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Editor: Omer Rizwan

## Macron opposes NATO plans in Asia – FT

PARIS (Agencies): French President Emmanuel Macron has refused to approve a scheme to open a NATO liaison office in Japan, arguing the organization should not extend itself beyond the North Atlantic, the Financial Times reported. Macron's opposition to the new facility planned for Tokyo, which would be NATO's first such office in Asia, has resulted in a monthslong deadlock within the bloc, eight sources familiar with the talks told FT on Monday. Opening a liaison center in Japan would require unanimous consent from NATO's North Atlantic Council, meaning Paris has the ability to scuttle the proposal. According to one of the sources reached by the Financial Times, Macron believes the body's charter imposes geographic limitations which bar NATO from expanding into Asia. At a conference last week, the president reportedly warned that pushing NATO



to enlarge its "spectrum and the geography" would be "a big mistake." Another unnamed source told the outlet that Paris is unwilling to support any policy that "contributes to NATO-China tension," as Beijing has already made its misgivings known about the proposed liaison office. Last month, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said NATO should remain within its own sphere of influence and not seek to grow its presence in Asia, arguing the region

"does not welcome bloc confrontation or military blocs." The scheme has been discussed intermittently since 2007, when Japan's then-Prime Minister Shinzo Abe first visited NATO's headquarters, and was raised again in recent months. Tokyo has steadily increased its cooperation with the bloc over the years, opening its first NATO branch office in Brussels in 2018, while Prime Minister Fumio Kishida became the first Japanese leader to attend a NATO summit last year.

## Protests in Morocco over 'massacre' of stray animals

RABAT (Agencies): Animal rights activists in Morocco staged a protest in the capital Rabat yesterday calling for an end to the culling of stray cats and dogs by the authorities. The demonstration came a day after the interior ministry informed local media that it had already taken measures to encourage municipalities to avoid using firearms and poisons to kill stray dogs. One demonstrator from Casablanca was quoted by AFP as saying he was against "the pitiless extermination of cats and dogs in Morocco". "Dogs are maltreated and put in cages with nothing to eat or drink, they are massacred — poisoned or burned alive — and their young are drowned," the activist said. The protest was held outside parliament in Rabat and was organized by the North African country's Society for the Protection of Animals (SPAM) amid a wider international campaign. "We want an immediate end to the killing of street dogs," SPAM chief Ali Izzidine said. "We also want parliament to pass a law protecting animals." SPAM has also urged the government to adopt the application of a TNVR programme (Trap, Neuter, Vaccinate, Return). Despite Morocco signing an agreement "to sterilise, vaccinate and identify stray dogs" in 2019, activists claim it has yet to be implemented.

## At least 12 dead in Venezuelan gold mine disaster

EL CALLAO (Agencies): At least 12 illegal miners were killed in a shuttered gold mine in the Venezuelan town of El Callao, local officials told AFP on Saturday. Heavy rain filled the mine with water and trapped the prospectors inside, where they were asphyxiated. The group "entered a mine that had been closed a long time," local security secretary, General Edgar Colina Reyes, told AFP Reyes said that "the mine was flooded from rains" on Wednesday, which collapsed the mine and made escape impossible. Five bodies were recovered on Friday and another seven on Saturday, he added. Reyes told Reuters that 112 people survived the collapse, and that authorities returned to the site on Sunday to check for additional casualties or survivors. The 12 bodies have already been returned to their families, he stated. Located in southeastern Venezuela, El Callao has been a gold-mining center since the precious metal was first discovered there in 1853.

## Qatar, Egypt agree to launch initiative to support Sudan humanitarian aid

CAIRO (Agencies): Qatar and Egypt have agreed to launch an initiative supporting Sudanese people, as the conflict in Sudan continues to rage almost two months on. In a phone call yesterday between Qatari Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and Egyptian president Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, the two leaders discussed a number of regional issues and ways to strengthen bilateral ties in various fields, including helping to alleviate suffering in Sudan. According to Egyptian presidential spokesperson Ahmed Fahmy, cited by media reports, the leaders emphasised the importance of working to "contain the humanitarian situation in Sudan, facilitate the flow of relief aid, and spare civilians the impact of the clashes." Al Thani and El-Sisi also agreed to launch "a joint initiative to support and provide relief to Sudanese

civilians with an aim to mitigate the repercussions of the crisis on the Sudanese population." That initiative will be "carried out through the provision of humanitarian and relief services, provided that the concerned authorities in the two countries will develop the relevant executive framework and mechanisms." The discussions on the planned initiative were confirmed by the Amiri Diwan of Qatar – the Emir's administrative office – which issued a similar statement and agreed to intensify their "joint coordination to provide support and assistance to Sudan and ease the consequences of the conflict." Since 15 April, the Sudanese army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) have been battling for control of the country following a disagreement regarding the integration of the RSF into the military.

## Turkiye to deploy commando battalion to northern Kosovo to help NATO

ANKARA (Agencies): Turkiye is set to send a commando battalion to northern Kosovo in response to a request by NATO for troop reinforcements to help curb violent unrest, after Serb militants wounded 30 international soldiers. On Monday this week, ethnic Serbs in Kosovo clashed with troops from NATO's Kosovo Force (KFOR), wounding 11 Italian and 19 Hungarian soldiers through the clashes and the use of improvised explosive incendiary devices which caused fractures and burns. There were also reportedly live bullets fired at the peacekeeping troops during the incident. The clashes came after confrontations by Serbs who were attempting to block recently-elected ethnic Albanian officials from assuming office in the area, adding to tensions that have been building up in northern Kosovo over the past year. In a press statement posted on its official Twitter account, the Turkish Defence Ministry made it known that Ankara is closely following developments in the Balkans region "where we have common historical and cultural values," and urged "restraint and dialogue to resolve these developments in northern Kosovo which endanger regional security and stability." In response to a request from NATO's Joint Force Command Naples, the Turkish Defence Ministry statement announced that a commando battalion will join the alliance's KFOR peacekeeping mission as a reserve unit, where it will de-

ploy to the Sultan Murat Barracks in Kosovo today and on Monday. According to the ministry, the Turkish troops heading to Kosovo will number around 500, adding to the approximately 350 Turkish troops currently already in KFOR's total force of almost 3,800. The deployment is seemingly part of NATO's announcement on Tuesday that it would be reinforcing its presence in the area with 700 more soldiers. The move by Ankara is seen as the latest representation of Turkiye's increasingly prominent role in the Balkans in recent years, especially at a time when the United States – the historic backer of Kosovo's independence – has turned on the Kosovan government by announcing sanctions on it for attempting to take control of municipal and governmental buildings in the north of its territory. Washington accuses Pristina of stoking tensions through those attempts, as Kosovo's northern region is dominated by ethnic Serbs in contrast to the rest of the country which is dominated by Albanians and Muslims. While it has criticised and sanctioned Kosovo, the US has avoided criticising Serbia for its role in the tensions, in a policy which many analysts say is a tactic to keep Belgrade from slipping further to the side of Russia – its traditionally close ally and hegemon – in order to stem Serbian support for Moscow's ongoing invasion of Ukraine and broader regional influence.

## Indian opposition leader Rahul Gandhi calls on US audience to stand up for 'modern India'

NEW YORK: Indian opposition leader Rahul Gandhi pressed his criticism of the country's leadership in a speech Sunday, calling for Indians in the US and back home to stand up for democracy and the Indian constitution. Gandhi, a sharp critic of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi who was expelled from Parliament, accused Modi and his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) of dividing the country and failing to focus on important issues such as unemployment and education. "To be nasty to people, to be arrogant, to be violent, these are not Indian values," Gandhi, 52, told a crowd of about 700 at the Indian Overseas Congress USA event at the Jacob Javits Center in

Manhattan. He spoke just after a minute of silence recognizing a massive train derailment in eastern India that killed 275 people and injured hundreds more. Gandhi has been on a three-city tour of the United States, including speaking engagements at Stanford University in California and the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. Meanwhile, US congressional leaders have invited Modi to address a joint meeting of Congress later this month. House Speaker Kevin McCarthy, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and other leaders announced the address as an "opportunity to share your vision for India's future and speak to the global challenges our countries both face."

## US, Japan, South Korea aim to share North Korea missile warning data

WASHINGTON (Agencies): The United States, Japan and South Korea aim to share North Korean missile warning data before the end of 2023, the three countries said in a statement following a Saturday meeting of their defense chiefs in Singapore. The three sides "recognized trilateral efforts to activate a data sharing mechanism to exchange real-time missile warning data before the end of the year in order to improve each country's ability to detect and assess missiles launched" by

North Korea, the statement said. The announcement followed a failed North Korean attempt to launch a spy satellite on Wednesday, which crashed into the sea after a rocket failure. South Korea's military said it had managed to locate and salvage a portion of the suspected debris. Seoul, Tokyo and Washington all slammed the launch, which they said violated a raft of UN resolutions barring Pyongyang from any tests using ballistic missile technology.

## Libya departs thousands of Egyptian migrants

TRIPOLI (Agencies): Thousands of Egyptian migrants have been deported back to their home country on foot from eastern Libya through a land border crossing, reports suggest. A Libyan security source is quoted by Reuters as saying that about 4,000 migrants were discovered during raids on human traffickers following a clash between security forces and smugglers, and that all of them had been deported. However, an Egyptian security source is said to have clarified that only around 2,200 of the 4,000 migrants found were in Libya illegally and thus expelled. While the majority of the migrants were Egyptians, some were also citizens of other Af-

rican countries. The deportees were taken to a location called Emsaed near the border and then walked about 2km into Egypt, the Egyptian source said, as reported by Reuters. Libya is both a destination and transit country for migrants, due to its job opportunities and geographical location, according to migration agencies. The majority are from Sub-Saharan and Northern Africa, with a smaller number from Asia and the Middle East. The UN's International Organization for Migration (IOM) said that more than half a million migrants are in Libya, many of whom aim to cross to Europe by boat, while others have found jobs and settled in the oil-rich country.

## Bangladesh power cuts may last two more weeks on fuel shortages

- Bangladesh has suffered under severe power shortages since April as a searing heatwave spiked demand for electricity  
- The power losses threaten Bangladesh's crucial apparel sector that accounts for more than 80 percent of its exports and supplies retailers  
DHAKA (Agencies): Bangladesh could face power cuts for two more weeks, its power minister said late on Sunday, as higher electricity consumption because of rising temperatures has caused a fuel shortfall for generation plants. Bangladesh has suffered under severe power shortag-

es since April as a searing heatwave spiked demand for electricity and then a deadly cyclone cut off supplies of natural gas to fuel plants. The country has also curtailed imports of liquefied natural gas (LNG), its main power generation fuel, after record high prices in the second half of 2022 made the fuel too expensive. "This condition may remain for another two weeks," Nasrul Hamid, minister of state for power, energy and mineral resources told reporters. "This problem is happening because we are not able to ensure an adequate supply of coal and gas," Hamid said.

## Islamic scholar appeals for dialogue between regional rivals Algeria, Morocco

President of the International Union for Muslim Scholars (IUMS) Ali al-Qaradaghi has called for dialogue between regional rivals Algeria and Morocco to ease their tension, Anadolu reports. "We feel pain due to sedition between Algeria and Morocco," al-Qaradaghi said on Twitter. "This sedition is meant to eliminate what is left of strength of the Islamic and Arab nation." The prominent Islamic scholar appealed for both sides to ignore voices seeking to fuel

the rift between the two neighbors. "There is no need for escalation. We are for dialogue and against rift," al-Qaradaghi added. Algeria-Morocco ties have been strained for decades against the backdrop of the disputed Western Sahara region between Rabat and the Algeria-backed Polisario Front. In August 2021, Algeria severed diplomatic relations with Morocco, accusing Rabat of having "hostile tendencies," an accusation denied by Moroccan authorities.

**About Khyber Mail** The Khyber mail was first published in Peshawar, Pakistan in 1932. A newspaper in English by the eminent journalist Sheikh Sana Ullah. From 1932 to 1989 it has survived as leading English newspaper in the region by the sons of Sana Ullah i.e. Sheikh Zaka Ullah, Sheikh Inayat Ullah and Sheikh Saleem Ullah. The publication was shut down in 1989 due to various reasons. The current owner Rizwan Inayat son of Sheikh Inayat Ullah and grandson of Sheikh Sana Ullah, has restarted the family heritage but meeting with the requirement of the century, by giving the readers current happenings around the world with one touch anywhere any time and updating the reader to pace up with the world.



## Traffic police launch awareness campaign to promote laws

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawar Traffic Police on Sunday launched a new initiative to promote awareness of traffic laws among the city’s residents. Under the guidance of IGP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, flyers have been distributed on rickshaws and main roads to educate people about traffic regulations. In the Cantonment Division, digital screens are being used to inform the public about traffic laws, as stated by Chief Traffic Officer Qamar Hayat Khan. The campaign, titled “Phoolon Ka Sheher Peshawar” (Peshawar, the City of Flowers), appeals to citizens to cooperate with the traffic police

for their own safety. The awareness campaign is being rolled out in phases, with subsequent enforcement efforts to ensure the effective implementation of traffic laws. Chief Traffic Officer Qamar Hayat Khan said the importance of personal responsibility and urges citizens to support the traffic police by following seat belt and helmet regulations, avoiding overspeeding and overloading, maintaining lane discipline, and disembarking from vehicles safely. As part of the campaign, SP education Shazia Shahid and her team are providing information to residents in various sectors, focusing on the use

of seat belts and helmets, avoiding mobile phone usage while driving, and the significance of adhering to traffic rules. Wearing helmets and seat belts during travel ensures the safety of individuals, as even a momentary distraction caused by mobile phone use can lead to severe accidents, putting lives at risk. Accidents can occur within seconds due to drivers’ negligence. Citizens are encouraged to allow extra time when traveling to any destination to prioritize their safety and arrive securely. A few minutes of impatience can endanger lives and disrupt the peace of their homes.

## Traffic police establishes checkpoints to enforce new public transport fares

ABBOTTABAD (APP): Following the directives of Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Police Hazara region Tahir Ayub Khan, Senior Superintendent Police (SSP) Traffic Abbottabad Arif Javed Khan on Monday initiated a campaign against drivers of local public transport who were charging extra than the prescribed fares list. While taking action against other violations, including tinted glasses, without helmet motorcycling and underage driving, the traffic police during the past week established checkpoints in various locations including Abbottabad city, Havelian, Galyat and Qalandarabad, where 340 vehicles were fined by removing

black papers, and 123 motorcycles were seized for riding without a helmet, and later released after providing helmets. Moreover, 87 motorcycles were confiscated for underage driving, which were returned after taking a written undertaking, said a police spokesman. Vehicles without number plates were also held and released after applying number plates, and during enforcement actions against drivers charging extra fares on various routes, vehicles were checked on the spot and drivers were fined for collecting fares without proper authorization, and the collected fare was returned to the passengers, he added.

## Kohat Police arrested 26 suspects, including arms smuggler

KOHAT (APP): On the special instructions of DPO Farhan Khan, 26 suspects were arrested in the search and strike operation conducted in different localities across the district. According to details, as part of the search and strike operation, raids were conducted on the possible abodes of wanted criminals, their facilitators and criminal elements, said a spokesman of the Kohat Police here on Sunday. He revealed that 2 guns, 1 repeater,1 rifle, 5 pistols, 9

chargers and cartridges were recovered from the arrested persons. A heavy contingent of police and Elite Force participated in the search and strike operation under the leadership of DSP Cantt Circle Yousaf Jan, SHO Muhammad Riaz Shaheed Police Station Islamuddin and SHO Jarma Police Station Sohail Shah. Separate cases were registered in the respective Police Stations against the alleged accused who were caught with weapons in the operation.

## Threat of Congo, Lumpy shin viruses in cattles

PESHAWAR (APP): With the arrival of Eid-ul-Azha, there is a fear of the spread of Congo and Lumpy Skin viruses in cattle, said Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Livestock Department in a letter sent to all district administrations. There is a possibility of large-scale spread of the virus due to movement of cattle and recommendations

in this connection issued to prevent possible Congolese and Lumpy viruses should be strictly implemented, the letter says. Check posts in tribal districts should be provided with additional spray for cattle, said an official of the Livestock Department. He said staff to be posted at check posts in North Waziristan and all sub-divisions, the

official of the Livestock Department. He said diseases spread by cattle are also a threat to public health, Director Livestock Department Alamzeb Khan. He said till now 83000 vaccine doses of Lumpy Skin virus have been purchased. Funds have been sought from the Finance Department to purchase more vaccines, Director Livestock.

## Influential political,tribal figures to join PPP: Bacha

PESHAWAR (APP): Provincial President PPP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Minister of State for Water Resources, Mohammad Ali Shah Bacha has

said that numerous influential political leaders and tribal elders will join Pakistan People’s Party soon. In a statement issued here on Sunday, the PPP stalwart said that the future belongs to their party and said that the province will be made a fortress of the party and the next chief minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will be a ‘jiyala’. He said that the PTI government had proved the worst government in the history of the country and incompetency of it played havoc with both the country and its economy. He said that the next elections would be held on time. He said that PPP is a popular political party and its popularity graph had never declined. He said that during the period of the last 55 years, the PPP leadership had faced challenges with bravery. Mohammad Ali Shah Bacha said that now the party is fully

focused on KP and will not repeat the mistake of the past. He said that PPP is emerging as the top popular party of the province as it wants peace and socio-economic uplift through Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) to address the sense of deprivation of the people. He said that since the last 13 years, PPP has played the role of opposition and now it is once again becoming an effective and organized political force of the province. He recalled that when PPP assumed the reigns of power in 2008, the government was even not in a position to pay salaries to employees, but it still gave National Finance Commission (NFC) Award, gave social security programme like Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) for destitute women and also guaranteed provincial autonomy.

## Crackdown Against Ghost Employees In Merged Districts Commence

PESHAWAR (APP): On the instructions of the Elementary and Secondary Education Department of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the district officers of the Education Department in South Waziristan and other merged districts have formally started action against the ghost employees in all the educational institutions. An official of the education department

said here on Monday that the teachers and other staff who remain absent from duty would be identified and terminated from services. The move was aimed at ensuring quality education to students of merged districts, replacing ghost employees with qualified and competent people who could teach the students without showing dereliction of duty.

## Two Terrorists Arrested From Swat: IGP

PESHAWAR (APP): Police in Swat on Monday arrested two terrorists associated with the outlawed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) from Swat. Addressing a press conference KP Inspector General of Police Akhtar Hayyat Khan said the police have arrested two TTP terrorists named Asmatullah and Rafiullah aka Jawad from Swat. He said every year attempts from a ‘neighboring country’ are made to disturb law and order in Swat. Giving details about the arrest of two TTP operatives, the KP IG said police launched an operation on information about the presence of terrorists on May 23 in Buner. He said in an attack by the terrorists a

citizen was martyred while a jawan of Elite Force named Waqar Khan had sustained wounds. He said the terrorists’ group was active in Charbagh and Manglaore areas of the Swat district. The terrorists’ facilitator, Asmatullah was involved in providing safe passage to the TTP operatives. The terrorist named Rafiullah along with his family had moved to Afghanistan in 2012 and returned to Pakistan, last year, after the formation of TTP Swat group. He said both the terrorists have been arrested in an intelligence based operation and further investigation from them was underway to arrest their accomplices.

## KP to be made strong hold of PPP as leading political figures joining party: President PPP

PESHAWAR (APP): President of PPP Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha has said that PPP would be appeared as the strongest party of KP and predicted that the Chief Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa would soon be announced himself as a Jayala. In a press statement issued here on Sunday, Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha said that the province would be made a stronghold of PPP as more important political and tribal figures from across the province are joining PPP under the leadership of Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Asif Ali Zardari. He said that very soon more big surprises are coming in this connection. He said Imran Khan has sunk the country and the 4-year economy and the Tehreek-e-Insaf government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa have proved to be the worst government in history.

About the general elections, he said, it would be held accordingly at its appropriate time by fulfilling all democratic norms. In the 55-year era, our leaders bravely faced the conditions and hardships and accepted all kinds of situations with determination and commitment. PPP, he said, would pay full attention to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the mistakes of the past will not be repeated. PPP wants peace in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. PPP wants to give prosperity to every house of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa through Benazir Income Support Program, he added. They will end the feeling of deprivation of the people of the province, he said, adding, With the support of Almighty Allah and commitment and determination of the PPP leadership, the PPP would continue hard work day and night to make the party ac-

tive and organized and would have to fulfill the responsibility that the party has assigned to him. It has happened and today the PPP is being active and organized in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Syed Muhammad Ali Shah Bacha said that the process of joining the PPP will continue. Jai Bhutto’s voices are echoing and slogans are being raised throughout the province because the PPP is the country’s largest political party, serving the people without any political affiliation. PPP has always ended hateful politics and the party wants peace in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and will take all possible measures to end the feeling of deprivation in the province, Muhammad Ali Shah Bach said while quoting both Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Asif Ali Zardari as saying. He said the top leadership of PPP have always

discussed that how to end the sense of deprivation and unemployment in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and that by coming to power, the sense of deprivation of the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will be removed and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa will be made the cradle of peace. He said that in 2008, when the PPP government came to power, the government did not have money to pay salaries to the employees, the PPP gave the NFC award, the PPP gave provincial autonomy, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa package to the provinces and millions of people were also given Benazir Income Support. Widows and the poor are receiving money, he said that the coming time belongs to the PPP and a plan will be made to end unemployment because the PPP has always served the poor, Mr. Bacha said.

### GOLD PRICE IN PAK

Gold Rate	24K Gold	22K Gold	21K Gold	18K Gold
Per Tola Gold	Rs 233,300	Rs 213,857	Rs 204,137	Rs 174,975
Per 10 Gram	Rs 200,017	Rs 183,348	Rs 175,015	Rs 150,013
Per Gram Gold	Rs 20,002	Rs 18,335	Rs 17,502	Rs 15,001
Per Ounce	Rs 567,041	Rs 519,785	Rs 496,161	Rs 425,280

### FOREX RATES

Currency	Buying	Selling
US Dollar	305	308
China Yuan	40.28	40.68
Japanese Yen	2	2.08
Saudi Riyal	80.5	81.5
U.A.E Dirham	83.5	84.5
UK Pound	377	381
Euro	322	325
Australian Dollar	202	204
Canadian Dollar	226	230

### Emergency Numbers

Organization	Phone No
Rescue 1122 HQrs	091-2264224-25
Rescue 1122 Mardan	0937-9230770
Fire Brigade Cantt:	091-9212534
Fire Brigade City	091-2566666
Police Emergency	091-9212222
Edhi Ambulance	091-2214575
Red Crescent Ambulance	091-2210836
Emergency Ambulance	091-2590846
Civil Defence, Peshawar	091-9212176
Lady Reading Hospital	091-9211430
HMC Peshawar	091-9217140-46
KTH Peshawar	091-9216340-8
Irnam Hospital	091-9216115
Mission Hospital	091-2212371
Al-Khidmat Hospital	091-2215945
Fauji Foundation Hospital	091-9212771-4
Frontier Foundation Blood Services	091-5703463
Hamza Foundation, Peshawar	091-5841632
Sui Gas, Peshawar	091-9213016
Wapda Complaint Peshawar	091-9212041
PIA, Peshawar	091-9213351
Airport Inquiry	114
Railway Inquiry	117





Courtesy: Defense One



## COMSTech team returns back to Pakistan after successful Conduct of 400 Eye Cataract Surgeries in Chad

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): A team of eight Pakistani ophthalmologists returned to Pakistan on Saturday night after conducting 400 eye cataract surgeries successfully in Chad. The initiative, organized by COMSTech in collaboration with the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) and Layton Rehmatullah Benevolent Trust, involved conducting 400 cataract surgeries in the Republic of Chad, a least developed country of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Africa. According to COMSTech, the primary objective of this initiative was to address the urgent eye care needs of the people of N'Djamena,



Chad. Over a span of eight days, the dedicated team of Pakistani ophthalmologists conducted a free eye camp in challenging weather conditions, leaving a lasting impact on the lives of hundreds of individuals. Prof. Dr M. Iqbal Choudhary, the Coordinator General of COMSTech, congratulated the team on the successful

mission and expressed his commitment to continuing such initiatives in the future. Despite the hot weather and numerous challenges, the team of doctors successfully completed their mission, earning praise for their unwavering dedication. Dr Zakaria Ousman Ramadan, the Honorary Consul General of Pakistan in Chad, appreciated the collaborative efforts that contributed to the resounding success of this initiative. He highlighted the strong partnership between the local government, the Ministry of Health of Chad, and COMSTech, which made the mission possible.

## Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khanniazi message on the Occasion of World Environment Day 2023

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): 'World Environment Day' (WED) is observed on 5th of June each year and calls for protecting our natural surroundings. The day, celebrated under the ambit of United Nations Environment Programme marks an occasion to raise awareness on the challenges facing our environment such as pollution, illegal wildlife trade, sustainable consumption, rising sea levels and food security. This year's theme for the

WED is 'Solutions to Plastic Pollution'. WED-2023 will showcase how countries, businesses and individuals are learning to use material more sustainably, offering hope that one day, plastic pollution will be history. This is a timely call, since the world is being inundated by plastic. More than 400 million tonnes of plastic is produced every year, half of which is designed to be used only once. Of that, less than 10% is recycled. An

estimated 19-23 million tonnes end up in lakes, rivers and seas. Today, plastic clog our landfills, leaches into the ocean and is combusted into toxic smoke, making it one of the gravest threats to the planet. In addition, microplastics find their way into the food we eat, the water we drink and the air we breathe. Many plastic products contain hazardous additives, which pose a serious threat to our health.

## NA Speaker extends felicitation to Ch.Latif Akbar for being successfully elected as Speaker Legislative Assembly of Azad Jammu & Kashmir

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf extended warm felicitation to former President PPP AJK and former opposition leader AJK Legislative Assembly Chaudhry Latif Akbar for being successfully elected as Speaker of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly. The Speaker said that the successful election of Chaudhry Latif Akbar

as the speaker of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly reflected the confidence reposed by members of Assembly on people centred policies of PPP. He also expressed his confidence that Chaudhry Latif Akbar as Speaker Azad Jammu and Kashmir Legislative Assembly would continue to exert his efforts for highlighting atrocities on Kashmiris in Indian occupied Jam-

mu & Kashmir at every international forum. The Speaker expressed his belief that legislative Assembly of AJK would continue to legislate in the best public interest under visionary and astute leadership of Chaudhry Latif Akbar. He added, "Ch. Latif Akbar being the Speaker of Legislative Assembly would follow principles of consensus based politics."

## Embassy of Turkmenistan organizes cycling event on World Cycle Day

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): A cycling event was organized to encourage people from all walks of life to adopt cycling to promote an active lifestyle and eco-friendly practices on Saturday. June 3 is celebrated worldwide as World Bicycle Day to recognize bicycle as a reliable and sustainable means of transportation. The event was organized with the initiative of the Embassy of Turkmenistan and in collaboration with Serena Hotels and Tabani Groups of companies. The cycling rally took off at D-chowk and culminated at Serena Business Complex, where attendees were served healthy refreshments. The event was attended by the diplomatic community, media personnel and Serena Hotel's associates. The chief guest for the occasion was Special Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Af-



fairs of Pakistan Syrus Sajjad Qazi. Speaking at the event, Special Secretary Syrus Sajjad Qazi appreciated the embassy of Turkmenistan for organizing the cycling event. He also lauded the government of Turkmen-



istan for initiating the resolution at the United Nations General Assembly for declaring June 3, as World Bicycle Day to promote healthy life style which will ultimately reduce emissions and pollution.

## Minister of State for Foreign Affairs' Visits to Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Belgium

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Ms. Hina Rabbani Khar will undertake official visits to Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Belgium from 5th to 13th June 2023. She will hold meetings at the Ministerial level to discuss political engagement and cooperation in develop-

ment, trade and climate change. She will also meet lawmakers and local entrepreneurs. In Belgium, she will hold meetings with Members of the European Parliament and senior officials of the European Commission. In Sweden, the Minister of State will attend the Annual Meeting of the European

Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) as a key note speaker. She will present Pakistan's perspective on issues of regional and global importance and interact with leading European decision-makers, experts, think-tanks and influencers for debates on foreign policy priorities and challenges.

## Govt plans to upgrade major airports at par international standards: Saad Rafique

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Railways and Aviation Khawaja Saad Rafique has said that the PML-N-led government had planned to upgrade the country's major airports with the addition of modern facilities for passengers to bring the airports at par with international standards. Talking to a private news channel on Monday, the minister said, "We will provide maximum basic facilities to passengers in airports and railway stations and generate more revenue for the department aiming to drive it to self-sufficiency." Apart from this, the government was also planning to upgrade security checks at railway stations, he added. Rafique said the government was taking several steps to improve the performance of airport authority and Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) services and would provide maximum facilities to the passengers. He said that a contract had been signed with the New

York City government to operate the renowned Roosevelt Hotel of the PIA situated in New York (USA) for three years. The minister further said that three international airports, including Lahore, Karachi and Islamabad, were being outsourced and made it clear that "outsourcing did not mean privatisation". A credible company, the International Finance Corporation (IFC) of the World Bank, had also been given the task of outsourcing the airports as no Pakistani company had the experience in this regard, he mentioned. The minister said that work of up-gradation at airports had already been started, adding the Gwadar International Airport was also under construction and would soon become operational. Replying to a question, he said that it was the first time in history that Quetta airport had started direct flights to Makkah for Hajj which was hassle-free and easy for passengers.

## IRSA releases 160,000 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Monday released 160,000 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 181,500 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1426.15 feet and was 28.15 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 58,700 cusecs and 57,300 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1132.90 feet, 82.90 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded as 55,500 cusecs and 35,400 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 74,800, 80,900, 62,300 and 21,600 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 36,400 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera while 12,000 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.

## Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change Commentrates World Environment Day

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): the Senate Standing Committee on Climate Change, chaired by Senator Seemee Ezdi, participated in a cleanliness drive at the Shahdara Margalla Hills National Park to commemorate World Environment Day on June 5th. During the event, the committee received a briefing from Ms. Rina Khan, Chairperson of the Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB), on the organization's efforts to protect and preserve the Margalla Hills in the capital city. Senator Seemee Ezdi addressed the IWMB's wildlife Volunteer Force and the We Fixers Group, lauding their efforts and pledging to empower the volunteer groups to take action. The committee recognized the importance of volunteerism and emphasized that the preservation of natural resources in the country is impossible without the role of the local community and awareness campaigns. The committee noted that cleaning efforts are difficult to maintain and achieve without incentivizing and penalizing, and recommended



the strict implementation of policies. Senator Seemee Ezdi while addressing the participants lamented on the contamination of Rawal Dam due to usage of contagious chemicals for fishing and trapping turtles resulting in many fishes not only to perish but the water being contaminated, affecting the ecosystem. It was pointed that the same is also a source of water supply to Rawalpindi and is causing huge repercussion in terms of water purification, and posing health hazards to the people of the twin cities. Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed said that fishing of this kind is an illegal activity and the Committee must take immediate notice. The committee recommended that the matter must be addressed on priority basis.

## Pakistan a Priority Market for Business: Commerce Minister tells British Companies

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Federal Minister for Commerce, Naveed Qamar has urged the UK business community in Manchester to prioritize Pakistan as a market for business expansion. He was addressing the Manchester based business community during his official visit to the UK to attend the Commonwealth Trade Ministers' meeting, said a press release issued here by the Commerce Ministry on Sunday. The minister highlighted the favorable business environment and abundant opportunities available in Pakistan during his speech at the event, which was attended by the business community, UK Parlia-



mentarians, Mayors, Councillors and media representatives. The minister acknowledged the 1.6 million-strong Pakistani diaspora in the UK as the cornerstone of the strong UK-Pakistan relationship. The UK has become Pakistan's third-largest export partner, second-largest investment partner and third-largest source of remittances, Naveed Qamar said.

## Warehouse collapsed in Hyderabad, no loss of life reported

HYDERABAD (Agencies): A Warehouse was collapsed in Liaquat Colony area of Hyderabad city on Monday night. No loss of life was reported. According to Deputy Commissioner Fuad Ghaffar Soomro, a warehouse in Liaquat Colony, in which rice was stored, completely collapsed. As soon as the report was received, rescue teams reached the

site and found that a sufficient stock of rice were stored in the godown, DC said. He informed that some animals present in the warehouse were killed due to its collapse but no loss of life was reported. The investigation of the incident will be initiated while inspection would also be carried out about warehouses set up in residential areas, DC added.

## Pakistan, Iraq chambers signed MoU

BAGHDAD (APP): Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari Monday here attended memorandum of understanding (MoU) signing ceremony between Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Pakistan and Iraq.

The MoU was signed by Pakistan's ambassador Ahmed Amjad Ali and Abdul Razaq Al Zuheere, President Federation of Iraqi Chambers of Commerce. It will facilitate linkages between business community of both countries.

## Promote inter-religious harmony: Pakistan Ambassador to UMasood Khan urges faith leaders

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States, Masood Khan, urged faith and community leaders to work together to promote inter-religious harmony when he met them at his residence on Saturday. The faith leaders comprised Muslims, Christians, Hindus and Sikhs. "The strong bonds of humanity bind us all together; While we maintain our religious beliefs and identities, we have to work collectively, as one community, for the larger national interests and projecting the true image of Pakistan," the



ambassador told them, according to a press release issued by the Pakistani embassy. "Pakistan is committed to protecting the rights of minorities and providing them with an enabling environment to contribute towards socio-economic development and nation-building process."

## 4,242 officers, officials of SEPCO penalized in last five years

ISLAMABAD (APP): A total of 4,242 officers and employees of Sukkur Electric Power Company (SEPCO) were fined for their poor performance in the last five years. Official sources told APP here that out of the total, 299 were officers while 3,943 were officials from (PBS 1-16). Some 331 major and 3,911 penalties were imposed on these officers and officials of the company during the said period, they said. They said losses of the company also remained above 30 percent during the last five years. Given the breakup, they said the company losses were recorded as 32.3 per cent in

2022-23, 35.6 per cent in 2021-22, 35.3 per cent in 2020-21, 36.3 in 2019-20 and 37 per cent in 2018-19. Shortage of officers and officials, and the worst law and order situation under the jurisdiction of the company especially in the rural/ Kacha areas where the officials could not move safely were some reasons for the increase in losses and low recovery. The last recruitment of staff was made in 2012 and a large number of technical staff have also retired during the last 10 years but no replacement made due to the ban on recruitment which has created an acute shortage of skilled labor.



## Commissioner calls for protecting ecosystem through joint efforts

MULTAN (APP): Commissioner Multan Division Aamir Khattak urged the people to do their part to save the ecosystem from environmental degradation and promised a sustainable development policy to combat climate change that would boost socio-economic activities across the country. Khattak, in a message on the occasion of World Environment Day, observed across the globe on Monday, reiterated the importance of creating mass awareness among the public about global warming and its ad-

verse effects on lifestyle. He said that World Environment Day 2023 is being celebrated with the theme of eliminating plastic pollution. He said that climate change is directly affecting the country and it is the responsibility of all individuals to work together to restore our ecosystem. Every individual should realize their responsibility towards society and work hard for a green and clean environment for the survival of future generations. “Saving the environment is like saving humanity and all life forms on Earth.”

## SSP directs cops to take action against organized crimes

HYDERABAD (APP): The Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Hyderabad Sajid Amir Suddozai has directed the cops to take action against the organized crimes, street crimes and the sale of mainpuri and gutka. Chairing a meeting attended by the Deputy Superintendents of Police (DSPs) and Station House Officers (SHOs) at the police headquarters here on Sunday, the SSP said the purpose of calling the meeting was the meeting’s agenda. The SSP acknowledged that the criminals were depriving the citizens of their valuable things and said the police were also responsible for not stopping those crimes. He emphasized that

the police should at least compensate for those crimes by ensuring recovery of the stolen or robbed items. He warned that if his office received complaints about the sale of mainpuri and gutka or the existence of the betting dens the SHO of the concerned police station would face departmental action. Suddozai also directed the SHOs to register FIRs of the crimes without wasting the time of the affected people or subjecting them to stress of paying multiple visits to the police stations. The SSP later chaired a meeting of all the Head Moharars and asked them to ensure that the case properties were registered and kept safe.

## Manzoor Wassan lauds efforts of growers to organize Mango festival

MIRPURKHAS (APP): Adviser on Agriculture to Chief Minister Sindh Manzoor Hussain Wassan has said that the local farmers have taken a big step by exhibiting more than 225 varieties in the Mango festival. While addressing the closing ceremony of the 55th National Mango and Summer Fruit Festival Adviser said that government will take steps to introduce such varieties in the market as much as possible and further work to organize such a festival in Karachi as well. He

said that Government will take concrete measures to create a market in the US and other foreign countries as well and would constitute a committee consisting of joint settlers to resolve the problems on a priority basis. He said that in the light of the special directives, funds have been reserved for the maintenance and construction of water courses and due to the special interaction with the people, maximum facilities and all the benefits to the residents will be provided.

## Minister inaugurates expansion work of Dargah Jahanian Shah’s hall

HYDERABAD (APP): Sindh Minister for Minority Affairs Gianchand Esrani inaugurated the expansion and renovation work of the hall of Dargah Jahanian Shah here on Sunday. Talking to media persons, he said the Department of Minority Affairs was working on the construction, repair and renovation of the places of worship of the minority community adding that expansion and renovation of the hall of Dargah Jahanian Shah would make it easier for pilgrims to perform their religious rituals. He said the Department of Minority Affairs had done record development work this year and this process was still going on at a good pace. Hun-

dreds of development schemes of improvement of temples, churches, crematory and other places of worship of the minority community are going on across the province”, he claimed. He said that the concerned wing of the department had been directed to complete as many development schemes as possible by the end of the current financial year and negligence would be tolerated in this regard. He further said that the minority community had always been given importance in the governments of Pakistan People’s Party as practical steps had been taken for the welfare of the minority community including the renovation of their places of worship.

## Talha returns Rs 4.5 bln to pilgrims, implements cost-cutting measures

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Senator Muhammad Talha Mahmood on Sunday said the ministry, taking significant measures to ease the financial burden on pilgrims, had returned an impressive sum of Rs 4.5 billion, demonstrating its commitment to ensuring the well-being of those embarking on the holy journey. He, in a talk with APP, highlighted the efforts made by the ministry to reduce costs associated with the Hajj pilgrimage. He disclosed that this year’s expenses for the Hajj had been lowered to \$3,900 from \$5,000, presenting a substantial decrease in comparison to the previous year. However, despite this decrease, he

acknowledged that the current Hajj remained the most expensive in history due to the depreciation of the Pakistani rupee and the increase in the value of the US Dollar, he added. Addressing concerns about accommodation for pilgrims in Saudi Arabia, Senator Talha emphasized that the ministry had taken steps to secure buildings at more affordable rates. He revealed that the ministry had rented buildings between SR1,800 and SR2,300, compared to the higher rental fee of SR2,600 in 2019. Despite the significant difference in inflation rates between 2023 and 2019, the ministry managed to secure accommodations at lower prices, he maintained.

## PPP wins 130 out of 179 reserved seats in HMC

HYDERABAD (APP): The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) has secured 130 out of 179 reserved seats, amounting to over 70 per cent of the total reserved seats, in Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (HMC), according to the party position declared by the District Election Commissioner Muhammad Yousif Majeedano. The PPP is followed by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) with 48 seats and Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) with only one. The Muttahida Qa-

umi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) had boycotted the local government elections which were held on January 15. According to details, the reserved seats include seats for women, youth, labour/peasant, non-Muslims, persons with disabilities and transgender. The PPP’s 130 include 75 reserved seats for women, 13 each for youth, non-Muslims and labour/peasants and 8 each for persons with disabilities and transgender. Similarly, 30 seats for wom-

## Inaugural Flight to Makkah carrying 340 Pakistani pilgrims touches down in Jeddah safely

JEDDAH (APP): The first direct flight to Makkah Mukarma, Saudi Arabian Airline SV 3727, carrying 340 intending pilgrims of the Government Hajj Scheme, safely landed at Jeddah Airport on Monday morning. The Pakistani pilgrims were given a rousing welcome by the Pakistan Hajj Mission upon their arrival in the sacred city of Makkah Mukarrama. The pilgrims were greeted with a cascade of rose petals accompanied by refreshing juices. Additionally, they were presented with delightful gifts including sweets. Director General

Hajj Abdul Wahab Soomro, Director Hajj Faheem Khan Afridi, Director (R&R), Mushahid Hussain Khalid along with officials from the Pakistan Hajj mission extended a heartfelt welcome to the Hajj pilgrims. A total of three flights carrying 1050 hajj pilgrims will arrive in Jeddah from Islamabad and Multan by Monday evening. Among them, two flights, including SV 3723, will bring 340 pilgrims from Islamabad, while another flight SB 3801 will carry 370 intending pilgrims from Multan. Now onwards Hajj flight service will carry

intended pilgrims directly to Makkah, Saudi Arabia. Ten Pakistani cities will offer flights to Makkah, with the final aircraft departing for the holy city on June 21. According to the schedule, the first flight from Rahim Yar Khan is scheduled to leave for Jeddah on June 6, while a second flight from Sukkur is scheduled to depart for Jeddah on June 7. The post-hajj flight operation, however, will start on July 4. The pilgrims would go to Madina to fulfil their eight-day stay after performing the Hajj before flying back to Pakistan from Madina.

## NTDC transmission infrastructure upgraded

MIRPUR (APP): State-run National Transmission and Despatch Company Limited (NTDC) has achieved the successful replacement of a 108 km 220 kV transmission line in the south region. “The newly constructed Guddu-Shikarpur transmission line has been energized on June 3, 2023”, the media wing of NTDC said in a statement issued on Sunday. This significant milestone marks a major step towards improving the power supply system in the South areas of Pakistan, specifically Balochistan and Sindh Provinces. Guddu-Shikarpur Transmission Line project has been completed with a total contract cost of USD 13,108,994 and PKR 1,630,460,035, this transformative

project addresses operational problems and system bottlenecks that plagued the previous transmission line. This vital project will strengthen the connection between Guddu and Shikarpur, resulting in improved stability and reliability of the power transmission network. The existing 220kV Guddu-Sibbi single circuit transmission line, constructed in 1977, suffered from aging and deterioration of the PCC Poles + Steel Towers. Over the course of its more than 40 years of service, the transmission line experienced a de-rated capacity, causing frequent operational challenges for power transmission from Uch Power Plants to respective load centers.

## NA Speaker will inaugurate 2-day seminar on ‘Reclaiming the Space: Reading the Constitution from Women’

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Women Parliamentary Caucus (WPC) and the Federal Ministry of Law and Justice have collaborated to organize a momentous two-day event, titled “Reclaiming the Space: Reading the Constitution from Women’s Perspective.” scheduled to be commenced on June 5-6, 2023, in Islamabad. This seminar is to mark the first-ever initiative in Pakistan’s 75-year history to examine , analyse and deliberate upon the constitution from a women’s perspective. National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervez Asharf as Chief Guest would inaugurate this seminar on 5th June in Islamabad. The

Speaker will also deliver key note speech to inaugurate the seminar for empowering women through the constitution. Furthermore, the seminar comprises of an inaugural session followed by a series of accentuated roundtables under the themes of Language of the Constitution, Gender Equality, Women’s Empowerment, and Women’s Representation and Political/Electoral Participation. The roundtable Sessions will be chaired by Members of Parliament, including Mehnaz Akber Aziz, Dr. Nafisa Shah, Eng Rukhsana Zubart, and Ms. Shaista Pervaiz Malik, respectively.

## Energy transition partnerships key to phaseout coal, mobilise finances for renewable energy transition: Experts

ISLAMABAD (APP): The experts on Sunday termed just energy transition partnerships key to phaseout coal and mobilise investments towards renewable energy (RE) in Pakistan. It was the crux of a symposium on “Just energy transition in Pakistan” organized by the Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI) and Network for Clean Energy Transition in Pakistan: Research and Advocacy here, a news release said. Joint Executive Director, SDPI, Dr. Vaqar Ahmed highlighted that the current challenges slugging rapid off-take of renewable energy in Pakistan arise from inadequacy of infrastructure and grid stability. He stressed innovative decentralized energy models, micro-grids, encouraging the development of local RE industry and

building storage capacity to address these challenges. Economic Affairs Officer, United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), Michael Waldron emphasized the need to increase energy sector investments by 3-4 folds to meet SDGs. He highlighted that “Just Energy Transition Partnerships” (JETP) can play key role by providing low-cost finance to Renewable Energy (RE), promoting investment-grade domestic policies to phase out fossil fuels, and supporting just transition for affected workers. He further stressed prioritizing halting coal power development and retirement of existing plants and considering solutions for repurposing of coal power plants and incentivize RE solutions.

## Business community grateful to Chairman CDA for starting construction, repair work in markets: Bakhtawari

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ICCI) Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari has said that the entire business community of Islamabad is grateful to the Chairman CDA Capt (retd) Noor Ul Amin Mengal, who paid attention to our long-standing problem regarding the construction works in the markets. He said this while chairing a meeting of the presidents of different markets of Islamabad, on this occasion the issue of construction works by CDA in the markets was discussed, said a press release issued here on Sunday. The presidents of all the markets of the capital city participated and various markets were selected for the construction and repair works in the first phase, including G 9, Abpara Market, G 11, F10, F11, F6 and Melody Market. In the meeting, 5 focal persons were also selected for co-

ordination regarding construction works with CDA, including President Islamabad Chamber Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, Chairman Founder Group Khalid Iqbal Malik, Former President Ijaz Abbasi, President Anjuman Tajran Ajmal Baloch and Khalid Chaudhry. We will work in this regard in a phased manner, he said that the presidents and other officials of all the markets should cooperate with the Chamber and CDA to end this problem. The work has not been done for a long time, therefore the situation of the markets is worse, due to the lack of irrigation and carpeting, the problems of cleanliness have also become serious. I hope with this initiative of CDA we will overcome these problems soon. Speaking on this occasion, Chairman Founder Group Khalid Iqbal Malik said that Islamabad as the capital of our country is the crown jewel of our country.



## Pakistan must begin journey of reducing plastic waste: Sherry Rehman

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): On the occasion of World Environment Day 2023, Federal Minister for Climate Change & Environmental Coordination, Senator Sherry Rehman on Sunday said that the consequences of plastic pollution are intense and long term, as it irreversibly damages our environment and threatens the very fabric of life on earth, from the highest mountains to the deepest ocean trenches. Under this year's theme 'Solutions to Plastic Pollution', centered around addressing the grave concern of plastic under the campaign #BeatPlasticPollution, Minister Rehman urged a call for action as plastic production is set to

triple by 2060 if 'business-as-usual' continues, according to a statement issued here. The Minister shared the 7R's Action Agenda which marks the country's commitment to combat plastic pollution and initiate its journey towards reducing plastic waste. The Agenda includes encouraging conscious choices to minimize plastic consumption ("Reduce"), promoting the redesign of plastic products and manufacturing processes to minimize environmental impact ("Redesign"), emphasizing the extension of product lifespans and reducing reliance on single-use plastics through reusing ("Re-use"), advocating for effective recycling practices to transform plas-

tic waste into new materials and alleviate pressure on landfills and oceans ("Recycle"), and highlighting the shared responsibility of individuals, businesses, and communities in managing plastic waste and promoting sustainable practices ("Responsibility"). The Minister also acknowledges the significance of scientific research and innovation ("Research") in developing cost-effective and sustainable solutions to combat plastic pollution. Furthermore, the Minister stresses the importance of providing support and resources, particularly to developing nations, in their fight against the global challenge of plastic pollution ("Resource").

## NFEH calls for adopting National Action Plan for effectively dealing with plastic pollution issue in Pakistan

KARACHI (APP): The National Forum for Environment and Health (NFEH) has demanded that Federal, provincial and local governments should sit together and adopt a 'National Action Plan' to effectively deal with the issue of plastic waste before this polluting issue causes irreversible damage in the country. Addressing a meeting of the core committee of NFEH here Sunday to organize an interactive seminar on in connection with the World Environment Day-2023 to be observed on Monday, NFEH President Naeem Qureshi said that the least Pakistan should do was to ensure that all the main urban centers in Pakistan should strictly impose a ban on single-use polythene bags to tackle the problem of plastic pollution. Naeem Qureshi

said the theme of this year's World Environment Day "Beat the plastic pollution" befittingly highlighted the environmental catastrophe Pakistan and other developing countries had been facing due to the unattended issue of polythene bags and unchecked use of other plastic material in everyday life. Qureshi highlighted that monsoon season was about to begin all over the country and all the main cities in Pakistan especially Karachi could face again the issue of urban flooding due to choked stormwater drains. He said that various studies and surveys had repeatedly pointed out that waste mainly generated due to the unattended problem of polythene bags was the main cause behind the choking of the stormwater drains in Karachi.

## Experts demand for introducing climate change as subject in curriculum on 'World environment day'

ISLAMABAD (APP): Expert on Monday stressed environmental laws on a provincial level and demanded relevant authority to introduce the subject of climate change in the educational curriculum, with an aim to aware the younger generation about the harmful effects of plastic use and to protect the environment in future. Senior Researcher at NIMA Dr Kanwar Muhammad Javed Iqbal on 'World Environment Day' talking to a Private news channel said that the ministry should take the provinces into confidence and convince them to introduce climate change as a subject from the school to university level. He said, "The best way to equip

the young generation to combat the looming danger is to educate and aware them of the negative impacts of climate change. " He further explained, "education is an important element to reduce the usage of plastic bags and helps people to encourages their behaviour changes in their attitudes." Replying to a question, he said, "By enforcing the exciting laws, we can reduce the negative impacts of pollution, climate change, and resource depletion and work towards a more resilient and sustainable future." He stressed that the public should stop the use of plastic bags, bottles, and cups, which would create a huge positive impact on nature.

## Transporters refuse to slash fares despite fuel prices downfall

MUZAFFARGARH (APP): The transporters refusal to cut down fares despite steep downfall of fuel prices recently has led to protest among citizens demanding the authority of taking 'stern action' to deal with the issue. Several commuters waiting at local bus stand here complained that fruits of reduction in petroleum prices could not yet pass on the commoners. Rana Ashraf, Muhammad Hayyat, Aslam, Khizer, Kalsoom Bibi, Zeenat and Sidra, talking to APP said that transporters had been increasing

fares with the minimal jump of the fuel prices, hesitate to accomodate people when the same lowered in the country. They observed that as Rs 50 had been charged for 10 km travelling and Rs 20 for the double distance for the long in past, remained intact today even. According to some women, conductors sometimes misbehave them while offering fare before boarding the vehicle. They said effects of price reduction in petroleum products must trickle down to edibles as well to reduce inflation.

## Students of the SSUET Computer Science Department secured the first position in the Developers Day Hackathon competition.



KARACHI (Agencies): FAST National University, Karachi Campus, organized the Developers, Hackathon 2023 competitions in which Dinesh Kumar, Kashan Khan Gauri, Nameer Nasir, and Muhammad Zahid secured first position. Later they were also awarded a shield and 20,000 cash prize. Appreciating the efforts of students and teachers Registrar SSUET, Commodore (R) Engr. Syed Sarfraz Ali urged them to participate in such activities in the future, while Prof. Dr. Muhammad Asif (Faculty of Computing and Applied Science and Faculty of Business Management Sciences) said that success is the result of the dedi-

cation of teachers and the hard work of students. Abdul Hamid Daccani Dy Director Information Caption: (L-R) Ayesha Arooj (In-Charge CAC), Dr. Valeej Haider (Chairman, Department of Computer Science and Information Technology), Registrar Commodore (Rtd) Engr. Sarfraz Ali, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Asif (Faculty of Computing and Applied Science and Faculty of Business Management Sciences), Prof. Dr. Muhammad Aamir (Faculty of Electrical and Computer Engineering), and Dr. Abrar (Chairman, Department of Electrical Engineering) are grouped with the SSUET students who secured 1st position.

## PMDC decides to hold MDCAT exam on Aug 27

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Medical and Dental Council (PMDC) has decided to hold the Medical Dental Admission Examination (MDCAT) on August 27, 2023. The decision was made in the council meeting chaired by President PM&DC Dr Rizwan Taj. The council decided that the syllabus of the MDCAT will remain the same as last year's exam. The council directed all provincial secretaries to start preparing for the said exam. The decision was made keeping in view the larger interest of students. Last year, almost 204,259 students appeared in exams while this year 210,000 students are likely to appear in the exams. Medical universities from all four provinces and the Federal capital will again conduct the exams as per the provincial curriculum. The council emphasized that prior to exams all stakeholders will be taken on board like public medical universities' examination departments to ensure the secrecy of exams.

## A joint delegation of PSX, MFA calls on Ishaq Dar

ISLAMABAD (APP): A joint delegation of Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) and Mutual Funds Association (MFA) of Pakistan called on the Federal Finance Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar. The PSX was represented by its MD/CEO Farrukh Hussain and Chief Financial Officer Ahmed Ali whereas Mir Adil and Arif Qadri represented Mutual Funds, said a press release issued here Sunday. The Finance Minister was accompanied by Dr. Aisha Ghaus Pasha, Minister of State for Finance, Tariq Bajwa, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Finance, Tariq Mehmood Pasha, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Revenue, Ashfaq Tola Chairman Reforms and Resource Mobilization Commission (RRMC), Asim Ahmad Chairman Federal Board of Revenue and other senior officers from the Finance Ministry and Revenue Division. Governor State Bank Jameel Ahmad also attended the meeting. During the meeting, representatives of MFA highlighted the growth of Sharia compliant mutual funds and proposed that short term Sharia compliant sukuk should be launched.

## President directs COMSATS to allow student to complete degree

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi has directed COMSATS University to allow its student, whose admission had been cancelled, to complete his education. The admission of Hammad bin Zain at COMSATS had been cancelled after three and a half years of studies at the varsity, at a point where he had already completed seven out of eight semesters. A statement issued by President's secretariat's press wing said that Zain's admission made in the year 2017, had been cancelled on the ground that he was not eligible it as he hadn't obtained the required marks. "It was surprising that the administration of the university could make such a huge error by granting him admission and then informing him, after a lapse of 3.5 years, that he was not eligible for admission," the statement quoted President Alvi as saying. He said that the student paid his requisite fees for eight semesters and diligently completed the semester course.

## Nasir Shah lays foundation stone of Central Karachi Hospital

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Minister for Local Government Syed Nasir Husain Shah on Sunday said that the Central Hospital Karachi would be constructed at a cost of Rs. 400 crore for the citizens at Federal B Area Water Pump with the support of Sindh government. He said that as per the vision of Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto, Sindh government was taking measures on an emergency basis for the construction and development of Karachi and providing basic rights to the citizens. He stated this while laying the foundation stone of Central Hospital Karachi the previous day, according to a communiqué. He was accompanied by Senator Waqar Meh-

di, Minister of Labor and Human Resources Saeed Ghani, Secretary LG Najam Ahmad Shah, Director General of KDA Syed Muhammad Ali Shah, a senior leader of PPP Dr. Asim, Chief Minister Sindh Coordinator Shehzad Memon, President District Central PPP Masroor Ahsan, General Secretary District Central Dil Muhammad, political leader Najmi Alam and MC-KMC Syed Shujaat Hussain. The Minister said that health facilities will be provided in the Central Hospital under the supervision of the Pakistan Medical Association. The Central Hospital Karachi will consist of 6 floors and a basement including four towers.

## Training workshop for ensuring political participation of persons with disability held

NAWABSHAH (APP): A training workshop on ensuring the political participation of persons with disabilities was organized by the Pakistan US Alumni Network under the chairmanship of President NDF. On the occasion, the coordinator of the project Abid Lashari said that appointing councillors through reserved seats for persons with disabilities in the Local Government was a commendable step and a good move by the Sindh government. Hundreds of disabled people have become a part of practical local politics and decision-making processes. The Disability Rights Act 2018 Government of Sindh guarantees politi-

cal participation as well as the protection of all rights of persons with disabilities. President Hari Welfare association Akram Khaskheli said that allocating councilor seats for disabled people in the Local Government ACT amendment bill 2021 was a big step through which people with disabilities could become part of decision-making at the local level. Before that, disabled persons were excluded from politics, and deprived of the right to participate in politics. Tariq Channar said that there was a lack of information and awareness among disabled people due to which the disabled youth are not able to get the right of political participation.

## Minister takes notice of shortage of X-ray films in hospitals

RAWALPINDI (APP): Caretaker Provincial Minister for Health Punjab Dr Jamal Nasir on Sunday made surprise visits to Holy Family, Benazir Bhutto Hospital, DHQ and Rawalpindi Institute of Urology, and reviewed the treatment facilities and performance of doctors and paramedical staff. The minister took notice of the shortage of X-ray films in the city hospitals and called an emergency meeting of the health department on Monday to review the situation and solve the problem. On the occasion Dr Jamal Nasir

warned that no negligence would be tolerated in providing the treatment facilities and strict action would be taken against those found careless in their duty. He said that the doctor's and paramedical staff's protection would be ensured at any cost and patients and their families would not be allowed to take the law into their own hands. The minister said that obligatory laws would be made for the protection of doctors and paramedical staff and will be implemented in letter and spirit.

## CM directs IGP to monitor overseas' complaints redressal

LAHORE (APP): Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi has issued directions to the Inspector General of Police to promptly redress the grievances of overseas Pakistanis asking him to personally monitor complaint redressal system. He directed that all commissioners, regional police officers (RPOs), deputy commissioners and district police officers (DPOs) should leave no stone unturned to resolve the problems of overseas Pakistanis in their relevant cities. He directed the administrative and police officers to redress the grievances of overseas Pakistanis and submit a report to the CM office every

month. Mohsin Naqvi directed that overseas Pakistanis should be kept posted regularly on the progress being made with regard to redressal of every complaint, adding that a time frame should be chalked out to resolve the problems of overseas Pakistanis residing abroad. He asserted that every complaint should be disposed off in a minimum span of time, adding that a slow paced traditional action on a complaint being sent by a portal, telephone or by mail would not be tolerated. Mohsin Naqvi stated that officers concerned would monitor steps being taken to redress the grievances of overseas Pakistanis in the CM office as well.

## Ombudsman orders Rs 17.2m in financial relief to 60 plaintiffs

LAHORE (APP): The Office of the Ombudsman Punjab swiftly responded to public relief requests, effectively resolving the issues faced by 60 individuals across various districts. These proactive efforts have resulted in a cumulative financial relief worth Rs. 17,238,187 (Rs 17.238 million) being extended to those in need. According to a statement issued by a spokesman on Sunday, the University of Mianwali, on the direction of the provincial ombudsman, has disbursed Rs.92,82,843

to 52 students, including plaintiff Muhammad Hanzala Zubair, as outstanding amounts of their need-based scholarships. Additionally, the District education Authority Chakwal has granted 2.2 million rupees as financial aid to complainant Haji Mehr Muhammad. In another case, the district administration Lodhran has provided employment dues worth Rs.1.9 million to Ayesha Mai, the widow of deceased Patwari Ghulam Murtaza, the spokesman added.

## Roosvelt Hotel given to NY local govt for 3 years for \$220m: Kh Saad

LAHORE (APP): Minister for Aviation and Railways Khawaja Saad Rafique said on Sunday that a contract had been signed with the New York City government to operate the renowned Roosevelt Hotel of the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) situated in New York (USA) for three years. In a press conference held at Allama Iqbal International Airport here, he said that a revenue of US\$220 million would

come to the country as a result of the agreement. Giving details of the agreement, he said that 1025 rooms of the hotel would be handed over to the City government for three years and the initial earnings from the hotel had started pouring in. He said that under the agreement, one-year business was guaranteed; however, he expressed his hope that the hotel business would continue for all three years.



## PIF-owned Riyadh Air receives designator code from IATA

RIYADH (Agencies): Marking a significant milestone for Saudi Arabia's new world-class carrier as it prepares to start operations, Riyadh Air secured the "RX" designator code from the International Air Transport Association. Riyadh Air CEO Tony Douglas made this announcement at the IATA's 79th annual general meeting being held in Istanbul, Türkiye. "We are delighted to announce that we have obtained 'RX' as our IATA code,



which will be on every touch point that our guests see as they take flight with us. The code reflects our ambition to be a digitally led airline, having the connection of innovation and

state-of-the-art technology," Douglas said. The new airline also unveiled the first of two liveries it will deploy as preparations continue for its launch of flights in 2025. It released a video on social media on Sunday illustrating its livery. Owned entirely by the Public Investment Fund, Riyadh Air was inaugurated in March, with a vision to transform the Kingdom's capital into a global hub for travel and trade.

## UBS expects to seal Credit Suisse takeover as early as June 12

ZURICH (Agencies): UBS expects to complete its takeover of Credit Suisse "as early as June 12", which will create a giant Swiss bank with a balance sheet of US\$1.6 trillion following a government-backed rescue earlier this year. The deal's completion is subject to the registration statement, which covers shares to be delivered, being declared effective by the US Securities and Exchange Commission, and other remaining closing condi-



tions, UBS said in a statement today. "UBS expects to complete the acquisition of Credit Suisse as early as 12 June 2023. At that time, Credit Suisse Group AG will be merged into UBS Group AG," it said. UBS shares were

indicated 1.1% higher in premarket activity in Switzerland, while Credit Suisse shares were up 0.7%. "We consider the completion of the takeover to be an important step in initiating what we see as a protracted integration process and getting things done," said Zuercher Kantonbank analyst Michael Klien. "Although the risk profile of UBS has changed significantly, we see good opportunities for investors," he added.

## US recession predicted in second half of 2023

MOSCOW (Agencies): Bank of America CEO Brian Moynihan said Sunday the country may face a mild recession in the second half of this year and in the first quarter of the next year. "So the last time I was here was the end of last year and we predicted a recession this year. We moved it out. It's basically third quarter this year, fourth quarter, this year into first quarter, a mild recession," he said.



sion. And unemployment gets up in high 4% range, still very low by historical norms," Moynihan said in an interview to CBS News channel, re-

ported Sputnik. In May, Federal Reserve chairman Jerome Powell said that the US may be heading toward what he hopes is a mild recession. Policymakers at the Federal Reserve have also projected that the US will experience a "mild recession" later this year that could take two years to overcome, minutes of the central bank's policy meeting from March showed.

## US banks could face 20% hike to capital requirements

WASHINGTON (Agencies): US regulators are preparing to tighten rules for large banks, which could raise their capital requirements by 20% on average, the Wall Street Journal reported on Monday, to boost the financial system's resilience after a spate of midsize bank failures this year. Regulators are on track to propose the changes as early as



this month, the WSJ reported, citing people familiar with the matter. Last month, the US Federal Reserve's top regulatory official told Congress

that the central bank would likely unveil its plan to ratchet up capital rules for banks this summer and ensure supervisors more aggressively police lenders following the bank failures. Fed vice-chair for supervision Michael Barr said the central bank was "carefully considering" rule changes for larger regional banks.

## AstraZeneca's Tagrisso slashes death risk in lung cancer patients

LONDON (Agencies): AstraZeneca's lung cancer therapy, Tagrisso, cut the risk of death by more than half in patients with a certain form of lung cancer who were diagnosed early enough to have their tumour surgically removed, trial data showed. Tagrisso is already the crown jewel in the Anglo-Swedish drugmaker's portfolio, raking in US\$5.4 billion last year. The drug has regulatory approvals across multiple geographies for cer-



tain patients with so-called non small cell lung cancer (NSCLC) who have a mutation of the EGFR gene. The latest data, presented at the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) meeting, establishes Tagrisso as the

backbone treatment for EGFR-mutated lung cancer, said Susan Galbraith, executive VP of oncology R&D at AstraZeneca in a statement. In a 682-patient trial called Adaura, Tagrisso was evaluated against a placebo in earlier-stage EGFR-mutated NSCLC patients who had undergone surgery to remove their primary tumour. The majority of such patients eventually see their cancer return despite surgery and add-on chemotherapy.

## Turkish economy to return to 'rational ground', says new minister

ANKARA (Agencies): Turkey's newly-appointed finance minister Mehmet Simsek said today that the country has no choice but to return to "rational ground" to ensure predictability in the economy. President Tayyip Erdogan named Simsek to his cabinet on Saturday to tackle Turkey's cost-of-living crisis and other strains, in a clear sign that his newly-elected government would return to more orthodox economic policies. In a handover ceremony, Simsek



said the main goal of the new government will be to increase social welfare. "Transparency, consistency, predictability and compliance with international norms will be our ba-

sic principles in achieving this goal," Simsek said. "Turkey has no other choice than to return to a rational ground. A rules-based, predictable Turkish economy will be the key to achieving the desired prosperity." Macro-financial stability in an environment of increasing global challenges and geopolitical tensions will be a priority, he said. "Establishing fiscal discipline and ensuring price stability for sustainable high growth will be our main goals," he said.

## Russian carmaker to start production at former Nissan plant

MOSCOW (Agencies): Car production at a St. Petersburg plant that formerly belonged to Nissan will resume this month, the CEO of Russia's biggest automaker AvtoVAZ has announced. The Japanese manufacturer left the Russian market last year, transferring all its assets in the country to the state-owned research and development firm NAMI for a token sum of €1. The plant in Russia's second-largest city was later bought by AvtoVAZ, which is best known for its Lada vehicles. "June



14, 2023 is the date when production at the Lada St. Petersburg plant will start. A new Lada model will be manufactured in St. Petersburg," AvtoVAZ CEO Maxim Sokolov told reporters on Friday. The fac-

tory plans to produce up to 10,000 vehicles this year, with output increasing over the following years, Sokolov said. The Nissan plant in St. Petersburg, which was opened in 2009, has production capacity of up to 100,000 cars per year. In 2021, roughly 43,000 cars came off of its assembly line. The plant mostly produced SUV models such as the Qashqai and X-trail. AvtoVAZ is the largest car manufacturer in Russia and Eastern Europe, producing over one million vehicles per year.

## Indian imports of Russia oil hit a new record in May

NEW DELHI (Agencies): India imported nearly 2 million barrels of crude oil per day from Russia in May, notching a new record, Bloomberg reported on Thursday, citing ship-tracking data. Flows of Russian oil to New Delhi surged by 15% last month compared to April, reaching 1.96 million barrels per day (bpd) and putting a dent in the share of im-

ports from OPEC's major oil producer, Saudi Arabia, data from Vortexa showed. Saudi crude exports to India have plunged to their lowest levels since 2021, according to Bloomberg. Analysts have cited discounts as the key reason for the rise in imports from Russia. The average cost of oil from the sanctioned country was \$68.21 a barrel in April, accord-

ing to data from India's Ministry of Commerce. "Indian refiners continue to show a voracious appetite for Russian crude given their discounts relative to Middle Eastern supplies," Vortexa analyst Serena Huang said. She added that imports of Urals and Sokol grades saw their biggest gains last month, and overall volumes are likely to grow in June and July.

## UAE's non-oil outlook positive despite slight PMI dip in May

RIYADH (Agencies): The UAE's non-oil private sector growth outlook remained positive in May, even as the seasonally adjusted S&P Global Purchasing Managers' Index fell to 55.5 compared to 56.6 in April. The S&P Global report noted that improved operating conditions drove business confidence to its strongest levels since October 2021. According to the index, PMI readings above 50 show non-oil private sector growth, while those below 50 signal contraction. "The UAE PMI pointed to another strong performance across the non-oil sector midway through



the second quarter of 2023. Despite slipping from April's six-month high of 56.6, the latest headline reading of 55.5 signaled a robust improvement in business conditions, driven by marked upturns in activity and new work," said David Owen, senior economist at S&P Global Market Intelligence.

## Air travel to soar near record in 2023

ISTANBUL (Agencies): Airlines will fly 4.35 billion passengers this year, close to the 2019 record as the industry bounces back from the Covid pandemic, an industry group said today. The sector will also be back in the green, with net profits forecast to reach US\$9.8 billion in 2023, or double previous estimates, boosted by the end of China's Covid restrictions, according to the International Air Transport Association (IATA). The association added that its 2022 losses were half as bad as previously estimated at US\$3.6 billion. "Airline financial performance in 2023 is beating expectations," IATA direc-



tor-general Willie Walsh said in a statement during the association's annual general meeting in Istanbul. "Stronger profitability is supported by several positive developments. China lifted Covid-19 restrictions earlier in the year than anticipated," Walsh said. While jet fuel prices remain high, they have moderated over the first half of the year, he added.

## Saudi pledges big oil cuts in July

VIENNA (Agencies): Saudi Arabia will make a deep cut to its output in July on top of a broader Opec+ deal to limit supply into 2024 as the group seeks to boost flagging oil prices. Saudi's energy ministry said the country's output would drop to 9 million barrels per day (bpd) in July from around 10 million bpd in May, the biggest reduction in years. "This is a Saudi lollipop," Saudi energy minister Prince Abdulaziz told a news conference. "We wanted to ice the cake. We always want to add suspense. We don't want people to try to predict what we do... This market needs stabilisation". Opec+, which groups the Organization of the Petroleum



Exporting Countries and allies led by Russia, pumps around 40% of the world's crude, meaning its policy decisions can have a major impact on oil prices. A surprise decision to cut supply in April briefly sent international benchmark Brent crude around US\$9 higher, but prices have since retreated under pressure from concerns about the weakness of the global economy and its impact on demand.

## Opec+ meets to debate production quotas, new cuts

VIENNA (Agencies): Opec and its allies will meet today to debate a new deal possibly adjusting countries' output quotas and a further cut in production, sources told Reuters, as the group faces flagging oil prices and a looming supply glut. Opec+, which groups the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and allies led by Russia, pumps around 40% of the world's crude, meaning its policy decisions can have a major impact on oil prices. Four sources familiar with Opec+ discussions have told Reuters that additional production cuts were being discussed among options for today's session. "We are discussing the full package (of changes to the deal)," one of the four sources said. Three out of four



sources said cuts could amount to 1 million bpd on top of existing cuts of 2 million bpd and voluntary cuts of 1.6 million bpd, announced in a surprise move in April and which took effect in May. The April announcement helped to drive oil prices about US\$9 per barrel higher to above US\$87, but they swiftly retreated under pressure from concerns about global economic growth and demand. On Friday, international benchmark Brent settled at US\$76.

## US military spending may drop to lowest level since Cold War era - WSJ

WASHINGTON (Agencies): The share of US spending on defense may drop below 3% for the first time since the Cold War era, the Wall Street Journal reports, citing the latest debt ceiling agreement as a major reason for the decline. The deal reached by the White House and Republicans last week boosts defense spending to around \$885 billion next year, an 11% increase on

the \$800 billion allocated in the current budget. In 2025, the country's military spending is expected to see a further increase to \$895 billion. However, the number represents a reduction in the defense budget in real terms after inflation, according to an editorial piece published by the WSJ shortly after President Joe Biden signed the bill into law on Friday.

## Iran's trade with BRICS surging - foreign minister

TEHRAN (Agencies): Trade between BRICS and Iran has been growing as Iran seeks to become a member of the alliance, according to the country's foreign minister. Hossein Amir-Abdollahian was speaking at the 'Friends' of BRICS session as part of the bloc's foreign ministers' meeting in Cape Town, South Africa, on Friday. "Our bilateral political and economic relations with the BRICS countries remain at a very good level while our trade value exceeds \$30 billion," Amir-Abdollahian said, noting that the sides have important arrange-

ments on multilateral cooperation. "We will soon expand our relations with three BRICS countries; namely Russia, China, and India within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization," he added. In June 2022, Iran applied to become a BRICS member, saying it "would result in added value for both sides." Customs data shows that trade in goods other than crude oil between Iran and the bloc's members totaled nearly 48 million tons in the fiscal year 2022-2023, representing a 14% increase in terms of value.



## Leon down Los Angeles to win CONCACAF Champions League

LOS ANGELES (Agencies): Mexican side Leon won the CONCACAF Champions League for the first time on Sunday, defeating Los Angeles FC 1-0 to seal a 3-1 aggregate victory over the Major League Soccer champions. Lucas Di Yorio's first-half goal proved decisive, Los Angeles goalkeeper John McCarthy failing to grasp the Argentine forward's scuffed shot for the game's only goal in the 20th minute. The win ended Leon's long wait to taste success in the CONCACAF region's premier club competition after finishing runners-up in the 1993 tournament in its old format. Leon's Argentine coach Nicolas Larcamon paid tribute to



the way his team absorbed an early period of pressure from Los Angeles before closing out the win. "We managed to get around that first quarter of an hour and then we dominated clearly," Larcamon said. "Los Angeles are a very good team. The result today is testimony to how well we played over both games." The

win means Leon will qualify for this year's FIFA Club World Cup as well as the expanded 32-team edition of the event planned for 2025. But it was another agonizing near-miss for LAFC, who were also bidding to win the tournament for the first time, three years after losing in the 2020 final to Mexican side Tigres. "We got beat by a very good team," Los Angeles coach Steve Cherundolo said. "They deserved to win over 180 minutes. We're disappointed and it hurts, as it should. "We now know where we need to get to win this competition and we'll do everything in our power to come back stronger next year."

## 'Legendary' Benzema strikes on Madrid farewell,Valladolid relegated

BARCELONA (Agencies): Real Madrid's departing great Karim Benzema struck from the penalty spot to earn his side a 1-1 draw against Athletic Bilbao on Sunday in La Liga as he said goodbye to fans at the Santiago Bernabeu. Elsewhere Real Valladolid were relegated after a 0-0 draw with Getafe, while five other sides near the bottom were able to breathe a sigh of relief after a gripping conclusion to the season. Champions Barcelona were beaten 2-1 at Celta Vigo, with Gabri Veiga's brace ensuring the Galician side will remain in the top flight next season. Benzema, whom Madrid confirmed would leave this summer earlier in the day,



departing after 14 years at the club, rolled his penalty down the middle to level the game, before being substituted to great applause. The draw ensured Real Madrid would finish above city rivals Atletico Madrid in second place, after Diego Simeone's side tied 2-2 at Villarreal on the final day. "I spoke with him this morning and

he told me he was going. He's taken the decision and I told him I respect it completely," said Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti. Ancelotti said Benzema's choice came by surprise, after the Italian himself said Saturday he expected the forward to stay. "I have coached one of the best in the world, not a forward, a complete footballer," continued the coach. "A very friendly, humble, serious person. We can't be happy he is going, but we have to respect his decision. What he has done at this club is legendary and unforgettable." Athletic were the stronger team and only a stunning Thibaut Courtois penalty save to deny Mikel Vesga kept his team level at the break.

## Australia's out-of-form Warner determined to exit on own terms

SYDNEY (Agencies): Opener David Warner will be determined to show he still has what it takes when he begins the countdown to retirement at the World Test Championship final starting Wednesday. The 36-year-old former vice-captain has been a mainstay of the Australian team since making his Test debut against New Zealand in 2011, racking up 103 caps and 8,158 runs. But he approaches the WTC final at The Oval against India and the five-Test Ashes series from June 16 more vulnerable than ever with one century in his past 32 innings and a mediocre record in England. His prolonged poor form had prompted intense speculation about how much longer he



would carry on and over the week-end Warner set out his timetable to end his red-ball career. The pugnacious left-hander hopes to bid farewell in front of his hometown fans in the New Year Test against Pakistan in Sydney in January. He aims to keep playing white-ball cricket until the 2024 World Cup. "I probably owe it to myself and my family...

if I can get through this (WTC final and Ashes) and make the Pakistan series, I will definitely finish up then," he told reporters in England. Warner will be desperate to go out on his own terms, but with his place under threat, how much of a part he plays in his final Ashes series remains to be seen. He made Australia's squad heading to England but chief selector George Bailey then added to the uncertainty, saying Warner would play against India but non-committal beyond that. Warner suffered a fractured elbow and concussion on the blockbuster tour of India in February, missing the last two Tests, which itself came on the back of an extended lean spell.

## Napoli celebrate title triumph,Ibrahimovic retires

NAPLES (Agencies): Napoli fans watched their heroes finally lift the Serie A trophy on Sunday as coach Luciano Spalletti walked away from Naples, while Zlatan Ibrahimovic announced his retirement from football. A 2-0 win over relegated Sampdoria was little more than a hors-d'oeuvre before the real reason fans jammed into the Stadio Diego Armando Maradona -- to see their team lift the trophy for the first time in 33 long years. Victor Osimhen opened the scoring from the penalty spot midway through the second half, the 26th league strike of a stunning season which made him Serie A's all-time top African scorer. Giovanni Simeone then made sure



the hosts would finish the season on 90 points in the 85th minute with a stunning long-range strike before celebrating by holding up a Napoli shirt worn by icon and compatriot Maradona. "I don't know, the president has to decide that," Osimhen told DAZN when asked whether he might leave in a big-money summer move. "I love the people of Napoli,

they have shown me so much love. For me, I don't mind, the president decides and I will just go with the flow." Spalletti will be on gardening leave for a year while still under contract with Napoli, and he will return to his Tuscan vineyard the oldest ever coach to win the Scudetto at 64. - 'True to myself' - Napoli's title triumph was the crowning glory of Spalletti's long and eventful coaching career which has brought plenty of plaudits but few trophies. "I need to be true to myself, leaving was a decision I made, that I came to. Even when I'm at home it'll be like I was in the stands watching and cheering for them," said Spalletti.

## Tambwe double sends Bordeaux-Begles into Top 14 semis

PARIS (Agencies): Congolese winger Madosh Tambwe scored twice as Bordeaux-Begles beat Lyon 32-25 on Sunday to seal a place in next weekend's French Top 14 semi-finals in a game played without a television match official (TMO). Tambwe took his tally for the campaign to nine tries after joining from the Bulls in Pretoria this season. The 26-year-old crossed twice in the second half to help Bordeaux-Begles book a tie with Champions Cup holders



La Rochelle in San Sebastian next Saturday. "Madosh is a great player, he arrived and shined quickly before a tough first winter in France

where he discovered the harshness of the Top 14 in winter," back-rower Mahamadou Diaby told reporters. "Tonight he came along at the right time." In the other semi-final, record 21-time champions Toulouse will play Racing 92 on Friday after they beat Stade Francais 33-20 in a Parisian derby. Before kick-off in balmy conditions in Lyon, host broadcaster Canal+ said there would be no TMO during the match because of a technical issue linked to the TV truck.

## Tambwe double sends Bordeaux-Begles into Top 14 semis

MILAN (Agencies): Swedish legend Zlatan Ibrahimovic has announced his retirement from a glittering soccer career at the age of 41, leaving Italy's Serie A as the league's oldest-ever goal scorer. The star striker made the announcement following his team AC Milan's season finale 3-1 victory over Hellas Verona on Sunday. "It's time to say goodbye to football, but not to you," an emotional Ibrahimovic told the Rossoneri fans at the San Siro stadium. The club had previously announced it



would hold a brief ceremony to bid farewell to the enigmatic star as his contract would not be renewed at the end of this month. "The first time I arrived you gave me happiness, the second time, you gave me love," Ibrahimovic said.

## China misses bronze after Australia's buzzer beater at FIBA 3x3 World Cup

VIENNA (Agencies): China's women's team fell to a 21-20 loss to Australia, courtesy of a last-second shot in the third-place game at the 2023 FIBA 3x3 World Cup here on Sunday. Due to Zhang Yi's absence stemming from a knee injury sustained in the semifinal against the United States, China had only three players to vie for the bronze medal. Despite being a player short, China executed a smart and strategic game, conserving energy and maintaining a 20-17 lead by scoring from afar. However, Australia's Marena Whittle made the ultimate difference with two 2-point shots, overturning the game and securing victory. The Chinese



players contested that Whittle's final shot was taken out of the 12-second shooting window, but the referees upheld the end results. "It's challenging to play such a tough game with only three players, but our desire to win was strong," said Wan Jiyuan. "Victory would have been a huge honor."

## Djokovic,Alcaraz into French Open quarters as showdown looms

PARIS (Agencies): Novak Djokovic swept into the French Open quarter-finals for the 14th straight year on Sunday as world number one Carlos Alcaraz breezed past Lorenzo Musetti to stay on a collision course with the 22-time Grand Slam champion. Third seed Djokovic ended the surprise run of Peruvian outsider Juan Pablo Varillas, winning 6-3, 6-2, 6-2, and has yet to drop a set through four matches. The Serb, chasing a third Roland Garros crown, is into a record 17th French Open quarter-final after making the last eight at a major for the 55th time. "I'm proud of it, but my attention is already in the next match," said Djokovic,



who faces Russian 11th seed Karen Khachanov for a place in the semi-finals, where Alcaraz could await. "I know what my goal is here. I'm trying to stay mentally the course and of course not look too far. "Obviously the performance of today gives me a great deal of confidence about how I felt, about how I played."

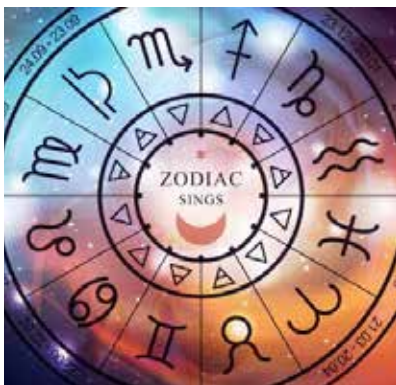
## 'Don't give a damn' Heat pull level against Nuggets in NBA Finals

DENVER (Agencies): The Miami Heat have become masters of tuning out the naysayers' noise in their bid to become the first eighth-seeded team to win the NBA title. Forward Jimmy Butler said it's something the Heat have perfected through an arduous, injury-plagued season in which mental toughness carried the club through lineup changes, losing streaks, the play-in tournament and, finally, past Eastern Conference top seeds Milwaukee and second-seeded Boston. On Sunday, they handed Western Conference top seeds Denver their first home defeat of this post-season, withstanding a 41-point performance from Nuggets star Nikola Jokic to head home to Miami to host games three and four with the championship series tied at 1-1. "We're not worried about what anybody thinks," Butler said of the key to the Heat's resil-



ience. "We're so focused in on what we do well and who we are as a group that at the end of the day, that's what we fall back on. "Make-or-miss shots, we're going to be who we are because we're not worried about anybody else. That's how it's been all year long, and that's not going to change. "So that's what I think it is. I think it's the 'I don't give a damn' factor." Center Bam Adebayo added: "Biggest thing for us, we heard the noise throughout the whole playoffs. Biggest thing for us, we had the will and we had the belief, and we keep finding ways to win."

## DAILY HOROSCOPE: JUNE 6, 2023



– It's a general reading which may differ from person to person because of time date and year.  
– **ARIES**: Something strikes you, probably midday, and you can't stop thinking about new possibilities. It's a good time to share your vision with your friends or coworkers. Things can change quickly!  
– **TAURUS**: Workplace issues could get out of hand, and you should expect territorial struggles wherever you go, even if you're not involved. You might need to calm people down, whatever the situation.  
– **GEMINI**: It's a great day for working through big intellectual issues. You've got plenty of amazing energy locked away in that brain of yours, and the biggest question is what you want to tackle first.  
– **CANCER**: It's a good day to try new methods of adapting to stress. You can deal with all sorts of crazy people simply by sidestepping them or confronting them in a different way. Everything is flexible!  
– **LEO**: You need to keep trying new options until one works perfectly (or

nearly so). It may get frustrating, but this is one of those days when good enough just isn't good enough. Keep at it!  
– **VIRGO**: You need to make sure that you're not just trashing the big plan for the sake of picking nits. Unless you think something is headed for disaster, try to keep your comments as positive as possible.  
– **LIBRA**: Your smile is practically irresistible today. It's a good time to show the people around you how to loosen up and enjoy themselves even if they're slaving away over deadlines.  
– **SCORPIO**: No matter where you are, your first instinct may be to reject new ideas as too much trouble. Instead, try to remain open-minded. Things will settle down soon, and you need a fresh perspective.  
– **SAGITTARIUS**: Now is a really great time for you to figure out the latest issue that's been troubling you or making life weirder for you. See if you can take time out to sift through all the new information in your life.  
– **CAPRICORN**: You're pretty level-headed on most days, but today you're even more down-to-earth. It's a good time to figure out your finances or invest in something solid.  
– **ACQUARIUS**: You're at your best today and should find that other folks are much more willing to offer you new opportunities. You may get job offers, romantic propositions, investment opportunities, and more!  
– **PISCES**: You're not feeling all that optimistic about recent plans. They may have proven to be unrealistic. That's just the first step, though, as long as you're willing to change course.



## Scientific experimental samples brought back to Earth,delivered to scientists

BEIJING (Agencies): A new batch of scientific experiment samples has been brought back to Earth with the return capsule of China's Shenzhou-15 manned spaceship from China's space station Tiangong, the Science and Technology Daily reported Monday. The samples have been delivered to the scientists of the space application system for subsequent research and studies. The space application system, along with the return capsule of the Shenzhou-15 spaceship, sent back the



experimental samples of a total of 15 scientific projects, according to the report. The samples, weighing more than 20 kilograms, will be used in life experiments and material experiments. The scientists will conduct molecular biology, cell biol-

ogy, in-orbit growth and metabolism analyses on the samples in life experiments. The samples of the material experiments will be tested and analyzed in the laboratory to study the physical properties and chemical changes of the materials that are difficult to know in the ground gravity environment. Shenzhou-15's return capsule touched down at the Dongfeng landing site in north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region at 6:33 a.m. (Beijing Time) on Sunday.

## Here Comes the AI: Fans rejoice in 'new' Beatles music

WASHINGTON (Agencies): When the Beatles broke up more than 50 years ago, devastated fans were left yearning for more. Now, artificial intelligence is offering just that. From "re-uniting" the Fab Four on songs from their solo careers, to re-imagining surviving superstar Paul McCartney's later works with his voice restored to its youthful peak, the new creations show off how far this technology has come - and raise a host of ethical and legal questions. "I'm sobbing! This is so beautiful!!!" wrote a listener in a typical YouTube comment for a fan-created AI cover of McCartney's 2013 single, "New," which features de-aged vocals and a bridge part "sung" by his great songwriting partner and friend, the late John Lennon. Equally impressive is a version of "Grow Old With Me," one of the last songs penned by Lennon, which was posthumously released after his 1980 murder and recently remade by an AI creator who goes by "Dae Lims." With enhanced audio quality, an orchestral arrange-



ment and harmonized backing vocals that evoke the Liverpoolian rockers' heyday, the song's most stirring moment comes when McCartney croons over a soaring melody with poignant lyrics about aging. "When I hear this, I lose it. I start crying," said music YouTuber Steve Onotera, who goes by "SamuraiGuitarist" and has a million followers, in a recent video discussing the new works' unforeseen sentimental resonance. After the most influential band in history parted ways acrimoniously, fans were deprived of a final "happy ending," he said. "So when we do get that reunion artificially yet convincingly created by AI, well, it's surprisingly emotional."

AI here, there and everywhere Like an earlier track called "Heart on a Sleeve" which featured AI-generated vocals of Drake and The Weeknd and racked up millions of hits on TikTok and other platforms, these covers use scraping technology that analyzes and captures the nuances of a particular voice. The creators would have probably then sung the parts themselves and then applied the cloned voice, in a manner similar to placing a filter on a photograph. While the results can be astonishing, getting there isn't simple and requires skilled human operators combining new AI tools with extensive knowledge of traditional music processing software, Zohaib Ahmed, the CEO of Resemble AI, a Toronto-based voice cloning company, told AFP. "I think we're still seeing a very small percentage of the population that can even access these tools," he said. They need to "jump through hoops, read documentation, have the right computer, and then put it all together."

## Apple mixed-reality headset to take aim at the metaverse

SAN FRANCISCO (Agencies): Apple on Monday is expected to show off pricy mixed-reality headgear at its annual Worldwide Developers Conference, challenging Facebook-owner Meta in a market that has yet to sizzle. The iPhone maker has remained mum on reports that it is poised to unveil a headset for augmented or virtual reality experiences at its annual jamboree for developers and app designers. The release would be the most significant product launch by the iconic iPhone maker since it unveiled the Apple Watch in 2015. It could also invite more tensions between Apple CEO Tim Cook and Meta's Mark Zuckerberg who have feuded over the handling of their sprawling tech empires, especially over data issues and China ties. Expectations are high that Apple will use the WWDC stage to spotlight a "Reality Pro" headset priced around \$3,000, along with custom-made software for the gear, Wedbush analyst Dan Ives said in a note to investors. "We believe Apple's

Reality Pro will come with many apps and use cases," Ives said. Cook is also expected to talk about the company's strategy when it comes to artificial intelligence, which has been in the spotlight since startup OpenAI released ChatGPT late last year. The headset has been in development at Cupertino-based Apple for years, and will focus on gaming, streaming video and conferencing, as well as health and fitness, according to Ives. It is also expected to synch closely with other Apple devices, following the company's strategy of using premium hardware to lock customers into other products and services. "From all reports, Apple hoped to release a product that felt more like designer glasses than a gaming headset, but it's releasing something much bulkier," said Insider Intelligence principal analyst Yory Wurmser. "It wants to get its device into the hands of early adopters and developers, who will start to build a (mixed reality) ecosystem around Apple software."

## Amid Hindutva threats,venue cancellations to stop Khalistan Referendum, 31000 Australian Sikhs vote in Sydney

ISLAMABAD: Over 31,000 Sikhs voted for Khalistan Referendum in Sydney amid stiff resistance from the Indian government and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's personal campaign to stop Sikhs from holding the third phase of the referendum in Australia. The Sydney phase of Khalistan Referendum was organised to mark the anniversary of the 1984 Operation Blue Star Amritsar Genocide when Indian authorities killed thousands of Sikhs during a bloodied attack on Sri Harmandir Sahib (popularly known as the Golden Temple). Thousands of Sikh men and women queued outside Shaheed General Shabeg Singh Khalistan Referendum Voting Centre on Sterling Road, Michinbury, from 9am and cast their votes till 5pm under the supervision of independent Punjab Referendum Commission which is overseeing the worldwide referendum voting, commissioned by Pro-Khalistan separatist group, Sikhs for Justice (SFJ). Two weeks before Khalistan Referendum voting in Sydney, PM Modi was in Australia where he met the Australian govt authorities and urged them to stop Sikhs from going ahead with voting but the Australian

govt told Modi that whole Canberra respected India's position it was no in position to stop its own citizens from expressing their legal and democratic right. Pro-Khalistan Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) booked Khalistan Referendum voting at four different venues but all venues ended up cancelling the booking citing security and organisational issues as Hindutva groups, backed by the Indian govt, raised false alarms of potential violence between Sikh and Hindutva groups with the centres. Large sized banners and posters hung outside the venue with the following slogans: "Khalistan Referendum Australia, Shimla Capital secession of Punjab from India"; "1984 Sikh Genocide, 100+ Sikhs burnt alive in furnaces by India's Hindu mobs"; "Khalistan Rerendum, the last battle to liberate Punjab"; "Khalistan Referendum - Punjab - Shimla Capital". The Sikhs for Justice General Counsel Gurbatwant Singh Pannun said: "Sydney Khalistan Referendum voting is a prodigious journey of Sikh Sovereignists from June 1984 defending Sri Akal Takht Sahib With 'bombs-bullets' to 'ballot-voting' in 2023 to liberate Punjab from Indian occupation."

## Mexico's most populous state votes in prelude to presidential election

MEXICO CITY (Agencies): Millions of Mexicans voted Sunday in the country's most populous state, with the ruling left-wing Morena movement hoping to seize the last major bastion of the once-dominant PRI party, one year ahead of presidential elections. A total of 12.6 million people were eligible to vote for the governor of the State of Mexico, the region on the outskirts of the capital which encapsulates all the contrasts of the country, from economic dynamism to criminal violence. In this last big test before the mid-2024 presidential election, Morena's candidate Delfina Gomez is the favorite against the PRI's Alejandra del Moral. A victory would confirm the new hegemony of the Movement for National Regeneration (Morena), which already governs 22 of Mexico's 32 states, either alone or with its allies. Shortly after polling stations closed at 0000 GMT, both Gomez and Del Moral said they had won. Preliminary results were expected late Sunday. Gomez said she was proud of the men and women of her state. "They are the ones who made this victory possible," she said. Gomez is boosted by the popularity of President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, in office since December 2018. The Institutional Revolution-

ary Party (PRI), which held power from 1930 to 2000, and then again between 2012 and 2018, had been described in the past as a "perfect dictatorship" by Nobel Prize in Literature winner Mario Vargas Llosa. A loss in the State of Mexico would deny PRI its historical bastion. "I hope it will be a beautiful day for the Mexicans," the term for inhabitants of the state, said Gomez as she cast her ballot. With 17 million residents — more than Belgium, Switzerland, and many other European countries — the State of Mexico is a "mini-Mexican Republic," according to the political scientist Miguel Tovar from Alterpraxis. The state is one of the most violent in the country, especially in the urban areas around the sprawling capital, yet also an important manufacturing hub that is home to corporate giants such as Ford and Nestle. Its economy represents 9.1 percent of the nation's GDP. Elections were also taking place Sunday in the northern mining state of Coahuila on the US border. Morena has not presented such a united front there, thanks to the dissident candidacy of a former secretary of state in Lopez Obrador's government. The division within the ruling party could allow the PRI to win over a majority of the 2.3 million registered voters.

## Snowden leaks at 10 years: more data more controls

WASHINGTON (Agencies): In 2013 US intelligence contractor Edward Snowden stunned the world with revelations that the massive US spy apparatus was secretly sucking up communications and private data on people around the world, from the lowest social media poster to the phone calls of German chancellor Angela Merkel. Snowden showed no one was safe from electronic prying by the National Security Agency, least of all Americans, whose private communications were supposedly constitutionally protected. Ten years later, Snowden sits in exile in Moscow and US intelligence still collects huge amounts of private electronically stored and transmitted information. But his revelations had lasting im-



pact, advancing privacy protections in Europe and America and accelerating use of encryption. After Snowden's leaks, "in almost every Western democracy, there was a historic debate about the relationship of citizens and the state mass surveillance programs, whether oversight of those programs was adequate," said Ben Wizner of the American Civil Liberties Union and an attorney for Snowden.

## Fossil fuelled: Climate talks begin with spotlight on oil chief

PARIS (Agencies): The future of fossil fuels — the leading source of planet-heating emissions — will face scrutiny at UN climate negotiations Monday (5 June) with an under-fire Emirati oil chief poised to step into the driver's seat. As the world struggles to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above preindustrial levels, pressure is on the UAE to arrive in Germany with ambitious plans for its presidency of Dubai's December COP28 climate summit. The choice of Sultan Al Jaber, chief executive of the Abu Dhabi National Oil Company, to head December's COP28 summit in Dubai has angered climate activists and some Western legislators who fear it will hold back progress on reducing emissions. Last month, more than 100 lawmakers from the US Congress and European Parliament called for the oil company boss's removal from the position. Al-Jaber favours the rapid development of renewable energy. But he

regularly calls for more investment in hydrocarbons to meet global energy demand, emphasising the need to boost development of technologies for capturing carbon dioxide emissions. Oil producers have for years touted carbon capture as a potential global warming solution, against criticism from climate experts who say it risks distracting from the urgent goal of slashing fossil fuel pollution. "The presidency needs to quickly show where its ambition lies: ramping up the renewables is part of it but recognising that won't be enough for this COP," said Laurence Tubiana, head of the European Climate Foundation. She added it was critical to "recognise that the fossil era is ending". On Sunday, the United Arab Emirates' Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, responsible for overseeing the preparations for COP28, met with US special presidential envoy for climate John Kerry, in a meeting attended by al-Jaber.

## Saudi Arabia announces comprehensive Hajj operational plan

MAKKAH MUKARMA (APP): Saudi authorities have unveiled their plans for the largest organizational operation in the history of the Hajj season. The meticulously crafted operational plan, which took a year to develop, aligns with the government agency's strategic goals for 2024, centered on the visionary Vision 2030 initiative, according to Saudi media. In an announcement by Dr. Abdulrahman Al-Sudais, the president of the General Presidency for the Affairs of the Two Holy Mosques, it was revealed that a record-breaking 14,000 staff members, along with numerous volunteers, will be deployed in the Two Holy Mosques to cater to the millions of worshippers participating in the pilgrimage. Dr. Al-Sudais emphasized that this year's Hajj

season would focus on achieving the government agency's strategic goals for 2024, aligning with Vision 2030. With the COVID-19 pandemic coming to an end, the authorities are expecting a significant number of pilgrims. Volunteering opportunities will be abundant, and 300,000 copies of the Qur'an will be distributed between the Grand Mosque in Makkah and the Prophet's Mosque in Madinah. The plan also includes more than 35,000 hours of Qur'an recitation and memorization teaching workshops, as well as round-the-clock scientific and orientation broadcasts in 10 languages. To assist pilgrims from various backgrounds, translation services, guidance, and answers to questions will be available in 51 languages.



## World must 'work as one' to end plastic pollution: UN chief

UNITED NATIONS (APP): As international negotiators committed to hammering out a draft treaty by November on ending plastic pollution, the UN chief stressed in his message for World Environment Day on Monday, the importance of curbing the "catastrophic" consequences of waste plastics. "Every year, over 400 million tons of plastic is produced worldwide one-third of which is used just once", said Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. "Every day, the equivalent of over 2,000 garbage trucks full of plastic is dumped into our oceans, rivers, and lakes." He noted that microplastics

are finding their way into the food we eat, the water we drink, and even the air we breathe. "Plastic is made from fossil fuels the more plastic we produce, the more fossil fuel we burn, and the worse we make the climate crisis", the UN chief said. But solutions are at hand: including the legally binding agreement that remains on course, following five days of negotiations involving more than 130 nations last week. "This is a promising first step, but we need all hands on deck", he said, stressing that a new report from the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) shows that plastic pollution can be reduced

by a staggering 80 per cent by 2040 if humankind acts now to reuse, recycle, and pivot away from plastics. "We must work as one governments, companies, and consumers alike to break our addiction to plastics, champion zero waste, and build a truly circular economy. "Together, let us shape a cleaner, healthier, and more sustainable future for all." The statistics for the damage caused by plastics are daunting: more than 400 million tonnes of plastic is produced every year worldwide, half of which is designed to be used only once. Of that, less than 10 per cent is recycled, according to UN figures.

## Australian jailed for killing her children released after 20 years

SYDNEY (Agencies): An Australian mother jailed for killing her four young children was pardoned and released on Monday after 20 years behind bars, ending what authorities called a "terrible ordeal". Kathleen Folbigg was dubbed "Australia's worst female serial killer" after she was convicted in 2003 of murdering three of her children and the manslaughter of a fourth. Prosecutors argued she suffocated the children, who died between the ages

of nine weeks and three years, but Folbigg has steadfastly maintained each death was due to natural causes. In 2021, dozens of scientists from Australia and abroad signed a petition calling for Folbigg's release, saying new forensic evidence suggested the unexplained deaths were linked to rare genetic mutations or congenital abnormalities. New South Wales Attorney-General Michael Daley said Folbigg had been pardoned following

an inquiry, launched in May 2022, that established "reasonable doubt" surrounding the convictions. "This has been a terrible ordeal for everyone concerned, and I hope that our actions today put some closure on this 20-year matter," he told reporters. Folbigg, 55, was released on Monday morning from a prison in Grafton, in the north of New South Wales state, where she had been serving a sentence of at least 25 years.

## Swiss capital votes for legal cocaine

BERN: The municipal council of the Swiss capital Bern voted on Thursday to extend the trial sale of cannabis to cocaine. The drug will not be immediately legalized, however, without the federal government's permission. The motion, which was introduced by the Alternative Left party, passed by 43 votes to 18, Swiss news outlet SRF reported on Friday. The motion was opposed by center-right and religious councilors, but supported by leftists and some members of the center-left Social Democratic Party. Bern voted last year to test the controlled sale of cannabis, and was granted permission by the federal government last month. Cannabis sales are expected to begin in Bern this fall, and have already started in Basel, Zurich, and Lausanne. Noting that the federal government only agreed to allow cannabis sales after significant pressure from multiple cities, Bern Social Director Franziska Teuscher said her city would not push the government to act on cocaine, and that Thursday's vote instead sent a signal that the city would be open to the idea in future. A similar motion was rejected by the council in 2019, with the Social Democrat majority arguing that they wanted to gain experience with legal cannabis sales before moving on to harder drugs. Switzerland is a cocaine hotspot, with Addiction Switzerland estimating that five tons of the powder enters the country every year. According to EU data, four Swiss cities – Zurich, Basel, Geneva – rank in the top ten in Europe for cocaine consumption. Consumption all across Europe has risen in the last decade, with residents of Bern consuming more than twice as much of the substance last year as they did in 2012.

## Germany to deploy warships to Indo-Pacific

BERLIN: Germany will send two warships to the Indo-Pacific in 2024, Defence Minister Boris Pistorius said on Sunday, amid rising tensions between China and Taiwan and over the disputed South China Sea. Speaking at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, Asia's most important security conference, Pistorius said countries needed to stand up for the rules-based international order and the protection of major maritime passages. "To this end, the German Federal Government sent a frigate to the Indo-Pacific in 2021, and will again, in 2024, deploy maritime assets – this time a frigate and a supply ship - to the region," he said, according to a script of his speech distributed by the defence ministry in Berlin. He added the deployments were not directed against any nation, a remark apparently addressed at China. "To the contrary: They are dedicated to the protection of the rules-based international order that we all signed up to and which we all should benefit from – be it in the Mediterranean, in the Bay of Bengal or in the South China Sea."

## Pakistan keen to enhance business, trade ties with Iraq: Bilawal



BAGHDAD (APP): Minister for Foreign Affairs Bilawal Bhutto Zardari Monday said Pakistan was keen to enhance ties with Iraq in the fields of trade and investment and would take steps to increase economic cooperation with the brotherly country. Speaking at an event of Pakistan-Iraq Business Forum here, he said Pakistan and Iraq shared religious and cultural affinities and now needed to take their bilateral relationship to meaningful partnership by encouraging joint ventures and collaboration between the business communities of the two countries. He said during his interactions with President and Prime Minister of Iraq, they discussed ways and means to expand cooperation in diverse areas including trade, investment, reconstruction of infrastructure and for sharing experience in water management and agriculture. He said there was a resolve on both sides to explore new innovative areas for mutually beneficial cooperation. During talks with the Iraqi leadership, it was agreed to facilitate business community of both countries and introduce flexible visas regimes for them, he continued. Pakistan had already made arrangement for visa facilitation for foreign investors, he said adding he

signed two memorandums of understanding for further enhancing cultural cooperation and for abolishing visa requirements for diplomatic and official passport holders. He said both countries agreed on opening of Pakistani Consulate in Najaf and an MoU for hospitality of Zaireen was also discussed. The minister expressed confidence that the business community of both countries would take advantage of the measures taken by the two governments for enhancing business ties and for transfer of capital. He said the two sides would boost efforts to enhance bilateral trade as the current volume of trade did not commensurate with their trade potential. He urged the business forum to focus on tapping into new business opportunities so that both countries could move forward in different areas including food security, energy and construction. He said Pakistan-Iraq Business Council would be formed which would give policy input and suggestions and help implement special initiatives to boost economic cooperation. He assured of full cooperation of the Pakistan government to the proposed council in achieving its objectives, adding economic diplomacy was at the heart of Pakistan's foreign policy.

## Sanjrani embarks 4-day diplomatic visit to Russia

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani, along with a delegation of Senators, has commenced a four-day visit to Russia at the invitation of the esteemed Speaker of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation, Valentina Mativenko. The chairman Senate and his accompanying delegation arrived at Moscow's Domodedovo airport, where

they were warmly received at the VIP lounge, a press release received here from Moscow on Monday said. The distinguished delegation was greeted by Chizhov Vladimir Alekseevich, the head of the group on cooperation between the Federation Council and the Senate of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, representing the Russian side. Additionally, Shafqat Ali Khan, the Extraordinary and Pleni-

## Israel Energy Minister opposes Saudi civilian nuclear program as normalisation condition

TEL AVIV (Agencies): Israel's Energy Minister has expressed opposition to the possibility of Saudi Arabia developing a civilian nuclear program as a condition for the normalisation of bilateral relations. Speaking to Ynet TV today, the country's Energy Minister, Israel Katz, replied to a question about the prospective Saudi civilian nuclear program by stating that "Naturally, Israel does not encourage such things. I don't think Israel should agree to such things".

The issue stems back to a report by The New York Times in March that Saudi Arabia made it a condition for normalising relations with Israel that it be allowed to develop its own nuclear program for civilian purposes, amongst

other conditions. That report was not confirmed by Saudi and US officials, however. Tel Aviv has long been concerned with nuclear programs adopted by other nations in the region – such as Iraq, Syria and Libya previously, and, currently, Iran – even if they be for civilian and energy purposes. That concern seems to now extend to Saudi Arabia, despite Israel's desperate efforts to strike a normalisation deal with the Kingdom.

As Israel's ally, the United States continues to pursue such diplomatic efforts in order to broker a historic deal, Tel Aviv made it clear last week that it expects to be consulted by Washington on any agreement which allegedly impacts its national security.

## Russia announces major naval drills



MOSCOW (Agencies): Russia's Pacific Fleet has launched large-scale naval exercises in the Far East, which are scheduled to last two weeks, the Defense Ministry announced on Monday. In a statement, the ministry said more than 60 warships and support vessels, 35 naval aircraft, coastal defense troops, and more than 11,000 military personnel would be involved in the drills, which are taking place in the Sea of Japan and Sea of Okhotsk. The fleet's tactical groups and naval aviation are set to perform combat training, as well as practice tracking submarines and work on improving naval air defense organization and logistics support, according to the ministry. The drills are scheduled to last from June 5 to 20 and will be overseen by the Pacific Fleet's commander, Admiral Viktor Liina. The ministry released a video showing Russian warships in formation passing under a bridge, with several others then heading to the open sea. The major new exercises come after Russia switched its Pacific Fleet to full combat readiness in April as part of a surprise check. Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu reported to President Vladimir Putin that the effort involved more than 25,000 service members, 167 ships, 12 submarines, and 89 aircraft. Putin later commented that the surprise check had been conducted "at a high level," while pointing out that despite the conflict with Ukraine, "nobody has aborted the task of developing the navy." The exercises also come amid tensions in the Asia-Pacific region, most notably on the Korean peninsula, which has seen repeated North Korean missile launches and joint US-South Korean military drills. The regional situation has also been exacerbated by a standoff between China and the US over Taiwan.

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## NA Speaker underlines role of Women's participation in legislation

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf Thursday recognizing role of women in development of the country said that without integration of women in legislation, economy, and politics, the development remained a distant dream. He expressed these views while addressing the participants of the "National Conference of Women's Parliamentary Caucus" organized by Women Parliamentary Caucus ( ) in Pakistan Institute of Parliament Serves ( PIPS) The speaker congratulated Secretary WPC Shahida Reh-



mani for arranging the conference

as it is for the first time that such an effort has been made to gather Women Legislators from National and Provincial Assemblies under one roof. He said that Women had always worked dedicatedly towards bringing sustainable change in the lives of their fellow women and they had always played an imperative role in strengthening inter-provincial ties. While, commemorating the determination of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto, the speaker said that she was a symbol of invincible women as a she served as the 11th and 13th Prime Minister of the country.

