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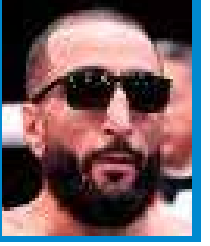
Detailed News On Page-08

Museums reflect history of nations

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Belal dethrones Leon Edwards at UFC 304

Detailed News On Page-06



Amid outcry over IPPs

Fin Min Aurangzeb stresses structural energy reforms

"We cannot completely disregard the integrity of our agreements with the IPPs," finance minister says

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb on Sunday stressed the need for urgent structural reforms in the energy sector to address issues related to independent power producers (IPPs), inflated electricity bills, and other irregularities that burden the national exchequer and consumers. "We need to move towards structural solutions. We have provided an immediate solution, but we must also follow through with structural reforms," the minister said during a press conference in Islamabad. His comments come amid outcry over capacity payments being made to IPPs through consumers' monthly electricity bills, which are already burdened with taxes and the highest tariffs in the country's history. Political leaders, civil society, and the general public have criticised the government for increasing power rates and have called on authorities to revisit their agreements with IPPs. The Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) has also taken to the streets, staging a sit-in in Rawalpindi against the payments being made to IPPs and the "inflated electricity bills." Cash-strapped consumers are being forced to pay skyrocketing power bills at a time when the headline inflation rate has reached 12.6% (June 2024). "We can make emotional decisions and react emotionally, but we also need to attract both local and foreign investment. We cannot completely disregard the integrity of our agreements with the IPPs," Aurangzeb said. The finance minister emphasised that short-term and knee-jerk reactions will not lead to a comprehensive structural transformation of the country's various sectors of economy. Despite the government taking steps such as introducing an industrial package, ending cross-subsidies, and providing subsidies for consumers using up to 200 units, more needs to be done. He stated that the government was

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Privatisation board okays PIA, DISCOs' sale

Says three DISCOs to be privatised by 2025; financial advisers appointed

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Privatisation Commission Board has approved the privatisation of several power distribution companies (DISCOs) in a bid to strengthen the national economy. The decision was made during a meeting chaired by Federal Minister for Investment, Communications, and Privatisation Abdul Aleem Khan. The board decided to complete the legal formalities for privatisation by 2025, starting with three DISCOs in the first phase. The appointment of a financial advisor to facilitate this process was also approved. The federal minister emphasised the importance of a transparent and swift privatisation process, stating that privatising these institutions is crucial for economic recovery. He noted the strong potential for making these institutions profitable once they transition to the private sector.



ISLAMABAD: The Metro Bus Service, which was shut owing to the Jamaat-e-Islami dharna, has partially been opened. Full resumption of the service depends upon the sit-in plans. Commuters of twin cities have been facing severe problems due to disruption in the bus service. - Online

Petrol, HSD prices likely to decrease

According to media reports, petrol prices might drop by up to Rs3 per litre

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: The prices of petroleum products in the country are expected to decrease from August 1. According to media reports, petrol prices might drop by up to Rs3 per litre, while high-speed diesel (HSD) prices could see a reduction of Rs8.50 per litre. Additionally, the price of kerosene oil is anticipated to decrease by Rs9.11 per litre due to the decrease in global crude oil prices. Sources from the Ministry

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E-gates to be installed at airports

New visa policy to boost tourism, trade activities: PM

The businessmen, investors, and tourists of 126 countries will be issued visas within 24 hours through an online system, he said

MEHTAB PIRZADA / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday said the government had introduced significant visa reforms to facilitate foreign investors, business community, and tourists. He said the step would help promoting tourism, boost foreign investment and increase trade activities in the country. In a statement, the prime minister, terming the initiative a highly positive development, said the government had approved visa-free entry for businessmen from Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, which will increase investment and business opportunities from these countries. The businessmen, investors, and tourists of 126 countries will be issued visas within 24 hours through an online system, he said. Additionally, he said traders and tourists from these

Continued on Page 06

MOFA to start apostille attestation service

The courier companies authorized include TCS, M&P, Gerry's, Leopard, and ECS

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: In a bid to facilitate applicants seeking apostille attestation in Peshawar and surrounding areas, the ministry of Foreign Affairs liaison office in Peshawar will provide facility of document attestation received through courier companies from July 29 (Monday).

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Briefs

Court extends Raof's physical remand
Judge sends PTI worker Syeda Arooba to jail on judicial remand

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: A court in the federal capital on Sunday handed over Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) Information Secretary Raof Hasan and other suspects for two more days to the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) for their alleged involvement in disseminating anti-state propaganda. Hasan, who was arrested by Islamabad Police on Monday, was handed over to the FIA on a two-day remand on Tuesday. Subsequently, a court then approved a three-day extension in his physical remand along with other PTI workers.

People must know who bring IPPs in country

IPPs have now become symbol of economic destruction

DNA

PESHAWAR: Independent Power Producers (IPPs) were introduced by the PML-N and the People's Party, KP government's information adviser said on Sunday. "The IPPs are licking the country like termites," Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's adviser Barrister Saif stated. "The people must know who brought the IPPs in the country and who mint money from renewal of these agreements," he said. "The names of Sharif and Zardari families and their stooges would come to surface if an inquiry conducted," he claimed.

For May 9 probe

KP requests PHC CJ to form judicial commission

Law minister says administration department wrote letter to PHC CJ Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government, led by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), on Sunday wrote a letter Peshawar High Court's (PHC) Chief Justice Ishtiaq Ibrahim for the constitution of a judicial commission to investigate the May 9 incident. KP Law Minister Aftab Alam Afridi, while speaking to Geo News, said: "The letter requesting the establishment of a judicial commission was sent to the chief justice by the administration department." Afridi said that the chief justice will announce the names for the commission, adding that the judicial commission will be headed by a PHC judge. A day earlier, the KP cabinet approved the establishment of a judicial commission to probe the May 9 events during the meeting presided by Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur. The PTI had been demanding to hold a judicial inquiry into the May 9 protests which broke out in the country last year over party founder Imran Khan's arrest in

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PPP to play its role if Imran is ready to talk

President Asif Ali Zardari has always tried to solve problems through negotiations, says Khurshid Shah

DNA

QUETTA: Senior Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader Khurshid Shah has said that the Bilawal Bhutto-led party would play its role if Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan is ready to talk. "It is being said that the PTI founder is ready to talk. If [Imran] Khan is ready to talk then that's a positive thing. President Asif Ali Zardari has always tried to solve the

Continued on Page 06

Ad-hoc judges to take oath today

This decision, made under Article 182 of the Constitution

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Retired Justice Sardar Tariq Masood and Retired Justice Mazhar Alam Miankhel are set to take the oath as ad-hoc judges today (Monday). Chief Justice of Supreme Court Qazi Faez Isa will administer the oath to the ad-hoc judges. As per the report, the oath-taking ceremony of ad-hoc judges will take place in the Judges Block Committee Room at 11 am. The federal law ministry has issued a notification confirming the

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Germany didn't hand over consulate attack's suspects

In response to claim in report on social media, FO Spokesperson Mumtaz Baloch terms report "fake news"

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office (FO) on Sunday denied authenticity in the report circulating on social media about Germany handing over of those involved in the attack on Pakistani consulate in Frankfurt. When asked whether the suspects involved in the vandalism were handed over to Pakistan, as being claimed in a report on social media, FO Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch termed the report a "fake news". Dozens of miscreants had attacked the Pakistani consulate during a protest in Frankfurt on July 20. Following which, the German police had arrested two suspects. Reports indicated that German authorities had allowed Afghan nationals to hold a peaceful protest. However, the demonstration's participants turned violent, lobbed stones at the consulate building, and removed the country's flag, leading to heightened tensions. After arresting two Afghan nationals, German police had anticipated more arrests as they continued to identify additional protesters with the help of video footage. A day after the incident, Pakistan condemned the attack by the gang of extremists

Continued on Page 06

ASEAN moot Foreign Secretary shares Pakistan perspective on IIOJK, Gaza

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Secretary Muhammad Syrus Sajjad Qazi led the Pakistan delegation at the 31st ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) Ministerial meeting where he highlighted Pakistan's perspective on the situation pervading the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) as well as Gaza. In the meeting held on Saturday in Vientiane, Lao PDR, the foreign secretary underscored Pakistan's firm commitment to regional peace, security and cooperation and the importance attached by Pakistan to its relations with ASEAN and its member states,

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President urges awareness, screening for hepatitis-free Pakistan

The president, in a message to the nation on World Hepatitis Day, annually observed on July 28

DNA

ISLAMABAD : President Asif Ali Zardari on Sunday called for carrying out awareness and large-scale screening for timely diagnosis of hepatitis to reduce the burden on the healthcare system and rid the country of the disease. The president, in a message to the nation on World

Hepatitis Day, annually observed on July 28, said hepatitis, being a silent killer, was a great challenge for the world because the lack of symptoms increased the risk of its spread, thus leading to a huge number of deaths globally. He noted that Pakistan's public health sector faced serious threats from the disease as a huge number of patients put a serious burden on the

healthcare system. President Zardari warned that any failure to take timely steps could multiply the hepatitis cases in the country, therefore decisive measures to protect the citizens' health were inevitable. He called for public awareness on promoting precautionary measures to ensure prevention, large-scale screening

and testing, besides highlighting the significance of treatment and increasing the number of facilities. The president also stressed the need for collective efforts for prevention and eradication of hepatitis and urged the media, educational institutions, teachers and civil society to educate people on hepatitis to achieve a hepatitis-free Pakistan.

DG NAB Majeed proposes amendments to housing policy

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: In a bid to provide relief to victims of the Housing sector and other frauds, the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Lahore, under the supervision of Director General (DG) NAB Lahore Amjad Majeed Aulakh, convened a monthly open court session at the Lahore office. The event was attended by 250 (approx.) affectees of fraudulent housing schemes and other cheating public matters. During the session, DG NAB Lahore engaged with the complainants and announced that the Bureau has proposed amendments to the existing housing policy to regulate the open file system to prevent further exploitation of common citizens. He emphasized that NAB will, henceforth, only entertain genuine complaints and also instructed

affectees to furnish documentary evidence, including allotment letters and payment receipts generated by concerned housing societies, to substantiate their claims. DG NAB Lahore also apprised the affectees of Pak-Arab Housing Society that NAB is poised to distribute cheques worth billions of rupees as part of its efforts to provide relief to victims of housing sector fraud. He revealed that NAB has completed the re-verification process of 2400 affectees and is preparing to file a Reference in Court to bring the perpetrators to justice. Furthermore, DG NAB Lahore disclosed that NAB has filed an application in court to cancel the bail of accused persons, including Ammar Gulzar and Waqar Gulzar, meanwhile, has also sought permission from the honorable court to sell the seized properties of the said authorities to compensate the affectees. The

DG also announced that NAB has contacted DG LDA to address complaints from developed blocks' residents for delays in pending development work. In response to grievances raised by Prime Zone affectees, DG NAB Lahore announced that NAB has apprehended the main accused named Mufti Rizwan, and has initiated proceedings to cancel the bails of other accused persons. He also revealed that the investigation into the administration of Prime Zone is underway to impart justice. Regarding the main absconder, Imran, DG NAB Lahore announced that a red warrant will soon be issued, and efforts are underway to bring the same back through Interpol to face justice. In response to complaints from Khayabani-Ameen Housing Society affectees, DG NAB Lahore directed the administration to provide plots, flats, and houses to all

affectees as per promise and warned of strict action if the administration fails to comply. DG NAB Lahore also cautioned that if the Khayabani-Ameen administration fails to redress public grievances within the timeframe given by the honorable court, NAB will take stringent action against the administration to ensure justice is served. Regarding complaints from New Lahore City affectees, DG NAB Lahore announced that NAB has sought details from DG LDA regarding the alleged collection of additional development charges by the society administration to determine the veracity of the claims. He also assured affectees who have made full payments that they will be given possession of plots immediately and warned the administration of strict action if they fail to provide ownership rights to such affectees.

Price control mechanism to be implemented

FAISALABAD : Additional Deputy Commissioner Revenue (ADCR) Nauman Afzal Awan said that price control mechanism would be implemented in letter and spirit across the district. Presiding over a meeting, he said that the government was committed to providing full relief to masses in the purchase of daily use commodities. In this connection, the price control magistrates should perform their duties honestly and dedicatedly as price control mechanism would be implemented in to and no negligence and lethargy would be tolerated in this regard.—APP

Political harmony key to strong democracy

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR : Democracy, commonly heralded as the best form of government, thrives on expression of the people's will through their elected representatives. But, this journey sometimes becomes tumultuous amidst populism, extra constitutional measures and upheavals. In many countries this system suffered a severe blow due to political engineering, venomous uprising and unconstitutional acts even by those always propagating democracy and the populist leaders as we recently witness in our

country. When the political players enter a deadlock due to their arrogance and haughtiness and close the doors for negotiation, strictly sticking to their stance, the concept of political harmony and understanding each other's viewpoint fades away. These uncalculated interruptions leave deep scars on the political landscape besides fostering an environment where religious extremism, terrorism and societal and political intolerance creeps in, marring any country's economic and democratic progress very badly. "The fractured governance structure, built

on numerous fault lines, often becomes a catalyst for these extra constitutional steps," said Professor Dr A. H. Hilali, former Chairman Political Science Department, University of Peshawar. "Corruption, mismanagement, nepotism and jobbery often weaken a democratic system and rule of law. Moreover, locking horns by different political forces paves way for extra constitutional steps by non-democratic forces." Most recently, the political temperature in the country and stiffness of rival forces not to sit on table for resolving contentious issues has heightened self-centered politicking.

A special audit and high-level inquiry of the upscaling Green Pakistan program is essential

This audit should be conducted by an independent body to ensure impartiality and transparency

MUMTAZ AHMED BHATTI



The Ministry of Climate Change (MOCC) in Pakistan embarked on an ambitious afforestation project known as the Upscaling Green Pakistan Program (UGPP) with the aim of combating deforestation, mitigating climate change, and promoting environmental sustainability. This grand project has encountered significant obstacles that threaten its success. At the heart of these challenges is the alleged Incompetency by the National Project Director (NPD) Office, coupled with systemic issues such as inadequate funding, lack of qualified personnel, and potential corruption. The UGPP was envisioned as a transformative initiative to address Pakistan's environmental challenges, particularly deforestation and its attendant consequences such as soil erosion, loss of biodiversity, and climate change. The project's goals included planting millions of trees across the country, rehabilitating degraded forest

lands, and promoting community-based forestry practices. By doing so, the UGPP aimed to enhance carbon sequestration, improve air quality, and support rural livelihoods through sustainable forestry practices. The NPD Office was established to oversee the implementation of the UGPP, ensuring that the project's objectives were met efficiently and effectively. This office was tasked with coordinating between various stakeholders, and ensuring that field activities were carried out as planned. Allegations of Incompetency and mismanagement have cast a shadow over the NPD Office's operations. One of the most glaring issues affecting the UGPP is the apparent lack of qualified personnel within the NPD Office. Reports suggest that most of the staff members do not possess the necessary education or experience in forestry. This lack of expertise has likely hampered the effective planning and execution of the project's activities. Another significant challenge has been the inconsistent and insufficient release of funds by the government. Afforestation projects require substantial financial investment for activities such as seedling production, site preparation, planting, and maintenance. Delays in fund disbursement can disrupt the planting schedule, affect the survival rates of seedlings, and undermine the overall success of the project. The UGPP has reportedly suffered from chronic underfunding, which has exacerbated the operational challenges

faced by the NPD Office. The allegations of corruption and mismanagement within the NPD Office are particularly concerning. There are claims that funds intended for the purchase of equipment, laptops, computers, vehicles, and furniture have been misappropriated. Questions have been raised about the authenticity of field visits conducted by NPD officials, with suspicions that some visits were fabricated to justify expenditures. Such malpractices not only drain the project's financial resources but also erode public trust and confidence in the UGPP. The combined effect of unqualified personnel, inadequate funding, and potential corruption has placed the UGPP in a precarious position. The project, which holds immense potential for environmental and socio-economic benefits, is currently described as being "on ventilator." If these issues are not addressed promptly and effectively, the UGPP risks failing to achieve its objectives, which would be a significant setback for Pakistan's environmental conservation efforts. To salvage the UGPP and ensure its successful implementation, it is imperative to establish robust mechanisms for accountability and oversight. The Prime Minister of Pakistan should order a special audit and a high-level inquiry to investigate the allegations of corruption and mismanagement. This inquiry should assess whether funds were misappropriated, verify the authenticity of field visits, and evaluate the qualifications and performance of

NPD staff members. A special audit is crucial to uncover any financial irregularities in the procurement processes for equipment, vehicles, and other project-related expenses. This audit should be conducted by an independent body to ensure impartiality and transparency. It should also include a thorough examination of the field visits reported by NPD officials to determine their legitimacy. By identifying instances of fraud and mismanagement, the audit can help hold accountable those responsible for undermining the UGPP. The inquiry should also evaluate the educational qualifications and professional experience of the NPD Office staff. This assessment will help determine whether the current team possesses the requisite expertise to manage and implement an afforestation project. If deficiencies are identified, it may be necessary to recruit qualified personnel with a background in forestry and environmental management. This step is essential to ensure that the UGPP is guided by knowledgeable and competent professionals. Strict legal action should be taken against any MOCC officials found guilty of corruption or negligence. This will serve as a deterrent to future misconduct and reinforce the importance of integrity and accountability in public service. Policy reforms may be needed to strengthen the governance and oversight of environmental projects. Implementing stringent checks and balances can help prevent similar issues from arising in the future.



PESHAWAR: Governor KP Faisal Karim Kundi visits KP Museum, highlighting rich heritage including the Gandharan civilization and various religious traditions.—DNA

Monsoon tree plantation drive begins

RAWALPINDI: The Forest Department has officially launched the monsoon tree plantation campaign, under which a total of 1.2 million saplings will be planted across all 6 districts and the three hilly tehsils of the Rawalpindi division. The Department has extended the alert period in which chances of forest fire are high till August 15. During this period, emergency will remain in effect in all forests of the division until this date, with field staff deployed in the forests. Security of the forests has also been tightened. Divisional Forest Officer Saqib Mahmood Sheikh stated "This year a record number of trees are being planted in the Rawalpindi division. All types of saplings are being provided free of cost to the military, police and government institutions, while temporary nurseries have been established from where the public can purchase saplings for Rs10 to 12 each. This year, saplings are also being planted in all government schools, colleges and universities. Under the "One Student, One Plant" campaign, students are being involved in the tree plantation drive. Saplings will also be planted along the roadsides of Rawalpindi. All staff and institutions have been strictly instructed to protect the newly sowed plants. The Forest Department will continue to monitor and check the plants planted in the institutions.—APP

Museums reflect history, culture of nations: Kundi

PESHAWAR : Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Faisal Karim Kundi on Sunday said that museums reflect the history and culture of nations, highlighting rich heritage includes the Gandharan civilization and various religious traditions. He said this during visit to the Peshawar Museum. Upon arrival, Dr. Abdul Samad, Director of Archaeology and Museums, welcomed the Governor. During his visit, Governor Faisal Karim Kundi inspected the Gandharan civilization artifacts and the unique cultural heritage of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa showcased at the museum. Dr. Abdul Samad briefed the Governor on the historical and cultural significance of the museum's valuable collection, as well as details regarding the museum's renovations. Governor Faisal Kundi praised the Archaeology and Museum Department for maintaining the museum to a state-of-the-art level and

ensuring the protection of precious historical artifacts, emphasized that museums reflect the history and culture of nations, highlighting rich heritage includes the Gandharan civilization and various religious traditions. The Governor suggested that special tours of the Peshawar Museum be arranged for the youth, especially students, to familiarize them with their cultural and historical heritage. Governor Kundi described the Peshawar Museum as crucial for projecting a positive image of the province to international tourists. He stressed the need to promote Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for its peace and tourism potential. Governor Kundi also mentioned that the first session of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly was held in Peshawar Museum. He said that the museum and its artifacts are valuable assets. He asserted that while there may be polit-

ical differences, the primary goal should be to advance the province's rights and public welfare. He called for a collective political effort to present the province's case at the federal level and highlighted the need for more industries to create job opportunities for youth. Regarding ongoing issues, the Governor criticized the provincial government's silence on a land dispute in the merged district of Kurram, which has seen recent clashes and rocket fire. He urged the Corps Commander, IG, and Chief Secretary to address the issue. He said that the provincial should resolve the problems of universities instead of selling university lands. Meanwhile, Minister Local Government Azad Kashmir Faisal Rathore called on Governor Faisal Karim Kundi here at Governor's House and discussed tourism, culture and political issues on this occasion.—APP

USAID launches program for sustainable action in Sindh

DNA

KARACHI: The USAID's flagship private sector Health project, Frontier Health Markets (FHM) Engage, has launched the Youth Council for Sustainable Action in Sindh. The youth council aims to amplify youth voices and promote sustainable health practices, particularly in family planning services across Pakistan. FHM Engage is a global

cooperative agreement that provides technical assistance to support local actors to improve the ability of health markets to meet supply-side capacity gaps and consumer preferences, contributing to equitable provision of and access to high-quality family planning and other health services and products in mixed health systems. As one of the core consortium partners of FHM Engage, Pathfinder International, renowned for its community-led health programs

globally, brings expertise to ensure meaningful youth engagement in healthcare decision-making. "As the key implementer of the FHM Engage activity in Pakistan, Pathfinder International is proud to contribute to the launch of this initiative that empowers young people to actively shape interventions that enhance their health and overall well-being," stated Madiha Latif, Country Director at Pathfinder International, Pakistan.

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

JULY

July 01/Japan
Self Defence Day

July 01/Singapore
Armed Forces Day

July 01 / Canada
National Day

July 01/Somalia
Independence Day

July 04/USA
Independence Day

July 05/Algeria
Independence Day

July 09/Argentina
Independence Day

July 09/Mongolia
Revolution Day

July 14/France
National Day

July 15/Brunei
Sultan's Birthday

July 21/Belgium
National Day

July 20/TRNC
Independence Day

July 23/Egypt
National Day

July 26/Cuba
National Day

July 26/Liberia
National Day

July 30/Morocco
National Day

Hotels & Restaurants



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



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

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



Enquiry

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



Hospitals

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



Departments

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

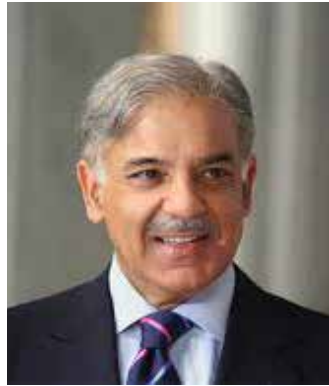
Hepatitis is a silent epidemic that affects millions of people

Message of Prime Minister on World Hepatitis Day

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Today, we join the global community in observing World Hepatitis Day, a day dedicated to raising awareness about hepatitis and its impact on individuals and communities worldwide. The theme for this year's World Hepatitis Day, "It's time for action" reminds us that we must act urgently to prevent, diagnose, and treat hepatitis. We cannot afford to delay the necessary actions that will help us eliminate this disease and ensure a healthier future for all. Hepatitis is a silent epidemic that affects millions of people around the world, causing liver inflammation and potentially

lead evere complications if left untreated. Pakistan has a very high burden of Hepatitis C infection, having 10 million infected cases, out of 60 million hepatitis C cases globally. Our country is facing an epidemic of Hepatitis C and it is feared that we may also see an epidemic of liver cancer if necessary actions to prevent and eliminate Viral Hepatitis are not taken. As a nation, we have made significant progress in combating viral hepatitis through awareness campaigns, vaccination programs, and improved access to testing and treatment. However, there is still much work to be done. We must continue to prioritize hepatitis prevention, ensure early diagnosis, and provide affordable and



accessible treatment options for all. The government stands firm in its dedication to overcome the challenges posed by Hepatitis. I am pleased to announce a nationwide campaign aimed at eradicat-

ing Hepatitis C. As a part of this noble endeavor, our focus will be on decentralizing testing and treatment centers, ensuring that the services provided are tailored to the needs of our citizens, in alignment with the Global Strategy. I reassure every citizen of our great nation, Pakistan, will have free access to screening and treatment facilities for Hepatitis C. During my tenure as Chief Minister Punjab, Pakistan Kidney & Liver Transplant Institute project, a milestone in the provision of state-of-the-art medical facilities to kidney and liver patients was established along with modern Hepatitis Filter

Clinics that were set up in all the 36 districts of Punjab. We have done it before and we will do it again. The core objective remains to uplift the health and well-being of those afflicted with HCV, while simultaneously reducing the detrimental impact it has on work productivity, preventing liver cancer, and averting premature death. On this World Hepatitis Day, let us stand united in our efforts to raise awareness, support those affected by viral hepatitis, and work towards a future free from the burden of this disease. Together, we can make a difference and build a healthier and more prosperous nation.

Experts emphasizes safe practices, awareness on 'World Hepatitis Day'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: As the world marks World Hepatitis Day today, health experts are emphasizing the importance of safe practices and awareness in preventing the spread of hepatitis, a silent killer disease that claims thousands of lives every year. Talking to PTV news channel, Executive Director and spokesperson Dr Abdul Jabbar Bhutto in Polyclinic explained that World Hepatitis Day aims to focus on taking concrete steps towards eliminating this silent killer.

On World Hepatitis Day, we are reminded that hepatitis is a preventable and treatable disease. By raising awareness, improving access to testing and treatment, and supporting those affected, we can break the cycle of suffering. Let us unite to combat this silent killer, prioritize liver health, and create a world where no one dies from hepatitis-related illnesses, he added. The theme for this year's campaign is "It's Time for Action," emphasizing the need for immediate and collective efforts to combat hepatitis, he added.

World Hepatitis Day is observed annually on July 28 to raise awareness about hepatitis, including the infectious diseases hepatitis A, B, C, D, and E, adding, people should avoid sharing needles. Using new, sterile needles for injections. It prevents transmission of blood-borne hepatitis viruses (B and C). He said every person should ensure screening of blood to patients, do not share razors, toothbrushes, or nail clippers as personal items can carry blood. It prevents transmission through small amounts of blood. Dr Ikram Tirmizi - Gastroenterologist at Polyclinic added that more awareness drives for public can help in informing the public about hepatitis and how it spreads, adding, this encourages behavior changes that reduce the risk of transmission. WHO also continues to support countries in monitoring their progress and validating hepatitis elimination through the newly established Regional Validation Advisories, he added. Individuals with chronic liver disease or liver conditions can have existing liver disease or conditions, getting tested for hepatitis is crucial to manage your overall liver health effectively. Regular testing and monitoring enable healthcare professionals to assess liver function, track any changes, and make informed decisions regarding further interventions or treatments. Early detection and monitoring of hepatitis can significantly impact treatment outcomes, quality of life, and long-term liver health, he added. In remote areas, limited access to healthcare and education makes communities more vulnerable to hepatitis. By expanding awareness and promoting healthy habits, we can control this disease, he added. By working together, we can bring hepatitis awareness



ISLAMABAD: Chairman CDA Mohammad Ali Randhawa taking a selfie with children during a tree plantation drive at the Trail Five. - DNA

BMP suggests soft financing for SMEs

FARUKH SHEHZAD

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP) has asked the government to announce soft financing with very low interest rate and without any collateral for SMEs with a view to spur the economic growth in the country. The FPCCI former president and BMP Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar, in a meeting of trade and industry representatives, stated that the constant increase in power tariffs on the pretext of fuel adjustment had increased electricity prices and added to the already high cost of trade and industry. Seeking comparable energy tariffs for domestic industries in order to capture the global market, he stated that due to high electricity rates, power theft became rampant as the tariff was unaffordable to consumers. The meeting forwarded several recom-

mendations so that the small industry could deal with the challenges posed by the present economic crisis, saying mere statements would not unless solid measures are taken by the government, including a sizable reduction in fuel prices, bringing down key policy rate to single digit, regionally competitive energy rates and substantial cut in duties and taxes. It is unfortunate that the State Bank has several times introduced a financing scheme for Small and Medium Enterprises, enabling them to get loans without collateral but it was never implemented in its true spirit. The scheme was launched to improve the SMEs' access to finances in collaboration with the government and aimed at enabling businesses that cannot offer security or collateral to access bank finance. The BMP and PIAF meeting was held here to deliberate the government economic policies and called for con-

crete steps to keep industrial wheels running, especially for SMEs, saving the livelihood of millions of workers associated with the small and medium industries. The BMP Chairman urged the central bank to announce a soft loan with a minimum markup rate, especially for SMEs to bail out their struggling businesses. The Businessmen Panel called for significant cuts in import duties and waiver of sales tax, income tax, and additional income taxes, which are still being charged in this time of grave crisis. Mian Anjum Nisar asked the government to take concrete steps to keep the industrial wheels running especially for SMEs, to save the livelihood of millions of workers associated with the small industries. He said that to save the economy from the impacts of the slow growth, the government should announce special incentives for a cash-strapped small and medium industry,

which represents more than 90% of around 3.2 million business enterprises in Pakistan, contributing 40% to GDP, employing more than 80% of non-agricultural workforce, and generating 25% of export earnings. The BMP Chairman Anjum Nisar stated that providing affordable electricity would assist in lowering production costs, thereby benefiting the public. He stated that rising imports and a widening trade deficit posed a serious threat to economic growth and must be addressed urgently. He said that with continuous hike in cost of production in the country, what the Pakistan's economy really needs is persistent and sound economic management, asking the authorities for undertaking economic reforms and improving the regulatory environment for better Ease of Doing Business level to boost foreign investment so that financial stability can be achieved in the long-run.

Chairman CDA reviews ongoing uplift work in diplomatic enclave

Lakeview and Ankara Parks to See Major Beautification and Renovation Efforts, Says CDA Chairman

ISLAMABAD: Secretary Interior Khurram Agha along with Chairman CDA, Ali Randhawa on Saturday visited the Islamabad Industrial Triangle Kahota and Industrial Estate I-9/10. The Interior Secretary said that the state-of-the-art development of Industrial Triangle Kahota should be done and the industrial estates of Islamabad should be ensured to provide all the facilities to the industrialists. He further said that all kinds of encroachments should be eliminated from the Industrial Triangle area. Chairman CDA said that industrialists should be given special incentives for the establishment and promotion of information technology and telecom industry in the industrial estates of Islamabad. He detected that the allottees of such industrial plots who have not been able to establish industries on the allotted plots should set up industries on their plots as soon as possible. He said that all steps will be taken for the promotion of industry and for convenience of industrialists in Islamabad. Chairman CDA also visited various other places of Islamabad on Saturday. Officers of relevant formations CDA accompanied the Chairman during his visit. According to the details, Chairman CDA visited the Diplomatic Enclave. He reviewed the progress of ongoing uplift work in the diplomatic enclave and directed that the landscaping work should be done under a proper theme. He further said that after completing the landscaping and beautification work, measures be taken so that the beauty of the area could be maintained. Chairman CDA directed to complete minor construction and repair work at earliest. Moreover, Chairman CDA also visited Jinnah Convention Center and made a detailed review of the ongoing renovation work in the Convention Center. He said that during the renovation work of Jinnah Convention Center, the seating capacity in the main hall of the center should be expanded. Chairman CDA said that the convention center is being renovated according to the international standards for hosting world level events.—DNA

Minister for swift drainage of rainwater in low-laying areas

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi emphasized the need for self monitoring of drainage works in low-laying areas after torrential rains hit Islamabad on Sunday morning. The minister has stressed that these works should be completed as soon as possible to prevent water accumulation. Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad (MCI) teams are working around the clock to ensure swift drainage and mitigate potential flooding, said a news release. To ensure smooth water flow, teams were instructed to monitor drains and waterways 24/7. Additional staff and machinery were deployed as needed to facilitate the process. A comprehensive response was mobilized, with Assistant Commissioners, CDA officers, MCI teams, and emergency responders from 1122 working together to address the situation.—APP

PIMS incinerator continues spewing health hazardous dark smoke

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) Hospital incinerator established to get away with hazardous hospital waste through incineration and safe management of its remains has become a nuisance for the residents of F-8, G-7 and G-8 sectors facing dark smoke with an increased ratio of pollutants being spewed since last quarter of the year. An incinerator is a highly capital-intensive infrastructure developed to convert solid or liquid waste of both hazardous and non-hazardous nature into gas or ash, reducing to less bulky, less toxic or less harmful material. The major products, of incineration of waste, are carbon dioxide (CO₂), water, and ash, whereas the items of serious concern are compounds containing sulfur, nitrogen, and halogens that are highly detrimental to health and the environment. The incinerator is operated at a high temperature ranging from 850°C to 1200°C that helps convert waste into flue gas CO₂ and water as end products. When contacted, by the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA), the official informed that the matter was already in the notice of the Agency and the matter was being taken as per the Pakistan Environmental Protection Act 1997. Suleman Bilal, a local area resident told APP that it is a usual practice during morning and evening durations when the incinerator starts working and emits thick dark smoke, making the air unbreathable for all. "The incinerator is next to the hospital where the Paeds ward, burn centre, and cafeteria are in its closest proximity where massive visitors are present. They are at risk of contracting serious health complications and respiratory diseases that are evident from the pungent dark smoke directly affecting nostrils and lungs of an individual," he added.—DNA

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Briefs

CAT Upholds
CCP's penalty
on trademark
dispute

ISLAMABAD: The Competition Appellate Tribunal (CAT) has dismissed the appeal filed by M/s Baba Plastic against the Competition Commission of Pakistan's (CCP) order concerning fraudulent use of M/s ShajarPak (Pvt) Limited's registered trademark. ShajarPak, a fabric manufacturer, filed a complaint with the CCP alleging that eight companies, including M/s Baba Plastic, were fraudulently using its trademark 'Pasha Fabrics' on their products' packaging and labelling. Following an inquiry, the CCP confirmed that ShajarPak had not authorized any company to use its trademark. By copying the trademark and trade dress, these companies were deceiving consumers, which was capable of harming ShajarPak's business interests, in violation of Section 10 of the Competition Act, 2010. Consequently, the CCP issued a Show Cause Notice and, after having heard the parties, imposed a penalty of PKR 750,000 on Baba Plastic. Baba Plastic appealed the CCP's decision before the CAT. However, due to their repeated failure to appear at scheduled hearings, the Tribunal dismissed the appeal for non-prosecution.

Pakistan
needs sound
economic
management:
APBF

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD - The All Pakistan Business Forum has warned that a bailout from the IMF alone was unlikely to speed up economic growth, as the political instability and lack of reforms would further deteriorate the financial situation in the country. The APBF President Syed Maaz Mahmood observed that amidst continuous of hike in cost of production in the country, what the Pakistan's economy really needs is persistent and sound economic management. He asked the authorities for undertaking economic reforms and improving the regulatory environment to boost foreign investment so that financial stability can be achieved in the long-run. The APBF President stressed the need for reducing cost of doing business, besides evolving a new price control mechanism, as huge taxation, rising oil prices and constant jump in electricity and gas tariffs have lifted the inflation to high level. APBF Chairman Ibrahim Qureshi warned the authorities that inflation above 6 percent can hurt economic growth and a careful policy is required to keep it in control. He said that the pace of inflation is skyrocketing at a time when the economic activity is slowing down. As the oil prices have been increased and power tariff has gone up further the APBF chairman stated that the government has dropped a fuel bomb on the businessmen after it suffered an electric shock to meet the conditions of IMF to ensure loan program-a recipe to shake the trade.

Tackling inflation is serious
challenge for govt: FRIA

Quoting the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, he said that the Consumer Price Index surged to 21.2% last month compared to a year ago. The increase was more than market expectations and has lessened the prospects for a cut in the interest rates

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Ferozpur Road Industrial Association (FRIA) senior vice chairman Shahbaz Aslam has said that the most serious challenge to the economy for the government in the current fiscal year would be inflation, because it is already hitting economy due to continuous raise in oil prices and depreciation of local currency. Shahbaz Aslam warned the high cost of doing business has been hurting the economic growth, as the inflation rate bounced back in concluding month, hurting the

trade and industry the most, who faced the brunt of a staggering 520% increase in gas prices. Quoting the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, he said that the Consumer Price Index surged to 21.2% last month compared to a year ago. The increase was more than market expectations and has lessened the prospects for a cut in the interest rates. This reading, the first announced by the PBS after the recently concluded International Monetary Fund (IMF) talks, in which the global lender also cut the inflation forecast for Pakistan to 22.8%, may strengthen the IMF's view of keeping the policy rate un-

changed until core inflation starts easing out when the Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meets. The FRIA SVC predicted that inflation would remain high and may even increase further due to market frictions caused by relative demand and supply gap of essential items, exchange rate depreciation and recent upward adjustment of administered prices of petrol and diesel. The trader leader called for keeping check on government expenditure and high cost of debt servicing to contain budget deficit, as the Pakistan's federal budget deficit projection has been revised to history's highest to over Rs6

trillion, highlighting the unending fiscal woes that have pushed the country into a debt trap despite putting additional burden of billions of rupees on industry in the current fiscal year. Expressing serious concern over the high jump in country's budget deficit, Shahbaz Aslam said the revision has been made in light of agreement with the International Monetary Fund, which exposed the massive underreporting of expenditures at the time of budget presentation by the finance ministry. This is a highly unsustainable level and has already pushed the country into a situation where debt re-

structuring seems to be the only viable option. He maintained that the failure to reform the tax system and increase revenue collection is a major factor behind heavy domestic and foreign borrowings by the government. In view of the low level of available FX reserves, the debt management strategy of Pakistan may have to be revisited, to ensure the stability of Pakistani rupee and restoration of international capital markets' confidence in the economy of Pakistan. Shahbaz Aslam expressed surprise at the impact of the gas price hike, stating that it has surpassed market expectations.

FPCI to
approach
Supreme
Court, SIFC on
IPPs issue

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former Caretaker Prime Minister of Pakistan Anwar ul Haq Kakar has said that the Independent Power Producers (IPPs) issue is the issue of the entire nation alongside the business community and that instead of point scoring on it we will find out a viable solution through dialogue. He said this while addressing a business conference organized by Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCI) in Lahore as President of FPCI's Economic Policy Business Development Think Tank. Kakar said that the issue of Independent Power Producers is discussed in the Senate. "We fought for people's rights before, will fight this battle too and those spreading despair about the country's future on social media should know that the country's future is bright. Former Federal Minister for Commerce and Interior Dr. Gohar Ejaz and Chairman FPCI's Economic Policy Business Development Think Tank said that the government's negligence towards IPPs is being borne by the people. An audit of IPPs should be conducted. The whole of Pakistan is saying in one voice that we are affected by IPPs and we need to find a solution to end the IPPs agreements. We never want our country to face a crisis but the policies should be made to move Pakistan forward. There is electricity, but the problem is the cost of electricity. How can we compete with the world with expensive electricity, he questioned. Chairman UBG SM Tanveer said that they will approach the Supreme Court and SIFC to explain the real issue as well as the satisfactory solution to pull the country out of the existing economic mess. FPCI President Atif Ikram Sheikh said that Anwar ul Haq Kakar's business friendly policies will definitely bear fruit and will enhance the prestige of the fraternity. Secretary General UBG, Zafar Bakhtawari said that Pakistan is full of investment and business opportunities but the only needed thing is to wisely formulate the economic policies in consultation with the real stakeholders. He said that IPPs and the existing crisis are linked with the future of Pakistan, adding that the country is in an emergency situation and the leadership will have to take aggressive decisions to come out of the existing economic crunch.



ISLAMABAD: Secretary General of the Commonwealth, Patricia Scotland has arrived in Islamabad. She was welcomed by Additional Foreign Secretary (Europe) Ambassador Shafqat Ali Khan at the Islamabad Airport. —DNA

Pak lauds China-
aided poverty
alleviation projects

DNA

ISLAMABAD: BAD/DNA A group of 19 officials, business representatives, and experts in charge of economic development co-operation from Islamabad, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Punjab participated here in a recent two-week seminar. The seminar, hosted by China Center for Urban Development of the National Development and Reform Commission, is one of the 2024 bilateral training programs supported by China aid. From China's land system and the development history of China's urbanization, to the background and experience of China's relocation for poverty alleviation, as well as China's industrial

poverty alleviation policies and practices, food security, smart agricultural development, and rural public services improvement, the trainees gained a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of China's poverty alleviation process. The two week seminar concluded on July 24, Gwadar Pro reported on Sunday. In Zunyi and Bijie City of Guizhou Province in southwest China, the participants gained first-hand experience of China's poverty alleviation and rural revitalization efforts. The delegation experienced batik and embroidery techniques of the Miao ethnic group in Zhiqing County, which has a history of more than 2,000 years. It visited local production workshops and folk villages

to gain a detailed understanding of the output, value, and market of local traditional handicrafts, and how they improve the employment and income of local people. In Huawu, once a village mired in poverty, now it embraces clean and tidy roads and charming antique houses. All the participants spoke highly of its transformation and marveled at its successful organic connection between poverty alleviation and rural revitalization, as well as the integration of rural ecological revitalization, industrial revitalization, and cultural revitalization. During the exchange and discussion session, the participants introduced the work content of their units and relevant information about their work and business.

"Exotic Wildlife Pak" photo-
exhibition to go on display at PNCA

FASIAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: As many as twenty-nine large size photos of the exotic wildlife of Pakistan captured by Pakistan's Wildlife Ambassador and former senator, Sardar Muhammad Jamal Khan Leghari will go on display at the National Art Gallery No. 2 from Monday. The exhibition is being organized by the Snow Leopard Foundation and Devcom-Pakistan (Development Communications Network) in collaboration with the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA). A formal ceremony to honor this exhibition will be a part of the Pakistan Wildlife Protection Awards on July 31. This ceremony will recognize the extraordinary efforts of wildlife guards, watchers, and rangers who have shown remarkable

courage and dedication in protecting Pakistan's wildlife. Dr. Muhammad Ali Nawaz, Director and CEO of the Snow Leopard Foundation: "We are thrilled to collaborate with Devcom-Pakistan and PNCA to bring this exhibition to life. The photographs not only capture the splendor of our wildlife but also underscore the critical need for continued conservation efforts." Curator of the exhibition, Devcom-Pakistan Executive Director Munir Ahmed says: This unique exhibition aims to highlight the breathtaking biodiversity of Pakistan, featuring captivating images that showcase the country's rich wildlife heritage. The event will provide a rare opportunity for nature enthusiasts, photographers, and the general public to appreciate the stunning wildlife

that inhabits Pakistan's diverse ecosystems. "Our partnership with the Snow Leopard Foundation and PNCA is a significant step towards raising awareness about wildlife conservation. This exhibition is a celebration of the extraordinary biodiversity of Pakistan and the dedicated individuals working tirelessly to protect it. The public and media are invited to attend and explore the beauty of Pakistan's exotic wildlife through the lens of a genius photographer. This exhibition is an opportunity to connect with nature, appreciate the efforts of wildlife protectors, and foster a deeper understanding of the need for conservation." Pakistan's internationally known wildlife photographer, Sardar Muhammad Jamal Khan Leghari is an honorary Wildlife Ambassador of Pakistan, member

of Pakistan National Long-range Rifle Team, former Senator and former chairman BOD, Multan Electric Power Company, and the owner and manager of "Jamal Leghari Wildlife Sanctuary". Mr. Leghari believes that his dedication defines his quest to showcase Pakistan's exotic wildlife in their natural habitats through his photography. "Travelling across the country at my own expense has been a deeply personal mission, a testament to my unwavering commitment to conservation and environmental awareness. From the majestic mountains of the Himalayas to the sweeping deserts of Balochistan, I have ventured into the heart of untamed wilderness, seeking out elusive creatures and rare moments that define the unique tapestry of Pakistan's biodiversity.

IESCO issues
power
suspension
notice

DNA

ISLAMABAD: According to Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO)'s spokesman, System Maintenance/Development Work is in process. Therefore power supply of below mentioned feeders/areas will be temporary suspended as per given schedule: On 29th July 2024, From 06:00 AM to 10:00 AM, Islamabad Circle, Comst, Chatta Bakhtawar, Park Enclosure, Kandara, Trami, ISI, Kahara, PHA.I&II, Kurry Road, CM Pak Zong, Isolation Hospital, Fazahia, I&II, Bajniyal, Top City, Mumtaz City, F-17/1&2, Nogzi, Athal, Shahpur, Tret, Bhara Kaho.I&II, NIH, Golf Colony, FSH, I-8/4, I-11/1, I-11/3, METRO, PHA-II, I-10/1 Feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle, Ratta, Pandhaon, Ghosia Colony, P&T Winny, Jhangi, EME Complex Feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, NPF.I, Mehboob Shaheed, Park View, Pindi Board, Jail Park, Car Chowk, Qureshiabad, Garja.I, Hayal, Gulshan Fatima, Ranyal, Moort Feeders, Attock Circle, Mansar, Haji Shah, Kamra Rural, Hameed Feeders, Chakwal Circle, Dhadial Express Feeder, From 08:00 AM to 12:00 Noon, Islamabad Circle, PC, TDCP, MCM, Gharial, Kohala, Sunny Bank Feeders, Chakwal Circle, Dhoda Feeder, From 05:00 AM to 10:00 AM, Attock Circle, Chhab, Mahfuz Shaheed feeders.

Ground-breaking of
Al-Shifa Trust's GB
Eye Hospital held

RAWALPIND: The Chief Minister of Gilgit-Baltistan broke ground on the cutting-edge Gilgit-Baltistan Eye Hospital, which will be run by the Al-Shifa Trust and offer free, high-quality eye care to everyone in the area. Parliamentarians, the Chairman of the Rupani Foundation, Force Commander FCNA Major General Kashif Khalil, dignitaries, local notables, and donor representatives attended the ceremony. Al-Shifa Trust President Maj. Gen. (retired) Rehmat Khan, Chief of Medical Services Dr. Wajid Ali Khan, Project Director Brig. (retd) Arshad and others were also present at the event. Chief Minister Gulbar Khan, Naseeruddin Rupani, Chairman of the Rupani Foundation, and other dignitaries commended the trust on this occasion for their concern for the people's lack of access to high-quality eye care in the isolated region. They said that in the past, those with eye issues had to go to Islamabad, but many of them could not afford to do so. They also mentioned that things will get better now, which will help the locals. Speakers noted that this hospital would cover 18 lakh people living in 14 districts of GB, of whom 10 to 15 percent face eye issues due to poverty, extreme weather, and improper living conditions. They said the hospital will be established in a 20-kanal area on the Karakoram Highway, which is within reach of locals because it is just three kilometres from the city. President of Al-Shifa Trust, Maj. Gen. (retired) Rehmat Khan, thanked the GB Government and donors for their cooperation. He said that the GB hospital will be able to treat 150 OPD patients per day and conduct 50 surgeries daily. He announced that the area's first modern hospital, estimated to cost 355 million rupees, would be completed by the end of 2026. He said that the Rupani Foundation would pay half of the cost, while the trust will arrange the remaining half through donations. He pointed out that eye diseases, particularly cataracts, severely affect people in GB, necessitating the provision of a facility at their doorstep. We will initially provide OPD facilities and cataract surgeries but later include other more sophisticated procedures such as retina, glaucoma, cornea, and oculo-plastic treatments. According to Maj. Gen. (retired) Rehmat Khan, a special feature will be an OPD facility for people suffering from depression. He added that the Rawalpindi Eye Hospital has started training the paramedics who will work in the GB hospital, and the GB students have preferential access to a diploma course in eye care. He said that the outreach programs would provide specialised eye care services in isolated places, and the trust would keep organising free eye camps and school screenings in Gilgit-Baltistan.—DNA

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Meloni's visit boosts ties to new heights

CHINA'S measured reaction to Italy not renewing relevant cooperation documents of the Belt and Road Initiative in December showed its tacit understanding that Italy's move largely stemmed from external pressure. Italy's decision, after about one year's struggle, was clearly incompatible with the Italy-China Year of Culture and Tourism resumed the year before, and came at the height of Washington's exhortations that its allies stay away from China. Both Rome and Beijing were careful to keep the door ajar to each other, and some positive exchanges between the two sides this year prove the door is reopening even wider than before. Italian Minister of Enterprises and Made in Italy Adolfo Urso visited China earlier in July, when an ancient Roman cultural relic exhibition in Beijing was becoming a national hit in China, laying the groundwork for the ongoing visit by Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni from Friday to Tuesday. During his visit, Urso said that China is an indispensable market for Italian companies and a key partner. The cooperation between China and Italy in the fields of green technology, electric vehicles, and public buses is becoming increasingly important, marking a new stage in the strategic partnership between the two countries. The five-day length of Meloni's first visit to China after taking office for nearly two years and her packed itinerary, including meeting with not only the Chinese leadership but also the business community and cultural representatives, indicate that Meloni's visit should not be viewed as one to repair ties, but one that aims to upgrade the relationship.

No wonder Italian tire-maker Pirelli, energy group ENI, defense group Leonardo, wine producers and several Italian luxury fashion groups including Dolce&Gabbana are among the companies invited to attend an Italy-China business forum addressing cooperation in sectors such as automotive and green technology that was held in Beijing on Sunday and Monday. Italy is the fourth-largest trading partner of China within the European Union, and China is Italy's largest trading partner in Asia. Given the high complementarity between the structure and development stage of the two economies, that China's exports accounted for about two-thirds of the \$71.76 billion bilateral trade last year, which dipped 7.2 percent from 2022 due to aforementioned reasons, means the Italy has great potential to boost its exports to the Chinese market. In particular, its high-tech and advanced products, food, and high-end consumer goods have great potential. And it has every reason to deepen cooperation with China in pharmaceuticals, biomedical engineering, green technology and electric mobility. This year marks the 20th anniversary of the China-Italy comprehensive strategic partnership. China has indicated that it is looking to work with Italy through this visit to cement the traditional friendship between the two countries, promote the Silk Road Spirit, strengthen mutual understanding and trust, deepen practical cooperation and people-to-people and cultural exchanges, pursue the steady and sustained growth of China-Italy and China-EU relations, and jointly contribute to a more peaceful, stable and prosperous world.



Healthy business ties platform for stability

ACCORDING to the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade, Ren Hongbin, the council's chairman, is leading a delegation of Chinese entrepreneurs to visit the United States. The reciprocal visit after the one to China by US business executives a few days ago, represents a Chinese endeavor to create a positive scenario for bilateral business ties amid the souring of political ties. The CCPIT also operates in the name of the China Chamber of International Commerce, and is registered as a nongovernmental national trade facilitator. The exchange illustrates Beijing's desire to preserve operational China-US economic and trade relations via communication at nongovernmental levels. But it also carries very high hopes for fostering a correct US perception of China at a time when Washington is planning to further tighten the screws to stymie bilateral scientific and technological exchanges with China. The visits have followed swiftly on the heels of the third plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, which initiated a new round of reform and further opening-up. That means more opportunities will be created that foreign businesses can profit from. That is the message Beijing wanted the visiting US executives to take home with them, and one their Chinese counterparts are taking to the US. Four days after the key CPC meeting, a delegation of US business executives led by the US-China Chamber of Commerce Chairman of the Board Rajesh Subramanian arrived in China. Not only the timing, but also the roster of visitors, including key executives of Micron, Goldman Sachs, Apple and Boeing, were highly symbolic. Beijing wants to assure the outside world about its continuous commitment to reform and openness, and showcase the enduring interest in the potential of the Chinese market. According to a CCPIT spokesperson, the US business delegation came at its invitation, met with Vice-Premier He Lifeng and Foreign Minister Wang Yi, visited key economic and trade authorities, and compared notes with Chinese business leaders. Both He and Wang elaborated on the central leadership's focus on more reform and openness. Wang urged the visitors to present to the US government, Congress and all walks of life a real comprehensive image of China, contribute more objective, positive, rational voices and help the US form a correct understanding of China. The Chinese leadership has on various occasions stated that it believes the hope for improved China-US relations lies in the two peoples, and its foundation lies at the nongovernmental levels. The CCPIT initiative was based on the conviction that the two countries' business communities are important preservers of and contributors to bilateral relations, who want bilateral ties to stabilize and move forward, said the CCPIT spokesperson. A core objective of the Chinese business delegation, according to her, is to inform the US business community about the CPC plenum. Per Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning, the over 300 major reform measures the plenum endorsed sent to the rest of the world a strong message about China's resolute dedication to reform and opening up.

Exploring Pakistan-Ethiopia cooperative ties

Ambassador Jemal Beker Abdula



In this way, the Ethiopian government has proved that its wealth of precious natural resources needs appropriate welcoming destinations around the world, where Pakistan has become an exception due to the non-existence of major disagreements between Addis Ababa and Islamabad. The absence of any political difference between two-sided governments provides additional support to the ongoing mutually collaborative patterns of bilateral relations between Pakistan and Ethiopia. Through developing special formats of regular interactions between Islamabad-based diplomatically...

THE cooperative ties between Islamabad and Addis Ababa have been refreshed by the Ethiopian government's decision to open the embassy in Islamabad on May 11, 2023, to strengthen the economic cooperation between the two states formally. The Ethiopian government is highly ambitious to join Pakistan's efforts to explore the untapped potential of African nations in the contemporary international system parallel to singing various bilateral cooperative agreements with different African nations. During the inaugural ceremony of the embassy, the two-sided formal state authorities showed their commitment to working together in various areas of common interests, such as climate change, immigration, security and terrorism. While appreciating the Addis Ababa's choice of formalizing the ambassadorial relations with Pakistan, and the government of Pakistan accepted the need for boosting multidimensional cooperative ties between Pakistan and African nations. The Islamabad-based decision-makers also acknowledge that the Ethiopian and Pakistani governments have common economic and development problems in the contemporary global order.

In the welcoming remarks, Pakistan's state representatives dubbed the opening of the embassy in Islamabad as a new beginning in the bilateral cooperative interactions between the two states, and it has facilitated the two-sided leaderships in expanding the conventional patterns of their bilateral interactions in the diplomatic, political, economic, and social dimensions. On a reciprocal basis, the representatives of Ethiopia showed a keen interest in their government in deepening bilateral cooperation with Islamabad, which would enable the leaders of both sides to diversify their formal ties.

In this way, the decision to open an embassy in Pakistan has marked a significant development in the bilateral ties, and it exhibits the increasing values of diplomatic, trading, and cultural relations between the two nations. In cultural terms, the common ideological foundations provide solid grounds for the growth of cultural ties, and the prominent role of Ethiopians in Islamic history creates solid connections between Islamabad and Addis Ababa. The recent development of opening an embassy in Islamabad cannot be divorced from a comprehensive account of Pakistan-Ethiopia relations, which started in the 1950s when the leaders of both na-

tions realized their shared values of mutual respect and bilateral cooperation in diverse directions. The major turn in the bilateral ties occurred in 1973 with the formal opening of the Pakistan's Embassy in Addis Ababa under Islamabad's broader framework of Engage Africa Policy.

The Engage Africa approach focused on various African states and preferred Ethiopia as one of the prominent nations appropriate for establishing collaborative connections with Islamabad in the areas of agriculture, education, and healthcare.

In this way, the governments of both nations witnessed a brief era of strong political coordination, diplomatic support, and economic cooperation throughout history. However, Addis Ababa's launching of formal ambassadorial services in Islamabad started facilitating the two-sided governments in exploring new platforms for trading collaborations. The signing of the Bilateral Trade Agreement in May 2023 is important in this regard because it led the two-sided business communities to establish their partnerships. The trading connections have already been established between both nations, and these relations made Pakistan a recipient of Ethiopian red kidney beans, chickpeas, pulses, hides and skins, tea, and coffee, whereas the Ethiopian government receives Pakistani healthcare products, chemicals, machinery, sugar, rice, and textiles.

In this way, a smooth trading connection based on a commendable volume of import-export enabled the Pakistani and Ethiopian governments to recognize their potential for working together for mutual trade benefits. It has widened the scope of trade and investment opportunities between their respective business communities while encouraging their mainstream leaders to consider each other as reliable business partners in the contemporary international system. The quest to augment the existing level of people-to-people contact between the two nations has led Ethiopian and Pakistani formal state authorities to take several practical measures to deepen the two-sided societal acquaintances. To overcome the challenge of certain social disconnects, direct flights between Karachi and Addis Ababa have started recently, and it enabled Pakistan to receive four direct Ethiopian flights. The launching of direct flights plays a creditable role in promoting the mutual interests of two states to foster economic growth with the promotion of bilat-

eral cultural ties. This step started leaving positive impacts on the shared interests of trade, tourism, and pleasant societal contacts between Islamabad and Ethiopia. Direct flights create easy chances for business professionals and potential investors to travel between both states while availing the benefits of reduced travel time and reasonable costs.

In this way, the Ethiopian government has proved that its wealth of precious natural resources needs appropriate welcoming destinations around the world, where Pakistan has become an exception due to the non-existence of major disagreements between Addis Ababa and Islamabad. The absence of any political difference between two-sided governments provides additional support to the ongoing mutually collaborative patterns of bilateral relations between Pakistan and Ethiopia. Through developing special formats of regular interactions between Islamabad-based diplomatically community and leading circles of Pakistan's business communities, the government of Ethiopia has conveyed an explicit message for fostering commercial ties between Pakistan and Ethiopia with the support of regular cultural and social contact. Therefore, the ongoing designs of political communication, diplomatic support, economic cooperation, and social interaction validate the determination of Addis Ababa to work with Islamabad in various unexplored dimensions of their bilateral cooperation. This pattern of multidimensional cooperative bilateralism contains substantial potential for convincing two-sided leadership to work on certain strategic extents. The strategic communication between both states has already witnessed teamwork in the training and capacity-building programs of United Nations international peacekeeping operations. Addis Ababa and Islamabad have established a comprehensive framework to enhance their bilateral partnerships in various areas. The leadership of both nations is strongly committed to expanding their collaborative potential. Over the past two years, since the opening of ambassadorial services in Islamabad, significant progress has been made, indicating that the two nations could work towards a more stable and cooperative future. This cooperation aligns with their shared goals of social prosperity and economic development.

The writer is the Ambassador of Ethiopia to Pakistan

Modi 3.0 and the Pakistan response

Muhammad Nasir Chaudhry

Modi's cult and fear have been a deterrence. His loss has emboldened his critics within his support base to start manoeuvring for political ascension. Modi's decision to reverse the ban on civil servants joining RSS is a concession to the RSS as is Amit Shah's decision to reach Manipur to chair a high-level security review meeting. That he did not invite his handpicked protégé, Biren Singh, who is Manipur's Chief Minister, to the meeting was another concession. However, the whip hand now rests with the nomenklatura

INDIA is a country with a strong ethos of religion in its body politic. In the Hindu religion, Vishnu is the Indian God of preservation who returns to the earth in troubled times to restore the balance of good and evil. His popular avatars are Ram and Krishna. Therefore, the pageantry of Modi during the Ram Temple's consecration, choreographed media appearances on the banks of the Ganges in Varanasi and the assertion of not being biologically born but 'sent' for a divine mission assume significance. If the arrival of Ram was Modi's election story, subsequent events have distinguished it with 'The Mark of Vishnu' as Modi 3.0 takes command. What would be the future trajectory/internal dynamics around Modi 3.0? How should Pakistani policymakers be responding to Modi 3.0? I attempt to address these two binaries.

Modi's future and that of his coalition is uncertain. There are two primary reasons for this. First, his fortunes have plunged within 'nomenklatura,' namely the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). A decade of iron fisted rule, disregard for delegation of authority and consensus has violated the movement's core principles. Anyone who cultivates a personality cult and endangers the RSS' long-term game is run aground. Never mind if he has nearly met all its core objectives. The Modi-Shah duo has continued to steam roll its way into unilaterally taking decisions and monopolizing power or its acquisition, by means fair and foul. Modi's humbling would accentuate the process of impending succession within the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). This has been a sensitive issue due to Modi being a once in a generation politician who is, arguably, one of the most popular politicians India has had in contemporary times.

Modi's cult and fear have been a deterrence. His loss has emboldened his critics within his support base to start manoeuvring for political ascension. Modi's decision to reverse the ban on civil servants joining RSS is a concession to the RSS as is Amit Shah's decision to reach Manipur to chair a high-level security review meeting. That he did not invite his handpicked protégé, Biren Singh, who is Manipur's Chief Minister, to the meeting was another concession. However, the whip hand now rests with the nomenklatura. This reflects in renewed focus on Rajnath Singh. Nitin Gadkari, Shiv Raj Singh Chauhan and Davendra Fadnavis have been nursing their wounds but electoral results would encourage them to raise their stakes in New Delhi. Modi must be wary of any tacit support from the RSS. Gadkari has long been touted as a consensus builder with an enviable reputation of efficient governance. His parliamentary constituency in Nagpur gives him an advantage.

Any further concessions from Pakistan would allow for India to a diktat on the bilateral relationship and boost Modi at a time when he is at his weakest. Second, Modi's allies remain unreliable. He may well count on Chandra Babu Naidu and his Telegu Desam Party simply because Naidu has made a comeback at the twilight of his political career and is inclined to continue to wield power before handing it to another generation. It is his political compulsion. His dream project of creating a new capital for Andhra, Amravati, is already off to a start. His other partner, Nitesh Kumar, of the Janata Dal (U) was until a few months ago heading the opposition India Bloc! Nitesh's tendency to switch alliances for political expediency makes him notoriously un-

reliable even by Indian standards. A compounding factor would be the state elections in Haryana and Maharashtra. BJP's loss in those states can encourage state institutions to assert autonomy and reclaim space which will be challenging for Modi 3.0. How must Pakistan respond to Modi 3.0? Neighbourly relations between two unequal neighbors are prone to a crisis matrix. There is no exclusivity, therefore, in the Indo-Pak relationship. It would be prudent for Pakistan to frame an Indian policy with all stakeholders on board. Persistence would present opportunities as internal dynamics shape in India. Rahul Gandhi's outreach to the backward classes has struck an important chord. They continue to eke on the fringes of the Indian story. This discontentment along with income inequity, unemployment and rural distress will make for allowances. If Pakistan constrains its obsession to self-harm, then the emergence of 'Squad' instead of Quad, reports of Delhi's worldwide assassination campaigns, reactions to Modi's Russian visit in the West and calls for moderating the expectations of India in the US can be better leveraged by Islamabad.

Pakistan's principled support to the Kashmiris must not cease particularly considering a crystallizing indigenous resistance in the territory against India. Events in the Middle East have only swelled the global public opinion in favor of self-determination. Concessions in the past were met by a modest ceasefire along the Line of Control chiefly due to India's preoccupation in its Eastern theater. Any further concessions from Pakistan would allow for India to a diktat on the bilateral relationship and boost Modi at a time when he is at his weakest.

- Sourced by Arab News

Briefs

Fin Min Aurangzeb stresses...

FROM PAGE 01 making every effort not to burden the low-income section of society and mentioned plans to include agriculture in the tax regime...

KP requests PHC CJ to...

FROM PAGE 01 the Al-Qadir Trust case. During the protests, alleged PTI supporters damaged public and private properties...

Germany didn't...

FROM PAGE 01 on its consulate as well as the failure of the German authorities to protect the sanctity and security of the premises of its consular mission...

Foreign Secretary shares...

FROM PAGE 01 according to a Foreign Office press release. He appreciated the positive role played by ASEAN in regional integration and prosperity...

Belal Muhammad dethrones Leon Edwards at UFC 304

Belal Muhammad ends Leon Edwards' eight-year unbeaten streak; Tom Aspinall knocks out Curtis Blaydes in first round

LONDON: The Ultimate Fighting Championship (UFC) returned to the UK for UFC 304, a highly anticipated pay-per-view event featuring 14 bouts and headlined by a long-awaited rematch between Leon Edwards and Belal Muhammad...



and Muhammad pulling off an upset in the rematch, there could be demand for a third fight right away.

with all 18 wins coming by either knockout or submission. The level of competition has been questionable. His most recent wins came against Geoff Neal and what's left of Stephen Thompson...

ECB chief opens up on hosting Pakistan vs India Test series

Pakistan and India last played a bilateral series in 2013



LONDON: The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), Richard Gould, welcomed the prospect of hosting a Test series between Pakistan and India...

Pakistan Test] impossible. The politics between the BCCI and the Pakistan Cricket Board are long known, as are the politics between governments...

Dressel leads US to first Paris Olympic Gold

PARIS: A formidable United States spearheaded by an emotional Caleb Dressel stormed to the men's 4x100m Olympic freestyle relay title on Saturday for the country's first gold in Paris...

New visa policy to boost tourism...

FROM PAGE 01 countries will be exempt from visa fees. The visa policy reforms will make Pakistan an attractive destination for foreign individuals in terms of business and tourism...

PPP to play its role if Imran is...

FROM PAGE 01 problems through negotiations [and] the PPP would play its role if needed [in this regard] Shah said while speaking to media in Quetta...

Pakistan swimmers fail to qualify for Paris Olympics



KARACHI: Pakistan's swimmers Ahmed Durrani and Jehanara Nabi couldn't qualify in the next round of the Paris Olympics 2024 in their respective categories. In the men's 200-meter freestyle, Durrani finished last in his heat...

Sri Lanka stun India to win Women's Asia Cup 2024

This is the first the Islanders have won the competition

SPORTS DESK

DUBAI: Sri Lanka stunned India by eight wickets to win their first-ever Women's Asia Cup 2024 at the Rangiri Dambulla International Stadium...



a spot of bother when Athapaththu fell for 61 at the end of the 12th over. However, Harshita, who had dropped two catches on the field, redeemed herself with a terrific counter-attacking half-century...

MOFA to start...

FROM PAGE 01 As part of this initiative, designated courier companies will collect documents from applicants, which will then be attested by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs...

Petrol, HSD prices...

FROM PAGE 01 of Petroleum Division have indicated that the final summary regarding the petroleum prices will be sent to the government by the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA)...

Ad-hoc judges to...

FROM PAGE 01 appointment of two ad hoc judges to the SC for a one-year term. The notification comes a day after President Asif Ali Zardari approved the appointment of two former Supreme Court judges...

کرت نوش - Cricket News section containing various news items, scores, and updates in Urdu.

Briefs

Nineteen
drown
as boat
capsizes in
Ethiopia

LONDON : At least 19 people drowned when their boat sank in a river in Ethiopia's northern Amhara region on, the region's official media said on Sunday. "Seven people including a child were saved in difficult circumstances," the Amhara Media Corporation (AMC) added, quoting a local administrator. The boat was taking passengers across the Tekeze river, which runs along Ethiopia's border with Eritrea before it crosses into Sudan at the point where the three countries meet. Twenty six people were estimated to have been on board at the time of the accident at around noon (0900 GMT) on Saturday, officials said. Only two bodies had been recovered, AMC said, adding that those rescued had been taken to nearby hospitals. Media access to the remote northern Ethiopia is heavily restricted by the authorities, with information of ten trickling in hours later. Amhara -- Ethiopia's second most populous region -- has been wracked for months by clashes between the Ethiopian military and an ethnic Amhara militia known as Fano. It was also caught up in the neighbouring region Tigray's war, with its regional forces fighting alongside federal government troops against Tigrayan rebels. --APP

Police shoot
dead knife-
wielding man
in Sydney

SYDNEY : A knife-wielding man has been shot dead in Sydney's southwest after he allegedly attempted to stab a police officer, who narrowly avoided "catastrophic injuries". Emergency services were called to Bird Walton Avenue in Middleton Grange, about 40km from the CBD, about 11pm on Saturday following reports a man was armed with a knife. At a press conference on Sunday morning, assistant commissioner Brett McFadden said the man had been walking in the street and allegedly threw a knife at a car with civilians inside -- not thought to be known by him -- who then contacted police. Police said the 34-year-old allegedly confronted and threatened officers on arrival. He allegedly struck a 33-year-old senior constable with the knife through the open window of a police vehicle on two occasions, but the officer -- who was in the drivers seat -- was protected by his operational vest. A Taser was used but proved ineffective, police said. McFadden alleged the man "rushed towards the officer that had discharged the Taser", before another officer shot the man twice in the torso. Police said CPR was administered but at 11.41pm, he died at the scene. --DNA

Global
electric car
usage surges
to 42 million

LONDON : The number of electric cars is continuing to rise rapidly worldwide, according to the latest research out of Germany. The Centre for Solar Energy and Hydrogen Research (ZSW) reported on Sunday that there were around 42 million cars with electric motors at the end of 2023 -- some 50% more than a year earlier. This figure includes purely electric vehicles, plug-in hybrids and electric vehicles with a range extender. According to the ZSW, there were 23.4 million of these cars in China, more than half of the global stock. Number two is the United States, although it was far behind with 4.8 million vehicles. Germany is in third place with 2.3 million, ahead of France and the United Kingdom with 1.6 and 1.5 million respectively. China's dominance is unlikely to change much in the short term, with growth there at 60% compared to last year -- significantly stronger than in other major markets. In order to achieve the German targets for electromobility, the market needs new impetus, said Andreas Püttner from ZSW. "The German government's growth initiative to increase the promotion of electric company cars can only be a first step." --APP

BD students vow to resume protests unless leaders freed

The group's chief Nahid Islam and others "should be freed and the cases against them must be withdrawn", Abdul Hannan Masud told reporters

NEWS DESK

DHAKA : A Bangladeshi student group has vowed to resume protests that sparked a lethal police crackdown and nationwide unrest unless several of their leaders are released from custody on Sunday. Last week's violence killed at least 205 people, according to an AFP count of police and hospital data, in one of the biggest upheavals of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's 15-year tenure. Army patrols and a nationwide curfew remain in place more than a week after they were imposed, and a police dragnet has scooped up thousands of protesters including at least half a dozen student leaders. Members of Students Against Discrimination, whose campaign against civil service job quotas precipitated the unrest, said they would end their weeklong protest moratorium. The group's chief Nahid Islam and others "should be freed and the cases against them must be withdrawn", Abdul Hannan Masud told reporters in an online briefing late Saturday. Masud, who did not disclose his location because he was in hiding from authorities, also demanded "visible



actions" be taken against government ministers and police officers responsible for the deaths of protesters. "Otherwise, Students Against Discrimination will be forced to launch tough protests" from Monday, he said. Islam and two other senior members of the protest group were on Friday forcibly discharged from hospital in the capital Dhaka and taken away

by a group of plainclothes detectives. Earlier in the week Islam told AFP he was being treated at the hospital for injuries police inflicted on him during an earlier round of detention and said he was in fear for his life. Home minister Asaduzzaman Khan told reporters Friday that the trio were taken into custody for their own safety but did not confirm

if they had been formally arrested. Police told AFP on Sunday that detectives had taken two others into custody, while a Students Against Discrimination activist told AFP that a third had been taken on Sunday morning. At least 9,000 people have been arrested nationwide since the unrest began according to Prothom Alo, Bangladesh's largest

daily newspaper. While a curfew imposed last weekend remains in force, it has been progressively eased through the week, in a sign of the Hasina government's confidence that order was gradually being restored. Bangladesh's mobile internet network was restored in the afternoon, 11 days after a nationwide blackout imposed at the height of the unrest. Fixed line broadband connections had already been restored on Tuesday but the vast majority of Bangladesh's 141 million internet users rely on their mobile devices to connect with the world, according to the national telecoms regulator. One small street rally held in Dhaka on Sunday to demand Hasina's resignation was quickly dispersed by police. Protests began this month over the reintroduction of a quota scheme reserving more than half of all government jobs for certain groups. With around 18 million young Bangladeshis out of work, according to government figures, the move deeply upset graduates facing an acute employment crisis. Critics say the quota is used to stack public jobs with loyalists to the ruling Awami League.

Australia PM reshuffles cabinet before 2025 election

WEB DESK

SYDNEY: Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese on Sunday announced a cabinet reshuffle after two senior ministers said they planned to retire at the next election. The reshuffle, the first since the centre-left Labor Party swept to power at a general election in May 2022, marks an attempt by Albanese to refresh his team ahead of the next poll, expected in 2025. "I would expect that this is the team that I will take to the election when it is held sometime in the future," Albanese said in a televised media conference in Canberra. Among a raft of ministerial changes, Albanese said Tony Burke, already arts minister, will take the key portfolios of home affairs, immigration and multicultural affairs, and cyber security. Clare O'Neil shifts from home affairs and cyber security to housing and homelessness, remain-

ing in cabinet, while immigration minister Andrew Giles moves to skills and training, no longer in a cabinet position. Northern Territory Senator Malarndirri McCarthy will take over as minister for indigenous Australians. Australia PM defends action on cost of living amid by-election The appointments come after long-serving Labor ministers Brendan O'Connor and Linda Burney announced they would retire at the next election. Albanese paid tribute to O'Connor and Burney as having made an "extraordinary contribution" to the nation over a long period of time. Meanwhile, Albanese signalled this would be his last ministry reset until the next federal election, due to be held before May next year. "These combined changes, I think, represent a significant move forward," he said. "I would expect that this is the team that I will take to the election when it is held sometime

in the future." The Greens housing spokesperson, Max Chandler-Mather, who had been a thorn in the side of Collins as she attempted to push through the government's housing agenda, very quickly turned his attention to O'Neil, calling on the incoming minister to reopen negotiations with the Greens. If Labor wants their housing bills passed, I call on the new housing minister, Clare O'Neil to immediately reopen negotiations with the Greens on rent freeze/caps along with phasing out tax handouts for investors and real investment in public housing. "If all we see from the new housing minister is more of the same small-target strategy, the reality is that Labor will be punished at the ballot box by the millions of people across the country right now who are getting smashed by the housing crisis," he said on social media. Asio will follow the Australian federal police to sit under the attorney general's department, reversing the move the Coalition made in placing both agencies in home affairs. Three special envoys have been appointed. Peter Khalil will report to the prime minister on social cohesion, NT MP Luke Gosling will report on veterans affairs, defence and northern Australia issues and Andrew Charlton will have responsibilities in the cyber security and digital resilience space. Envoys differ from assistant ministers as they will have no decision-making powers. They instead report their findings to the prime minister and portfolio ministers. Matt Thistlethwaite, who helmed the now-axed republic assistant ministry, and Julian Hill have been named assistant ministers to Tony Burke covering immigration, citizenship and multicultural affairs. Patrick Gorman, the existing assistant minister to the prime minister, will now take on assistant ministry duties for the attorney-general as well.

Gazans face severe food crisis

ANKARA: The Gaza Strip, where 80% of the population is currently internally displaced, has experienced world's worst food crisis, according to a new UN report. The "2024 Food Security and Nutrition in the World" report, jointly prepared by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), World Food Program (WFP), International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), and World Health Organization (WHO), painted a grim picture of global hunger and food security. The report reveals that between 713 million and 757 million people worldwide were undernourished last year, with an average of 733 million facing hunger, implying that one in every 11 people struggled with hunger. Hunger levels rose from 2022 to 2023 in most parts of West Asia, the Caribbean, and sub-Saharan Africa. In Africa, the percentage of the population struggled with hunger increased to 20.4%. In Asia, it rose to 8.1%, in Latin America and the Caribbean to 6.2%, and in Oceania to 7.3%. By 2030, an estimated 582 million people will be chronically undernourished, with nearly half of them living in Africa. Last year, 2.33 billion people worldwide faced moderate or severe food insecurity, with more than 864 million sometimes going without food for an entire day or longer. Moderate or severe food insecurity in Africa was nearly double the global average, at 58%. In Asia, it was 24.8%, in Latin America and the Caribbean 28.2%, and in Oceania 26.8%. Food insecurity remained nearly unchanged in Africa, Asia, North America, and Europe from 2022 to 2023, but it worsened in Oceania. Although women were more affected by food insecurity than men, the gap between the two groups began to narrow in 2022 and continued to decrease in 2023. The report, however, shows that adult obesity has steadily increased over the last decade, from 12.1% (591 million people) in 2012 to 15.8% (881 million people) in 2022. This number is projected to top 1.2 billion by 2030. --APP

North Korea vows to destroy enemy, commemorates war

PYONGYANG : North Korea has vowed to "totally destroy" its enemies in case of war when leader Kim Jong-un gives an order, state media KCNA reported on Sunday, as the regime marked the end of hostilities in the Korean war. Senior military officials including Col Ri Un-ryong and Lt Cdr Yu Kyong-song made the comments "out of surging hatred" towards the US and South Korea at a meeting on Saturday attended by Kim, marking the 71st anniversary of the Korean war armistice, according to KCNA. North Korea and the US do not have diplomatic ties and talks over reducing tensions and denuclearising North Korea have been stalled since 2019. North Korea's state media recently said it does not expect that to change no matter who is next elected in the White House. Accusing the US and South Korea of "being hellbent on provoking a nuclear war", the military officials vowed to strengthen war efficiency to stage an "overwhelming attack on the enemy anytime and without delay and totally destroy them once the respected supreme commander Kim Jong-un gives an order". North Korea signed an armistice agreement with the US and China on 27 July 1953, ending hostilities in the three-year war. US generals signed the agreement representing the UN forces that backed South Korea. North Korea calls it "victory day" while South Korea does not mark the day with any major events. --APP

Venezuela's economy runs on oil and music

CARACAS : Venezuela's battered economy is one of the key battlegrounds in Sunday's presidential election, with President Nicolás Maduro hoping to convince voters that the country has turned the corner after years of strife. Thanks to his recent efforts to push down the cost of living, the outlook is slightly rosier. In February, Venezuela finally said goodbye to the rampant hyperinflation that had seen price rises peak at more than 400,000% a year in 2019. Now annual inflation is more manageable, but still high at about 50%. Mr Maduro has been keen to take credit for the fall, saying it shows that he has "the correct policies". Unfortunately, however, those policies have done little or nothing to tackle the economy's underlying structural problems -- chiefly, its historic dependence on oil, to the detriment of other sectors. "Since it was discovered in the country in the 1920s, oil has taken Venezuela on an exhilarating but dangerous boom-and-bust ride," as the US Council on Foreign Relations think tank puts it. Now opponents of President Maduro are pinning their hopes of economic revival on a change of leader, and a new beginning under his electoral rival, Edmundo González. "An opposition victory would lead to a renewed opening of Venezuela's trade and financial ties with the rest of the world," says Jason Tuvey, deputy chief emerging markets economist at Capital Economics. --W

Eleven killed in central China landslide

SHANGHAI: A landslide caused by flooding in central China's Hunan province destroyed a local guesthouse and killed 11 people on Sunday, with at least one person still missing, state media reported. Official broadcaster CCTV said it had "been initially confirmed that 18 people were buried". As of Sunday afternoon, 11 bodies and six injured survivors had been recovered, it added. The landslide was caused by flash flooding on a mountain, according to CCTV. More than 240 emergency personnel had been dispatched to the scene, with "rescue work continuing urgently", the broadcaster said. A video published by the state-run Beijing Youth Daily showed a swath of mud and debris cutting through a green hillside, and an uprooted tree lying in front of a three-storey building. China has suffered a summer of extreme weather, with flash floods in the north and southwest killing at least 20 people earlier this month. In May, a highway in southern China collapsed after days of rain, leaving 48 dead. Scientists say climate change is making extreme weather more frequent and intense, and China is the world's largest emitter of greenhouse gases. Landslide kills eight in China after heavy rainfall Long dependence on polluting energy sources such as coal, Beijing has pledged to bring emissions of planet-heating carbon dioxide to a peak. --APP



ISLAMABAD: Youth participating in the race on Jinnah Avenue for recruitment in Islamabad Police. --ONLINE

Uzbekistan: A new and technological approach to elections kick-starts

The Central Election Commission of the Republic of Uzbekistan held a meeting and a series of events on July 26. The primary agenda item was the preparation and high-level accomplishment of the upcoming elections for the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis and the Councils of People's Deputies in full compliance with the Constitution and laws. According to Article 128 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, elections for the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis and the Councils of People's Deputies are scheduled to take place on the first Sunday of the third ten-day period of October in the year their term expires. Considering that the term of the deputies of the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis and the Councils of People's Deputies ends in 2024, the elections will be held on October 27th of this year, and the election campaign will begin on July 26th, as decided by the Central Election Commission. These elections mark a significant departure from the past, taking place in a new socio-political environment as stipulated by our Constitution. The meeting underscored

the unique features of these elections, which include:

1. For the first time in Uzbekistan's history, the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis elections will be conducted using a mixed electoral system, combining majoritarian and proportional systems. This significant change will see seventy-five deputies elected directly through the majoritarian system, where voters vote for specific candidates. The remaining seventy-five deputies will be elected based on votes cast for political parties under the proportional system.
2. One of the most significant advancements is the full digitization of election commissions' activities at all levels and their interactions with participants in the election process. This development significantly reduces bureaucracy, time, and document handling in election procedures, ushering in a new era of efficiency in our electoral system.
3. Our election legislation has been fundamentally improved to align with advanced democratic standards. These improvements include introducing a new system for election bodies led by the Central Election Commission and requiring political par-



ties to ensure that at least 40% of their candidates for deputy positions are women. Additionally, a candidate must receive a relative majority of votes to be elected. If a candidate gets more votes than other candidates in their respective electoral district, they will be elected without needing a repeat vote. 4. The elections are taking place in conditions of significantly strengthened parliamentarism and the powers of representative bodies at the local level, as established by the Updated Constitution. Specifically, the absolute powers of the Legislative Chamber have increased from 5 to 12, and those of the Senate from 12 to 18. The parliament's oversight functions over the activities of executive, judicial, law enforcement agencies, and special services have been expanded. The institution of hokims leading local Councils of People's Deputies

is being abolished. To enhance the role of representative bodies in resolving important state issues, 33 powers previously held by hokims have been transferred to local Councils. The meeting underscored the significance of these elections as a vivid example of democratic state-building in our country and an essential means for citizens to exercise their constitutional rights to vote and be elected to democratic state bodies. The elections will involve the election of 150 deputies to the Legislative Chamber, 65 members to the Senate, 65 deputies to the Jokargy Kenes of the Republic of Karakalpakstan, deputies to 208 district (city) Councils in the regions and Tashkent city, with around 30,000 candidates and nearly 90,000 trusted representatives actively participating. Over 120,000 election commission members and more than 70,000 citizens and international observers are expected to participate in the election process. Considering the important role of elections in state life and with the aim of widely engaging citizens in this process, the Central Election Commission announced that the elections will be held on October 27th under the slogan

"My Choice - My Prosperous Homeland." The "E-Saylov" information system is a key tool in making the election process more transparent and accessible. It facilitates around 60 interactions between election commissions, political party candidates, observers, and the media entirely electronically. Integrated with other electronic platforms, the system automates many procedures in the election process without human intervention. This system forms an extensive database of nearly 400,000 participants in the election process, including election commission members, candidates, and observers. Around 32,000 participants will professionally use the information system, which includes communication through 40 types of SMS notifications. For citizens, the "E-Saylov" information system introduces several conveniences in obtaining election-related information. Specifically, it provides statistical data on voters and polling stations, information on candidates for various elections, and interactive maps to learn about candidates and their biographies. The meeting emphasized that the "E-Saylov" information system represents a new level

of technological advancement and transparency in elections. It was also noted that according to Article 37 of the Election Code, political parties have the right to nominate candidates for deputies to the Legislative Chamber and local Councils. To participate in the elections, political parties must have been registered by the Ministry of Justice at least four months before the announcement of the election campaign and collect at least 40,000 signatures supporting their participation. Additionally, the meeting approved a calendar plan to ensure that the activities related to conducting the elections are carried out step-by-step within the timelines specified by election legislation. The Central Election Commission, as an impartial and independent constitutional body, will take all necessary measures to prepare for and conduct the upcoming elections in full compliance with national legislation and international election standards, ensuring the process is open and transparent. A Press Center has also been established under the Central Election Commission. Central Election Commission of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Briefs

China approves use of local coal for 3 plants

BEIJING: China has approved the conversion of three coal-fired power plants in Pakistan from imported coal to local coal, a significant move aimed at reducing energy costs. Sources confirmed that Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb and Energy Minister Owais Leghari, currently visiting China, facilitated the agreement. The plants affected include the 1,320 MW Sahiwal Coal Power Plant, the 1,320 MW Hub Power Plant, and the 1,320 MW Port Qasim Power Plant, all known for producing some of Pakistan's most expensive electricity. The Chinese delegation provided a positive response regarding the re-profiling of these coal power plants, ensuring a shift to local coal. The two countries also outlined the future steps required to advance this conversion process. Additionally, Chinese officials assured full support for Pakistan regarding Panda Bonds, further solidifying the cooperation between the two nations. Meetings between Pakistani and Chinese officials will continue to address the conversion and re-profiling of the power plants. - Agencies

Venezuelans vote in polls challenging Maduro's grip

CARACAS: Venezuelans are going to the polls in what has been described as the biggest challenge to the governing socialist PSUV party since it came to power 25 years ago. Nicolás Maduro - who has been president since the death of his mentor, Hugo Chávez, in 2013 - will be running for a third consecutive term. His main challenger is Edmundo González, a former diplomat who has the backing of a coalition of opposition parties. Polls suggest Mr González has a wide lead over the incumbent, but as Mr Maduro's 2018 re-election was widely dismissed as neither free nor fair, there are fears that the result of this election could be tampered with, should it not go Mr Maduro's way. Those fears have been compounded by the fact that Mr Maduro has told his supporters that he would win "by hook or by crook". But after casting his vote in the capital on Sunday, Mr Maduro vowed to "make sure" the results were respected, AFP reported. Reuters news agency reported that Venezuelans started to turn out before 06:00 local time (10:00 GMT), when voting was scheduled to begin. Tensions rose outside a polling station in Caracas, where queuing voters faced off and clashed as they waited for the doors to open, the agency added. - Agencies

JI chief vows to continue sit-in until demands are met

Hafiz Naeemur Rehman says they have come out to protest for the future of the country



KHAYAM ABBASI

RAWALPINDI: Ameer of Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan, Hafiz Naeemur Rehman, stated that when the ruling class fails to work and the Parliament becomes nothing more than a rubber stamp, the public is forced to take to

the streets. Addressing the participants of a protest sit-in at Liaquat Bagh in Rawalpindi, he emphasized that no one desires to leave their homes and sit on the streets. However, they have come out for the future of the country and will stay until their demands are met. "Agreements with Independent Power Producers (IPPs) were kept hidden, and

upon investigation, it was revealed that the ruling class was involved. The budget for capacity charges on electricity surpasses the defence budget. IPPs that are working properly should continue, but those that are not should be completely shut down," he added. Rehman asserted that the state has authority over every agreement, and if this is

not the case, those who made these agreements should be hanged in public. The ruling class, he criticized, is not working, and the Parliament is ineffective, forcing the public to protest. Rehman said that the government has set the minimum wage at Rs37,000, but he challenged them to run a household with electricity bills and inflation at that rate. Questioning if the poor should choose the path of suicide, the JI chief stated that they had no choice but to engage in political resistance and called on the youth, lawyers, scholars, and civil society of Pakistan to join their movement. He said that their basic demands have been conveyed to the government's negotiation committee, which include reducing electricity prices, ending the slab system, and abolishing taxes on salaried individuals. Pointing out that Pakistan collects four times more taxes than India, he highlighted that educated individuals, businessmen, and farmers are drowning in debt. There would be a public meeting today, and on Monday, women would come out in protest. He hinted at possibly announcing sit-ins across Pakistan in today's meeting, emphasizing that they will rise to claim their rights. He reiterated that both sit-ins and negotiations will continue simultaneously. Mere lip service, he warned, will not work, and Jamaat-e-Islami will not relent until public issues are resolved

Azma berates KP gov't's

Says one cannot become a Che Guevara or Nelson Mandela by using judicial cover

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Provincial Information Minister Azma Bokhari has criticised the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government's demand for a judicial commission regarding the May 9 incident. In her response, Bokhari stated that the KP government's letter to the Peshawar High Court, requesting the formation of a judicial commission was an unsuccessful attempt to hide behind judicial protection. She likened it to a coward running towards the city when facing imminent death. Information minister emphasised that judicial commissions were usually formed for obscure and clarification-seeking matters. He argued that the evidence of the failed insurrection on May 9, including videos, photographs and audios, were already available. She labelled the May 9 events as a conspiracy against the country and claimed that the identities of those involved including facilitators and masterminds have already been exposed.

CTD apprehends 38 terrorists in July

DNA

LAHORE: The Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) Punjab has arrested 38 terrorists in 449 intelligence-based operations conducted across various cities of the province in July. According to a spokesman of CTD, operations were conducted in Lahore, Rahim Yar Khan, Narowal, Rawalpindi, and Multan. Earlier, the Punjab Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) arrested Amin-ul-Haq, a close associate of Al-Qaeda founder Osama bin Laden. Addressing a news conference in Lahore, DIG CTD Usman Akram Gondal said that Amin al-Haq, a key Al-Qaeda operative, was taken into custody yesterday. He stated that the arrested Al-Qaeda operative's name was included in the list of terrorists wanted by the US and EU. The CTD launched an investigation into the matter, terming the arrest as a significant breakthrough, DIG CTD Usman Akram Gondal added.

PTI to hold countrywide protest on August 5

Fresh election is the only solution of prevailing crises in the country, say PTI leaders

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Sunday announced holding countrywide protest on Aug 5. Addressing a press conference in Islamabad, senior PTI leaders Omar Ayub, Asad Qaiser and Sheikh Waqas Akram said that fresh election is the only solution of prevailing crises in the country. "The Sharif family wants to create misunderstanding between the Pak Army and PTI," said leader of

the opposition in National Assembly Omar Ayub. The former National Assembly speaker Asad Qaiser said that 41 MNAs of PTI are being targeted after the Supreme Court verdict on reserved seats. He urged the apex court to take suo motu over this issue as it is tantamount to contempt of court. "The PTI founder was arrested on Aug 5 illegally and therefore we'll stage protest on that day," Asad Qaiser said, while adding that the PTI's protest would also be against the inflation. He said that worst crackdown is going on against the PTI workers and social media activists. He added that all the political parties must sit together to oust this government. MNA Sheikh Waqas Akram said that the country is heading towards anarchy and this government has ruined the economy. He said that the PTI workers cannot be intimidated through Section 144.

Khamenei formally endorses Pezeshkian as Iran's president

FOREIGN DESK

TEHRAN: Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has formally endorsed Masoud Pezeshkian as Iran's new president. At a ceremony broadcast live on state television on Sunday, Ayatollah Khamenei gave his official approval for Pezeshkian, who emerged victorious in the second round of the presidential vote on July 5. Iranian state and military officials, seminary and university professors, representatives of various guilds, a group of families of martyrs, and foreign ambassadors in Tehran attended the ceremony. The Leader's decree, endorsing the mandate of President Pezeshkian, was read out at the event by the head of the leader's office. In the decree, Ayatollah Khamenei said, "The fate-determining test of the presidential election ended with calmness and sobriety in difficult conditions thanks to the endeavors of people and officials, and the person chosen by the nation became ready to take on a great responsibility." He also described the 14th presidential vote, which was held after martyred president Ebrahim Raisi's unfinished term of office, as "one of the honors of the Iranian nation and a sign of the establishment of a sustainable Islamic system that indicate the rationality and sobriety of the country's political environment." The Leader also expressed prayers and wishes for Pezeshkian's success, adding that the nation's vote and his endorsement will persist as long

as the president follows his usual approach on the straight path of Islam and the Revolution. Pezeshkian will take the oath of office in parliament on Tuesday. The 69-year-old trained heart surgeon garnered more than 16 million votes against ex-nuclear negotiator Saeed Jalili, who secured upwards of 13 million out of over 30 million votes cast, with the voter turnout standing at almost 50 percent. In a victory speech, Pezeshkian described his triumph as the start of "a new chapter" for the country. The election was called early after Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi lost his life in a helicopter crash in May. Delivering a speech at the event, the Leader said Iran's "democracy is mixed with competition and healthiness." "This democracy that exists today in our country was not obtained cheaply and easily, it is the result of people's uprising against a chaotic and disastrous situation that prevailed in the past," he emphasized. "From the first day of the victory of the [1979] Islamic Revolution, the late founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Imam Khomeini, firmly established an unprecedented matter in the country that is the people's involvement, presence, and influence in managing the country." Ayatollah Khamenei further said that the Islamic Republic has in the past more than 40 years witnessed dozens of elections that were held in a healthy and competitive atmosphere with the motivated presence of the people. He also expressed his satisfaction with the holding of the presidential vote, saying, "Thank God, the people elected a competent president... We all have to help him and his government do great jobs." Meanwhile, the Leader advised the future government and officials to work tirelessly and without expecting a wage in a manner resembling jihad (endeavor for the sake of God). He said that the three branches of the Iranian government—executive, legislative, and judiciary—and the Armed forces should play a role based on their duties wherever they are needed.

Vladimir Putin threatens to restart production of nuclear weapons

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin on Sunday threatened to relaunch production of intermediate-range nuclear weapons if the United States confirmed its intention to deploy missiles to Germany or elsewhere in Europe. "If the United States carries out such plans, we will consider ourselves liberated from the unilateral moratorium previously adopted on the deployment of medium- and short-range strike capabilities," Putin said during a naval parade in Saint Petersburg. Missiles, which can travel between 500 and 5,500 kilometres (300-3,400 miles), were the subject of an arms control treaty signed by the US and the Soviet Union in 1987. But both Washington and Moscow withdrew from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty in 2019, each accusing the other of violations. Russia subsequently said it would not restart production of such missiles as long as the United States did not deploy missiles abroad. In early July, Washington and Berlin announced that the "episodic deployments" of long-range US missiles, including Tomahawk cruise missiles, to Germany would begin in 2026. Putin said that "important Russian administrative and military sites" would fall within the range of such missiles that "could in the future be equipped with nuclear warheads, such that our territories would be within around 10 minutes" of a strike being launched. "This situation reminds us of the events of the Cold War linked to the deployment of American Pershing medium-range missiles in Europe," said Putin. The Kremlin had already warned in mid-July that the proposed US deployment would mean that European capitals would become a target for Russian missiles. - APP

Israeli genocidal war on Gaza continues

The health ministry saif that the death toll from the ongoing Israeli bombardments and shooting attacks, which started on October 7, climbed to 39,324 martyrs and the number of the wounded surged to 90,830 people

NEWS DESK

GAZA: As the US-backed Israeli genocidal war on the Gaza Strip entered day 296 on Sunday, aerial and artillery strikes continued to pound and target different areas and massacre more civilians. Reporters for the Palestinian Information Center (PIC) said that the Israeli occupation army continued to bomb homes and attack citizens in different areas of Gaza, especially in Khan Yunis and Rafah, during the past 24 hours. According to media sources, three civilians from the family of al-Qassab and an-Najjar were martyred following an Israeli attack on Khan Yunis. A number of civilians, including a woman and a girl child, were martyred and others were injured in an Israeli attack on a tent in Mawasi area in Khan Yunis. The Israeli army also bombed an area in az-Zeitoun neighborhood in southern Gaza, injuring three citizens. Meanwhile, medical sources said that bodies of five martyrs were transported to the morgue of Nasser Hospital following different attacks on Khan Yunis. Citizens were able to evacuate a number of martyrs from a bombed area in Bani Shehla town in eastern Khan Yunis. More casualties were reported in other areas of Gaza following Israeli aerial, artillery and shooting attacks last night and today. The health ministry in Gaza said on Sunday that the Israeli occupation army

Israel's desire to destroy Hamas 'unrealistic': Lavrov

MOSCOW: Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said Israel's goal of eliminating the Palestinian resistance movement Hamas is an "unrealistic" task. Speaking at the end of his visit to Malaysia after attending the 57th Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Laos on Saturday, Lavrov said Hamas will not cease to exist as it has support from the Muslim world. "Israel says through [prime minister Benjamin] Netanyahu that the war will not end until Hamas is completely eradicated. In my opinion, and that of many of my partners, that is an unrealistic mission," he said. "Hamas continues to exist and has sufficient capabilities and support including in the Muslim world," he added. Since October last year, Netanyahu has reiterated that Hamas must be "completely destroyed" before Israel will agree to end its genocidal war against Gaza which has killed more than 39,300 Palestinians so far. However, domestic pressure is running high in the occupied territories for a deal that would bring home the remaining 110 captives held by Hamas in Gaza. Tens of thousands of Israelis have consistently rallied against Netanyahu and his cabinet, demanding early elections and a deal to return the captives. Agencies committed three massacres in different areas of the Gaza Strip during the past 24 hours, killing at least 66 civilians and injuring over 241 others, while a large number of victims are still under the rubble of bombed buildings or lying on roads. In a statement, the health ministry said that the Israeli army killed and injured a large number of civilians in different areas of Gaza during the past 24 hours, but at least 307 of them, including 66 martyrs, were transported to hospitals. The health ministry added that the death toll from the ongoing Israeli bombardments and shooting attacks, which started on October 7, climbed to 39,324 martyrs and the number of the wounded surged to 90,830 people. The Gaza Strip has been under brutal bombardment since a cross-border operation was launched by Hamas's armed wing, al-Qassab Brigades, on October 7.

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