



Islamabad POST

Friday, July 26, 2024

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 30

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Return of parliament

ECP notifies 39 returned MNAs as PTI lawmakers

39 lawmakers contested Feb 8 elections as independent candidates and later joined SIC

FARRUKH SHEHZAD / DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Thursday declared 39 lawmakers – who contested the February 8 elections as independent candidates and later joined the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) – as members of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) in line with the Supreme Court's July 12 verdict in reserved seats case. The ECP uploaded the notification on its website to declare 39 NA lawmakers as the former ruling party's members who had shown their affiliation with the PTI in their nomination papers for the February 8 nationwide polls. The decision was taken in a key session held under the chair of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja today in which they reached a conclusion to upload the notification of 39 lawmakers' affiliation with the Imran-founded party. Asad Qaiser, Sher Afzal Khan, Latif Khan Khosa, Zartarj Gul, Shandana Gulzar Khan, Zain Hussain Qureshi, Malik Aamir Dogar, Ali Afzal Sahi, Ali Khan Jadoon, and others were among the notified PTI MNAs. The PTI MNAs who have been notified by the ECP today were those who had shown their party affiliation with the Imran-founded party in their nomination papers before the 2024 general elections. Having been deprived of its election symbol, the PTI's candidates contested the February 8 elections as independents. However, these independents were directed by the party to join the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) to be eligible for the reserved seats. After winning the most seats in the general polls earlier this year, PTI was denied reserved seats by the ECP while its decision was also upheld by the Peshawar High Court (PHC), citing the party's inability to submit list of candidates for reserved seats in the stipulated time. The apex court had on July 12 ruled that PTI was and is a

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ECP seeks SC guidance over reserved seats verdict

Electoral body says PTI "has no organisational structure for confirmation" of lawmakers' statements

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: After notifying 39 out of 80 Members of the National Assembly (MNAs) as Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf members, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Thursday approached the Supreme Court seeking legal and constitutional guidance on the matter of the remaining PTI lawmakers in the national and provincial assemblies. The electoral body submitted a plea to the top court's registrar via its secretary Omar Hamid Khan to seek an elaborated version of its July 12

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ISLAMABAD: Outgoing Secretary General of ECO Khusrav Noziri called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. – DNA

PM to attend Iranian president's inauguration

PM said that as neighbouring countries, Pakistan and Iran enjoy a close and historic relationship

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is due to travel to Tehran to attend the inauguration of Iranian president-elect Dr Masoud Pezeshkian, who won the Islamic Republic's presidential run-off election earlier this month. "At the invitation of the Speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Muhammad Baghir Ghalibaf, the prime minister [...] will visit Tehran on July 30 to attend the inauguration ceremony of the President-Elect of Iran,

Continued on Page 06

Section 144 enforced in Punjab, Islamabad

PTI's country-wide protest demands the release of political prisoners

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Punjab Home Department has imposed Section 144 across the province and in Islamabad, banning public gatherings and rallies for three days. According to the notification issued on Wednesday, Section 144 will be in effect from Friday, July 26 to Sunday, July 28.

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PM determined to revive economy Pak pledges support for intra-regional trade among ECO members

He highlighted the significance of "ECO Vision 2025", signed during the 2017 ECO Summit in Islamabad under then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, as an important document for the ECO

ANSAR BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday reaffirmed his commitment that Pakistan would continue to lend its full support to Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) in enhancing intra-regional trade among ECO countries as well as on the ECO reforms agenda. He was talking to Secretary General of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) Amb. Khusrav Noziri who called on him at the PM House. He highlighted the significance of "ECO Vision 2025", signed during the 2017 ECO Summit in Islamabad under then Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, as an important document for the ECO. The outgoing Secretary General apprised the Prime Minister about ECO's

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Punjab govt rewards bureaucrats with plot allotment scheme

Plots will be available on easy installments spread over eight years

DNA

LAHORE: In a bid to reward its bureaucracy, the Punjab government has announced a new plot allotment scheme for civil service, PMS, and police

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Briefs

Forces kill terrorist in operation

DNA

RAWALPINDI: On 24 July 24, Security Forces, conducted an Intelligence Based Operation in Hoshab District of Balochistan. During conduct of the operation, intense fire exchange took place between own troops and the terrorists. Resultantly, terrorist Ali Jan was sent to hell, while two terrorists got injured. Weapons, ammunition and explosives were also recovered from killed terrorist, who remained actively involved in multiple terrorist activities in the area including kidnapping and target killing of innocent civilians. Sanitization operation is being conducted to eliminate any other terrorist found in the area. Security Forces of Pakistan, in step with the Nation, remain determined to thwart attempts of sabotaging peace and stability of Balochistan.

Manchester airport brawl

Pak community protests police highhandedness

In the footage, a male officer was seen aiming a taser at a man lying on the ground. Reports suggested the men being beaten by police officers were British Pakistanis

AGENCIES

MANCHESTER: A video showing a British police officer kick and stamp on a man's head during an arrest at Manchester airport in northern England sparked a protest outside a police station late on Wednesday. Police suspended one of the officers involved and referred the actions to an independent police complaints watchdog after the video, filmed by an onlooker, was posted on social media platforms and attracted criticism. It showed a chaotic scene in an airport car park, in which several officers armed with tasers restrained two suspects. The events preceding this scene were not included in the video. In the footage, a male officer was seen aiming a taser at a man lying on the ground. Reports suggested the men being beaten by police officers were British Pakistanis. One man was kicked and stamped upon by an officer as

Continued on Page 06

Arshad Sharif killing Scotland Yard drops investigation against Nawaz, Maryam

Counter terrorism unit says complainant Tasnim Haider didn't produce evidence to back up his claims

FOREIGN DESK

LONDON: Scotland Yard has decided not to investigate former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, his daughter Maryam Nawaz Sharif and their colleagues after allegations were made against them linking them to the killing of

Continued on Page 06

Pakistan welcomes "unity declaration" by Palestinians

She reiterated Pakistan's continued political, diplomatic and moral support to Kashmiri people

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Thursday welcomed the 'Declaration of Unity' signed by the Palestinian political factions in Beijing while recognizing and commending China's role in bringing the factions together for meaningful negotiations. "Unity amongst the Palestinian people is of paramount significance in view of the ongoing war crimes against the Palestinian people, particularly in Gaza, and the blatant disregard for international law by the Israeli occupation forces," Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said at her weekly press briefing here. Calling upon the international community to intervene immediately to bring an end to the ongoing illegal and incessant aggression in Gaza, she reiterated Pakistan's support for the realization of the inalienable right to self-determination of the Palestinian people, their right of return to Palestine and the establishment of an independent state of Palestine with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. Regarding the periodic report of the Human Rights Committee in Geneva on India, she said during the proceedings, questions were raised about arrests under draconian

laws like Public Safety Act and Public Security Act, and frequent suspension of mobile internet service in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. "This demonstrates continuing concerns of the international human rights machinery about the dismal human rights situation in IIOJK. We call on the international community to take note of these human rights abuses by India in IIOJK and to bring an end to the suppression of the Kashmiri people," she said and reiterated Pakistan's continued political, diplomatic and moral support to Kashmiri people. The spokesperson announced that at the invitation of the Speaker of the Islamic Consultative Assembly of Iran Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif will visit Tehran on July 30 to attend the inauguration ceremony of the President-elect of Iran Dr. Masoud Pezeshkian. The visit attests to the commitment by the two countries to strengthen leadership level engagement and bilateral cooperation, she added. Similarly, Foreign Secretary Muhammad Syrus Sajjad Qazi will lead the Pakistan delegation at the 31st ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Ministerial Meeting, being held on July 27 in Lao People's Democratic

Continued on Page 06

Omar urges nation to prepare for polls

PTI is the biggest political party in the country

MAHNOOR ANSAR

RAWALPINDI: Opposition Leader in National Assembly Omar Ayub says the incumbent government has failed and the nation should prepare for the new elections. Talking to media on Thursday, the PTI leader emphasised that all CCTV footage from the May 9 incidents and Zaman Park should be disclosed, and deleting such footage constitutes a crime. Ayub said he met Imran Khan in a pleasant atmosphere at Adiala Jail. "The PTI is the biggest political party in the country, and the nation should prepare for new elections for growth and development," he highlighted.

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PM orders strategy for youth to get equitable job access

PM Shehbaz Sharif was of the view that provision of employment opportunities to the youth was the government's top priority

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday directed the relevant authorities to prepare a comprehensive strategy with respect to provision of employment opportunities to the youth of the country on equal basis. Calling the youth as the assets of Pakistan, the prime minister said the country's development was linked with their welfare and progress.

ing Commission (NVTTTC) should be focused on creating job opportunities for the students. He directed to conduct a detailed survey of job market and then accordingly start the skill training programmes. During the meeting, it was informed that under PM Laptop Scheme, some 600,000 laptops had so far been delivered to the students. Under this scheme, the government would provide additional 100,000 laptops during current year. The meeting was informed that 64% students who got training under the Youth Skills Development Programme managed to get respectable jobs during previous three years. It was told that the government funded 100 startups under its PM National Innovation Award who were being placed in designated incubation centers across the country. Similarly, the prime minister was informed that 10 international standard sports academies and a biomechanical laboratory would start functioning this year under PM Youth Sports League.

Likewise, under the Prime Minister Green Youth Program, 268 universities across the country would be targeted for training youth on climate change prevention and eco-innovation. "Preparation of National Youth Employment Policy 2024 is in final stages," the meeting was told. The focus of the policy would be to create decent employment opportunities for the youth and increase the proportion of women in the workforce. Similarly, it was told that PM Digital Hub was also being prepared which would be a one-window operation dashboard. The meeting was attended by Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Ahmad Khan Cheema, Information Minister Attullah Tarar, Minister of State for Information Technology & Telecom Shaza Fatima Khawaja, Chairman PM Youth Programme Rana Mashhood, Coordinator to PM Rana Ihsan Afzal and other relevant high officials.



ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Ms. Shaza Fatima Khawaja in a meeting with Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan H.E. Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmad Al-Malkiy.—DNA

Sindh Rescue 1122 receives 5000 calls per day

KARACHI: Sindh Emergency Rescue Services (SERS) Rescue 1122 ambulance service receives 5000 calls per day for medical related emergencies and rescue operations. This was revealed during the "Safe Karachi Conference: Strengthening Urban Resilience" conference organised by K-Elctric in collaboration with Institute of Business Administration, held to hold a dialogue on strengthening urban resilience for a safer Karachi. During the conference at the IBA City Campus hosted by analyst Zarrar Khuuro, the speakers discussed a vision for a safer Karachi and its preparedness for disasters including monsoon flooding and heat waves. The event discussed public threats including regulatory enforcement and safety hazards and other challenges facing the city. Speaking during the conference, Brigadier (Retd) Tariq Lakhair, Chief Executive Officer, Sindh Emergency Rescue Services (SERS), said Rescue 1122 Sindh was launched in 2021, has gradually spread to 30 districts and 1280 locations across the province. While emphasizing on emergency response, Brig. (Retd) Tariq Lakhair said the Rescue 1122 receives 5000 calls every day, of which nearly 99 per cent are medical-related and half are for rescue services. He said an ambulance costs 20 million rupees and is equipped with a ventilator and paramedic facilities.—APP

ISSI-BNU moot highlights key Pakistan-US ties

DNA

ISLAMABAD: ISSI-BNU International Conference on "Strengthening Pakistan-US Relations" featured keynote address by H.E. Donald Blome, U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan. The conference was attended by a large number of diplomats, practitioners, and academics, showcasing significant interest and engagement. Following the inaugural session, two separate panel discussions took place. These discussions focused on key drivers of Pakistan-US ties; addressed contemporary challenges in the bilateral, regional, and global contexts; and identified opportunities for mutually beneficial relations, economic partnership, security cooperation, and regional dynamics.

The first session, chaired by Ambassador Tehmina Janjua, Former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan, focused on Pakistan-US bilateral relations. Ambassador Zamir Akram emphasized realism in the relationship, noting its cyclical nature driven by tactical interests and shaped by external factors. He highlighted the need for substantive engagement in trade and investment. Ambassador Robin Raphael, former senior U.S. Diplomat, praised efforts to stabilize the relationship through dialogues and visits, allowing for candid discussions on divergent issues. She called for enhancing economic opportunities and targeted U.S. assistance in areas like higher education, technology, and green energy. Ambassador Ali Jehangir Siddiqui, former Pakistan's Ambassador to U.S., discussed

the limited progress in Pakistan-US relations over the past 15 years, emphasizing the importance of enhancing Pakistan's criminal justice system and setting achievable goals to reduce 'noise' in bilateral relations. Mr. Vaseem Anvar, former President, American Business Forum, emphasized the need for a sustainable economic partnership, recommending strengthening diplomatic ties, improving infrastructure, and adopting technology to enhance supply chain management and reduce costs. The session concluded with a question and answer segment. In the second session, Ambassador Mansoor Khan highlighted the evolving Pakistan-US bilateral relations over the past 75 years, noting historical support and shared challenges.

DC for resolving genuine issues of traders

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: Deputy Commissioner Dera Ms. Sarah Rehman on Thursday said that the genuine issues of traders would be resolved on priority basis as the business community has a key role for a strong economy. She stated this during a meeting with a delegation of Central Association of Traders led by its president Sohail Ahmad Azmi held here at her office. The delegation comprised of Kafeel Ahmad Nizami, Chaudhry Jameel Ahmad, Khalid Hussain, Haji Muhammad Nawaz, Chaudhry Javed Akhtar, Muhammad Zeshan, Haji Aman Ullah, Haji Muhammad Ashraf, Sher Muhammad Mehsud, Mohammad Rehan, Naem Qureshi and others while Assistant Commissioner Dera Fa-seeh Ishaq Abbasi was also present in the meeting. The DC said that the district administration would maintain close liaison with the business community to resolve their problems. On this occasion, the delegation congratulated Ms. Sarah Rehman over her appointment as the Deputy Commissioner Dera and assured her of their full cooperation with the administration. The delegation apprised the deputy commissioner about different issues of the city including street lights, cleanliness, debris on the banks of the Indus River, slaughterhouses and others. The DC assured them that the administration would resolve all their genuine issues on priority basis in order to ensure better business opportunities across the district.—APP

Punjab takes major step towards digital healthcare records

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab Minister for Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department Khawaja Imran Nazir announced a groundbreaking initiative on Thursday to digitalise birth and death records at the primary healthcare level, marking a significant milestone for the department. The announcement was made during a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signing ceremony with the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), held at the PSHD committee room here. The MoU aims to integrate digital record-keeping at all Basic Health Units (BHUs) and Rural Health Centres (RHCs) across the province. This joint initiative between P&SHD and NADRA is set to enhance birth registration processes, making Punjab the only province sharing this data directly with NADRA. This integration allows citizens

to obtain birth certificates promptly, streamlining the process and ensuring accuracy. Khawaja Imran Nazir emphasized the vital role of Lady Health Workers (LHWs) in raising awareness among the public about this new system. He highlighted that the digitization initiative, including the record-sharing with NADRA, will facilitate a transition to a paperless system. He said that this move extends to government hospitals, which now maintain digital records for all patients, including those in outpatient departments (OPD) and pediatric wards. The digital records will help develop strategies for understanding the causes, factors, and prevention of diseases, and enhance immunization coverage, particularly in underserved areas. Director NADRA, Colonel (Retd.) Saqib Mehmood, stressed the importance of digitizing birth and death data for future digital censuses. He lauded the Department of Health's efforts in

digitizing patient records, recognizing the significant impact on improving healthcare services and data accuracy. Dr. Muhammad Ilyas Gondal, DG Health Services, praised the collaborative efforts of PSPU and NADRA in achieving the National Health Sector Programme (NHSP) goals. He reaffirmed NHSP's commitment to increasing access to quality health services for poor and vulnerable households in Punjab and acknowledged the support of the Provincial Minister and Secretary PSHD, Ali Jan, in enhancing primary healthcare services delivery. The ceremony was attended by prominent officials, including Special Secretary (Ops) Muhammad Iqbal, Additional Secretary (Tech.) Dr. M. Younas, Director PSPU Muhammad Ahmed Khan, and other key stakeholders. The initiative marks a transformative step in Punjab's healthcare system, paving the way for better healthcare facilities and data management in the region.

Speakers lauded achievements of Pakistani students in UK

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Speakers at a seminar on Thursday lauded the significant achievements of Pakistani students studying in British universities. They recognized their contributions for presenting positive image of the homeland. Speakers, including Eng. Qamar ul Islam, MPA Riffat Abbasi, and Barrister Shoaib Razaq, praised the academic excellence and determination of Pakistani students in the United Kingdom. With 25,000 students currently pur-

suing higher education in British universities, their achievements were seen as a testament to Pakistan's potential. Wajid Ali, representing the University of Gloucestershire, highlighted the university's commitment to diversity and inclusivity. Hanan Ali Abbasi, President of the National Youth Assembly, emphasized the importance of supporting and celebrating the success stories of Pakistani students abroad. The speakers unanimously agreed that these students are not only gaining education but also acting as

cultural ambassadors, strengthening bilateral ties between Pakistan and the UK. "Pakistani students in UK universities are our hope and potential", Eng. Qamar ul Islam "Their presence in British universities is a testament to their academic excellence", Eng. Riffat Abbasi "These students are our ambassadors, showcasing Pakistan's rich heritage" - Hanan Ali Abbasi remarked. The event concluded with a call to action for continued support and encouragement for Pakistani students pursuing higher education abroad.

Senate education body urges HEC degree attestation

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson Senate Standing Committee on Federal Education and Professional Training Senator Bushra Anjum Butt on Thursday committed to addressing the widespread challenges of attestation and equivalency faced by students across all regions, including students involved in the pending cases. Chairing the Senate Standing Committee on Federal Education and Professional Training, she expressed her dedication to youth empowerment through education. She emphasized the need to collectively resolve these issues without dwelling on past grievances, stressing that politics should not be played at the stake of the future of the nation's youth.—APP

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CDA Chief addresses death and birth registration suspension issue

After the intervention of Chief Commissioner Islamabad Muhammad Ali Randhawa, MCI services were immediately restored for the citizens

MEHTAB PIERZADA

ISLAMABAD: Chief Commissioner Islamabad Muhammad Ali Randhawa has taken strict notice on the suspension of death and birth registration services in Islamabad. Chief Commissioner Islamabad and Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa immediately contacted Chairman NADRA. After the intervention of Chief Commissioner Islamabad Muhammad Ali Randhawa, MCI services were immediately restored for the citizens. It is pertinent to mention here that the Municipal Corporation Islamabad (MCI) has paid all the dues of NADRA immediately. Chief Commissioner Islamabad and Chairman CDA Muhammad Ali Randhawa instructed the authorities to take

permanent steps to pay the dues of NADRA. He directed the Director DMA that any shortcoming in the facilities provided to the citizens of Islamabad will not be tolerated. Earlier on, Capital Development Authority (CDA) on Thursday resumed death and birth registration services suspended by National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA) due to outstanding dues. CDA chairman Muhammad Ali Randhawa timely intervention into the matter led to restoration of vital services in the capital. Randhawa, upon receiving notice of the suspension of services contacted Chairman NADRA to resolve the issue. Following his instructions, the Municipal Corporation Islamabad (MCI) immediately settled all outstanding payments to NADRA, leading to the restoration of serv-

ices. To prevent future disruptions, Chief Commissioner Randhawa directed authorities to take permanent measures to ensure timely payment of NADRA's dues. He emphasized that no shortcomings would be tolerated in facilities provided to Islamabad's citizens. Meanwhile, Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA), Muhammad Ali Randhawa, conducted a surprise visit to the Park Road Extension Project, stressing the need for swift completion of the construction work. During the visit, Chairman Randhawa directed the project team to expedite work on all sections of the project, ensuring round-the-clock presence of the Project Director to oversee the progress. He also instructed the team to collaborate with traffic police to minimize inconvenience to citizens due to

the ongoing construction. Randhawa warned that no further delays would be tolerated, emphasizing the importance of completing the project without any additional hindrances. Despite the warnings, the Chairman expressed satisfaction with the progress made in the last two months, noting that the project is now nearing completion. According to the briefing given to the Chairman, the construction work is in its final stages and is expected to be completed soon. The project's timely completion is a testament to the CDA's commitment to delivering infrastructure projects efficiently. The Park Road Extension Project is a significant initiative aimed at improving Islamabad's road network and reducing traffic congestion. Its completion is eagerly awaited by residents and commuters alike.

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July 05/Algeria Independence Day

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July 14/France National Day

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IBCC meeting concludes with key examination, assessment reforms

The primary focus of the meeting was on modernizing and standardizing examination systems to enhance the quality of education and ensure fair assessment practices across Pakistan

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The 179th meeting of the Inter Boards Coordination Commission (IBCC) was successfully concluded here the other day with key decisions aimed at transforming Pakistan's examination and assessment systems. Organized by the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (BISE) Peshawar on Thursday, the meeting was hosted by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Boards Committee of Chairmen. The meeting was chaired by Syed Junaid Ikhlaq, Chairman of the Federal Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education (FBISE) and Senior Joint Secretary at the Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training, which gathered representatives from examination

boards nationwide. The primary focus of the meeting was on modernizing and standardizing examination systems to enhance the quality of education and ensure fair assessment practices across Pakistan. Historically, the education system in Pakistan has faced challenges such as disparities in quality, regional imbalances, and inconsistent standards across educational boards. The current assessment systems have been criticized for emphasizing rote learning over critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Recognizing these issues, the Forum endorsed the proposal to formulate the National Assessment Framework. This framework marks a significant step in the country's educational progress, demonstrating a collective commitment to improving education quality

and providing equal learning opportunities for all students. The National Assessment Framework will serve as a comprehensive guide for implementing a robust student assessment system that meets international standards while respecting Pakistan's unique cultural and academic contexts. In 2022, the Forum unanimously decided to adopt a new grading system to replace raw marks, aiming to reduce intense competition among students for the highest marks. Although its implementation was delayed due to pending approvals from provincial BISE authorities, recent discussions have prioritized its execution for the annual examinations of 2025. Annually, the IBCC organizes a summer camp for top achievers from all BISEs. This year, the Chairman of BISE

Benazir Abad has been appointed as the focal person to organize the summer camp on behalf of the Sindh Boards Committee of Chairmen. The event will be held in the scenic valleys of Kaghan and Naran, with support from KP-BCC. Also, the Federal Education Ministry officially announced the National Curriculum of Pakistan for 2023. The provincial curriculum authorities have endorsed this curriculum, which aims to standardize education, ensure consistent learning outcomes, and improve education quality nationwide. This initiative is expected to bridge educational disparities between urban and rural areas, promote national cohesion, and provide students with a modernized curriculum aligned with international standards. The Forum also commended the Sindh

Government's decision to conduct SSC/HSSC examinations in March/April, aligning with other provincial boards' schedules. This uniform academic calendar will protect students from harsh weather conditions during exams and synchronize board results with university admissions. Syed Junaid Ikhlaq expressed his appreciation for the collaborative efforts of all participants, emphasizing the importance of these reforms in shaping the future of education in Pakistan. Dr. Ghulam Ali Mallah, Executive Director IBCC, highlighted the goal of creating a fair, transparent, and efficient examination system that accurately reflects students' capabilities. He noted that the decisions made in this meeting represent significant progress toward this objective.



ISLAMABAD: Governor KP Faisal Karim Kundi offering feteiha for the departed soul of wife of President Press Club Azhar Jaoti.—DNA

PSB to hold month-long Sports Festival for Independence Day

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) is set to ignite the nation's sporting spirit with a month-long extravaganza to mark the Independence Day. From August 1 to 31, a diverse range of sporting events will be held across the country, from the bustling metropolis of Karachi to the serene landscapes of Abbottabad. The initiative aims to nurture young talent and prepare athletes for national and international competitions. According to the game calendar prepared by the Pakistan Sports Board to celebrate the month of Independence, the National Women's Netball Training Camp for the Asian Championship will be held in Karachi and Islamabad from August 1 to September 23. The Ju-Jitsu Championship will take place from August 4 to 7 in Lahore. The Ten Pin Bowling Independence Cup Championship will be held from August 8 to 10 at the Pakistan Sports Board in Islamabad. The National Clay Shooting Championship will run from August 8 to 14 in Karachi. The Inter-Diplomatic Tennis Cup (for diplomats) will be from August 9 to 11 in Islamabad. A Training and Coaching Course for Level One and the Independence Day Weightlifting Cup will be held from August 10 to 14 in Lahore. The Junior National Wushu Training Cup (for boys) will take place from August 10 to 29 in Faisalabad. The Inter-provincial Basketball Championship (for men) will occur from August 10 to 14 at PSC Islamabad. Additionally, the women's basketball championship will be held from August 10 to 14 at PSC Islamabad. The National Training Camp and Camp for the preparation of the South Asian Games for senior weightlifting will be held from August 10 to March 2025 in Islamabad and Lahore. The Independence Judo Cup will take place at the national level on August 13 and 14. The Independence Day Netball Tournament will be held on August 14 in Lahore and Karachi, and the Independence Day Dangal (wrestling) will take place on August 14 in Lahore. The National Men's and Women's Boxing Championship will occur from August 17 to 21 in Peshawar. A Wrestling Educational Program for Coaches will be held on August 19 in Lahore. The Serena Hotels International Tennis Cup will run from August 19 to 25 in Quetta. A Wrestling Educational Program for Referees will be held from August 20 to 25 in Abbottabad. The Referees and Judges Judo Course will take place from August 22 to 26 in Peshawar and Abbottabad. The Inter-provincial Ju-Jitsu Championship will be held from August 30 to September 2 in Peshawar and Abbottabad. A Long Range Shooting Training Camp will be held in August in Jhelum. The BBP National Basketball Championship will take place during August in Faisalabad. A FIBA National Statisticians Workshop will be held in August at PSC Islamabad. An Online Archery Seminar and the Master Cup Tail Tennis Tournament will be held in Faisalabad in August.

ANF seizes 721 kg drugs in 10 operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting 10 operations across the country managed to recover 721 kg drugs and arrested 10 accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Thursday. He informed that 2.7 kg ice was recovered from two parcels booked for Australia at a courier office in Karachi. 668 grams cocaine was recovered from a passenger coming from Doha at Lahore Airport. 5.5 kg ice was recovered from a parcel booked for New Zealand at a cargo office at Lahore Airport. 588 kg hashish was recovered from the possession of an accused arrested in Quetta. 44.4 kg hashish and 27.6 kg opium were recovered from a vehicle intercepted on M-1 Motorway Islamabad while an accused was also arrested. 36 kg hashish was recovered from a vehicle near Sohrab Goth Karachi and two accused were arrested. 10 kg opium and 1 kg hashish were recovered from two suspects rounded up near Al-Asif Square Karachi.—APP

Authorities directed to resolve traffic issues, remove encroachments

RAWALPINDI: Director General (DG) Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) Kinza Murtaza has directed the authorities concerned to make efforts to resolve traffic issues and remove encroachments. Chairing a meeting of the Comprehensive Traffic and Transportation Plan Committee, the DG instructed the officers to review traffic and transportation issues of Rawalpindi city. According to RDA spokesperson, the DG instructed Chief Officer Municipal Corporation Rawalpindi (MCR), Razaqat Gondal, and Director Land RDA, Malik Ghaznafar Ali Awan to collaborate and work hard to resolve traffic problems and remove encroachments from commercial areas of Rawalpindi particularly from Murree Road. She directed Chief Engineer RDA, Muhammad Anwar Baran, and Chief Planner RDA, Jamshaid Aftab to identify locations for parking areas in the city. Additionally, she also ordered a study on integrated bus operations, and a comprehensive examination of the root causes of traffic congestion besides identifying potential sites for parking plazas, evaluating existing public transport routes and integrating different modes of transport. She also sought suggestions for pedestrian and cyclist safety routes within the context of Non-Motorized Transport to reduce air and noise pollution, contributing to clean air and a quiet environment. The spokesman informed that the meeting was attended by Additional Director General, RDA, Awais Manzoor Tarar, Chief Engineer RDA, Chief Planner RDA, Chief Traffic Officer, Director Land RDA, Director Master Planning CDA, CEO Chaklala Cantonment Board Rawalpindi, Manager Metro Bus Authority, Chief Officer MCR, Deputy Director Planning, Deputy Director IT, and other officers.—APP

Increased literacy essential for achieving developed nation status

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Thursday highlighted the importance of increasing the literacy rate in the country to achieve national development and prosperity. "There is not a single country in the world that has progressed without achieving a 90 per cent literacy rate," he said while addressing the groundbreaking ceremony of the Center for Excellence for Childhood Development at the Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) Vice Chancellor Secretariat. As per the data of the 7th Digital Census-2023, he regretted that Pakistan's literacy rate stood at around 61 per cent, stressing the need for improvement to enable the younger generation to compete in the era of digital revolution and rapid innovation that has transformed all fields. "In today's world, the competition has shifted from pen literacy to digital literacy, intellect and capability in research and development," he added. The minister underscored the urgent need to invest in human resource development for real progress, recalling the historical achievements of Muslims in science and research. Calling the establishment of the Center for Excellence for Childhood Development a 'great achievement,' Ahsan Iqbal noted its importance as international research showed early years were crucial for children's development. He highlighted that the center would promote research, training, and best practices, adding "Through this center, educators, researchers and policymakers will collaborate on creative, professional, and strategic strategies.—DNA

Railways all set to solarize stations, office, workshops

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Railways is all set to transition the power network of all its stations, including major railway stations, offices, workshops and factories to solar systems in various stages. "This initiative is expected to result in substantial savings for the department, amounting to billions of rupees," an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP here Thursday. He said that the initiative was projected to save Rs. 1.8 billion in the initial phase for the department. Subsequent phases will see more stations, offices, and facilities being included. In the first phase, he said Pakistan Railways aims to transition approximately 99 formations, encompassing major railway stations, nine divisional headquarters, and other essential offices, to solar energy. The official said that Pakistan Railways would enlist the expertise of the National Engineering Services Pakistan (NESPAK) to convert its network to solar power. The department has opted to transition the railway network to solar energy to alleviate the economic strain on Pakistan Railways, he added. He said that the choice to adopt solar power was a strategic measure aimed at easing the financial burden on Pakistan Railways, which had been facing economic difficulties.—APP

Ministry all set to amend govt accommodation allotment rules

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Housing and Works is all set to modify government accommodation allocation rules to facilitate federal government employees. "A proposed amendment to modify the Allocation Rules, 2002 is under consideration which will be implemented as soon as possible, sources in the Ministry told APP. They mentioned that the ministry plans to eliminate Rule 20 of Government House Allotment. This rule currently allows a government house allocated to a retired federal employee to be assigned to their employed son or daughter. The sources said the waiting list employees are of the view that the rule is based on injustice to transfer the government house from father to child on retirement as it deprives the right of senior employees who have been waiting for a long time. They said the officers and employees get their son or daughter recruited before retirement and the house is allotted to them, adding that the affected employees are demanding that the allotment of houses should be done only on the principle of seniority. In this regard, the sources said that the Secretary Ministry of Housing and Works had also constituted a committee for reforms in the rules which has recommended that Rule 20 be scrapped.—APP

MoHR to launch app for people welfare

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Minister for Law, Justice and Human Rights, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar has launched the Awaz App, a groundbreaking mobile application designed to address and report human rights violations effectively. This initiative marks a significant advancement in the country's efforts to enhance the protection and welfare of individuals. The Awaz App is a testament to the Ministry of Human Rights' commitment to utilizing technology for social good, ensuring rapid responses to critical human rights issues. The App allows users to report human rights violations, including cases of missing or abducted children, directly through the platform. These reports are immediately forwarded to relevant authorities for redressal. Upon receiving a report, the app activates an Alert System that triggers a coordinated response involving law enforcement, government departments, and community organizations. Crucial information about reported incidents is disseminated through various channels, including social media, WhatsApp groups, news outlets, and public announcements. This approach maximizes public awareness and engagement. Law enforcement agencies are mobilized to initiate search operations and investigations to locate missing or abducted individuals promptly. The app's primary objective is to ensure the safe recovery of victims, with comprehensive support services provided once they are found. These services include counseling, legal aid, and medical assistance. While inaugurating, Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar, highlighted the App's role in fostering a safer and more responsive environment for addressing human rights issues.—APP

JULY 2024

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Briefs

Tourists urged to adopt precautionary measures before heading towards Northern areas

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) on Thursday urged tourists to adopt precautionary measures to avoid any untoward incidents during travelling at vulnerable sites in Northern areas. The PTDC warned the tourists owing to their safety as large number of people thronging from various parts of the country to enjoy their trip. An official in PTDC told APP that the snow and clad-mountain were attracting and catching eyes of massive number of tourists to these scenic sites at hilly areas which resulted in extra traffic load on the roads. He urged the citizens to use their own line and avoid using the dual line to refrain from miseries and hardships. The visitors are advised to carry warm clothes, keep fuel tanks full and avoid unnecessary travel after 8:00 pm. He further said that the families with infants and asthma patients were also advised to avoid travelling to the Northern areas.—APP

Pakistan's regional exports increase 20% in FY 2023-24

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's exports to the seven regional countries witnessed an increase of 20 per cent during the fiscal year (2023-24) as compared to the corresponding period of last year. "The country's exports to the regional countries including Afghanistan, China, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, and the Maldives account for a small amount of \$4334.467 million, which is 13.94 per cent of Pakistan's overall exports of \$31,090.229 million during July-June (2023-24)," State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) reported. China tops the list of countries in terms of Pakistan's exports to its neighbouring, leaving behind other countries such as Bangladesh and Afghanistan. Pakistan carried out its border trade with the farther neighbour Sri Lanka, India, Nepal, and Maldives. Pakistan's exports to China witnessed an increase of 33.64 per cent to \$2,707.225 million during fiscal year under review from \$2,025.741 million last year while exports to Afghanistan also witnessed an increase of 6.07 percent from \$522.271 million to \$554.008 million. The country's exports to Bangladesh decreased by 13.27 percent to \$666.516 million from \$768.548 whereas exports to Sri Lanka rose by 37.81 percent to \$391.226 million from \$283.882. The exports to India increased to \$3.569 million from \$0.329 million in the previous year. Exports to Nepal decreased by 4.67 per cent to \$2.711 million from 2.844 million while to Maldives increased by 7.86 cent to \$9.212 million.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Syed Yousuf Raza Gilani, Former Speaker National Assembly, Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, Senator Saleem Mandviwalla and Parliamentarians cutting cake to celebrate birthday of President of Islamic Republic of Pakistan Asif Ali Zardari At Parliament House.—DNA

Resilient food systems under climate change threat

This is mostly because of overlapping crises, including fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic, the impacts of the Russia-Ukraine war, economic turmoil, and climate disaster, i.e., 2022 floods. Given that the world is expected to be subject to increased weather shocks in future years, particularly as a result of climate change, the effectiveness of disaster preparedness and response is likely to become increasingly central to the outlook on food security

DNA

ISLAMABAD: "There is no blueprint to solve food and nutrition insecurity under changing climate, solutions have to be contextualized and adaptation mechanism drawn by integrating multi-sectors and engaging range of actors," remarked Dr. Omer Ahmed Bangash, Sector Advisor for Sustainable Food and Nutrition Security (SFNS) at Welthungerhilfe-Pakistan (WHH-Pakistan). Dr. Bangash spoke at the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS), Islamabad, on 'Resilient Food Systems under Climate Change'.

During his in-depth presentation,

Dr. Bangash evaluated the situation of food and nutrition security (SFNS), the concept of Food Systems, and the impact of climate change on SFNS. He shared alarming predictions for South Asia in the face of climate change, highlighting that an additional 181 million people will be at high risk of hunger by 2050. He added that the yields of staple crops such as maize, rice, and wheat are expected to decrease by 30 percent, and freshwater availability will also diminish significantly. Dr. Bangash noted that while the Global Hunger Index improved from 36.7 in 2000 to 26.6 in 2023, the progress for reducing hunger has largely stalled since 2015 and the

level of hunger in the country is termed, serious. This is mostly because of overlapping crises, including fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic, the impacts of the Russia-Ukraine war, economic turmoil, and climate disaster, i.e., 2022 floods. Given that the world is expected to be subject to increased weather shocks in future years, particularly as a result of climate change, the effectiveness of disaster preparedness and response is likely to become increasingly central to the outlook on food security. In light of these critical statistics, he offered approaches to practical actions and policy recommendations, emphasizing the need to work with ex-

isting food systems while integrating new research. He advocated for localized solutions to address this global problem, stating that site-specific, farmer-oriented, and locally adapted agriculture was the way forward. He said that there exists an excess of policies, with some commendable examples such as the National Food Security Policy, the National Climate Change Policy, and the National Water Policy. However, he stressed that progress can only be made once the 'right to food' is in essence considered a basic human right under the Constitution of Pakistan given the UN Resolution 'Right to Food' that has been endorsed

by the Government of Pakistan. Ambassador Jauhar Saleem, President IRS, drawing upon his experience as Pakistan's Permanent Representative to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), IFAD and World Food Program (WFP) highlighted the urgency of building resilience in food systems as the South Asian population continues to rise rapidly and current systems falter. Ambassador Saleem particularly emphasized the role of youth as the inheritors of these food systems and future decision-makers. "The gravity of the challenge is not fully realised," he remarked. "The governments in South Asia need to take cognizance of this impending crisis."

PPDA supports PM's decision to end govt intervention in fixing oil prices

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Petroleum Dealers Association (PPDA) said on Thursday that it supports the decision of the Prime Minister to end the government's intervention in the determination of oil prices. The Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) should set petroleum product prices, not oil marketing companies (OMCs), it said. OGRA is well suited to protect the interests of all stakeholders and consumers in a professional manner, said Hassan Shah, spokesperson for the PPDA. Giving the authority to determine the oil price to OMCs is like throwing consumers to the wolves, he said in a statement issued here today. The political government should stop setting the oil prices, as this will prevent it from facing public criticism for inflating the cost of oil in the coun-

try following an increase in its price on the international market. The government also incurs losses due to fluctuations in oil prices; the only solution is for the government to completely end its intervention in this regard, he said. The devaluation of the local currency, the appreciation of the dollar, or fluctuations in the price of oil on the global market will not affect the political government's reputation once its role in determining oil prices ends, he underlined. He said that OGRA has the ability to determine oil prices in a professional manner, and petroleum dealers have no objection to it, although they have reservations about giving this authority to oil marketing companies. The government should conduct a thorough study and evaluate the benefits and implications before

making a decision. He stated that Pakistan's oil marketing companies are already profiteering and do not miss any opportunity to earn illicit profits. Giving them more power will have disastrous consequences for the country's economy. Oil marketing companies have already formed a powerful group and consider it their right to cross the line for ill-gotten gains. There is no one who can stop this practice of OMCs because the Competition Commission of Pakistan is a toothless institution that lacks the capacity and willingness to intervene and investigate important matters, such as the country's energy security. Hassan Shah asserts that while Pakistan cannot store oil for more than a few weeks, countries with deregulated oil prices can do so for six hundred to eight hundred days.—APP

CAP for lowering power cost

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman of the Chainstore Association of Pakistan (CAP), Mr. Tariq Mehboob, has called upon the government to take serious action to resolve issue of ever rising power tariff for commercial consumers, surging to extreme level of Rs77.15 per unit, the highest tariff of all electricity consumers in the country. In a press release, issued here on Thursday, Tariq Mehboob said that soaring electricity costs pose a major threat for retailers, traders, and exporters, severely impacting their competitiveness and affordability. This situation has also adversely affected household budgets, reducing purchasing power and making it increasingly difficult for businesses to sell products and consumers to buy them. Consequently, this has led to domestic business closures and exacerbated poverty levels. Over the past two years, Pakistan has seen a historic increase in the base electricity tariff. As a result, the base tariff for residential customers has reached Rs48.84 per unit.—APP

Mohsin Naqvi condemns firing

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi on Thursday condemned the firing at check post in Upper Orakzai and paid rich tribute to Sepoy Ayub who embraced martyrdom in the attack. Interior Minister expressed deep condolences and sympathies to the bereaved family. Mohsin Naqvi prayed for the speedy recovery of Constables Javed, Rahmat, and Polio Worker Afaq, who were injured in the firing by terrorists in District Swat. Interior Minister said that Sepoy Ayub sacrificed his life while performing duty. He added that our brave soldiers have made history by sacrificing their precious lives in the war against terrorism.—APP

Gold rates decrease by Rs.2,300 per tola to Rs.250,500

ISLAMABAD: The price of per tola of 24 karat gold decreased by Rs.2,300 and was sold at Rs. 250,500 on Thursday against its sale at Rs.252,800 on last trading day. The price of 10 grams of 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs. 1,972 to Rs. 214,763 from Rs. 216,735 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat gold down to Rs. 196,866 from Rs. 198,674, the All Sindh Sarafa Jewellers Association reported. The price of per tola silver decreased by Rs60 to Rs.2,860 whereas that of ten gram silver went down by Rs.51.44 to Rs.2,451.98. The price of gold in the international market decreased by \$43 to \$2,470 from \$2,413, the Association reported.—APP

China top investor in Pakistan with \$568m FDI in FY24: Report

ISLAMABAD: China has emerged as the largest investor in Pakistan in fiscal year 2024 (FY24) with a net foreign direct investment (FDI) of \$568.2 million. The second and third highest ranks in terms of net FDI were held by Hong Kong and the United Kingdom, with net investments worth \$358.51 million and \$268.19 million, respectively. It is pertinent to note that the total FDI in FY24 stood at \$1.9bn, up 16.88% YoY compared to FDI of \$1.63bn in FY23. Gwadar Pro reported on Thursday quoting official data issued by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP)—APP

Blind followers

TANVEER HUSSAIN



Blind devotion or following is a disease that can lead even the most intelligent person astray. Allah Almighty has ordered man to think about the creation of the universe. Most people preferred the easy-to-follow method to avoid the labor of deliberation. Following is right to some extent but blind devotion is not right. This blind devotion leads to egoism and individualism. In 1991, the United States claimed that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein possessed lethal weapons that posed a threat to world peace. All major countries and international organizations became supporters of this false claim

of America. Then the US and its allies destroyed the world peace by killing millions of Iraqis to save the world peace. Ten years later, the same story was repeated in Afghanistan. A major war was fought to control terrorism which left the entire region at the mercy of terrorists. The interesting thing is that this time also the world limited personal freedom in their own country by blindly trusting America's claim. In Pakistan too, the trend of following blind devotion is increasing rapidly. The blind devotees of any religious party or political party consider their leader as an avatar. These blind followers see nothing but their leader. If he says that day is night, all followers will accept him as true without doubt. These people think everyone is bad except their leader. Due to this blind imitation, the city of Karachi remained a graveyard for a quarter of a century. Another group of similar blind followers has been developed in recent years. It has been said in the Holy Qur'an that when

any news comes to you, investigate it lest you harm someone unknowingly. Today is the era of social media; everyone shares information according to their understanding and wisdom. There are also a large number of people who deliberately spread fake news for their own interests or to spread mischief in the country. There are some leaders who resort to lies and hate to increase their vote bank while their blind followers not only commit acts of violence themselves but also promote it through social media and YouTube channels to create public opinion. Due to this irresponsible behavior, the country is suffering from political instability and law and order problems also arise. These blind followers are more harmful to the society than old followers. They are very stereotyped, rude and quarrelsome. Their entire lesson is based on abuse, fighting and blaming. They believe that only their leader is an honest, patriotic and true leader while all others are wrong in their eyes. These blind

followers are poison to society. Leaders who pride themselves on the number of (blind) followers they have a heavy responsibility to reform those followers. The leader of the blind followers, if he is a doctor, can endanger the lives of all the followers by prescribing a wrong medicine. Similarly, a religious leader or a politician endangers thousands of lives by giving wrong orders to his blind followers. The government and educational institutions should provide quality education, good training and awareness to the people so that the number of elements promoting violence and hatred in the society can decrease instead of increasing. It will take decades to make these extremist blind followers into useful citizens of the society. However, various departments also have to learn from history and avoid any such facilitation. Donations and foreign funding should also be regulated. Although it is a difficult and patient task, but with courage and determination, this problem can be overcome.

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Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti

Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 05 Issue: 212

Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

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Barbarism vs civilisation

The spectacle of a fiery Benjamin Netanyahu meeting repeated thunderous applause and standing ovations from his obsequious servants in the US Congress was truly something to behold. Here it was: two of the world's self-styled leading "democracies" openly and unashamedly embracing and celebrating their mutual criminality and systematic dismantling of international law, while denigrating the common decency and courage of many of their own citizens and the almost universal opinion of humankind on the question of Palestine. Some 146 countries now formally recognise the state of Palestine, making the United States and a handful of close allies the outliers in their refusal. What could possibly go wrong when it comes to liberty, justice and nationhood as these ideal standards are being twisted and reimposed on – or rather against – the rest of the world? So much for "a decent respect to the opinions of mankind" as famously stated in the US Declaration of Independence. Netanyahu's address at the joint session of Congress came less than a week after the International Court of Justice (ICJ) delivered its advisory opinion, at the request of the United Nations General Assembly, on Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories. The court concluded what everyone has long known, and its judgment has no power of enforcement. Still, it's useful to have its decision on record as part of a large body of almost unanimous international legal statements on the status of Palestine. The ICJ concluded: Israel's continued presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), including East Jerusalem, is illegal; it is obliged to cease all new settlement activities, and to evacuate all illegal settlers from the OPT; Israel has the obligation to make reparation for the damage caused to all the natural or legal persons concerned in the OPT; all states and international organisations are obliged not to recognise the unlawful presence of Israel in the OPT and are required to work towards ending its presence there. One immediate legal consequence of the ICJ advisory for Israel's ongoing destruction of Gaza is that it cannot be construed as an act of self-defence, but one of illegal occupation. Predictably, Washington denounced the court's opinion. The Knesset, Israel's parliament, voted for the passage of legislation opposing the establishment of a Palestinian state as an "existential danger". It's interesting to observe which side is actually dying by the thousands month after month in what amounts to a deliberate policy of depopulation. In a separate case, the ICJ has already ruled that Israel has a "plausible" case of genocide to answer in Gaza and is currently examining the evidence, arguments and counterarguments. Francesca Albanese, UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in the Palestinian territories, has concluded that Israel's conduct in Gaza indeed meets the "threshold" of genocide under international law. Karim Khan, chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), has asked a panel of its own judges to issue warrants for the arrest of Netanyahu and Defence Minister Yoav Gallant, as well as Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar and two other senior Hamas officials for war crimes and crimes against humanity. These long drawn-out legal proceedings have been further delayed and complicated by blatant – both legal and illegal – interference from Israel, the US and Britain, among other Western allies. US congressional members have openly threatened sanctions against the ICC chief prosecutor and his staff. Other, more covert threats have been made, leading his office to issue an unprecedented public statement in May calling for an end to what it called intimidation of its staff.

Labour Britain: Internal challenges

The British general election held on July 4, 2024, marked a seismic shift in the country's political landscape, with the Labour Party securing a resounding victory after 14 years in opposition. This electoral outcome ended the Conservative Party's prolonged tenure in power, overturning their control of the House of Commons, the Prime Minister's Office, and the government itself. The election results underscored a growing discontent among voters towards Conservative policies, a sentiment that had been brewing and was earlier evident in local election outcomes. In this election, fifteen political parties participated, with major contenders including the Conservative Party, Labour Party, Liberal Democrats, Reform Party of Britain, Scottish National Party, Green Party, Democratic Unionist Party, Plaid Cymru, and Sinn Féin. The electoral battleground spanned 650 constituencies across England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, adhering to the Westminster system where the winning party secures a majority of 326 seats necessary to form a government and appoint the Prime Minister. The Conservative Party's defeat was stark and historic, securing only 121 seats—a dramatic decline from the 362 seats they held after the 2019 elections. This represented the party's lowest seat count since its inception in 1834 and marked its worst electoral performance since 1906. Notably, several prominent Conservative figures, including former Prime Minister Liz Truss, were unseated, and the party lost ground in traditionally strong constituencies like Wales, reflecting a harsh voter backlash against perceived domestic policy failures. In contrast, the Labour Party under the leadership of Sir Keir Starmer emerged triumphant with 412 seats, providing a clear mandate to form a government. Starmer campaigned on promises to rejuvenate and unite the nation, focusing on addressing economic, social, and health crises exacerbated by factors such as Brexit and evolving foreign policy challenges. Economically, Labour's agenda includes establishing a state-owned clean energy company, nationalizing railways upon contract expiry, and implementing a robust industrial strategy. Plans also include measures to combat inflation and foster private sector investment, while addressing concerns among business leaders about Labour's traditionally leftist leanings. Additionally, Labour aims to maintain strategic gas reserves, halt new oil and gas extraction licenses in the North Sea, and impose higher taxes on energy companies to accelerate a shift towards renewable energy sources. Addressing crime and public safety is another cornerstone of Starmer's platform, necessitated by rising crime rates exacerbated by funding cuts and reduced police numbers since 2010. Labour pledges to recruit 13,000 additional police officers and impose stricter penalties on offenders to restore law and order. The healthcare sector, burdened with a £13 billion deficit and facing public dissatisfaction over treatment costs and waiting times, remains a critical priority. Despite allocating £1.8 billion to healthcare improvements, the Institute for Fiscal Studies suggests this may not suffice, underscoring ongoing challenges in managing and funding public health services.

A bridge that endangered South Asia

Qamar Bashir



The bridge named "Chenab Rail Bridge" is the highest of its kind in the world and has been hailed as a feat of engineering that will play a pivotal role in both peace and wartime, facilitating the movement of army personnel in larger numbers than was previously possible. The 1,315-meter-long steel and concrete \$24 million bridge connects two mountains with an arch 359 meters above the Chenab River, completing the vital link of the 272-kilometer railway that begins in the garrison city of Udhampur

While we in Pakistan are hurling blames and threats at each other, India has quietly tightened its grip on Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJ&K) and improved its standing along the 3500 Km disputed border by silently building a bridge on the rugged Himalayas gorge. This bridge has successfully linked the Kashmir valley to the vast Indian plains by train to achieve three strategic objectives: to further tighten its grip on IIOJ&K, to contain Pakistan, and to meet the perceived rising strategic threat from China. The bridge named "Chenab Rail Bridge" is the highest of its kind in the world and has been hailed as a feat of engineering that will play a pivotal role in both peace and wartime, facilitating the movement of army personnel in larger numbers than was previously possible. The 1,315-meter-long steel and concrete \$24 million bridge connects two mountains with an arch 359 meters above the Chenab River, completing the vital link of the 272-kilometer railway that begins in the garrison city of Udhampur, headquarters of the army's northern command, and runs through the region's capital Srinagar. It terminates a kilometer higher in altitude in Baramulla, a gateway trade town near the Line of Control with Pakistan. The railway cost an estimated \$3.9 billion and has been an immense undertaking, with construction beginning nearly three decades ago. This bridge is the biggest civil engineering challenge faced by any railway project in India in recent times, which would revolutionize logistics in Ladakh bordering China, achieving a huge military advantage. Earlier, the Indian military had to stockpile supplies, military equipment, and ammunition transported by road in Ladakh for six months every year before the roads closed for winter. With the construction of the bridge, the military will have a year-long sustainable supply line. This project will also give birth to several other road tunnel projects to connect Kashmir and Ladakh, not far from India's frontiers with China and Pakistan. The completion of this vital bridge has given India a multitude of advantages across military, strategic, economic, political, and security dimensions. Militarily, it enhances troop mobility and logistical efficiency, enabling rapid deployment and sustained supply lines in Jammu and Kashmir. Strategically, it strengthens India's position against China and Paki-

stan, acting as a deterrent and reinforcing territorial control. Economically, the bridge promotes regional development by attracting investment, boosting trade, and enhancing tourism. Politically, it symbolizes national integration, facilitates policy implementation, and contributes to political stability by improving living standards. Security-wise, it bolsters disputed border monitoring and counter-insurgency operations, ensuring civilian safety and reinforcing India's overall security posture in the region. The Chenab Rail Bridge represents a significant strategic development with far-reaching implications for China-India relations, India-Pakistan dynamics, the Kashmiri struggle for freedom, and the broader South Asian region. This infrastructure project enhances India's logistical and military capabilities in the region, particularly along the contested borders with China. By improving troop and equipment mobility, India strengthens its defensive and offensive positions, signaling its readiness to counter any potential threats from China. This development not only increases India's military readiness but also supports its broader strategy of counterbalancing China's influence in South Asia. It would also give much-needed impetus to the strategic interests of both the USA and the West, who are supporting India and propping it as a counterbalance power against China. For India-Pakistan relations, the Chenab Rail Bridge exacerbates existing tensions, particularly over the disputed region of Jammu and Kashmir. The improved infrastructure allows India to bolster its military presence in the area, which, in Pakistan's view, should be a direct threat to its security and territorial claims. This increased militarization could lead to further conflicts and heightened diplomatic tensions between the two nuclear-armed neighbors. Moreover, the international community may pay closer attention to the ongoing conflict in Kashmir, potentially influencing geopolitical dynamics and the involvement of global powers. The Kashmiri population faces both opportunities and threats from the Chenab Rail Bridge. While improved infrastructure might bring economic benefits, there are significant concerns about demographic changes and the erosion of Kashmiri autonomy. Easier access to the region could lead to an influx of outsiders, potentially marginalizing the

local population and undermining their unique cultural and linguistic identity. This development could intensify the resistance among Kashmiris, fueling their long-standing demand for self-determination and merger with Pakistan. Additionally, the increased militarization facilitated by the bridge might lead to more human rights violations, drawing international condemnation and support for the Kashmiri cause. In the broader context of South Asia, the Chenab Rail Bridge influences regional stability, economic development, and strategic alliances. By enhancing India's strategic posture, the project could destabilize the region by increasing military capabilities and heightening tensions with both Pakistan and China. However, improved infrastructure in Jammu and Kashmir could also foster economic growth through increased trade and connectivity within India and potentially with neighboring countries. This project could serve as a model for similar initiatives in the region, promoting economic development and regional connectivity if managed diplomatically. To neutralize India's advantages after completing the Chenab Rail Bridge, Pakistan should adopt a multifaceted strategy. Militarily, Pakistan should enhance its defensive preparedness. Economically, Pakistan must build resilience, develop infrastructure in Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Additionally, fostering political unity within Pakistan and ensuring good governance and human rights in Pakistan-administered Kashmir will further strengthen Pakistan's position. Pakistan should also intensify its international diplomacy to highlight that the construction of the Chenab Rail Bridge in IIOJ&K is a direct violation of the UNSC resolutions. By building such strategic infrastructure, India is unilaterally altering the status quo of the region, thereby undermining the spirit and intent of the UNSC resolutions, which call for maintaining the disputed nature of the territory until a fair and impartial plebiscite is conducted under UN auspices. This not only challenges the legal and international status of Jammu and Kashmir but also raises significant concerns about India's commitment to resolving the issue peacefully and in accordance with international law.

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

A diplomatic balancing act in uncertain times

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



The Democratic Party generally supports Israel but a growing group within the party that is more critical of Israel's policies, especially regarding the Palestinian territories and human rights issues. This division reflects a broader trend in American society, where younger and more progressive voices are increasingly against what they see as unbalanced U.S. support for Israel. On the Republican side

The Biden administration and Congress were getting ready to welcome Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during a time of significant changes and uncertainty in U.S. politics. This visit happens as both countries face evolving domestic and international situations, making it challenging to manage their complex and long-standing relationship. In the U.S., President Joe Biden's administration is dealing with a divided political environment. The Democratic Party generally supports Israel but a growing group within the party that is more critical of Israel's policies, especially regarding the Palestinian territories and human rights issues. This division reflects a broader trend in American society, where younger and more progressive voices are increasingly against what they see as unbalanced U.S. support for Israel. On the Republican side, support for Israel remains strong, often influenced by evangelical Christian beliefs and strategic interests. However, the GOP is also facing its own internal challenges, with different groups competing for power after the Trump era. This political situation means that Netanyahu's visit will be viewed through these partisan divides, affecting the nature and outcomes of his meetings. For President Biden, Netanyahu's visit presents a complex diplomatic challenge. The Biden administration has been trying to adjust U.S. foreign policy after the turbulent Trump years, focusing on multilateralism, renewed alliances, and human rights. Balancing these goals with the strong U.S.-Israel relationship requires careful diplomacy. Biden is also dealing with the resumption of talks about the Iran nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Netanyahu has strongly criticized the JCPOA, arguing that it threatens Israel's se-

curity. Therefore, his visit will likely bring these issues to the forefront, challenging Biden to balance the concerns of an important ally with broader international diplomatic goals. Netanyahu's visit comes at a time of significant political change in Israel as well. Having recently returned to power, Netanyahu leads a government that includes far-right elements, raising concerns both in Israel and internationally. Issues like the proposed judicial reforms by his government have sparked widespread protests and criticism, showing a nation deeply divided on its future direction. Moreover, Israel's ongoing conflict with the Palestinians remains a central issue. Netanyahu's hardline stance and the policies of his coalition partners have made efforts toward a peaceful resolution more complicated. This ongoing conflict continues to be a key issue in U.S.-Israel relations, especially under an administration that emphasizes human rights and diplomatic solutions. Despite these challenges, the strategic relationship between the U.S. and Israel remains a crucial part of American foreign policy in the Middle East. Issues like defense cooperation, intelligence sharing, and counterterrorism efforts highlight the mutual benefits of this alliance. Netanyahu's visit will likely emphasize these aspects, even as both sides navigate their complex domestic and international political situations. President Biden has six months left in office. He might spend more time on foreign policy, something he is passionate about from his time in Congress and as head of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. With fewer campaign and domestic issues to deal with, Biden might focus on strengthening his foreign policy legacy. This leadership change in one of the US's main political parties comes at a hectic time for US foreign

policy in the Middle East. The recent Houthi drone attack on Tel Aviv and Israel's response in Yemen show that events continue even when US politics are focused inward. US military and diplomatic efforts in the Middle East are still active due to ongoing issues in the region. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's visit to Washington this week, including a meeting with the Biden administration and a speech to Congress, will highlight the Middle East again. The context of his 2024 visit is different from his 2015 visit when US policy was more focused on the Middle East, such as with Iran nuclear talks and the fight against ISIS. Netanyahu may get a warmer reception from Republicans than Democrats, but unless he has surprising news about Israel-Hamas, Lebanon, or Iran, his visit might not get as much attention as in 2015. Ahead of Netanyahu's visit, Secretary of State Antony Blinken emphasized two key Middle East policies at the Aspen Security Forum. First, he highlighted the priority of achieving a cease-fire and hostage release deal in the Israel-Hamas conflict, which the US has been working on with Qatar and Egypt. Blinken said they are close to a deal. A successful Netanyahu visit would involve finalizing this deal and outlining a plan for Gaza, Israel, and Palestinians. Blinken reiterated the US goal of a two-state solution as a strong response to Iran and Hamas, despite Israel's parliament rejecting this idea. Secondly, Blinken stressed that the US is committed to preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon. He mentioned that Iran could be weeks away from having enough material for a nuclear bomb, a critical point. Blinken's statements about a two-state solution and stopping Iran from getting a nuclear bomb show the US's need to focus on these goals, even with other pressing issues.

Briefs

ECP notifies
39 returned
MNAs as...

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political party that won general seats in the national and provincial assemblies in the February 8 elections, thus, is entitled to reserved seats. The SC full bench headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa, by a majority of 8, set aside the Peshawar High Court's judgment of March 25 and declared the ECP order of March 1 to be ultra vires the Constitution, without lawful authority and of no legal effect. Following the SC directives, the electoral body held multiple sessions to deliberate on the verdict. Regarding the independent candidates' issue, the ECP stated in a session last week that 39 candidates of the embattled party had shown their affiliation with the PTI in their nomination papers. However, 41 candidates who had been declared independents hadn't mentioned PTI in their nomination papers neither they disclosed their affiliation with the party nor submitted the ticket of any party, it added.

ECP seeks
SC guidance
over...

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order regarding the PTI-backed independent candidates in which the SC declared the former ruling party eligible for reserved seats. Following the apex court's ruling, PTI lawmakers in the national and provincial assemblies had submitted their affidavits of allegiance to the Imran-founded party to the ECP. However, the ECP raised some queries before the top court despite receiving the relevant party association particulars from the PTI-backed independent legislators. In its civil miscellaneous application related to the SC order, the electoral body stated that the PTI lacked an organisational structure as per the ECP's record, which "is statutory obligation of every enlisted political party to conduct intra-party elections in terms of Section 208 of the Election Act 2017".

Pakistan
welcomes
"unity..."

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Republic where he will take part in discussions on political and security issues, share Pakistan's perspective and also hold bilateral meetings with the participating dignitaries. She also apprised the media of the visit of Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers and Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan, Rashid Meredov from July 22-25 who called on President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, besides holding extensive talks with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar and co-chairing the Third Round of Pakistan-Turkmenistan Bilateral Political Consultations. During the talks, two sides agreed to intensify efforts in political, economic, and defence cooperation; to foster parliamentary, cultural, and educational exchanges; and strengthen collaboration in multilateral forums.

Pakistan
community
protests...

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he lay face down on the floor. The second man also appeared to be struck in the head by an officer. A Greater Manchester Police (GMP) statement said the video showed "an event that is truly shocking, and that people are rightly extremely concerned about. The use of such force in an arrest is an unusual occurrence and one that we understand creates alarm". It said police had responded to reports of an assault, and three officers were assaulted during their response. The officers, including one female officer whose nose was broken, required hospital treatment. An officer was suspended on Thursday, having initially only been removed from operational duties. The two men were arrested on suspicion of assault, assault of an emergency worker, affray, and obstructing police.

Key Australia's stars set to miss T20Is against Pakistan

Australian players may miss the T20I series against Pakistan to prepare for the five-match Test series against India

SYDNEY : Australia's all-format players might miss the T20I series against Pakistan in November 2024 to prepare for the high-profile Test series against India on home soil, ESPNcricinfo reported. The Aussies are set to host Pakistan for six white-ball matches, three ODIs, and T20Is between 4 and 18 November. The tour commences with a three-match ODI series on 4 November. The ODIs will be followed by three T20Is, scheduled between 14 and 18 November. The proximity of the Pakistan T20Is to the Border-Gavaskar Trophy might lead to several multi-format players being excluded from Australia's squad, as the Test series starts on November 22. The multi-format players will reportedly be given the best preparation facilities for the five-Test series, with the Sheffield Shield starting on 8 October. Even if they are rested for the first round, they will have three First-Class matches to fine-tune themselves for the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. Therefore, players like Travis Head, Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc, Mitchell Marsh, and Josh Hazlewood, who play all formats for Australia, are likely to miss the T20I series against Pakistan.

Meanwhile, Former Pakistani captain Shahid Afridi has sharply criticised the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), attributing the team's poor performance to frequent changes in leadership and structure. In an interview with a local news channel, Afridi emphasised that the administration needs to allow at least three years for any system to take effect and deliver results. "When you change or



bring in any new structure, you must give the system time. Every year, a new chairman comes, and a new system is introduced. Things don't work this way," Afridi said. "All the senior board members and senior players should sit together at one table and make a plan. Then, let that plan be executed for three years. Let the results come. If you keep changing the system every year, what results can you expect?"

he added. Pakistan experienced disappointing defeats against the United States and India in their first two matches of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024, leading to an early exit from the group stage. This marked the first time in T20 World Cup history that Pakistan failed to progress beyond the first round. Many fans and former cricket stars have blamed captain Babar

Azam for the team's poor performance, calling for his resignation. In response to Pakistan's early exit, the PCB has made several changes to the backroom staff, including sacking selectors Wahab Riaz and Abdul Razaq. The board is also considering significant decisions regarding Babar Azam's future as captain.

Pakistan vs Australia ODI series schedule: November 4: MCG, Melbourne (D/N) November 8: Adelaide Oval, Adelaide (D/N) November 10: Perth Stadium, Perth (D/N) Pakistan vs Australia T20I series schedule: November 14: The Gabba, Brisbane (N) November 16: SCG, Sydney (N) November 18: Bellerive Oval, Hobart (N).—Agencies

Djokovic says don't write me off for Olympic gold

PARIS: Novak Djokovic says he has "high expectations" as he chases an elusive Olympic gold medal, with his confidence unshaken despite a poor year by his stellar standards. The 24-time Grand Slam champion has not won a single title this season, losing in straight sets to Carlos Alcaraz in the Wimbledon final earlier this month. He returns to Roland Garros for a fifth Olympics, attempting to improve on the bronze he earned on his debut at the 2008 Beijing Games. The

Serbian world number two faces a mouthwatering clash with Rafael Nadal if both players win their opening matches. Djokovic has missed out on the podium at the past three Olympics, twice finishing fourth, including in Tokyo three years ago when his bid for a rare golden calendar Grand Slam came up short. Carlos Alcaraz is the favorite for the title in Paris after landing his first French Open title and defending his Wimbledon crown, but Djokovic has made a habit of proving doubters wrong.

"When it comes to bookmakers, people will always talk," Djokovic said at a Serbian team press conference on Thursday. "I haven't yet won a title in this calendar year so people tend to count me out, but it has happened before and it can always change. So it can be a motivator." The 37-year-old pulled out before his French Open quarterfinal with a knee injury at the start of June but made a swift return following an operation in time to play at Wimbledon. "I feel more ready now than I was for Wimbledon," said Djokovic, who begins his Olympic

campaign against Australia's Matthew Ebden. Djokovic has made no secret of the fact that winning Olympic gold remains one of his "biggest dreams," as the only major honor missing from his list. "The expectations are always high, which is something that I cannot change and don't want to," he said. "Approaching Olympic Games is always a huge challenge for me because I put extra expectations and pressure on myself, and of course, the nation as well."—Agencies

Murray to skip singles event at Paris Games

PARIS : The two-time Olympic gold medalist will prioritise the doubles event in the final tournament of his career before retirement. Murray skipped the singles in his final appearance at Wimbledon this month after having surgery to remove a spinal cyst in late June, but had initially entered in singles and doubles, alongside Dan Evans, in Paris. However, the 37-year-old made the decision to skip singles before the draw was made on Thursday. "I've taken the decision to withdraw from the singles to concentrate on the doubles with Dan," he said in a statement via his management team. "Our practice has been great and we're playing well together. Really looking forward to getting started and representing Britain one more time." Murray won singles gold at London 2012, beating Roger Federer in the final, and successfully defended his title in Rio four years later defeating Juan Martin del Potro. He also has a mixed doubles silver from London partnering Laura Robson. The three-times Grand Slam winner said on Tuesday he would retire after the Paris Games, where the tennis tournament runs from July 27-Aug. 4 at Roland Garros.—APP

Kerber to retire from tennis after Paris 2024

PARIS : Three-time Grand Slam champion Angelique Kerber has said she is going to retire from tennis after the Olympic Games in Paris. The 36-year-old German is a former world number one and claimed the Australian Open and US Open titles in 2016 before winning Wimbledon two years later. She competed at the 2016 Olympics in Rio when she won silver in the women's singles, having been beaten by Puerto Rican Monica Puig in the final, and did not compete at the Tokyo Games. "The finish line," said Kerber on social media. "Before the Olympics begin, I can already say that I will never forget Paris 2024, because it will be my last professional tournament as a tennis player. "And whereas this might actually be the right decision, it will never feel that way. Simply because I love the sport with all my heart and I'm thankful for the memories and opportunities it has given me." Kerber returned to the WTA Tour earlier this season after being on maternity leave. She added: "The Olympics I've participated in so far have been more than just competitions as they represent different chapters of my life as a tennis player: the climb, the peak and now, the finish line."—DNA

Hijab-wearing French sprinter faces exclusion from Olympics opening ceremony

PARIS : French government and Olympics officials are seeking a solution to allow Muslim French sprinter Sounkamba Sylla to wear her hijab at the opening ceremony while still complying with the country's secularism laws, they said. This effort comes after the 26-year-old member of France's 400-metre relay team recently took to her Instagram to reveal that her hijab — a head covering worn by many Muslim women — would prevent her from appearing in Friday's blockbuster opening ceremony. She wrote: "You are selected for the Olympic Games, organised in your country, but you can't take part in the opening ceremony because you wear a scarf on your head." Thousands of athletes, including some who wear a hijab, are placing an international spotlight on tensions in France over



national identity and perceived discrimination against Muslims, Reuters reported. France, home to Europe's largest Muslim minority, enforces laws to protect the

principle of secularism under which state employees and school pupils are banned from wearing religious symbols and clothing in public institutions. Rights groups say these rules effectively discriminate against Muslims. French government and Olympics officials said they were willing to find a solution for Sylla, although it remains unclear what that could be. "Our citizens expect us to follow these principles of secularism, but we also need to be inventive about solutions to make everyone feel good," Amelia Oude-Castera, minister for sport and the Olympic and Paralympic Games, said on Wednesday, adding that Sylla "understands our principles, our rules."—APP

Iraq defeat Ukraine 2-1 in football opener at Olympics

Iraq's captain and veteran striker Aymen Hussein equalized in the 57th minute from a penalty kick

SPORTS DESK

RIYADH: Iraq defeated Ukraine 2-1 in Group B of the Paris Olympic Games' football competition on Wednesday. Ukraine could not maintain their lead after Valentyn Rubchynskyi scored in the 53rd minute. Iraq's captain and veteran striker Aymen Hussein equalized in the 57th minute from a penalty kick. In the 75th minute, Ali Jasim added the second goal, allowing the Lions of Mesopotamia to snatch three valuable points. Iraq faced a tough challenge in the second round on Saturday against Argentina, who fell to Morocco 1-2 on Wednesday. Meanwhile, Egypt and the Dominican Republic battled their way to a scoreless draw on Wednesday in their opening Group C match on the first day of the men's soccer tournament at the Paris Olympics. The Dominicans, who are playing for the first time ever in

the football competition at the Games, had the ball in their opponents' net in the 13th minute, courtesy of Peter Gonzalez, but the referee ruled it out over a foul Egyptian defender Hossam

Abdelmajeed. Both teams had chances throughout the match, which took place at Nantes' Stade de la Beaujoire, but goalkeepers Xavier Valdez and Hamza Alaa were

not to be beaten on the day. Alaa made a great save to tip away a Gonzalez free-kick in the 70th minute, and his Egyptian teammates worked hard to grab a winner late on but the Domini-

can defense refused to yield. Egypt are competing in the Olympics football contest for the 13th time, the most of any African nation, but has never finished higher than fourth place, which it achieved in Amsterdam in 1928 and Tokyo in 1964. The team made reached the quarter-finals at Tokyo 2020, losing 1-0 to Brazil. It had been hoped that Mohammed Salah might join the Egyptian side as a senior player at the Olympics but he declined to do so, opting instead to focus on Liverpool's preseason preparations. Former Arsenal midfielder Mohammed Elneny captained Egypt. Earlier, Spain, silver medalists in Tokyo three years ago, kicked off their Group C campaign with a 2-1 victory over Uzbekistan at the Parc des Princes. Their squad included two members of their Euro 2024-winning squad: Alex Baena and Fermin Lopez.

Scotland
Yard drops
investigation
against...

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journalist Arshad Sharif in Kenya and a gun attack on PTI founder Imran Khan in Wazirabad around two years ago. Scotland Yard has told a private Pakistani news channel that it's Counter Terrorism Command Unit has decided not to commence an investigation after establishing that there are no grounds to begin a formal investigation as the complainant Sayed Tasnim Haider didn't produce evidence to back up his claims against the Sharifs and their colleagues Mian Saleem Raza, Nasir Mahmood, Zubair Gull and Rashid Nasrullah. In November 2022, PML-N senior UK activist Haider made headlines when he claimed he had evidence that Sharifs, Mahmood, Raza, Gull and Nasrullah were involved in hatching a murder plot against Arshad in London — that year on Eid day, July 8, 2022.

Pak pledges
support
for intra...

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initiatives and activities as well as his reform agenda to revitalize ECO during his tenure. The prime minister appreciated the Secretary General's efforts and contributions to promote ECO as a regional platform for cooperation and extended best wishes for his future endeavors. He noted with pleasure that Amb. Noziri was a graduate of Pakistan's Foreign Service Academy. The prime minister also conveyed his warm wishes for President Emomali Rahmon, President of Tajikistan. The prime minister also stated that Pakistan was proud that the incoming Secretary General of ECO would be Dr. Asad Maajeed Khan, former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan.

Punjab govt
rewards...

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service officers. This scheme will allocate plots of varying sizes to different officers. The scheme offers plots of two kanals, one kanal, and 10 marla. The plots will be located within 2 km of the Kala Khatai Road Interchange. The distribution of plots includes a 30% quota for Pakistan Administrative Services and PMS officers, a 10% quota for police service officers, and a 30% quota for X-cadre government employees. The plots will be available on easy installments spread over eight years, with the value set at Rs 800,000 per marla. Specifically, officers in grades 21-22 will be eligible for two-kanal plots.

PM to
attend...

FROM PAGE 01
Dr Masoud Pezeshkian," she said. "The visit attests to the commitment by the two countries to strengthen leadership-level engagement and bilateral cooperation." Pezeshkian, a 69-year-old cardiac surgeon known to be relatively moderate, was elected as the president on July 6. The election was called after President Ebrahim Raisi was killed in a helicopter crash in May. Following Pezeshkian's victory, President Asif Ali Zardari had congratulated the newly elected president in a post on X. "Pakistan and Iran enjoy fraternal ties & I hope that under your leadership our relations will grow further stronger," he said.

Section 144
enforced...

FROM PAGE 01
The measure aims to maintain law and order and prevent any potential terrorist threats. The notification stated that the administration will ensure the implementation of the order across Punjab and Islamabad. The imposition of Section 144 prohibits gatherings of five or more people, and any violation of the order can lead to legal action. This move comes ahead of a country-wide protest announced by the PTI led opposition alliance for Friday. The protests demand the release of 'innocent' prisoners, including PTI chairman Imran Khan.

Briefs

EU ready to support all efforts to end Sudan war

BRUSSELS : The EU foreign policy chief said Thursday that the bloc is ready to support all efforts to end the war in Sudan. "After 15 months of war, Sudan's belligerents must stop this man-made tragedy and come to the negotiating table," Josep Borrell said in a statement. "The EU stands ready to support all efforts to put an end to the war, including planned ceasefire talks by the US, co-hosted by Switzerland and Saudi Arabia on 14 August," Borrell added. The talks will be in Switzerland and include the African Union, Egypt, United Arab Emirates, and UN as observers, the US Department of State noted in its statement. The war in Sudan broke out in April 2023 between army Gen. Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and Rapid Support Forces (RSF) commander Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo over disagreements about integrating the RSF into the army. The conflict has caused a devastating humanitarian crisis, and clashes have killed nearly 16,000 people and displaced millions. —APP

N. Korea trash balloons disrupt flights in Seoul

SEOUL: North Korea has sent about 500 balloons laden with trash into South Korea's air space over the past 24 hours, officials in the South said on Thursday, disrupting flights and igniting a fire on the roof of a residential building. The balloons are part of an ongoing propaganda campaign by Pyongyang against North Korean defectors and activists in the South, who regularly send balloons carrying items such as anti-Pyongyang leaflets, medicine, money and USB sticks loaded with K-pop videos and dramas. A suspected balloon suspended take-offs and landings at Seoul's Gimpo Airport on Wednesday evening for two hours, an official at the Korea Airports Corporation said. Balloons have affected traffic at South Korea's main international airport, Incheon, several times in recent weeks. South Korea responds to North's trash balloons with loudspeaker broadcasts. In Gyeonggi, a province near Seoul, a balloon caught fire on top of a residential building. Fire fighters extinguished the blaze, an official at the Gyeonggi Northern Fire and Disaster Headquarters said. South Korea's military said some trash balloons were equipped with timed poppers that could cause fires. —APP

Child killed in Colombia's first lethal drone attack

BOGOTÁ : A ten-year-old boy died Wednesday in a drone attack targeting soldiers in Colombia, the first death of its kind in the country which has struggled to rein in guerrilla violence. The defense ministry's press office said it was the first drone death in Colombia and blamed the attack on a group of dissident guerrillas who broke away from the FARC armed group when it signed a peace deal with the government years ago. "Young Dylan, age 10, was killed following the launching of grenades by drones targeting" soldiers in the restive southwest department of Cauca, the regional military commander, General Federico Mejia, said in a video on the social network X. The grenade fell on a soccer field in the town of El Plateado, a stronghold of the Central General Staff (EMC) rebel group which broke away from FARC. The explosion also left six wounded, according to the Army. Colombia's leftist guerrillas are increasingly relying on drones to drop explosives on rivals. Unlike the sophisticated payloads mounted on drones by soldiers in Ukraine, for example, the guerrillas mainly use commercially available drones to drop homemade explosives or fireworks. —DNA

Putin, Assad discuss Gaza, bilateral ties in Moscow

Assad said both Syria and Russia have encountered tough challenges but have consistently managed to overcome them, emphasizing the strong trust between Moscow and Damascus

NEWS DESK

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin hosted his Syrian counterpart, Bashar al-Assad, in the Kremlin in the Russian capital of Moscow for a meeting to explore bilateral relations and the latest developments in the region amid the ongoing war on Gaza. Putin hosted Assad in the Russian capital on Thursday and held talks on matters of mutual interest, Syria's official news agency SANA and Russia's TASS news agency reported. Assad said both Syria and Russia have encountered tough challenges but have consistently managed to overcome them, emphasizing the strong trust between Moscow and Damascus, SANA said. Putin, for his part, characterized the situation in the Middle East as growing more tense and stressed the need for the continuation of bilateral talks,



SANA further reported, adding that he also stated that there are promising prospects for economic and trade relations between Syria and Russia. "Dear mister president, I am very happy to see you. We have the opportunity to talk about the entire set of our relations. We have not seen each other for a while," TASS quoted Putin as telling Assad at the beginning of their meeting. Previously, the two leaders met at the Kremlin in mid-March last year, with their talks lasting three hours. Russia is a key supporter of Syria and deployed forces to the war-ravaged Arab country on the official request of Assad to help fight foreign-backed Takfiri terrorist groups, including Daesh, since 2015. Together with Iran and Turkey, Russia has also served as one of the guarantors of negotiations between the Syrian government and opposition.

UN rights chief urges probe of BD protest 'crackdown'

Volker Turk said that We understand that many people were subjected to violent attacks by groups reportedly affiliated with the Government, and no effort was made to protect them

WEB DESK

WASHINGTON : The UN rights chief called Thursday on Bangladesh to urgently disclose the details of last week's crackdown on protests amid accounts of "horrific violence", calling for "an impartial, independent and transparent investigation". "We understand that many people were subjected to violent attacks by groups reportedly affiliated with the Government, and no effort was made to protect them," Volker Turk said in a statement. Last week's violence killed at least 193 people including several police officers, according to an AFP count of victims reported by police and hospitals, in one of the biggest upheavals of

Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's 15-year tenure. The unrest was sparked by protests against a public jobs quota scheme that critics say gives preference to allies of Hasina's ruling party. Thousands of troops are still patrolling cities and a nationwide internet shutdown remains largely in effect, but clashes have subsided since protest leaders announced a temporary halt to new demonstrations. Turk's statement lamented reports that some of the more than 1,000 injured in last week's crackdown were denied medical care, while many people remained missing. "At least two journalists were reportedly killed and scores of others injured. Hundreds of people were also reportedly

arrested, including opposition figures," the statement said. The government, it said, "must provide the details of those killed, injured, or detained for the benefit of their families". The UN high commissioner for human rights also called on the government to restore full internet access to allow people, including journalists, to communicate freely. "Blunt measures such as a blanket deliberate internet shutdown for a prolonged period contravene international law, affecting States' obligations to respect freedom of expression and the right to peaceful assembly," he said. This also breached "a wide range of other rights, including freedom of association and of movement, the rights to health and education, and a number of economic rights," Turk said. "Internet shutdowns can also reduce public scrutiny and knowledge of conduct of law enforcement agencies, and so risk heightening impunity for their actions," he warned. Meanwhile, Students Against Discrimination, the group responsible for organising this month's rallies, said it expected the government to make some concessions. "We demand an apology from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to the nation for the mass murder of students," Asif Mahmud, one of the group's coordinators, told AFP. "We also want the sacking of the home minister and education minister." Mahmud added that the estimated toll in the unrest was understated, with his group working on its own list of confirmed deaths.

Richest 1% added \$40tn in past decade

LONDON: Over the past decade, the world's richest one per cent have increased their fortunes by a total of \$42 trillion, according to Oxfam on Thursday. The non-governmental organisation (NGO) added that taxes on the rich have fallen to "historic lows", leading to "obscene levels" of inequality, while the rest of the world is left to struggle for limited resources, AFP reported. This issue will be a key topic at the upcoming G20 summit in Brazil. Brazil has prioritised international cooperation on taxing the super-rich during its presidency of G20, a group of countries representing 80% of the world's GDP. At this week's summit in Rio de Janeiro, the G20 finance ministers are expected to discuss raising levies on the ultra-wealthy and preventing billionaires from dodging tax systems. The initiative aims to develop methods to tax billionaires and other high-income earners. The proposal is due to be fiercely debated at the summit on Thursday and Friday, with France, Spain, South Africa, Colombia and the African Union in favour, but the United States firmly against. Oxfam dubbed it a "real litmus test for G20 governments", urging them to implement an annual net wealth tax of at least eight per cent on the "extreme wealth" of the super-rich. "Momentum to increase taxes on the super-rich is undeniable," said Oxfam International's head of inequality policy, Max Lawson. "Do they have the political will to strike a global standard that puts the needs of the many before the greed of an elite few?" Oxfam said that the \$42 trillion figure was nearly 36 times more than the wealth accumulated by the poorer half of the world's population. Despite this, billionaires "have been paying a tax rate equivalent to less than 0.5% of their wealth" across the globe, the NGO said. Nearly four out of five of the world's billionaires call a G20 nation home, Oxfam noted. —Agencies

Indonesia launches 'Golden Visa' to lure foreign investors

JAKARTA: Indonesia launched a long-term visa scheme on Thursday intended to attract foreign investors, President Joko Widodo said, with amounts of up to \$10 million giving them a 10-year visa and access to Southeast Asia's largest economy. The five-year "Golden Visa" requires individual investors to set up a company worth \$2.5 million, while a 10-year visa requires a \$5 million investment. Individuals not looking to set up a company must place \$350,000 and \$700,000 to gain a 5-year and 10-year permit respectively, and the money can be used to buy Indonesian government bonds, public company stocks, or place deposits. Corporate investors are required to invest \$25 million to get five-year visas for directors and commissioners. They need to invest \$50 million to gain a 10-year visa. If the investment is made in the new \$32 billion capital city currently being built in the jungles of Borneo island, \$5 million dollars will gain investors a 5-year visa and \$10 million a 10-year visa, the immigration agency said. Several countries offer similar investment visa schemes, but others, including Canada, Britain and Singapore, have scrapped such schemes as governments conclude they do not create jobs and could be a means to park speculative money. Jokowi, as the president is commonly known, said the visa was intended to lure "good quality travelers." "We're launching the golden visa to make it easier for foreign nationals to invest and contribute in Indonesia," he said. Silmy Karim, chief of the immigration agency, said Indonesia had granted golden visas to almost 300 applicants since it began testing the permits last year, attracting \$123 million. Silmy also said the authorities are discussing ways to grant a special status for foreign nationals of Indonesian descent, modelled after the Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI), which allows foreigners of Indian ancestry to visit, work and live in India indefinitely. That could be issued by October, he added. Silmy said the plan was intended to respond to calls for Indonesia to allow its citizens to hold another passport. —DNA



Islamabad : Federal Minister for Communications, Privatization and Board of Investment, Abdul Aleem Khan chaired a high-level meeting of the National Highway Authority. —DNA

China says Italy PM to visit from Saturday

BEIJING: Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni will visit China for five days from Saturday, Beijing said Thursday, her first to the country since she took office nearly two years ago. "At the invitation of Premier Li Qiang of the State Council, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni will pay an official visit to China from July 27 to 31," foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said in a statement. She will meet with President Xi Jinping as well as Premier Li during the trip, Mao told a regular press briefing. They will "hold talks with her... to exchange views on bilateral relations and issues of common concern", she said. Italy's Meloni put domestic concerns first in rejecting von der Leyen Beijing would "deepen practical cooperation and cultural exchange", Mao added, as well as "promote the steady and long-term development of China-Italy and China-Europe relations". Meloni's administration withdrew from China's vast Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) last year, having been the only G7 nation to sign up. Before taking office, Meloni said joining the initiative – a central pillar of President Xi's bid to expand China's clout overseas – had been a "mistake". Italy's non-binding memorandum of understanding with China had contained broad undertakings for cooperation in logistics, infrastructure, financial and environmental sectors. But details were scarce and the lack of transparency fuelled distrust among Italy's allies. Meloni's administration has since sought to mend ties with China, a key trading partner. The Italian leader's visit aims to "consolidate the strategic dialogue between Italy and China," said Giuliano Noci, a China expert from the Politecnico di Milano. Italian producers depend on China as "the world's most important market for many product categories, including luxury goods." Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani visited Beijing last year, meeting Chinese counterpart Wang Yi who said cooperation with Italy had been "fruitful". In April, Tajani said Rome intended to strengthen trade despite its withdrawal from the BRI. "Our relations with China are positive, even if we are competitors and our positions diverge on certain issues," he told reporters. —DNA

Marcos blames climate change for deadly Manila floods

At least 14 Filipinos were killed, over 1.1 million people affected by Typhoon Gaemi

FOREIGN DESK

MANILA: Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. said on Thursday that climate change was to blame for the severe floods that submerged the capital Manila, after heavy rains from Typhoon Gaemi triggered a deadly deluge and landslides. Gaemi, known as Carina in the Philippines, did not make landfall in the country but has intensified seasonal monsoon rains, causing landslides and flooding over the past few days and forcing authorities to declare a state of calamity in the capital

region that is home to roughly 15 million people. At least 14 people were killed, and more than 1.1 million people were affected by Typhoon Gaemi in the Southeast Asian nation.

Marcos joined relief efforts on Thursday and handed out food parcels to those hardest hit by the floods in Manila. "I wanted to see what the situation was. I was right; it's very different reading a piece of paper than actually seeing what the people have to go through," Marcos said. "This is what the effects of climate change are." Philippine climate activists are now renewing their calls for action,

citing the devastating effects of Typhoon Gaemi. "Typhoon Carina highlights the extreme weather impact being experienced in the world, and especially in the Philippines. It just emphasizes that our country is at the forefront of the climate crisis," Greenpeace Philippines campaigner Khevin Yu told Arab News. "It is really important for the Philippines to demand climate justice. So, this has been echoed by President Marcos, but we are pushing him to do more." Activists demand that bills related to climate justice and accountability be passed. Yu said Filipinos must also be included

in discussions and urged officials to move forward with energy transition plans. Jashaf Shamir Lorenzo, head of policy development and research at BAN Toxics Philippines, said Typhoon Gaemi sent a "very clear" message. "Climate targets that have long been ignored by developed countries are impacting our countries ... and this will only get worse unless we call for accountability. We call for actions on the end of not only the Philippines, but these developed countries who are contributing a lot to climate change," Lorenzo told Arab News. "Extreme weather

conditions have been becoming more common," he said. "This is only going to get worse if we do not address all the fundamental issues that we have." The Philippines sees about 20 storms and typhoons every year, but the changing climate is making the storms more unpredictable and extreme. In 2013, Typhoon Haiyan, one of the most powerful tropical cyclones ever recorded, left more than 6,000 people dead or missing and displaced millions in central Philippines, while in 2021, Super Typhoon Rai, known locally as Odette, killed over 200 people.

10 people drown in Panama river

BOGOTÁ : Ten people have drowned in a river near Panama's border with Colombia, Panamanian border police say, as the rainy season increases the risks migrants and asylum seekers face along a popular migration route. The bodies were found in riverside tributaries near the remote community of Carreto, the National Border Service, known as SENAFRONT, said on Wednesday. The village lies on the Caribbean Sea and is part of the Guna Yala autonomous Indigenous territory. SENAFRONT did not specify the nationalities of the people who drowned or whether they had crossed into Panama through the Darien Gap jungle or by boat. "Transnational organised crime through local collaborators in these Caribbean coastal communities insist on using unauthorised crossings, putting the lives of these people at serious risk," the agency added in a statement. Connecting South and Central America, the Darien Gap is a dangerous route rife with natural hazards, including insects, snakes and unpredictable terrain. Its landscape ranges from steep mountains to dense jungles and strong rivers, and the risks increase during the rainy season due to rising river levels. US politics, Canada's multiculturalism, South America's geopolitical rise—we bring you the stories that matter. Criminal groups also operate in the area, and robberies, extortion and other forms of violence are widespread. Despite these dangers, it has become a popular route for migrants and asylum seekers fleeing violence, socioeconomic crises and other hardships in their home countries. —Agencies

Jimmy Lai to testify in HK security trial

HONG KONG: Hong Kong media tycoon Jimmy Lai will take the witness stand for the first time in November in a high-profile national security trial where he is accused of sedition and colluding with foreign forces, a court said Thursday. The charges against Lai – founder of the now-shuttered popular Chinese-language tabloid Apple Daily – revolve around the newspaper's publications, which supported the pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong in 2019 and criticized Beijing's leadership. Besides sedition, the 76-year-old is also accused of two counts of colluding with foreign forces – which carries a maximum sentence of life imprisonment – by calling for international sanctions against Chinese and Hong Kong officials. Lai, who pleaded not guilty to the charges in a trial that started in January, "elects to give evidence in this case," said his lawyer Robert Pang. His testimony will start on November 20 and could run for weeks, said Esther Toh, one of the three senior judges hand-picked by the Hong Kong government to try security cases. Lai has been in custody for more than 1,300 days. Following massive pro-democracy protests in 2019, Beijing imposed a sweeping security law to quell dissent. The prosecution has so far called eight witnesses and played over 40 hours of Lai's talk shows and video interviews since January. —APP

Death toll from Ethiopia landslides surge to 500

NAIROBI: The death toll from landslides in Ethiopia earlier this week has risen to 257, and is expected to rise to 500, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said on Thursday. On Tuesday, Ethiopia's National Disaster Risk Management Commission had put the death toll at 229. Ethiopia hoping for \$10.5bn financial aid in coming years: PM Following heavy rain a landslide buried people in Gofa zone in Southern Ethiopia regional state on Sunday night, then a second one engulfed others who had gathered to help on Monday morning. —APP

Briefs

LHC asks Azma to approach FIA

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Punjab Information Minister Azma Bokhari has voiced concern over what she said selective justice. Speaking to media outside the Lahore High Court on Thursday, she deplored that an obnoxious video was uploaded at social media sites against her and made viral by activists of a political party. She filed a petition in the LHC, seeking action against the persons involved in malicious campaign against her. She made the Federal Investigation Agency and the Interior Ministry respondents in the case. She said the LHC chief justice was a woman and "I do not ask for justice as a provincial minister but as woman."

Moreover, she said, some "terrorist sisters" of May 9 were eulogised and two of them were called the "daughters of nation". "We are also daughters of nation. Who will deliver us justice? she asked while deploring that justice seemed to be meant for PTI only. The videos of Hina Pervez Butt, Sania Ashique, and Marriyum Aurangzeb also were made viral on social, she said. Bokhari said CM Maryam Nawaz was trying to provide protection to women and judiciary should also provide security to them.

PIA privatisation likely in Sept 2024

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The privatization of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) is expected to be finalised in September instead of August, sources familiar with the development told media. As per details, the delay of PIA's accounts is the reason behind the development. Additionally, companies interested in the privatization have not finished the due diligence process. These interested companies are reportedly insisting on reopening routes to Europe. Sources suggest that an accurate valuation of PIA can only be determined if its European routes are active. Six companies/consortiums including Air Blue, Arif Habib Corporation, Blue World City, Fly Jinnah, Pak Ethanol Consortium, and YB Holdings Consortium, have been pre-qualified in the process of PIA privatisation.

Earlier, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb had earlier expressed hope that PIA's privatisation would be finalised by July. On July 9, the National Assembly's standing committee on Aviation on Monday was informed that the privatisation process of Pakistan International Airlines Corporation (PIAC) is almost completed.

I quit presidential race to 'save democracy': Joe Biden

FOREIGN DESK

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden has told Americans in a televised address that he decided to end his faltering re-election campaign in a bid to save US democracy. Mr Biden, 81, said he felt his record as president "merited a second term" but that "nothing can come in the way of saving our democracy". He said he endorsed US Vice-President Kamala Harris to unite their fellow Democrats and the country.

The White House speech marked his first public appearance since he left the race on 21 July, paving the way for Ms Harris to run for the party's nomination. Biden sidesteps hard truths in rare primetime opportunity. Pressure had been building on him from colleagues and donors to step aside over doubts about his ability to serve another term following a disastrous debate with Republican Donald Trump. It was notable that he did not address how his campaign unravelled and the fact that defeat to Trump looked more likely the longer he resisted calls for him to quit.

KP's Apex Committee declares

No military op, only police to take action against terrorists

Trade activities will also be allowed in Bajaur and Mohmand districts including Torkham, Kharlachi, Angorada and Ghulam Khan border checkpoints

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Apex Committee, which was convened by Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur, after the end of the meeting, has issued a joint declaration which made it clear that no military operation was being carried out in the province. KP's Apex Committee meeting was chaired by Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur while members of Aman Jirga and key officers and officials of police, CTD and Army were present on the occasion. During the meetings, all the demands of Aman Jirga were deliberated in detail and later their demands were accepted.

According to the declaration, it was agreed by all the participants and concerned departments that only CTD and police would

take action against terror groups in the province. CTD will take action in sensitive areas and in seminaries in the province. However, in bordering areas, police will get the help of the military. According to the declaration, police were directed to take indiscriminate action against armed groups. To restore peace, additional support will be provided to the southern districts force from the existing personnel and vehicles on a priority basis. Priority will be given to southern districts in new jobs. It was clarified that the people of tribal districts are dependent on trade with Afghanistan. Trade activities will also be allowed on all traditional borders in Bajaur and Mohmand districts including Torkham, Kharlachi, Angorada and Ghulam Khan border checkpoints. To discourage smug-

gling, the federal government will be requested to employ local people. During the Apex Committee meeting, it was agreed that an application would be moved to the judiciary for the formation of an inquiry into the Bannu incident. Misunderstandings sometimes arise between people and institutions, which need immediate resolution. The committees will be set up at the level of every commissioner, which will comprise public representatives, civil, military and police representatives. In case of emergency, an immediate jirga meeting will be convened to avoid such incidents. The Apex Committee endorsed that peaceful protest was the constitutional right of every citizen but it was also the duty of every citizen to abide by the law and code of conduct. The violent protests should be avoided so that

non-state elements do not use it for their vested interests. Army, Police and other defence organizations and locals have made huge sacrifices for the eradication of terrorism therefore, the protestors should avoid such slogans that hurt the families of the martyrs. It was also clarified that some elements unnecessarily criticized the government institutions, which hurt the hearts of the officers and soldiers. The Apex Committee made it clear that there is no room for this kind of attitude. Earlier, Aman Jirga said that the Apex Committee has accepted the demands of the protestors. Provincial Minister Pakhtun Yar claimed that Chief Minister has already accepted 16-point demands of the Jirga. He said that Aman Jirga's concerns were addressed by the members of the Apex Committee.

Amnesty calls for full Sudan arms embargo

PORT SUDAN: Amnesty International called on the United Nations Thursday to extend the arms embargo on Darfur to cover all of Sudan, in a report on weapons flooding the war-torn country. The 15-month war between Sudan's regular army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces "is being fueled by an almost unimpeded supply of weapons into Sudan by states and corporate actors around the world," the rights watchdog said. The new report, titled "New Weapons Fueling the Sudan Conflict," found recently manufactured or transferred weapons from countries including Russia, Türkiye, Serbia, China and others were being imported and used on the battlefield. Since it erupted in April last year, the war has killed tens of thousands of people, with some estimating the toll to be as high as 150,000, according to US envoy to Sudan Tom Perriello. - Agencies



BEIJING: Senator M Aurangzeb Federal Minister for Finance & Revenue and Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Laghari Minister for Energy (Power Division) held meeting with Chinese Minister of Finance Lan Fo'an. - DNA

Israeli forces advance in south, tanks in Rafah

NEWS DESK

CAIRO: Israeli forces advanced deeper into some towns on the eastern side of Khan Younis in southern Gaza on Thursday, hours after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told US lawmakers he was actively engaged in bringing hostages home. Fighting in recent days has centered around the eastern towns of Bani Suaila, Al-Zanna, and Al-Karara, where the army said on Wednesday it had found the bodies of five Israelis who were killed in Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on Israel and held in Gaza since. Hamas militants took more than 250 hostages in the early morning raid into southern Israel and killed 1,200 people, according to Israeli tal-

lies. Israel retaliated by vowing to eradicate Hamas in Gaza in a nine-month war that has killed more than 39,000 Palestinians, Gaza health officials say. Several were wounded in the eastern towns during Israeli tank and aerial shelling, while an airstrike east of Khan Younis killed four people, Palestinian health officials said. Israeli bombardment intensified in several areas in Rafah, near the border with Egypt, as tanks operated north, west and in the town center, residents and medics said. Several Palestinians were also wounded in Israeli fire earlier on Thursday. Israeli military said forces operating in Khan Younis killed dozens of militants and dismantled around 50 military infrastructures, while it continued activities in Rafah, killing two militants.

Sanders slams 'liar' Netanyahu's US Congress address

WASHINGTON: American senator Bernie Sanders has censured Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's address to the US Congress, saying he is not only committing war crimes in the Gaza Strip but also lying about the situation in the Palestinian territory. In an X post on Wednesday, Sanders, an independent of Vermont who caucuses with the Democrats, said, "Netanyahu is not only a war criminal. He is a liar." - Agencies

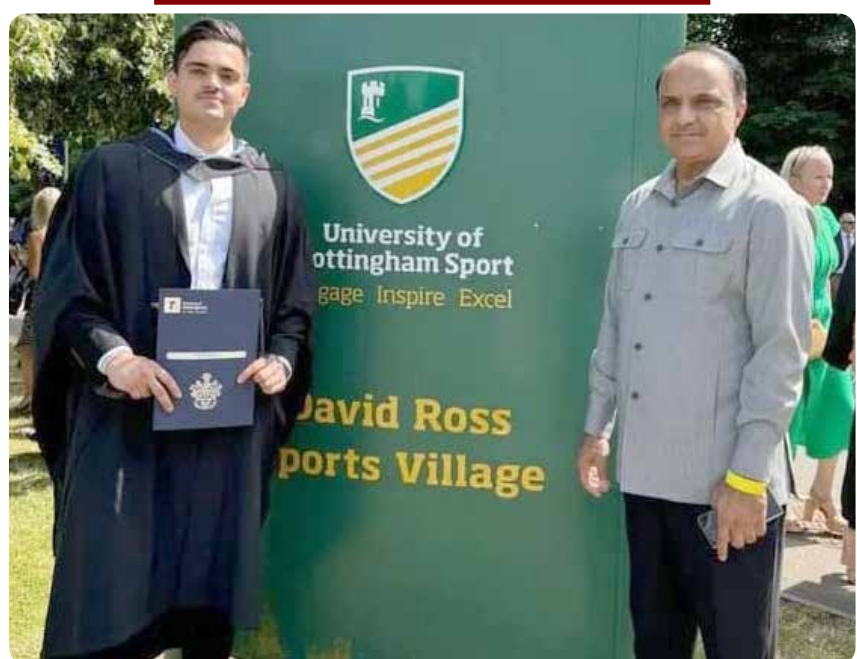
IHC CJ calls for adapting techin legal profession

COURT REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad High Court (IHC) Chief Justice Aamer Farooq emphasised the growing role of technology in the legal profession and urged all members to adapt accordingly. Addressing a function in Islamabad, the chief justice acknowledged that judicial challenges persist and will continue. However, he noted that since 2023, many facilities have been provided to plaintiffs. He highlighted the advent of artificial intelligence and mentioned that notices will now be received through email and SMS, making the e-no-notice system more convenient for plaintiffs. Chief Justice Farooq stated that e-no-

notice have been introduced in Islamabad, and online proceedings are also underway. He mentioned the inauguration of automation, which has simplified the compliance process for summons or notices. He added that a notice tracking system is being introduced in the judiciary and that the management information system is now available online. This will allow all case details to be accessed from the information machine. The chief justice also addressed the pending matter of appointing new judges in Islamabad, assuring that it will be resolved soon. He welcomed the training programme for new lawyers. Furthermore, he urged the legal community not to sever their connection with books and the law. Chief Justice Farooq concluded by stressing the need to collaboratively address the problems faced by the common man, asserting that the bar is their home and they will work together to solve its issues.

BILAL RAZA SHINES



NOTTINGHAM: Renowned business figure of Pakistan and Deputy Editor of Daily Islamabad POST/Centreline Abid Raza in a picture with his son Bilal Raza, who has got prestigious Bachelor of Science Degree from the University of Nottingham. - DNA

Raof's physical remand extended

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: A court in the federal capital approved an extension to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) spokesperson Raof Hasan's physical remand, handing him over to the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) for three more days. The FIA has booked the PTI information secretary and several other PTI media cell members for heading a digital media cell and its alleged involvement in running anti-Pakistan propaganda. The police had said that the "PTI digital media centre had become a centre of international disinformation, from where anti-Pakistan propaganda is run throughout the world".

Hasan and others who were arrested were produced before the court today after the completion of their two-day physical remand. During the hearing, the petitions of two arrested female members of the PTI Secretariat seeking bail were approved against surety bonds of Rs50,000 each. FIA's prosecutor, during the hearing today, said that social media campaigns were staged against two state institutions. The lawyer claimed that the two women nominated in the FIR were employees of the PTI's social media cell and that granting them bail would affect the case. "Sections of the Peca (Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act) imposed on both women are also important; we also have evidence against them," the prosecutor said.

'Landscape of country is moving towards destruction'

FAISAL SHEIKH

RAWALPINDI: Awami Muslim League chairman and former federal minister Sheikh Rashid said on Thursday the political landscape of the country was moving towards destruction. Speaking to media after appearing in court in a case, he voiced concern over the public crisis. He said inflated electricity bills and inflation had compelled

the public to take to the street and the government was responsible for the hue and cry. He also highlighted the political victimisation of the PTI, stating that it was denied electoral symbol. "Efforts are now being made to ban the PTI," he said. All these injustices wouldn't affect the PTI but the government would ultimately pay the price, he added. He lambasted the government, saying their acts would benefit PTI founder Imran Khan.

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