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Vol 11, No 234 - Friday 9 June 2023 Zilqada 19, 1444 A.H.

Editor: Omer Rizwan

Pakistan Economic Survey 2022-23 reveals a grim tale of the economy



ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Pakistan's Finance Minister, Ishaq Dar, presented an overview of the country's economic situation and outlined plans for recovery. The projected Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth of 5% for the fiscal year 2023 fell significantly short, with only 0.3% growth recorded. The agriculture and services sectors experienced modest growth rates of 1.5% and 0.86%, respectively, while the industrial sector contracted by a concerning 3%. Mr. Dar expressed discontent with the previous government, attributing the economic setback to their governance. He emphasized the need to resume development from where it was left off in 2017, focusing on inclusive and resilient growth, investor confidence, and market stability. To provide hope for the future, the finance minister previewed the upcoming budget for the next fiscal year. He announced plans to increase the federal Public Sector Development Programme to Rs1.15 trillion, which would be complemented by an additional Rs1.6 trillion through provincial development pro-

grams. These investments are expected to contribute to GDP growth in the coming year. The minister emphasized the government's commitment to addressing various challenges by prioritizing the "five Es": exports, e-Pakistan (digitization), environment, energy and infrastructure, and equity and empowerment. Additionally, efforts will be made to revive the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and implement the post-floods Resilient Recovery, Rehabilitation, and Reconstruction Framework (4RF). Mr. Dar hinted at forthcoming salary and pension increases for government employees, as well as special incentives for agriculture, information technology, and manufacturing sectors in the upcoming budget. He stated that the government's macroeconomic recovery plan involves fiscal measures and structural reforms, with further details to be revealed in his budget speech. Acknowledging the challenging circumstances faced by the current government, the finance minister argued that it would be unfair to compare their performance against the previ-

ously set growth targets. He identified three major setbacks, including a substantial trade deficit, delayed disbursements for development projects, and the adverse effects of last year's monsoons. Mr. Dar expressed optimism regarding the completion of the 9th review by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and highlighted the need to address the undervaluation of the Pakistani currency caused by market perceptions and the IMF drama. He urged the media to educate the public about the artificial undervaluation and discouraged citizens from converting their holdings into dollars and gold. The finance minister reassured that Pakistan is not insolvent and has valuable assets to manage its debts. He emphasized the importance of responsible spending and stated that budget numbers would only be shared with the IMF upon the prime minister's decision. He concluded by stating that the current IMF program would end on June 30, and the next government would determine if another program should be negotiated after the general elections.

Washington banned Kiev from signing truce with Moscow – Russian security chief

MOSCOW (Agencies): Nikolay Patrushev, one of Russia's senior security officials, has accused the US and the UK of standing in the way of peace. Unlike the peoples of Russia and Ukraine, the two English-speaking countries are interested in prolonging the violence and do not care about human suffering, he alleged. "I can identify the nations that are most interested [in continued hostilities] – they are the US and England," he said on Thursday during a press conference in Belarus. "And one should clearly realize that they do not care about people dying, because it's not their people, they are not waging the war on their own soil."

Patrushev, who serves as secretary of the Security Council, reminded journalists that Moscow and Kiev were on the verge of a truce in the first weeks of the conflict. But the Ukrainian government pulled out of peace talks under US pressure, he added. The official was referring to negotiations in Istanbul, during which Ukraine proposed to pledge neutrality in exchange for security guarantees, to which Moscow provisionally agreed. "Russia is not the ultimate target [for Western nations]," Patrushev assessed. "Their ultimate target is China. They [intend to] dominate the world, but that is unacceptable and won't happen."

Patrushev was visiting the Belarusian capital Minsk for a meeting of security chiefs from members of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), a regional mutual defense bloc that also includes Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Russian officials have described the hostilities in Ukraine as part of a larger proxy war waged by the US and its allies against Moscow, aimed at preserving Western powers' hegemony. Washington has declared the "strategic defeat" of Russia as its goal in Ukraine and pledged to provide military assistance to Kiev for as long as it takes to achieve that objective.

Millions under hazy skies as Canadian wildfire smoke spreads

NEW YORK (Agencies): Millions of people in North America are under air quality advisories as wildfires burning across Canada have prompted evacuations, disrupted air travel and caused apocalyptic, smoke-filled skies even thousands of kilometres from the blazes. The National Weather Service in the United States extended air quality alerts on Thursday for the East Coast from New England to South Carolina, as well as parts of the Midwest including Ohio, Indiana and Michigan. Health officials in more than a dozen US states have also warned residents that spending time outdoors could cause respiratory issues due



to the high levels of fine particulates in the atmosphere. Canada is experiencing its worst-ever start to wildfire season on record, experts have said, with blazes reported in nearly all the country's provinces and territories since May. More than 400 Canadian wildfires are still burning, particularly in the eastern province of Quebec, where approximately 150 fires were reported as of Thursday morning and some 13,500 people have been forced to evacuate. However, Quebec Premier Francois Legault said during an afternoon news conference that the situation was "stable" and no deaths or serious injuries had been reported so far.

Iran's president to visit three Latin American countries next week

MEXICO CITY (Agencies): Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi will visit Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela next week, Iran's state news agency IRNA announced on Wednesday, adding that the upcoming tour stemmed from invites from the presidents of each of the Latin American nations. IRNA said documents to expand bilateral cooperation will be signed between Iran and the three countries during Raisi's visit, mentioning economic, political and scientific issues, but without going into further detail. The state news agency said Raisi will leave Tehran on June 11. The three-country tour will give Raisi



face time with three regional allies, each of whom lead leftist governments that have been accused by critics of human rights violations. Iran and Venezuela are both members of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC).

US to give \$150m in aid for Syria, Iraq at Saudi conference on combating Daesh group



DUBAI (Agencies): Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Thursday that the US would provide nearly \$150 million in aid for areas in Syria and Iraq that were liberated from the Daesh extremist group. He spoke at a ministerial conference hosted by Saudi Arabia on combating the group, which no longer controls any territory — but whose affiliates still carry out attacks across Africa, Asia and the Middle East. The Global Coalition to Defeat Daesh includes more than 80 countries and continues to coordinate action against the extrem-

ist group, which at its height controlled large parts of Syria and Iraq. Blinken said the US pledge is part of new funding amounting to more than \$600 million. "Poor security and humanitarian conditions. Lack of economic opportunity. These are the fuel for the kind of desperation on which Daesh feeds and recruits," he said, using a common acronym for the extremist group. "So we have to stay committed to our stabilization goals." Blinken co-hosted the conference as part of a two-day visit to the Kingdom in which he met with senior Saudi officials, including Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Blinken also attended a meeting of Gulf foreign ministers. The Saudis have launched wide-ranging diplomatic efforts to wind down their war in Yemen, resolve a crisis with Qatar, restore relations with archrival Iran and welcome Syria's President Bashar Assad back into the Arab League after a 12-year boycott.

Scientists find 'lost world' in billion-year-old Australian rock

CANBERRA (Agencies): Scientists have discovered a "lost world" of ancient organisms in billion-year-old rocks from northern Australia that they say could change the world's understanding of humans' earliest ancestors. The microscopic creatures, known as Protosterol Biota, are part of a family of organisms called eukaryotes and lived in Earth's waterways about 1.6 billion years ago, according to the researchers. Eukaryotes have a complex cell structure that includes mitochondria, the cell's "powerhouse", and a nucleus, its "control and information centre". Modern forms of eukaryotes include fungi, plants, animals and single-celled organisms such as amoebae. Humans and all other nucleated creatures can trace their ancestral lineage back to the last



eukaryotic common ancestors (LECA), which lived more than 1.2 billion years ago. The new discoveries "appear to be the oldest remnants of our own lineage – they lived even before LECA," said Benjamin Nettersheim, who completed his PhD at the Australian National University (ANU) and is now based at the University of Bremen in Germany. "These ancient creatures were abundant in marine ecosystems across the world and probably shaped ecosystems for much of Earth's history."

Bangladesh suffers long power cuts amid worst heatwave in decades

DHAKA (Agencies): A crippling power crisis has added to the misery of the Bangladeshis as they reel under the country's longest heatwave in decades. Tens of thousands of primary and secondary schools have been shut down by the government this week as temperatures surged to more than 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) in Dhaka. Other cities such as Rangpur recorded a high of 41 degrees Celsius – the highest there since 1958. Officials at the Bangladesh Meteorological Department said they had not seen such a prolonged heatwave since the country's independence in 1971. Earlier this week, operations at Bangladesh's biggest power plant were suspended as the government is unable to import fuel due to a decline in foreign exchange reserves and the depreciating value of the Bangladeshi taka which depreciated about 25 percent against the US dollar last year. Officials say the power crisis



is likely to linger and could even worsen due to the financial crisis. According to the Bangladesh Bank, the country's forex stockpile has gone below \$30bn for the first time in seven years. It was \$46bn a year ago. The closure of the 1320 MW Payra power plant, the country's largest, due to a shortage of coal has only compounded the crisis. While the government assured the plant will be operational by the end of this month, a top official at its operating company, the North-West Power Generation Company (NWPGC), who requested anonymity, told Al Jazeera it was "highly unlikely".

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.



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Meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar chaired the meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet. Federal Minister for Commerce Syed Naveed Qamar, Federal Minister for Power Mr. Khuram Dastagir Khan, Mr. Shahid Khaqan Abbasi MNA/Ex-PM, Minister of State for Finance and Revenue Dr. Aisha Ghous Pasha, Minister of State for Petroleum Mr. Musadik Masood Malik, SAPM on Finance Mr. Tariq Bajwa, SAPM on Revenue Mr. Tariq



Mehmood Pasha, Federal Secretaries and other senior officers attended the meeting. The ECC approved following Technical Supplementary Grants: 1) Rs. 1000 million as in favor of Ministry of Housing and Works for development schemes in Punjab Province under (SAP) during CFY 2022-23. 2) Rs. 14, 802.32 mil-

lion in favor of Ministry of Housing and Works for development schemes of CFY 2022-23. 3) Rs. 1209.450 Million in favor of Ministry of Housing and Works for execution of 15 development schemes of CFY 2022-23. 4) Rs. 5 billion in favor of Cabinet Division for Sustainable Development Goals Achievement Programme (SAP) during CFY 2022-23. 5) Rs. 1773 million in favor of Ministry of Energy (Power Division) for execution of development schemes of Punjab and KP provinces under PSDP during CFY 2022-23.

Federal budget 2023-24 to be people-friendly: Kaira

ISLAMABAD (APP): Adviser to the Prime Minister on Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan Affairs Qamar Zaman Kaira has said that the government was taking serious steps in the budget for the welfare of the poor and working class to make it people-friendly. Talking to a private news channel on Thursday, he said that the Federal budget would be a surprise for the opposition, adding that it would not only provide relief to the working class of the country in every sector but will also fulfill their aspirations. He assured that protection would be provided to the weaker sections of society, adding priority would be to reduce the financial burden on the common people. "PPP is a party of the workers and it will continue to protect the rights of every citizen," he added. Replying to a question, Kaira said that the budget for the fiscal year 2023-24 was prepared with the objective of providing maximum relief to the common man and stabilizing the country's economy.

IRSA releases 168,400 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 168,400 cusecs of water from various rim stations with inflow of 185,400 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1426.30 feet and was 28.30 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 66,400 cusecs and 63,600 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1134.70 feet, which was 84.70 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded at 54,200 cusecs and 40,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 86,000, 82,000, 61,500 and 22,700 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 35,400 cusecs of water were released at Nowshera and 10,400 cusecs were released from River Chenab at Marala.

Accused held, illegal weapon recovered

MUZAFFARGARH (APP): Local police claimed to have arrested an accused and recovered illegal weapons from his possession. On the directives of CPO, the police teams in campaign against criminals raided and arrested Muhammad Sajid, son of Riaz Hussain in limits of City Police Station here. SHO Sabir Klasra said it had acted on a tip-off that the accused carried illegal weapons with him. He said during preliminary probe, the outlaw revealed that he had brought the weapon to threaten people. He added that the accused was involved in a previous case of carrying illegal weapons and was in the habit of threatening people during fights.

Factory worker killed as fireworks caught fire

FAISALABAD (APP): A factory worker was killed when a fire erupted in a fireworks factory near Makuana bypass on Thursday. The Rescue 1122 said fireworks material in a factory near Chak No 210 Makuana bypass caught the fire due to a short circuit the fire due to a short circuit. As a result, a worker, Abid Hussain, 22, of Okara, burnt alive.

Minister commerce attends Commonwealth Trade Ministers' Meeting, advocates for equitable access to development

ISLAMABAD (APP): Leading the Pakistani delegation, Federal Minister for Commerce Syed Naveed Qamar emphasized the importance of fair access to development for all member nations during the meeting. The discussions addressed significant trade and development issues affecting Pakistan and other Commonwealth countries. Expressing gratitude to the Commonwealth Secretary General for hosting the event, Minister Qamar commended the organization's dedication to a fair and transparent multilateral trading system. He stressed the significance of maintaining a high-level dialogue that fosters unity and avoids divisive matters. During the meeting, Syed Naveed Qamar highlighted the challenges faced by Pakistan, including the COVID-19 pandemic, crisis in



Ukraine, the global cost of living crisis, the issues of the Afghan refugee, and the economic consequences of floods. Urging the need to address food security challenges, he called for extensive reforms in the agricultural sector, ensuring that subsidies do not distort trade or harm other countries. Reaffirming Pakistan's commitment to the multilateral trading system, Minister Qamar stressed consensus-based decision-making, development-focused policies, and a functional dispute settlement system.

Public private pilot projects are best to explore practical implementation of block chain in energy sector, Chairman NEPRA

ISLAMABAD (APP): NEPRA hosted a webinar on "Blockchain in Energy Trade" with an aim to create awareness amongst the power sector stakeholders. The webinar was led and addressed by Chairman NEPRA, Mr. Tauseef H. Farooqi, followed by Dr. Shoab A. Khan, CEO CARE; Mr. Safi Ghauri, Lawyer, Esquire and President Centre of Pakistan and International Relations, Ms. Amna Munawar. The same was also attended by a large number of Power Sector's Professionals. Chairman NEPRA, Mr. Tauseef H. Farooqi highlighted the importance of Blockchain in Peer-to-Peer Energy Trading, Energy Data Management and its role in Grid Balancing and Flexibility. He elaborated that the potential benefits of block chain in energy trade are significant, however, the main challenges are regulatory framework, scalability and interoperability with existing energy systems and that the public private

pilot projects are best to explore the practical implementation of block chain in the energy sector. Mr. Shoab A. Khan provided an overview of basics of blockchain technology, Smart Contracts and use of blockchain in electrical grids by explaining daily load curves and relating it with energy mix. Mr. Safi Ghauri highlighted the benefits of blockchain for energy providers, consumers and regulators. He also gave an overview of the blockchain energy markets apps and economic considerations to take in account while implementing the block chain technologies. President COPAIR Ms. Amna Munawar at the end highlighted the importance of block chain in micro grids, energy communities and electric vehicles charging and integration. President of COPAIR said that adoption of Blockchain platform will increase efficiency across participating institutions and in turn enhance the client experience.

DG Hajj mission ensures quality food facilities to Hujjaj this year

ISLAMABAD (APP): Director Hajj Mission Faheem Khan Afridi has said that the government was utilizing all resources to provide quality three meals a day to the pilgrims in Makkah as per the hygienic guidelines mandated by the Pakistan Hajj Mission. While talking to the PTV News channel on Thursday, he said special teams were visiting the kitchens of catering companies and observing that principles of hygiene were being strictly followed while preparing, packaging,

transporting, and distributing food among Hujjaj. He said comprehensive arrangements had been made to address complaints of the Hujjaj, adding, food contracts had been given to new and well-reputed catering companies this year. Afridi stressed that no negligence regarding Hajj facilities, including food, would be tolerated. Pakistani cooks in Makkah had ensured the highest quality standards at every stage, using exclusively Pakistani ingredients, he informed.

Experts for exploring strategies reducing plastic waste, creating livable urban future in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): The experts on Thursday called for exploring strategies for reducing plastic waste, and creating a livable urban future in the country. A Twitter Space titled "Reducing Plastic Waste for a Livable Urban Future in Pakistan" was held on World Environment Day 2023. It was jointly organized by the Institute of Urbanism (IoU) and the School of Leadership (SoLF) with the support of the U.S. Embassy, a news release said. The virtual event brought together experts, policy-makers, and concerned citizens to address the pressing issue of plastic waste and its impact on the urban environment in Pakistan. The event aimed to raise awareness, foster di-

alogue, and identify effective strategies for reducing plastic waste and creating livable urban spaces. The panel included the Director General Pakistan Environment Protection Agency (Pak EPA), Farzana Altaf Shah, Senior Manager Climate & Energy WWF-Pakistan, Nazifa Butt, Mome Saleem Senior Environmentalist, Dr Ejaz Ahmad Senior Program Fellow Institute of Urbanism (IoU), Mariyam Irfan Managing Director School of Leadership Foundation (SoLF), Mehreen Raza Founder and CEO She-Guard and Bilal Ahmad INT TECH GenUnlimited Global Winner. The space was hosted by Asmat Ullah, Anchorperson, a news release said.

Pakistan, Iraq to expand cooperation in trade, defence production

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan and Iraq have agreed to expand bilateral cooperation in diverse areas including trade, agriculture, water management and defence production. A Joint Statement simultaneously issued in Islamabad and Baghdad mentioned the agreement between the two countries on the inclusion of Pakistan in the Iraqi Development Corridor and establishing sister port cities relations between Basra and Karachi, health, textile, pharmaceutical and supporting Iraq's efforts in their reconstruction and rehabilita-

tion. Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari during his visit to Iraq from June 05-07 held wide-ranging interactions with Iraqi leadership, including with the President, Prime Minister, Speaker of the Parliament, Interior Minister, Governor of Karbala, Head of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq, President Al-Hikmet Party and Grand Ayatollah Sheikh Bashir Al-Najafi. Both sides noted the vital importance of the Joint Ministerial Commission (JMC) meeting, and agreed to hold its next session in the second half of 2023.

Chairman Senate addresses Plenary Session of Russian Federation Council, Highlights Shared Goals for Peace, Prosperity, and Interconnected World

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Senate of Pakistan, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani, addressed the members of the Russian Federation Council during the Plenary Session on 7th June 2023. His speech emphasized the historical ties and the prospects of enhancing bilateral relations between Pakistan and Russia. Expressing his gratitude for the warm welcome and generous hospitality extended to the Pakistani delegation, Chairman Senate acknowledged the pride and honor he felt to be present in the culturally diverse nation of Russia. He commended the symbolism of the Russian flag's colors and the inspiring national anthem, which reflect freedom, justice, valour, patriotism, power, and national integration. Highlighting

the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Russia, Chairman Senate recognized the strong bond shared by the peoples of both nations over an extended period. He expressed confidence that the evolving global landscape would further strengthen bilateral ties and open new avenues of cooperation. The Pakistani business community has shown significant interest in expanding trade relations with Russia. Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani paid tribute to the heroic struggle of the Soviet Union during World War II and the role played by the people of the Indus Valley, now Pakistan, in the defeat of Nazism. He regarded Leningrad as a symbol of patriotism and courage and paid special homage to the Red Army and the Russian people.

Middle East, a strategic economic partner of Pakistan, Minister Planning

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) in collaboration with We News organised an international seminar on 'Developments in the Middle East: Lessons and Opportunities for Pakistan.' The seminar, was addressed by former Ambassador of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan, Ambassador Ali Awadh Asseri; Federal Minister for Planning and Development, and Special Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal; Pakistan's former Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Vice-Admiral Hasham bin Siddique; Dr Robert Mason, Non-Resident Fellow at Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington; Professor Mahjoob Zweiri Dir Gulf Studies Programme, Qatar University; Ambassador Javed Hafeez, former envoy of Pakistan, and Azfar Ahsan, former minister of State & Chairman Board of Investment (BOI).

Federal Minister for Planning and Development, and Special Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal said that a decade of stability is desired to transform Pakistan into a performing economy, and drew attention towards the goal of making Pakistan as the 25th economy in the world. He listed out a promising six-point agenda, and said that while interacting with Gulf States, these could serve as benchmarks for progress. They are seeking Mideast investment in agriculture, information technology, energy and renewable projects, mining, manpower export and tourism. He said that despite the fact that Pakistan's economy is dwindling and the currency has lost ground, it comes as an opportunity in disaster as Pakistan has the lowest cost-laden human resource, and serves as an attraction for Gulf States.

Modi regime continues victimization of Kashmiris, attaches 124 more properties across IOJK

ISLAMABAD (APP): Narendra Modi-led fascist Indian government continues to victimize the people of Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir by depriving them of their houses and other properties for their affiliation with the ongoing freedom movement. According to Kashmir Media Service, the Modi regime in its latest action has attached 124 properties worth millions, including land and buildings, owned by the people and organizations affiliated with the freedom struggle. It claimed that these properties situated at 86 locations across occupied Kashmir had been used for the furtherance of the activities aimed at the freedom of Jammu and Kashmir from India's

illegal occupation. The properties have been attached by the Delhi-controlled State Investigation Agency (SIA) and the Executive Wing of Indian police in IOJK under various sections of the black law, Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA). Of these properties, 77 belong to the socio-religious organization Jamaat-e-Islami. It is to mention here that India's dreaded National Investigation Agency and SIU had already attached the headquarters of the All Parties Hurriyat Conference in Srinagar and confiscated hundreds of houses and properties belonging to pro-freedom leaders and organizations including the Jamaat-e-Islami across IOJK.

Protection of marine life, reducing oceanic pollution need of hour: DG

ISLAMABAD (APP): Director Pakistan Meteorological Department Dr Zaheer Ahmed Babar Thursday on World Ocean Day stressed for educating people around the world to come together to address ongoing major threats to our oceans as plastic pollution threatens food safety, human health, coastal tourism, and contributes to climate change. "It is need of hour to explore new and existing legally binding agreements to address marine plastic pollution, he stressed while talking to PTV news channel. He further explained that oceans are very important for mankind as these are a major source of sustenance of life on earth and act as lungs to our planet as they provide more than 50 percent of the oxygen produced on this planet, adding, plastic in our oceans

affects creatures large and small. He stressed that people should be sensitized to refuse the use of plastic and promote recycling and reusing. People should stop the use of one-time plastic commodities, such as plastic bottles, straws and cups, which would create a huge positive impact on oceans and environment, he added. World Oceans Day reminds every one to play role for the oceans' protection, he said, adding, all the stakeholders to act now at individual, communal, and governmental levels by transforming their approach and employing scientific innovations. He said human activities related to the sea and shores are playing havoc with the health of oceans and this state of affairs require better long-term strategies to tackle issues and protect Marine life.

TAPI gas pipeline project to usher in region’s prosperity: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday expressed confidence that TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) gas pipeline project would usher in an era of regional cooperation, development and prosperity. Addressing here at the signing ceremony of TAPI Joint Implementation Plan, the prime minister said the project was of utmost importance for the development of the four countries and the region. Sharif said the project would help the region to secure natural gas to concrete assurances and mutually agreed terms and conditions. He mentioned that in view of global



situation, energy had become a real challenge. “For a developing country like Pakistan, there is a need for speedy actions to explore the options for energy,” he said. The prime minister directed his team to do everything to pace up the planning and execution of the TAPI project. He said Pakistan and Turkmenistan were ready to expand relations in diverse areas and boost their cooperation.

ANF recovers 37 kg drugs in four operations; arrests two

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in their ongoing operations against drug smugglers conducted raids in different areas and managed to recover over 37 kg of drugs besides netting two accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman. He informed that in an operation at a private courier company office here, ANF recovered 50 grams of weed, being sent to the UK. The parcel was booked by an accused resident of Jhelum.

In another operation at Multan Airport, 986 grams of charras were recovered from the possession of a Dubai-bound passenger, a resident of North Waziristan, going through flight no PK-221. In the third operation, 129 litres of prohibited chemical was recovered from Toba Achakzai, Qilla Abdullah area. In the fourth operation conducted in a deserted Mazani area in Gwadar, 36 kg charras concealed under bushes were recovered.

Jailed Nayeem Khan’s father remembered on his death anniversary

ISLAMABAD (APP): The All Parties Hurriyat Conference Azad Jammu and Kashmir (APHC-AJK) chapter leader, Altaf Hussain, has paid a rich tribute to Ghulam Muhammad Khan, the father of illegally detained APHC leader, Nayeem Ahmed Khan, on his 8th death anniversary. Ghulam Muhammad Khan was a close associate of prominent martyred liberation leader, Muhammad Maqbool Butt, and endured detentions and torture but remained steadfast for the demand of right to self-determination for the people of Jammu and Kashmir,Kashmir Media Ser-

vice reported. Altaf Hussain Wani in a statement issued in Islamabad while paying homage to Ghulam Muhammad Khan hailed the peerless sacrifices, services and contribution of the Khan family in the ongoing Kashmir freedom movement. He said that late leader was a man of integrity who passed away at his residence at Pathan Pora Khore in Pattan area of Baramulla on this day in 2016 at the age of 83. Altaf Wani said that the Ghulam Muhammad Khan would be remembered for long in the annals of Kashmir’s resistance history.

Party not interested in delaying elections:Javed Latif

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) Federal Minister Mian Javed Latif Thursday said his party was not interested in delaying elections after the completion of constitutional period. Talking to a private news channel,he said elections would be conducted time and date adding that in the upcoming budget the government will allocate funds for elections, security arrangements for polling stations and ensure the availability of equipment for obtaining transparent results.

Commenting on support from coalition partners in the general elections of 2023, he said that the seat adjustment formula would be applied for winning the next elections. He claimed that Pakistan Muslim League-N had good working relationships with coalition partners including Pakistan People’s Party(PPP). To another question about division among leaders of Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTI), he said that PTI had been using the blame game agenda for four years.

Sherry calls for unity to tackle plastic pollution in oceans

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Climate Change Senator Sherry Rehman on Thursday urged the masses to unite this year to tackle the critical issue of plastic pollution in the oceans as the oceans produce 50 to 75 per cent of the earth’s oxygen. In her message on World Oceans Day, the federal minister said the Day was being celebrated all over the world including Pakistan. Senator Rehman said the day aimed to raise global awareness of the importance of oceans and promote their conservation and sustainable management. “The entire planet’s ecology depends on the

oceans. Plastic pollution is a serious threat to marine life and ecosystems. It is estimated that there are millions of tons of plastic in our oceans. Global reports indicate that 8 to 12 million metric tons of plastic waste enter the oceans every year,” Sherry Rehman added. “If this trend continues, one day there will be more plastic than fish in our oceans,” she said. Nature has blessed Pakistan with a marine ecosystem, harmful effects of plastic waste on our own oceans should not be ignored as Pakistan presents a 7Rs road-map to combat plastic pollution, Sherry Rehman added.

Media role vital to eradicate corruption:ACE director

SARGODHA (APP): Anti-Corruption Establishment (ACE) Sargodha Region Director Abdul Razzaq Dogar said on Thursday that media needed to play its crucial role in elimination of corruption by identifying the corrupt elements in society. He told APP here at his office that the ACE was striving to eradicate corruption and measures were being taken against the corrupt mafia. He said corruption was a serious challenge, being faced by both developing and developed countries and it required consistent efforts, effective monitoring and controls, committed leadership, and an active civil society to curb the menace. “The scourge of corruption and its various manifestations are responsible for some of

the gravest threats facing the nation. Corruption contributes to instability and poverty, and is a dominant factor pushing fragile countries towards state failure,” he added. He said fighting corruption was a serious issue for developing countries, especially Pakistan, as “it weakens security, hinders economic growth, deprives the nation of precious and scarce public and private resources. It creates social and economic disparities, erodes the economic edifice of society, and weakens state institutions.” Abdul Razzaq Dogar said that state media should highlight the progress made over the past years in the fight against corruption. “Elimination of corruption is a mission.

Arafat Catering prioritizes rigorous hygiene standards for food served to Pakistani Hajj pilgrims: CEO

ISLAMABAD (APP): Arafat Catering is committed to ensuring the safety and satisfaction of Pakistani pilgrims during the Hajj in Makkah Mukarramah by strictly adhering to the hygienic standards mandated by the Pakistan Hajj Mission, ensuring a delightful dining experience throughout the spiritual journey. Shahid Nazir, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Arafat Catering told APP that the meals provided are not only delicious but also prepared with the highest

levels of cleanliness and quality. Shahid, a Pakistani businessman from Multan, mentioned that his company has been providing three-time meals to Pakistani pilgrims since 2015. Having been in the catering business in Saudia since 2002, Shahid, takes pride in his company’s extensive experience spanning over two decades. Their kitchen is equipped with cutting-edge facilities, including dedicated departments for cutting, preserving, cooking, and ensuring

the proper temperature of cooked food using hot pots, among other essential features. Shahid personally oversees the entire process, from procuring and cutting ingredients to cooking and delivering meals to the Hajj pilgrims in their respective residences.He ensures the highest quality standards at every stage, using exclusively Pakistani ingredients. Shahid’s kitchen employs a dedicated staff of 85 individuals who work diligently to prepare the meals.

Shopkeepers fined

SARGODHA (APP): Assistant Commissioner Kot Momin Rab Nawaz on Thursday imposed a fine of Rs 105,000 on shopkeepers over profiteering near Sial morr. According to the official sources, the assistant commissioner in coordination with motorway policechecked various shops and found various shopkeepers involved in overcharging and profiteering. To which, the fine was imposed on profiteers.

Two cops among three killed in Swat

SWAT (APP): At-least two police personnel and a passerby killed in an attack on police here, said the spokesman of district police. He said the two cops were going for duty when unknown militants opened indiscriminate fire at them near Sabzi Mandi here as a result of which the two cops and a passerby died on the spot. A police team reached the spot ,shifted the bodies to hospital and started a search operation in the area.

Three brick kilns sealed

SARGODHA (APP): The Environment Protection Department sealed three brick-kilns on Thursday over violation of the government instructions regarding smog during a crackdown under way across the district. In line with special directives of Deputy Commissioner Sargodha (DC) Capt (retd) Shoaib Ali, a team, headed by Assistant Director Environment Naveed Ahmad, conducted raids at Chak No 34-NB and its surroundings and found that owners of three kilns had failed to adopt the zigzag technology at their kilns. The teams sealed those kilns for causing smog and registered cases against their owners -- Zee-shan, Farooq Khan and Abdul Qadir -- in Urban Area police station.

Dolphin force arrest two robbers

RAWALPINDI (APP): Dolphin Force here on Thursday arrested two alleged robbers who were trying to escape from the scene after looting cash and other valuables from a citizen. According to a police spokesman, a Dolphin Force team while giving a quick response managed to net two robbers riding a bike, who had looted cash, a laptop and other valuables from a motorist on Rawal Road in the jurisdiction of Sadiqabad police station. Dolphin Force team after chasing the robbers managed to net two accused namely, Abdullah and Saghir.

Security guard killed in robbery bid

MULTAN (APP): A private security guard was shot at and killed outside a medical store situated at Allah Shafi chowk here. Rescuers said the two accused tried to forcibly walk into the medical store. They intended to loot the cash on gunpoint. However, the security guard intercepted them to put up resistance. As a result, one of the unknown accused opened straight fire on the guard causing him critically wounded. Rescuers rushed to the location on an anonymous call and shifted him immediately to the Nishtar hospital where the medic pronounced him dead. The deceased was identified as Muhammad Shamir, 57, son of Sultan, resident of Kabir Walla. The police of the concerned jurisdiction was informed which reached the spot and collected evidence to start an investigation.

President urges universities to play role in preventing extremism,violence among students

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday called upon the universities to play an active role in preventing intolerance, extremism and violence among students and guide them towards a positive mindset. The universities, he said, should arrange regular capacity-building training sessions for their management and faculty members to inculcate in students the ability to resolve conflicts and extremism. Addressing the National Vice Chancellors’ Peace Conference, the president said banning the students’ unions in universities was not a solution and stressed that there was a need to change their mindset through proper teaching methodologies. He said the step would en-

sure the reformation of students to help them contribute towards the country’s better future, sustainable peace and prosperity. President Alvi stressed the need for promoting ethics, morality, empathy, forgiveness and tolerance among the students. He said the students must not be indulged in activities which created stress among them. To overcome the ongoing crisis, he said, priorities should be defined in streamlining the country’s economy, reducing inflation, poverty and the rule of law. The president hoped that the challenging times would pass soon and the country would witness exponential growth within five to seven years. The country will stand on strong footings again, he said.

Islamabad Police hold open katchehry to address public issues,vows priority action

ISLAMABAD (APP): In an effort to prioritize public concerns, Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Operations, Malik Jameel Zafar, emphasized the Islamabad capital police’s commitment to organizing open katchehries. During an open Katchehry held at Golra police station, various police officials, conciliatory committees, ulema, and community leaders gathered to discuss grievances and propose solutions. The SSP Operations promptly issued orders to address participants’

issues and assured them that their suggestions would be taken into consideration. Expressing determination to resolve residents’ problems, SSP Operations highlighted the significance of these open Katchehries in fostering direct relationships with the public. Acknowledging the positive impact of the police’s improved strategies in reducing crime, he urged citizens to cooperate in crime prevention and encouraged them to promptly report any suspicious activities.

Railways upgrades 167 un-manned crossings in one year

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistan Railways has upgraded as many as 167 vulnerable un-manned level crossings to manned level crossings, out of 550 which are identified by the department over the entire railway network last year.“The relevant provincial government provided the finances to Pakistan Railways for the upgradation of un-manned level crossings in the country,” official sources in the Ministry of Railways told APP.They said the present government was taking several steps including the up-gradation of un-manned and vulnerable railway level crossings across the country in collaboration with respective provincial governments.The sourc-

es said there were two types of level crossings over the Pakistan Railways network, un-manned and manned level crossings, adding that the un-manned level crossings were without gate leaves.“There are a total of 1,565 unmanned level crossings over the entire railway network and as per railway policy in vogue, the up-gradation of any un-manned or manned level crossing is the responsibility of road owning authority,” they added. The sources said that a joint survey of Pakistan Railways and the Provincial Government was also conducted in 2013-14 to identify accident-prone/vulnerable un-manned level crossings across the country.

Police carry out search operations against anti-social elements

RAWALPINDI (APP): Police carried out search operations in various areas of Rawalpindi to maintain law and order and to flush out suspects, informed a police spokesman on Thursday. The search operations were conducted by the police in Fauji Colony, Kalar Road, Quaidabad and adjoining areas in the limits of police stations Pirwadhai and Rawat following the directions of City Police Officer (CPO) Syed Khalid Hamdani, he added. SHOs of police stations, Rawalpindi district police personnel including women police

took part in the search operations, the spokesman informed. “Police checked as many as 70 houses and 135 individuals during the search operations and recovered over three kg charras, 20 litres liquor, three 30-bore pistols besides netting nine accused,” he said. SSP Operations Muhammad Amir Khan Niazi said that police were fully prepared to shield the lives and property of the public, adding that a combing and search operation was done to flush out the suspects and hardcore criminals.

PM approves ‘revolutionary program’ for uplift of youth, farmers, women in budget 2023-24

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday approved the inclusion of a ‘revolutionary programme’ in the upcoming budget 2023-24 for the uplift of youth, women and farmers. As per the prime minister’s directives, the funds have been allocated in the upcoming budget for projects on the welfare of youth and women as well as for the agriculture.According to a PM Office statement, in the next fiscal year, the youth would be provided interest-free loans and endowment fund would be

established for education and sports. The prime minister approved the establishment of Pakistan Endowment Fund for Education on the pattern of Punjab Endowment Fund. Under the Fund, the intelligent but poor students from across the country, would be given educational scholarships. The funds have been allocated Prime Minister Youth Programme to extend small loans to the youth. The government has also specified funds to impart skill training to the youth, including in information technology.

Auto supplier Autoliv to slash 6,000 jobs

STOCKHOLM (Agencies): Autoliv is speeding up cost cuts, mainly in Europe, and expects to cut 6,000 jobs or 11% of its workforce, the world's biggest maker of airbags and seatbelts said on Thursday as it fights high raw material prices. The Swedish company said the measures across its operations will include the closure of several sites in Europe, and it expects the changes to be fully implemented by 2025. "These initiatives will continue



to optimise our geographic footprint for a more effective structure," CEO Mikael Bratt said in a statement. "We intend to simplify and consolidate how we operate in all areas." Auto

suppliers have been hit by soaring raw material prices. Autoliv in January said cost inflation in 2022 was the worst in three decades, and that it was seeking to pass those costs on. "The company continues to negotiate with its customers to secure pricing that reflects the extraordinary inflation and corrects structural price gaps," Bratt said on Thursday. "The highest priority and greatest challenge are the customer negotiations in Europe."

WhatsApp rolls out one-to-many broadcasting 'channels'

SAN FRANCISCO (Agencies): WhatsApp today began letting select organisations try a new feature called "Channels" that lets them broadcast to followers on the popular, Meta-owned messaging service. The debut comes as an array of agencies and organisations grow disenchanted with Elon Musk-owned Twitter in the face of fees, performance problems, and dramatically scaled-back content moderation. Meta described



Channels as "a simple, reliable, and private way to receive important updates from people and organisations, right within WhatsApp". A video shared by Meta showed the potential

for Channels to keep people up to date on race results, football match outcomes, weather, and traffic, and even share cooking or home repair tips. "We think the time is finally right to introduce a simple, reliable, and private broadcast tool," Meta said in a post. Meta said WhatsApp's priority will continue to be private messaging, but that users have been asking for a feature like Channels for years.

UK self-driving car dreams risk early breakdown

LONDON (Agencies): Britain could lose out on investments in autonomous vehicles (AVs) and see startups shift testing elsewhere if promised laws to regulate the technology are not passed before the next general election, startups and insurance companies said. Despite the government's vision to be a world leader in AV technology, truly driverless cars are not currently permitted on Britain's roads, making it difficult for start-ups to commercialise their vehicles and



insurers to assess their risks. The UK government said last August it would advance a bill in the current parliamentary session, which is expected to end this autumn, providing detailed regulations by 2025. That has not yet

happened, with political turmoil forcing the government to water down ambitions for this session. With a national election due by January 2025, the industry wants the government to bring forward legislation next session, or risk lengthy delays. "There is a window of opportunity for the UK to at least be leading on something," said Claudio Gienal, head of UK and Ireland operations for global insurer AXA, which believes the technology could prevent accidents.

US tax breaks lift Tesla's non-Chinese battery makers

NEW YORK (Agencies): With Tesla Inc shares climbing back to a seven-month high amid a string of positive news, Asia investors are focusing on its all-important battery suppliers, especially those outside China. Panasonic Holdings Corp and LG Energy Solution Ltd are likely to benefit the most from tax credits under the Inflation Reduction Act, Citigroup Inc analyst Kota Ezawa wrote in a report. One of the main goals of the IRA is to make the US less reliant on China, which dominates the EV battery



supply chain. Panasonic shares have climbed 45% so far this year in Tokyo, while LG Energy is up 36%. Both are outpacing gains in their local benchmarks, though they're still trailing Tesla's 82% surge. Rival Chinese battery maker Contemporary Amperex

Technology Co has missed out on the rally completely, down 4.5%. Industry expert Chris Berry estimates total IRA credits could reach US\$1 trillion versus the initial Congressional Budget Office estimate of US\$369 billion over 10 years, according to the Citi note. Berry told a Citi seminar that China's dominant share of the refining market is "an obstacle to IRA mechanisms working and that various ideas to build a US-led scheme to reduce dependency on China were being considered", Ezawa wrote.

Spotify shifts podcast exclusivity strategy

NEW YORK (Agencies): Spotify Technology SA is in talks to make the popular podcasts Armchair Expert and Anything Goes available on other streaming platforms, reversing its strategy in order to attract more listeners and boost revenue for the shows. Armchair Expert, hosted by Dax Shepherd and Monica Padman and currently billed as "A Spotify Exclusive", may soon be available on other services. The audio version of Emma Chamberlain's Anything Goes is already accessible on Apple



Inc's Podcasts service. More shows will likely follow, according to people with knowledge of the situation. As Spotify built out its podcasting business, the company paid significant sums to acquire studios and exclusive rights to shows because it

thought they would entice more listeners. Armchair Expert became exclusive in 2021, while Anything Goes did so in February of this year. But making shows exclusive to Spotify limited the potential audience since podcast listeners often use other services. Spotify said in a statement to Bloomberg News that it's adopting a tailored approach to each show, including releasing episodes exclusively for a period before making them more broadly available, a strategy known as windowing.

TikTok eyes US\$20bil e-commerce boost

BEIJING (Agencies): ByteDance-owned TikTok hopes to more than quadruple the size of its worldwide e-commerce operations to as much as US\$20 billion in merchandise sales this year, relying on growth in Southeast Asia, Bloomberg News reported on Wednesday, citing people familiar with the matter. The increase compares to last year's

US\$4.4 billion in gross merchandise value, representing the worth of total goods sold through its online marketplace TikTok Shop, the report said, adding that the company is betting on markets such as Indonesia. TikTok did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment. TikTok's e-commerce platform lets customers purchase goods through

links on the app during live broadcasts. The development comes as the Chinese-owned company faces scrutiny from governments and regulators because of concerns that China could use the app to harvest user data or advance its interests. The company is also working to expand its sales in the US and Europe, the report said.

Google, Meta using 'bullying tactics' against news bill, says Trudeau

OTTAWA (Agencies): Alphabet's Google and Meta Platforms are using "bullying tactics" against a Canadian push aimed at ensuring financial support for news publishers, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Wednesday. The proposed legislation is designed to compel internet giants like Google and Meta's Facebook to negotiate commercial deals and pay publishers for their content. The US firms say



proposals in the bill, dubbed the "Online News Act," are unsustainable for their businesses. Google and Facebook have run tests this year to limit

some users from viewing or sharing news content in Canada as a potential response if the legislation is passed into law in its current form. "The fact that these internet giants would rather cut off Canadians' access to local news than pay their fair share is a real problem, and now they're resorting to bullying tactics to try and get their way – it's not going to work," Trudeau told reporters in Ottawa.

Aussie banks halt crypto payments over scams

SYDNEY (Agencies): Commonwealth Bank of Australia (CBA) said on Thursday it would block some payments to certain cryptocurrency exchanges as part of a suite of new anti-scam measures that would limit customer crypto payments. A spokesperson for CBA, the country's largest bank, declined to

name the crypto exchanges involved. The bank said it would also from Thursday hold certain payments to crypto exchanges for 24 hours and soon introduce a monthly A\$10,000 (US\$6,666) transfer limit to crypto exchanges. The CBA spokesperson declined to say whether those measures would apply

to all crypto exchanges or a select few. "Customers who make payments to cryptocurrency exchanges are currently facing a significantly higher risk of potentially being scammed," said James Roberts, general manager of CBA's group fraud management services in a statement accompanying the decision.

Saudi economy grew 3.8% in Q1 driven by rise in non-oil activities

RIYADH (Agencies): Saudi Arabia's real gross domestic product grew by 3.8 percent year over year in the first quarter of 2023, primarily driven by expansion in non-oil activities, according to a report released by the General Authority for Statistics. The GASTAT report noted that the Kingdom's non-oil activities expanded by 5.4 percent in the first three months of 2023 compared to the



same period a year ago. However, the Kingdom's real GDP decreased by 1.4 percent in the first quarter of 2023 compared to the last quarter of the previous year.

Temasek eyes US\$150bil in new African cities plan

SINGAPORE (Agencies): The African Union and a unit of Temasek Holdings Pte are considering backing a plan to develop as many as 123 new cities across Africa. The plan, developed by Cape Town-based Africa123, envisages the construction of the cities over the next two decades at a cost of as much as US\$150 billion. The aim is to meet a continent-wide housing deficit, with the World Bank predicting that 216 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa will live in shanty towns by 2063. Under the plan, Africa123 plans to incorporate designs that include



sustainable energy and water supplies as well as transport, education and health infrastructure, and employment opportunities. The African Union Development Agency is in talks to develop a pilot project with the company and the programmes will include the provision of home loans through arrangements with financiers.

India holds interest rates as inflation eases

MUMBAI (Agencies): India's central bank on Thursday kept interest rates on hold for its second-straight meeting, citing easing inflation pressures, but warned about an uncertain global outlook. The benchmark repurchase rate was left at 6.50% by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI), bank governor Shaktikanta Das announced in a webcast, in line with expectations. "The Monetary Policy Committee decided to remain focused on the withdrawal of accommodation to ensure that inflation progressively aligns with the target while support-



ing growth," Das said. "Headline inflation still remains above the target, and being within the tolerance band is not enough. Our goal is to achieve the target of 4.0% going forward." Inflation hit a peak of 7.79% in April last year, well above the RBI's target range of 2.0-6.0%, before slowly easing to 4.7% in April.

Binance's US\$70bil Silvergate, Signature money trail

NEW YORK (Agencies): Crypto exchange Binance and related entities shuttled some US\$70 billion through accounts at now-defunct Silvergate Bank and Signature Bank from 2019 up until this year, including "large amounts of money" flowing in and out within days, according to new details revealed in a filing Wednesday. Silvergate facilitated more than US\$50 billion in deposits for Binance-related parties, while Signature handled more than US\$19 billion, the 27-page document, which was filed Wednesday in US District Court in Washington, shows. Some of the funds flowed out to foreign entities, according to the filing, which cited a review of financial



records including bank statements, deposits, canceled checks and wire transfers. The SEC this week sued Binance, its co-founder Changpeng "CZ" Zhao, and Binance.US for "blatant disregard" of US securities laws, including mishandling customer funds and misleading investors and regulators, part of a widening crypto crackdown following a wave of blowups last year including the collapse of Sam Bankman-Fried's FTX exchange.

Asian markets slide on fresh rate hike worries

HONG KONG (Agencies): Renewed fears that the Federal Reserve will lift interest rates next week sent Asian markets into reverse Thursday, tracking losses across Wall Street and Europe, while traders were looking for measures from China to boost growth. Equities have enjoyed a broadly healthy run-up so far this month as recent data suggested the US economy was holding up after 10 straight rate hikes but the central bank had enough room to skip another increase this month. However, a surprise lift by the Bank of Canada on Wednesday – a day after Australia lifted rates to an 11-year high – dealt a blow to those hopes and



reminded investors that more work was still needed to fight still-too-high inflation. The Fed's June 14 decision comes just after the release of figures on the consumer price index, which could play a major part in policymakers' thoughts, with the board still split on whether or not to pause. "Canada's central bank is viewed as one of the leaders when it comes to being proactive with monetary policy," said Oanda's Edward Moya.

StanChart trimming roles as part of cost cuts

LONDON (Agencies): Standard Chartered is starting to lay off employees across Singapore, London, and Hong Kong hubs as part of an existing plan to cut costs by more than US\$1 billion through 2024, Bloomberg News reported on Wednesday. The British bank had previously said that it aims savings of US\$1.3 billion under a cost-efficiency programme. The total reductions could be more than 100, although a final number has yet to be decided, the report said, citing people familiar with the matter. "It is part of normal business activity to review our role requirements on an ongoing basis across the bank," a spokesperson for the British lender told Reuters in an emailed statement. The Lon-



don-listed bank's move is the latest among big banks cutting jobs. Goldman Sachs is expected to reduce just under 250 jobs in the coming weeks, while JPMorgan Chase & Co is cutting about 500 employees, Reuters reported in May. Separately, Standard Chartered earlier this year sold its Jordanian business to Arab Jordan Investment Bank (AJIB) as the lender pressed ahead with plans to exit seven markets in Africa and the Middle East.

Man City and Inter target Champions League glory in Istanbul final

ISTANBUL (Agencies): Manchester City are hoping to get their hands on the Champions League trophy at last, and complete a historic treble, when Pep Guardiola's team face outsiders Inter Milan in Saturday's final in Istanbul. City have been building toward winning Europe's elite club competition since the Abu Dhabi-backed takeover of 2008 which transformed them and helped reshape the sport on the continent. They came agonizingly close to Champions League glory in 2021, losing narrowly to Chelsea in the final, before being denied in last year's semi-



finals by a remarkable Real Madrid comeback. Having exacted revenge on Madrid, the holders, in this season's last four with a 5-1 aggregate triumph, they are now expected to complete the

job at the Ataturk Olympic Stadium. "We have all been working for this for a long time," City goalkeeper Ederson, at the club since 2017, said this week. "The whole team have seen a lot of victories but also defeats as well. The players who have been here for five or six years who have seen these sorts of defeats, we have learnt from them so that helps us to grow as a team." A victory for City will see them complete the treble after they claimed a fifth Premier League title in six seasons and then lifted the FA Cup last weekend, beating Manchester United 2-1 in the final.

City must 'right the wrongs' of 2021 Champions League, says Walker

MANCHESTER (Agencies): Manchester City are determined to "right the wrongs" of their defeat to Chelsea in the 2021 Champions League final when they take on Inter Milan on Saturday in this year's showpiece, defender Kyle Walker said. Pep Guardiola's side have wrapped up a fifth Premier League title in six seasons, beat Manchester United to win the FA Cup last weekend, and could be crowned European champions for the first time with victory over Inter in Istanbul. Their only previous Champions League final appearance ended in a 1-0 loss to Chelsea. "We know we are a good team but to be recognised globally as one of the best



teams you need to win the Champions League," Walker told British media on Wednesday. "It doesn't define what this squad has achieved over the last six years ... We have a second chance with Pep and the group of players who

have stayed around and we need to put right the wrongs we did against Chelsea." City could become only the second English club to complete the treble and Walker said they were driven by the desire to match United's feat from 1999. Walker said City must win Europe's elite club competition if they want to be considered among the great teams of English football alongside the likes of United's 1999 side and Arsenal's 'Invincibles', who went through the 2003-04 league campaign unbeaten. "That United team, along with the Invincibles, are probably up there with the best Premier League teams of all time," Walker said.

Australia's 1974 World Cup coach Rasic dies aged 87

SYDNEY (Agencies): Rale Rasic, the Yugoslavian-born coach who led Australia to their first World Cup finals campaign in 1974, has died aged 87, Football Australia said on Thursday. Rasic arrived in Australia in 1962 and was named coach of the Socceroos at the age of 34 in 1970, leading the team on an unbeaten run of 12 matches and ultimately to qualification for the World Cup in West Germany. In the finals, the mostly amateur Australians failed to score a goal in losses to both East and West



Germany and a draw with Chile, finishing bottom of their group. Rasic was sacked after the tournament and Australia would not qualify again until the World Cup returned to a reuni-

fied Germany in 2006. "Rale changed the game in Australia in 1974, qualifying Australia for the first World Cup ever," current Australia coach Graham Arnold said in a news release. "The amount of passion and love that Rale had for football has never drifted too far away from myself and he has been a great inspiration for me over the years. "He was such a great man, he loved a chat, and loved a story, and he always kept those stories going and that motivated a lot of people in life."

Azizulhasni disappointed with MSN

KUALA LUMPUR (Agencies): National track cycling champion Datuk Mohd Azizulhasni Awang has expressed his disappointment with the National Sports Council (MSN) for failing to provide a complete support system here in preparation for the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris. Mohd Azizulhasni, nicknamed "The Pocket Rocketman" due to his small stature, said a series of discussions were held with MSN for a year before he returned to Malaysia from his training base in Melbourne, Australia, but so far no solution has



been found. He said that he accepted with an open heart the decision of MSN to close the centralised training camp of the national track cycling squad in Melbourne, but his return to the home-

land was not accompanied by a complete and world-class support system as promised. "Returning home is not an issue, so long as the support system in Malaysia is equivalent or better than in Melbourne. Discussions and meetings with my representatives have taken place more than 10 times and the answers received are very disappointing. "Really unprofessional and just letting things hang for a very long time. What kind of high performance sport is this!," lamented Mohd Azizulhasni on his official Facebook site today.

S.Korean trio fined for boozing at Baseball Classic

SEOUL (Agencies): Three South Korean players have been fined and ordered to do community service for drinking during their failed World Baseball Classic campaign. The Koreans went to Tokyo in March with high expectations from the baseball-crazy country that they could advance to at least the semi-finals. However they were eliminated in the preliminary round after losing to Australia and hosts Japan, who went



on to win the tournament. Reports later emerged that the three players had

drunk heavily around the time of crucial games and they subsequently apologised. The Korea Baseball Organization investigated and yesterday fined Kim Kwang-hyun, a starting pitcher against Japan, five million won and ordered him to do 80 hours' community service. It separately fined fellow pitchers Lee Yong-chan and Jeong Cheol-won three million won and ordered them to do 40 hours in community service.

Declan Rice set to leave West Ham after winning European trophy, - club chairman says

LONDON (Agencies): England midfielder Declan Rice looks to have played his final match for West Ham. Rice, who captained West Ham in their victory over Fiorentina in the Europa Conference League final on Wednesday, has been promised he can leave the club and wants to go, chairman David Sullivan said. "You can't keep a player who doesn't want to be there," Sullivan told British radio station Talksport on Thursday. Rice has been linked with some of Europe's top teams, including Arsenal and Bayern Munich. "It's not something we want to happen," Sullivan said. "We offered him 200,000 pounds (\$250,000) a week 18 months ago. He turned it down." The 24-year-old Rice has played for West Ham since 2017. He said after Wednesday's final that "it's not a goodbye yet." "Obviously there's loads of speculation, but nothing's happened," Rice said. "I'm a West Ham player, I've got two years left on my contract. I love every minute of it." Sullivan said West Ham has yet to receive an offer. "But I



think the offers will start to come today," Sullivan said. "There are three or four clubs who have shown interest,

but out of respect to West Ham, while we're still playing, you don't make offers for players."

Jokic and Murray dominate as Nuggets take 2-1 lead over Miami

MIAMI (Agencies): Nikola Jokic and Jamal Murray dominated the Miami Heat, both making triple doubles, as the Denver Nuggets took a 2-1 lead in the NBA Finals and regained their home court advantage with a 109-94 win in Game 3 on Wednesday. Two-time NBA Most Valuable Player Jokic scored 32 points with 21 rebounds and 10 assists, an unprecedented triple-double combination in an NBA Finals game. Murray scored 34 points and grabbed 10 rebounds and 10 assists. It was the first time any team in a Finals had two players making triple-doubles in the same game. Miami simply could not find a way to handle the 6 foot, 11-inch (2.11m) Jokic and unless coach Erik



Spoelstra can come up with a plan before Friday's Game 4, the Heat are going to face an uphill battle. Jokic became the first player in NBA history to reach the 30 points, 20 rebounds, 10 assists mark in a Finals game but took little interest in that achievement. "To be honest, not much. I'm just glad that we won a game," he said.

Indian wrestlers suspend protest after promise of swift probe of federation chief



NEW DELHI (Agencies): India's top wrestlers said they had decided to suspend protests on Wednesday after the country's sports minister promised a swift probe of their federation chief who they accused six months ago of sexually harassing female athletes. The wrestlers have been camping in New Delhi for months since April seeking the arrest of Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) President Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, who has denied the allegations.

Last month, the protest site was cleared and several wrestlers were briefly detained as they kept demanding action against Singh, who is also a powerful member of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and a federal lawmaker. Olympic medalist Bajrang Punia was part of the wrestling delegation that met Sports Minister Anurag Thakur at his residence on Wednesday, a meeting that lasted nearly six hours. "The government has assured that they would complete the police investigations against Singh by June 15 so we have suspended the protest till then," said Punia, who won the men's 65 kg freestyle bronze at the Tokyo Olympics. Singh, a six-time member of parliament, has been accused of sexually assaulting seven female athletes, including a minor.

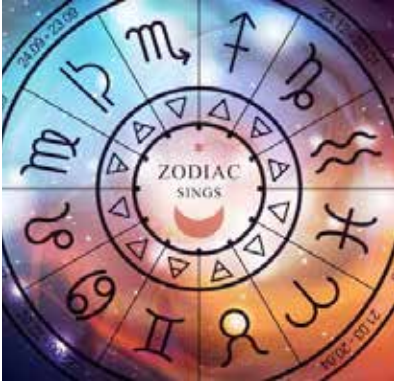
French Open 2023: No. 1 Iga Swiatek and No. 2 Aryna Sabalenka on course for final showdown

PARIS (Agencies): If Iga Swiatek meets Aryna Sabalenka for the French Open championship, more than the trophy would be at stake. The No. 1 ranking would be, too. But there's work to be done for both players first — getting to the final. In Thursday's semifinals, No. 2 Sabalenka of Belarus will play unseeded Karolina Muchova of the Czech Republic, before No. 1 Swiatek of Poland faces No. 14 Beatriz Haddad Maia of Brazil. Sabalenka is unbeaten in Grand Slam action in 2023; she won her first major title at the Australian Open in January. She's drawn more attention for non-tennis matters over the past 1 1/2 weeks, however, connected to her country's assistance to Russia during the invasion of Ukraine. After being asked about that at two news conferences, Sabalenka skipped the next two



post-match sessions with reporters, before speaking to the media for the first time in nearly a week after her quarter-final victory. Swiatek has not been challenged much at Roland Garros this year as she pursues her third triumph on the red clay and fourth Slam title overall. She hasn't dropped a set yet heading into the matchup against Haddad Maia, a player who served a 10-month doping ban after failing a test in 2019 and had never been past the second round at a major tournament until now.

DAILY HOROSCOPE: JUNE 9, 2023



– It's a general reading which may differ from person to person because of time date and year.
– **ARIES:** Your dreams are more important than ever right now and you should definitely try to remember each detail as clearly as possible. Even if it's all a fog, though, there should still be a profound effect.
– **TAURUS:** Your intuition is strong and you're better able to understand friends and family even when they're confused themselves. You may need to do something a little crazy to get them to see the light!
– **GEMINI:** Something that's beyond your control starts to affect your reputation today. Even if it seems terrible at first, you should be able to turn it around after some time has passed, so don't fret.
– **CANCER:** You're feeling quite good and wouldn't mind just kicking back with family and enjoying the day. There may be scheduled activities that take precedence, but they should be lots of fun too.
– **LEO:** You're having the hardest time understanding what your friends and

family are really trying to say. Things can't be as simple as they appear to be on the surface. Relax and let things happen.
– **VIRGO:** It's a day of low productivity anywhere you go. Instead of stressing out, see if you can forget about responsibilities and focus on having fun and relaxing. Your family is certainly ready for it!
– **LIBRA:** You need to keep up with today's changes and the aftermath. It's not that hard for you to be flexible, right? Just make sure that you're dealing with things as they pop up and not delaying.
– **SCORPIO:** Your appreciation for art (and ability to make it yourself) is enhanced today. All that good energy should be put to use. You may want to check out a museum or try your hand at something new.
– **SAGITTARIUS:** You've got a lot on your mind right now. Blow off some errands or tasks that don't seem that important so you can take all the time you need with your personal issues. Don't delay!
– **CAPRICORN:** Your mind is turning toward helping the community, and you may find yourself drawn to the less fortunate. It's a great time for volunteer work or donating money to a worthy cause.
– **ACQUARIUS:** You're on the fence about what to do about a friend who seems to be troubled. Don't spend all your time worrying about how to help. Just jump right in and start. You can make a big difference!
– **PISCES:** It's a day of transformation and positive energy for you, and you might find yourself heading in a very different direction by this evening. It's a good time to try something totally new!

Some Countries Might Send Troops to Ukraine: Ex-NATO Chief

MOSCOW (Agencies): Former NATO Secretary General Anders Rasmussen said on Wednesday that a group of NATO countries might take individual actions and deploy troops in Ukraine in the event of member states failing to provide security guarantees to Kiev at the NATO summit in Lithuania's capital Vilnius in July. "If NATO cannot agree on a clear path forward for Ukraine, there is a clear possibility that some countries individually might take action. We know that Poland is very engaged in providing concrete assistance to Ukraine. And I wouldn't



exclude the possibility that Poland would engage even stronger in this context on a national basis and be followed by the Baltic states, maybe including the possibility of troops on the ground ... I think the Poles would seriously consider going in and assem-

ble a coalition of the willing if Ukraine doesn't get anything in Vilnius," the UK media quoted Rasmussen as saying. Rasmussen said security guarantees need to cover intelligence sharing, joint Ukraine training, NATO interoperability, enhanced ammunition production and arms supply. The ex-NATO official also said that "some NATO allies might be in favour of the security guarantees to actually avoid a real discussion on Ukraine's membership aspirations," adding that "they hope that by providing security guarantees, they can avoid this question."

Czech President signs bill on allocation of 2% of GDP for defense into law

PRAGUE, (Sputnik): Petr Pavel, the president of the Czech Republic, on Wednesday signed into law the bill on the annual allocation of 2% of the country's GDP for defense, local media reported. The law, approved by the country's upper and lower houses and signed by the president, stipulates the annual allocation of 2% of GDP required by NATO for defense, the Czech broadcaster reported. The new law will go into effect in July 2023 and will have to be taken into account when drafting the state budget for fiscal year 2024. The country's defense budget for 2024 was planned at 130 billion koruny (\$5.9 billion) but will increase by 21.5 billion koruny under the new law, the report



said. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg is expected to propose at the NATO summit in Lithuania's capital Vilnius, scheduled for July 11-12, that the current goal of 2% of GDP allocated by each country for defense should not be the ceiling, but a minimum threshold, on which the budgets of member states of the alliance should be based, the media reported.

Children among eight injured in knife attack in southeast France



PARIS (Agencies): Children were among eight people injured Thursday in a knife attack in Annecy, in southeast France, local officials said. A male suspect was detained in connection with the attack. French Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne will travel to Annecy with Interior Minister Gérald Darmanin on Thursday, according to the interior ministry. French President Emmanuel Macron said "the nation is in shock,"

following the attack. "Absolute cowardice this morning in a park in Annecy. Children and an adult are between life and death. The nation is in shock. Our thoughts are with them, their families and the emergency services," Macron tweeted. Health Minister François Braun tweeted that his thoughts were with the victims of the knife attack. "All my thoughts go immediately to the people injured by an individual armed with a knife in Annecy, and to their loved ones," Braun tweeted. "I salute the rapid mobilization of the emergency services to take care of the victims, and notably the Urgent Medical Aid Service (SAMU)." Lawmakers in the French National Assembly observed a minute's silence for those injured in the attack.

Justice Department informs Trump he is target in classified documents probe

WASHINGTON (Agencies): The Justice Department recently informed Donald Trump's legal team that he is a target in a federal investigation into the possible mishandling of classified documents, sources familiar with the matter told CNN, a sign that prosecutors may be moving closer to indicting the former president. The sources have been informed of the target letter and its contents but had not seen it themselves. Prosecutors' decision to inform Trump he's a target crystallizes that special counsel Jack Smith's investigation is focused on Trump's actions and not just the actions of people around



him. Trump's legal team met with DOJ officials, including Smith, about the investigation on Monday. The meeting focused on the Trump legal team presenting their allegations of misconduct by prosecutors. Smith did not say anything beyond greeting those in the room in the meeting, that source said.

QatarEnergy and PetroBangla sign 15-year LNG supply deal - CEO

DOHA (Agencies): QatarEnergy has signed a 15-year supply deal for liquefied natural gas (LNG) with Bangladesh's state-owned PetroBangla for 1.8 million tonnes a year starting in 2026, CEO Saad Al-Kaabi said on Thursday, Reuters reports. According to the report, the latest contract with an Asian customer by the world's top LNG exporter comes when Western countries, including Germany, push to win a chunk of the Qatari gas, as competition ramped up follow-

ing the Ukraine war. "The majority (of LNG exports) will be going to Asia and the other will be going to Europe," Kaabi told a news conference in Doha, referring to the two-phase North Field expansion plan. The expansion will raise Qatar's liquefaction capacity to 126 million tonnes per year by 2027, from 77 million currently, report added. The report says QatarEnergy will sign LNG supply deals also with European customers, likely after the summer break.

Saudi, Bahrain embassies in Sudan attacked by armed groups

DUBAI (Agencies): The embassies of Saudi Arabia and Bahrain in Sudan have been attacked by armed groups, amid the ongoing conflict raging within the country. In a statement by the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs, it condemned "the sabotage and violence carried out by some armed groups" on the embassy in Sudan yesterday, which risked the safety of its Ambassador and embassy staff. The Ministry called for "confronting

these groups that are trying to undermine [the] security and stability [of] Sudan and its people". Bahrain's Foreign Ministry also stated that its embassy and its Ambassador's residence were attacked and vandalised, which caused damage to the building. It highlighted "the need to stop acts of violence and vandalism in Sudan and to provide the full protection for the headquarters of diplomatic missions and civilian facilities".

China Threat: US, Japan & Taiwan to integrate Real-Time Drone Data



NEW YORK (Agencies): The US has been claiming that China - dubbed a security challenge last year by the NATO alliance - is preparing to take control of Taiwan, which Beijing sees as its rogue province, by military force. Washington and its NATO allies have been building up their presence in the Indo-Pacific, and further ratcheting up tensions. The US, Japan, and Taiwan are planning to begin sharing real-time data from unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) as part of a plan to enhance interoperability in the Indo-Pacific, a US report stated. Washington is purportedly determined to boost military coordination between its allies under the pretext that if China were to attack Taiwan, such a scenario would call for building a "common operational picture" using reconnaissance drones' capability. Four MQ-9B SeaGuardian drones - a maritime ver-

sion of the American Reaper UAV - are to be delivered to Taipei by the US defense contractor General Atomics Aeronautical Systems some time in 2025, sources were cited as saying. The drones, which can be configured with cross-domain capabilities for a broad range of maritime surveillance, are said to have been successful in locating, tracking, and targeting enemy ships and radars. The UAVs, once they arrive in Taiwan, would be allowed to integrate into the system deployed by the US military and the Japanese Self-Defense Force in the region.

Australia to introduce national ban on Nazi symbols



SYDNEY (Agencies): Australia has announced it will introduce a national ban on Nazi symbols, in an effort to crack down on far-right groups. Public displays of the swastika or SS symbols will be punishable by up to a year in prison. However the new laws will not cover the Nazi salute. Nazi symbols are already banned in many states, but this means they won't be allowed anywhere, the government says. The move comes amid a resurgence in far-right activity. In March, a group of neo-Nazis appeared at a rally in Melbourne hosted by Kellie-Jay Keen-Minshull - who is known for her opposition to transgender rights - and performed Nazi salutes on the steps of the Victorian Parliament. Ms Keen-Minshull denied any connection to the group, but the event triggered a political backlash with calls for greater efforts to tackle displays of Nazi regalia. "There is no place in Australia for symbols that glorify the horrors of the Holocaust," Attorney General Mark Dreyfus said, announcing the new legislation. "We will no longer allow people to profit from the display and sale of items which celebrate the Nazis," he added.

Telegraph Media Group set to be put up for sale



LONDON (Agencies): The Daily and Sunday Telegraph newspapers and The Spectator magazine are set to be put up for sale due to debts owed by their parent group. Receivers Alix Partners have now taken control of the group, and replaced the current owners, the Barclay family. The receiver said it doesn't expect the changes to affect the operations of the papers, which are profitable. Lender Lloyds Bank is unlikely to recover the original value of the loan, worth hundreds of millions of pounds. The bank has placed B.U.K, a Bermuda-based holding company controlled by the Barclay family, into receivership. Alix Partners said on Wednesday that it has taken control of Telegraph Media Group, which owns the newspapers, and the company which runs The Spectator. Family members Howard and Aidan Barclay have been removed as directors, it said. Lloyds Banking Group said it "regrettably" had no choice other than to appoint receivers, but said "it was willing to continue discussions to find a suitable solution." "The decision... follows numerous discussions with B.U.K's parent company, Penultimate Investment Holdings Limited (PIHL). The aim of these discussions, which were held over a long period and undertaken in good faith, had been to find a consensual solution and repayment of PIHL's borrowing to Bank of Scotland.

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