



Islamabad POST

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VP Kamala Harris holds slight lead over Trump in new poll

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UN Chief hails Beijing declaration

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Arshad Nadeem in good shape ahead of PO

Detailed News On Page-06



No discussion on PTI ban issue PM warns TTP's Afghan-based terror attacks unacceptable

Highlighting the role of Afghanistan in the surged wave of terrorism, the prime minister said the government was in interaction with them as Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif also visited there

ANSAR M BHATTI / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday denounced the terror attacks in Pakistan involving Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) using Afghan soil saying that was "unacceptable" as Pakistan was fully prepared to protect its citizens but desired to resolve the matter peacefully. The prime minister, in his remarks at the meeting of the federal cabinet chaired by him, pointed out the surge in terror incidents, particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan causing the killing of the personnel of the army, police and civil armed forces. He called the terrorism wave a machination against Pakistan as it was taking place at a time when the coalition government was making efforts for the country's development as it reached a Staff Level Agreement with IMF despite challenges and announced a three-month relief package for 96% of domestic power consumers. Highlighting the role of Afghanistan in the surged wave of terrorism, the prime minister said the government was in interaction with them as Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif also visited there. "But how is it possible that we hosted

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US expresses concern over arrest of PTI leaders

Miller says, that the State Department supports the upholding of constitutional and democratic principles

AGENCIES

WASHINGTON: The United States is "always concerned" at the arrest of opposition leaders and urges the peaceful upholding of constitutional and democratic principles, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Tuesday regarding the arrest of PTI leader Raouf Hasan and the raid on the party's office. Hasan, himself a spokesperson for the PTI, was arrested by the Islamabad police on Monday during a raid conducted by the Islamabad police and Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) on the PTI's digital media wing, with the interior ministry accusing the party of peddling "anti-state propaganda". During a State Department press briefing last night, Miller was asked to comment on the Pakistani government's decision to conduct the raid, arrest Hasan and even trying to have the PTI banned. To this, Miller acknowledged to have seen the reports of the arrests of PTI leaders, adding that the US is "always concerned when we see arrests of opposition leaders". "I'm always personally concerned when I see the arrest of a spokesperson," Miller said, drawing a laughter from those in attendance due to him being a spokesperson himself. He said that the State Department "supports the upholding of constitutional

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting of the Federal Cabinet. - DNA

C'wealth SG to arrive on Sunday

During the Secretary-General's visit, the two sides would also discuss avenues to enhance cooperation

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Rt Hon Patricia Scotland KC, the Commonwealth Secretary-General, will pay her first official visit to Pakistan from 28 July to 2 August 2024 on the invitation of the Government of Pakistan. During her five-day visit, Secretary-General Scotland will meet with Pakistan's leadership, members of the Cabinet, youth leaders, civil society representatives and other stakeholders. The Commonwealth Secretary-General, who has been a staunch advocate for supporting Pakistan in meeting the adverse impacts of

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'Individuals with no understanding' Imran criticizes DG ISPR for using 'digital terrorism' labels

Imran Khan refutes claims of inciting GHQ protests, calls May 9 riots 'false flag operation'

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: PTI founder Imran Khan, who is currently incarcerated in Adiala Jail, said on Wednesday that certain individuals with no understanding of social media were dishing out "digital terrorism" labels. Faced with an intensifying wave of criticism on social media, the army in May had labelled such expressions as "digital terrorism" and declared a firm commitment to combat and defeat anti-military campaigns proliferating across online platforms. The statement that marked further stiffening of the stance of the military towards online dissent and suggested an impending crackdown against the critics had come at the end of the 83rd For-mation Commanders Conference. Over the past couple of years, social media campaigns against the army have escalated, reflecting broader tensions within the country's political and social fabric. The government, often in tandem with the military, has responded with stringent measures aimed at controlling the narrative and stifling dissent.

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Three 'agents' arrested in fake passports case

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Investigation Authority (FIA) arrested three agents from Peshawar who were allegedly involved in providing Pakistani passports to Afghan nationals. According to the details, FIA's Anti-Human Trafficking Circle in an operation in Peshawar arrested three suspects namely Rahmatullah, Tariq Javed, and Abu Bakar. According to the FIA, the suspects were part of a human smuggling network and providing Pakistani passports to Afghan nationals in exchange for large sums of money. The FIA started interrogating the arrested suspects and are conducting

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Briefs

Electricity bill takes another life

The altercation escalated into violence, resulting in a tragic death

DNA

GUJRANWALA: A man killed his younger brother in Gujranwala, following a heated dispute over an inflated electricity bill. According to media reports, the incident occurred in a house on Prince Road in Gujranwala. The brothers, identified as Murtaza and Umar Farooq, engaged in a violent confrontation over the exorbitant bill. During the altercation, according to local police, Murtaza used a sharp instrument to cut Umar's throat, resulting in his death at the scene. A case has been registered against Murtaza, and police are conducting raids to apprehend the suspect.

'PA speaker abusing his powers'

He also criticised the speaker for purchasing cars worth Rs180 million

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Opposition Leader Punjab Assembly Malik Ahmad Khan Bhachar said on Wednesday that Punjab Assembly Speaker Malik Ahmad Khan was abusing his constitutional powers. Speaking at a press conference at the Lahore Press Club, the opposition leader blamed Malik Ahmad Khan for closure of opposition chambers of the Punjab Assembly. He also criticised the speaker for purchasing cars worth Rs180 million. "No PTI MPA went to get TADA. Our 11 members were suspended without any notice. Ours is a political party which I can't run alone in the assembly," he added.

Justice Minallah wishes

Courts should remain open amid threat of coup

"I wish they were open on July 5 when Gen Ziaul Haq was removing an elected prime minister," says SC judge

FOREIGN DESK

NEW YORK: Supreme Court Justice Athar Minallah has expressed his desire for the courts to remain open whenever there's a threat of martial law being imposed in Pakistan. The nation has seen a total of three martial laws - 1958-1971, 1977-1988, 1999-2008 - spanning decades since its independence in 1947. Justice Minallah, in his address to an event of the New York City Bar Association, said: "I wish every time there's a threat of martial law, the courts remain open." The judge's response came in response to a question, when a participant in the event asked him why did he open the Islamabad High Court (IHC) on April 9, 2022, at midnight - the day when former prime minister Imran Khan was ousted from power. The judge, who served as the IHC chief justice from 2018-2022, told the participant that when he was appointed to the high-ranking office, he issued a

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Zardari, Nawaz on the wrong side of history

Former minister links political stability in country with Imran Khan's return to politics

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Former federal minister Fawad Chaudhry said on Wednesday that Asif Ali Zardari and Nawaz Sharif were on the wrong side of the history. He made these remarks during his appearance in an anti-terrorism court (ATC) in a case registered against him. He said the cabinet meeting would deliberate on banning the Pakistan

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Pakistan 'approves' visa free entry for 126 countries

The visitors would get visas within 24 hours through the electronic travel authorization form

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has approved the issuance of digital visas for citizens of 126 countries, allowing visa-free entry for business and tourism purposes, DNA News reported citing sources. The federal cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif okayed the decision that aims to promote investment and trade with friendly countries, enabling visa-free entry for investors and businessmen.

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Joe Biden admin seeks \$ 101 million aid for Pakistan

Donald Lu says funds to be allocated to combat terrorism, support economic reforms, provide debt relief

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: US Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asia, Donald Lu said Tuesday that US President Joe Biden has requested \$101 million in aid for Pakistan to support democracy and human rights in the country. Lu, whom Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan blamed for toppling his government in 2022, made the statement before a committee of the American House of Representatives, which was summoned to discuss the United States budget for South Asia. The assistant secretary stated that the funds would be allocated to combat terrorism, support economic reforms, and provide debt relief. Lu highlighted that this financial assistance aims to stabilise Pakistan's economy, which is in dire straits even after the government secured a 37-month-long International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme. The staff-level agreement caps negotiations that started in May after Islamabad completed a short-term, \$3 billion program that helped stabilize the economy, avert a sovereign debt default, and set challenging revenue targets in its budget to get IMF approval. The new agreement introduced increased tax on agricultural incomes,

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Govt set to deregulate petroleum prices

Federal govt will transfer authority to set petroleum prices from government to oil marketing companies, say sources

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has decided to transfer the authority to set petroleum prices from the state to oil marketing companies, sources revealed on Wednesday. Insiders said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has instructed the cessation of the government's role in determining petroleum prices, prompting Petroleum Minister Musadik Malik to call a crucial meeting scheduled today. The government is preparing to delegate the pricing authority to oil marketing companies in phases. The Chairman of the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA)

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RCCI and Ministry of Climate Change join hands for climate action

Romina Khurshid expressed her commitment and cooperation from her office to work closely with RCCI towards sustainable environmental practices and enhancing climate resilience in Pakistan

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI), and Ministry of Climate Change will join hands to address challenges faced by Pakistan due to Climate Change and both reiterated their resolve to put joint efforts to cope with the impact of climate change. These commitments were expressed at a meeting of RCCI delegation headed by President Saqib Rafiq, with Ms. Romina Khurshid Alam, Coordinator to the Prime Minister on Climate Change and Secretary, Ministry of Climate Change and Environmental Coordi-

nation (MoCC) in Islamabad. The primary focus of the discussion revolved around collaborative efforts on climate change initiatives, with particular emphasis on carbon/plastic credit mechanisms and co-operation in climate programs. Ms. Romina Khurshid expressed her commitment and cooperation from her office to work closely with RCCI towards sustainable environmental practices and enhancing climate resilience in Pakistan. "Pakistan is among the countries most adversely impacted by climate change, but it is now leading the way with its climate diplomacy, she added." President Saqib Rafiq highlighted the RCCI's ongoing

efforts and initiatives in promoting environmental sustainability within the business community. He extended an invitation to Ms. Romina Khurshid Alam to participate in an upcoming event on Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) organized by the RCCI. Ms. Romina Khurshid Alam appreciated RCCI's proactive approach and assured the Ministry's full support in advancing joint climate action programs. Senior Vice President Muhammad Hamza Sarosh and executive committee member Mr. Asad Aftab, and Women Executive Members Ms. Gul Zeba and Ms. Sadia Zia were also present on the occasion.



ISLAMABAD : Ambassador of France to Pakistan, Nicolas Galey called on Federal Minister for Board of Investment, Privatization and Communications, Abdul Aleem Khan.—DNA

LESCO chief reviews availability of material

DNA

LAHORE : Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) Chief Executive Officer Engineer Shahid Haider chaired a meeting here on Wednesday to review the matters pertaining to availability of materials and related equipment for smooth functioning of power supply system. He directed the quarters concerned to take effective measures to ensure availability of materials and related equipment. In case of non-availability of materials, he said, consumers face difficulties; therefore, no negligence would be tolerated in this regard, especially with regard to meters and transformers. The CEO directed that all the officers concerned to remain present in the offices from 11am to 1 pm and to listen to the public problems and solve them immediately. The LESCO Director (HR) Zameer Hussain Kolachi, Chief Finance Officer Bushra Imran, Director (Customer Services) Sarwar Mughal, Chief Engineer (Operations) Abbas Ali, Chief Engineer (T&G) Zafar Aqbal, Chief Engineer (P&D) Imran Mehmood, Chief Engineer (PIU) Ijaz Bhatti, Chief Internal Audit Muhammad Tayyab, Director (Complaint Cell) Rana Rizwan Sibghatullah and Director (Safety) Fawad Khan attended the meeting.

DC chairs meeting regarding tree plantation drive

NAWABSHAH : The Deputy Commissioner Shaheed Benazirabad Shahrar Gull Memon presided over a meeting regarding tree plantation drive in the district. Addressing the meeting, the Deputy Commissioner said that a grand tree plantation drive would be started on 14th August. He urged all departments and social welfare organizations to plant a maximum number of saplings in their offices, streets, homes and public places and also ensure special care of plants so that such plants could benefit people. He said that due to climate change and less tree plantation the

temperature was increasing day by day which was highly alarming for humans and animals however tree plantation was the only solution to protect from heat. Mayor Nawabshah Qazi Muhammad Rasheed Bhatti said that Municipal corporation will extend every possible cooperation for tree plantation and added it would be carried out with the help of town chairmen. Divisional forest officer Mushtaq Ahmed Zardari said that various types of saplings were available in the forest department and out of which one lac saplings were completely ready which will be provided free of cost to

plant in Government institutions, roads and canals. Representatives of social welfare organization assured to contribute in tree plantation drive on 14th August. Additional Deputy Commissioner Nawab Sumar Iqbal, Director Social Welfare Ghulam Muhammad Sahto, District Education officer Muhammad Salem Bhatti, Additional Director Social welfare Muhammad Sabir Qureshi, District Manager SAFWCO Abdul Samad Phulpot, Muhammad Amin keeriyoo of Sindhica and representatives of other Social welfare organizations were also present on the occasion.—APP

Tanveer stresses to focus skill training to promote education

ISLAMABAD : Minister for Industries, Production, and National Food Security Rana Tanveer Hussain emphasized the need for focusing on skills education and vocational training, in addition to promoting higher education, to achieve economic development and social prosperity in the country. Addressing a ceremony held to unveil commemorative postage stamps marking the golden jubilee of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), the minister stated that alongside higher education, skill training would enable graduating students to secure dignified employment upon completion of their education. Minister Hussain also called for integrating 2.5 million out-of-school children into the educational network to cultivate their productivity as citizens of the country, stressing that education is crucial for economic growth and social prosperity. He commended AIOU's role in advancing the education sector in Pakistan and reiterated the commitment to providing all necessary resources for promoting quality education. Speaking at the event, Dr Nasir Mahmood highlighted the university's golden jubilee celebration, emphasizing the significance of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto's contribution in establishing AIOU as a national asset. Dr. Nasir mentioned the recent declaration of an education emergency by the prime minister and underscored the university's potential role in this national initiative.—DNA

Kundi underscores for overseas Pakistanis, religious affairs

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD : Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi on Wednesday met with the Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, and the Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony, Chaudhary Salik Hussain to discuss critical issues facing laborers and minorities in the region. During the meeting, Governor Faisal Kundi raised significant concerns about the challenges faced by laborers from Bannu, Lakki Mar-

wat, Tank, DI Khan, South Waziristan, Mianwali, and Bhakkar. He highlighted the absence of a Protectorate of Emigrants office in the vicinity, which forces these laborers to undertake arduous journeys to obtain protected visas, as mandated by the Emigration Ordinance 1979. To address this, Governor Kundi urged the establishment of a Protectorate of Emigrants office in Dera Ismail Khan, which would serve the aforementioned areas and significantly ease the process for the local labor force. Additionally, the discussion extended to the po-

tential development of a Labour Colony in Dera Ismail Khan. Both officials considered the benefits of such a project, which would provide much-needed housing and facilities for laborers, thereby improving their living conditions and overall quality of life. Governor Faisal Kundi also brought to attention the challenges faced by minorities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He requested the renovation and enhancement of Churches, Gurdwaras, and Shamsan Ghats across the province. Emphasizing the importance of modernizing these religious sites,

he proposed the provision of solarization solutions to ensure a sustainable and uninterrupted energy supply. Federal Minister Chaudhary Salik Hussain expressed his support for these initiatives and assured that the concerns and proposals presented by Governor Kundi would be given due consideration. Both parties agreed on the need for collaborative efforts to improve the welfare of laborers and minorities, demonstrating a commitment to fostering inclusivity and development in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

English cyclists admire Hazara's beauty

DNA

HARIPUR: Two female English cyclists arrived at the Khanpur Dam after cycling through various parts of the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and expressed their admiration for the warm welcome and scenic landscapes. Jasmin and Hanaya stated they did not feel like outsiders despite being in a foreign land. The women tourists, who are traveling through different cities of Hazara and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, shared their happiness upon reaching Khanpur Dam. Both cyclists from England praised the hospitality of the people in Hazara and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa, emphasizing that they felt secure and welcomed throughout their journey. They noted that they were often stopped and served refreshments at various places, enhancing their sense of safety and belonging in the region. At Khanpur Dam, Jasmin and Hanaya enjoyed the local delicacies, particularly the native potato tamarind and plum syrup, and expressed their joy at seeing the dam for the first time. They described Pakistan as a beautiful country that attracts tourists from all over the world and conveyed their determination to visit Khanpur Dam again. Following their visit, the cyclists left for Islamabad, with Lahore as their next planned destination.

Meeting reviews CM's initiatives for agri sector

Minister Kirmani was told that so far, more than 327,000 farmers had submitted online applications for Chief Minister's Punjab Kissan Card and after scrutiny, more than 130,000 applications had been sent to the Bank of Punjab for approval

ABID RAZA

LAHORE : Provincial Minister for Agriculture & Livestock Syed Ashiq Hussain Kirmani presided over a meeting at Agriculture House, Lahore in which progress on the initiatives, approved by Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif for the Agriculture Department, were reviewed. During the meeting, Minister Kirmani was told that so far, more than 327,000 farmers had submitted online applications for Chief Minister's Punjab Kissan Card and after scrutiny, more than 130,000 applications had been sent to the Bank of Punjab for approval. The process of registration of dealers of fertiliser, seed and pesticides companies was also going on. So far, 3,000 dealers have registered by themselves, he added. He directed that the

Kissan Card Project's timeline should be followed with letter and spirit and the number of requests received from farmers should be monitored on daily basis. The minister inquired about the helpline status and directed all the employees on duty at the call center of agriculture department about their responsibilities that the farmers who contacted on helpline, should be informed about the reasons for the rejection of their applications. He was told that more than 500 applications had been received so far for the Chief Minister Green Tractor Scheme and four major tractor manufacturing companies have been contacted in this regard. He issued orders to make a live portal for the one year recruitment process of 1,000 agricultural graduates. The minister was also briefed that 1,000 in the first phase and 1,000 in the second

phase agricultural graduates would be recruited under internship programme. He was also briefed that 4,000 super-seeders will be distributed among the farmers. Secretary Agriculture Punjab Iftikhar Ali Sahoo said that the preparation of 1,000 super seeders is in final stages and their distribution will be done soon. He said that the use of super seeders will help in the smog control. Special Secretary Agriculture Punjab Sheshanshah Faisal Azeem, Additional Secretary Agriculture Planning Captain (retd) Waqas Rashid, Consultant Agriculture Department Muhammad Anjum Ali, Director General Agriculture Extension Chaudhry Abdul Hameed, DG Agriculture Water Management, Punjab Malik Muhammad Akram, and Director General Agricultural Information Punjab Naveed Asmat Kahloon and other senior officers participated.

Plantation drive launched on Margallas

ISLAMABAD: On the instructions of Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi, the largest plantation campaign in the history of the Margalla Hills plantation. He has directed the use of all available resources to restore the original beauty of the Margalla Hills and protect the plants. Naqvi emphasised that the dam-

age caused by recent fire incidents due to heat waves on the Margalla Hills will be addressed. The minister has also ordered digital monitoring of the planted saplings. He noted that instead of decorative trees, fruit and flowering plants will be planted to make Islamabad greener. The campaign will continue for 60 days.—APP



ISLAMABAD : Work in progress on Park Road expansion project in the Federal Capital.—ONLINE



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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



Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115
PIA Flight Info.....114
PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi.....5555489
CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

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



Departments

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Int'l moot on strengthening Pakistan, U.S. relations held

Donald Blome, Ambassador of the United States of America to Pakistan, discussed the importance of the U.S.-Pakistan relationship, emphasizing the long history of partnership and cooperation between the two nations

MAHNOOR ANSAR

The Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), in collaboration with Beaconhouse National University (BNU) Lahore, hosted an International Conference on July 24, 2024, titled "Strengthening Pakistan-U.S. Relations." The event featured distinguished diplomats, practitioners, and academics from both Pakistan and the United States. The keynote speaker, H.E. Donald Blome, Ambassador of the United States of America to Pakistan, discussed the importance of the U.S.-Pakistan relationship, emphasizing the long history of partnership and cooperation between the two nations. He highlighted the U.S.'s recognition of Pakistan's potential, particularly its dynamic young population and economic opportunities. Ambassador Blome appreciated Pakistan's contribution to counter-terrorism and underlined the U.S.'s commitment to supporting Pakistan in various areas, including countering regional threats, economic collaboration, renewable energy, climate management, and education. He underscored that the U.S.-Pakistan partnership



goes beyond security and includes significant investments in health, trade, and development sectors. Ambassador Mariam Madiha Aftab, Additional Secretary (Americas), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stated that the U.S.-Pakistan relationship is dynamic and multifaceted, covering areas such as health, trade, defense, and energy security. She emphasized the importance of economic collaboration, security cooperation, educational exchanges, and climate change initiatives. Ms. Aftab also addressed regional dynamics, stressing the need for the U.S. to play a crucial role in fostering peace

and stability, and called for a peaceful resolution of the Jammu & Kashmir dispute in line with UN Security Council resolutions and will of the Kashmiri people. Ambassador Mansoor Khan, Director of the Beaconhouse Center for Policy Research (BCPR), emphasized the multifaceted nature of Pakistan-U.S. relations, highlighting political, security, defense cooperation, and economic ties. He announced the launch of a new undergraduate course on Pakistan-U.S. relations at BNU. Dr. Neelum Nigar, Director of the Centre for Strategic Perspectives at ISSI, noted the significant contributions of the U.S. to Pakistan's devel-

opment in sectors like education, healthcare, and climate change. She stressed the need for mutual respect and cooperation to address contemporary challenges and opportunities. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, Director General of ISSI, provided an extensive overview of the historical and current dynamics of Pakistan-U.S. relations. He acknowledged the evolving nature of the partnership, with a shift in focus from security to areas like trade, investment, energy, and people-to-people exchanges. He noted the cyclical pattern of bilateral relations, shaped by external factors, regional developments, and a narrower secu-

city-centric focus over the past many decades. Stressing the importance of realistic expectations, he called for greater attention to Pakistan's historical role and cumulative power potential in the emerging global order and the need for the U.S. to focus on Pakistan's preoccupations and interests. Relating to regional concerns, particularly the impact of U.S.-India strategic partnership on Pakistan's security especially within the 'Indo-Pacific' construct, he called for a responsive approach from Washington. He also emphasized that Pakistan wished to nimbly navigate the complex dynamics of U.S.-China competition, and wished that cooperation rather than confrontation would be the key driver of their relationship. Highlighting mutual benefits from past cooperation, such as Sino-U.S. rapprochement and post-9/11 counter-terrorism efforts, Ambassador Sohail Mahmood stressed the alignment of new trade and investment emphases with Pakistan's pivot to geo-economics. The inaugural session concluded with Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman Board of Governors ISSI, presenting shields to the Chief Guest and Keynote speaker, followed by a group photograph.

Bilawal for recovery of three Pakistanis in Myanmar

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan People's Party Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Wednesday, taking notice of reported kidnapping of three Pakistanis in Myanmar, called upon the concerned authorities to take measures for their recovery and repatriation. In a statement issued from Media Cell Bilawal House, he stressed for utilizing diplomat channels to locate and recover three boys namely Kashif Hussain, Faraz Khan and Shehroz Khan of Hyderabad, who travelled to Thailand from where they were allegedly taken to Myanmar and held hostage. Bilawal Bhutto expressed sympathy with the loved ones of these boys and assured PPP will raise voice at all relevant forums for the recovery of these boys.—APP

Railways putting maximum efforts retrieve 13,972 acres land

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Railways has accelerated the efforts to retrieve the major portion of around 13,972 acres of land worth billions of rupees found under the illegal occupation of private individuals and different government departments across the country. "Around 5,809 acres were occupied in Punjab, 1,181 acres are under encroachment in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 5,948 acres in Sindh and 1,034 acres land occupied in Balochistan," an official in the Ministry told APP. He said the category of land under illegal occupations included commercial, residential, agricultural and various persons or departments. Giving details of the land, the official said that around 769 acres were commercial in all the provinces, 3,309 residential, 5,512 acres agricultural and 4382 were under encroachment of various persons or departments. The official said the department had also decided to accelerate its ongoing anti-encroachment operation against land grabbers across the country to recoup its land from different individuals, groups, and even business organizations which were using it for residential, commercial and agriculture purposes for decades. "The joint procedure orders have been issued to all Divisional Superintendents of Pakistan Railways to retrieve the railway land from encroachers," the official added. Accordingly, he said the anti-encroachment operations for retrieval of encroached Railway land all over the Railway network are being initiated by the concerned divisions and notices are issued to encroachers under the Possession Ordinance 1965 for vacation of Railway land/structure within 14 days.—APP

Korea, Japan, Pakistan collaborating on groundbreaking agri initiatives

"By pooling our resources and expertise, we can address pressing challenges, ensure food security, and propel Pakistan's agriculture sector into a new era of growth and prosperity"

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Agricultural Research Council Dr. Ghulam Muhammad Ali Wednesday shared a vision for a transformed agricultural sector in which Pakistan will join forces with Korea and Japan to leverage cutting-edge technologies and expertise to enhance Pakistan's capacity for producing quality-based disease-resistant seeds. Dr. Ghulam Muhammad Ali, unveiled a game-changing trilateral partnership with Korea and Japan, poised to drive innovation, boost crop yields, and ensure food security in Pakistan. This historic collaboration marks a new era in agricultural cooperation between our nations, he added. "By pooling our

resources and expertise, we can address pressing challenges, ensure food security, and propel Pakistan's agriculture sector into a new era of growth and prosperity", he mentioned.

To produce local seeds in Pakistan, he said that Korea's expertise in seed technology and Japan's knowledge in plant breeding will be combined to enhance Pakistan's capacity for producing high-quality, disease-resistant seeds. This will reduce reliance on imported seeds, ensuring self-sufficiency and improved crop yields, he added. He further explained that Research and Korea's renowned research institutions will collaborate with PARC to establish state-of-the-art research facilities, focusing on developing climate-resilient crop varieties, improving

soil health, and exploring novel agricultural practices. He said that the Korean-Pakistani cooperation will expand in the field of machinery and vegetable seed production.

Responding to a query, he disclosed that Pakistan's introduction of seed potato production using Aeroponics technology marks a significant milestone, adding that seed potatoes are essential for cultivating high-quality potatoes, and this innovation ensures a consistent supply of disease-free, high-yielding seeds. The successful adoption of Aeroponics technology for seed potato production demonstrates Pakistan's commitment to embracing innovative solutions for sustainable agriculture, he added. As the country continues to explore new technologies and collaborations, a

brighter future for its agricultural sector is on the horizon, he mentioned. To cope with the problem of a shortage for good potato seed locally, the aeroponic technology is the ultimate solution to rapidly multiply and disseminate healthy seeds to the country's resource-poor farmers, according to agricultural scientists working on the project, he said.

To another question, he said the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) is also working to enhance livestock and dairy production in the country. The present government's unwavering commitment to revolutionize the livestock sector through genetic breed improvement, recognizing it as a crucial component in ensuring national food & nutritional security, he highlighted

CDA chairman chairs meeting to review sectors development

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman of the Capital Development Authority (CDA), Muhammad Ali Randhawa chaired an important meeting to discuss the key issues regarding the sector development of Islamabad, the Islamabad Development Plan, and the financial position of authority. The meeting was attended by members of CDA Board, Administrator MCI and other concerned formations. The Member Finance provided a detailed briefing on the CDA's fiscal status and revenue generation efforts. It was decided that revenue generation status will be presented on a weekly basis, detailing both targets and achievements to ensure transparency and accountability. Progress on directives issued was shared by all members, reflecting upon the status of these directives. Chairman Muhammad Ali Randhawa emphasized the need for regular oversight by instructing that weekly board meetings be held to track progress and make necessary decisions promptly. Several major initiatives were discussed in detailed during the meeting. These included the computerization of land and property records, the operationalization of a smart app for essential services, and the beautification of the Diplomatic Enclave and parks. The Serena Chowk underpass project, a one-window operation for customer facilitation, and ongoing mega road infrastructure projects were also discussed, signaling the CDA's comprehensive and multi-pronged approach to overall development of Islamabad city. This initiatives aim to streamline CDA's operations, boost revenue generation, and expedite development projects across Islamabad. To enhance oversight of the progress, Chairman Randhawa directed that drone cameras be provided to Members Estates, Building Control, Engineering, Environment and DMA to monitor ongoing projects more effectively. The meeting concluded with a reinforced commitment to improving the capital city's infrastructure and services, ensuring that Islamabad continues to develop in a structured, speedy and sustainable manner.

PFF NC completes DFA elections

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) Normalization Committee has announced the successful completion of the District Football Association (DFA) elections nationwide. With over 90 percent voter participation, the electoral process will end football's long-standing crisis, said a press release. Out of 143 districts with football playing clubs, elections have been held in 119 districts. The DFA elections in Kohat and Tank are pending due to court stays, while those in Kashmir, South Waziristan, North Waziristan, Dera Bugti, Sorab and Kurram are on hold due to security concerns. Additionally, 11 districts do not have any club with a right to vote, and in 4 districts the presence of only one voting club prevents the election process as per the electoral guidelines. From the completed districts, the officials elected include 119 Presidents, 9 Senior Vice Presidents, 116 General Secretaries and 112 Treasurers. In the first round of DFA elections held in 66 districts, 187 positions were elected. The second round, conducted in 33 districts, resulted in the election of 95 positions. In the third round, held in 23 districts, 75 positions were elected. Chairman PFF Normalisation Committee, Haroon Malik, extended his congratulations to all the candidates who participated in the electoral process, lauding the smooth and efficient execution of the elections. The PFF NC Chairman highlighted the inclusivity and transparency of the elections, noting this was the first time they conducted the elections in such a manner. Malik further mentioned that the focus will be on the provincial elections for which the rules and regulations of provincial elections have been uploaded on the PFF social accounts. He reaffirmed the PFF NC's commitment to ensuring transparent elections across Pakistan.—APP

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Briefs

FGEHA sets to auction commercial plots in G-13

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Government Employees Housing Authority (FGEHA) is all set to auction its three mixed-use commercial plots in G-13 on August 7, as not only to generate more revenues but also to attract investors.

"The authority has already advertised the auction of the plots in different leading newspapers and urged the interested persons to obtain brochures from FGEHA office," an official in the Ministry of Housing and Works told media.

The official said that the prime location of these plots makes them suitable for a range of purposes, including multi-use businesses, shopping centers, corporate offices, and banks.

He said the plots have an ideal location positioned along the Main Srinagar Highway, adjacent to Metro Stations, GT Road, & N-5, which is an eight-minute drive from Motorway M-1 and M-2 while 12-minute distance from the New Islamabad International Airport.

Moreover, the official said the investors can benefit from a 10 per cent rebate on advance lump-sum payments, making the opportunity even more attractive. The reasons to consider these plots for investment include their ideal location, affordable pricing, and modern facilities, he added.

The official said the detailed terms and conditions for participation in the auction can be obtained from the relevant office, with brochures available for interested parties.

Cement exports increase 40.36% to \$266.516 mln in FY 2023-24

ISLAMABAD: The exports of cement witnessed an increase of 40.36 per cent during the fiscal year 2023-24, as against the exports of the corresponding period of last year. The cement exports from the country were recorded at US \$266.516 million during July-June (2023-24) against the exports of US \$189.876 million during July-June (2022-23), according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). In terms of quantity, the exports of cement also surged by 66.85 per cent going up from 4,247,470 metric tons to 7,087,401 metric tons, according to the data. Meanwhile, year-on-year basis, the exports of cement also witnessed an increase of 39.58 per cent during the month of June 2024 as compared to the same month of last year. The exports of cement from the country during June 2024 were recorded at US \$29.719 million against the exports of US \$21.292 million in June 2023. On a month-on-month basis, exports of cement however decreased by 7.85 per cent during June 2024 when compared to the exports of US \$32.251 million in May 2024, the PBS data revealed.—APP

Dengue declined to zero

RAWALPINDI: No dengue patient in any allied hospitals of Rawalpindi district is presently admitted which shows dengue has declined to zero after continued follow up campaigns by the district's health administration. The last patient admitted in hospital has also been discharged from the hospital after complete recovery a couple of days ago. According to a report issued by the district's anti dengue department, has revealed that so far 29 patients affected by dengue were admitted to hospitals since Jan 24, all of whom have recovered and went back to their homes. The report shows that there is no dengue patient admitted in any of allied hospitals. During the last week, 80 FIRs were registered on dengue SOPs violations, by the District Health Authority, while 52 challans have been issued. Moreover, 9 places have been sealed along with total fines imposed of Rs.96,500.—APP

Pak needs business-friendly policies to overcome prevailing crisis

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry has called for a forensic audit of Independent Power Producers (IPPs), decrying the annual payment of Rs.2000 billion in capacity charges as "daylight robbery." This, he argues, deprives consumers of their hard-earned income and puts them in severe hardships to meet their day to day affairs. In a statement issued here at Islamabad on Wednesday, Bakhtawari lamented that 25% of industries have already shut down, resulting in widespread unemployment and the sale of machinery at drastically reduced prices. He emphasized that the Rs.2 trillion being paid to 40 companies in capacity charges is severely hampering the national economy, even when no electricity is generated or supplied. Bakhtawari stressed the need for cheaper electricity sources, as current high tariffs hinder export growth. He urged the government to review all agreements with IPPs and



procure electricity from cost-effective sources for the national grid. He said that Pakistan needs

business-friendly and long-term economic policies to wriggle out of the current crisis and promote

business and investment activities. He urged that businessmen should be encouraged as role

models in society as they are playing a vital role in the development of the country.

The public may clash with power producers over exorbitant bills

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The chairman of the FPCCI Advisory Board and National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, as well as former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain, on Wednesday said that the risk of confrontation between the public and electricity companies is increasing due to inflated bills. People now have to pay electricity bills that exceed their income, leading to quarrels in their homes, he said. Mian Zahid Hussain said that inflated bills are breaking relationships, and people are shedding

blood over it. The veteran business leader, speaking to the business community, claimed that capacity payments are penalising the general public and the industrial sector. He warned that public anxiety and agitation could spiral out of control at any time, so the government should act quickly to stabilise the situation. The business leader stated that the elites and the government own 80 per cent of the IPPs established in the country, receiving far more in dollars than their rightful share. He warned that this plunder of resources should end; otherwise, the country will plunge into lawlessness and will soon become bankrupt. Mian Zahid Hussain said

that the government can do a lot in this regard. The Prime Minister has also issued directives to lower the cost of electricity for industries, yet a permanent solution to the losses and capacity payments in the electricity sector remains unattainable. He stressed that the government's non-developmental expenditures are skyrocketing, making it impossible to fool the people as they perceive everything. According to Mian Zahid Hussain, following violent incidents, the power tariff has been reduced in some areas, implying that those living in other areas should also resort to violence for relief. According to Mian Zahid Hussain, forty per cent of people have already fall-

en below the poverty line, and more are falling below it. If the government fails to correct the economy's direction and arrange a fair distribution of wealth, it will not only impact the people but also the upper classes, who will struggle with insufficient resources for their princely lifestyle. Mian Zahid Hussain added, "If the IPPs agreement was not a mistake, why is the country and nation suffering a loss of two thousand billion rupees annually, and why is this money only reaching a few people?" He stated that it's crucial to conduct a forensic audit of IPPs, noting that some individuals have profited greatly from the looting, and it's now time to put an end to it.

Finance minister vows to protect consumers' rights

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Finance Ali Pervaiz Malik Wednesday reiterated the government's unwavering commitment to consumer protection, assuring that it will remain a top priority where Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was taking aggressive measures to not only end power outages but also uplift the most vulnerable segments of society. Talking to a private news channel, he while elaborating on the government's strategy explained that efforts are underway to create a conducive business environment for the power sector to flourish. "We are not just focusing on privatization, but also on building a robust framework that encourages investment, innovation, and competition," he said. This multi-pronged approach, he added, will not only enhance the efficiency and reliability of power supply but also attract private sector participation, driving economic growth and job creation, he mentioned. He said that Power and Finance ministry working together and consulting with neighbor countries how to control these power crises effectively. Malik emphasized that consumer protection will remain at the forefront of these efforts, ensuring that vulnerable segments are shielded from exploitation and receive fair, quality services. Ali Pervaiz Malik said with the consultation of the World Bank, work on the privatization of power distribution companies is also under process. Responding a query, he said Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has announced billion of energy subsidy package for low-income households that consume less than 200 units of electricity which is admirable.—APP

China-Pak collaborates enhancing climate & disaster preparedness

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A training Workshop on Application of Cloud-based Early Warning System (CEWS) for Pakistan commenced here, China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Wednesday. It aimed at further deepening Pakistan, China bilateral cooperation in climate and disaster preparedness. The 7-day workshop brings together 20 officials and experts from the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) for training and knowledge exchange. Following the conclusion of the workshop, Chinese meteorological experts will travel to Pakistan to collaborate with local coun-

terparts on the installation and commissioning of the CEWS system. The CEWS Training is a collaborative effort between the China Meteorological Administration (CMA) and the Ministry of Ecology and Environment (MEE) of China. The opening ceremony was attended by Dr. Cao Xiaozhong, Deputy Administrator of CMA, and Khan Muhammad Wazir, Science and Technology Counsellor at the Pakistani Embassy in Beijing, and so on. On the occasion, Dr. Cao expressed hope for deeper cooperation in the future, contributing to the advancement of meteorological science and the implementation of the United Nations' univer-

sally early warning initiative. The Course covered various topics related to the locally adapted application of the Cloud-Based Early Warning System for Pakistan. Developed jointly by CMA and PMD, this system includes technologies for severe weather monitoring and forecasting, climate projections, meteorological satellite surveillance, remote sensing, and the installation and maintenance of meteorological observation facilities. Participants engaged in on-site lectures, hands-on practical exercises, and interactive discussions, sharing experiences in disaster prevention, early warning, and enhancing overall climate resilience.

WAPDA supplied 34.436 bln units to national grid during FY 2023-24

These projects will increase the WAPDA hydel generation in next four to five years from 9,500 MW to 20,700 MW with an addition of about 11,200 MW clean, green and low-cost hydel electricity

ISLAMABAD: Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) has supplied around 34.436 billion clean and low-cost units from its various hydel stations to the national grid system during the last fiscal year 2023-24. As per official data, 22 hydel power stations of WAPDA cumulatively provided 34.436 billion units of electricity in 2023-24, which is 3.266 billion units more than that of fiscal year 2022-23. Tarbela Hydel Power Station generated 13.424 billion units, Tarbela 4th Extension 4.672 billion units, Ghazi Barotha 6.556 billion units, Mangla 5.276 billion units, and Neelum-Jhelum Hydel Power Station generated 762 million units. While,

rest of the generation i.e. 3.747 billion units - was contributed by other hydel power stations of WAPDA. This increase in hydel generation by WAPDA to the tune of 3.266 billion units helped save national exchequer an amount of Rs. 143.7 billion, if the same quantum of electricity had to be generated through imported furnace oil. WAPDA achieved this additional hydel power generation because of the improved hydrology and effective operation and maintenance of its Hydel Power Stations. It is pertinent to note that the cumulative installed generation capacity of WAPDA Hydel Power Stations, including Neelum Jhelum, stands at about

9,500 MW. Hydel generation is the most economical electricity, generated in the country. WAPDA is vigorously implementing a least-cost energy generation plan to enhance share of hydel electricity in the National Grid. A number of mega projects are under construction in Water and Hydropower Sectors including Diamer Basha Dam, Mohmand Dam, Dasu Hydropower Project and Tarbela 5th Extension etc. scheduled for completion in a phased manner. These projects will increase the WAPDA hydel generation in next four to five years from 9,500 MW to 20,700 MW with an addition of about 11,200 MW clean, green and low-cost hydel electricity.—APP

RDA advises citizens not to invest in illegal housing societies

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Director General (DG) Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) Kinza Murtaza has advised the citizens not to invest in illegal housing societies and check their status before investment on RDA website www.rda.gov.pk. The citizens can also visit RDA office to get the information about legal and illegal housing societies, she said. She informed that 71 schemes were approved in Rawalpindi and 74 were under process while 359 schemes were illegal. The status of housing schemes is updated on the RDA website and efforts are also made to spread information for the awareness of the public, she added. The DG further said that that the authorities concerned of RDA were directed to regularly monitor approved and ongoing schemes besides taking legal action against illegal housing societies.

RDA had issued legal notices to 560 schemes while 218 societies were challenged and their cases were sent to the magistrate's court, she said adding, 221 FIRs were also lodged against the rules violators. Apart from this, RDA had also taken strict legal action against several schemes and sealed offices of 184 schemes and demolished illegal constructions, offices, main gates of 200 societies.

The DG informed that the authorities concerned of FIA Cyber Crime Wing were also requested to take action against illegal advertisements, booking of plots, publicity campaigns of illegal housing schemes. Punjab Development Authority, Private Housing Scheme Rules 2021 are enforced and all-out efforts are being made to take strict action in accordance with the law against the rules violators, she added.

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Ansar Allah's war strategy

AFTER 9 long months, Ansar Allah has proved itself as a force to be reckoned with. A country that has been afflicted with poverty, famine, and war at the hands of the imperial powers and their Arab collaborators, has chosen to put the rifle before itself. It has taken the lead as a supportive wing to the Palestinian Resistance during the genocide of Gaza, carrying with it a few locally sourced weapons and ample amounts of willpower. This phase marked the beginning of Yemen's domination over the entity's maritime relations. It pitched Yemen against long standing normalisation efforts, directly challenging the status quo by preventing the occupation entity from functioning as a legitimate state in regional waters. At the time, more than 90% of container ships bound for the Suez Canal had to be rerouted, adding a dozen days to travel time. As the entity continued its blockade of Gaza to starve the population, phase 2 of Ansar Allah's strategy sought to tighten the chokehold. This included blocking ships from any country seeking to approach the entity's ports. The makeshift US-led Red Sea coalition of non-Arab states failed to stop Ansar Allah, as these countries did not see it in their interest to be dragged into a US fight, further highlighting how the US is losing its legitimacy as the world's 'global police.' US escalation only exacerbated attacks on its own ships, including the US 'Eisenhower' aircraft carrier. If not already clear by their domination of the Red Sea, Ansar Allah extended its blockade to the Indian Ocean. This move spotlighted Ansar Allah's consistency and well-planned strategy— a foreshadowing of its ability to sustain itself throughout this confrontation. As Ansar Allah began closing in on the entity, their only path was through the Mediterranean Sea. In this phase, the entity risked losing access to its final maritime waterway, forming another obstacle which challenged the entity's high economic dependence on sea trade. Escalating into the Mediterranean Sea was particularly impactful, as this area has long been considered NATO's territory. By extension, it was a direct challenge to the US which planned to create an 'aid port' that sought to covertly facilitate further control. The coordination between the Iraqi Resistance and Ansar Allah strengthened, with reports of the establishment of a new coordination and communication office in Baghdad. Though their coordination began much earlier, its levels increased in preparation for phase 5. Along with tightening alliances, Ansar Allah began creating new locally made weapons such as the Palestine ballistic missile, to account for the technical, operational, and long-range requirements in this phase. After its recent attack on Tel Aviv, Ansar Allah has positioned itself among the growing list of Resistance Axis members that have been able to bypass the Iron Dome, exposing its fragility. The occupation has suffered a major psychological blow with the economic heart of the entity coming under attack. As anxieties spread over Sanaa's increased capabilities and range, the occupation is forced to prepare itself for the possibility of direct attacks from outside of Palestine in future.



Israel's war against UNRWA

TARGETING a school during a war could be justified as, or at least argued, to have been a mistake. But striking over 120 schools, and killing and wounding thousands of civilians sheltering inside, can only be intentional, with each attack a horrific war crime in its own right. Between 7 October last year and 18 July, Israel has done precisely that, targeting with total impunity UN infrastructure in the besieged Gaza Strip, including schools and medical centers. According to the estimates of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), at least 561 internally displaced Palestinians sheltering in UNRWA buildings have been killed and 1,768 have been wounded since the start of Israel's war. Within just ten days between 8 and 18 July, at least six UNRWA schools serving as makeshift shelters for displaced Palestinians were targeted by the Israeli army, resulting in the killing and wounding of hundreds. Historically, UN-linked organizations have been more or less immune from the impact of wars. The privilege of being neutral outsiders to any conflict allowed those affiliated with such organizations to carry out their duties largely unhindered. The Israeli war on the Palestinians in Gaza, however, is the primary exception among all modern conflicts. According to UN sources, 274 aid workers and over 500 healthcare workers linked to the international organization have been killed by the Israeli occupation forces. These figures are consistent with all other statistics produced by the ongoing Israeli genocide in Gaza. Indeed, not a single category of people has been spared: neither doctors nor civil defense workers, mayors or even traffic police, let alone the children, women and elderly. It was obvious from the very start of the war that Israel wanted to criminalize all Palestinians. True, a number of governments eventually resumed their funding of the agency, but such action was only taken when much damage had already been done. Moreover, most, if not all, Western governments have taken no action against Israel for its continued targeting of UNRWA facilities, and thus the killing of hundreds of innocent Palestinians in the process. This non-committal attitude has emboldened Israel to the extent that, just this week, the Israeli Knesset (parliament) passed the first reading of a bill to designate UNRWA as a "terrorist organization". On 18 July, Israeli spokesman David Mencer accused the Commissioner-General of UNRWA, Philippe Lazzarini, of being a "terrorist sympathizer". Israel's hate for UNRWA, however, stretches back long before the current war. Indeed, the issue is not just about UNRWA, but rather the historic role the agency has played as a reminder of the plight of millions of Palestinian refugees in occupied Palestine, the Middle East and across the world. UNRWA was established through General Assembly Resolution 302 (IV) of 8 December 1949. The founding of UNRWA came one year after the passing of UN Resolution 194, which granted Palestinian refugees the right to "return to their homes". Although UNRWA's mission has turned into a de facto permanent mandate (albeit one that has to be renewed periodically), since Palestinian refugees were not granted their right of return, the role of the agency has remained as critical as it was decades ago.

Harris vs. Trump: What's next for Pakistan?

Qamar Bashir



Kamala Harris earned a Juris Doctor (J.D.) from the University of California, Hastings College of the Law, in 1989. She began her legal career as a deputy district attorney in Alameda County, later serving as San Francisco's District Attorney from 2004 to 2011, and as California's Attorney General until 2017. Her career culminated with her election as Vice President alongside President Joe Biden in 2020. Like all countries, Pakistan is closely watching the ups and downs of the U.S. elections.

Pakistan, like others, is evaluating both Donald Trump and Kamala Harris for their expected policies toward Asia...

THE divine approval seemed to suddenly turn away from Joe Biden after he fumbled, lost his words, and struggled to maintain the sequence while making points, showing visible signs of aging. Later, he contracted coronavirus, perhaps seen as the final push of the divine to move him out of the president's slot. The "Huma," the "Bird of Paradise," which had been protecting his presidency, flew away in search of a new abode. For the first time, it found not a man, but a woman of mixed heritage—Black and Tamil—bestowing her with the strength and charisma to enter the race to become the first-ever female president of the world's most powerful country in known history. She was nominated by Joe Biden as his successor, but this was only half the battle won. She still has to pass many tests and cross numerous formidable hurdles to officially secure her position as the Democratic nominee and run for the presidency. With the broadest smile, exuding confidence and competence, she is well-prepared for the challenge, but the path ahead is steep, with stiff competition from many men with impressive CVs and compelling credentials. However, fate seems to be smiling on her. She has already made significant strides towards securing the Democratic nomination for the presidency. She has successfully garnered the support of enough Democratic delegates, and top Democrats, including elected officials, party leaders, and political organizations, have rallied behind her following President Joe Biden's decision to drop his bid for reelection. She has set a new 24-hour record of raising \$48 million for presidential donations, and several state delegations, including Texas and California, have confirmed their support. But who is Kamala Harris? She was born on October 20, 1964, is a member of the Third Baptist Church of San Francisco, a mixed race, with a Black and South Asian heritage. Her mother, the late Shyamala Gopalan, a PhD was of Indian Tamil descent from Madras (now Chennai), India. Her father, Donald Jasper Harris, is of Jamaican descent and is an economist and professor emeritus at Stanford University. Kamala has one sibling, a younger sister named Maya Harris, who

is a lawyer, public policy advocate, and political analyst, and who served as a senior policy advisor to Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign. She is married to Douglas Emhoff, an attorney. They got married on August 22, 2014. She does not have biological children but is a stepmother to Emhoff's two children from his previous marriage, Cole and Ella Emhoff. Kamala Harris earned a Juris Doctor (J.D.) from the University of California, Hastings College of the Law, in 1989. She began her legal career as a deputy district attorney in Alameda County, later serving as San Francisco's District Attorney from 2004 to 2011, and as California's Attorney General until 2017. Her career culminated with her election as Vice President alongside President Joe Biden in 2020. Like all countries, Pakistan is closely watching the ups and downs of the U.S. elections. Pakistan, like others, is evaluating both Donald Trump and Kamala Harris for their expected policies toward Asia, South Asia, and Pakistan. Pakistan has already experienced Trump's presidency, so his policies may not come as a surprise. However, Trump had some positive aspects for Pakistan. He prioritized counter-terrorism and used military force and economic sanctions to curb terrorism. His administration carried out drone strikes and targeted terrorist leaders in Afghanistan and Pakistan. In Afghanistan, Trump focused on reducing U.S. military presence while negotiating with the Taliban, leading to the Doha Agreement aimed at withdrawing U.S. troops. His approach to countries perceived to harbor terrorists involved applying pressure through sanctions and military actions. Regarding the Kashmir dispute, Trump generally supported India's position, occasionally offering to mediate between India and Pakistan, but his administration was less vocal about human rights concerns in the region. Trump's view of Pakistan-China relations was generally wary, seeing Pakistan primarily through the lens of counter-terrorism and regional stability rather than as a broader geopolitical partner. He strengthened U.S.-India relations, viewing India as a key strategic partner to counterbalance China's influence in the region, which

sometimes strained U.S.-Pakistan relations. On the other hand, Kamala Harris is likely to maintain a strong stance on counter-terrorism, emphasizing a combination of military, diplomatic, and economic tools. She is expected to support initiatives that enhance regional stability and cooperation in counter-terrorism efforts. In Afghanistan, Harris would focus on ensuring that the country does not become a haven for terrorists again, emphasizing diplomatic solutions and international cooperation. On the Kashmir dispute, Harris may take a more balanced approach, emphasizing human rights and democratic values. She has previously expressed concerns about the situation in Kashmir, which could lead to a more vocal stance on human rights issues. Regarding Pakistan-China relations, Harris is likely to acknowledge their strategic importance while seeking to balance U.S. interests in the region, potentially engaging Pakistan in broader diplomatic and economic initiatives to counterbalance China's influence. Under Trump, India was seen as a crucial partner in the Indo-Pacific strategy to counter China's rise, leading to significant defense agreements and a strong bilateral relationship. Under Harris, while India will likely continue to be a strategic partner in counterbalancing China, she might also stress human rights and democratic values in U.S.-India relations, potentially leading to a more holistic approach. For Pakistan, this comparison seems to tilt in favor of Kamala Harris becoming President of the USA. However, the true test will come once her policies take shape after she assumes office and confronts the ground realities and complexities of geopolitics. She will only realize the full impact of the intricate layers of bilateral and multilateral relations after assuming the mantle of power. Pakistan may likely be overshadowed by larger issues such as the Russia-Ukraine war, the China-Taiwan standoff, the trade and innovation war between the U.S. and China, and the Israel-Gaza conflict to name a few.

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

The changing dynamics of Indian politics

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



The economic issues in India, such as unemployment, inflation and slow growth, likely caused voter dissatisfaction. Despite efforts to improve the economy, ongoing problems may have made people lose faith in the ruling party's ability to handle economic matters. Rural distress, a long-standing problem, probably further alienated rural voters

THE 2024 Indian General Election results present a clear picture of how the political scene in India has changed compared to the 2019 elections. The results show notable shifts in the number of seats won by these major political alliances. The BJP and its allies have seen a significant reduction in their number of seats, dropping from 352 in 2019 to 293 in 2024. This 59-seat loss points to a decline in their previous dominance. Several factors might explain this decrease, such as voter dissatisfaction with the government's performance, economic problems, or successful opposition campaigns. Despite this decline, the BJP and its allies still maintain a strong presence in the parliament. The Congress and its allies have also been closely analyzed, along with the category of other parties that do not align with either of the two main alliances. These shifts in parliamentary seats are essential to understanding the broader implications for India's political landscape. A significant part of this analysis delves into what these changes mean for India's political and socio-economic environment. The reduction in seats for the BJP and its allies suggests a change in voter sentiment since the 2019 elections when they held a commanding majority with 352 seats. This change could be due to various reasons, including possible voter dissatisfaction or more effective campaigning by opposition parties. Furthermore, the analysis aims to understand the factors contributing to these shifts. For instance, economic issues might have played a crucial role in altering voter preferences. If the public feels that the government has not effectively managed the economy, it could lead to reduced support for the ruling party. Additionally, successful opposition campaigns could have swayed public opinion, resulting in more votes for parties other than the BJP and its allies. The consequences of these election results are significant. With a reduced majority, the BJP and its allies might face more challenges in passing legislation and governing effectively. This situation could lead to a more collaborative or conten-

tious political environment, depending on how different parties choose to interact in parliament. The economic issues in India, such as unemployment, inflation and slow growth, likely caused voter dissatisfaction. Despite efforts to improve the economy, ongoing problems may have made people lose faith in the ruling party's ability to handle economic matters. Rural distress, a long-standing problem, probably further alienated rural voters. Protests by farmers and their demands for better support and fair prices might have influenced voters, especially in agricultural states. Additionally, how the government handled social and communal issues could have swayed voter behavior. Perceived failures or bias in managing communal tensions might have turned voters against the BJP. The natural tendency for voters to seek change after a long period of governance by the same party could also have played a role. This desire for new leadership often leads to significant shifts in election outcomes. The Congress party and its allies made a remarkable comeback, gaining 142 seats, bringing their total to 234. This success marks a significant recovery for Congress, which struggled in the previous election. Congress likely ran a more effective campaign, addressing key voter concerns and presenting a compelling alternative to the BJP. Strong leadership, strategic alliances and effective use of social media and grassroots mobilization could have contributed to this success. By focusing on economic and social issues, Congress may have resonated with a broader section of the electorate. Promises of economic reform, job creation, and social justice might have appealed to voters seeking change. Forming strategic alliances with regional parties and other opposition groups likely bolstered Congress's seat count, helping consolidate anti-BJP votes and enhancing Congress's overall performance. Smaller parties and independents, categorized as 'Other,' saw a dramatic decline from 99 seats in 2019 to just 16 seats in 2024. This indicates a significant consolidation of votes towards the two major alliances, suggesting a less fragmented parliament. A more streamlined legislative pro-

cess could result, with fewer coalition challenges. The decline of smaller parties may also indicate increased polarization within the electorate, with voters gravitating towards the two dominant political forces. This polarization could lead to more intense political competition and sharper divisions within the electorate. The new seat distribution suggests a more balanced parliament. With BJP and its allies holding 293 seats and Congress and its allies at 234, legislative processes might involve more negotiation and compromise. This balance could lead to more robust debates and diverse perspectives in policymaking. The shift in power dynamics might lead to changes in economic policies. Congress, with its increased influence, might push for policies focused on social welfare, job creation and economic equity. The BJP may need to adapt its economic agenda to address the concerns that led to its seat loss. Social policies could shift towards inclusivity and social justice, especially if Congress uses its gains to promote its agenda. Issues such as education, healthcare, and social security might receive increased attention. The reduced number of seats for smaller parties could simplify coalition dynamics, with fewer small parties to negotiate. However, the close contest between BJP and Congress could lead to intense political maneuvering and alliances. The reduced majority for BJP might pose challenges in passing legislation, necessitating more collaboration and consensus building. Congress, with its significant gains, could play a crucial role in shaping the legislative agenda. The 2024 Indian General Election results reflect a dynamic and evolving political landscape. The decline of the BJP and its allies, the resurgence of Congress and the reduction in seats for smaller parties indicate shifting voter sentiments and priorities. These changes suggest a more balanced parliament, potential shifts in policy direction, and new challenges and opportunities for governance. As India moves forward, the political landscape will continue to evolve, shaped by the actions and strategies of its key political players.

Briefs

US expresses concern over arrest of PTI...

FROM PAGE 01 and democratic principles, including the rule of law, equal justice under the law, and respect for human rights like freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly". Miller added that the department "urges that these principles be respected in accordance with Pakistan's constitution and laws", before answering further questions. Asked about the Department's views on the state of democracy in Pakistan as well as Bangladesh, Miller replied, "What we as the United States have always done [...] is to speak out for democratic values around the world and make sure that — and make clear that countries are strongest when they uphold democratic values [...] anywhere in the world. And that's what we're going to continue to do."

Courts should remain...

FROM PAGE 01 circular that the high court would operate 24/7. He said that he set a procedure that no matter what the time anyone could file a petition, which would then be sent to the then-IHC CJ on WhatsApp — whether it be 3am or 4am. "1,400 benefited from that circular. Nobody knows about them because they were not political people, they were ordinary people. Only the Islamabad High Court did that. The high court was open for everyone," Justice Minallah said. Clarifying that the media reports were wrong when they ran the news that he had arrived at the high court, "I was in my pyjamas [...] when I was informed that Supreme Court Bar Association President Ahsan Bhoon wants to file a petition. But all petitions were frivolous and I didn't pass any order."

Zardari, Nawaz on the wrong...

FROM PAGE 01 Tehreek-e-Insaf, adding that whoever was siding with Nawaz Sharif and Asif Zardari won't be able to survive in politics in future. Speaking about PTI founder Imran Khan, he said the 14-month long illegal incarceration of Imran Khan couldn't achieve anything for the government as people had voted for his party without the PTI having a party symbol for the polls. He warned the government against rampant human rights abuses which may lead to anarchy. "The world is watching everything happening in Pakistan where even court orders are brushed under the carpet," he cautioned. Underscoring the need for strengthening the judiciary, the former minister said people should obey court orders. He also criticised those who were maligning the armed forces from abroad, cautioning that it won't do them any good.

Joe Biden admin seeks \$101...

FROM PAGE 01 underscoring the need to increase government revenue and reduce recurrent deficit to win the lender's approval. Under the IMF deal, the highest effective tax rate can rise to as much as 45% from the current 15%. It will be implemented from 2025, a move that was termed "unprecedented" by broker-age and investment banking firm JS Global. Moving forward, he also expressed concern over the situation of women and minority groups in Afghanistan, noting that relations with the Taliban government cannot normalise until the rights of Afghan citizens are respected. The senior State Department official also demanded the Afghan Taliban to release all American prisoners in their custody. The US remains the largest aid donor to impoverished Afghanistan nearly three years after the Taliban seized Kabul as the last US troops completed a chaotic pullout following 20 years of war with the Islamist militants.

Paris 2024 Olympics

Rafael Nadal, Alcaraz cautious over doubles medal chances
2008 singles gold medallist Nadal will link up with Alcaraz at Roland Garros for doubles championship

SPORTS DESK

PARIS: Rafael Nadal and Carlos Alcaraz promised on Wednesday to make every effort to overcome lack of preparation even if they are aware that their combined stature at the Olympics in Paris would not bring them any rewards. In an attempt to build on the doubles championship he and close friend Marc Lopez won in Rio in 2016, 2008 singles gold medallist Nadal will link up with Alcaraz at Roland Garros as part of a tennis dream squad. Before his final Olympics, the 22-time Grand Slam winner was eager to temper expectations because Nadal and Alcaraz would be working together for the first time. "I understand the fascination, the hope of seeing us play together, (but) let's not think that this translates into success, I think that's a mistake," said the 38-year-old Nadal. "At the end of the day Carlos hasn't played much doubles and I haven't played much in either doubles or singles," he said at a Spanish team press conference in the Olympic Village.



Both Nadal and Alcaraz will also compete in the singles at Roland Garros, where Nadal has won the French Open a record 14 times. Alcaraz claimed the title in Paris for the first time last month. "We trust in the great moment that Carlos is in," said Nadal. Alcaraz retained his Wimbledon crown 10 days ago, landing his fourth Grand Slam at the age of 21. "We're going to give our all to try and at least leave with the peace of mind of having done everything possible," added Nadal. Meanwhile, Alcaraz said it was "a dream" to be able to make his Olympic debut in doubles alongside Nadal. He too sounded a note of caution and insisted their star power was no guarantee of a medal. "What I can say is that we're going to do give the best of ourselves... with great enthusiasm, let's hope we can enjoy it and play well," said Alcaraz, who beat Novak Djokovic again in this year's Wimbledon final. Djokovic, who won singles bronze in 2008, will also be in Paris as the Olympic tennis tournament is held on clay for the first time since Barcelona in 1992.

Nadeem in good shape ahead of PO 2024

LAHORE: Salman Butt, coach of premier javelin thrower Arshad Nadeem, on Monday said that Arshad is in good shape, adding that it was extremely difficult to cope with the hot conditions in Lahore ahead of the Paris Olympics which will be formally opened on July 26. "He is in good shape and we will try to make him much better. We have worked hard but weather has affected our training. We don't have indoor air-conditioned facilities. It's very difficult condition to train," Butt told The News in a detailed chat. Butt and Arshad are set to leave for Paris at 2am late Tuesday night. Arshad will compete in the qualifying phase to be conducted on August 6 while finals will be held on August 8. This is the second time that the world silver medallist Arshad will be competing in Olympics. He finished fifth in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. "Despite tough conditions we have worked hard and have done four to five techniques," Butt said. "Because of the hot conditions body becomes stiff and legs as well where he had an injury and we are to carry him carefully while taking care of all these things," he said. "Now we are moving to better weather conditions in Paris and there we will utilise around 12 days as per our plans," Butt said. "As you go near the competition you reduce the load and it makes the movement faster and reduces repetition. What we need is speed," he said. Arshad is the sole medal hope for the country in Paris Olympics. His personal best throw is 90.18m which is counted as the world's top throw. He managed this in the 2022 Birmingham Commonwealth Games which was also the Games record throw. Dogged by injuries for a long time, Arshad has eventually achieved fitness and a few days ago he made a good effort in the Diamond League in Paris where he finished fourth with a throw of 84.21m. — DNA

Basit Ali slams BCCI Secretary Jay Shah

He accuses the Indian official of exerting undue influence on other cricket boards

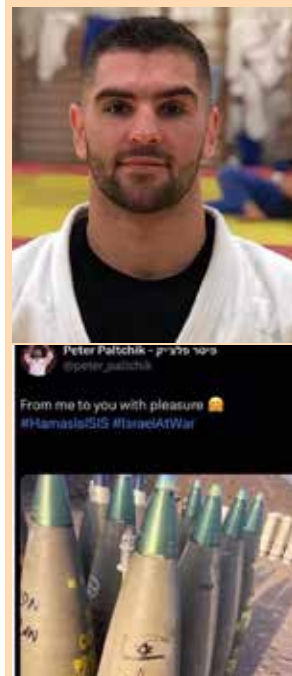
DNA

LAHORE: Former Pakistan cricketer Basit Ali has criticized BCCI Secretary Jay Shah for reportedly declining to travel to Pakistan for the 2025 Champions Trophy. Ali accused Jay Shah of exerting undue influence on other cricket boards to align with his preferences. Despite ongoing security concerns, Pakistan retains the hosting rights for the 2025 Champions Trophy. The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has initiated preparations for the event, including stadium renovations. However, India's participation remains uncertain. Recent reports suggest that the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) may request the International Cricket Council (ICC) to relocate India's Champions Trophy matches to a neutral venue, as the Indian government is expected to deny approval for the team's travel to Pakistan. Ali, visibly frustrated by BCCI's stance, voiced his concerns in a YouTube vid-

eo. He claimed that Jay Shah wields significant influence, asserting that "5-6 cricket boards blindly follow his directives." "There are 5-6 boards, they will talk with their tails wagging what Jay Shah will say. If he says the Champions Trophy will be in Pakistan, they'll agree. If he says it'll be a hybrid model, they'll go with that too," Basit said. The former cricketer suggested that Shah has secured the support of major cricket boards by offering substantial payments for player participation in the Indian Premier League (IPL). He argued that this financial leverage has led to a situation where boards are compelled to align with Shah's decisions. "It's because when their players play in the IPL, BCCI pays their boards a huge amount whether it's the English board, New Zealand board, West Indies board, or Australia board," he said. Recently, at the International Cricket Council's (ICC) annual meeting in Colombo, the budget for the 2025 Champions Trophy was officially approved. According to a local media report, this approval was granted on the final

day of the meeting. Pakistan, the host nation for the event, was represented by Chairman Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Mohsin Naqvi, who was present at the meeting. The budget was meticulously prepared by ICC Chief Finance Officer Ankur Khanna and PCB Finance Officer Javed Murtaza. The ICC have passed the budget for the upcoming Champions Trophy 2025 which will be hosted by Pakistan in February-March next year. However, the ICC allotted Rs 12.80 billion to Pakistan for the multinational tournament. ICC's chief finance officer, Ankur Khanna, and PCB's chief finance officer, Javed Murtaza, had prepared the budget. ICC allocated this budget to the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) to renovate venues in Karachi, Lahore and Rawalpindi for the Champions Trophy 2025. PCB are sticking to its original plan of hosting the whole tournament in Pakistan but as per Cricket Pakistan's report team India might play their matches at a neutral venue rather than travelling to Pakistan.

Israeli Olympic flagbearer signs bombs targeting Palestinian children



PARIS: Israeli team is set to participate in the Paris Olympics starting Friday after the French government as well as the International Olympic Committee turned down calls to ban it over the genocidal war on Gaza. Netizens have been fuming at the body responsible for organizing the Olympic Games and Emmanuel Macron's government for allowing "mass murderers" to participate in the marquee sports competition. According to reports, the flag-bearer of the Israeli contingent at the Paris Olympics will be Peter Paltchik, a Ukrainian-born Israeli judoka who competes in the under-100 kg weight category. Social media users have pointed out that Paltchik, a former European champion, was one of those who signed bomb shells aimed at Palestinian children in the Gaza Strip. In a post on X, formerly Twitter, after the Israeli regime launched its genocidal war against Palestinians in the besieged territory in October 2023, Paltchik shared a photo of munitions signed by him. "From me to you with pleasure," he wrote in the tweet, which stirred up the hornet's nest. Leyla Hamed, a sports journalist based in the UK, said the presence of Israeli athletes such as Paltchik "is going to make this Olympics (in Paris) to be remembered as the Genocide Games." Meet Israel's flag bearer, Peter Paltchik, also known for signing bombs aimed at Palestinian children and civilians in Gaza. Hamed hastened to add that Paltchik was part of the judo team that disrupted a pro-Palestinian protest in Japan and harassed protesters while wearing his Olympic uniform. "Does this represent the @Olympics spirit," she asked. Israeli judo team disrupt a demonstration in solidarity with Palestine in Japan and threaten to kill protesters while wearing their Olympics uniform. Her tweets came in response to a post by the Israeli Olympic team on July 5 stating that Paltchik and Andi Murez would be flagbearers for the Israeli contingent at the Paris Olympics. Max Blumenthal, a US-based journalist and editor of the Grayzone website, responding to Hamed's tweet wrote that Israel "seldom wins gold because there are no Olympic competitions in slaughtering masses of children and manipulating Western political hacks." — Agencies

Imran criticizes DG ISPR...

FROM PAGE 01 These measures have led to numerous arrests and legal actions against journalists and social media users accused of disseminating "negative propaganda" against the military and the state. Additionally, there have been several instances of restricted internet access, and notable social media platforms like X have faced bans. The military's reaction had come against the backdrop of a post on Imran's X account in which he urged his followers to study the Hamoodur Rehman Commission Report on the events leading to the separation of East Pakistan. The term had featured again in the 265th Corps Commanders' Conference earlier this month. The attendees had stressed that the "onslaught of politically motivated digital terrorism, unleashed by conspirators, duly abetted by their foreign cohorts against state institutions" was meant to induce "dependency in the nation and sow discord through peddling of blatant lies, fake news and propaganda".

PM warns TTP's...

FROM PAGE 01

millions of their people here without any complaint? We treated them like our brothers and never considered them as a burden. But we were rewarded in the form of TTP attacks on our citizens to mar the country's peace and business. This is not acceptable," he remarked. He said Pakistan was ready to face any kind of situation as its valiant armed forces had sacrificed their lives to safeguard the country and its people. Prime Minister Shehbaz also highlighted that the perpetrators of the May 9 riots, who had also attacked parliament, PTV and besieged the PM House in the past, had resorted to new tactics to malign the country and its armed forces as a malicious campaign was run against Army Chief General Asim Munir from the official website of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf. "We will not tolerate any such steps against the country, its innocent people, and armed forces," he said and called for national unity to protect the national interest. The prime minister apprised the members of a decision to abolish the visa fees for 126 countries as a "quantum jump" to bring ease of doing business and attract businessmen, tourists and travelers to Pakistan. The decision, made after a threadbare discussion, would be tabled before the cabinet for its consideration, he added. He said the deficiency of the visa fees would be made up by foreign exchange earned through investment and tourism, including religious tourism of which Pakistan has immense potential. Prime Minister Shehbaz said that the visitors would get visas within 24 hours through the electronic travel authorization form. Besides, the E-gates would be established at Gwadar Port and nine airports — initially in Islamabad, Lahore and Karachi airports. The prime minister strongly condemned the unprecedented human rights abuses of Israel against Palestinians as around 40,000 Palestinians had been killed including thousands of children and women. He said despite the resolutions passed by the United Nations Security Council and UN General Assembly and the decision by the International Court of Justice, Israel was unbudged from its oppression which was highly condemnable. The prime minister drew attention to the attacks on Pakistan's missions in Germany and London. He said the Foreign Office had timely taken up the matter and that the envoys of the countries concerned should be given demarches to seek the protection of Pakistan's missions.

Govt set to deregulate petroleum prices

FROM PAGE 01 has been tasked with assessing the impacts of deregulating petroleum prices and developing a strategic framework. The final framework for deregulation will be presented to the prime minister for approval. In that regard, OMAP Chairman Tariq Wazir Ali wrote a letter to the prime minister to draw his attention to the unrecoverable exchange losses of the petroleum industry, which had been pending for a considerable time period. He stressed that prompt action would help safeguard the petroleum industry from further crisis and ensure its continued contribution to the national economy. He praised the government's policies for putting the country back on the right track, adding that the "commitment to economic stability and growth is a beacon of hope for many industries, including the petroleum industry." Earlier, oil refineries also called on the government to make full recovery of the actual currency exchange losses.

Three 'agents'...

FROM PAGE 01 raids to arrest others involved in the network. Earlier, the FIA identified more officials of the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) allegedly involved in issuance of Computerised National Identity Cards (CNICs) to Afghan nationals. The FIA's investigation has reached its final stages, and responsible officials have been identified. It was revealed that Afghan citizens were issued Pakistani ID cards in exchange for bribes, with the help of Pakistani families, the sources said. The investigation was initiated after the arrest of an Afghan national, Majidullah, who attempted to obtain a Pakistani passport. The investigation revealed that Majidullah bribed and pretended himself a member of the family to obtain an ID card. The FIA already recorded statements from relevant NADRA officials and is set to take action against the accused persons.

C'wealth SG to arrive...

FROM PAGE 01 climate change, will reaffirm her solidarity with Pakistan, as it marks the second anniversary of the catastrophic 2022 floods that submerged a third of the country and caused more than \$30 billion in damage. She is also likely to tour some of the areas that were affected by the floods. During the Secretary-General's visit, the two sides would also discuss avenues to enhance cooperation between Pakistan and the Commonwealth in other areas of shared interest, including supporting Pakistan's national development plan, empowering youth, and boosting trade and investment. With 2023/24 designated the "Year of Youth" by the Commonwealth and Pakistan chairing the Commonwealth Youth Ministers Meeting, the Secretary-General will receive extensive briefings on the Prime Minister's Youth Programme and highlight the opportunities Commonwealth membership brings to young people.

Pakistan 'approves'...

FROM PAGE 01 Additionally, the cabinet approved the establishment of special courts under the SECP Act 1997, the signing of an MoU between Pakistan and Denmark, and the increase in the number of members of the Privatization Commission Board. While addressing the cabinet meeting the Prime Minister said the government is undertaking efforts to ensure ease of business in the country. Citing a recent meeting amongst different ministries, he said they have agreed to a liberal visa regime to promote investment and tourism including religious tourism in the country. He said the visa regime will be presented in the cabinet for the approval. Sharing details of the new visa regime, the Prime Minister said it envisages major changes, including providing free visas to businessmen and tourists from one hundred and twenty-six countries.

Pak qualifies for semi-finals after India's win over Nepal
India and Pakistan finished first and second respectively in Group A points table

DUBAI: The Pakistan women's cricket team qualified for the semi-finals of the 2024 Women's Asia Cup after India claimed an 82-run win over Nepal at Rangiri Dambulla International Stadium on Tuesday. India were already in a strong position to qualify in the final four after they posted 178/3 in 20 overs. The bowlers restricted Nepal on 96/9. India had defeated Pakistan and UAE previously too. The Girls in Green had defeated the United Arab Emirates (UAE) by 10 wickets in a must-win match earlier today. Chasing the target of 104 runs, Pakistan's opening duo of Gull Feroza and Muneeba Ali showed impeccable performances with the bat as the Green Shirts reached home in just 14.1 overs without



losing a single wicket. Feroza scored 62 off 55 balls with eight fours while Muneeba contributed 37 runs on 30 deliveries with four boundaries. Pakistan also became the first team to win a match by 10 wickets in the history of the Women's T20 Asia Cup. After being asked the bat first, the UAE women did not have a great start as they kept on losing wickets at regular intervals. Skipper Esha Oza (16 off 26) and Theertha Satish (40 off 36) were the top two scorers for UAE as other than them, only Khushi Sharma (12 off 13) managed to contribute runs in double figures. For Pakistan, Sadia Iqbal, Nashra Sandhu and Tuba Hassan took two wickets each while skipper Nida Dar managed to get one. — Agencies

Briefs

Trash balloon lands in South presidential compound

SEOUL: North Korean balloons carrying trash have landed near South Korea's presidential office, the Presidential Security Service said on Wednesday. Trash carried by the balloons was identified in the area around the government complex in the Yongsan area, the security service said in a statement. The objects in the balloons contained no contaminants or other risks, it added. Since May, North Korea has periodically sent hundreds of balloons carrying an assortment of trash along the heavily fortified border with the South, prompting South Korea's military to restart loudspeaker broadcasts targeting the North. The North has said it is retaliating to an ongoing propaganda campaign by North Korean defectors and activists in the South, who regularly send inflatable balloons containing anti-Pyongyang leaflets, alongside food, medicine, money and USB sticks loaded with K-pop videos and dramas. North Korea had sent another batch of trash-laden balloons earlier on Wednesday, South Korea's military confirmed.—APP

Japan sees biggest drop in population growth

TOKYO: Japan recorded its largest population decrease in history last year, with a significant drop of 861,000 residents, according to official data released on Wednesday. This demographic shift, observed across various provinces, highlights the nation's ongoing challenges with an aging population and declining birth rates. The population decreased from 122.42 million in 2022 to 121.56 million in 2023, Tokyo-based Kyodo News reported, citing data from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications. This marks the 15th consecutive year of decline and the largest drop since the survey began in 1968. However, the capital Tokyo experienced a slight population increase, rising by 0.03% due to a high influx of people into the city, according to the report. The number of foreign nationals in Japan also increased, surpassing 3.29 million for the first time. People aged 65 and older accounted for 29.38% of the Japanese population, an increase of 0.23%, while the working-age population, those between 15 and 64, declined slightly to 59.02%. Last year, Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida called for implementing "unprecedented" measures to address the issue.—DNA

26 million people in Sudan are 'acutely hungry': UN

WASHINGTON: UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric expressed concern Tuesday over the worsening food situation in Sudan. "Almost 26 million men, women and children are acutely hungry — to give you an example, that is equivalent to the entire population of Australia," Dujarric told reporters. "Of those 26 million, 750,000 people are just one step away from famine — which translates as IPC (Integrated Food Security) phase (classification) 5 for us." People in Sudan are facing a "worst-case scenario," he added. Sudan has been mired by fighting between the army, led by Gen. Abdel Fattah el-Burhan, who is the head of the ruling Sovereign Council, and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) led by his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo. At least 12,260 people have been killed and more than 33,000 injured in the conflict that started in April 2023, according to UN figures. A humanitarian crisis continues to worsen as nearly 6.8 million people have fled their homes seeking safety in Sudan or neighboring countries. Several ceasefire agreements brokered by Saudi Arabia and US mediators have failed to end the violence.—APP

Turkiye monitors Greece, intervenes if needed

Türkiye will continue protecting Turkish minority in Western Thrace, Erdogan says

NEWS DESK

ANKARA: Türkiye monitors all steps of Greece and intervenes in case of need, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Wednesday. Speaking at a parliamentary group meeting in Ankara, Erdogan said Türkiye will continue protecting the Turkish minority in Western Thrace. Erdogan emphasized that the same situation applies to the rights of the Turkish Cypriot people, who have been subjected to "injustice, unlawfulness, and discrimination for nearly three-quarters of a century since the 1960s." He noted that Western institutions and organizations have done nothing while these oppressions occurred. Türkiye and the



Turkish Cypriots are fed up with federalism-based proposals, he

stressed, Erdogan affirmed the commitment to continue efforts within the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the Organization of Turkic States to achieve recognition for the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. "We aim to improve our friendship with all countries and increase the number of our friends," he added.

Regarding Moody's upgrade of Türkiye's rating on Friday, Erdogan said it was an 11-year belated step as Türkiye has much higher economic capacity. Moody's announced Friday it upgraded Türkiye's long-term foreign- and domestic-currency issuer and foreign-currency senior unsecured ratings to B1 from B3. The global rating agency said the outlook remains positive.

"As the cost of the earthquake,

which has reached \$104 billion, decreases and as our policies yield results, we will make any additional resources available primarily to retirees and our people," Erdogan said.

On Feb. 6, 2023, magnitude 7.7 and 7.6 quakes struck 11 Turkish provinces — Adana, Adiyaman, Diyarbakir, Elazig, Hatay, Gaziantep, Kahramanmaraş, Kilis, Malatya, Osmaniye, and Sanliurfa. A total of 53,537 people were killed and more than 107,000 others were injured. Over 14 million people in Türkiye were affected by the quakes, as well as many others in northern Syria.

"Our goal is to permanently increase the well-being of our people without putting our economy into a vicious cycle that fuels inflation," Erdogan added.

Lula rallies G20 against world hunger pre-meeting

Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said that the fight against inequality, the fight against hunger, the fight against poverty are all fights that cannot be done by one country

WEB DESK

RIO DE JANEIRO: Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva on Wednesday will launch a new initiative against world hunger ahead of an upcoming G20 meeting in Rio de Janeiro. Finance ministers for grouping's member states will convene Thursday and Friday in the Brazilian metropolis, one of the final gatherings before the G20 summit takes place on November 18-19 in the same city. The initiative, dubbed the Global Alliance against Hunger and Poverty, will seek to secure common finan-

cial resources to combat world hunger and replicate successful programs that have worked locally. "The fight against inequality, the fight against hunger, the fight against poverty are all fights that cannot be done by one country," Lula told reporters Monday.

"It has to be done by all the countries that are willing to take on this historic responsibility." The initiative is one of Lula's major priorities ahead of the G20 summit. A recent report published by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations outlining the state of world hunger will be presented at the meeting to illustrate the scale of the endeavor.

Aside from the world hunger initiative, the agenda for this week's meeting of G20 finance ministers will involve discussions of how to achieve another objective set by Brazil: figuring out ways to tax the ultra-wealthy. The initiative, first discussed during a meeting in Sao Paulo in February, involves determining methodologies to tax billionaires and other high-income earners based on the work of French economist Gabriel Zucman. However, talks have been highly contentious, and any forward progress is far from guaranteed. US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen opposed international negotiations of the subject during a G7 finance meeting

held in May in Italy. "We think that probably the most effective and impactful tax solutions in this space will almost certainly vary fairly widely across jurisdictions," a senior US Treasury official said. The meeting will also discuss taxation of multinational corporations nearly three years after an agreement was signed to create a plan on the initiative. Founded in 1999, the Group of 20 assembles 19 of the world's largest economic powers, as well as the European Union and the African Union. The organization was originally focused on global economic issues but has increasingly taken on other pressing challenges of the moment.

Guterres welcomes China-Brokered accord for Palestinian unity

UNITED NATIONS: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres welcomed Tuesday an accord brokered by China seeking reconciliation between Hamas and other Palestinian factions to form a national unity government in Gaza.

"I think all steps toward unity are to be welcomed and encouraged," his spokesman Stephane Dujarric said, adding that Guterres "very much welcomes the signing of the Beijing Declaration by the Palestinian factions." Earlier on Tuesday, Hamas announced it had signed the agreement in Beijing with other Palestinian organizations — including rivals Fatah — to work together for "national unity." Hamas and Fatah are long-term rivals and fought a brief but bloody war in 2007 in which the former seized control of Gaza. Fatah continues to dominate the Palestinian Authority, which has limited administrative control over urban areas of the Israeli-occupied West Bank. Israel swiftly slammed the Beijing-brokered deal, with Foreign Minister Israel Katz insisting that "Hamas rule will be crushed" and accusing Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas, a leader of Fatah, of embracing the group whose October 7 attacks triggered the war in Gaza. The text of the deal outlines plans for "a temporary national unity government by agreement of the Palestinian factions" which would "exercise its authority and powers over all Palestinian territories" — the Gaza Strip as well as the West Bank, including Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said the factions had agreed to set up an "interim national reconciliation government" to govern post-war Gaza. Speaking at the UN, spokesperson Dujarric said unity among the Palestinian factions was crucial. "Palestinian unity... is crucial for peace and security and for advancing the aspirations of the Palestinian people for self-determination and for fully independent, democratic, contiguous, viable and sovereign Palestinian state," he said.—APP

Typhoon Gaemi forces Philippines to halt work

MANILA: Typhoon Gaemi and a southwest monsoon brought heavy rain on Wednesday to the Philippine capital region and northern provinces, prompting authorities to halt work and classes, while stock and foreign exchange trading were suspended. The presidential office suspended classes at all academic levels and work in most government offices in the capital region, which is composed of 16 cities and home to at least 13 million people, because of the tropical storm. Gaemi, with maximum sustained winds of 155 kilometers per hour (96.3 mph) and gustiness of up to 190 kph, was heading toward Taiwan, the Philippines' state weather agency said in a 5 a.m. bulletin. It did not make landfall but it is enhancing a southwest monsoon, resulting in heavy to intense rain in northern Philippines, the agency said. "Flooding and rain-induced landslides are likely." Gaemi and another tropical storm, Prapiroon, hit southern Philippines and caused floods last week, resulting in seven deaths. The Philippine coast guard said 354 passengers and 31 vessels were stranded in ports while airlines canceled 13 flights on Wednesday, Manila's airport authority said. The Philippines sees an average of 20 tropical storms annually, causing floods and deadly landslides.—Agencies

Earth breaks hottest day record for second day in a row

LONDON: The world again registered its hottest day on record on Monday, July 22, inching past Sunday which had just taken the title, according to preliminary data from a European Union monitoring agency. As heatwaves sizzled around the world and wildfires engulfed parts of the Mediterranean, Russia and Canada, the global average surface air temperature rose to 17.15 degrees Celsius (62.87 degrees Fahrenheit) on Monday. That was 0.06 C (0.11 F) higher than Sunday's record according to the EU's Copernicus Climate Change Service, which has tracked such data since 1940. This includes temperatures in the Southern Hemisphere which is currently in winter, bringing down the worldwide average. Scientists said it was possible that Tuesday or Wednesday of this week could again surpass Monday's record, as temperature peaks generally happen in clusters. The last record hot day was in July 2023, when the daily peak was broken across four consecutive days from July 3 through 6. Before that, it was set in August 2016.

What makes this year's record unusual is that unlike in 2023 and 2016, the world in April moved out of the El Nino climate pattern which generally amplifies global temperatures owing to warmer-than-usual waters in the Eastern Pacific. Karsten Haustein, a climate scientist at Leipzig University in Germany, said it was remarkable that the record had been breached again now with the world well into the "neutral" phase of the El Nino-Southern Oscillation. Even the Arctic is enduring a heatwave.

Fairbanks, Alaska was set to hit 31 C (88 F) on Wednesday, approaching past records, while temperatures in parts of the Canadian, Russian and Norwegian Arctic were reaching temperatures more than 9 C (16.2 F) above the 1979 to 2000 baseline average for this time of year. Russia's state forest agency has been battling dozens of blazes in Siberia in recent days as the unusually hot summer fuels fires. In Europe, Spain endured blistering temperatures in its second heatwave of the summer, which arrived on Tuesday, just four days after the first one ended. The heat was expected to peak on Wednesday, with at least one wildfire burning out of control in the northeast of the country. Weather service AEMET put about half of Spain's territory on orange alert for heat and part of the eastern region of Extremadura on red alert, forecasting maximum temperatures of 44 C.—APP

Georgia probes alleged plot to overthrow govt

Georgia's state intelligence agency has announced the opening of an investigation into a plot to "violently overthrow" the government. In a statement posted on Facebook on Wednesday, the State Security Service of Georgia said it is "investigating criminal activities" aimed at creating unrest, including a plot to kill Bidzina Ivanishvili, the honorary chairman of the governing Georgian Dream party. The statement accused "former high officials" of being behind the plot, with local media reports suggesting links to Ukraine. The announcement came amid heightened tension in Georgia over the introduction of a "foreign influence" law that opponents say illustrates the government is moving closer to Russia. "The aim of the criminal activities is to violently overthrow the state government by destructive forces in the midst of creating unrest in the country and weakening the government," the statement read. "Active investigations and operative-search measures are underway in which specific persons are sent to the investigative body for questioning," it added. The security service did not name the suspects. However, Georgian media reported at least six people had been summoned for questioning, most of whom have fought against Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Georgia's authorities have repeatedly accused Ukraine-based Georgians fighting against Russia of plotting a coup. Tbilisi says it opposes Moscow's invasion of Ukraine, but has declined to impose sanctions on Russia over its aggression. Georgia also hosts significant numbers of Russians who fled their country in fear of Moscow's mobilisation efforts.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister Board of Investment, Abdul Aleem Khan meets with the Chinese Ambassador, His Excellency Jiang Zaidong to Bolster Economic Cooperation.—DNA

Ruto adds opposition figures to cabinet as protests rumble on

Despite president's hope that a new cabinet could quell protests, scepticism remains and rallies continue

FOREIGN DESK

NAIROBI: Kenya's President William Ruto has appointed four members of the main opposition party as part of a new cabinet as protests continue to rock the East African nation. Ruto announced the nominees in an address to the nation on Wednesday. The president had promised to appoint a new "broad-based" cabinet in response to continuing nationwide protests that have threatened his hold on power. The announcement came two weeks after Ruto scrapped the previous cabinet as the protests, prompted by planned tax hikes, swelled. A clampdown by the authorities helped raise the number of people killed to more than 50, with hundreds more wounded. The opposition figures appointed to the new cabinet are allies of political veteran Raila Odinga, whom Ruto defeated in elections in 2022. John Mbadi Ngo'ongo will lead the fi-



nance ministry and James Opiyo Wandayi was named energy minister. "I commend the leadership of diverse organisations... for their encouraging response to my outreach to consult on forming a broad-based government," Ruto said in the address from his official residence. "Their willingness to set aside partisan positions and interests in order to join a visionary

partnership for the radical transformation of Kenya is a historic gesture of their patriotism." However, the majority of the 20 appointees announced so far were members of the disbanded cabinet, and reports suggest this has angered some. The nominations must next be approved by parliament, both chambers of which are controlled, with a slim majority, by allies of Ruto. Scepticism Ruto's hope that a new cabinet, and the inclusion of opposition figures, would help defuse anger, significant scepticism remains. The mostly young protesters who have largely led the demonstrations, which already forced Ruto to withdraw the tax hikes, have voiced opposition to a unity government. They said a deal between the rival camps would only perpetuate a tradition of leaders co-opting the opposition with jobs and perks while the population sees no benefits. Aiding Palestinian recovery: Physiotherapist offers services to Gaza's wounded patients The protests have been

mostly organised online and have stood out for their broad mobilisation of Kenyans across ethnic and regional lines. Demonstrators have condemned the entire political class as corrupt and called for far-reaching reforms to address corruption and poor governance. Last week, coalition allies of Odinga's party had indicated that they would not participate in a unity government. It is still unclear how they will react to the nominations. Ruto said he would announce the final two nominations to the new cabinet soon. He also said he would propose amendments to anticorruption and public procurement laws. "Journalists lives matter" Meanwhile, unrest continues across Kenya, with activists now calling on Ruto to resign. On Wednesday, journalists joined marches in protest against what they see as heavy-handed government tactics to stifle media freedom, including police attacks on journalists during the demonstrations.

Briefs

Govt is afraid of PTI's popularity, says Saif

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Advisor Barrister Saif said on Wednesday that the government of "Ali Baba and 40 thieves" was afraid of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) popularity. He said whatever odds the government may stack against the PTI, neither would they make any deal nor flee the country, adding that the PTI is an idea that can never be killed. He said the PTI had been facing all sorts of troubles for the last 20 months, stressing that his party would continue to overcome all legal and constitutional barriers. "Banning political parties and silencing critics is a hallmark of this fake government. It will not affect anything as people stand by the PTI. Proscribing the PTI will be the most foolish decision of the government as it will harm itself in the end," he added.

Bails of May 9 accused challenged in SC

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Punjab government challenged the lower court order in the Supreme Court for canceling the bails of the May 9 accused. The Anti-Terrorism Court Rawalpindi judge was made a party in the petition. The Punjab government filed the petition through the Prosecutor General. The government in the petition requested that the accused in the list be denied bail. The list of 57 accused including PTI founder Imran Khan, senior leader Shah Mehmood Qureshi, and Sheikh Rashid was submitted to the Supreme Court in this regard. The Anti-Terrorism Court Rawalpindi had granted bail to the accused, the decision of the Anti-Terrorism Court was challenged in the Lahore High Court earlier.

Govt urged to cancel capacity payment accords

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Muttahid Qaumi Movement Pakistan senior leader Mustafa Kamal says Pakistan cannot progress under the current conditions of capacity payments, urging the government to scrap the accords with local independent power producers (IPPs). Speaking to the media after visiting the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (Nepra) office on Wednesday, he highlighted the rising energy costs as the biggest issue facing the country, noting that little effort had been made to alleviate the burden on the masses. Kamal claimed that the country has a capability of 43,000MW, yet despite this massive potential, the issue of loadshedding has remained unresolved for many decades. "The matter has been made worse with the rising power bills," the former Karachi mayor added.

IHC forms larger bench over missing persons cases

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The IHC has constituted a larger bench to hear cases of missing persons. After wrapping up the plea seeking recovery of missing poet Ahmed Farhad, on June 7 IHC judge Mohsin Akhtar Kiani stated his intention to write to the Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) to constitute a larger bench for cases involving missing persons, ensuring that multiple judges can review the positions taken. As per details, the bench will be headed by Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kiyani and will include Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri and Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir.

German envoy meets Maryam, vows to strengthen bilateral ties

Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz said that it is hoped that the people involved in the Germany incident will be brought to justice and such incidents will not happen in the future



DNA

LAHORE: Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany, Alfred Grannas met with Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz. In the meeting, commitment to strengthen mutual relations was reiterated. Maryam

Nawaz appreciated the quick action of the German authorities on the attack of miscreants on the Pakistani embassy in Germany. Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz said that it is hoped that the people involved in the Germany incident will be brought to justice and such incidents will not happen in the future. The meeting discussed the promotion

of bilateral relations. Economic cooperation, cooperation in technical education were also discussed in the meeting. Chief Minister Punjab appreciated Germany's ongoing cooperation and investment in the development sectors of Punjab, while possibilities of further cooperation in various sectors including renewable energy,

vocational training and information technology were also reviewed. German Ambassador Alfred Grannas reiterated his determination to strengthen mutual relations with Punjab and appreciated the efforts of the provincial government in creating a favorable environment for foreign investment in Punjab. In the meeting, mutual cooperation was agreed in achieving sustainable development goals, promoting innovation and technological development.

In the meeting of the two leaders, the possibilities of possible partnership in health, education and other sectors were reviewed. Chief Minister Punjab assured full support in providing facilities required by German investors and businesses. During the meeting measures to increase technical education and vocational training programs in Punjab were also discussed. Maryam Nawaz said we want to equip the youth with skills that meet the requirements of the job market. Chief Minister Punjab Maryam Nawaz Germany is the global leader in renewable energy issues, Germany has served humanity by taking environmentally friendly measures. Solarization project has been started to provide clean and green energy to the citizens of Punjab, said Maryam Nawaz. Senator Pervez Rasheed and other officials were also present during the meeting.

Brussels berates Italy, Hungary for decline in rule-of-law

The three countries fared badly in the new edition of the Rule of Law report, released every year by the European Commission. The extensive report examines all member states and offers tailored recommendations to address deficiencies and close loopholes

FOREIGN DESK

BRUSSELS: The European Commission has released the new edition of its Rule of Law Report, showing persistent problems in press freedom. Italy, Hungary and Slovakia have come under fire over their continued decline in democratic standards, which threatens the effective prosecution of corruption, the independence of the judicial system and the safety of journalists. The three countries fared badly in the new edition of the Rule of Law report, released every year by the European Commission. The extensive report examines all member states and offers tailored recommendations to address deficiencies and close loopholes. "Protecting the rule of law is a continuous work," Vera Jourová, the Commission's vice-president for values and transparency, said on Wednesday while presenting the main findings. "We see that further action is still needed." The report is "neither naming or shaming, nor praising anyone," she added, calling it a "preventive tool" to foster dialogue and raise awareness. Still, the exercise inevitably creates a magnified lens over certain countries suspected of drifting away from EU norms. This year, Italy is urged to do more to ensure the proper funding of public media, protect the professional secrecy of journalists and reform its defamation regime. The call comes amid concerns in Italy over the growing political influence in the media sector, alleged episodes of censorship, the harassment of critical voices and the potential acquisition of the AGI news agency by a far-right legislator. In May, reporters at RAI, the public broadcaster, went on strike to protest what they described as the "suffocating

control" exerted by Giorgia Meloni's government over editorial content. Meloni has filed legal cases against several reporters who have made scathing remarks about her. Last week, a journalist was ordered to pay €5,000 in damages for mocking the prime minister's height on social media. "We have been expressing the need for (journalistic) safeguards for years now," Jourová said when asked about Italy. "But with new incidents reported by stakeholders and budget cuts, this is becoming very urgent." Regarding Hungary, a perennial thorn in the Commission's side, the report shows a total lack of progress in several areas, including rules on lobbying and revolving doors, the prosecution of high-level corruption cases, transparency in state advertising, editorial independence of public media and obstacles that hinder the work of NGOs. Over the past years, Brussels has launched many infringement procedures against Budapest, most recently over the so-called "Sovereignty Protection Office," empowered to probe people and organisations that receive foreign funding and are suspected of influencing the country's political debate and electoral processes. The controversial office has begun proceedings into Transparency International and Atlátszó, an investigative nonprofit supported by international donations. In reaction to the persistent trend of democratic backsliding, the Commission froze more than €30 billion in Hungary's allocated share of cohesion and recovery funds, a situation that Prime Minister Viktor Orbán repeatedly decried as "financial blackmail." Last year, though, the executive released €10.2 billion after Budapest introduced a judicial reform in line with EU recommendations. The decision triggered a furious backlash and led the European Parliament to sue the Commission.

FS inaugurates conference of CA countries in Islamabad

Foreign Secretary Muhammad Syrus Sajjad Qazi underlined the right of developing countries to access dual-use goods & technologies for socio-economic development and urged striking a balance between protecting national security interests

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Secretary Muhammad Syrus Sajjad Qazi today inaugurated the two-day Regional Conference on Export Control Programme for Dual-Use Goods in Central Asia, being held in Islamabad. Co-organized by Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamabad and the European Union, the Regional Conference brings together Senior officials and Experts from Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, the US, the EU, the UN and representatives of multilateral export control regimes and other international organizations. The participants will discuss national approaches on strategic trade controls with a view to promoting international cooperation on trade of goods and technologies, in line with the relevant United Nations Resolutions, particularly UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 1540. At the inaugural session, Foreign Secretary Muhammad Syrus Sajjad Qazi underlined the right of developing countries to access dual-use goods & technologies for socio-economic development and urged striking a balance between

protecting national security interests and facilitating legitimate trade. He stated that Pakistan is diligently fulfilling all its obligations pertaining to nonproliferation and disarmament. As a responsible state of a thriving technology landscape with advanced nuclear technology, Pakistan remains fully cognizant of its nonproliferation obligations, he stated. In his welcome address, Director General SECDIV, Haroon Rashid, briefed the participants on Pakistan's extensive legislative, regulatory and administrative framework for exercising controls over the transfer of sensitive goods and technologies to prevent their diversion to non-peaceful uses. Pakistan's national control lists are fully harmonized with those of the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) and Australia Group (AG) and its export control regime is at par with the highest international standards. The Regional Conference showcases Pakistan's robust cooperation with regional and global stakeholders in non-proliferation efforts. The Conference also demonstrates Pakistan's role as an important partner of the international community in the implementation of strategic trade controls in line with the objectives of UNSC Resolution - 1540.



CM Gandapur accepts all demands of Bannujirga

Apex committee to discuss demands of jirga members in a meeting likely to be held tomorrow

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur has accepted all demands of the Bannu Aman Jirga in a meeting held earlier this week, Geo News reported citing sources on Wednesday. The jirga's demands will be presented before the apex committee meeting expected to be held tomorrow, wherein the terms of reference (ToRs) for the constitution of a committee to probe into the Bannu incident, the sources said. The forthcoming session of the apex committee will be attended by the KP chief secretary, additional secretary home, Corps Commander Peshawar, KP Inspector General (IG), and other senior officers. The people familiar with the meeting also said the jirga sought to dismantle armed groups operating in the province; empower police and ensure their patrolling at night; allow CTD to conduct search operations or take action against terrorists instead of security forces; and present missing persons before courts.

Harris holds slight lead over Trump in new poll

WASHINGTON: US Vice President Kamala Harris has been quickly building momentum among fellow Democrats as she seeks to clinch her party's nomination, posing a challenge to Republican nominee Donald Trump, a new poll shows. The Reuters/Ipsos poll, conducted between July 22 and July 23, found Harris leading Trump 44% to 42% among registered voters. Five percent of voters said they would support some other candidate, 4% said they wouldn't vote and 4% said they didn't know. The poll has a margin of error of plus or minus three percentage points. The latest findings show Harris making steady progress. She was previously tied with Trump 44% in a July Reuters/Ipsos poll, and the former president was leading Harris by one percentage point in a June poll. - Agencies

Israel carries out new raids as Netanyahu in US

NEWS DESK

GAZA: Israeli forces carried out new raids in the Gaza Strip on Wednesday, hours before Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was due to address the US Congress. The latest Israeli attacks destroyed homes in towns east of Khan Younis in southern Gaza and thousands of people were forced to head west to seek shelter, residents said. The Palestinian Civil Emergency Service said it had received distress calls from residents trapped in their homes in Bani Suhaila, east of Khan Younis, but were unable to reach the town. Israel's military, which is trying to eradicate the Islamist militant group Hamas after the Oct. 7 attack on Israel, said it had been operating in areas from which fighters had been able to fire rockets into Israel and attack Israeli troops. Gaza health officials said Israeli military strikes in the past 24 hours had killed at least 55 people, the latest casualties in a war that health authorities in the enclave say has killed more than 39,000 Palestinians. "Where should we go? Shall we cross into the sea?" said Ghada, who has been displaced with her family six times during the war, said from Hamas City in northwestern Khan Younis. "We are exhausted, starved, and want the war to end now, now not an hour later. Every day means more families are wiped off the registration book," she said via a chat app. Local residents said they had been ordered to head west toward a designated humanitarian area, but that the area was now unsafe. Israeli forces also carried out airstrikes on several areas of central and northern Gaza Strip, killing and wounding several Palestinians, health officials said.

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