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'Ukraine can and will stop Putin': President Biden

Detailed News On Page-08

Nasrallah urges Muslim solidarity with Gaza

Detailed News On Page-07



Shahid Afridi wants real surgery in team

Detailed News On Page-06



Decides to abolish 5 more ministries Pakistan extends stay of Afghan refugees for 1 year

The development came a day after United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Filippo Grandi met top Pakistani officials including Prime Minister Shehbaz and appreciated the country for suspending the "Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan"

ANSAR BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has extended Afghan refugees legally residing in the country by another one year, according to an official statement issued following the cabinet meeting on Wednesday. In its meeting, the federal cabinet approved a one-year extension of Proof Of Registration (POR) cards for 1.45 million Afghan refugees legally residing in the country and whose POR cards expired last month. The extension in the POR cards has been granted till 30th June next year. The development came a day after United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) Filippo Grandi met top Pakistani officials including Prime Minister Shehbaz and appreciated the country for suspending the "Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan," according to a statement issued by the UNHCR. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has decided to abolish more ministries and departments, directing concerned officials to fast-track the implementation of austerity plan. Chairing a federal cabinet meeting which was held at PM House in Islamabad on Wednesday, Shehbaz Sharif sought a strategy within a week for abolition of more ministries as the cabinet endorsed wrapping up of PWD department. Institutional Reforms Cell officials briefed the president on abolition of five more ministries and their relevant institutions. Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb informed the participants of the cabinet meeting about the right-sizing and reducing the ministries' strength. The prime minister sought recommendations from the five ministries within a week. According to the sources, Information Technology Ministry topped the list of five ministries from whom the recommendations were sought by the prime minister.

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No decision on wheat export: PM tells NA

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday told the National Assembly that the government had made no decision for the export of wheat. "No decision has been made for the export of wheat. I want to bring it on record before the House that there is no such decision for the wheat export," he told the National Assembly responding to a point of order raised by a parliamentarian. However, referring to the PTI government's sugar and wheat scams, he recalled that it was also on record that in the past wheat and sugar were first exported and later imported and where the billions and trillions of rupees went was part of the history. The prime minister also appreciated National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq for showing "generosity" to give floor to the opposition leader which was not practiced during the speakership of Asad Qaiser. Meanwhile, the House today passed "the State Owned Enterprises (Governance and Operations) Bill, 2024."

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif addresses the federal cabinet. – DNA

Decision allowing ISI to tap phones challenged in LHC

Petition filed by citizen lists PM Shehbaz, the federal govt, and PTA as respondents

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) has received a petition contesting the government's decision to grant the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) the authority to tap phones. This follows the Shehbaz Sharif-led coalition government's justification of the controversial move under the banner of "national security." The petition, filed on Wednesday, by citizen Fahad Shabbir, lists the PM Shehbaz, the federal government, and the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) among its respondents.

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Israel orders civilians to leave Gaza City

Strikes early Wednesday hit three houses in the Nuseirat refugee camp, killing 12 people including five children

NEWS DESK

DEIR AL-BALAH, Gaza Strip: Israeli airstrikes early Wednesday killed 20 Palestinians in central Gaza, including six children and three women, some of them inside a purported "safe zone" declared by the Israeli military, hospital authorities said. This second straight night of deadly strikes in the central town of Deir Al-Balah and nearby refugee camps came as US, Egyptian and Qatari mediators as well as Israeli officials came together in the Qatari capital, Doha,

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Imran Khan demands Establishment 'must step back' to ensure transparent elections

Imran questioned why petitions on human rights and the February 8 case are not being heard in the SC

KHAYAM ABBASI

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) incarcerated and beleaguered founding chairperson Imran Khan emphasised the urgent need for the establishment to step back to ensure transparent elections in the country. "If we want to save the country, the establishment must step back to move towards transparent elections," the former premier asserted during an informal talk with media in the Rawalpindi's Adiala jail today. The PTI supremo highlighted the drastic increase in national debt, stating that in 2021, it was Rs2.8 trillion, but within four years, it had surged to Rs8 to Rs9 trillion. He criticised the current government for failing the nation, saying, "The current government has destroyed Pakistan's hope; no one trusts this government anymore." Imran pointed out the severe economic burdens on the common people, noting, "The poor who used to have a 2,000 rupee bill now face a 10,000 rupee bill."

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Four security personnel martyred in Peshawar IBO

During conduct of the operation three terrorists including HVT, Terrorist Commander Abdul Raheem were sent to hell

SHAMIM SHAHID

RAWALPINDI: On 10 July 2024, a joint intelligence based operation was conducted by Security Forces and Police in general area Hassan Khel, Peshawar District on reported presence of a high profile terrorist. During conduct of the operation, after intense exchange of fire, three terrorists including HVT, Terrorist Commander Abdul Raheem were sent to hell. Weapons and ammunition were also recovered from

Imran formally expresses mistrust on CJP

Objection submitted in response to appeals filed against SC's decision to annul NAB amendments

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan has filed an objection against the involvement of Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa in his ongoing cases. The objection was submitted in response to intra-court appeals filed against the Supreme Court's decision to annul the National

Continued on Page 06



killed terrorists. Terrorist Commander Abdul Raheem was highly wanted by the Law Enforcement Agencies and Government had fixed Head money of PKR 6 Million on him, as he remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities, and was also responsible for Shahadat of Captain Hussain Jehangir Shaheed and Havildar Shafiqullah Shaheed on 26 May 2024. Operation has avenged the heinous act and has brought the main perpetrator to justice. However, during intense exchange of fire,

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Briefs

Nawaz wants power relief for masses

Dar also briefed the PML-N supremo about his recent foreign visit

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) supremo and party president Nawaz Sharif has sought relief for middle class in the electricity bills. According to sources, the PML-N president in a meeting with Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar, asked him to control inflation and give relief to the people in the extraordinary inflated electricity bills. Dar also briefed the PML-N supremo about his recent foreign visits.

IPP agreements reason behind power crises

Says, Pakistan's economy has come to a standstill

ADIL SHAHEEN

RAWALPINDI: The Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Pakistan opposed the federal government's agreements with Independent Power Producers (IPPs), terming them the main reason behind the energy crisis in the country. Addressing a presser in Rawalpindi, JI Naib Ameer Liaquat Baloch lambasted the government over its 'failure' to address inflation, unemployment, and other issues being faced by the masses. He said that Pakistan's economy has come to a standstill. Responding to the recent budget, the JI Naib Ameer termed it a "document of national destruction". Ameer Liaquat Baloch said that the government and its allies are 'oblivious' to the suffering of the people, pointing to the massive increase in electricity bills, which he said left the common man disillusioned with their future.

Interfering judicial procedures

Justice Jahangiri receives 'suspicious' calls, messages

Sources say caller claiming to be the FIA DG tried to contact Justice Tariq Jahangiri at his office

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad High Court's (IHC) Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri has been targeted by suspicious calls and messages, it was revealed on Wednesday. Sources from the judiciary disclosed that the caller purported to be the Director-General of the FIA (Federal Investigation Agency). However, subsequent investigations determined that the FIA DG did not place any such call. The individual behind the suspicious communication attempted to directly contact Justice Jahangiri. In response, the top jurist has directed the court registrar to promptly inform the FIA, providing them with the mobile number associated with the incident. According to insiders, the suspicious call was directed to Justice Jahangiri's office at the Islamabad High Court just two days ago. Additionally, messages were sent to the judge's personal mobile number from the same suspicious source. Previously, the Islamabad High Court (IHC) has decided to confront head-on the alleged government-backed

Continued on Page 06

Fazl stresses deeper examination of root causes of terrorism

JUI-F chief says will comment on issue of SIC reserved seats after court has announced its verdict

SHAMIM SHAHID

DI KHAN: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman has stated that he will comment on the issue of reserved seats after the court has announced its verdict. It should be noted that the hearing on the petition filed by the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) against the denial of reserved seats concluded Tuesday in the Supreme Court, with the decision now reserved. Speaking to media at a gathering in DI Khan, Fazlur said the Pakistani government should think as an independent and sovereign state.

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Khattak records his testimony in 190m pounds reference

Pervez Khattak, in his statement, said "Shehzad Akbar informed that money from Pakistan was sent abroad illegally that was confiscated in Britain and that money would be returned to Pakistan"

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

RAWALPINDI: The accountability court in Rawalpindi's Adiala jail has adjourned the hearing of the 190 million pounds reference against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan and his spouse Bushra Bibi until July 13. Accountability court's judge Muhammad Ali Warraich heard the 190 million pounds reference in Rawalpindi's Adiala jail. During the hearing, Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi appeared before the court from jail. A witness in the reference, former federal minister Pervez Khattak, recorded his testimony during the hearing. Pervez Khattak, in his statement, said "Shehzad Akbar informed that money from Pakistan was sent abroad illegally that was confiscated in Britain and that money would be returned to Pakistan." Khattak informed that this matter was not included in

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SIC reserved seats case Top court likely to announce verdict today

CJP holds consultations over order related to reserved seats with full court's member judges, say sources

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court (SC) is expected to announce a verdict on a case related to reserved seats of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) backed Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) on

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Africa City Celebrations in Islamabad

National Day of Portugal celebrated

LARGEST CIRCULATED DIPLOMATIC MAGAZINE

Ahsan admires innovative spirit of young entrepreneurs

ICCI President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari highlighted several key initiatives under his leadership that benefited the business community and residents

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD : Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry



(ICCI), commended the innovative spirit of young entrepreneurs, highlighting ICCI's commitment to fostering entrepreneurship and a start-up culture for the nation's economic prosperity. Speaking at a ceremony organized by Ameer Hamza Sid-

dique, President of the Young Entrepreneurs Club and ICCI Executive Member, Bakhtawari emphasized the Chamber's efforts to facilitate business operations, boost exports, and attract investments. He pointed

universities to strengthen academia-industry partnerships, aiming to nurture the next generation of successful entrepreneurs. During the event, Bakhtawari highlighted several key initiatives under his leadership that benefited the business community and residents. Ameer Hamza Siddique, who hosted the Commonwealth dinner to honor successful young business people and promote youth entrepreneurship, stated that ICCI welcomes young entrepreneurs to seek guidance from seasoned business leaders. This initiative aligns with Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif's youth program. Deputy Secretary PMYP, Dr. Muhammad Malik Ali, also graced the event with his presence and pledged unwavering support for the initiative, recognizing its potential to significantly impact the country's economic development. The event saw a large turnout of young entrepreneurs who expressed their appreciation for ICCI's proactive role, especially the efforts of President Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari.

SCCI president holds meeting with federal ministers

SIALKOT, Jul 10 (APP)-Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) President Abdul Ghafoor Malik held a detailed meeting with Federal Minister for Commerce Jam Kamal Khan and Federal Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif. Multiple matters of significance importance particularly revival of the Final Tax Regime (FTR), the launch of the new LTLD and DDT Scheme, formation of the EDF Board and the issuance of note verbale for Sialkot Chamber's Brazil delegation were discussed. Both the ministers assured of their full support on the issues presented by the President SCCI Abdul Ghafoor Malik.—APP

Over Rs. 2m released for cops' medical treatment

LAHORE: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar has ordered for releasing over Rs 2 million for treatment of ailing and injured police officers in Lahore and other districts. The IGP issued Rs 1.4 million for traffic ward of Lodhran police, Muhammad Dildar, for leg operation and treatment. Rs 0.2 million were released for medical expenses of injured Constable Muhammad Mujahid of Faisalabad police. Constable Zawar Hussain was given Rs 0.16 million for cancer treatment. Rs 150,000 were released to the injured Constable Tameel Hussain of Sialkot police for medical expenses. Injured Constable Abdul Khaliq of Faisalabad Police was given Rs 150,000 for medical expenses.—APP

Civil society praises NCHR's 2% minority quota implementation

The NCHR has directed all public sector universities to comply with the reserved 2 percent admission quota for minorities

SHAMIM SHAID

PESHAWAR: The Civil Society Support Group has lauded role of the National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) in promoting minority groups' equal access to higher education. The NCHR has directed all public sector universities to comply with the reserved 2 percent admission quota for minorities, following the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government's approval of the quota in 27 public sector universities in 2021. Miss Yumna Aftab, Project Manager at Blue Veins, said that approximately 16 out of 27 public sector universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have complied with the allocated 2 percent admission quota for minorities. She attributed this progress to the proactive support and efforts of the NCHR,

emphasizing the Commission's significant role in this achievement. Members of the Civil Society Organization (CSO) Support Group, established by Blue Veins under the initiative "Faith in Action for Equal Rights and Opportunities," praised NCHR's proactive approach towards addressing the issues faced by minority communities. The group also highlighted the need for a centralized database to assess the implementation and effectiveness of the quota system. The formation of the Sub-Committee on Minority Issues by NCHR, aimed at safeguarding the rights of minority groups and addressing their challenges in accessing education, was lauded by civil society members. They emphasized the importance of proactive engagement by duty bearers in addressing

social issues and its positive impact on societal development. The members reiterated that improving socio-economic conditions and uplifting diverse faith communities can only be achieved through collaborative efforts and ensuring equal opportunities for all societal groups. The recent directive by NCHR to the Governor Inspection Team to instruct universities to share their compliance reports further strengthens the support for this cause, ensuring the effective utilization of the quota by minority communities. The NCHR's commitment to expediting the implementation of this quota is seen as a commendable effort, as it not only enhances access to education for minorities but also ensures an inclusive and accessible education system for all.

Anjuman donates Rs 1mln for drug rehabilitation: SSP

QUETTA: Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operation Quetta Muhammad Baloch on Wednesday said that the representatives of Anjuman Tajran have given funds Rs one million to the police for the rehabilitation of drug addicts which was admirable initiative. He expressed these views while addressing a meeting regarding drug addicts. The meeting was attended by Focal Person for Narcotics DIG Ali Sher Jakhri along with the President of Central Anjuman Tajran Registered Balochistan Abdul Rahim Kakar Dad shopping center and other officials. During the meeting, for the treatment of drug addicts in the rehabilitation center, the president of Anjuman Tajran, Abdul Rahim Kakar Dad the owner of the shopping center and other businessmen donated one million rupees for the treatment of drug addicts. On this occasion, the SSP said that just as the representatives of Anjuman Tajran have given funds to the police for the rehabilitation of drug addicts. Similarly, if the businessmen and other philanthropists of the province also cooperate, by ensuring the treatment of drug addicts from the society, such people can be made useful men of the society, he said. The shopping center owner assured the SSP operation that the rehabilitation and treatment of drug addicts would be continued and to play a role for the betterment of the city.—DNA



ISLAMABAD : Federal Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal inaugurated the Seventh Agricultural Census 2024 at a ceremony held by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS).—DNA

Banks to observe Ashura holidays on July 16, 17

DNA

KARACHI : The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) and all banks and financial institutions will remain closed on July 16 and 17, 2024 on the occasion of Ashura 1446 A.H. The central bank, in a statement issued here on Wednesday, informed that SBP will remain closed on July 16 and 17, 2024, (Tuesday and Wednesday) being public holidays on the occasion of Ashura (9th and 10th Moharram 1446 A.H.). All the banks, Micro Finance Banks (MFBs), Development Finance Institutions (DFIs), and banking and non-banking financial institutions will also remain close on July 16 and 17 accordingly.

IESCO issues power suspension schedules

DNA

ISLAMABAD: According to Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO)'s spokesman, System Maintenance/Development Work is in process. Therefore power supply of below mentioned feeders/areas will be temporary suspended as per given schedule: On 11 th July 2024, From 06:00 AM to 10:00 AM, Islamabad Circle, Sohdran Road, Ghori Garden, Sharifabad, Burma, Khanna Dak, Upper Topa, Patriata, TDCP, FSH Feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle, Tench Bhatta, Shams Colony, Pindhoon, F-Block Feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Zaraj-I, Zaraj-II, IST, Dhok Awan, Mohra Nagyal, Dhaniyal, UC Lakhana, Gulshan Saeed, Jail Park-I Feeders, Attock Circle, Shakardara feeder and surrounding areas will remain closed. IESCO management apologizes to its esteemed customers for the power outage. If the work is completed ahead of time, the power supply can be restored even before the scheduled time.

Kisan Ittehad applauds PM's solarization of agri-tubewells

Chairman Kisan Ittehad thanked Chief Minister of Balochistan Sarfraz Bugti and the Prime Minister of Pakistan for their orders to convert thousands of tube wells to solar power

DNA

QUETTA: Chairman of Kisan Ittehad, Khalid Husain Bath on Wednesday lauded Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif's initiative of converting 28,000 tube wells to solar panels in Balochistan. Addressing a press conference here at Quetta Press Club, he said shifting of tube wells to solar energy will pave the way for Balochistan's development and prosperity.

"Balochistan has fertile land and making agricultural lands cultivable can increase the country's resources," he said, urging that the province has around 40,000 tube wells, and an additional 16,000 tube wells should also be converted to solar energy. The Chairman Kisan Ittehad thanked Chief Minister of Balochistan Sarfraz Bugti and the Prime Minister of Pakistan for their orders to convert thousands of tube wells to solar power. He requested Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Chief Minister Balochistan to take measures to promote tourism in the province, ensuring the security of tourist areas to increase the province's resources. He noted that last year's heavy rains caused significant damage to farmers, and stressed the need that the government should immediately compensate for their losses. He also called for taking precautionary measures to deal with the upcoming rains in order to minimize the losses to landowners.

Minister highlights impacts of climate change

DNA

PESHAWAR : Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Agriculture, Sajjad Barkwal on Wednesday highlighted the vital role water on human health, food security, basic needs and energy production and said that governments around the world are concerned about impacts of climate change

on water resources. He was addressing the opening session of a National Workshop on High Efficiency Irrigation System in a local hotel. Workshop was attended by Director General on Farm Water Management KP Hayat Khan, experts related to irrigation and agriculture, representatives of World Bank and FIO. The minister said that policy makers round the globe are concerned about effects of climate change on water resources and lives of people. He appreciated performance of On Farm Water Management KP and the management is working day and night for timely completion of ongoing projects. He also urged participants and experts to guide by formulating suitable recommendations for timely achievement of the goals.

Urgent call for population management on World Population Day

General Assembly decided to continue observing this day to raise awareness of population issues, including their relation to the environment and development. The day was first observed on July 11, 1990, in more than 90 countries

ABID RAZA

LAHORE : While observing World Population Day, the speakers urged the government to prioritize population control by focusing on four key components including women empowerment, resource mobilization, population management, and poverty alleviation. PODA, in collaboration with the Department of Social Work at the University of Punjab, Lahore, observed World Population Day at the university premises. The event saw participation from a diverse group including students, community members, academicians, government

officials from the social work and education departments, lawyers, media personnel, health workers, professionals, NGO representatives, and politicians. The observance is part of PODA's three-year project titled "Reduce Early Marriages to Enhance Gender Equality," funded by the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Islamabad. World Population Day is marked annually on July 11. By resolution 45/216 of December 1990, the United Nations General Assembly decided to continue observing this day to raise awareness of population issues, including their relation to the environment and development. The day was first observed on July

11, 1990, in more than 90 countries. Dr. Qais Aslam, Professor of Economics and Head of the Business School at the University of Central Punjab, emphasized the need to manage and balance the population according to existing resources. He highlighted the urgent need to provide skill-based education to both women and men so they can work together to improve their quality of life. Tanveer Jahan, Executive Director of the Democratic Commission for Human Development, Lahore stated that reducing child marriage contributes to lower population growth by allowing girls to complete their

education and enter the workforce, leading to smaller, healthier families. This change fosters economic stability and improves the overall quality of life for future generations. Prof. Javeria Q. Joyia, Director of Sustainability at UCP and International Climate Reality Leader, USA, discussed ways to adapt to climate change effectively by utilizing available resources and emphasizing the importance of donating unused items and recycling. She stressed the need for innovation and entrepreneurship to utilize resources efficiently while generating livelihoods for others. Nida Usman Chaudhary, Advocate and Founder of

the Women in Law Initiative, Pakistan, underscored the need for a comprehensive reproductive health policy. She highlighted that population is not just a personal family planning issue but also a women's rights, human rights, economic, environmental, and survival issue for the state. It is a political stability issue that can exacerbate inequalities leading to social unrest and higher crime rates, she added. Quoting a study, she said, "Family planning alone, without improving the low status of women and girls around the world, will likely have only a limited impact on broader economic and social development."



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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/Argentine
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

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Marriott.....051- 2826121
Monal.....0334-5421812



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



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Fire Services Rawalpindi/
Islamabad.....1122 & 16
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MH.....561116
Cantt Hospital...9270907-11
DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
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Shifa International 4603666



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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Massive fire engulfs over 300 stalls at Sunday market

Chief Commissioner Randhawa forms committee to probe fire incident in H-9



ISLAMABAD: Vendors try to save their belonging from their shops after a massive fire erupted at H-9 Sunday weekly bazaar in the Federal Capital, More than 100 shops were gutted in the fire that broke out in Sunday weekly bazaar. —ONLINE

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: A massive fire erupted at Islamabad's Sunday Bazaar on Wednesday, engulfing over 300 stalls, with police saying an investigation into the cause of the fire is underway. The incident occurred at the capital's I-9 open-air market, where vendors set up stalls each week to sell a wide variety of goods. "The process of putting out the fire is currently underway, while due to a shortage of fire brigades in Islamabad, help has been sought from Rawalpindi rescue teams and the firefighting team of the Pakistan Navy," the correspondent said. He added that no casualties have so far been reported, however, goods worth millions of rupees stored in the stalls were reduced to ashes, prompting vendors to voice their grievances to the market's administration. Meanwhile,



the Islamabad Police said that the entire area surrounding the market has been cordoned off and



into the fire will also be carried out [while] all arrangements have been made to maintain flow of traffic around the area," the capital police wrote on the X platform. "Citizens are requested not to form unnecessary gatherings and cooperate with the police," it added. Last month, a fire broke out in Peshawar's Nauthia Phattak area, destroying at least 80 shops mostly selling used goods and injuring three people. Rescue 1122 officials said the fire started in a small makeshift

structure alongside the railway line, spreading to nearby shops and engulfing wooden cabins and a power transformer. Chief Commissioner (CC) Muhammad Ali Randhawa visited the H-9 Sunday Bazaar on Wednesday after a fire broke out around 11 am and formed a committee to investigate the incident. He also reviewed the fire extinguishing efforts. Talking to media persons, the Commissioner, accompanied by the Inspector General (IG) of Police, said, "The fire



brigade was dispatched right away. Our team was already active due to the rain, so 31 fire engines and several water tankers were promptly reached on the site. Over 250 rescuers are involved in the operation." On the occasion, Randhawa said that he called the IGP and the area had been sealed off to prevent further incidents. He assured that any damage would be repaired. He said that the aim of cordoning off the area was to stop the fire from reigniting. Randhawa ac-

knowledged that this isn't the first fire at the bazaar. To determine the cause and find prevention measures, a joint committee of district and police officials would be formed. This committee is expected to submit its report within seven days. The Chief Commissioner said that steps would be taken to avoid these incidents in the future. Relaying the incident details, he said that out of 2,743 shops, 500 have been damaged. Authorities have urged people not to risk their lives to retrieve goods.

Country facing shortage of nurses at national level: Tarar

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Parliamentary Affairs, and Law and Justice, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar on Wednesday said the country is facing shortage of nursing staff at the national level as the country required a 0.9 million more nurses to cater the growing needs of the population by 2030. The minister was replying to the calling attention notice moved by Member National Assembly

(MNA), Sehar Kamran to invite attention of the Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination to the matter of shortage of doctors and nurses in Islamabad, causing grave concern amongst the public. Tarar informed that there was no shortage of doctors in the hospitals of the federal capital, but rather that of nurses. "At present, 100,000 nurses are serving whereas there are 589 nursing schools and colleges operating across the country out of which 375 are

private and 214 are public institutions," he said. He added that it was an important service and evening classes policy was being introduced and imposed since 2018. Since, there were more females opting for this profession, there were efforts underway to manage their hostel and other needs and nursing colleges were encouraged to increase their seats to accommodate increasing number of aspirants, he said. The minister underlined that some 20,000 doctors were entering the service

system per year which was satisfactory and as per the WHO guidelines to cater the population of the country. However, he said concerns were emerging in the service ratio of those doctors in rural and urban areas. He assured that the number of doctors in PIMS, Polyclinic, and Basic Health Units (BHUs) was satisfactory, whereas 77 positions for Poly Clinic Hospital were allocated awaiting the Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC) approval for recruitment.

Inclusivity key to national development, prosperity: Ayaz

The speaker acknowledged the importance of addressing demographic challenges, ensuring equal access to family planning, and promoting gender equality to ensure a sustainable future

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq and Deputy Speaker Syed Ghulam Mustafa Shah on Wednesday emphasized adopting inclusive approach for wider development and prosperity of nation. They said introducing and implementing non-discriminatory policies to provide basic rights to all would lead Pakistan on the path of development. They also emphasized taking proactive measures for addressing the challenge of over population. They

expressed these views in their separate message on World Population Day, which is commemorated around the globe with the theme "leave no one behind, count everyone". The speaker acknowledged the importance of addressing demographic challenges, ensuring equal access to family planning, and promoting gender equality to ensure a sustainable future. He stressed that it is a collective responsibility to align development priorities with population growth and provide quality education, healthcare, and employment opportunities to the growing population. Ayaz Sadiq also

underscored the importance of increasing awareness and education among the masses, particularly in rural areas, to effectively tackle the issue of population growth. He stressed that by working together, we can ensure a brighter future for our generations to come and achieve sustainable economic growth, social prosperity, and environmental protection. The speaker expressed his concern that the rapidly growing population is exerting immense pressure on Pakistan's limited resources, infrastructure, and public services, and if left unchecked, it could lead to

severe consequences, including food and water scarcity, unemployment, and social unrest. He warned that the country's healthcare, education, and housing systems are already overstretched, and the increasing population would further strain these services, compromising the quality of life for millions of Pakistanis. Moreover, the speaker noted that the population growth rate is also having a devastating impact on the environment, with increased pollution, deforestation, and loss of biodiversity, ultimately threatening the very survival of the planet. He urged the need for swift and collective action to address this critical issue.



Vassalise allies

A PEACEFUL and prosperous Asia? Think about it, there is no upside in that for the United States. This is especially so because there is no scenario in which that doesn't also mean a more stable, prosperous and, therefore, even more powerful China. For the US to contain China must also mean impoverishment and instability for its neighbours, intentionally or as collateral damage. That is the real meaning behind the hatefest currently taking place at Nato's 75th anniversary summit in Washington. For an alliance that has "North Atlantic" in its name, it's extraordinary that it now spends as much time fretting about China as Russia, against which it is waging a hot proxy war. The purest expression of this US strategy in Asia has been Australia's costly deal for nuclear-powered submarines under the Aukus security partnership with the United Kingdom and the US. In a new book, Australian investigative journalist Andrew Fowler has delivered the proverbial smoking gun, courtesy of David Gould, former British undersecretary for defence hired by Canberra as consultant for a programme to replace the country's ageing submarines. "Gould revealed for the first time what has long been suspected: one of the submarine's most important requirements would be to work with the Americans in the South China Sea," Fowler wrote in *Nuked: The Submarine Fiasco that Sank Australia's Sovereignty*. "He explained that the submarine would need 'to get through the archipelago to the north of Australia and into the South China Sea and operate in the South China Sea for a reasonable period of time and then come back again, without docking, or refuelling or anything. That's what it needs to do.'" That was in fact the criticism of Paul Keating, former Labor prime minister, from day one. The original contract for much-cheaper conventional submarines, which would have been adequate for the defence of the continental homeland, was unilaterally broken by the Liberal government of Scott Morrison. The book quoted Gould as saying the submarines would work alongside the US and Japan in an "integrated system", which had become "even more pertinent with China". The revelation, of course, undermines Canberra's claim that the new submarines would be used to defend Australia and protect its shipping lanes. The argument is, of course, ludicrous. Why would Australia need to defend sea lanes against China, its best customer and biggest trading partner that had, until recently, helped boost its economic growth over two decades? It is at the same level of absurdity as Brussels and Washington's claim that the Nord Stream pipelines, blown up in September 2022, was the work of the Russians, who built them to supply oil to Germany and beyond. But you can always count on the stenographic mainstream news media in the Anglo-American sphere to duly repeat the absurd propaganda. Across the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea, it's the same story. A little more diplomatic finesse could have considerably eased tensions. But then, Washington would neither be able to sell expensive but obsolete weapons to the island, nor justify deploying massive naval hardware to the region. Taiwan's secessionist forces are only too happy to play along. "Today Ukraine, tomorrow Taiwan" – that has been the argument Nato and the US have been using to justify an increasingly aggressive Western posture. It is not that Beijing wants to go against the island, but Nato and Washington want it to do precisely that or at least threaten the island enough to justify Western intervention.



Israel and Europe's far right

THE surprise victory of an alliance of leftist parties, the New Popular Front, in France's parliamentary elections on Sunday has rattled the country's far right, which had won the first round of the snap elections a week before and was hoping to repeat its gains and form a government for the first time since the Second World War. Such a victory would have unsettled the political landscape of Europe, threatened the unity of the EU and sent an ominous message to millions of immigrants in the continent and beyond. While populist ultranationalist parties across Europe expressed shock at the result, they were joined by the Israeli political establishment, which was hoping for a far-right victory. The head of the conservative and right-wing political party YisraelBeiteinu, Avigdor Lieberman, said after Sunday's results that "the victory of a radical leftist party in France means the rise of hatred against Israel and a spike in antisemitism, and I call on Jews in France to immigrate to Israel." Lieberman said that Jean-Luc Melenchon and many members of his France Unbowed party show pure antisemitism, as he put it. The head of the party in the French National Assembly had said that Paris would recognize the state of Palestine in the coming two weeks. Lieberman's reaction points to the controversial ties between Israel and Europe's far-right parties. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his extremist coalition partners have been cheering for Europe's far right despite its notorious antisemitic legacy. For years, Netanyahu has been courting populist European figures such as Santiago Abascal, the leader of Spain's far-right Vox party, and Serbia's ultranationalist President Aleksandar Vucic. He has links with other European populist leaders, including the staunchly anti-Islam Geert Wilders of the Netherlands, the young French far-right leader Jordan Bardella and Hungary's ultranationalist Prime Minister Viktor Orban. The meteoric rise of far-right parties in many European countries, as indicated by the results of the recent European Parliament elections, should worry Israel's leaders. But it does not. Netanyahu has been able to find common ground with these parties, such as Islamophobic, fear-mongering rhetoric and the apparent need to preserve a shared Judeo-Christian culture against foreign intruders, especially Muslims. Netanyahu has portrayed Israel's onslaught on Gaza as a war on behalf of the West, saying that Israel's victory would be the West's victory. He has underlined that Israel's ability to thwart an Iranian invasion would guarantee the stability of countries like Egypt, the collapse of which would lead to millions of illegal migrants heading to Europe, in his view. In response, many of Europe's far-right parties have muted their antisemitic rhetoric, despite a rise in antisemitism in the West in recent years. Anti-Israel sentiments had spiked in many Western countries as a result of the war on Gaza. Still, Israel has been successful in calling on Western governments, such as Germany and the US, to equate anti-Zionism with antisemitism. Far-right European parties and politicians have come out in support of Israel's war against Hamas, saying that Israel had the right to self-defense and that "Islamist terrorists" – a term that Netanyahu uses a lot – were seeking to destroy Israel. Some have gone as far as rejecting any move to recognize a Palestinian state or even support a two-state solution, identifying completely with Israel's far-right parties and government.

Competition for influence in the Red Sea

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



Furthermore, there are concerns that Russia may collaborate with the Houthis to deploy sea mines, disrupting maritime traffic and potentially coercing ships to seek safety under Russian jurisdiction. Additionally, Russia might forge alliances with various factions in the Horn of Africa to evade international sanctions, facilitating illicit trade in oil and grain, which could alleviate energy and food shortages exacerbated by U.S. sanctions related to the conflict in Ukraine. Russia has also employed "grain diplomacy," supplying significant amounts of grain to several African nations, including Somalia...

RECENT reports indicate that the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Russian government are on the verge of finalizing a significant military and economic agreement. This potential deal underscores Russia's strategic interest in gaining access to ports along the Red Sea, a move aimed at bolstering its naval capabilities and expanding its geopolitical influence in the region. Moreover, Russia seeks to forge stronger political and military alliances across Africa, using partnerships with countries like Sudan to enhance its global stature, counter Western influence, and explore new economic opportunities. Lieutenant General Yasir al-Atta confirmed in late May the nearing conclusion of negotiations between the Sudanese Armed Forces and Russia. The proposed agreement would allow Russia to establish a naval support facility on the Red Sea, marking a pivotal step in their bilateral relations. In exchange, Sudan would receive weapons and ammunition, reflecting Sudan's strategic maneuvering amid dissatisfaction with Western Nations for their perceived inaction against external support to their adversaries particularly the Rapid Support Forces involved in Sudan's civil conflict. Initially slated for completion since February 2023, progress on the agreement was hindered by Sudan's internal strife. Russia's motivation also lies in strengthening ties with African nations facing sanctions from Western powers. However, regional tensions, notably involving the UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Qatar concerning Sudan's conflict, as well as ongoing issues in the Red Sea, have complicated matters. These complexities have impeded effective responses to challenges like the Houthis' attacks, highlighting the geopolitical intricacies influencing both the agreement and regional stability. Simultaneously, Russia and China are intensifying efforts to consolidate their positions in the Red Sea area. Russia, in collaboration with Eritrea, is advancing plans to establish a naval facility at Massawa port, a development affirmed by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov during his visit to Eritrea in January 2023. This move underscores Russia's ambition to secure additional strategic ports in the Red Sea beyond Sudan. Meanwhile, China's presence near the

Bab el-Mandeb Strait, a critical maritime route linking the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea, is expanding. With a military base in Djibouti, China has expanded its naval operations, exemplified by the presence of an Iranian spy ship nearby, signaling deepening military engagement in the region. These concerted efforts by Russia and China to enhance their influence in the Red Sea area are viewed as challenges to the policy objectives of the Biden administration in Africa. As both powers assert their presence through strategic partnerships and military expansions, they are reshaping the geopolitical landscape, potentially altering traditional spheres of influence and global power dynamics in Africa. Critics, such as Senator James Risch, argue that the current U.S. approach is ineffective. Risch proposes strengthening ties with Somaliland as a countermeasure against China and Iran's growing influence. The recent maneuvers by Russia and China underscore the strategic significance of the Red Sea in terms of both military dominance and economic control. Russia, leveraging attacks by Houthi rebels on commercial vessels, seeks to bolster its influence by offering safe passage to ships under the Russian flag. Furthermore, there are concerns that Russia may collaborate with the Houthis to deploy sea mines, disrupting maritime traffic and potentially coercing ships to seek safety under Russian jurisdiction. Additionally, Russia might forge alliances with various factions in the Horn of Africa to evade international sanctions, facilitating illicit trade in oil and grain, which could alleviate energy and food shortages exacerbated by U.S. sanctions related to the conflict in Ukraine. Russia has also employed "grain diplomacy," supplying significant amounts of grain to several African nations, including Somalia, and forgiving substantial debts, such as \$684 million owed by Somalia. This assistance is particularly appealing to Somalia, grappling with financial constraints exacerbated by the ongoing conflict with al-Shabaab. As tensions escalate between Somalia and Somaliland, especially ahead of Somaliland's upcoming elections in November, Somalia may increasingly turn to Russia and China for support. Notably, opposition leader and former Russian ambassador Abdirahman Irro advocates

for closer ties with China, potentially influencing Somalia's foreign policy decisions. There are growing apprehensions that Russia may interfere in Somaliland's electoral processes or disrupt its agreements, such as the strategic port deal with Ethiopia, in order to gain access to the port of Berbera. Africa's vulnerability to heightened Russian engagement is compounded by perceived U.S. policy gaps in the region. The Horn of Africa, encompassing the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, holds immense strategic importance for global maritime trade and security. Control over this region confers significant geopolitical advantages, making it a focal point for competing military and economic powers. Russia's expanding presence in Africa spans military cooperation, arms sales, and economic investments, filling voids left by diminishing U.S. engagement. The prospect of Russia militarizing the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden raises considerable concerns, potentially destabilizing an already fragile region and extending repercussions to global security, including the Middle East. Such developments could precipitate an arms race and exacerbate existing conflicts. To mitigate these risks, the Biden administration must adopt a robust response, revisiting initiatives like the Somaliland Partnership Act. This proposed legislation advocates for the formal recognition and support of Somaliland, praised for its stable governance and strategic positioning. By collaborating with Somaliland, the U.S. could effectively counterbalance Russian and Chinese influence in the region, while securing a crucial ally in the Horn of Africa. Moreover, enhanced collaboration with the Department of Defense is imperative. A comprehensive military strategy, encompassing joint exercises, security assistance and infrastructure development, would fortify regional stability and dissuade adversarial incursions. The evolving dynamics in the Horn of Africa demand proactive U.S. engagement to preserve equilibrium and prevent unilateral dominance by any foreign power. By strategically aligning with stable regional partners like Somaliland and bolstering military cooperation, the U.S. can safeguard its interests while promoting peace and security in this pivotal maritime corridor.

The daily struggles of life under attack

Iman Abo Qamar



My children used to enjoy eggs every morning. However, for prolonged periods, eggs were simply unavailable in the markets. When they finally became available again, they were very expensive and often spoiled. The lack of meat and chicken has led us to depend on canned food, marking a significant change from our diet before the war

I YEARN for the life I used to lead before this genocide. War transcends mere bombings, missiles and destruction; it encompasses economic, social, environmental and psychological devastation. I've lost touch with my sense of womanhood, feeling much older than my years. Even my appearance reflects this. My daily routine, previously centered around caring for my children, making breakfast, ensuring they got to school before starting my work, has been completely shattered. I've forgotten the simplicity of life before the war, including my food preferences and principles for raising my children. Every day, I eagerly await the moment I can return home and reclaim my former lifestyle. I long for the simple pleasure of sitting on my bed with my kids after a shower. Now, even having a shower is hard work. Securing warm water requires gathering wood from specific locations after fetching water from distant sources. Eight months have elapsed without electricity. Before the genocide, we were accustomed to eight hours of power daily. However, since then, Israeli forces have targeted Gaza's only power plant as well as solar panels across the Gaza Strip. I've regressed to washing

clothes by hand, cooking and baking over firewood. There are shortages of gas, fuel and flour. The washing machines and refrigerators in those houses that have not been reduced to rubble serve as mere decorations or, in some cases, a sanctuary for children during their games of hide-and-seek. Even basic activities such as charging our phones or connecting to the internet have turned into monumental challenges. We traverse long distances to find working solar panels. Life in makeshift tents and crowded schools lacks even the most basic necessities. Days can pass without access to clean drinking water. We try to avoid unhygienic public bathrooms where queues are interminable. An ordinary day: My children have suffered immensely during the war. They've had gastrointestinal issues and diarrhea due to displacement and unsanitary conditions. We've all lost weight since nutritious food is scarce. My children used to enjoy eggs every morning. However, for prolonged periods, eggs were simply unavailable in the markets. When they finally became available again, they were very expensive and often spoiled. The lack of meat and chicken has led us to depend on canned food, marking a significant change from

our diet before the war. Both my husband, a software engineer, and I, a writer and translator, have lost our jobs and livelihoods due to the internet blackout. We used to work from home with high-speed internet, which allowed me to work from my bed and quickly perform my tasks. The war has deprived my children of their playtime and weekly visits to their grandfather's house. Every Friday, they used to go to his house, where there was a garden, a swing and lemon, olive, orange and guava trees. They used to gather with their cousins, play in the sand, have fun, water the trees and eat their fruit. Israeli warplanes targeted their grandfather's house in Beit Hanoun, leaving nothing for the children to do there now, except gather firewood. Just like that, their childhood disappeared and their games vanished. All they care about is for this genocide to end. Playgrounds and family gatherings are replaced by the harsh realities of displacement and scarcity. I pray for an ordinary day spent with my children at home. Yet, in Gaza City, a city plagued by perpetual conflict, the pursuit of normalcy remains an elusive dream.

– Iman Abo Qamar is a content writer and translator in the Gaza Strip.

Briefs

Pezeshkian to be sworn in as Iran president on July 30

TEHRAN: The swearing-in ceremony of the Iranian President-elect Masoud Pezeshkian is slated for July 30. The news was announced by Mojtaba Yousefi, a member of the Iranian Parliament's presiding board, on Wednesday. Along with senior Iranian officials who will attend the ceremony, some foreign guests from various world countries are to participate in the important event, the member of the parliament told IRNA. Based on the planning, the ceremony will be held after the Supreme Leader formally approves the president. Pezeshkian, 69, was elected as the ninth president of Iran after the votes of the July 5 presidential runoff counted. Pezeshkian, a heart surgeon, won 16,384,403 votes while Jalili stood behind him with 13,538,179 ballots. — Agencies

NAB chief visits grave of watchdog's victim

MEHTAB PIRZADA
ISLAMABAD: Lieutenant General (ret'd) Nazir Ahmed Butt, the chairman of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), recently visited the grave of brigadier (ret'd) Asad Munir, who had taken his own life several years ago. Asad, a retired brigadier known for his integrity, had pointed to harassment by NAB as the sole reason for his suicide in his note which he wrote before taking his own life, hoping to prevent others from enduring similar treatment "for the crimes they had not committed". Three years after his death, an accountability court acquitted Asad. Last month, a representative from the Nazir's office contacted Asad's widow, Saeeda, and sought permission for his superior to visit her. She declined to meet with the NAB chairman but he insisted. Butt had been intrigued by Asad's suicide note and, while he wanted to express his condolences to Saeeda, he also wanted to know more about his last note. In response, the family agreed to meet. Nazir told Saeeda and Asad's brother, Khalid, that the NAB was in the process of drafting Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for investigating government officers. He also wanted to learn what Asad went through, so that it was not repeated. He was also keen to know why NAB went after Asad without a solid reason. The family was not very aware of the motives. Saeeda, who was initially reluctant to meet him, was appreciative of his gesture. "I found him to be a very nice person," she said.

ISSI welcomes Estonian delegation

DNA
ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Strategic Perspectives (CSP) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) organised a Roundtable Discussion with the visiting Estonian delegation led by Ambassador Kristi Karelsohn, Director General of the Department of Asia, the Pacific, Middle East and Africa, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Estonia. Mr. Vaino Reinart, Estonian Ambassador-designate to Pakistan based in Ankara, and Ms. Grete Vahter, Desk Officer for Pakistan were also part of the Delegation. The discussion focused on a range of geopolitical and security issues impacting both regions. In his welcome remarks, Director General ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood highlighted the extremely friendly and cordial relations between Pakistan and Estonia, recent high-level bilateral exchanges, and the growing trajectory of mutual cooperation across various fields.

NATO marks 75th anniversary

'Ukraine can and will stop Putin,' says Joe Biden

Kicking off three days of events for the 32-nation alliance with a celebration Tuesday evening, Biden announced a new air defense system for Kyiv



FOREIGN DESK

WASHINGTON: As NATO leaders gather for their 75th anniversary in Washington, they aim to increase support for Ukraine amid escalating Russian attacks and growing political uncertainties in the West. US President Joe Biden announced a new air defense system for Kyiv and emphasized unity against Russian aggression, while Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky urged for further assistance to defeat Russia. NATO leaders meet Wednesday for their 75th anniversary, seeking ways to ramp up support for Ukraine as deadly Russian strikes and political uncertainties

in the West stir new concerns. With the pomp of a summit in Washington, President Joe Biden is aiming to rally the West and also reassure US voters amid intense pre-election scrutiny on whether at 81 - six years older than the alliance - he remains fit for the job. Kicking off three days of events for the 32-nation alliance with a celebration Tuesday evening, Biden announced a new air defense system for Kyiv and urged unity against Russian aggression, while Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky urged for further assistance to defeat Russia. NATO leaders meet Wednesday for their 75th anniversary, seeking ways to ramp up support for Ukraine as deadly Russian strikes and political uncertainties

hospital was reduced to debris. Biden has invited Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to the summit as well as the leaders of four key Pacific partners - Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand - as he seeks to increase NATO's role in managing a rising China. But the US president himself is facing a tough election challenge from Donald Trump, who has loudly questioned the utility of NATO and mused on forcing a peace deal in which Ukraine would surrender land to Russia. Zelensky in Washington thanked Ukraine's backers for the promise of new air defenses - and urged the United States and others to go further to help defeat Russia. NATO's outgoing secretary general, Jens Stoltenberg of Norway, acknowledged the

question marks, after Trump's allies in the US Congress forced a delay of months in approving new weapons for Ukraine. "Ukraine has shown remarkable courage and NATO allies have provided unprecedented support. But let's be honest - not even our support for Ukraine has been a given," Stoltenberg said. "Remember - the biggest cost and the greatest risk will be if Russia wins in Ukraine. We cannot let that happen." Other leaders attending the summit include Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban, one of Putin's closest partners in the West, who ahead of Washington went to Ukraine, Russia and China on a self-described peace mission criticized by Brussels and Washington. Another Asian partner of the US, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, met Putin on the eve of the NATO summit and is not part of the Washington talks. Leaders on Wednesday will formally convene the alliance's North Atlantic Council inside downtown Washington's convention center. Biden, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin will later welcome their counterparts for gala dinners around the Washington area, which is in the throes of a searing heat wave. One new NATO leader is British Prime Minister Keir Starmer, who is visiting days after taking office in a landslide victory by his Labour Party. He will meet both Biden and Zelensky and is expected to confirm Britain's strong support for Ukraine. Ukraine has been seeking firm assurances that it will one day join NATO, which considers an attack on any member an attack on all. Ukraine's membership enjoys wide backing from Baltic and Eastern European nations still haunted by decades under the Soviet yoke.

Yemeni forces strike vessels linked to US, Israel

SANA'A: The spokesman for the Yemeni Armed Forces says the country's naval forces and missile units have carried out three operations against vessels linked to the US and Israel off the nation's coast, in solidarity with Palestinians amid the ongoing Israeli onslaught on Gaza. Speaking at a televised press briefing broadcast live from the Yemeni capital city of Sana'a on Tuesday night, Brigadier General Yahya Saree said the country's forces targeted the American Maersk Sentosa container ship in the Arabian Sea with several ballistic and winged missiles. Saree added that Yemeni naval units targeted the Marathopolis ship in the Arabian Sea, and the MSC Patnaree ship in the Gulf of Aden with a number of drones. He stressed that the three operations achieved their goals successfully, and the hits were direct and accurate. Saree noted that his country's forces will continue their anti-Israel operations until a permanent ceasefire is enforced in Gaza, and all restrictions on supplies of humanitarian aid for its residents are lifted. — Agencies

Rs10bn approved for CM Punjab's Kisan Card

BUREAU REPORT
LAHORE: The Punjab government on Wednesday approved Rs 10 billion for the Chief Minister Punjab's Kisan Card. In the meeting of the Provincial Development Working Party, 23 schemes were approved. The funds were approved in the fourth meeting of the financial year 2024-25. A total of Rs77 billion were approved for 23 schemes in the agriculture and roads sectors. Planning and Development Board Chairman Barrister Nabil Awan presided over the meeting. Rs 1.25 billion were approved for the establishment of model agriculture malls in Punjab, and Rs67 billions were approved for 21 development schemes of roads sector in various districts of Punjab.

South Sudan peace talks face collapse over a new security law

WEB DESK

JUBA, South Sudan: South Sudan peace talks that almost reached completion faced a stumbling block with opposition groups demanding a newly passed bill allowing the detention of people without an arrest warrant scratched out in order to sign a proposed agreement. Kenya has been hosting the high-level meetings since May between government representatives and rebel opposition groups who were not part of a 2018 agreement that ended a five-year civil war, leaving about 400,000 people dead and millions displaced. Despite the agreement, violence often erupted in the country of 9 million. Pagan Amum Okiech, negotiating on behalf of the South Sudan Opposition Movement Alliance, told the Associated Press Tuesday night that it would be "meaningless to sign any agreement if the draconian National Security Act is signed into law by the president." Last week, parliament voted in favor of the 2015 bill and President Salva Kiir will have to approve it within 30 days for it to become a law. This comes ahead of the country's first-ever election on Dec. 22.

"This law violates the fundamental rights and freedoms of South Sudanese citizens, it eliminates civic and political space," Amum said. "There can be no peace or democracy under such a law." Attending the peace talks is the executive director of the Community Empowerment for Progress Organization, a non-profit that engages university students and fresh graduates. Edmund Yakani criticized the security bill and said it "created a negative spirit for the negotiations." Human Rights Watch has also called on Kiir to reject the controversial bill saying that it will further undermine human rights and strengthen national security agencies that have a history of long-standing rights abuses. The talks - dubbed Tumaini, Swahili for hope - have resulted in a draft agreement proposing to extend the country's transitional period and postpone the coming election to allow finishing up the country's constitution and electoral laws, as well as set up constituency borders and a unified security force as proposed in the 2018 peace talks. Some Western envoys also recommend delaying the poll "to guarantee a free and fair election." Kiir has been adamant about having the election in December and called out the envoys.

Syria and Saudi Arabia resume regular flights

DAMASCUS: Regular flights between the Syrian capital of Damascus and Saudi Arabia resumed Wednesday for the first time in more than a decade as part of a thaw in relations between the countries, Syrian state media reported. Syria and Saudi Arabia had severed ties in 2012 over President Bashar Assad's brutal crackdown on anti-government protesters at the start of the civil war. But most Arab countries have restored diplomatic ties with Damascus, which was readmitted to the 22-member Arab League last year. Syria's ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Ayman Soussan, said the resumption of flights was "an additional step in the process of development in relations between the two brotherly countries," state news agency SANA reported. In May, Syrian pilgrims traveled on a direct flight to Saudi Arabia for the annual Islamic Hajj pilgrimage, but Wednesday's Syrian Airlines flight to Riyadh marked the return of regular commercial flights. Syria's 13-year civil war is now largely frozen, with the central government in Damascus having reasserted control over most of the territory, while much of the northwest is still controlled by a patchwork of opposition groups and northeast by Kurdish forces. — Agencies

At least 15 dead as jeep plunges into Neelum River

Jeep carrying 17 people tumbles down onto bank of Neelum River as rescue teams transport bodies to hospitals

MUZAFFARABAD: At least 15 people lost their lives and two were injured when a passenger jeep tumbled down from the Leswa Bypass Road near Devlian village onto the bank of the Neelum River on Wednesday while they were travelling from LawatBala to Muzaffarabad, AJK. Though police and rescue teams rushed to the accident site, their efforts faced certain difficulties due to the occurrence of rain, according to Rescue 1122. They added that the bodies were sent to the District Headquarters Hospital, whereas, the wounded passengers were taken to the Muzaffarabad Combined Military Hospital. Additionally, a woman cutting grass and two children were also injured at the scene. They were also admitted to the hospital. Notably, at least 17 passengers were travelling in the jeep including the driver; out of which six men, four women, and three children could not survive the accident. Additionally, two other passengers were announced dead when they reached the hospital, as per the rescue officials. Apart from the police and rescue teams, local people and youth also volunteered and took part in the rescue efforts. As the possible causes behind the accident are still being determined, Muzaffarabad Deputy Commissioner Nadeem Ahmed Janjua told Geo News: "Apparently, there is no obvious cause for the car accident." — Agencies

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