's crisis of leadership and direction. And then there's current prime minister Rishi Sunak. No honest person would argue that he is unqualified or as unserious as his two predecessors. But Sunak's problem is a combination of Tory fatigue and being perceived as being utterly out of touch. Leaving the D-Day commemoration early or gushing about a campaign train ride as if he had just visited a space station are only a few examples. Most importantly, ordinary Britons have not felt any significant financial improvement during his tenure. Moreover, the recent betting scandals are particularly egregious. Both Labour and Conservative candidates, destined to earn around £91,350 (\$115,626) annually if voted in, deemed it worthwhile to gamble on the election date to make a few extra quid. This sends a devastating message to an already distrustful electorate, further erodes our norms and provides fertile breeding ground for populists such as Nigel Farage and his Reform UK party, which finds itself head-to-head with the Tories. Say about Farage what you may, but he has mastered the art of exploiting political discontent and has returned to the spotlight, ready to capitalise on the chaos. His party is forecast to win 18 seats in the House of

Commons without a fiscally sound explanation of how it plans to realise its promises. The rise of populism in a society reflects deeper currents of discontent and disillusionment among its populace. In our case, it certainly signifies a collective response to perceived and de facto failures or inadequacies in the traditional Westminster system, a dangerous development. Meanwhile, Labour Party leader Keir Starmer has not tired of promising change and a new start. However, Starmer's promises and his credo of "country first, party second" seem rich, considering his admission to having essentially lied when, in 2019, he said Jeremy Corbyn would make a "great prime minister". Corbyn was later expelled by Starmer due to accusations about his role in antisemitism within Labour.

Putting the country first yet engaging in an attempted Machiavellian power grab makes his other promises difficult to believe. It certainly does not send the message of change. Moreover, to anyone convinced that Labour is the answer to Tory chaos and surging populism, I say interventionist proclivities and regulatory ardour paired with propinquity to unions and a rather censorious stance on business interests is not the ideal recipe for an economic comeback, to put it mildly. Amid Britain's internal struggles, Labour will also inherit a world in upheaval, with Pax Americana under strain, as well as the challenges posed by China, Russia and a potential second Trump administration in the United States. Will Labour have adequate answers to all those internal and external adequates? I think not. But our system is broken to an extent that the need for damage control is much greater than lofty goals at this stage. Thus, the agenda for the next five years can only be to keep Farage in check, and for the Tories to find a way to redeem and reinvent themselves, to become a credible force of stability and vision for Britain yet again.

Briefs

Pak-Russia ties stand 'on own strength': PM

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today, he said Pakistan has long business relations with Russia. He recalled that Pakistan used to import a lot of machinery and goods from Russia and export textile and leather goods under the barter trade. The premier further said the two countries can certainly enhance trade, which is at the moment, touching one billion dollars. Radio Pakistan reported. He also commended the Russian top leader for promoting co-operation in the field of energy at his request. He added Pakistan has received a shipment of oil from Russia and there is a need to further move in this direction.

Belarusian President to visit...

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will visit Belarus in July for a food and agriculture exhibition. The minister emphasized the opportunity to attract investments to Pakistan, citing the relocation of Service Tyre Company from China to Pakistan. Furthermore, Malaysia and Gulf countries have shown interest in Pakistan's halal gelatin and meat industries, respectively. The federal minister also revealed that a Chinese electric vehicle (EV) manufacturer was planning to enter the Pakistani market through a joint venture with a local power company. He noted the growing interest of mobile phone manufacturers and food industries in investing in Pakistan.

Govt 'fulfils requirements' for...

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at this point the IMF's validation was the primary focus. The IMF did not respond immediately to a request for comment. Earlier on Sunday, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb expressed optimism about the country's chances of securing a new IMF bailout, following President Asif Ali Zardari's approval of the tax-intensive budget for the upcoming fiscal year starting July 1. "The IMF programme is our assurance in terms of macro stability. We are taking it forward; it is inevitable. I'm very optimistic that we'll be able to take it through the finish line for an Extended Fund Programme which is going to be larger and longer in nature," the minister said addressing a press conference in Islamabad.

PTA proposes...

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solicit feedback from stakeholders, with a deadline for public feedback set for July 10. "PTA will analyse the responses and decide accordingly," Obaid said over the phone. The PTA categories OTT services into three groups: Communication services (e.g., Viber, Skype, WhatsApp), Application services (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram), and Non-Broadcasting Media Services (e.g., YouTube, Netflix, Spotify). If implemented, OTT services would need to comply with the new authorisation framework within 12 months, after which services without the PTA authorisation would be considered illegal, according to the draft.

Imran Khan set to...

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as secretary-general of the party to focus on his role as National Assembly Opposition Leader instead. Ayub's resignation came amid reports of rifts in the ranks of the PTI with sources telling Geo News that 27 PTI-backed SIC lawmakers deliberated on the option of resignation from the National Assembly in protest against the party's top leadership. Of the 27, the insiders had said 21 of its lawmakers hinted at forming a forward bloc over top leadership's inability to secure the release of party founder from jail, the sources added.

Gray Kirsten submits 'confidential' report to PCB

Report highlights players' fitness, game awareness and discipline; PCB chief to also consult ex-cricketers, say sources

SPORTS DESK

LAHORE: Pakistan's white-ball coach Gary Kirsten has submitted a "confidential" assessment report on the national side's disastrous performance in the recently concluded T20 World Cup 2024 to the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), sources told media reporters on Wednesday. The report, the sources added, has been sent to PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi who will review the document highlighting players' fitness, discipline and game awareness among other things that led to the team's early exit from the mega event. The development comes as the Green Shirts failed to even make it to the Super Eight stage of the World Cup after suffering an upset loss against the minnows United States followed by a defeat against arch-rivals India. The Babar Azam-led side only managed to win matches against Canada and Ireland which were insufficient to propel the team to the next stage of the tournament. The below-par performance by the national side resulted in scathing criticism from fans and former cricketers alike prompting the PCB chief to announce a



"major surgery" in the squad. However, the board decided to wait for Kirsten and senior manager Wahab Riaz's report to make any decision with regard to the team's future. After going through the report, the PCB chief will also consult other board officials and former cricketers before taking a decision on the way forward. Earlier, media reporters while citing sources

had reported that Kirsten had expressed concerns over the players' fitness levels, stating they are not up to the mark. In a discussion with the team after their elimination from the World Cup, the coach pointed out that the team's skill level is significantly lagging compared to the rest of the world. "Despite playing so much cricket, no one knows which shot to play and when," he

said, adding that only players who value unity, focus on fitness, and improve their skill set will be part of the team moving forward. The team's poor performance has also been acknowledged by wicket-keeper batter Mohammad Rizwan who, while talking to the media in Peshawar on Tuesday, said that the criticism faced by the Men in Green was justified. "The criticism the team is facing is justified and we deserve this since we didn't perform in accordance with expectations. Players who can't face criticism won't be able to succeed. "We are disappointed with our performance in the T20 World Cup. There are multiple reasons behind our losses. When a team loses, one can't say that bowling and batting is doing well," Rizwan said. It must be noted that India won the T20 World Cup 2024 by beating South Africa in the final by seven runs on Saturday in Barbados. India joined England and the West Indies to win the T20 World Cup title two times as they won their first in 2007 by beating Pakistan in the final. The next edition of the T20 World Cup will be held in 2026 in India and Sri Lanka for which Pakistan have already qualified owing to their seventh place on the ICC T20I rankings.

Hockley hints at possible tri-series with Pakistan, India

Cricket Australia CEO Nick Hockley says Cricket Australia is keen to support, assist in organising bilateral, tri-series with these nations

SYDNEY: In a significant development for cricket fans in the subcontinent, Cricket Australia's Chief Executive Nick Hockley has expressed a strong desire to facilitate a high-profile tri-series involving India and Pakistan. This move comes amidst growing excitement for the long-awaited clash between these traditional rivals, which has always been a major attraction in the cricketing world. During an online press conference, Hockley highlighted the immense enthusiasm that surrounds India-Pakistan encounters. "Pakistan and India are traditional rival teams; there is a lot of excitement for their matches," the CEO remarked. He further elaborated that Cricket Australia is keen to support and assist in organising

both bilateral and tri-series with these nations. "We are ready to support both teams for a bilateral and a tri-series," Hockley added, emphasising the Australian cricket governing body's readiness to facilitate these high-stakes matches. "We would be happy to play a role in the revival of Pakistan-India bilateral series," said Hockley, reflecting Cricket Australia's eagerness to bring these two cricketing giants together on the same pitch. However, he also mentioned that any such plans would require coordination between the respective cricket boards and governments of both India and Pakistan. "The two boards need to decide first, and we will assist in hosting," he said, adding that formal discussions have yet to take place due

to the busy schedules of the cricket boards involved. "We absolutely want to see cricket grow" Considering Afghanistan's remarkable win against Australia, Hockley congratulated the Afghan team for their exceptional performance. He acknowledged the challenges the Afghan cricketers faced, particularly in the context of human rights issues affecting women's cricket in the country. Hockley also expressed hope for future progress that would allow for the resumption of bilateral cricket between two countries. Despite current restrictions, Cricket Australia maintains close communication with the Afghanistan Cricket Board and remains committed to supporting the growth of the sport in Afghanistan. While address-

ing questions regarding the support for Afghan women's cricket, he noted that several Afghan women cricketers residing in Australia are actively engaged in local cricket clubs, accredited to the support of the Australian cricketing community. Hockley emphasised Cricket Australia's commitment to advocating for women's cricket and expressed hope for positive changes that would allow Afghan women to participate more fully in the sport. "We absolutely want to see cricket grow and thrive all around the world for women and men," Hockley said. "The ongoing dialogue with the Afghanistan Cricket Board aims to encourage the development of women's cricket in Afghanistan, despite current political and social challenges." - Agencies

Miller reacts to T20I retirement rumours

CAPE TOWN: South Africa's middle-order batter David Miller has dismissed rumours that he had retired from T20Is following the World Cup final disappointment against India in Barbados. Miller took to Instagram on Tuesday, July 2, to confirm that he would be available to play for the Proteas in the shortest format of the game. "Contrary to reports, I have not retired from T20 international cricket. I will continue to be available for the Proteas. The best is yet to come," Miller wrote in his Instagram story. On Monday, Miller opened up after the final defeat and said he was gutted to be on the losing side. "I am gutted!! Really tough pill to swallow after what transpired 2 days ago. Words don't explain how I am feeling. One thing I do know is how proud I am of this unit. This journey was an incredible one, with highs and lows throughout the entire month. We have endured pain, but I know this team has the resilience and will keep raising the bar," Miller wrote on his Instagram story. India won the T20 World Cup 2024 after beating South Africa by seven runs in one of the most thrilling finals of all time at the Kensington Oval. India joined England and the West Indies to win the T20 World Cup title two times as they won their first in 2007 by beating Pakistan in the final. - Agencies



Brian Lara names 'greatest' pacer to play the game

LONDON: Former West Indies captain Brian Lara named England's James Anderson as the greatest pacer to ever play the game as the Englishman is nearing his retirement from international cricket. Anderson, 41, is widely considered England's greatest pacer as he made unmatched history throughout his career with the country and is the only pacer to bag 700 wickets in red-ball cricket. He is named in England's first Test squad against West Indies which will begin on July 10 at Lord's Cricket Ground and that would be Anderson's 188th and last red-ball match for England. Lara believes that Anderson is the greatest fast bowler to ever play the game as he has achieved many accolades during his career. "He is the greatest fast bowler that has ever played the game. His numbers are incredible, and he has served England well. I know he did not have that in mind (retiring from cricket), but I think he has accepted it. If that is the choice of his captain, coach, and selectors, then so be it," Lara said. "He has had a tremendous career for England. There are not many England cricketers who come close to Anderson (when asked about Anderson's legacy). He has taken the most Test wickets as a fast bowler and had a career that lasted for over 23 years." - Agencies

Gauff storms past qualifier to reach third round

LONDON: Coco Gauff stormed past Romanian qualifier Anca Todoni to move into the third round of Wimbledon. The second seed entertained the crowd under the roof on Court One with big hitting to earn a 6-2 6-1 victory in 66 minutes. A second convincing win this week marks progress for the American at SW19 after a surprise exit in the first round last year. "Overall, I just learned about life a lot. I guess you do as you get older," the 20-year-old said. "I realised what I do, yes I'm passionate about, but it's not that serious and sometimes the world can make you feel like there's so much pressure, so much expectation. "At the end of the day, it's a game, it's a sport and I'm very privileged to be playing out here." Todoni, 19, came into Wednesday's match on the back of a dominant win - and her first victory in a Grand Slam - over fellow

qualifier Olga Danilovic, of Serbia. But she faced a tougher opponent in US Open winner Gauff, who is among the favourites to go the distance at Wimbledon. After dropping serve early, Todoni couldn't make the most of any chances to break back. It was an uphill task from there for Todoni, who struggled to absorb Gauff's powerful ball striking and won just three points on her opponent's serve. Meanwhile, Andy Murray and Emma Raducanu are set to play mixed doubles at the ongoing Wimbledon 2024 in what is likely to be the former's final appearance at the Grand Slam. Murray, 37, withdrew from the singles on Thursday as he couldn't recover properly from his back injury but he will be in action in men's and as well as mixed doubles. In men's doubles, the 37-year-old will team up with his brother Jamie. Andy

Murray played in the mixed doubles in 2019 alongside the legendary Serena Williams where he reached the third round. Murray is aware that this is his last Wimbledon appearance as he has repeatedly said that he does not intend to play after summer and the Scot is aiming to leave the court on a high note. On the other hand, Raducanu cruised to Wimbledon's second round after beating Renata Zarazua 7-6, 6-3 in her first match of the tournament. The 2021 US Open idolises Murray and has often spoken highly of the two-time Wimbledon winner. "I think the biggest advice is just how he's always taken care of his operations, how he manages his people," she said. "I think for me it's just like watching him operate day to day, watching him be absolutely on it with everything. Even in practice now, he's so on it to the minute." - Agencies

Demiral's double sends Turkey to Euro 2024 Quarters

Merih Demiral struck in each half and their goalkeeper Gunok pulled off a superb stoppage-time save as they secured a high-octane 2-1 victory over Austria

OUR CORRESPONDENTS

LEIPZIG: Turkey's Merih Demiral struck in each half and their goalkeeper Mert Gunok pulled off a superb stoppage-time save as they secured a high-octane 2-1 victory over Austria on Tuesday to book their spot in Euro 2024's last eight. The central defender, who was man-of-the-match, scored after 57 seconds and added another with a powerful header just before the hour to set up a quarter-final on Saturday in Berlin against the Netherlands, who beat Romania 3-0 earlier on Tuesday. Austria cut the deficit through Michael Gregoritsch midway through the second half and were denied in the final seconds when Christoph Baumgartner's header was kept out by a stunning one-handed stop from Gunok. Celebrations broke out across many cities in Germany at the final whistle as thousands of Turks took to the streets, honking car horns, waving flags and chanting, with their national team eyeing a repeat of their Euro 2008 semi-final run. "This match was a very important match," said Turkey coach Vincenzo Montella. "It was a match where we reflected the team spirit from the first minute to the last minute." "This is actually a historic result, we have matched 2008 in terms of victories. This is very important. We are ad-

vancing step by step." For tournament dark horses Austria, it was a bitter end to their European Championship with the team still waiting for their first win in a knockout match at any major tournament since 1954. The Turks snatched the lead in a frantic start to the game when Demiral pounced on a goalmouth scramble following a corner to fire into the roof of the net for the fastest

ever goal in a Euros knockout match. Turkey were happy to leave possession to Austria, who beat them 6-1 in a friendly back in March, but kept pressing high and looked to catch them on the break, disrupting their opponents' usual no-frills playing style. Despite missing suspended captain Hakan Calhanoglu, the hard-charging Turks kept Austria at bay, with Ralf Rangnick's side

having no efforts on target in the first half. The Austrians came out fighting following the break, picking up the pace and should have levelled six minutes after the restart when captain Marko Arnautovic was sent through with only the keeper to beat but his shot was blocked by Gunok. Instead it was the Turks who struck again with Demiral beating two players in the air to head home from yet another corner by the excellent teenager Arda Guler for a 2-0 lead in the 59th minute. Amid pouring rain, Austria pulled a goal back when substitute Gregoritsch finished at the far post in the 66th and they reached a total of 20 attempts on goal as they kept pushing forward in search of an equaliser. Baumgartner thought he had got it with his added-time header but Gunok pulled off the save of the match, and possibly the Euros, by palming it wide to protect their slim lead. "We didn't have the necessary luck. I believe if the game had gone to extra time we would have had a chance to win, the Turks were fairly exhausted towards the end," said Rangnick. "The team tried everything, we scored, had chances to score but it's difficult if you have Gordon Banks in goal," he added, recalling the former England keeper's stunning stop to deny Brazil's Pele at the 1970 World Cup.



Iddat case verdict to be announced by July 12

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would be announced by July 12. Additional district and sessions Judge Muhammad Afzal Majoka heard the central appeals filed against the case. The court, meanwhile, adjourned the hearing on appeals against the conviction of Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi in the Nikkah Iddat case until July 8. As the hearing began, Imran Khan's counsel Salman Akram Raja gave the reference of Section 7 of the Muslim Family Law. In response, Judge Majoka raised a question, "Are you saying that Section 7 does not apply in this case?" Raja cited judicial decisions on Muslim law, mentioning that family law is part of personal law and falls under the jurisdiction of the Shariat Court. The court highlighted that Section 7 cannot be used to exert pressure. The judge observed that in one case, a woman claimed maintenance despite the lack of a Section 7 notice which the court granted. Raja argued that a woman could marry without a Union Council certificate and that invalidating thousands of marriages annually would create numerous inheritance issues. Citing the Allahd dad case, he said the court ruled that the Iddat restarts upon the husband's death. Various interpretations of the Iddat period were discussed, including the acceptance of 39 days and three menstrual cycles. Adding that court should give importance to the woman's testimony, Raja alleged that the statements of all witnesses, including Khawar Maneka and Latif, are based on lies. Later, Barrister Salman Safdar was asked to provide counterarguments. Safdar requested that his arguments be scheduled for Monday as he was unavailable the next day. He assured the court that he would conclude his arguments within two hours.

Ex-senator among 5 killed in...

FROM PAGE 01
Hidayat, who was a former independent senator from erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata), was killed in the bomb explosion along with four others, he added. He went to Damadola village in connection with the electioneering of a candidate in the PK-22 constituency - Najeeb Ullah Khan - who is his nephew. He faced the horrific bomb attack while returning to Bajaur's headquarters, Khar town, police said. According to the police, Malik Irfan from the tribal district's Niag Banda area and Nazir Deen from Nawagai town were also among the deceased in the horrific explosion which completely destroyed the vehicle. Hidayat belonged to an influential political family whose father was former National Assembly lawmaker Haji Bismillah Khan and his brother was former governor Shaukat Ullah. He was elected as an independent senator twice - from 2012 to 2018 and 2018 to 2024 - besides serving as the Upper House's Standing Committee for Aviation's chairman and a member of the National Counter-Terrorism Authority (Nacta).

UN chief calls for positive resolution in Khan's detention

FROM PAGE 01
incarcerated PTI founder, Guterres' spokesperson Stephane Dujarric acknowledged the independent panel's recommendation during a press briefing on Tuesday. "We want to see the current political situation, the current situation of Mr Khan, evolve in a much more positive way," Dujarric stated. The UN human rights working group has labelled Khan's detention as arbitrary and a violation of international law, urging for his immediate release. In response, Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar asserted that Khan's arrest and ongoing legal cases are strictly domestic matters.

Briefs

Greece's PM pledges to focus on economy

ATHENS: Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis pledged Tuesday to focus on the economy and reforms amid ongoing criticism over his party's disappointing results in European elections in June. "We will push for a reform agenda. The elections will be held in 2027, and we will be judged for the results we have produced at the end of this four-year period," Mitsotakis said in a discussion he attended at an international panel in Athens. Maintaining that Greece performs better than the EU average in terms of the growth rate, he said the protection of citizens' disposable income and reducing unemployment were the government's primary economic goals. Referring to the underperformance of the ruling New Democracy party, Mitsotakis said it remains the most dominant power in the country's political scene and continues to attract the most votes from centrist and right-wing voters.—APP

Militant attack in Mali kills 20 civilians

BAMAKO: An attack blamed on militants in central Mali killed more than 20 civilians on Monday, two local officials said, in the latest killings in the troubled Sahel region. Mali has for over a decade been ravaged by militants and other armed groups, with the center of the West African country becoming a hotbed of violence since 2015. "At least 21 civilians have been killed" in the village of Djiguibombo, several dozen kilometers (miles) from the town of Bandiagara, an official from the provincial authority said on Wednesday, speaking on condition of anonymity. He attributed the attack to militants. Another provincial authority official, who spoke overnight, said about 20 people had been killed and the security situation prevented authorities from going to the site. But a local youth representative said the army had arrived afterwards. Both local authority sources asked not to be identified given their positions. Since the junta came to power in 2020, information about such incidents is not generally made public. The attack began before nightfall and "lasted around three hours," the youth representative said, requesting anonymity for security reasons. "Twenty people have been killed. More than half are young people. Some victims had their throats cut," the source said. "Many inhabitants fled toward Bandiagara. Those who stayed were not even able to bury the dead properly," he said. The deteriorated security context, remote locations and a lack of reliable information mean that attacks often take a long time to confirm. Mali has since 2012 been plagued by different factions affiliated to Al-Qaeda and the Daesh group, as well as by self-declared self-defense forces and bands.—APP

Türkiye 'neutralizes' 6 PKK terrorists

ANKARA: Turkish security forces "neutralized" six PKK terrorists in northern Iraq's Hakurk region, the country's National Defense Ministry said on Wednesday. "Our heroic Turkish Armed Forces continue to bring down their iron fist on terrorists," the ministry said on X, adding: "Our operations will continue decisively until no single terrorist is left in the region." Turkish authorities use the term "neutralize" to imply the terrorists in question surrendered or were killed or captured. Terrorists often hide out in northern Iraq, just across the Turkish border, to plot terror attacks in Türkiye. In its nearly 40-year terror campaign against Türkiye, the PKK — listed as a terrorist organization by Türkiye, the US, and EU — has been responsible for the deaths of more than 40,000 people, including women, children, and infants.—Agencies

Indonesia, Malaysia vow to seek justice for Gaza

PM Anwar Ibrahim and Indonesian FM Retno Marsudi both discussed their commitment to defend Palestine on the international stage

NEWS DESK

JAKARTA: Indonesia and Malaysia vowed on Wednesday to continue seeking justice for the people of Gaza and to support Palestine's bid for full UN membership. The Southeast Asian neighbors are among the staunchest supporters of Palestinian statehood, with their officials consistently calling for a permanent ceasefire since the start of Israel's deadly onslaught on Gaza in October, and for the implementation of the two-state solution in Palestine. During a meeting in Malaysia's administrative capital of Putrajaya, Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim and Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi discussed their commitment to defend Palestine on the international stage. "Our conversation touched on the issue of Palestine, with both nations reaffirming our unwavering support for justice for the people of Gaza and the acceptance of Palestine as a full member of the United Nations," Ibrahim wrote on X



after the talks. Marsudi said in a statement after the meeting that Indonesia and Malaysia had the "same concerns toward the situation in Palestine" where Israeli airstrikes and ground offensives have killed in excess of 37,900 Palestinians and wounded more than 87,100 people. "Both nations also have strong commitments to support Palestinian independence," she said.

"Indonesia will continue with efforts to ensure an immediate and permanent ceasefire, to deliver humanitarian aid without hindrance, and preparations for the creation of a Palestinian state, including the issue of acceptance and full membership at the UN." In May, Indonesia and Malaysia voted at the UN General Assembly in support of a Palestinian bid to become a full member of the world body. The General Assembly resolution, which was approved by a vote of 143-9 with 25 abstentions, also called on the Security Council to reconsider Palestine's request to become a UN member, after its previous bid was vetoed by the US in April. Palestine has had a non-member observer state status since 2012, which allows it some rights short of a full membership that would allow it to cast a vote. Under the UN Charter, admission of prospective members must first be approved by the 15-member Security Council, before it goes for another round of voting at the General Assembly.

Pakistani IT companies offers diverse range of products : Fatima

Shaza Fatima said that the Belt and Road Initiative and the Digital Silk Route project were clear indications of the country's commitment to building a connected and technologically advanced world

WEB DESK

BEIJING: Minister of State for Information Technology and Telecommunication Shaza Fatima Khawaja on Wednesday said the Pakistani IT companies offered a diverse range of products and services from software development and cybersecurity to artificial intelligence and data analytics. "These capabilities complement the strengths of our global counterparts, paving the way for extensive collaboration," she said while addressing the EuroAsia Pakistan Digital Economy

Forum. The minister said that China had made remarkable advancements in artificial intelligence, big data, cloud computing, and 5G technology. The Belt and Road Initiative and the Digital Silk Route project were clear indications of the country's commitment to building a connected and technologically advanced world, she added. Dr Baige Zhao, Vice Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of 12th National People's Congress, said Pakistan and China were enhancing cooperation in digital technologies. "Pakistan has geographical advantages

and young population, Pakistan is the future of the digital economy," she added. Maroof Ali Shahani, Chief Executive Officer of Cyber Net in Pakistan said after collaboration with Alibaba, he was enjoying all services in China by using Pakistan payment system. Discussions centered on leveraging cutting-edge technologies, enhancing digital infrastructure, and fostering innovation to drive economic growth. The event highlighted the strategic importance of digital transformation and strengthened ties between Eurasian and Pakistani

stakeholders. Chinese and Pakistani companies signed a series of Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) at the Global Digital Economy Conference (GDEC) 2024. These agreements, aimed at fostering technological collaboration and innovation, underscore the deepening economic ties between the two nations and their shared commitment to driving digital transformation. The partnerships are expected to leverage cutting-edge technologies, boost digital infrastructure, and open new avenues for economic growth in both countries.

Sudan facing worst food insecurity in 2 decades

KHARTOUM: The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said Tuesday that Sudan is grappling with its worst food security situation in two decades. Vanessa Huguenin, OCHA's public information officer, made the statement during the UN agency's bi-weekly press conference in Geneva, as reported by the UN News website. "More than 60,000 people have fled due to fighting in the town of Singa in Sennar State, southeastern Sudan, along with insecurity in the Abu Hajar and Dali areas," Huguenin said. The situation escalated on Monday when the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) claimed control over the headquarters of the 67th Infantry Brigade and the 165th Artillery Brigade in Singa without any official response from the Sudanese army. On Sunday, the Sudanese army reported clashes with the RSF in Singa, the capital of Sennar State, which has led to a significant wave of displacement. Huguenin said that "most of the displaced, following clashes between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the RSF in Singa, are moving eastward to neighboring Gedaref State." The UN official emphasized that "women, children and entire families are being forced to flee, leaving everything behind," as the situation continues to deteriorate across Sudan. She reiterated that Sudan is currently facing its "worst food insecurity in 20 years." The conflict in Sudan broke out in April 2023 between army Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and RSF commander Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo over disagreements about integrating the RSF into the regular military. It has resulted in the deaths of nearly 16,000 people, displaced millions and caused a devastating humanitarian crisis in Sudan, according to UN figures.—APP

Rights group accuses Ethiopia of attacks on medical facilities

ADDIS ABABA: Ethiopian forces have committed "widespread attacks amounting to war crimes against medical professionals, patients, and health facilities" in the conflict-torn Amhara region, Human Rights Watch said on Wednesday. The northern region was under a state of emergency until last month after fighting erupted there between federal forces and the Fano "self-defense" militia in August 2023. In a 66-page report based on interviews with 58 people, including victims and eyewitnesses, global rights watchdog HRW said it had documented attacks by federal forces and a pro-government militia against "medical workers, health care facilities, and transports in at least 13 towns." "Soldiers beat, arbitrarily arrested, and intimidated medical professionals for providing care to the injured and sick, including alleged Fano fighters," HRW said, adding that troops also "unlawfully attacked ambulances and prevented hospitals from functioning.—APP

Australian coal mine battles five-day blaze

SYDNEY: A major Australian coal mine battled on Wednesday to extinguish an underground gas fire that has been burning for five days following a "combustion event". The blaze erupted on Saturday when gas ignited at Anglo American's Grosvenor mine in the eastern state of Queensland, forcing the evacuation of all workers and a halt to production. "The fire is still going and we are still working to safely seal up the last of the ventilation shafts using a variety of methods," a spokeswoman for Anglo American told AFP. "But we are very close." A remote controlled bulldozer helped to seal one shaft overnight, the firm said. Anglo American is working with state health and safety authorities on the next steps to ensure a "safe restart" to the mine, which employs about 1,400 people, it said. The re-opening is likely to take "several months as a result of the likely damage underground", Anglo American said in an earlier update. The group said air quality was "within acceptable limits". This indicated "no impact for community health from smoke or airborne contaminants", it said. The fire started when a "localised ignition" occurred at a site where coal is extracted in a long slice along a broad wall of the coal face, Anglo American said.—APP

Germany arrests 5 men for war crimes in Syria

BERLIN: German authorities arrested five men for committing war crimes in Syria, prosecutors announced on Wednesday. One of the suspects was an employee of the Syrian military intelligence service and involved in the violent suppression of peaceful demonstrations, abuse of civilians in detention centers, the Federal Prosecutor's Office said in a statement. The other suspects were members of an armed militia group which exercised control over the Yarmouk refugee camp near Damascus, on behalf of the Syrian regime, and were strongly suspected of committing crimes against humanity. "All of the accused took part in the violent suppression of a peaceful demonstration against the Syrian government in Yarmouk on July 13, 2012. Together with other accomplices, they deliberately shot at demonstrators. At least six people died from their injuries, and other victims were injured, some seriously," the prosecutors said. According to the authorities, the suspects cooperated closely with the Syrian military secret service, in particular with its departments 227 and 235, and they were involved in arbitrary arrests, physical abuse of civilians and enforced disappearances between 2012 and 2014. They were believed to have travelled to Germany during the refugee influx and applied for international protection. Germany's unique legislation the "Code of Crimes against International Law" gives courts universal jurisdiction over war crimes and crimes against humanity, and they can open full investigation into such crimes, even if they were not committed within its territory.—APP



Islamabad: Group Chief Executive of the Standard Chartered Bank, Bill Winters, called on President Asif Ali Zardari, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.—DNA

Far-right gains in Europe 'alarm bell to ring': Turk

'I'm always worried when I hear narratives that denigrate the other, dehumanize the other, that makes scapegoats of migrants and refugees and asylum seekers of minority groups,' says UN rights chief Volker Turk

FOREIGN DESK

GENEVA: The UN human rights chief on Wednesday warned that the rising far-right in Europe should ring an alarm bell. "I am always worried when I hear narratives that denigrate the other, dehumanize the other, that make scapegoats of migrants and refugees, and asylum seekers of minority groups," Volker Turk said in Geneva in response to Anadolu's question for an evaluation of the situation after far-right gains in European Parliament and France elections. "We need to be very vigilant, because especially history tells us, in particular in Europe, that the vilification of the other, that the denigration of the other is a harbinger for what's to

come," he said. "And yes, it's an alarm bell that we need to ring." "Absolutely critical" to continue work in Palestine Commenting on the conflict in Palestine, Turk said it is "absolutely critical" for the human rights office to continue its work to improve the accountability for crimes committed in Gaza and the occupied West Bank. It is "critical" to keep monitoring, reporting, and documenting to find ways and means to engage with authorities as well, he said. Asked if there is a need to establish an international tribunal to tackle breach of human rights, he said: "We have existing ones, and they are being used." It is "important" to ensure the current accountability mechanisms' ability to

work, Turk added. Israel has killed nearly 38,000 Palestinians since an Oct. 7, 2023 cross-border attack by Hamas. The actions have triggered a humanitarian disaster and an ongoing trial over alleged genocide at the International Court of Justice. Since then, Israeli raids and arrests have also increased in the West Bank. Meanwhile, a judge in Ontario, Canada ordered pro-Palestinian protesters to tear down their tents and clear out of the University of Toronto (U of T) by 6 p.m. Wednesday. After the deadline, the judge gave Toronto police the go-ahead to arrest anyone who refuses to leave the campus. The university had gone to court seeking an injunction to have the encamp-

ment of about 200 tents and protesters removed. The court also granted the university the use of police to clear the encampment. The protesters, who began occupying an area known as King's College Circle in downtown Toronto on May 2, were defiant in the face of the court order. U of T Occupy for Palestine, the organizers of the encampment, said in an X post that the court has given the university the "immoral right to unleash police violence" on students. "The university's shameful attempt to use legal force to brutalize its own students — for the crime of protesting genocide — will go down in history as a disgraceful chapter for this institution," the post said. University lawyers argued in court

that the protest breached school policies, made members of the university community feel unsafe and infringed on the rights of free speech of others, CBC News reported. The court found the protesters had prevented others from using the campus for 50 days and that amounts to "irreparable harm." "In my view, the harm to the university is greater if the injunction is not granted than is the harm to the respondents if the injunction is granted," the judge said. The protesters demanded that the university cut ties with Israel, stop dealing with companies that profit from Israel's war in Gaza and sever relations with any of Israel's academic institutions that are complicit in the war.

Floods kill at least 4 in India after heavy rains

NEW DELHI: Torrential rains in northeast India have sparked heavy flooding killing at least four people, government disaster officials have said. More than a million people have been impacted by floods, according to government figures on Wednesday. Monsoon rains cause widespread destruction every year, but experts say the climate crisis is shifting weather patterns and increasing the number of extreme weather events. Disaster authorities in the northeastern state of Assam said 38 people have been killed since mid-May when heavy rains battered the state, triggering floods and landslides. India's weather department has issued alerts for Assam and neighbouring states warning of the risk of more flash floods. Flood waters have damaged roads in the state, and the airforce rescued 13 fishermen stranded on an island. A major portion of the Kaziranga national park, a UNESCO world heritage site and home to the highest number of one-horned rhinos in the world, has also been flooded. "Forest guards have been put on alert," park official Arun Vignesh said. "Hundreds of animals have started crossing the highway in search of higher ground". Floods have also swamped vast areas in Bangladesh, downstream from India's northeast region.—DNA

Briefs

Chaotic party must be ashamed of rowdyism

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Punjab Minister for Information and Broadcasting and PML-N leader Azma Bukhari has responded to Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) party, opposition in the Punjab Assembly, saying, "anarchic party must be ashamed of rowdyism in the premises of Punjab Assembly. She claimed that opposition party members in the assembly didn't support them, they gathered people defeated in the election for the protest. She hit out at the opposition party for the protest against the incumbent Punjab government, referring to them as the terrorists of May 9 who were involved in the mischievous acts in the assembly for four months. She lambasted the opposition party for holding protest at the Punjab Assembly gate, "people involved in objectionable language inside the assembly are repeating the same outside the assembly,"

Lebanon 'a hell with no return for Zionists'

TEHRAN: Iran's interim foreign minister has praised Lebanon's resistance as a vigorous actor against the Israeli regime, warning that in case of a new war the Arab country will turn into a "hell with no return" for the occupying entity. Ali Bagheri Kani made the remark on the sidelines of the Iranian government's weekly cabinet meeting in the capital Tehran on Wednesday as tension has intensified between the Hezbollah resistance movement with the Israeli aggression on the country's south since October last year, concurrent with the regime's brutal onslaught against Palestinians in the besieged Gaza Strip. "In Lebanon, the resistance has played a role as a vigorous actor that created deterrence both in the international field and in the field of diplomacy," Bagheri Kani said. - Agencies

5 minors drown in rainwater pool

AWARAN: Five minors lost their lives after drowning in accumulated rainwater in Awaran district of Balochistan on Wednesday. According to Deputy Commissioner Awaran, the minors were playing in the rainwater pool when they slipped and fell into the deep water. The victims, aged between two and minor years, were all from the same family. Their bodies have been recovered and shifted to a nearby hospital in Quetta. The Deputy Commissioner has expressed deep condolences to the bereaved family and assured them of all possible support. - Agencies

Heavy fighting rocks Gaza as thousands on the move again

The Israeli forces have continued their ground invasion of large neighborhoods in Rafah, since May 7, while storming the Shuja'iya neighborhood for the sixth day amid air and artillery bombardment

NEWS DESK

GAZA STRIP, Palestinian Territories: Israeli forces bombed and battled Hamas in Gaza City on Wednesday as tens of thousands of Palestinians scrambled for a safe haven after the army issued an evacuation order for a vast swathe in the territory's south. Apache helicopters and Israeli quadcopter drones flew above Gaza City's Shuja'iya district as heavy gunfire echoed through the streets, said AFP reporters. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rejected a US media report saying his generals were urging a Gaza truce even with Hamas undefeated, stressing on Tuesday that "this will not happen." Military chief Herzli Halevi meanwhile said Israel is engaged in "a long campaign" to destroy Hamas over the October 7 attack and to bring home the hostages held by Palestinian militants. The United Nations warned that the almost nine-months-old war had "unleashed a maelstrom of human misery" and that the latest evacuation order had plunged yet more Palestinians into "an abyss of suffering." Ten days after Netanyahu said the war's "intense phase" was winding down, the Israeli military again rained down air strikes and artillery fire on militants in the Shuja'iya district. The air force struck "over 50 terror infrastructure sites" across Gaza in 24 hours while ground troops "eliminated terrorists," located tunnels and found weapons including AK-47 assault rifles, the military said. The Israeli army - which issued an evacuation order for Shuja'iya a week ago - on Sunday did the same for a

'Israel' approved largest WB land seizure in 3 decades

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM: The largest seizure of land in the occupied West Bank in more than three decades has been just approved by "Israel", according to anti-settlement watchdog Peace Now, which could further exacerbate tensions already on the rise since the Israeli genocide on Gaza started on October 7. The approved seizure involves 12.7 square kilometers (nearly 5 square miles) of land in the Jordan Valley. This, according to the group's research, constitutes the largest single seizure approved since the 1993 Oslo Accords. Following the seizure of 8 square kilometers (about 3 square miles) of land in the occupied West Bank in March and 2.6 square kilometers (1 square mile) in February, today's land seizure was approved late last month but was only made public on Wednesday. The contiguous settlements are situated northeast of Ramallah, and the occupation has classified them as "state lands", meaning that Palestinians cannot own them and they can only be leased to Israelis. Israeli police repeatedly clashed with settlers in the occupied West Bank while dismantling an unauthorized settler outpost early on Wednesday, according to video footage reviewed by Reuters. The video showed police using excavators to demolish makeshift structures at the outpost. Settlers attempted to block police access by sitting across a road, but officers removed them forcibly, as depicted in the video. This is happening as "Israel" faces international pressure to restrict settlement expansion in the occupied West Bank. The outpost, located in a rural region, violates both Israeli and international laws. - Agencies

Antonio Guterres's spokesman Stephane Dujarric said the order covers 117 square kilometers (45 square miles), or "about a third of the Gaza Strip, making it the largest such order since October." The UN humanitarian coordinator for Gaza, Sigrid Kaag, told the UN Security Council in New York on Tuesday that the war had now displaced 80 percent of Gaza's population. She also said not enough aid was reaching the besieged territory and that crossings must be reopened, particularly to southern Gaza, to avert a humanitarian disaster. "Palestinian civilians in Gaza have been plunged into an abyss of suffering, their home lives shattered, their lives upended," she said. "The war has not merely created the most profound of humanitarian crises. It has unleashed a maelstrom of human misery." Amid the war, siege and mass displacement, more than 150,000 people have contracted skin diseases in the squalid conditions, said the World Health Organization. Wafaa Elwan, a Palestinian mother of seven who now lives in a tent city by the sea, said: "We sleep on the ground, on sand where worms come out underneath us." She said her five-year-old son, much of whose body was covered in rashes and welts, "can't sleep through the night because he can't stop scratching his body." The bloodiest ever Gaza war broke out after Hamas's October 7 attack on southern Israel resulted in the deaths of 1,195 people, mostly civilians, according to an AFP tally based on Israeli figures. The militants also seized 251 hostages, 116 of whom remain in Gaza including 42 the army says are dead. Israel's retaliatory offensive since then has killed at least 37,925 people, also mostly civilians, according to data from the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory. The Israeli military said Wednesday that "operational activities continue throughout the Gaza Strip." The Gaza civil defense agency said seven people were killed when a strike hit a family house north of Gaza City. Another strike killed three people in a car at Al-Maghazi refugee camp in the central Deir Al-Balah area, said an AFP reporter. - Agencies

Egypt overhauls cabinet as power cuts persists

CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi swore in a reshuffled cabinet on Wednesday that includes new finance and foreign ministers in a government facing challenges including the Gaza war on its border, economic woes and persistent power cuts. When the resignation of the previous cabinet was announced a month ago, El-Sisi reappointed Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly and said his new government should focus on lowering inflation and regulating markets as well as boosting investment. Sworn in as the new finance minister was Ahmed Kouchouk, formerly deputy finance minister and facing perhaps the biggest challenge in managing a stumbling economy and a debt burden that has soared in recent years. Egypt's sovereign dollar bonds rallied on Wednesday, with the longer-dated maturities gaining the most. The 2047 maturity rose by 1.96 cents to trade at 75.16 cents on the dollar by 11:24 GMT. At the foreign ministry, Egypt's ambassador to the European Union, Badr Abdelattay, replaces Sameh Shoukry, a veteran who has steered Egypt's diplomatic efforts to contain the impact of the war in Gaza. Karim Badawi was appointed as petroleum minister, Mahmoud Esmat as electricity minister and General Abdel Majeed Saqr as defense minister. - Agencies



ASTANA: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif meets with President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev on the sidelines of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation Summit. - DNA

Only Imran Khan could lead Pakistan on path to redemption

Laments inordinate delay in case of civilians trial in military court

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Central Information Secretary Raof Hasan categorically stated currently, there is no democracy in the country, but rather a worst form of autocracy, unacceptable to the people under any circumstances, adding that only PTI Founding Chairman Imran Khan could pull the country out of prevailing quagmire. He alarmed that the people's estrangement from the state and the state institutions was worsening due to non-implementation of their constitutional and fundamental rights. Speaking at a press conference along with Abuzar Salman Niazi, member PTI Core Committee, Raof said that the fast-widening chasm between people and state institutions could

lead to a major calamity. PTI CIS vowed that Imran Khan was the only leader who could lead the country towards redemption, because there was no leader of his stature in the country presently. Therefore, he stressed that political forces and establishment would have to approach him to steer the country from the prevailing crises, which were intensifying with each passing day. Talking about the US House of Representatives' resolution, HR 901 and UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention report, he said that both these were major developments, as the government considered all such developments as an intervention in Pakistan's internal affairs but democratic people, who wanted people should be given all human rights, welcomed them. He remarked that PTI welcomed it not because an intervention in Pakistan's internal affairs but as an expression of inherent desire of people of the country who wanted democracy and freedom of expression, right to vote, and free, fair and transparent elections in the country.

Ji emir announces "Haq do Awaamko" movement

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Jamat-i-Islami emir Hafiz Naeemur Rehman on Wednesday announced to start "Haq do Awaamko" movement. Speaking at a press conference in Islamabad, the Ji chief said that his party would start a "historical sit-in" the capital against the government to raise voice for a common man who, he said, was suffering the most from recently passed budget. He said that the Ji would lodge its protest alone as other parties were full of deep splits. He censured the government for oppressing the salaries class in the budget. "I want to ask Shehbaz Sharif why he hasn't imposed taxes on landlords. We

want to ask you why you aren't blocking the SIMs of landlords and only blocking those of masses," he bemoaned. He lamented that people were giving taxes on everything, adding that the government was dropping bomb on the masses in form of electricity bills. Speaking about deteriorating security situation in country, the Ji chief deplored that now people were left to fend for themselves. He castigated the government for hoodwinking farmers and leaving them in the lurch. He demanded imposition of taxes on landlords owning more than 100 acres of land. He asked the government to abdicate privileges given to ruling elite, urging that sacrifices should be given by elite instead of masses.

"China-Russia ties at high level": Xi after meeting Putin

The pair met on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in the Kazakh capital of Astana - a regional political and economic bloc that the two leaders see as a counterweight to US "hegemony" in international affairs

FOREIGN DESK

ASTANA: Russian President Vladimir Putin told Chinese leader Xi Jinping on Wednesday that relations between Beijing and Moscow were stronger than ever before. The pair met on the sidelines of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit in the Kazakh capital of Astana - a regional political and economic bloc that the two leaders see as a counterweight to US "hegemony" in international affairs. Putin hailed the group as "strengthening its role as one of the key pillars of a fair multipolar world order" in opening remarks of a meeting with Xi that were published on Russian state TV. Alongside Russia and China, four Central Asian states, India, Iran and Pakistan are members of the SOC. Beijing has become Moscow's key political and economic partner since it invaded Ukraine in February 2022, triggering a raft of Western sanctions. "Russian-Chinese relations, our comprehensive partnership and strategic cooperation, are experiencing their best period in history," Putin said.

Russian missiles and drones strike eastern Ukraine

KYIV: A Russian missile and drone attack on the eastern Ukrainian city of Dnipro on Wednesday killed five civilians and injured 47 others, including a 14-year-old girl, authorities said. Blasts blew out some windows of a shopping mall, raining shards onto the street, photos published by local officials showed. Mayor Borys Filatov said the daytime attack also shattered windows in two schools and three kindergartens. Debris struck the intensive care unit of a children's hospital, and a fire broke out in another hospital. A video posted on social media by President Volodymyr Zelensky showed a missile with a fiery trail streaking over buildings in Ukraine's fourth-largest city, and debris flying into the air from its impact. The war, now in its third year since Russia invaded its neighbor, has killed more than 10,000 civilians and wounded around 20,000 others, the UN says. - Agencies

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