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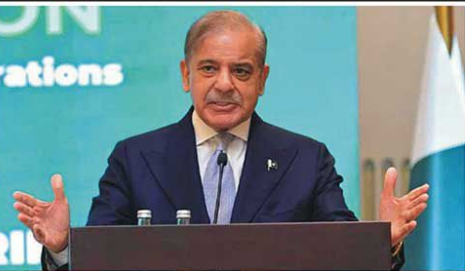
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PM Shehbaz in UAE: Pakistan seeks investment, not loans

The premier praised the economic innovations introduced by Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed.



Soon Times Correspondent ABU DHABI
Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif says Pakistan has moved beyond seeking loans from the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and is now focused on joint investment. Addressing a round-table session "Innovate Together: UAE-Pakistan Tech Collaborations," in Abu Dhabi on Thursday, PM Shehbaz expressed his pleasure at witnessing the talent of UAE's IT professionals. He noted their significant role in the digitalisation of various sectors of the economy. The PM highlighted that over 60 percent of Pakistan's population is youth, and he dedicated considerable time in the past

two and a half months to promote IT. The premier praised the economic innovations introduced by Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed. He acknowledged the UAE president as a great friend of Pakistan. He reiterated Pakistan's desire to stabilise its economy through collaboration with the UAE, highlighting the continuous support of Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed like his father. Shehbaz Sharif said the UAE was a leader in the IT sector and Pakistan sought joint investments rather than aid. The prime minister also acknowledged the contributions of Pakistanis working in the UAE, describing them as an invaluable asset.

BHC disposes of high treason petition against Imran Khan



Soon Times Correspondent QUETTA
The Balochistan High Court (BHC) on Thursday disposed of a petition seeking high treason proceedings against PTI founder Imran Khan. BHC's two-member bench comprising Chief Justice Hashim Khan Bazar and Justice Shaikat Rakhshani announced the ruling on the petition filed by Advocate Anamullah, alleging the former prime minister of dissolving the National Assembly unconstitutionally.

CM Maryam wants air ambulance service functional in June



Soon Times Correspondent LAHORE
Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz on Thursday directed the officials to start the air ambulance project by next month. The chief minister chaired a meeting to review the progress made on the air ambulance and emergency services in Punjab. Secretary of emergency services Dr Rizwan Naseer gave briefing on the air ambulance and training of CPR in this regard. "The air ambulance will be

Naqvi directs Nadra to make national registration policy

Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD
Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi while presiding over a review meeting regarding National Database Registration Authority (NADRA) on Thursday directed to make National Registration Policy. The minister in a meeting said that authenticity of identity card and citizenship is of utmost importance, therefore, a comprehensive policy should be evolved in this regard. He also directed to develop consensus of all provinces on this policy because union council has the status of foundation and access of NADRA to Union Councils is necessary in this connection. He said that the policy will make citizen's registration transparent and foolproof. The new policy will also prevent illegal registration of citizenship, due to which the issue of releasing identity cards and passports to foreigners came to light, the minister said. The plan to increase NADRA centers in six major cities was also reviewed in a meeting. Apart from Karachi, Lahore,



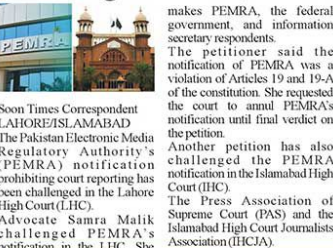
Peshawar, Quetta, Islamabad, and Rawalpindi, Multan had been decided to be included in this plan. The plan should be finalized and implemented in the next few days, so that people could avoid unnecessary rush and hassle, said the Interior Minister. NADRA counters should also be started in service centers for the convenience of the people, he directed. Home Minister's visits and subsequent measures have reduced the waiting time from 120 minutes to 75 minutes. Mohsin Naqvi was informed in a briefing. However, the minister directed measures to further reduce waiting time. At present NADRA registration is 85% of the total population, the minister was briefed. Secretary Interior Khurram Ali Agha, Chairman NADRA Lieutenant General Mohammad Munir Afzar and senior officers also participated in the meeting.

PDA to construct underpasses, flyovers on Ring Road, other busy roads



Soon Times Correspondent PESHAWAR
The Peshawar Development Authority (PDA) decided to construct underpasses and flyovers on Ring Road and other key roads to alleviate traffic congestion in Peshawar. The PDA meeting was held under the chairmanship of Chief Minister Khayr Pakhtunkhwa Ali Amin Gandapur. During the meeting, which took place after a year and a half, a 33-point agenda was discussed, and significant decisions were made. More to read: CM Gandapur gives Centre 15-day ultimatum to fix KP electricity issues. The meeting resolved to construct underpasses, flyovers, and improvements on the Ring Road at various busy locations. The establishment of a PDA sub-office in Regi Model Town was approved, along with an action plan for establishing an education complex in Regi Model Town.

PEMRA's notification of court reporting ban challenged in LHC, IHC



Soon Times Correspondent LAHORE/ISLAMABAD
The Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority's (PEMRA) notification prohibiting court reporting has been challenged in the Lahore High Court (LHC). Advocate Samra Malik challenged PEMRA's notification in the LHC. She makes PEMRA, the federal government, and information secretary respondents. The petitioner said the notification of PEMRA was a violation of Articles 19 and 19-A of the constitution. She requested the court to annul PEMRA's notification until final verdict on the petition. Another petition has also challenged the PEMRA notification in the Islamabad High Court (IHC). The Press Association of Supreme Court (PAS) and the Islamabad High Court Journalists Association (IHCA).

COAS Asim Munir meets civil, military leadership in Germany visit



Soon Times Correspondent RAWALPINDI:
Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Sved Asim Munir has held meetings with civil, military leadership while paying a visit to Germany, Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said Thursday. During the visit, he was received at the Federal Ministry of Defence by General Carsten Breuer, chief of defence, where he was presented with the guard of honour by the contingent of German Armed Forces. The army chief also met Chief of the German Army Lieutenant General Alfons Maas, and visited the Army Combat Training Centre, Gardelegen, along with his German counterpart. He was briefed on various facets of the centre and the training being imparted to the German Army and contingents of other armies. He also witnessed a demonstration of urban warfare and visited different training facilities.

COAS Munir also met German Chancellor's Foreign Policy and Security Adviser Jens Plofner, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Tobias Linder, and State Secretary at the Ministry of Defence Nils Hiltner. During the meetings with the civilian and military leadership, matters of mutual interest came under discussion. The German leadership acknowledged the Pakistan Army's role in the fight against terrorism and in maintaining peace and stability in the region.

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Pakistan to experience three episodes of heatwaves in May, June: minister

Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD
Special Assistant to Prime Minister for Climate Change Romina Khurshed Alam has warned about three episodes of heatwaves in May and June. During a press conference, Romina Alam alerted the public about the start of heatwave phases as Pakistan is grappling with climate change. She informed that nine districts of Punjab, 13 districts of Sindh and Balochistan's four districts were engulfed with heatwaves. She also highlighted the negative impacts of heatwave which include loss of crops and rapid glacier melting. She also stressed that people should avoid smoking near forests as heatwave increase the risk of fire. Romina Alam stated that the firefighters had extinguished the recent fire in the forests by taking immediate action. She stressed that precautionary measures were needed these days to avoid any such event.

Ji Emir Hafiz Naem urges govt to withdraw 'Punjab Defamation Bill 2024'

Soon Times Correspondent LAHORE
Jamaat-e-Islami Emir Hafiz Naemur Rehman has vehemently rejected "The Punjab Defamation Bill 2024" passed by the Punjab Assembly earlier this week. Speaking to media in Mansoorana on Thursday, the Ji Emir said the government wanted to forcibly control the people. Earlier, a delegation of Joint Action Committee (JAC) called on him to express the reservations of media fraternity over the defamation bill. The meeting was attended by CPNE President Irshad Atri, Lahore Press Club President Arshad Ansari, Dunya Media Group Managing Director Naveed Khashif, former CPNE president Kazim Khan, senior journalists Avaz Khan and others. Also Read: Media fraternity to move court against 'draconian' Punjab Defamation Bill. "You cannot control the people even in America. The government must take back the defamation bill and Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (Peca) should also be abolished," Naem said. The Ji Emir said it would be a huge blunder if the government did not take back the draconian law.

“India’s Maritime Buildup: Implications for the Indian Ocean”

The Arms Control and Disarmament Centre (ACDC) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) in collaboration with the Indian Ocean Study Centre (IOSC), National Institute of Maritime Affairs (NIMA), hosted a seminar on “India’s Maritime Buildup: Implications for the Indian Ocean,” to address crucial geopolitical and security dynamics of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). The speakers at the seminar included: Vice Admiral (R) Ahmed Saeed HI(M), President NIMA; Vice Admiral (R) Khan Hasham Bin Saddique, former Vice Chief of Naval Staff; Brigadier Zahir Kazmi, Director General, Arms Control and Disarmament Affairs (ACDA), SPD; Mr. Baber Bilal Haider, Vice President NIMA and Director IOSC, NIMA; and Rear Admiral (R) Syed Faisal Ali Shah, Honorary Research Fellow, NIMA. The seminar was moderated by Malik Qasim Mustafa, Director, ACDC-ISSI. Vice Admiral Ahmed Saeed, in his keynote address, highlighted that the Indian Ocean (IOR) was crucial for global

maritime trade, with around 80% of global oil trade passing through its chokepoints. Controlling these passages equates to significant geopolitical influence, underscoring the region’s role as a critical axis in global economic and security frameworks. The shift in the global world order post-Cold War, the strategic use of chokepoint diplomacy, and the potentially destabilizing effects of the AUKUS model in the IOR were discussed. The presence of major powers complicates the geopolitical landscape, making the IOR a focal point for economic advancement, strategic competition, and diplomatic engagements. He stressed that regional cooperation and dialogue are needed to mitigate tensions and promote stability. DG ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, in his welcome remarks, stated that the Indian Ocean plays a critical role as a vital maritime corridor, connecting nations across Africa, Asia, and Australia, and highlights its immense geopolitical significance on a global scale. He also elaborated on the

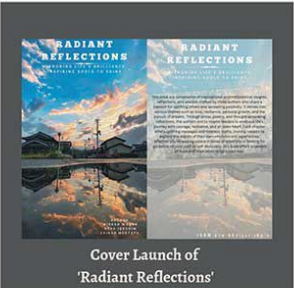
Indian Ocean’s role as a crucial arena for diplomatic engagement and regional collaboration. He further pointed out that controlling the Indian Ocean often equates with dominance over Asia, emphasizing its pivotal role in shaping regional dynamics. Ambassador Sohail Mahmood highlighted the active involvement of major powers such as the United States, UK and China and countries like Japan and India in the region, underscoring that the IOR is a focal point for economic advancement, geopolitical competition, and strategic maneuvering. He also dilated on India’s expanding naval capabilities, the role of Indian maritime buildup in IOR’s militarization, and the impact of these developments on Pakistan’s security and economic interests. Earlier, in his introductory remarks, Malik Qasim Mustafa pointed out that India wants to ensure dominance of the Indian Ocean with the help of extra-regional powers and strives to play the role of “Net Security Provider”. It militarised the Indian Ocean while rapidly modernizing

and building up its blue-water capabilities. It has nuclearized the Indian Ocean. This growing Indian naval presence is endangering the peace and stability of the region. It has heightened Pakistan’s threat perception and security concerns, and it could spark a conventional and nuclear arms race in the region. Vice Admiral (R) Khan Hasham Bin Saddique elaborated on the great power competition in the IOR. He discussed the strategic significance of the IOR, and the military dimensions shaping the region’s environment. He underscored the nontraditional challenges that accompany this competition, including piracy, terrorism, and human trafficking, which complicate the already tense maritime security landscape. His remarks provided a broad overview of geopolitical tensions and underscored the need for cooperative security frameworks to address these multifaceted challenges. Brigadier Zahir Kazmi shared his insights on the Indian sea-based nuclear capabilities.

About the book

Misbah Waqar
Neha Ibrahim
Zainab Mustafa

courage, resilience, and an open heart. Each chapter offers uplifting messages and timeless truths, inviting readers to explore the depths of their own emotions and experiences. Whether you’re seeking solace in times of adversity or looking for guidance on your path to self-



Cover Launch of 'Radiant Reflections'

discovery, this book offers a beacon of hope and inspiration to light your way.

This book is a compilation of inspirational and motivational insights, reflections, and wisdom crafted by three authors who share a passion for uplifting others and spreading positivity. It delves into various themes such as love, resilience, personal growth, and the pursuit of dreams. Through prose, poetry, and thought-provoking reflections, the authors aim to inspire readers to embrace life’s journey with

Demand to declare India a Terrorist Country



Abdul Basit Alvi

India has consistently engaged in espionage and terrorist activities in foreign territories, with a documented history of interference in the internal affairs of other nations, particularly its neighboring countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives. The imperative of respecting the sovereignty of other nations and refraining from involvement in their internal matters becomes paramount. International relations comprise a complex web of interactions shaped by distinct values, interests, and governing systems of each country. Within this intricate landscape, the principle of non-interference assumes a central role, necessitating abstention from meddling in the domestic affairs of other nations. India and RAW have been accused of supporting terrorist activities within Pakistan, with notable instances such as the case of Kulbhushan Yadav, a retired Indian Navy officer implicated in espionage and terrorism in Balochistan. Yadav was apprehended by Pakistani Security Forces in 2016 based on information provided by the ISI. RAW has allegedly operated from neighboring countries’ territories with the aim of destabilizing and weakening Pakistan. Pakistan has borne the brunt of India’s alleged efforts to foment division along ethnic lines, enduring prolonged unrest and conflict in regions such as Balochistan and KPK. The Indian media’s involvement in what can be labeled as “media terrorism” extends to spreading false propaganda and misinformation about Pakistan, orchestrated by India and its leadership. Attempts to mislead

the people of Pakistan and AJK are continuous. The populace of AJK dismisses statements from Indian politicians and media, especially those attempting to draw parallels between HIOK and AJK, as trivial. Recent protests in AJK, misinterpreted as hostility towards Pakistan and its army, have led Indian politicians and media to suggest AJK align with India, citing supposed discontent. Indian Home Minister Amit Shah claimed AJK residents are unhappy with Pakistan, while Indian intellectuals, anchors, and journalists have proposed AJK secede to India. However, AJK residents largely see these statements as jests. In reality, they express considerable satisfaction with Pakistan, appreciating its special autonomous status and close ties. Recent protests in AJK were focused on basic demands, not against Pakistan. AJK residents enjoy full rights within Pakistan, contrasting with India’s history of unrest, particularly in Indian-occupied Kashmir. Allegations of human rights abuses and political repression persist in regions like Indian-administered Kashmir, exacerbated since Article 370’s revocation. India should address grievances in Kashmir and other parts of the country instead of scapegoating Pakistan. It’s crucial for India to address dissent within its own territories, including Indian Punjab, Kashmir, and Ladakh. Recent statements from Indian politicians, intellectuals, anchors, and journalists are condemned by AJK people as unwarranted interference and a disregard for India’s internal unrest. Canada has also experienced the repercussions of Indian involvement in alleged terrorism. Recent disputes between Canada and India have drawn international attention, particularly following Canada’s announcement of credible allegations linking Indian government agents to the

murder of a Sikh separatist leader in British Columbia. According to reports from American media outlets, the killing of American citizen and Sikh activist Gurpurn Singh Pannu was allegedly sanctioned by the then-chief of RAW, Sumant Goyal. According to reports from American media outlets, American intelligence agencies claim that hired assassins were contacted by RAW officer Vikram Yadav. The directive for the assassination was allegedly issued by RAW while Narendra Modi was visiting the US on June 23. Sumant Goyal, according to American media reports, was reportedly under significant pressure to eliminate Sikh separatists operating outside India. US agencies assert that National Security Advisor Ajit Doval was aware of this plan. Moreover, there were reports from Australia stating that RAW agents were expelled from the country. Additionally, a few weeks ago, a court in Qatar sentenced eight former Indian navy personnel to death, accusing them of espionage on behalf of Israel. These former naval personnel were employed by Al Dahra Global Technologies and Consultancy Services, a private company owned by a former officer of the Oman Air Force. This company was tasked with providing training and various services to Qatar’s armed forces and security agencies. India’s trajectory seems to be leading towards increased international embarrassment and isolation. Under Prime Minister Modi’s leadership, India continues to undertake actions that further tarnish its global reputation, showcasing a growing sense of cynicism with each passing day. The world must examine India’s malicious role in promoting and supporting terrorism in other countries and consider declaring India a terrorist state. Teaching a lesson to an international terrorist state is essential for creating a peaceful world.

Confronting Terrorism: Strategies for Pakistan in 2024



highlighting how it stems from both internal and external factors, including political, ideological, and religious motivations. Dr Muhammad Feyyaz, an academic on counterterrorism, spoke about the need for countering terrorism through combative measures. He stated that terrorism is an enduring phenomenon, which requires a nuanced understanding through the identification of three interconnected factors: a rigid strategic mindset, a mismatch surrounding terrorism and counterterrorism, and a lack of adequate attention to social sciences in analysing political violence. Ambassador Syed Abrar Hussain, a former envoy to Afghanistan, underscored the need for bilateral and regional diplomatic engagement with neighbouring countries to mitigate terrorist threats. He proposed a three-pronged strategy: direct action against terrorists, addressing root causes, and diplomatic engagement. In his concluding

remarks, Air Marshal Asim Suleiman (Retd), President, CASS Lahore, stated that terrorism continues to impede Pakistan’s progress despite decades of efforts to counter it. He noted that the recent surge in terrorist attacks has affected both civilians and security personnel, besides fuelling sectarian strife. He said that external threats from hostile neighbouring states complicate the situation. The President stressed the need for a comprehensive strategy focused on national unity and proactive engagement with allies, alongside diplomatic efforts to prevent regional territories from becoming sanctuaries for terrorists. The seminar highlighted the need for national harmony, unwavering resolve and ironclad political will for the cross-the-board implementation of the rule of law to choke the terrorists financially and logistically. It was urged that flawless border management be ensured and informal monetary transactions be stopped.

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Soon Times Correspondent Lahore

The Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies (CASS), Lahore, hosted a seminar titled “Confronting Terrorism: Strategies for Pakistan in 2024” on Thursday, 23 May 2024. The event focused on examining the multifaceted challenges posed by terrorism to Pakistan’s national security and exploring effective strategies to combat this menace. In his introductory remarks Air Commodore Khalid Iqbal (Retd), Director at CASS Lahore, identified three streams of terrorism confronting Pakistan: anti-China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) disruptive assaults, sporadic activities of separatist terrorists, and ethno-sectarian clashes. The keynote speaker, Dr Syed Kaleem Imam, former Federal Secretary and former Inspector General of Police, spoke about mapping Pakistan’s terrorism landscape and its impact on national security and development. He examined the origin, motivation, and impact of terrorism in the country,

Economic scholar Ijaz Ahmad defends his thesis & completes PhD



Soon Times Correspondent
Islamabad:
 Renowned economic scholar Ijaz Ahmad Khattak has successfully defended his thesis and completed his PhD. He completed his research journey under the supervision of Kohat University of Science and Technology's Chairman, Department of Economics, Professor Dr. Dilwar Khan, Dean, Faculty of Management Sciences, Chairman, Department of Economics. He said, the only solution to get out of the problems the country is currently facing lies in adopting research and understanding economics. Dr. Ijaz Ahmad said that in order to put the country back on its feet at this time, it is necessary to go side by side with the world's economists and implement it by making use of research. All policies should be based on research.

Bill against dual citizenship of govt officials lands in National Assembly

Soon Times Correspondent
ISLAMABAD:
 A lawmaker has submitted a bill in the National Assembly (NA) against dual citizenship of government officers, claiming that they escape accountability after fleeing to foreign nations post-retirement. The amendment bill was submitted by Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam-Fazl (JU-F) lawmaker Noor Alam Khan to the NA Secretariat on Thursday. It stated that an individual holding dual nationality or foreign citizenship should not be given right to be appointed as a civil servant. A document obtained by Geo News showed that MNA Noor sought changes in the Civil Servants Act, 1973's Section 5, calling it "Civil Servants (Amendment) Bill, 2024". "Provided that a civil servant holding dual nationality or citizenship of any foreign country shall not be entitled for appointment," it read.



Elaborating on reasons behind seeking the modification, he stated: "Government servants must have their stakes in the country in which they hold positions of authority, privilege and trust." Bill against dual citizenship of govt officials lands in National Assembly He added that his proposed amendments would "ensure the loyalty of government servants in the light of Article 5 of the Constitution". The development comes after MNA Noor sought a constitutional amendment to impose a complete ban on the appointment of judges in the higher judiciary who are

dual nationals. On Tuesday, the lawmaker also submitted a Constitutional (Amendment) Bill, 2024, to the NA Secretariat which has sought modifications in the Constitution's Articles 177, 193, and 208, shutting all legal routes to the appointments of those judges, who have foreign nationalities. The draft bill clearly stated that a dual-national individual shall not be appointed as a Supreme Court (SC) or a High Court (HC) judge. It also sought to block the passage to the appointments of foreign nationals as judiciary officers and servants as well. It also read: "Those who hold dual nationality of foreign states, putting at stake the interest of the country of their origin". Urging the legislature to promulgate the proposed law, the JU-F lawmaker said there is a need to ensure the loyalty of the judges in the light of Article 5 of the Constitution, and his proposed amendments will achieve the objectives.



PM has taken practical steps to bring medical sector to international standards: Bharath

Soon Times Correspondent
Bhara:
 Prime Minister Muhammad Shabbaz Sharif has taken practical steps to provide better medical facilities to the people and to bring the medical sector to the level of international standards. These steps will have far-reaching consequences. This was said by Prime Minister's Coordinator for Health, Dr. Malik Mukhtar Ahmed Bharath, during a meeting with the delegation led by Atta-ul-Rehman Iqbal, General Secretary of Bhera Press Club, in his office. The delegation included Bhera Press Club Registrar's Vice President Khawaja Kamran Naseem and Finance Secretary Maher Muhammad Bilal Tahiri. Appreciating the positive journalism of the club members, he said that this is my and the provincial minister for law, communication and construction Malik Sohaib Ahmad Bharath's own institution, which we are

proud of. We will do our best for the betterment of this organization and to solve its problems. The delegation thanked him. Dr. Malik Mukhtar Ahmed Bharath said that Prime Minister Muhammad Shabbaz Sharif has formed a 25-member committee to solve the problems of medical education. Deputy Prime Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar has been nominated as the Chairman of Medical Education Committee while he is included as a member in this committee. Dr. Malik Mukhtar Ahmed Bharath told the delegation that the Medical Education Committee will evaluate the quality of public and private medical colleges and universities and prepare suggestions for dealing with the challenges faced by them. Also, the committee will prepare an action plan considering the lack of seats in public and private medical colleges and universities and the gap between demand and supply of medical education.

Iddat case: Verdict on Imran Khan, Bushra Bibi's pleas to be announced on May 29



Soon Times Correspondent
ISLAMABAD:
 A district and sessions court in Islamabad on Thursday reserved its verdict on the pleas filed by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi in the un-Islamic nikah case. Judge Shahrukh Arjumand, who heard the case, reserved the verdict before leaving the courtroom for his chamber. The judge will pronounce the court's decision on May 29.

The verdict was reserved after the court heard arguments of lawyers from both sides. Salman Akram Raja is Khan's lawyer in the case, while Bushra Bibi's counsel Usman Gul and prosecutor Adnan Ali were present in court when the verdict was reserved. The assistant counsel for the complainant said Rizwan Abbasi, the lawyer of Khawar Maneka — Bushra Bibi's former husband — has to give arguments, as the record is

not with him. Addressing Bushra Bibi's lawyer, the sessions judge told him to give the final arguments. The judge also asked for Abbasi to present his arguments in the court today via video link. Last month, a local court in Islamabad had rejected Maneka's no-confidence motion in the appeals against the conviction in the iddat case. As per the motion, Maneka expressed no confidence in the judge and requested that the case be transferred to another court. Judge Arjumand asked Maneka what led him to believe that he was sympathising with the other party. Responding to that Bushra's ex-husband said that his entire family said the judge will acquit the accused. To this, Khan's lawyer had said that seeking transfer of case from one court to another amounted to contempt of court and that Justice Babar Sattar had imposed fine on the no-confidence motion. Following the argument, both Maneka and Raja had a heated exchange with Judge Arjumand later rejecting Maneka's no-trust plea.

Govt to revamp passport policy for 'married women'

Soon Times Correspondent
ISLAMABAD
 Director General Immigration and Passports, Mustafa Jamal Kazi said on Thursday that a committee was formed to revamp passport policy, pertaining to the condition of a "married woman's" passport bearing the name of her husband instead of the father. The committee was tasked to address discrepancies between the policies of the National Database and Registration Authority (Nadra) and the passport issuing authority regarding married women, Kazi told a private news channel. He said according to current policy a married woman's passport bear her husband's name instead of her father's that raised concerns about contradictions between the policies of these two institutions and perceived discrimination against women. The DG Passport further explained that while Nadra's registration is local and used only within Pakistan, a passport is an international document and must comply with international agreements. "Women often face difficulties when their

passports use their father's name, especially when traveling with their children without the children's father. This can complicate establishing the biological relationship," said Kazi. He noted that the passport authority has faced litigation in recent years due to issues arising from undecorated divorces. According to the law, citizens must register and declare both marriage and divorce, but problems occur when these events are not officially documented and complicating custodianship matters, he added. "It is legal for a married woman to enter her husband's name along with her own in the passport," Kazi said, emphasizing the need for proper registration and documentation to avoid complications.



KP govt set to present Rs1,600bn surplus budget 2024-25

Soon Times Correspondent
PESHAWAR
 The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government is all set to present a surplus Rs1,600 billion budget 2024-25. Provincial Finance Minister Aftab Alam said the people would be given relief in electricity tariff while welfare cards

would also bring ease to the commoners' lives. He said new taxes would also be imposed due to the financial constraints. He said the province was enriched with the natural resources and the reservoirs would also be exploited. Meanwhile, a meeting of provincial cabinet has been called at 11am on May 24 for the

approval of the budget. The assembly meeting will also be held at 3pm tomorrow while KP governor has approved the summary. It should be noted that interim government had approved two budget for four month each Rs462 billion and Rs529 billion in its tenure.

Bailout deal to come after approval of IMF-dictated budget, Pakistan told

ISLAMABAD:
 The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has conveyed to the Pakistan authorities that the next bailout package under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) would only be considered after presenting an aligned upcoming budget and securing its approval from parliament. This arrangement could pave the way for kick-starting formal parleys and signing a staff-level agreement for clinching the fresh bailout package with the possibility to augment it through climate finance in the range of \$6 to \$8 billion. On account of timelines, it seems possible only in July 2024. "In the budget 2024-25, the government will have to demonstrate its ability to raise the Federal Bureau of Revenue (FBR) revenue, throw primary surplus through curtailing expenditures and undertaking structural reforms to restrict the losses of State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs). The government will have to hike electricity and gas tariffs in coming July and August 2024 to strike a deal with the IMF," top official sources confirmed to the publication on Wednesday.

The Ministry of Finance had arranged a dinner in the honour of visiting IMF team led by Nathan Porter Tuesday night in Islamabad where the ongoing talks were expected to be concluded. Now the upcoming budget for 2024-25 will become a test case for the incumbent regime to demonstrate its ability that they could deliver on the IMF's stringent conditions. The visiting IMF team had secured relevant data of all major economic fronts and informed the relevant authorities that kind of budget the Fund staff would like to see in 2024-25. The IMF's prescription is crystal clear that the government will have to devise a roadmap for increasing tax-to-GDP ratio which might further decline to 9% of GDP for the current fiscal year.



Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh Chaired a meeting on Gwadar Development and Trade Facilitation in Islamabad on May 23, 2024.

Tunisia sentences two journalists to one year in prison



TUNIS
A Tunisian court sentenced two journalists to one year in prison on charges of publishing false news that harms public security, a judicial official said, amid growing fears of a crackdown targeting all critical voices.

Mourad Zghidi and Borhan Bissais, both journalists with IFM radio, were detained this month over political comments made on the radio. Tunisia has now imprisoned a total of six journalists, including Zghidi and Bissais, while dozens of others face judicial prosecution, according to the journalists syndicate, which is the country's main union for journalists. In May, police arrested 10 people, including journalists, lawyers and officials of civil society groups, in what Amnesty International called a deep crackdown targeting activists and journalists. Human Rights Watch has called on Tunisia to respect free speech and civil liberties.

Myanmar's military junta announces mandatory conscription



Web Desk
Myanmar's military junta, which took power in a coup in February 2021, is increasingly facing armed resistance and announced mandatory conscription. Last October, an alliance of ethnic rebel groups and pro-democracy activists launched a major offensive across the country. In response, the junta recently announced mandatory conscription for all men aged 18 to 25 and women aged between 18 and 27. As a result, thousands of young people are now fleeing the country to avoid being called up. Most are heading to neighbouring Thailand, which is bracing.



Israeli forces move deeper into Rafah in night of heavy battle

It was one of the most intense nights of bombardment of the southern Gaza city since Israeli attack

CAIRO
Israeli tanks advanced to the edge of a crowded district in the heart of Rafah on Wednesday during one of the most intense nights of bombardment of the southern Gaza city since Israel launched its offensive there this month. Israel's assault on Rafah on Gaza's southern edge has set hundreds of thousands of people fleeing in what had been a refuge for half of the enclave's 2.3 million people. It has also cut off the main access routes for aid into Gaza, drawing international fears of mass casualties and famine. Israel says it has no choice but to attack the city to root out the last battalions of Hamas fighters it believes are sheltering there. Its troops have been slowly moving into the eastern outskirts of Rafah since the start of the month. Residents and militants said tanks had taken up new positions on Wednesday further west than before along the southern border fence with Egypt, and were now stationed

on the edge of the Yibna neighbourhood at the centre of Rafah. They had not yet entered the district as fighting had been intense. Hamas's armed wing said it had struck two armoured troop carriers at a gate along the border fence with anti-tank rockets. Palestinian residents said Israeli drones were firing into the Yibna suburb and had opened fire overnight on fishing boats on the beach of Rafah causing some to catch fire. "There has been no stopping of Israeli fire all night, from drones, helicopters, warplanes, and tanks," said one resident of Rafah, asking for his name to be withheld to protect his security. "Tanks made a limited push southeast, still limited but they have advanced under heavy fire all night," he told Reuters via a chat app. There was no immediate word from the Israeli military on Rafah. It said it had killed a number of fighters in targeted operations in Khan Younis just north of Rafah.

Israel to reprimand Irish, Norwegian, Spanish envoys over Palestine move



JERUSALEM
Israel will reprimand the ambassadors of Ireland, Norway and Spain on Thursday over their governments' plan to recognise a Palestinian state next week, an Israeli official said. The envoys have been summoned to the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem, where they will be shown a previously unpublished video of Hamas

With Ukraine losing ground, allies debate how to squeeze cash for Kyiv out of frozen Russian assets



FRANKFURT, Germany
Ukraine's allies are wrestling with how to squeeze money out of frozen Russian assets to support Kyiv's war effort, a debate that is ever more urgent as Russia gains territory on the battlefield and as the outlook for Ukraine's state finances looks shakier.

What to do with the Russian central bank reserves frozen in response to the invasion of Ukraine is at the top of the agenda as finance officials from the Group of Seven rich democracies meet Thursday through Saturday in Stresa, Italy, on the shores of scenic Lago Maggiore. The issue: Ukraine and many of its supporters have called for the confiscation of \$260 billion in Russian assets frozen outside the country after the Feb. 24, 2022, invasion. But European officials have resisted, citing legal and financial stability concerns. And most of the frozen assets are located in Europe.

A European plan to merely use the interest on the Russian funds would provide only a trickle of money every year — some \$2.5 billion-\$3 billion at current interest rates. That would barely meet a month's financing needs for the Ukrainian government. U.S. Treasury officials and outside economists are proposing ways to turn that annual trickle into a much larger chunk of upfront cash. That could be done through a bond that would be repaid by the future interest income, giving Ukraine the money immediately. The ministers meet with Ukrainian Finance Minister Sergii Marchenko "Securing Ukraine's position in the medium-to-long term requires unlocking the value of immobilized Russian sovereign assets."

Sports & Showbiz

American star Pegula pulls out of French open



Paris
World number five Jessica Pegula announced her withdrawal from the French Open on Thursday, saying she had not yet sufficiently recovered from an injury. "Unfortunately pulling out of @rolandgarros this year," the American posted on Instagram. "I'm just about back to practicing normal (haven't had any issues for weeks) but played it super safe with recovery & return to play. "If I had another 5-7 days I would have been there 100%." Pegula, 30, has not played an official match since the Billie Jean King Cup in mid-April. She then withdrew from the Madrid Open after "hurting herself", without giving any further details on the nature of her injury. She also missed the Rome Open, the last big clay-court tournament prior to Roland Garros. Pegula, however, is confident she will soon return to competition. "I will definitely be back for a full grass season and the rest of the summer and grinding out the rest of the year," she posted. Last year, Pegula, 30, was eliminated in the third round of the French Open by Belgium's Elise Mertens. Her best result at Roland Garros is a quarter-final appearance in 2022 when she lost to eventual winner Iga Swiatek. The draw for the French Open, which begins at the weekend, takes place later on Thursday.



Miyaichi focused as Marinos set sights on Asian Champions League crown

Web Desk
Yokohama F Marinos winger Ryo Miyaichi is confident the Japanese side can maintain their focus to overcome hosts Al-Ain in the second leg of the Asian Champions League final on Saturday and claim the continental title. Miyaichi played a key role off the bench in the 2-1 first-leg win in Yokohama last Saturday, leaving the Harry Kewell-coached J League outfit on the verge of winning the trophy in the last year of the competition in its current format. "The boss always tells us you have to focus until the final whistle and we want to do that," said Miyaichi, who set up Kota Watanabe to score Marinos' late first-leg winner. "It's going to be a really tough game again, but we just want to enjoy it. It's the last game of the Asian Champions League, it's the final and this is why we play football. "We want to enjoy and we want to win." Kewell is 90 minutes from becoming the first Marinos manager to win the title and, should he do so, the ex-Australia forward would surpass the achievements of countrymen Ange Postecoglou and Kevin Muscat despite only being appointed in late December. Marinos are also seeking to become the fourth Japanese winner in the last seven seasons of the championship, which is due to undergo a major overhaul ahead of the next campaign. August will see the launch of the Asian Champions League Elite, a streamlined competition featuring 24 clubs — down from the current 40 — in the group phase. The new format also will replace the home-and-away knockout rounds with single match quarter-finals, semi-finals and final in a centralised venue in Saudi Arabia for the opening two seasons at least. While Yokohama are aiming to win the trophy for the first time, Al-Ain are eyeing a second success and victory for the club from the United Arab Emirates would bring some symmetry to the competition's concluding campaign. Al-Ain won the inaugural Asian Champions League in 2002-03, when it was launched to replace the Asian Club Championship as the region's premier competition. The club from the Garden City have appeared in two subsequent finals, losing in both 2005 and 2016, and the desire to reclaim the trophy has already seen Herman Crespo's side defeat Saudi Pro League duo Al-Nassr and Al-Hilal.

Humayun Saeed admits influence of social media, but warns about its side-effects



(Web Desk)
Versatile actor Humayun Saeed in an interview unfolds many aspects ranging from his personal life, showbiz career and influence of social media. Speaking on social media, Humayun Saeed says he understands the influence of social media and he also knows how rumours on social can damage innocent people. Humayun Saeed, renowned for his role in "Mere Paas Tum Ho," shares insights into his return to television prominence with "Gentleman" after a three-year break. During an honest conversation on a YouTube channel, he delves into his enduring marriage to Samina, the evolution of his acting journey,

Steinhauser breaks to solo triumph as Pogacar extends Giro lead

PASSO DEL BROCON (Italy)
German rookie Georg Steinhauser won the 17th stage of the Giro d'Italia on Wednesday as Tadej Pogacar strengthened his huge lead at the top of the overall standings. The 22-year-old EF rider who capped on a solo mountain romp is the nephew of former Tour de France and Vuelta a Espana champion Jan Ullrich. He was also notably third on the line on the challenging Queen stage on Sunday. On Wednesday Steinhauser claimed his first professional win after going it alone with around 30km left and finishing the punishing final Passo del Brocon climb after 159km of riding from Selva di Val Gardena. He broke away with Emanuel Ghebrezgabher with 50km left, then dropped the Eritrean to close out the win. "It's something unbelievable. I knew I had good legs. I thought maybe I have the legs to win a stage," said Steinhauser. "Today already when I rode to the sign on I thought to myself, 'I have good legs, maybe I will win today.'" Steinhauser crossed one minute and 23 seconds ahead of Pogacar who made his own burst from the pink jersey group in the final two kilometres and extended his lead over Daniel Martinez to seven



minutes and 42 seconds. **TWAS SUPER NERVOUS!** There was a moment when it looked like Pogacar might try to repeat Tuesday's stunning win when he overtook Giulio Pellizzari in the final kilometre. Pogacar now leads Dani Martinez by 7min 42sec. Geraint Thomas by 8min 04sec third, while Ben O'Connor is at 9min 57sec and Antonio Tiberi, at 10min 29sec, round out the top five. Team UAE leader Pogacar is aiming to take the Giro before going for a third victory in July's Tour de France. "I was just in my zone. I was super nervous on the last climb, I know I had to push all the way to the finish," admitted Steinhauser.