Ishaq Dar presents the Budget 2023-24

Focus on People-friendly Measures and Economic Growth

ISLAMABAD (Agencies): The Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Ishaq Dar, presented the budget speech for the financial year 2023-24 in the federal cabinet session. The budget aims to strike a balance between people-friendly measures and meeting IMF

The budget for the fiscal year 2023-24 includes several measures that can be described as populist.

The highlights of the budget include a significant increase in salaries and pensions for federal government employees, a 33% increase in development spending, and tax incentives for sectors such as agriculture, information technology, construction, and industry.

The budget also includes increased tax rates for non-filers, a higher tax burden on capital markets, and a projected increase in revenue from the petroleum levy. Additionally, the government has budgeted for a \$2.4 billion inflow from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for the next year, despite ongoing difficulties in reaching an agreement with the IMF.

The government plans to rely heavily on external borrowing, with projections indicating a 114% increase compared to the previous year. The borrowing includes funds from Saudi Arabia, international bonds, international commercial loans, and China's SAFE deposit.



However, most of these loans are contingent on Pakistan re-entering an IMF

The budget also includes an increase in subsidies for the power sector, particularly for K-Electric and Independent Power Producers (IPPs). The allocation for overall subsidies has been slightly reduced compared to the previous year, but it is worth noting that the budgeted amount for subsidies last year was significantly lower than what was actually

The increase in salaries and benefits for government employees is the highest in about a decade, with increases ranging from 30% to 50%. These increases surpass the core inflation rate and the average inflation rate for the outgoing year. The Federal Board of Revenue has set a

higher tax target for the next year, with a significant portion expected to come from income tax and indirect taxes. The budget also includes a higher non-tax revenue target through the petroleum development levy.

One of the major challenges highlighted in the budget is the insufficient income of the federal government to cover its expenses, particularly interest payments. The fiscal deficit for the next year is projected to be the highest in history, and the government plans to finance it through a combination of external and domestic borrowing.

Overall, the budget includes a mix of populist measures, increased borrowing, and reliance on external inflows to meet the government's financial obligations and fund development projects.

China: Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas to visit next week

BEIJING (Agencies): Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas will make a state visit to China next week, Beijing said Friday, after China said it was ready to help facilitate Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. "At the invitation of President Xi Jinping, President of the state of Palestine Mahmud Abbas will pay a state visit to China from June 13 to 16," foreign ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said. China's Foreign Minister Qin Gang in April told his Israeli and Palestinian counterparts that his country was willing to aid peace negotiations. The separate phone calls between Qin and the Israeli and Pal-



estinian top diplomats came as Beijing positions itself as a regional mediator. Qin encouraged "steps to resume peace talks" and said that "China is ready to provide convenience for this," in a phone call with Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen, Xinhua reported.

Rohingya in Bangladesh protest to be sent home after UN aid cut



DAKHA (Agencies): Tens of thousands of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh are demanding to be repatriated to Myanmar so that they can leave the squalid camps they have lived in since fleeing a brutal mili-

2017. More than a million Rohingya have been crammed into the camps in southeastern Bangladesh, the world's largest refugee settlement. Most fled the crackdown by Myanmar's military almost six years ago, although some have been there for longer. On June 1, the World Food Programme cut the monthly food allocation to \$8 per person from \$10 earlier. In March, the ration cut had been reduced from \$12 to \$10 due to a reduction in global aid for the refugees. During Thursday's demonstrations across the sprawling camps, the mainly Muslim refugees, young and old, waved plac-

tary crackdown in their homeland in ards and chanted slogans.

Record Mount Everest season in Nepal

also one of its deadliest

KATHMANDU (Agencies): Scaling Mount Everest is always dangerous. But expedition organisers have warned that a combination of extreme weather, corner-cutting on safety, and inexperienced and "impatient" foreign climbers has resulted in one of the peak's deadliest mountaineering seasons. As the last search and rescue teams hang up their boots and the tent city at Base Camp packs up for the year, expert climbers say several of the 17 people killed or missing and presumed dead this season could have avoided disaster. "This season was very bad overall," said expedition organiser Mingma Gyalje Sherpa, of Imagine Nepal Trek and Expedition, whose team was responsible for opening the route to the summit. "The main reason is that the weather was extremely cold ... but there was also



were recorded in past seasons, but those tolls included several killed in single large-scale disasters. In 2014, 16 Nepali guides were killed by an avalanche, with climbing closed for the season thereafter. The deadliest season was in 2015, when at least 18 people died in an earthquake that also killed nearly 9,000 people across Nepal. This season, 12 people died and five others are missing. Ten of them were foreigners, the highest such toll on record, as well as seven Nepalis: guides, mouncarelessness." Higher death numbers tain workers and a climber.

Boris Johnson steps down as MP: BBC reports

LONDON (Agencies): Boris Johnson has stepped down as a Tory MP after claiming he was "forced out of Parliament" over Partygate. The ex-PM saw in advance a report by the Commons Privileges Committee investigating if he misled the Commons over Downing Street lockdown parties. In an explosive and lengthy statement, he called the committee a "kangaroo court" whose purpose "has been to find me guilty, regardless of the facts". The committee said it had "followed the procedures and the mandate". The cross-party committee of MPs - the majority of which are Conservative - added it would conclude its in-

PLA holds large-scale drills around Taiwan



day China-Russia joint aerial strategic patrol in the Asia-Pacific region, which set a record in the number of warplanes involved, the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) on Thursday launched what appeared to be a largescale exercise around the island of Taiwan. The recent patrols and exercise served as deterrence against the rising tensions following US provocations in the region, analysts said. Some 37 PLA aircraft, including J-11 and J-16 fighter jets, H-6 bombers, YU-20 tanker aircraft and unidentified early warning aircraft, were successively observed over waters to the southwest of the island of Taiwan on Thursday morning. Some of them entered the West Pacific through the Bashi Channel to the east side of the island, according to a press release issued by the defense authority on the island. This is well above the daily average for the PLA's routine patrols and drills around the island of Taiwan, marking a probable large-scale exercise following the China-Russia joint aerial strategic patrol in the Asia-Pacific region over the previous two days, observers said.



quiry on Monday and "publish its report promptly". Mr Johnson's resignation now triggers a by-election in his marginal constituency of Uxbridge and South Ruislip. Delivering his announcement late on Friday evening, Mr Johnson said the draft report he had seen was "riddled March - but denied doing it on purpose.

with inaccuracies and reeks of prejudice", adding it was clear the committee was "determined to use the proceedings against me to drive me out of Parliament". "They have still not produced a shred of evidence that I knowingly or recklessly misled the Commons," he said, insisting "I did not lie". He also accused its chairwoman, Labour's Harriet Harman, of "egregious bias", saying he was "bewildered and appalled" at how he was being forced out. The ex-prime minister previously admitted misleading Parliament when he gave evidence to the committee in a combative hearing in

China, Pakistan & Iran hold first meeting of trilateral consultation on counter-terrorism, security

BELJING (Agencies): China on Wednesday held a consultation meeting in Beijing with Pakistan and Iran on counter-terrorism and security, marking the first meeting of its kind. The meeting creates a more profound institutional countries, and is likely to also establish a very important foundation for future cooperation in other security areas, experts told the Global Times on Thursday. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said at the routine press conference on Thursday that "Terrorism is a common enemy of humanity. China firmly opposes and strongly condemns terrorism in all its manifestations. We stand ready to work in close collabora- in a statement on Wednesday night.



mechanism for long-term counter-ter- tion with Pakistan, Iran and other regionrorism cooperation among the three alcountries to resolutely crack down on terrorist forces that endanger the interests of the three countries and regional security." During the first meeting of the China-Pakistan-Iran Trilateral Consultation on counter-terrorism and security, which was held at Directors General level, in-depth discussions were held on the regional anti-terrorism situation and joint crackdown on cross-border terrorists, according to the Chinese Foreign Ministry

HK to ban seafood from regions near Fukushima



HONG KONG (Agencies): Hong Kong will ban seafood from high-risk regions near Fukushima at once if Japan starts to dump nuclear-contaminated water from its crippled Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant into the Pacific Ocean, said Hong Kong's environment

chief on Thursday. The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region has set up a special group to guarantee food security for residents, said Secretary for Environment and Ecology Tse Chin-wan, emphasizing that if Japan starts dumping the nuclear-contaminated wastewater, the government will take immediate measures to ban the import of aquatic products from highrisk regions along the Fukushima coast and to impose strict import controls on aquatic products from other risk regions in Japan.

El Nino under way, raising fears of extreme weather patterns

- US climate agency says phenomenon, which leads to warmer temperatures.

is back after three years.

The El Nino climate phenomenon has arrived and is likely to yield extreme weather later this year, including above average temperatures, scientists at the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) have announced. Unlike the La Nina climate pattern, which often lowers global temperatures slightly and was dominant the past three years, El Nino is associated with a rise in temperatures across the world. "Depending on its strength, El Nino can cause a range of impacts, such as increasing the risk of heavy rainfall and droughts in certain locations around the world," NOAA climate scientist Michelle L'Heureux said on Thursday in a statement on NOAA's website. "Climate change can exacerbate or mitigate certain impacts related to El Nino. For example, El Nino could lead to new records for temperatures, particularly in areas that already ex-



during El Nino," L'Heureuz noted. El Nino is born out of unusually warm waters in the Eastern Pacific near the coast of South America and is often accompanied by a slowing down or reversal of the easterly trade winds. Australia this week warned that El Nino would deliver warmer, drier days to a country vulnerable to fierce bushfires while Japan said a developing El Nino was partly responsible for its warmest spring on record. The phenomenon's influence on the United States is weak during summer but more pronounced starting from late fall through spring. NOAA said in its statement. By winter, there is an estimated 84 percent chance of a "greater than moderate" El Nino developing and a 56 percent perience above-average temperatures chance of a strong El Nino.

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.







ICP seeks Rs 330mln funds for payment of salaries, pensions, expenses

lor of Islamia College Peshawar (ICP) University has requested the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government and the Finance Department to release the outstanding financial assistance of Rs. 97 million for payment of salaries and pensions to the employees on the eve of Eid-ul-Azha besides the provision of an additional amount of Rs 233 million for smooth functioning of the university. In a letter available with

PESHAWAR (APP): The Vice Chancel- APP, the VC said that the provincial and the additional funds were not regovernment had approved an amount of Rs 200 million as financial assistance to the ICP out of which 97 million were still pending to process. He said that ICP had been facing a severe financial crisis for the last many years and the university would not be able to process salaries and pension for the month of June and July, besides paying other expenses including electricity bills, if the outstanding amount for the two months.

leased. The VC further emphasized that the Eid ul Azha was expected on June 29 and the non-payment of salary for the month of June would create difficulties for the employees and pensioners. Giving a breakup of the expenses, he said that Rs 180 million would incur on payment of salaries for the months of June and July and Rs 30 million for payment of pensions

SIDB's capacity building atop priority list: Adnan Jalil

tunkhwa Minister of Industry, Commerce and Technical education, Mohammad Adnan Jalil has said that capacity building of the Small Industries Development Board (SIDB) Peshawar to provide the best services for the promotion of small industries atop his priorities. Talking to a delegation of the employees of SIDB here in his office on Friday, he said that he is making all-out efforts for the facilitation and management of small industries and assured that for this purpose, he will provide full support to solve the genuine problems small industries, which is his prior-

was comprised of the Employees Association, Adnan Gul, Senior Vice President Haji Imtiaz and other officials. The delegation presented various proposals including resolving the cases of promotions, rehabilitating the closed centres of the board and taking possible steps to appoint Managing Director (MD) to the vacant post as soon as possible and in this regard assured their full support. The provincial minister said that SIDB is an important organization in the province for the promotion of

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakh- of SIDB employees. The delegation ity to provide quality and improved services. He said that woodworking centres and Pak-German are stateof-the-art subsidiaries of the board for manufacturing quality furniture. However, he stressed the need for further capacity building of these subsidiaries of the board. The provincial minister assured that he in the capacity of the minister will leave no stone unturned in the resolution of the problems of employees. However, he also urged the employees to perform their duties with honesty for the salvation and stability of the organization.

Hot and dry weather with chances of isolated rain, thunderstorm likely

Meteorological Center Peshawar on

GOLD PRICE IN PAK

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

FOREX RATES

Currency	Buying	Selling
US Dollar	300	303
China Yuan	40.28	40.68
Japanese Yen	1.98	2.06
Saudi Riyal	79.5	80.3
U.A.E Dirham	82	83.7
UK Pound	376	380
Euro	371	375
Australian Dollar	202	204
Canadian Dollar	227	230

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

PESHAWAR (APP): The Provincial Friday predicted that hot and dry remained hot and dry over most disweather is expected in most districts of the province while very hot in southern districts. However, it said that cloudy weather with chances of isolated rain-wind and thunderstorm is likely to occur over Abbottabad, Haripur, Mansehra, Battagram, Torghar, Kohistan, Malakand, Bunner, Shangla, Swat, Chitral, Upper Dir, Lower Dir, Kohat, Hangu, Karak, Bannu , Lakki Marwat, D.I Khan, Tank and North/South Waziristan districts in the evening and night. During the last 24 hours weather

tricts of the province while very hot over southern districts. Rain recorded (in mm): Nil. The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in centigrade at different stations of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were Peshawar City 39/25, Chitral 37/18, Timergara 34/20, Dir 33/16, Mirkhani 40/16, Kalam 27/06, Drosh 37/21, Saidu Sharif 35/18, Pattan 37/24, Malam Jabba 23/14, Takht Bhai 37/24, Kakul 32/17, Balakot 34/17, Parachinar 28/12, Bannu 40/23, Cherat 32/19, D.I. Khan 41/27.

Excise Mardan recovers 12kg hashish near Rashakai

PESHAWAR (APP): The Excise and Narcotics Control Department Mardan Region on Friday recovered a large quantity of hashish from a car near Rashakai Bypass during snap checking. The action was taken under the supervision of Excise and Taxation Officer Narcotics Control, Daud Shah and Circle Officer Sayyed Naveed Jamal. SHO Excise Police Station Mardan Muhammad Riaz and Sub Inspectors Muhammad Faroog and Muhammad Fayyaz after receiving information about the narcotics smuggling attempt, signaled a car (IDM

1957) to stop for checking; however, the driver accelerated the car in an attempt to escape. The car was chased however the driver and another man managed to escape while a third man sitting on the back seat was overpowered by the Excise officials and took him into custody. During the inspection of the car, 12000 grams (12 kg) hashish was recovered from the secret components of the car. The arrested man named Ahmad Hassan, resident of Umar Gul Road Peshawar, identified the driver as Nahid Ullah and the other man as Kashif.

Anti-corruption deptt warns criminal proceedings against KP PA staff in illegal appointments

PESHAWAR (APP): The Anti-Cor- cord to the department. It requested ruption Establishment Khyber Pacriminal proceedings under section 175 PPC against the staff of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly for not providing a record of the alleged illegal appointments in the assembly secretariat. In a letter written to the Secretary KP Assembly, the anti-corruption department said that despite repeated reminders the concerned officers and officials of the KP assembly were reluctant to provide the re-

the Secretary to ask the relevant staff khtunkhwa has warned initiation of to provide the required record for further proceedings otherwise criminal proceedings would be initiated against them. It is pertinent to mention here the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) had handed over the investigation of more than a hundred recruitments made in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly during PTI's government in the province from grade 16 to grade 18 to the Anti-Corruption Establishment.

Power suspension for Peshawar notified

PESHAWAR (APP): The Peshawar consumers of 11 KV Shahgai, Hind-Electric Supply Company (Pesco) on Friday notified that due to maintenance work power supply will remain suspended from 132 KV Peshawar Cantt Grid Station on 11th, 14th, 18th 21st, 25th and 28th June from 8:00 a.m.to 2:00p.m. subsequently consumers of 11KV Tehkal, KTH, Islamia College, Commercial, Jahngira Abad, University Town, NCR, Airport Road, PAF Base, Saddar Road, Mall Road, MES 2, Old MES, Babu Ghari, Marble Industrial, CAA, Palosi 1, Bahria Colony, Tehkal Payan, Bank of Khyber, Scarp 1 feeders will face inconvenience. It said that power supply will also remain suspended from 132 KV Shahi Bagh Grid Station on from 8:00 a.m.to 2:00 p.m. resultantly feeders will face inconvenience.

khan, KSM, Industrial Naguman, Northern Baipas, Bakhshali Pull, Ghari Hamza, Old Naguman, Shah Alam, Latif Abad, Dalazak, Sikandar Pura, Shahibagh, New Takht Abad, New Naguman, Khazana, New Ghari and Khazana feeders will face inconvenience. The power supply will remain suspended from 132 KV Dalazak Grid Station on 10th, 13th, 17th, 21st and 26th June from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. resultantly consumers of 11 KV Shahgai, Hindkhan, KSM, Industrial Naguman, Northern Baipas, Bakhshali Pull, Ghari Hamza, Old Naguman, Shah Alam, Latif Abad, Dalazak, Sikandar Pura, Shahibagh, New Takht Ahad New Naguman 12th, 15th, 19th, 24th and 27th June Khazana, New Ghari and Khazana

Ali Muhammad Khan arrested in corruption case

PESHAWAR (APP): Pakistan Tehreek ruption case. Ali Muhammad Khan e Insaf (PTI) leader. Ali Muhammad case and shifted to Toru police station in Mardan soon after he was released by the court in another case. The lawyer of the PTI leader told the media that Ali Muhammad Khan has been shifted to Toru police station in a cor-

was earlier released by an Anti-Ter-Khan was arrested in a corruption rorism Court in Mardan. The Peshawar High Court, the other day had issued a directive for the release of Ali Muhammad Khan saying that he may be rearrested if involved in other cases. Ali Muhammad Khan has been arrested by the Mardan police and arrested five times for his alleged involvement in various nature cases.

Governor KP meets leading politicians

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Haji businessman, Syed Safdar Zaman Ghulam Ali Friday inaugurated a luxury home interior showroom based on modern furniture at Mansehra Road Abbottabad besides meeting leading politicians and former members of the provincial as well national assembly from Hazara Region. The Governor was given a warm welcome by Faisal Habib, owner of Lux Home Interior Showroom and renowned

Shah and the business community of Abbottabad, Mansehra, Bitgram. Former Member of National Assembly Babar Nawaz Awan, Fayyaz Tanuli, Haji Tariq Sultan, Qaiser Khan Daudzai, Munir Shinwari, Safdar Zaman Shah and other business community, chamber presidents and media representatives were present in the opening ceremony.

ESP endorses govt's success in FY 2022-23, foresees turnaround in economy: Experts

PESHAWAR (APP): Economics and financial experts here Friday said that the Economic Survey of Pakistan (ESP) 2022-23 has endorsed the government's success in different sectors during current fiscal year and said that a strong foundation was laid to turnaround the national economy and increase exports in days to come. Professor Dr Muhammad showed an increase of 16.7 percent Naeem of the Swabi University told compared to the last year. Dr Naeem APP on Friday that ESP has signified that the present elected government of Revenue (FBR) grew by 16.1 perdespite inherited economic and financial challenges, achieved significant progress and growth in various sectors including Information Technology, Tax, Fisheries, Forestry and Agriculture sectors during fiscal year 2022-23. He said it means that the national economy has started moving that showed better policies of the

towards the right direction and continuity of economic and fiscal policies of the present Govt was imperative for repayment of all foreign loans and decrease dependencies on the international monetary institutions. Citing ESP report, he said the IT sector has posted a trade surplus of \$1.72 billion in July-March FY 2023, which said the collection of Federal Board cent to Rs. 6,210 billion as compared to Rs5,348.2 billion last year, which was a positive sign for the economy. He said the current account deficit during July-April FY2023 narrowed down by 76 per cent to \$3.3 billion as compared to \$13.7 billion last year

the government's financial team that managed to contain the trade deficit during July-May FY2023 by 40.4 percent to \$25.8 billion as compared to \$43.4 billion last year. He said the Govt.'s tight economic and fiscal polturity. Yousaf Sarwar, former president Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry said the ESP reflected the resilience and strength of the government to bring the national economy back on track in the face of unprecedented challenges posed by the Russia-Ukraine war, climate change and political-economic challenges.

government. Dr Naeem commended He said the fiscal and external imbalances, high inflation and heavy loans burdens due to the past government's poor economic policies, floods damage to agricultural land, livestock, roads, communication, energy and other infrastructure, affecting the outicies helped it to repay internation- put of crops and livestock have made al commercial loans to the tune of an adverse effects on the national \$5.541 million, out of which \$4.541 economy. Dr Naeem said the governmillion were bank loans and \$ 1,000 ment in order to maintain the foreign million was international Sukuk ma- exchange reserves, have restricted imports during July-May FY2023 to \$51.2 billion as compared to \$72.3 billion last year, which reflected a decline of 29.2 per cent. The Bureau of Emigration & Overseas Employment registered 8,29,549 workers for overseas employment in CY2022 as compared to 2,86,648 in CY2021 showing an increase of 542,901 workers.

Amendments in Barter Trade mechanism can be brought for improvement, facilitation of businessmen

PESHAWAR (APP): Member Custom Operation Federal board of Revenue, Mukarram Jah Ansari has said that the newly introduced Business to Business (B2B) Barter Trade mechanism will be monitored for a couple of months and amendments can be brought for improvement in the system, making it more feasible in accordance with needs of business community. He said this while exchanging views on newly introduced commercial mechanism with Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi, Director Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI) on Friday. The FBR authorities have directed concerned officials to remain in touch with trading community for a couple of months and record feed-

trade and commerce in the region. After monitoring of the B2B Barter Trade mechanism for two months, we will take a review of it and if traders made some suggestions for bringing improvement in it, amendments can be brought in the new system, Mukarram told Director PA-JCCI. FBR official said the recently introduced Business to Business (B2B) Barter Trade mechanism for doing trade with Afghanistan, Iran and Russia through exchange of goods has been introduced for facilitation and provision of ease to traders doing business in bordering areas of the country. Mukarram Jan explains that B2B trade deal will serve as formal mechanism and will

bordering areas where traders face problems despite having lack of EIF (Enhanced Integrated Framework) and there is also fear among them that they may also be asked for transaction trail. Facilitation of business community will be the top priority in barter trade system and if need felt for bringing changes in any sections of the mechanism that will be made, he reiterated. He expressed the hope that the new system of trade will benefit the business community and help in increasing trade in the country and region as well. Speaking on the occasion, Ziaul-Haq Sarhadi appreciated the decision taken by Commerce Ministry and expressed the hope that the new

back of them on this new system of cover transactions being made in system will give better results and problems being faced by business community due to shortage of foreign Currency will be resolved. He also thanked Chairman FBR, Asim Ahmad, Member Custom Operation FBR, Joint Secretary Ministry of Commerce, Maria Qazi, Chairman PAJCCI, Zubair Motiwala for playing an effective role in introduction of Business to Business barter trade mechanism in the country. Zia said the business community was making demand in this regard especially after change of government in Afghanistan. He said presently there are some confusion among trading community in functioning of the barter trade mechanism but hopefully issues will resolve gradually.

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Market Closure

The government's recent decision to bring back the "shutter down" policy looks to be a questionable approach when it comes to saving energy. While its effectiveness remains questionable in saving energy, its sporadic implementation renders it completely ineffective. Traders have shown their disapproval of this policy, which is likely to cause problems in implementation once more. although shops around the world tend to close between 5-8 pm. Currently, the government's approach to tackling the energy shortfall lacks clarity. It fails to outline a consistent and longterm strategy for addressing the gap effectively. While advocating for the closure of shops as a means of conserving power, it provides no concrete plans for accommodating the shortfall of 7,577 MW through improved energy production methods. The potential savings (62 billion PKR), as estimated by the government, that can be achieved through the adoption of energy-efficient appliances are highlighted, but no path for achieving this shift is provided. Similarly, advocating for behavioural changes, such as utilizing daylight savings more effectively, lacks a clear mechanism for their implementation. Going for early closures of enterprises could still be a potential go-to for the government; however, it needs to be coupled with an effective long-term plan to account for the demand shortages. On the other hand, traders oppose the closure of shops, arguing that their concerns as stakeholders are not duly recognised in the policies implemented. Traders need to understand that Pakistan faces a significant 7,577 MW gap in electricity demand and supply. A substantial responsibility for bridging this gap falls upon the retail and business industries. While traders should be among the primary stakeholders involved in policy discussions, it is still imperative to implement and explore policies that address the large shortfall through conservation in the business and retail industries. The "shutter down" policy alone is clearly not a sustainable solution. We must strive for a comprehensive approach that provides actionable steps encompassing improved energy production methods, the adoption of energy-efficient appliances, and the engagement of all stakeholders in shaping effective and inclusive policies.

Joint chiefs vacancies loom amid Tuberville's Senate stand off — By Bryant Harris, Stephen Losey and Megan Edstein

WASHINGTON — A blanket hold by a and up-and-coming commanders to see lone U.S. senator on all high-level military promotions could prevent the confirmation of as many as five of the nominees to serve as the president's most senior military advisers. Five members of the joint chiefs of staff — including Gen. Mark Milley, the chairman — are required statutorily to leave their posts within the coming months, starting in July. Meanwhile, most of the vice chiefs - many of whom are the nominees or favorites to replace the chiefs — are preparing to assume leadership of the services amid the Senate impasse. Sen. Tommy Tuberville, R-Ala., is doubling down on his blockade of military confirmations. He told Defense News that the looming vacancies will not prompt him to back down from his ongoing hold on hundreds of military promotions, including the joint chiefs. "If they're worried about readiness, they need to go back to their old policy and we'll get it done," Tuberville said on Wednesday. "But they're more worried about social programs than they are about military readiness." The senator imposed his blockade in February to protest the Pentagon's new policy that provides leave time for troops to travel to receive abortion services if they're stationed in states where it's now illegal. The first service chief vacancy will occur when Marine Corps Commandant Gen. David Berger steps down on July 10, commencing a steady stream of exits from the joint chiefs through October. Army Chief of Staff Gen. James McConville must step down next on August 8, followed by Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Mike Gilday shortly after on August 21. President Joe Biden nominated Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. CO Brown as the next joint chiefs chairman, replacing Milley, who must depart by early October, and creating another opening at the top of the Air Force. "There's no playbook for this," Arnold Punaro, a former staff director on the Senate Armed Services Committee, said in an interview with Defense News. "This is really a time for regular order, and not the chaos and uncertainty that we see in the system right now." The tumult sends a terrible message about the seriousness with which the United States takes its military promotion process, he said. "It sends a sign of weakness to the rest of the world, that we can't get our work done on time, and that we're involved in political chaos," Punaro said. "This has nothing to do with the individuals

that the military promotion system is based on merit and [who is] best qualified." The Senate typically confirms noncontroversial military nominees, including the joint chiefs, using expedited floor procedures via unanimous consent. But any individual senator can block a unanimous consent request. allowing Tuberville to force the Senate to move through numerous procedural votes on each individual nominee. "All they've got to do is put it on the floor and vote for it," Tuberville told Defense News. "I'll vote for it." Tuberville's hold would require several weeks of limited Senate floor time to confirm the five joint chiefs nominees alone. Tuberville's blockade is also holding up more than 220 flag and general officer promotions, which would take an additional several months of scarce floor time if the Senate did nothing but confirm military nominees. The Senate expects to receive hundreds more military nominees in the coming months. Democratic leaders appear reluctant to use valuable floor time to confirm otherwise noncontroversial nominees and worry that doing so will encourage other senators to block military promotions in order to extract policy concessions. "The Senate cannot encourage this behavior by handing out rewards for holding up hundreds of nominees," Sen. Elizabeth Warren, D-Mass., who chairs the military personnel panel, told Defense News. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., repeatedly declined to commit to scheduling floor votes for the joint chiefs nominees when pressed by reporters at a Wednesday press conference. "What Sen. Tuberville has done is just awful." Schumer told Defense News. "We believe that Republican senators, if they care about national security, should be putting pressure on him to release the holds." Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, R-Kv., said last month that he disagrees with Tuberville's military holds. And Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, told Defense News he hoped the issue could be resolved with a vote on the Pentagon's abortion policy in the fiscal 2024 National Defense Authorization Act- a suggestion that Tuberville shot down. "I don't want to put it in the NDAA and then hold it up because you're going to have people that will be against it," Tuberville told Defense News. "I'd rather have the Defense Department draw something up, send it over here and let's vote on it, stand-alone." - Courtesy: Defense News

Why Russia Wants To Revive The TAPI Pipeline — By The Jamestown Foundation

- nomic and business venture that has the potential to be immensely beneficial to all countries involved.
- Overall, the TAPI pipeline is planned to stretch for over 1,100 miles with the capacity to transport 33 billion cubic me-
- Russian officials primarily view participation in the project as a way to gain

influence in Central Asia. Turkmenistan and Pakistan continue their talks on the revival of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline, and a bilateral meeting on the issue in Islamabad will be announced soon—possibly in late June 2023. For its part, Ashgabat is keen on moving ahead with the project, while energy-deficient Pakistan is willing to go ahead with or without India. And Kabul has said it is ready to raise a special force to provide security for the project (Business Recorder, May 13). Some sources have stated that the potential transit revenues could make up as much as 80 or 85 percent of Afghanistan's central budget, providing added incentives for securing the area around the prospective pipeline. Overall, the TAPI pipeline is planned to stretch for over 1,100 miles with the capacity to transport 33 billion cubic meters (bcm) of natural gas each year from the Galkynysh Gas Field in Turkmenistan to the Indian city of Fazilka via Afghanistan and Pakistan (Business Turkmenistan, August 23, 2022). The project was initially conceived in the early 1990s; however, the pipeline consortium was not announced until 2014 with an estimated cost of \$10 billion at that time. In 2018, construction began on the pipeline but was soon stopped due to security reasons after workers clearing the area were killed by unknown assailants (Pakistan Today. January 18, 2022). In recent years, officials in Islamabad, Kabul and Ashgabat have been seriously considering a return to the project, which again came into the spotlight following the withdrawal of American forces and the Taliban's takeover of Kabul in 2021. The insecurity and political instability in Afghanistan has so far been the main hurdle preventing the pipeline's construction. Nevertheless, Taliban leaders have already assured Turkmenistan that they will provide adequate security for the project (Express Tribune, February 1, 2022). According to a plan announced by Taliban spokesperson Bilal Karimi in January 2022, Afghanistan "will deploy a 30,000-member security unit for the

The TAPI pipeline is a massive eco- ed" (Pipeline-journal.net, January 17, 2022). India, however, has raised concerns about the logistical challenges and commercial aspects of the pipeline (Economic Times, January 20). Specifically, New Delhi is primarily concerned about the potential hidden costs of constructing the project as well as the political uncertainties of sanctioning a pipeline that would run through the territory of geopolitical rival Pakistan (Tribune.com.pk, February 1, 2022). The revival and execution of the TAPI project is not without its geopolitical implications. For its part, Russia has also shown interest in the revival and construction of the pipeline. In January 2023, Zamir Kabulov, the Russian special envoy to Afghanistan, visited Kabul and presented a renewed push from Moscow to revive the stalled project. "As the situation in Afghanistan stabilizes, the participation of domestic economic operators in the construction and operation of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India gas pipeline is possible," said the Russian Foreign Ministry after Kabulov's visit (Economic Times, January 20). Despite the profitability and commercial aspects of the TAPI pipeline, Russian officials primarily view participation in the project as politically attractive. For Moscow, the pipeline is alluring because it is not merely a gas transit project but will also connect South and Central Asia on the basis of the strategic needs and interests for the countries in both regions. Thus, as a potential key player in the project, Russia would be able to expand its influence in South Asia. On this, Kabulov has asserted, "Such a perspective appears politically attractive. The matters of supporting security for this project earlier considered to be the most challenging have lost their acuteness at this stage' (TASS, January 31, 2022). Furthermore, one of Moscow's top strategic goals has been to gain access to the Indian Ocean through the further development of the north-south transit corridor-something the TAPI pipeline would help fulfill (see EDM, July 13, 2022; April 11). Additionally, the project is geopolitically important for Moscow. In 2021, while addressing the international conference "Central and South Asia: Regional Connectivity. Challenges and Opportunities" held in Tashkent, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov expressed the Kremlin's interest in participating in the construction of new regional gas transmission routes, including TAPI: "The integration of the energy infrastructure of Central and South Asia is very promising. ... The Eurasian Economic Union is working on the formation of a single electricity market. This process could be synchronized with electricity sup-

ply projects in Central and South Asia" (Business Turkmenistan, July 16, 2021). No doubt, Russian participation in the TAPI pipeline would be a real step forward for Russia's vision with the Greater Eurasian Partnership (GEP). The GEP has become a key component of Moscow's regional policy, which, among other goals, seeks to assemble "a network of free trade areas and inter-regional trade and economic alliances, and connecting integration projects throughout the vast Eurasian space" (Russiancouncil.ru, September 28, 2020). Moreover, faced with Western sanctions over its invasion of Ukraine. Russia wants to strengthen its strategic partnership with energy-rich Turkmenistan (see EDM, December 15, 2022; May 11, 18). Moscow is interested in participating in the TAPI pipeline project in an effort to divert its energy exports away from Europe toward Asia. In this, Turkmenistan has the potential to be a transit hub for Russian energy and goods exported to South and Central Asia. In truth, as one expert has pointed out, Ashgabat is unwilling to export gas to Turkey and further to Europe if that would endanger its partnership with Moscow: "Ashgabat is clearly coming down on the side of Russia and spurning opportunities to move its gas in a Western direction. It has chosen to move towards its authoritarian brothers-in-arms, Russia and Iran" (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, February 27). Indeed, for Turkmenistan, besides generating additional income, the TAPI pipeline would be important for reducing the country's reliance on China, the largest customer of Turkmenistani gas since 2010. And as security was one of Moscow's gravest concerns, for now, it seems Russian officials are satisfied with the Taliban government's assurances. On January 19, regarding Kabul's security plan, Russian Energy Minister Nikolai Shulginov reportedly declared that, if "some security issues" are resolved, Russia would seriously consider joining the TAPI project (TASS, January 19). The TAPI pipeline is a massive economic and business venture that has the potential to be immensely beneficial to all countries involved. Yet, due to potential security concerns and certain geopolitical difficulties-Iran and India may remain resistant to the project, opting instead for the revival of the Iran-Pakistan-India pipeline—the actual prospects for implementation remain uncertain. Nevertheless, the key players continue to engage in discussions about bringing the pipeline to fruition, including Russia, which is keen to play a central role in emerging energy and transit projects to expand its influence in South and Central Asia. - Courtesy: Oil Price

Barter Trade: Pakistan Challenges Dollar — By Yasir Habib Khan

In the backdrop of Pakistan's trade shift at ebb. The bilateral trade volume beto a barter economy, de-dollarization or lower dependency on the US dollar has set its strong foothold in the country; offering Pakistan to revitalize its economy with less vulnerability from exchange volume between Pakistan and Afghanirate risks, balance of payments crisis and inflation. In a strategic move, Pakistan recognized the potential of barter trade agreements with countries Iran, Afghanistan, and Russia and implemented a "business-to-business barter trade mechanism 2023" on June 2; facilitating state-owned and private enterprises in Pakistan to engage in barter trade with all three neighbouring countries. This shift aligns with the global trend towards de-dollarisation; driven by geopolitical and economic factors. Pakistan's trade with Iran, Afghanistan and Russia has the innate potential to swell but USled trade curbs have always acted as a dampener; keeping the quadrilateral

security of the TAPI project. They will

be providing security along the route of

the project in all parts of the provinces

where the pipeline is being construct-

tween Pakistan and Iran has stood at around \$2 billion. Similarly, Pakistan's trade volume with Russia stands at approximately \$400 million. The trade stan is estimated to be around \$1 billion. If executed in true letter and spirit, the barter trade among Pakistan, Iran, Russia and Afghanistan will go manifold. Meanwhile, before subscribing to barter trade agreements, Pakistan has also begun importing various essential items from these countries. For instance, Pakistan is importing 100 MW of electricity from Iran, addressing its energy needs through bilateral cooperation. Additionally, Pakistan has initiated the import of crude oil, wheat, and other commodities from Russia. Instead of payment in dollars. Pakistan will settle these transactions through the exchange of commodities or goods, further reinforcing the de-dollarization policy. The barter trade

mechanism is a shot in the arms of Pakistan limping economy. The country of approximately 240 million people is facing significant challenges related to the balance of payments crisis and soaring inflation which reached an alarming rate of nearly 38 per cent in May 2023. Pakistan's foreign currency reserves have dwindled to slightly above \$4 billion, a level that can barely sustain imports for a month, according to central bank data. Barter trade presents numerous benefits for Pakistan's economy. By exporting a wide range of goods, including agricultural products, textiles, and sports equipment, Pakistan can showcase its diverse offerings to international markets. Simultaneously, barter trade allows the country to import vital commodities such as crude oil, LNG, and LPG from its trading partners, satisfying its energy requirements and reducing dependence on traditional trading methods. Courtesy: Daily Times

Letters to the Editor

NFTs in Pakistan

The demand for Non-Fungible Tokens NFTs in Pakistan is rapidly increasing. NFTs have merged as a new form of digital assets that are revolutionizing the art, gaming, and collectible industries globally, and Pakistan is no exception to this phenomenon. NFTs are unique digital assets that can represent ownership of a wide range of digital and physical items. Artists, creators, and col-

trade among all neighbouring countries

lectors have embraced this technology as it allows them to monetize and trade their digital creations in a secure and transparent manner. It provided an avenue for the artists to showcase their work and receive fair compensation for their efforts. In Pakistan, a surge in interest and participation in the NFT market is being witnessed. People are engaging global audiences with their artwork. These artworks are built on blockchain networks that consume a sig-

nificant amount of energy. 'FRIEND-SHIP ENDED WITH MUDASIR' was a meme that was sold as NFT worth \$49,866. Highlighting, there is a need for awareness among Pakistanis regarding NFTs. This technology is very new, and individuals may find it difficult to understand. Awareness of NFTs will ensure responsible participation in the NFT market. As this will signify the country's potential for digital innovation and creativity. - Talbia Syed, Karachi









involved. We want the young officers,

'Indian forces arrested over 2,500 Kashmiris so far this year': report

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indian troops, paramilitary, police and dreaded agencies have arrested over 2,500 persons, including All Parties Hurriyat Conference leaders and several women in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) so far this year. According to data re-June 9, Indian troops, paramilitary

and police personnel as well as the authorities slapped black laws like sleuths of the dreaded National Investigation Agency (NIA) and State Investigation Agency (SIA) during cordon and search operations and house raids arrested over 2,500 Kashmiris. Those arrested include APHC leaders, Bilal Siddiqi, Zamleased by Kashmir Media Service on rooda Habib, Yasmeen Raja, and journalist Irfan Mehraj. The Indian

Public Safety Act (PSA) and Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) on many of the detainees on the charges of their struggle for the right to self-determination guaranteed by the United Nations to the people of Kashmir in its several resolutions. They have been lodged in different jails of IIOJK and India.

Govt to award Rs.50k loan each to top 250 group projects: Wani

it-Baltistan Muhiudeen Wani has said that the top 250 group projects (5 to schools across the region would be awarded loans of Rs. 50,000 each. In an official statement to the media, he said the loans would be distributed in collaboration with Karakoram Cooperative Bank Limited. The purpose of the provision of loans was so that students could further improve their initial work and come up with proj-

GILGIT (APP): Chief Secretary Gilg- ects that could be scaled and were market-ready, Wani highlighted. The scalability and saleability must there-8 students) from various government fore be the essence of these projects, he stressed. The chief secretary said, "The students have till the end of June to improve their projects and come up with innovative yet market-acceptable projects." He further informed that a team of experts shall evaluate projects across Gilgit-Baltistan and shortlist the top 250 projects for further loan funding.

Five E's framework to prove game changer for economic development of Pakistan: Marriyum

Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb said on Friday that the 5E's framework formulated by the Ministry of Planning and Development & Initiatives (MoPD&SI) will prove a game changer for economic development in Pakistan. In a series of tweets, she said that 'Exports', 'E-Pakistan', Environment & Climate Change, Energy & Infrastructure, and Equity & Empowerment were the pillars of the turnaround of Pakistan. Through this framework, she added, new businesses and employment opportunities will be encouraged to increase exports. She stated that the promotion of education and health and population control will pave the way for the development economic measures.

ISLAMABAD (APP): Minister for of Pakistan. Affordable and uninterrupted energy supply will give a new boost to the economy and business, she said adding environment will be improved through water reservoirs and food security. Through e-Pakistan, youth will be given development opportunities and they will be empowered, she said. She opined that the reduction of fiscal deficit to 4.6 percent of GDP from 4.9 percent was a major achievement which was a positive outcome of the correct economic policy of the government. She said that a 76 percent reduction in the current account deficit was also a sign of sound economic policy. About 40.4 percent reduction in trade deficit showed the positive impact of

Govt. allocates Rs 150 million for Narcotics Control Division in PSDP 2023-24

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Federal ly for the Construction of the Model government has designated Rs 150 million under the Public Service Development Programme (PSDP) for the Narcotics Control Division in the fiscal year 2023-24. According to a budgetary document released, Rs 124.058 million has been allocated for an ongoing scheme in the PSDP for Women and Children Drug Ad-2023-24. This allocation is specifical- dicts in Islamabad.

Addiction Treatment and Rehabilitation Center in Islamabad. Additionally, an amount of Rs 25.942 million has been allocated for a new scheme. This allocation is intended for the acquisition of land to construct a Rehab and Vocational Training Center

PM forms committee to address BAP's reservations on Balochistan projects

Shehbaz Sharif on Friday formed a committee to address the reservations of the Balochistan Awami Parprojects and issues faced by the Balochistan province. The prime minister constituted the body as a BAP prise Senate Chairman Sadig San- ment.

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister jrani, Khalid Hussain Magsi, Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haidari, Agha Hassan Baloch, Ishaq Dar, Ahsan Iqbal, Dr Musaddiq Malik, Azam Naty (BAP) regarding the development zeer Tarar and Manzoor Kakar. The prime minister tasked the committee to hold a detailed consultation and present him a report within a week. delegation called on him headed by In the meeting, the BAP decided to Senate Chairman Muhammad Sadiq take part in the budget session and Sanjrani. The committee would com- extend its full support to the govern-

Govt specifies Rs 107,413 mln for power sector in PSDP 2023-24

ISLAMABAD (APP): The govern- million each for 220kV Hairpur Subment has earmarked a sum of Rs 107413.044 million for various ongoing and new schemes of the power sector in the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) for the financial year 2023-24. According to the budgetary document released on Friday, out of the total allocation, the government allocated Rs 81,774.431 million from the local component while Rs 25.638.613 million from the foreign aid component. Under ongoing schemes, an amount of Rs12.000 million has been allocated for Installation of 2x600 MW coal-fired power proiect GENCO-1 Jamshoro, Rs 2,536.471 million for interconnection of isolated Makran Network, Rs 1600 hal HPPs, Rs 5,667.

station, 220kV Swabi Substation. Rs 1200 million for 500kV Allama Iqbal Industrial City for 600 MW Demand of the Special Economic Zone, Rs 1,059 million for replacement of LT Bare conductor with ABC Cable in Peshawar Khyber Circle and Bannu Circle, Rs 1,439 million for 220/132 Kv GIS substation Dhabiji, Rs 964 million for electrification works at different valleys of District Chitral and Rs 900 million for 220 kV Quaide-Azam Apparel and business Park in the PSDP for FY 2023-24. Similarly, a sum of Rs 13,800 million has been specified for evacuation of power from Suki Kinari, Kohala, Ma-

Pakistan Business Forum endorses NEC's decision to close markets, commercial centers by 8 pm

QUETTA (APP): Pakistan Business Fo- Sana Khan Durrani while talking to rum has supported the decision of the National Economic Council to close the markets and commercial centers till 8 pm from July 1, saying that this will be the first step towards a civilized soci-

the media, said that the measures proposed under the plan to conserve energy, such as closing shops and commercial centers by 8 pm, switching to LED lights to save more energy, could help ety. Vice Chairperson PBF Balochistan the country save up to \$1 billion a year.

CTD arrests target killer

KARACHI (APP): The Sindh Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) Karachi on Friday arrested a former policeman involved in target killing, from near Metro Shopping Mall, University Road. According to the CTD spokesman, the arrested accused was identified as Ghulam Hussain. The accused during interrogation told the authorities that he was recruited by police in 1990 as a constable. During his posting at a police station in Sukkur in 1994, he spotted one of his opponents Anwar and shot killed him. He was arrested on the spot but escaped after getting bail. Later on, the District and Session Court Sukkur announced death penalty for Ghulam Hussain after being proven guilty.

Police bust gang involved in various robbery cases

RAWALPINDI (APP): In an operation against criminal elements. Rawalpindi Police have arrested two members of a gang and recovered Rs. 43,000 cash, weapons, a snatched motorcycle and other items from their possession. According to a police spokesman, Race Course Police arrested two accused namely Wahab, the ringleader and Shehzad, who were allegedly involved in various dacoity and robbery cases. He informed that the police team constituted, under the supervision of SHO Pirwadhai Police Station, on the directives of SP Potohar, Muhammad Wagas Khan conducted a raid and managed to net the criminal record holder gang.

Three arrested for resisting police

RAWALPINDI (APP): Saddar Baroni Police have arrested three accused when they allegedly tried to stop the police from checking a vehicle. According to a police spokesman, Saddar Baroni Police stopped a suspicious vehicle and tried to conduct its search but, the accused namely Danial, Bilal and Abdul Wahid resisted police checking. Police during a search of the vehicle recovered a Kalashnikov, 16mm rifle, two pistols, magazines, ammunition and a fake number plate. Police also impounded a Fortuner vehicle, he added. Superintendent of Police, Saddar, Muhammad Nabeel Khokhar appreciated the police action and directed them to take strict action against the lawbreakers.

Medical store sealed

SARGODHA (APP): The health department team sealed a medical store for selling fake and substandard medicine at the store here on Friday. According to the official sources,a team headed by deputy drug controller Dr Faheem Zia checked various medical stores in Shahpur, Jhawarian and it's surroundings and sealed Bunyaad Shah medical store at Dorywala village and recovered huge quantity of narcotics drugs and illegal medicines from his store. Meanwhile team also challans of three medical stores-Azhar, Usman and Hayyat for selling expired medicines at their stores.

73 cops get cash prizes

SARGODHA (APP): Regional Police Officer (RPO) Sargodha, Sharukh Kamal Sidiqui on Friday disbursed cash prizes and certificates of appreciation among 73 police officers in recognition of their excellent professional police,said a spokesman. While talking to APP that police said a formal ceremony was held here at the RPO office in this regard which was also attended by District Police Officer (DPO) Muhammad Faisal Kamran.

Pakistan Post issues commemorative stamp

Post has released a commemorative stamp worth Rs 50 to mark the completion of field operations of the country's first Digital Census. The stamp was unveiled by Chief Census Commissioner Dr Naeem uz Zafar at a function here at the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). This stamp was available for sale at all major post offices across the country. Naeem Zafar thanked all stakeholders including National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), Telecommunication Corporation (NTC), Space and Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SPARCO), local government, and the general public who supported and participated in this monumental event. He said holding a digital census for the first time in Pakistan marks an important milestone in the

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan country's history and paves the way for future advancements in data collection and analysis. Chairman Pakistan Post Hafiz Shakeel appreciated the joint efforts of the Post Office and PBS in introducing the commemorative stamp, which was a symbol of pride and recognition for the great success of the transition to the digital census. He said this was a testament to the hard work, dedication and commitment of all involved in ensuring the success of this important initiative. He also appreciated the efforts of PBS as it was the country's premier statistical department responsible for providing reliable and timely statistical data to support evidence-based decision-making at various levels. A documentary film was also screened during the event, portraying various activities and efforts undertaken during the census.

ANF seizes 6.2 MT narcotics in five months

a comprehensive counter-narcotics campaign with the resolve to make Pakistan a drug-free country managed to recover nearly 6.2 MT of narcotics from urban areas during the last five months. According to an ANF Headquarters spokesman, counter-narcotics operations were conducted in different parts of the country with a special focus on urban centre sanitization. Special combing and intelligence-based operations resulted in substantial seizures in major cities like Karachi, Lahore, Faisalabad, Quetta, Rawalpindi and that to effectively contain the threat, hicle.

RAWALPINDI (APP): Anti-Narcot- inter-provincial interdiction rings had ics Force (ANF) while carrying out been established and major inter-provincial communication arteries were being kept under surveillance. This effort is bearing fruits, wherein an estimated 7.26 MT of narcotics have been seized along motorways and highways, which was destined for major metropolises of the country for local consumption. In continuation of the countrywide counter-narcotics campaign, ANF carried out an intelligence-based operation near Kala Shah Kaku Toll Plaza on GT Road. During the operation, the mini truck was intercepted, which led to the recovery of a huge cache of narcotics Islamabad, he added. He informed tactfully concealed in the seized ve-

Empowerment of women, youth vision of Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif: Tarar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Interior Attaullah Tarar Friday said that the coalition-led government had approved the inclusion of a 'revolutionary program' to economically empower youth and women in the country since it was the vision of Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif. Talking to a Private news channel, he said the funds have been allocated in budget 2023-24 for the welfare of youth and women as well as for agriculture tube-wells, adding, government was taking solid steps to provide IT-based

tion. He said it was the firm belief of Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif that the society would achieve progress and prosperity by promoting merit. Tarar said that people, neglected by the past regimes, were now feeling a change and betterment in every sphere of life. He said that the program would provide decent employment opportunities to 68 per cent population of the country. He said that skill development scholarship and laptop projects for youth would empower less developed segments of the society and they would be able to play pro-active role technical training to the new genera- in bring real change in Pakistan.

CTO visits Taxila Facilitation Center to check licensing facilities

RAWALPINDI (APP): City Traffic possible steps to facilitate the citizens Officer (CTO) Rawalpindi, Tamoor Khan here on Friday visited Taxila Facilitation Center and inspected the arrangements being finalized to provide 24/7 driving licensing facilities to the citizens. In charge of Licensing gave a briefing about the driving test track and 24/7 licensing services. Traffic Police (CTP) was taking all cility would be provided to them.

according to the vision of Deputy Inspector General Traffic, Punjab Mirza Faran Baig. The CTP was providing the licensing facilities 24/7 to the residents of Rawalpindi district, Taimoor Khan said. The citizens having original ID cards could avail of the licensing facilities from the nearest The CTO on the occasion said that facilitation centre. All the facilities after successful 24/7 driving licens- related to licensing were being proing facilities at Traffic Headquarters vided to the residents of Taxila and Rawalpindi, soon the same would be its surroundings at their doorstep, he provided at Taxila. He said that City said, adding, soon a 24/7 licensing fa-

Three street criminals arrested; snatched motorcycles, weapons recovered

RAWALPINDI (APP): In an oper- constituted under the supervision of ation against criminal elements, Rawalpindi Police here on Friday arrested three street criminals and Police conducted a raid and managed recovered two snatched motorcycles, weapons and other items from their ered Rs two snatched motorcycles, possession. According to a police spokesman, Dhamial police arrested three members of the Usama gang including Usama, ringleader, Aqib and Nahid, wanted in various cases.

SHO Dhamial Police Station on the directives of the Superintendent of to net the accused. Police also recovweapons and other items from their possession. As per the preliminary police record, the criminals were also involved in other crimes, he said adding, the accused had been shifted to He informed that the police team jail for an identification parade.

3000 children so far enrolled under Benazir Taleemi Wazaif Programme

SARGODHA (APP): Benazir Income tabase was mandatory for the enroll-Support Programme (BISP) has so far enrolled 3000 children into schools through Benazir Taleemi Wazaif initiative in Sargodha district. BISP Deputy Director Sargodha told APP here on Friday that the aim of this initiative was to promote education through regular cash transfers to invest in human capital development. B-form/ CRC verification through NADRA da-

ment of child in the program, he added He highlighted that "A beneficiary child must have at least 70 percent attendance in a quarter to get cash transfers", adding that Primary level boy would get Rs 1500 each per quarter while each girl would get Rs 2000 per quarter, where as Rs 2,500 and Rs 3,000 would be paid to boy and girl student of middle class respectively.









Food safety team in Abbottabad conducts checking of milk, food items

safety team of Abbottabad Friday conducted a raid on Salhad Road. Abbottabad. During the raid, various vehicles involved in the supply of food items were checked, and collected milk and food items samples. According to details, following the directives of Director General of Food Safety, Shahrukh Ali Khan, and Director of Operations, Altaf Hussain, a team of food and safety authorities conducted raids on vehicles carrying food items and milk for supply to the

ABBOTTABAD (APP): The food shops. During the operation, milk samples were tested on the spot using the modern mobile testing lab. As a result, adulterated milk was confiscated, heavy fines were imposed, and improvement notices were issued. Additionally, a vehicle carrying dead poultry was intercepted and the owner imposed a heavy fine while the dead chicken was discarded. Furthermore, the owners of other shops, hotels, and restaurants were informed about the SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) of the Food Authority.

25 drug peddlers, bootleggers, illegal weapon holders netted

police in an action against suspected drug peddlers, bootleggers, illegal weapon holders and other lawbreakers here on Friday arrested 25 accused besides recovering over 9.5 kg charras, 45 liters liquor, 10 pistols, ammunition and other items from their possession. A police spokesperson said that Rattaamral, Pirwadhai, Waris Khan, Sadiqabad, Gujar Khan, and Rawat police conducted raids in their respective jurisdiction and arrested Abdul Majid, Naeem, Habibullah, Sher Ali, Imran, Jamshaid, Abdullah, Masood, Asif and Huzafa on recovery of 10 pistols 30 bore and ammunition. Similarly, Bani, Naseerabad, Taxila, Gungmandi, Pirwadhai on recovery of 3.5 kg charas.

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi and Kalar Syedan police rounded up 10 accused and recovered over six kg charras and 45 liters liquor. He informed that Zareen Gul was held with 1400 grams charras while Asif was sent behind the bars for having 1380 grams charras. Ali, Sanab Gul, Akash, Latif Waqar, Naqash, Sajid, Waqas and Siddique were netted for possessing 3250 grams charras and 45 liters liquor. Dhamial police in their operation succeeded to nab two bike lifters namely Numan and Yasir and recovered four stolen motorcycles and other items from their possession. New Town Police conducted a raid and arrested a record holder drug supplier namely Khurram Dada

Macroeconomic stability, protection of vulnerable segments top priorities in budget: Azhar Kiyani

the Prime Minister on Economy and Energy Bilal Azhar Kayani Friday said that macroeconomic stability to ensure financial discipline through effective policies and protection of vulnerable segments of the society was the topmost priorities in fiscal year budget 2023-24. Talking to a private news channel, he said the budget would prove helpful to make the country's economy strong by increasing exports. Azhar Kayani said the government was making all out efforts to bring the country out of economic crises and all institutions were to masses.

ISLAMABAD (APP): Coordinator to striving to give the Prime Minister's road map a reality. He said several mega government schemes and packages dedicated to welfare of women and youth were initiated by Pakistan Muslim League-N. The coordinator said the government had extended relief to the people through enhancing allocations for Benazir Income Support Program, Free Atta distribution, reduction in the prices of essential items at Utility Stores Corporation and Kissan package. He said the government also reduced the prices of petroleum products to provide relief

Agri. Secretary monitors eco-friendly IMP tech during visits to cotton fields in Khanewal, Mianchannu

MULTAN (APP): Secretary Agricul- of plant mapping, and plant populature South Punjab Saqib Ali Ateel on Friday paid visits to cotton fields in Khanewal and its tahsil Mianchannu to monitor activities of field formations and the status of cotton crops with particular reference to the application of environment-friendly Integrated Pest Management (IPM) technology to counter pest attack. Saqib specifically visited cotton demonstration plots where IMP technology was in the play and experts demonstrated pest scouting of crop friendly and enemy pests in the presence of a good number of farmers for their orientation. Experts also demonstrated techniques

tion per acre for farmers' guidance. The Secretary Agriculture also met with farmers who were developing cotton plots employing IMP technology and gave them further insight into the environment-friendly method of IPM. Farmers appeared immensely interested in the IPM and put many queries to the secretary who responded with detailed answers supported by research-based statistics. Saqib said that IPM model was also being replicated on other crops to reduce farmers' unnecessary cost on pesticides and make agriculture more profitable and environment-friendly.

Imran Bodla thanks law minister for promising grants for bars, banking court camp office in Rajanpur

RAJANPUR (APP): Member Pun- needs of bars in south Punjab and jab Bar Council (PbBC) Pir Imran Akram Bodla Friday said that he was thankful to the Federal minister for law and Justice Azam Nazir Tarar for promising grants for bar associations in south Punjab and assurances to recommend the establishment of a camp office of Talking to APP, Pir Imran Bodla advocate said that in a recent meeting with the federal minister for recommendations for development Eisan Bar Association.

added that the minister was forthcoming and kind to promise the implemention on his recommendations. He said that the federal law minister promised to allocate Rs 1.5 million annual grant for Tahsil Bar Association (TBA) Jampur, Rs 1.5 million for District Bar Associ-Banking Court in Rajanpur district. ation (DBA) Rajanpur, Rs 2 million for DBA DG Khan, Rs 1 million for Rojhan Mazari Bar Association, Rs 1 million for Taunsa Bar Associalaw and justice, he had presented tion, and Rs 800,000 for Kiror Lal

People repose trust in PPP in AJK by-polls: Zardari

Asif Ali Zardari has said the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) is a reality, which is a symbol of federation. In a statement issued here on Friday, he said victory of the PPP candidate, Ziaul Qamar, in by-elections in Azad Jammu and Kashmir was a great news for all those who believe in federalism and federation of Pakistan. He said the people ofAzad Kashmir have reposed their trust and confidence in not only in the PPP.

LAHORE (APP): Former president Ziaul Qamar and the PPP but also federation of Pakistan. He congratulated the newly elected Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) and urged him to expedite the PPP mission of serving people. Zardari said that the PPP saved the country earlier and now once again it was in a coalition with other parties to save the country from economic crisis. He thanked the citizens of district Bagh for reposing trust in

PPP's victory in by-election reflect AJK people's confidence over PPP: Kundi

ter of State for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety and Central Information Secretary of PPP Faisal Karim Kundi on Friday said Pakistan People's Party's success in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) by-election reflected the AJK's people's confidence and support for the party. Addressing a news conference here, Faisal Kundi congratulated the office bearers and workers of PPP for their hard work and sincerity that led to success in AJK by-election. "Support of AJK people were with PPP yesterday, today and will remain in future",

20 criminals busted

SARGODHA (APP): Sargodha Police on Friday during a crack down nabbed 20 criminals across the District. Police said that Sargodha Police raided under their respective jurisdictions and busted Sohail, Sajad, Momin, Shafique, Rafique, Shaheen, Tahir, Razaq, Rustom, Rehman and others, besides recovering 282 liters of liquor,3 kg of hashish, 2 kg of opium, 289 liters of wine, 12 pistols,09 Kalashnikov,128 bullets and valuables worth in millions of rupees from them. Further investigation was under way.

Accident killed two in Multan

ISLAMABAD (APP): At least two people were killed and two other sustained injuries when a car and a tractor trolley collided near Chowk Sarwar Shaheed at Multan Mian Wali road on Friday afternoon. According to details, rescue 1122 said, the tragic accident took place on Mian Wali road due to over speeding. Rescue teams and police reached the spot and shifted the deceased and injured people to nearby

83 constables promoted in Sargodha district

SARGODHA (APP): District Police Officer (DPO) Muhammad Tariq Aziz promoted 83 police constables to head constables in Sargodha district on Friday. A ceremony was held at Police Lines where the DPO was the chief guest. According to a spokesman for the police, the fifth promotion board meeting was held for the first time in the history of Sargodha police in just two months, in which 257 police officers including 83 constables were promoted to the next grades. Muhammad Faisal Kamran said the Police Department was well aware of problems of policemen and was striving for their

Training workshop on 'Mental Health & Social Issues'

FAISALABAD (APP): A daylong training workshop on 'Mental Health & Social Issues' was held at the Government College University, Faisalabad (GCUF). The training was arranged in collaboration with the Psychiatry Department of the university and Higher education Commission (HEC). A spokesperson for the university said here Friday that the objective of the workshop was utilisation of social resources in better way to cope with issues related to mental health, creating awareness about depression in society and to control mental diseases and factors of suicides.

IRSA releases 173,000 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Friday released 173,000 cusecs of water from various rim stations with inflow of 199,000 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1426.93 feet and was 28.93 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 73,300 cusecs and 64,800 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1135. 75 feet, which was 85.75 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet.

ing Imran Khan said that he who claimed that anyone given a ticket by him in the election will succeed can see how people of AJK supported PPP despite his video address. "This is a clear message for those who were saying that PPP is only limited to Sindh province that political leaders from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab, and Gilgit-Baltistan are also joining PPP in a great number", he said. About the newly formed political party, Faisal Kundi said that PPP always welcomed democratic political parties. The SAPM also said that

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minis- he said. Faisal Kundi while criticiz- PPP has always advocated the stance of the people of Indian Illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJ&K) for their demand of holding a plebiscite. Regarding Minister for Foreign Affairs Bilawal Bhutto's recent visit to Iraq, the SAPM said that the joint statement between Pakistan and Iraq was a historic act and added that during his highly successful visit, he discussed with the high official important issues including visa exemption, provision of legal assistance to the prisoners, facilitation for the Zaireen and legalization of Pakistani

President directs LESCO to pay marriage grant to retired employee

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr found out from others that a mar-Arif Alvi on Friday directed the Lahore Electric Supply Company (LE-SCO) to pay Rs 200,000 as a "marriage grant" to a retired employee for the marriage of his son who had been denied payment by LESCO. The LESCO had denied the payment on the ground that he had applied for the grant after the expiry of the prescribed time limit of six months. "We should take care of such people, who due to ignorance of the law or being unaware of the benefits for which they might be eligible due to their service, are unable to benefit from them in time", the president was not aware of his entitlement and expiry of about 2 years.

riage grant for his son was possible. He further held that it was the responsibility of government agencies to inform people about such benefits. President Alvi gave these remarks while accepting a representation filed by Muhammad Asif (the complainant) against the decision of the Wafaqi Mohtasib. As per the details, Muhammad Asif was an employee of LESCO and, after his retirement, he applied for the "marriage grant" in respect of his son. He was denied payment on the ground that his son's marriage was held on 02.12.2018 whereas the complainant applied for said. He regretted that the employee the grant on 08.12.2020 i.e., after the

Minister visits Khanewal prison to check facilities

KHANEWAL (APP): Caretaker Pro- served to prisoners and added that vincial Minister for Housing, Urban all the facilities entitled to prisoners Development & Public Health, Augaf & Religious Affairs Barrister Syed Azfar Ali Nasir paid a visit to district jail Khanewal and checked the facilities for prisoners there. During the visit, the minister talked to the prisoners for some time and heard their problems. He ordered jail authorities to improve the quality of food being titude of officials would be tolerated.

as per SOPs be provided to them. He said, he was paying visits to the prisons on the orders of caretaker chief minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi to improve facilities in prisons and asked jail officials to deal with the prisoners politely. He added that no complaint from prisoners regarding impolite at-

LWMC distributes 7000 social security cards in workers

LAHORE (APP): The Lahore Waste the LWMC workers were real heroes Management Company (LWMC) has distributed more than 7,000 social security card among workers while more than 12,000 cards would be distributed in phases. This was stated by Chief Executive Officer (CEO) LWMC Babar Sahab Din while attending social security card distribution ceremony held here at LWMC head office on Friday. He said that the department is committed to the welfare of its employees as workers are real asset and their welfare is among the priorities of LWMC. Health insurance of LWMC workers in being covered through Punjab Employees ing on the occasion, the CEO said through social security cards.

and cleanliness of Lahore was only possible due to their untiring efforts. The LWMC is working on the health and welfare of its workers as the health of the workers participating in the cleaning cannot be ignored in any case. For the facilitation of workers "Sahulat Markaz" at South, Children and Thokar workshop had already been established. Workers can reach their nearest facilitation center in case of any issue related to salary or leaves. He further briefed that apart from the resolution of day to day issues LWMC has also taken a major step to facilitate their workers Social Security Institution. Speak- by covering their health insurance

Experts for proactive multi-pronged strategy to counter growing risks of drought

ISLAMABAD (APP): The experts at highlighted the rising vulnerability of a consultative works strategy to counter growing risks of drought causing serious impacts on agriculture, livelihoods and health of local communities mostly at risk of natural calamity due to exacerbating global warming and climate change. The International Water Management Institute (IWMI) organized a consultative workshop on Early Drought Warning System (EDWS) for Pakistan here to engage experts, academia, public departments and relevant agencies for multi-stakeholder dialogue. Director General, Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) Mahr Sahibzada Khan in his welcome remarks the workshop.

shop on Friday the region and the country due to shif called for a proactive multi-pronged in rainfall and precipitation patterns influenced by environmental degradation. Director Water, food and Ecosystems, Dr Mohsin Hafeez presented a detailed outline of the Institute's endeavours in terms of enhancing the country's climate and water resilience including capacity building, training of quarters concerned, research on core issues and solutions devised to address the issues due to global warming impacts on the region in the areas of water management and governance. Research Group Leader Water Risk to Development and Resilience, IWMI Dr Giriraj Amaranth via online addressed

Indian Sikh pilgrims arrived in Hassanabdal to offer religious rituals

WAH CANTT (APP): Around 170 Sikh that Pakistan was their second home pilgrims arrived at Hassan Abdal to offer their religious rituals in connection to 174th death anniversary of Guru Arjan Dev also known as Jore Mela aimed strict security measures. Upon their arrival officials of local administration, Evacuee Trust Property board (ETPB) and the Pakistan Sikh Gurdwara Perbandhak Committee (PSGPC), local administration well come them. Speaking on the occasion, the Party leader of Sikh yatrees Sardar Gurbachan Singh said

for Sikhs living in all around the world. Evacuee Trust Property Board (ETPB) deputy secretary Shrines Saif Ullah Khokar has said that the Sikh pilgrim would leave for Gurdwara Nanaka Sahib on June 10. He assured that the Sikh pilgrims would be provided with the best facilities during their 10-day stay in the country. He said that Pakistan remains committed to preserving sacred religious places as well as providing necessary facilitation to the visiting pilgrims.

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Thai firms eyeing \$36m investment in Saudi Arabia as business ties strengthen

RIYADH (Agencies): Thai companies are ready to invest a combined \$36 million in Saudi Arabia, a senior figure from the Asian country's business community has revealed as relations between the two nations continue to develop. Sanan Angubolkul, chairman of the Thai Chamber of Commerce, revealed the figure during a meeting of the Saudi-Thai Business Forum in Riyadh, according to the Saudi Press Agency. He used his address to the event to



remark how 2022 was a "fantastic" year for the Kingdom and Thailand, as it saw the resumption of diplomatic and economic relations and the expectation of several commercial agreements valued at more than

\$300 million. Angubolkul added that eight Thai companies are looking to invest the sum in Saudi Arabia, expressing his country's readiness to cooperate with the Kingdom in the energy and crude-oil storage industry. The forum, organized by the Federation of Saudi Chambers, came during the official visit of Thailand's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Don Pramudwinai to discuss prospects of cooperation between the two countries.

Binance. US halts US dollar deposits after SEC lawsuit

NEW YORK (Agencies): Crypto exchange Binance.US said on Thursday it is suspending US dollar deposits and that its banking partners are preparing to pause fiat dollar withdrawal channels as early as June 13, just days after US regulators sued Binance and its CEO Changpeng Zhao. The US arm of the world's largest crypto exchange said in a tweet at 10.33pm EDT (0233 GMT Friday) that the move comes as it is taking "proactive steps" in its transition to



a crypto-only exchange for the time being. Trading, staking, deposits, and withdrawals in crypto would remain fully operational, the exchange said in a notice to its customers. On Monday, the US Securities and Exchange

Commission (SEC) filed a lawsuit against Binance and its founder Zhao, and subsequently sued Coinbase, the largest US cryptocurrency platform, a day later. The developments mark a dramatic escalation of a crackdown on the industry by US regulators, following the implosion of FTX last year. US financial regulators had said earlier on Thursday that they supported a freeze on Binance's assets, according to a US SEC filing to a federal court and made public.

Australia's inflation hurdles heighten recession risk

SYDNEY (Agencies): The risk of Australia's economy slipping into recession has risen sharply after the central bank surprised markets this week by raising rates and warned it could tighten again to tamp down on high inflation even at the cost of preserving jobs. For a year, Reserve Bank of Australia Governor Philip Lowe has been talking about successfully navigating a narrow path to lower inflation while keeping unem- to come, Lowe warned the narrow



ployment near 50-year lows. But this week the governor's tone changed. After a surprise rate rise to 4.10% and a hawkish promise of even more path would also be bumpy and that getting high inflation down would take priority over preserving jobs. The shift led economists, some of who thought rates had peaked at 3.6% when the RBA paused its tightening cycle in April, to factor in at least one more rate rise and a genuine risk of a recession, the nation's first in more three decades outside the sharp downturn at the start of the Covid pandemic in 2020.

Dollar retreats on jump in US jobless claims

SINGAPORE (Agencies): The dollar retreated on Friday, dragged by lower US Treasury yields after a spike in weekly jobless claims raised traders' hopes that a peak in US interest rates was near, as focus turned to the upcoming week packed with central bank meetings. The number of Americans filing new claims for unemployment benefits surged to the highest in more than 1-1/2 years last week, data on Thursday showed, though



layoffs are probably not accelerating as the data covered the Memorial Day holiday, which could have injected some volatility. Nonetheless, that was enough to knock the US dollar to a

more than two-week low against a basket of currencies in the previous session, as investors took the data as a sign that the US labour market was slowing. The dollar index last stood at 103.35 in early Asia trade on Friday, having lost more than 0.7% in the previous session, its largest daily decline in weeks. Against the Japanese yen, the greenback dipped to a one-week low of 138.765, tracking a slide in US Treasury yields.

Meta's Zuckerberg shakes off Apple Vision Pro

SAN FRANCISCO (Agencies): Meta chief Mark Zuckerberg on Thursday told employees that while Apple's mixed reality gear may be nice, it is not his vision of the future, according to US media reports. Zuckerberg's comments came during the first all-hands gathering at its Silicon Valley campus since the pandemic, and just days after Apple unveiled Vision Pro mixed reality headsets. "I mean, that could be the vision of



the future of computing, but like, it's not the one that I want," Zuckerberg reportedly said while assessing what he has seen of Apple Vision sitting on a couch by themself."

Pro. "There's a real philosophical difference in terms of how we're approaching this." "There's a real philosophical difference in terms of how we're approaching this." "Our vision for the metaverse and presence is fundamentally social," Zuckerberg said, according to a transcript of remarks posted by tech news website The Verge. "By contrast, every demo that (Apple) showed was a person

Erdogan appoints Erkan as Turkey's central bank governor

ISTANBUL (Agencies): President Recep Tavvip Erdogan today named Hafize Gaye Erkan, a finance executive in the US, to head Turkey's central bank as it prepares to reverse course and tighten policy after years of rate cuts and a simmering cost-of-living crisis. Erkan, former co-CEO at First Republic Bank and managing director at Goldman Sachs, takes the reins after Erdogan's re-election on May 28 and



signalled a pivot away from unorthodoxy with a new cabinet. The fifth central bank chief in four years, she replaces Sahap Kavcioglu, who spearheaded just under a week after the president Erdogan's rate-cutting drive that set off

a historic currency crash in 2021 and sent inflation to a 24-year peak above 85% last year. The announcement of Erkan's appointment in the Official Gazette was accompanied by a decision to appoint Kavcioglu as head of the country's BDDK banking watchdog. The policy rate was slashed to 8.5% from 19% in 2021, leaving real rates deeply negative and the lira largely managed by dozens of regulations covering credit and foreign exchange.

GM joins Ford in embracing Tesla's EV charging system

DETROIT(Agencies): General Motors will join Ford in adopting Tesla's North American charging plug standard and give GM electric-vehicle buvers access to the Tesla Supercharger network under an agreement announced on Thursday. GM's move, which follows a similar decision by Ford to embrace Tesla's charging plug standard, means three of the top EV sellers in the



North American market have now agreed on a standard for charging hardware. The agreement was announced by GM CEO Mary Barra

and Tesla chief Elon Musk in a Twitter Spaces event. Investors applauded the deal, and the prospect of one charging hardware standard for the North American market, GM shares rose more than 4% after the bell and Tesla shares rose 4%. The alliance among the three leading rival US EV manufacturers has significant commercial and public policy implications

New World Bank chief to kick off global tour

WASHINGTON (Agencies): The day. Banga, a former Mastercard ties between the institution and the World Bank Group's new president, Ajay Banga, will visit Peru and Jamaica next week, kicking off a months-long global tour aimed at accelerating the global lender's evolution to tackle the climate crisis and reinvigorate its development mission, the World Bank said on Thurs-

CEO who took over his new job on Friday, will visit countries in every region where the World Bank operates through December of 2023, the bank said in a statement. He will work to identify barriers for private-sector investment, find opportunities to maximize the bank's impact and deepen

countries it serves, it added. Banga also will work to "reimagine strategic partnerships" with other multilateral lenders and development organisations and will be joined on the Peru and Jamaica leg by Inter-American Development Bank president Ilan Golfajn.

UK to waive oil, gas windfall tax if prices plunge

LONDON (Agencies): Britain's windfall tax on oil and gas producers will not be applied if prices drop below certain levels for six months in a row, the finance ministry said on Friday, in a move the government hopes will boost energy security. The energy profit levy (EPL) was introduced in May last year after a jump in energy prices resulting from Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but the industry has warned that the high tax level could lead to reduced output in the long term. The EPL was raised from its initial 25% rate to 35% in November, bringing the overall tax burden to 75%. It has raised £2.8 billion



(US\$3.51 billion) so far, the finance ministry said. With Friday's changes the windfall tax would fall away, reducing the tax burden to 40%, if average oil and gas prices fall to or below US\$71.40 a barrel for oil and £0.54 per therm for gas for two consecutive quarters.

China begins 6-month push to revive auto sales

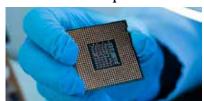
(Agencies): China launched a six-month campaign to boost car purchases and drive electric vehicle adoption in rural areas as sales growth of EVs slows in the world's biggest autos market. The push, coordinated by the ministry of commerce, starts this month and will encourage financial institutions to provide credit support for car purchases and local governments and automakers to offer subsidies and discounts, especially on EVs, according to a government statement late Thursday. One key priority is to promote EV adoption in the more than 11,000 counties and villages



around China, with Beijing pledging to improve charging infrastructure in rural areas and nudge local authorities to launch support measures such as consumer subsidies, the statement said. Top officials in China have repeatedly said they see EV adoption and spurring sales of cars more generally as very important this year.

EU greenlights €8bil in state aid for chip research

BRUSSELS (Agencies): Semiconductor research projects with €8 billion (US\$8.6 billion) in public funds were approved by the European Union's executive arm as part of a push to increase the bloc's domestic chip-supply chain. The projects are backed by a total €13.7 billion in private funding, amounting to about €22 billion, the European Commission announced Thursday. It said a total of 68 Important Projects of Common European Interest — or IPCEI — have been given the go-ahead from 56 companies in 19 countries, including Norway. "Europe is taking its destiny into its own hands," Internal Market Commissioner Thierry Breton wrote in a blog post.



"By mastering the most advanced semiconductors, EU will become an industrial powerhouse in markets of the future." The commission proposed the EU's Chips Act in early 2022, setting an ambitious goal to produce 20% of the world's semiconductors by 2030. These IPCEI projects form one component of that plan, which also opened the door for governments to provide funds for production facilities.

Swiss parliament to probe Credit Suisse takeover

ZURICH (Agencies): Switzerland's parliament will probe the government-orchestrated takeover of the stricken Credit Suisse bank by larger rival UBS, in an extremely rare move, following a vote today. A parliamentary commission of inquiry will be established to shed light on how the Swiss authorities rapidly stitched together the merger of the wealthy Alpine country's two biggest banks over a weekend in March. After the lower house of parliament voted unanimously yesterday in favour of creating the rare commission of inquiry, the upper chamber, or council of states, voted 37-5 for it today. The commission will examine "the legality, opportunity and effectiveness of



the activities" of the Swiss authorities in the takeover. It will report on "gaps observed at the institutional level". Like UBS, Credit Suisse was among 30 international banks deemed too big to fail due to their importance in the global banking architecture. But the collapse of three US regional lenders in March left Credit Suisse looking like the weakest link in the chain and its share price plunged more than 30% on March 15.

Emissions challenge looms despite EV growth

LONDON (Agencies): Electric vehicle sales are poised to more than double by 2026 but eliminating emissions from road transportation by the middle of this century will require even greater efforts, according to BloombergNEF. The research firm sees shipments of plug-in passenger vehicles surging to around 27 million from 10.5 million last year as sales jump in China and the US. That's offsetting slower growth in Europe, where tight supply chains and a cost-of-living crisis are weighing on demand. While shipments of combustion-engine passenger cars peaked six years ago, it'll take time to replace the roughly 1.3 billion roaming roads today. Some 30% of the global fleet



will still burn gasoline and diesel by 2050. Heavier commercial vehicles are expected to be trailing cars with just 32% of the fleet decarbonising on that timeline. Investments in zero-emission trucks "should be a priority focus for policymakers," BNEF analysts led by Colin McKerracher wrote in the researcher's annual Electric Vehicle Outlook released Thursday. "Eliminating emissions from road transport will require all hands on deck."

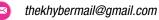
Sanctions sped up Russia's pivot to Asia – deputy PM

Russia's energy exports to the Asia against Russia) surged 76% year-Pacific region surged last year as Moscow was forced to shift its trade away from 'unfriendly' Western countries, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Aleksandr Novak stated, in an article he wrote for Energy Policy magazine published on Thursday. According to the senior official, oil supplies from Russia to Asian countries for the first time exceeded the volumes sent to Europe in May 2022. By the end of last year, oil exports to friendly countries (those that did not support sanctions

on-year, oil-product exports by 20%, pipeline gas and liquefied natural gas (LNG) supplies by 8%. In total, almost 40 million tons of oil and oil products were redirected from Western to Eastern markets last year, Novak noted. He said the surge in Asia-bound exports was the product of Western sanctions Russia faced following the start of its military operation in Ukraine. Restrictions have targeted many sectors of the Russian economy, including its energy exports.

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Karim Benzema receives ecstatic welcome from Al-Ittihad fans

JEDDAH (Agencies): Over 50,000 Al-Ittihad fans turned out to catch their first glimpse of Karim Benzema wearing his new black and vellow, number nine jersey, at King Abdullah Sports City Stadium on Thursday, as part of the Saudi League champions' official team presentation. The former Real Madrid forward and Ballon d'Or holder signed for three seasons to play for Al-Ittihad, in a contract worth an estimated \$215 million a year. The 35-year-old striker was introduced amid enthusiastic chants from Al-Ittihad supporters. With



fireworks exploding around him, Benzema emerged on the pitch to present fans with the moment they had been waiting for since the announcement

was made on Tuesday. The Frenchman lapped up the adulation from his new home crowd - juggling a ball, waving, blowing kisses and tossing balls into the crowd. Expectations are high that, with the addition of Benzema, Al-Ittihad will have a shot at competing for both the Saudi Pro League and the Asian Champions League. The player, who attended a press conference with Abdul Wahab Abid, the CEO of Al-Ittihad, said he was excited at the prospect of playing for the club and winning ti-

Seismic changes in Saudi football will be felt across Asian game

RIADH (Agencies): Asian football has never seen anything like this. Over the past decade or two, we have seen a number of the world's best players make the move to Asia: Rivaldo signed for Bunyodkor in Uzbekistan, Alessandro del Piero for Sydney FC, Xavi for Al Sadd and Andres Iniesta for Vissel Kobe, to name just a few. There was also the explosion in China in the midto-late 2010s that saw the likes of Oscar, Hulk and Carlos Tevez make the move east. But the scale of what we are witnessing in Saudi Arabia is unlike anything we have seen before. Quite as N'Golo Kante and Sergio Busquets the country's Vision 2030 agenda.



aside from the impact within Saudi Arabia, the landmark signing of Karim Benzema along with other names such

— and let's not forget a certain Cristiano Ronaldo in all of this - has the potential to completely reshape the face of Asian football. There are significant differences between what happened in the Chinese Super League and what is taking place in Saudi Pro League now. While the project in China had state backing, it was largely financed by private real estate developers and fell apart as soon as the ruling Chinese Communist Party party tried to cool the spending largesse. The project in Saudi Arabia, however, is directly linked to

Belmont cancels racing, Nationals postpone game due to poor air quality from wildfires in Canada

NEW YORK (Agencies): Racing at Belmont Park was canceled and the Washington Nationals' home game against the Arizona Diamondbacks was postponed Thursday due to poor air quality from wildfires in Canada. It's the second straight day the continuing fires north of the border have impacted sports in the Northeastern United States. Several Major League Baseball games were called off Wednesday. A National Women's day amid hazy conditions that have Soccer League game in New Jersey raised alarms from health authorities. Belmont Stakes.



and an indoor WNBA game set for Brooklyn were also called off Wednes-

With weather systems expected to barely budge, the smoky blanket billowing from wildfires in Quebec and Nova Scotia and sending plumes of fine particulate matter as far away as North Carolina and northern Europe could persist throughout Thursday and possibly the weekend. The New York Racing Association canceled live racing at Belmont Park two days before the facility is scheduled to host the final leg of the Triple Crown with the

Aaron-Wooi Yik storm into last 4 in Singapore

LUMPUR (Agencies): KUALA Reigning men's doubles world champions Aaron Chia and Soh Wooi Yik are one step away from reaching their second final of the year after cruising into the semifinals of the Singapore Open today. They overcame Leo Rolly Carnando and Daniel Marthin 18-21, 21-16, 22-20 in the quarterfinal at the Singamonth's defeat in the Malaysia Mas-



pore Indoor Stadium to avenge last

ters to the Indonesians. Aaron-Wooi Yik will take on seventh seeds Liang Wei Keng and Wang Chang of China tomorrow. The Chinese pair had earlier overcome unseeded English duo Ben Lane and Sean Vendy 21-11, 21-11. World No 4 Aaron-Wooi Yik stormed into the India Open final before losing to Wei Keng-Chang in January.

Austrian Laimer becomes Bayern's first summer signing

BERLIN (Agencies): Austria international Konrad Laimer has joined Bayern Munich on a free transfer from RB Leipzig, the Bavarian club announced today. The midfielder's deal at the German champions will run until 2027. Laimer's deal with the German Cup holders expired in the summer and the midfielder had been allowed to negotiate with other clubs since Jan 1. Known for his relentless pressing, Laimer played 190 games Cup in 2022 and 2023 with Leipzig. Dortmund on the final matchday.



for Leipzig, scoring 15 goals and assisting 19 more. He won the German

The Austrian had been linked with a move to Bayern for several months and was a favourite of former Bayern manager Julian Nagelsmann, who coached him at Leipzig. Laimer is Bayern's first summer signing and the first major arrival since the departure of sporting director Hasan Salihamidzic, who was sacked by the club in late May. Bayern won the league title on goal difference from Borussia

Heat running out of time to find answer to Jokic

DENVER (Agencies): The dominance of Denver centre Nikola Jokic through the first three games of the NBA Finals has dampened Miami's title hopes and the Heat must find a way to nullify the towering Serb if they are to avoid falling behind 3-1 in the championship series. Jokic had 32 points, 21 rebounds, and 10 assists in the Nuggets' 109-94 victory on Wednesday that put them 2-1 up in the best-of-seven series. That ef-



fort saw him become the first player to log at least 30 points, 20 rebounds,

and 10 assists in a Finals game. Denver bullied Miami on their home floor, out-rebounding the Heat 58-33 and outscoring them 60-34 in the paint. Miami centre Bam Adebayo has been given the unenviable task of matching up against two-time league MVP Jokic and said trying to predict what play the dynamic 28-year-old will go to next is the key to stopping him. "Biggest thing is just read and react," Adebayo told reporters on Thursday.

first prize fighter." Ali, who is widely

Don King says Broner's resilience reminds him of Ali

LOS ANGELES (Agencies): Legendary boxing promoter Don King said former four-division champion Adrien Broner's desire to return to the pinnacle of the sport reminds him of the fire that burned inside all-time great Muhammad Ali. Broner, 33, has vowed to win a title again, and to do so, he will first need a convincing victory over Bill Hutchinson when they square off in a 10-round welterweight fight in Miami today that will be streamed on Fite. The American (34-4-1, 24 KOs) last held a title in 2016 and has only fought sporadically since, but his comeback attempt managed to draw the 91-year-old King back to the sport. "He reminds me of a guy named Muhammad Ali, who believed in himself even when he me about boxing, and he was my



lost," King, who promoted Ali's epic "Rumble in the Jungle" and "Thrilla in Manila" fights in the mid-1970s, told Reuters. "There's no such thing as failure, it's just a setback. There's no drowning in your own tears, as Ray Charles would say. You've got to go back out there and win, you've got to kick ass! That's what Ali taught

considered the greatest heavyweight champion of all time, died in 2016 at the age of 74. Nicknamed "The Problem," Broner has not fought since his victory in February 2021 over Omar Figueroa and missed one fight due to mental health issues and another when a series of opponents dropped out. None of that troubles the passionate King, who has been involved in countless controversies in his decades of being one of boxing's most recognisable figures. "They call him 'The Problem' and many people advised me not to touch him because all he is is trouble, not realising that they are talking to trouble," King said. "Everything I ever did is trouble! My middle name is trouble. Therefore it fits."

Ticket sales top 1 million for Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand

SYDNEY (Agencies): More than 1 million tickets have been sold for the Women's World Cup kicking off in Australia and New Zealand next month, with soccer's international governing body saying the tournament is on track to be the most attended standalone women's sporting event in history. FIFA President Gianni Infantino issued a statement saying 1,032,884 tickets had been sold up to Friday morning local time in Sydney, surpassing the pre-tournament sales for the 2019 edition in France. Co-hosted by Australia and New Zealand, the 2023 edition features an expanded field of 32 teams, up from 24 in France. There are 64 total matches during the tournament. "Delighted to



share with the world that FIFA has passed one million tickets sold," Infantino said. "This means that with over one month to go before kick-off . 2023 is on track to become the most attended FIFA Women's World Cup in history. The future is women — and thanks to the fans for supporting what will be the greatest FIFA Women's World Cup ever!"

Home hope Corey Conners shares lead at Canadian Open



TORONTO (Agencies): Corey Conners shot a bogey-free 5-under 67 on Thursday to share the first-round lead at the RBC Canadian Open, the first PGA Tour event since its announcement of a merger with Saudi-backed LIV Golf. onners is seeking to become the tournament's first Canadian winner in 69 years. Also at 67 were Aaron Rai, Justin Lower and Chesson Hadley. Two-time defending champion

Rory McIlroy opened with a 71 at Oakdale. Matt Fitzpatrick, who will seek to defend his US Open title next week at Los Angeles Country Club, was one of nine players at 68. At No. 29 in the world, Conners is the highest-ranked of 21 Canadians in the field. The last homegrown winner of the event was Pat Fitzgerald in 1954 at Point Grey in Vancouver Conners did not speak to reporters after his morning round because he was dealing with an urgent personal matter. His two PGA Tour victories both came at the Valero Texas Open, including this year. "Really disciplined off the tee, we didn't try to do too much," said Danny Sahl, Conners' caddie. "But he had tons of fairways, missed maybe a couple in the first cut.

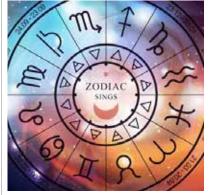
Unseeded Karolina Muchova to face No. 1 Iga Swiatek in French Open women's final

PARIS (Agencies): As it is, Karolina Muchova was the unseeded, unexpected participant in the French Open semifinals. And then, dealing with cramping legs nearly three hours into the match, she was just one point from losing to No. 2 Aryna Sabalenka, who entered Thursday with a 12-0 Grand Slam record in 2023, including an Australian Open title. Muchova somehow worked her way out of that difficult situation, grabbing the last five games against an error-prone Sabalenka for a 7-6 (5), 6-7 (5), 7-5 victory at Roland Garros to reach her first major final at the last place she expected. "A roller coaster," Muchova said. In Saturday's title match, she will meet No. 1 Iga Swiatek, the defending champion, who got past No. 14 Beatriz Haddad Maia 6-2, 7-6 (7) lost — or the way she lost.



on Thursday night. Swiatek is seeking a third title in Paris and fourth major championship in all and her win in the semifinals assured the 22-year-old from Poland of remaining atop the WTA rankings. At No. 43, Muchova is the fourth-lowest-ranked women's finalist in French Open history. On the other hand, she is now 5-0 for her career against players ranked in the Top 3. It was tough to decide which was more stunning: that Sabalenka

DAILY HOROSCOPE: JUNE 10, 2023



- It's a general reading which may differ from person to person because of time date and year.
- ARIES: Something small comes back in a big way. It might be a good deed you did a while back, or it could be something less positive. Most likely it's something worth looking into more
- TAURUS: You're on the same page as your closest friends today, no matter what things have been like between you lately. It's a great day to work on hobbies or projects that you all share an interest in.
- GEMINI: Your creative energy is powerful right now, and you ought to focus on generating new ideas and trying new ways of working rather than rehashing the same stuff. You'll be amazed by the results!
- CANCER: Your social energy is strong now, and while that might not make you seek new friends, it should bring you closer to those you already have. You may learn something new about one in particular.
- LEO: Someone dear to you flies off the handle over a perceived slight that them.

- seems like nothing to you, but don't tell them that! Be as supportive as you can, but bring them back down to earth gently.
- VIRGO: You need to let the details go today, which is hardly a comfortable thing for you to do. For now, though, they are just causing confusion. If you look at the big picture, you'll feel a lot better.
- LIBRA: You're living life on a smaller scale today and enjoying every moment as a result. If there are any big, pressing issues, you should do what you can to put them off for another day.
- SCORPIO: You're in a playful mood and should be able to influence those around you to lighten up a little and enjoy the time you've all got together. It's a good time to suggest a new activity.
- SAGITTARIUS: You're more of an observer than a participant today, which suits you just fine. Try to get people to talk about the old times. There's still a lot you don't know about what came before you.
- -CAPRICORN: You may not have much to do at first, but as the day progresses you find yourself helping out wherever you go. It's a good day to keep saying yes even if you're afraid of becoming over-
- ACQUARIUS: Today, you might get in a tussle with someone over a big decision you're facing together. It's important that you each have your say and find a way to respect each other's opinion.
- PISCES: You are relating better than ever with folks you don't see very often, though now you might want to see them more regularly. Use your good energy to forge new, stronger bonds with

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US preparing another \$2 billion in arms for Ukraine – Bloomberg

WASHINGTON (Agencies): The Pentagon is set to unveil another \$2 billion in military aid for Ukraine, hoping to bolster the country's air defenses as Kiev launches its much-touted counteroffensive against Russian forces, Bloomberg News has reported. The announcement is likely to come later this week, the outlet said on Thursday, citing unnamed US officials. The arms will be provided under the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative (USAI), which has furnished billions of dollars in American weapons to Kiev since fighting erupted with Moscow

Iran unveils energy hub ambitions



TEHRAN (Agencies): Iran is seeking to create a gas hub in cooperation with the country's Eurasian trade partners. Oil Minister Javad Owji announced on Wednesday. The move is part of Tehran's efforts to strengthen regional cooperation and enhance its position on the global energy market. Iran is one of the largest oil and gas producers in the world, selling most of its energy to Asian markets despite the threat of US secondary sanctions. The new project is planned for the Asaluyeh region of the southern Bushehr province. "Having 33 trillion cubic meters of gas reserves and thanks to the cooperation of Turkmenistan, Russia and Qatar, we are trying to become a gas hub," the minister told reporters, insisting that the conditions were in place to achieve that goal. The statement comes as Tehran has stepped up energy purchases from neighboring Turkmenistan, with the capacity to import between 40 and 50 million cubic meters of gas daily. Iran's major gas fields ar concentrated in the south, necessitating imports from its norther neighbor, particularly in the winter.

Tesla drivers praise bioweapon defense mode'



NEW YORK (Agencies): Many Tesla drivers responded to the air quality 'red alerts' flashing up and down the eastern US on Wednesday by switching on their vehicles' 'Bioweapon Defense Mode' feature - and singing its praises on Tesla CEO Elon Musk's social network. The apocalyptic-sounding 'Bioweapon Defense' option cranks up the vehicle's HEPA filtration system, allowing the driver inside the Tesla to breathe clean air without having to endlessly recycle what's inside the car or risk inhaling the wildfire smoke that has poured south from Nova Scotia, Ouebec and Ontario for nearly a week. The worst wildfire season Canada has seen in over a decade has suffocated dozens of major US cities, creating brownish orange skies with a red sun that wouldn't look out of place on Musk's hypothetical Mars colony.

Russia citizen killed in shark attack in Egypt -Russia Consulate



CAIRO (Agencies): A Russian citizen was killed in a shark attack near a beach at the Egyptian Red Sea resort of Hurghada, Russia's Consulate-General in the city said in a statement on Thursday, Reuters reports. In a statement posted on its official channel on the Telegram messaging application, the Consulate urged Russian tourists to be vigilant when in the water and to strictly adhere to any swimming bans imposed by the local authorities. Russia's TASS news agency said the person killed in the attack was a Russian man born in 1999, who lived in Egypt full-time and was not a tourist.



last year. The new aid package will include two types of Patriot missiles: the Patriot Advanced Capability Missile-3 (PAC-3) and the Guidance Enhanced Missile. Produced by Raytheon, the latter munitions are said to provide "improved ability to defeat tactical

ballistic missiles, cruise missiles or enemy aircraft in complement to the PAC-3 missile," according to the US weapons-maker. Washington will also reportedly send MIM-23 Hawk surface-to-air missile launchers, an aging system whose first variant entered service in 1960. Officials initially said the platform would be provided last November, but noted they would require refurbishing and repairs using funds from the USAI project. The latest military assistance comes as Kiev staged several major attacks against Russian forces over the past few days.

Israel fully re-occupying West Bank: Palestine

OCCUPIED WEST BANK (Agencies): Palestinian Prime Minister, Mohammad Shtayyeh, on Thursday accused Israel of seeking to fully re-occupy the West Bank, Anadolu Agency reports. What's happening is a full re-occupation of the West Bank, whether Area A, or B or C," Shtayyeh said in a statement. Earlier, Thursday, Israeli forces destroyed the house of a Palestinian detainee in the West Bank. The house is owned by Islam Froukh, who is accused by Israel of carrying out a bomb attack in a bus station in Jerusalem last year, in which two Israelis were killed. The home demolition has displaced the detainee's parents and four sisters. Shtayyeh termed the home demolition by Israel as a "heinous crime", which left his entire family homeless. "This collective punishment, which has never happened in history, is an attempt



by the [Israeli] occupation to lower the morale of our people," the Premier said. Under the 1995 Oslo Accords between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, was divided into three portions - Area A. B. and C. The Israeli army frequently demolishes homes of Palestinians accused of carrying out attacks against Israelis, a policy that triggered widespread condemnations from rights groups as a form of collective punishment.

Sudan declares UN envoy Volker Perthes ʻpersona non grata'



KHARTOUM: The Sudanese government has declared United Nations envoy Volker Perthes "persona non grata," the Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced. "The Government of the Republic of Sudan has notified the Secretary-General of the United Nations that it has declared Mr. Volker Perthes ... persona non grata as of today," the ministry said in a statement on Thursday, just weeks after army chief Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan accused Perthes of stoking the country's conflict and requested his

removal. Perthes was in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on Thursday for a series of diplomatic talks, according to the UN mission's Twitter feed. Since late last year, Perthes and the UN mission he heads in war-torn Sudan have been targeted by military and Islamist-backed protests denouncing perceived foreign interference. In a letter to the UN last month, Sudan's de facto leader Burhan blamed the envoy for exacerbating fighting between the army and the paramilitaries, accused him of not respecting "national sovereignty" and demanded he be replaced. UN chief Antonio Guterres and members of the UN Security Council have stood by Perthes. But last week, the Security Council voted to extend the UN Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS)'s mandate for just six months.

First Arab Hajj pilgrims arrive in Makkah

JEDDAH (Agencies): The first two groups of Arab Hajj pilgrims arrived in Makkah on Tuesday. The Motawifs of Arab Hajj Company received 192 pilgrims from Iraq and 294 from Algeria. Chairman Mohammed Maaiini said the company will provide the utmost levels of comfort to pilgrims to allow them to perform their rituals in an atmosphere of faith. Pilgrims from both countries have expressed their happiness with efforts made by the Saudi government to provide the best services and thanked the Kingdom for its hospitality. Meanwhile, the Saudi General Authority for Roads said all important routes to Makkah and streets in the holy city were prepared for the arrival of pilgrims and aid their travels. The authority had



focused on Riyadh, Taif, and Makkah Roads, which are a combined length of 820 km, the 70 km Makkah Jeddah Road and the 420 km-long Makkah Madinah Road. It has also prepared the 70 km Al-Sail Al-Kabeer Road and the 60 km Al-Hada Road. Transport and logistics bodies have surveyed all routes from the border crossings to the holy sites, and have carried out maintenance and safety works on 7,400 km of road.

China slams US over reported 'spy base' in Cuba



BEIJING (Agencies): China warned the United States Friday against "interfering in Cuba's internal affairs," in response to reports that Beijing was planning to set up a spy base on the island just off American shores. The media reports, based on comments by anonymous US officials to The Wall Street Journal and CNN, were dismissed by Cuba's deputy foreign minister as "mendacious and unfounded," while the White House called them inaccurate. When asked about the alleged spying base at a regular press briefing, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said he was "unaware of the situation" before criticizing US policy on Cuba. "As we all know, spreading rumors and slander is a common tactic of the United States, and wantonly interfering in the internal affairs of other countries is its patent," said Wang. "The United States should reflect on itself and stop interfering in Cuba's internal affairs under the banner of freedom and democracy, and immediately cancel the economic, commercial and financial embargo against Cuba." The reports suggested that the Chinese spying base would be capable of eavesdropping on communications across broad swathes of the southeastern United States. The developments come as Chinese leader Xi Jinping has pushed a rapid expansion of the country's security presence around the world. A base in Cuba, which lies 150 kilometers off Florida's southern tip, would present the most direct challenge yet to the continental United States. The Soviet Union had electronic spying facilities in communist Cuba to monitor the United States.

Saudi Crown Prince threatened to damage US economy – media

RIYADH (Agencies): Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman privately threatened to harm the American economy after President Joe Biden warned Saudi Arabia of "consequences" for agreeing an oil production cut with Russia, the Washington Post reported, citing leaked material. The Biden administration had said it would re-evaluate relations with the kingdom following a decision by Riyadh to slash crude production against the wishes of the US. The Crown Prince, who is widely referred to as MBS, warned that he would not deal with the US administration anymore if Biden penalized Saudi Arabia. He also promised "major economic consequences for Washington," the Post reported on Thursday. The threat was contained in a classified document that was leaked on a Discord server, but it was not clear whether the remark was part of inter-



cepted communications or a message sent privately to the US. Biden made his dissatisfaction with Riyadh clear last October after the OPEC+ group of major oil producers including Russia agreed to cut production by two million barrels a day. Washington was working to punish Moscow with sanctions on its oil trade over the conflict in Ukraine. "There's going to be some consequences for what they've done with Russia," the US president said in an interview with CNN at the time, without specifying any possible measures.

China's Huawei faces EU restrictions – FT



NEW YORK (Agencies): The EU is considering a mandatory ban on member states using Chinese telecoms group Huawei's equipment in their 5G networks, the Financial Times reported on Wednesday, citing officials with knowledge of the discussions There are growing high-level concerns in Brussels that some EU nations are not taking enough action on the issue, deemed to present a security risk, the officials told the outlet. The report cited EU internal market commissioner Thierry Breton as telling the bloc's telecoms ministers last week that only a third of the EU's member states had banned Huawei from critical parts of the bloc's 5G communications. "This is too few. And it exposes the union's collective security," Breton reportedly said. In 2020, EU members agreed certain recommendations to exclude high-risk vendors from technology investments ranging from certification requirements to diversification of suppliers.

Lebanon recalls France envoy amid rape investigation



BERIUT (Agencies): Lebanon has recalled its ambassador to France, Rami Adwan, after an investigation into rape and intentional violence allegations was opened by French authorities, the Lebanese Foreign Ministry announced yesterday. "Following the circumstances surrounding the case of the Lebanese ambassador to France... it has been decided to recall ambassador Rami Adwan," the Foreign Ministry said in a statement. Counsellor Ziad Taan will head the Lebanese mission as chargé d'affaires, it added. On Monday, a French diplomatic source told AFP that French authorities would ask Lebanon to lift the ambassador's immunity. Later on Tuesday, Lebanon sent a delegation from the Foreign Ministry to Paris to investigate the allegations against Adwan.

Saudi Arabia launches 'visiting investor' e-visa to boost business opportunities



Dubai (Agencies): Saudi Arabia has unveiled a 'visiting investor' e-visa aimed at simplifying the entry process for investors seeking to explore business opportunities in the kingdom, according to a tweet by the Ministry of Investment. The initiative has been launched by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in collaboration with the Ministry of Investment.

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