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Chief Editor
Shah Muhammad Awan

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LHC CJ Malik Shahzad urges stakeholders to respect judiciary



Soon Times Correspondent
LAHORE
Lahore High Court Chief Justice Malik Shahzad Ahmad Khan has urged the stakeholders to respect the judiciary.
Addressing a ceremony at the Punjab Judicial Academy, the chief justice said, "we respect everyone and therefore we should also get the reciprocal gesture."
"We don't want fight with any institution including the bar and government. We have respect for everyone," he said. He advised the judges not to feel pressure while hearing a case.
Addressing the ceremony, the chief justice said there were 1.4 million pending cases in courts and "we are also facing shortage of judges". "I am grateful to those lawyers who helped us in eliminating the culture of strikes in courts," he said.

IHC puts PEMRA on notice for restricting telecast of court proceedings



Soon Times Correspondent
ISLAMABAD
The Islamabad High Court issued a notice to the PEMRA (Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority) on Friday, restraining it from taking disciplinary action against television channels for broadcasting court proceedings.
IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq presided over the hearing on the petition jointly filed by the Press Association of Supreme Court (PAS) and the Islamabad High Court Journalists Association (IHCA) seeking the suspension of a PEMRA notification that restricted the telecast of court proceedings.
Barrister Omar Ijaz Gillani and Ali Azad, the president of the Islamabad High Court Bar Association, represented the petitioners.
The court, while serving notices to the PEMRA and information secretary, adjourned the hearing until May 28.
On Thursday, the PAS and the IHCA filed a joint petition with the Islamabad High Court against the PEMRA notification.

ECC approves compensation for five Chinese, one Pakistani Shangla victims



Soon Times Correspondent
ISLAMABAD
The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet on Thursday approved \$2.58 million for the families of Chinese workers killed in the Shangla attack earlier this year and Rs88 billion in other supplementary grants for various ministries.
The ECC, which met with Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb in the chair, approved compensation package for the families of five Chinese workers of the Dasu Hydropower Project and Rs2.5 million for the family of Pakistani bus driver killed in a terrorist attack in March.
The compensation was approved at a rate of \$516,000 per head as a goodwill gesture.

CM Maryam inaugurates the largest interchange of Punjab, Multan Road Interchange

Maryam Nawaz has also inaugurated the Ring Road Southern Loop (SL) 3.



Soon Times Correspondent
LAHORE
Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has inaugurated the largest interchange of Punjab, Multan Road Interchange today.
Maryam Nawaz has also inaugurated the Ring Road Southern Loop (SL) 3.
On the direction of CM Maryam Nawaz, the toll tax on SL 3 has been waived off for one month, citizen can travel for free.
Punjab CM has also directed for immediate action on SL 4 project. She also reviewed the road from Adialplot to Multan Road Interchange.
Minister for Communication Punjab Malik Sohaib gave the briefing about the project and highlighted that SL3 Multan Road Interchange was the biggest interchange of Punjab.
Maryam Nawaz underlined about the project vitality stating that traffic congestion within city will be reduced with SL 3.
The traffic on Thokar and Canal road will be less crowded. SL 3 Lahore is crucial for traffic management in Lahore.
Maryam Nawaz commended the performance of secretary construction and building and team.
Senior Provincial Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb, MNA Aizal Khokhar, Special Assistant Zeeshan Malik, Chief Secretary Zaid Akhtar Zaman, IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar, Commissioner Zaid bin Maqsood, DC Rafia Haider and other officials attended the inauguration ceremony.

Budget 2024-25: KP proposes 10pc increase in salaries, pensions of govt employees



Soon Times Correspondent
PESHAWAR
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has proposed 10 percent increase in both salaries and pension of the government employees in the budget for next fiscal year.
Minister for Finance Aftab Alam on Friday presented Rs1754 billion annual budget for the

fiscal year 2024-25 with a surplus of Rs 100 billion. The provincial government also proposed an increase in minimum wage from Rs32000 to Rs36000.
It has projected Rs1,654 billion expenses, said the minister during budget speech in the assembly, adding that as per the instructions of the Chief Minister Ali Ameen Gandapur the budget 2024-25 mainly focused on social protection, peace, employment opportunities, and economic development.
While giving details of the budget 2024-25, he said that the KP government anticipated receiving a total 1754 billion under different heads during the fiscal year 2024-25 including 1212.036 billion from the federal government under Federal Tax Assignment, one percent of divisible pool on war on terror, Straight Transfer under the head of royalties and surcharge on oil and gas, windfall levy and net hydro profit.

Well-thought out agenda being spread from Adiala Jail: Azma Bukhari



Soon Times Correspondent
LAHORE
Punjab Information Minister Azma Bukhari says an agenda is being spread in the country from the Adiala Jail.
Addressing a press conference in Lahore on Friday, Bukhari said the PTI founder was of the view that there was a probability of seeing the repetition of 1971-like situation in the country.
"It is the party's agenda to spread unrest in the country. Whenever there is unrest in the country, there comes the name of the one party," she said, adding that those who were talking about the London Plan might remember their own plan.
It was from the jail that the PTI founder wrote venomous article to British newspaper.

Bukhari said.
Talking about the International Monetary Fund (IMF), she said the protests were managed outside the IMF office after writing the letter.
Read more: Field hospitals across Punjab have been operationalised, says Azma Bukhari
The information minister said the provincial cabinet had admired the efforts of Punjab CM Maryam Nawaz for bringing down the prices of rice by Rs100 per kg, while roti, gas cylinders, iron, cements, petrol and dollars were also shedding their prices.

Nawaz Sharif to address huge public gathering on Youm-e-Takbeer

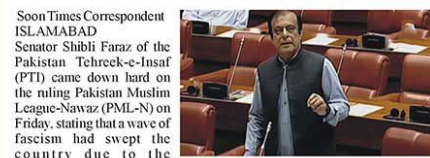
Over 5,000 PML-N workers and office-bearers have been directed to reach Lahore



Soon Times Correspondent
LAHORE
The PML-N supreme Nawaz Sharif has decided to address a huge public gathering on Youm-e-Takbeer - the day when he would assume the office of party president once again after almost seven years.
According to sources, over 5,000 PML-N workers and office-bearers have been directed to reach Lahore for the power show.

The former three-time prime minister will be elected as PML-N president once again on May 28 during the meeting of party's general council.
It has been decided that the general council meeting would become a huge power show of PML-N.
Nawaz Sharif will address the party workers after taking the reins of the party once again. He is likely to address on organisational and constitutional matters after becoming the party president on May 28.
The May 28 date was selected carefully as the day is celebrated as Youm-e-Takbeer to mark the historic nuclear tests conducted by Pakistan in 1998 when Nawaz Sharif was serving as prime minister in his second stint.

Shibli Faraz slams ruling PML-N for CDA raid on PTI central office



Soon Times Correspondent
ISLAMABAD
Senator Shibli Faraz of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) came down hard on the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) on Friday, stating that a wave of fascism had swept the country due to the incumbent government's undemocratic tactics.
During a Senate session chaired by Deputy Chairman Syedlat Khan Nasar, the PTI leader spoke about the recent arrests of party leaders and a raid on party's central office in Islamabad. He denounced these actions and demanded immediate release of his colleagues.
Faraz said that despite the government's attempts to suppress the PTI politically, the party's popularity remains strong. He warned the ruling PML-N against using undemocratic tactics.
In response, Law Minister and

Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar clarified that the Capital Development Authority (CDA) acted in accordance with the law.
Tarar said he obtained the facts from the Capital Development Authority (CDA), adding that a Senate standing committee had instructed the CDA to expedite action against encroachments in the capital.
The minister mentioned that the initial notice was served on the PTI in 2020 and subsequent reminders were sent, adding that the action of sealing the PTI office was initiated after a notice on May 10.

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Digital Media Authority

Minister for Information and Broadcasting Attaullah Tarar said on Monday that the government had no intention of unilateral legislation regarding the establishment of Digital Media Authority in the country. "All journalist organizations and press clubs will be taken into confidence on the matter", Attaullah Tarar said while talking to a delegation of National Press Club (NPC) Islamabad which met him here. The minister assured the

NPC delegation that health insurance scheme for journalists would be started soon. Attaullah Tarar said that necessary steps would be taken for the construction of the permanent building of the NPC and the improvement of the existing building. The minister assured that provision of annual grant for NPC will be ensured. The government was well aware of the problems of the administration of the National Press Club regarding the improvement of the National

Press Club, he remarked. The Government intended to ensure continuous grant provision to NPC, he said adding he will meet the finance minister and discuss the issue of annual grant allocation for the press club in the financial budget. President Azhar Jatoi said that the government should solve the problems of the press club on priority basis. He said that journalists were facing many challenges in the present era. Acting Secretary NPC Aun Shirazi said Media Town Phase II was very

important for the journalistic community of Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Shirazi said making government advertisements subject to timely payment workers salary will be a major step. Principal Information Officer Mobasher Hassan was also present in the meeting. Besides, President NPC Azhar Jatoi, Acting Secretary Aun Shirazi, Secretary Finance Waqar Abbasi also attended the meeting. Members of the governing body of NPC were also present in the meeting.

Pakistan's Changing Climate: Impacts on Agriculture and Adaptation Strategies

MUHAMMAD QAISER

In recent times, Pakistan has observed noticeable changes in its weather patterns, notably characterized by delayed winter rains and increasingly hot summers. These alterations are attributed to the broader phenomenon of climate change, largely driven by human activities such as the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation. Late winter rains disrupt the traditional agricultural calendar, affecting crucial stages of crop growth and planting, particularly for staple crops like wheat and barley. Additionally, soaring temperatures during summer months pose significant challenges to agricultural communities, with heat waves adversely impacting crops and livestock. The impacts of climate change on agriculture transcend mere

temperature fluctuations, encompassing broader issues such as water scarcity and extreme weather events. Altered precipitation patterns, coupled with the melting of glaciers in the Himalayas, have resulted in water shortages in regions reliant on glacier-fed rivers for irrigation. This scarcity threatens the sustainability of agriculture and exacerbates food insecurity across the country. Furthermore, Pakistan is witnessing a surge in extreme weather events, including floods and droughts, which have dire consequences for agricultural productivity. Floods cause widespread destruction of crops and infrastructure, while droughts lead to water shortages and crop failures. These unpredictable weather phenomena highlight the pressing need for adopting resilient agricultural practices to

mitigate risks and enhance the resilience of farming communities. To address the agricultural challenges posed by climate change, farmers are increasingly embracing adaptive strategies such as cultivating drought-resistant crop varieties and adopting water-efficient irrigation techniques. Nevertheless, governmental intervention is imperative to provide necessary support, including investment in agricultural infrastructure, implementation of supportive policies, and dissemination of climate-resilient farming practices. By fostering collaboration between stakeholders and implementing sustainable solutions, Pakistan can effectively navigate the complexities of climate change and ensure food security for its populace.

Love's Liberation: Breaking Free from Difficult Partnerships



Amina AG

In today's age of rapid technological advancement and globalization, the sophistications of relationships and love often take a backseat amidst the hustle and bustle of life. With the rise of dating and marriage apps, the dating landscape has undergone a significant transformation, turning the search for love into a mere swipe game. Many individuals find themselves caught up in this whirlwind, engrossed in the process of swiping through potential matches rather than investing in meaningful connections. Even for those who seek genuine companionship, decoding the true intentions of others remains a tough challenge. While we hold onto the hope for future technological innovations that may one day unveil the true feelings of potential partners, we are left with no choice but to rely on our instincts and understanding of the essence of love in the meantime. In this context, the importance of love awareness cannot be overstated; it becomes essential to our well-being as the very air we breathe. Navigating relationships can feel like a delicate dance, where we're often drawn to people who challenge us and stir our emotions deeply. But amidst this attraction lies a tricky trap: loving difficult individuals. It's a familiar pattern, where we strive to please someone who seems indifferent to our efforts. Who decided this was normal? Love shouldn't feel like a burden. If it weighs heavily on your heart, it's time to take a step back and reassess. The idea that enduring hardships makes love stronger might sound

romantic, but it's not true. This notion is often glorified in media and literature. True love should bring tears of joy, contentment, and fulfillment. It should be filled with compassion, selflessness, and understanding. Real love doesn't cause pain; it uplifts and nurtures. If your journey is marked by tears of sadness, manipulation, or neglect, it's a clear sign that you're experiencing isn't love. Too often, we find ourselves entangled with people who constantly demand proof of our love while giving little in return. This toxic dynamic eats away at our well-being, turning life into a battlefield of one-sided efforts. It's time to recognize our own worth. Love shouldn't demand more than we can give, nor should it chip away at our core. We deserve partners who meet us halfway, reciprocating our care and devotion. Recognizing when love has turned sour is crucial. Signs of deception, abuse, or emotional neglect should never be justified as acts of love. We owe it to ourselves to set boundaries, keeping out those who don't value our hearts. Admitting we may have chosen the wrong person is scary, but it's the first step toward freeing ourselves. In our quest for love, we must distinguish between the real and the fake. Some souls resonate with love's true essence; those who respond with kindness, cherishing our presence without conditions. These are the ones worth embracing, where love feels effortless and genuine. However, leaving should be the last option. Communication is key in healthy relationships, bridging misunderstandings and illuminating our darkest corners. If something bothers us about our partner, we must speak up openly and honestly. Through dialogue and understanding, we navigate the complexities of love, building bonds based on trust and respect. Understanding your partner plays an important

role in relationships, what your partner is anticipating and what makes them happy, sad, or angry. Try to accommodate it following healthy boundaries. Whenever you feel overwhelmed and it's only you who is suffering, STOP and take a break. Sit, think, evaluate, and ask yourself if the other person is worth it or not. If you think it's worth it, reevaluate your relationship, talk to your partner, communicate your true feelings, speak your heart, set your roadmap, and follow it. Do not forget to re-evaluate it at any point in time wherever you think it is not going well. Rethink everything, trust yourself, and take your move. Egoism can be the downfall of love and every other relationship in life. It's important to recognize when ego becomes toxic and when it's healthy. Healthy egoism should be welcomed in a relationship. We should learn to compromise and sometimes surrender for the sake of loving our partner, but without losing ourselves in the process. Remember, healthy egoism is the essence of a loving life. As Ehsan Segal said in his Poem;

*If I kill my ego
I kill myself
If I don't
I kill my love
The dilemma
Between love and the ego
Force me to lie
So that I don't lose the love
And the ego*

Breaking free from the cycle of loving difficult people requires courage and self-awareness. We must prioritize our own happiness, refusing to settle for anything less than mutual love. Though the path may be uncertain, it leads to liberation; a place where love flows freely, without struggle or resentment. Let's commit to breaking free from toxic love, embracing the simplicity of loving those who uplift us. Let's value ourselves enough to walk away from those who fail to see our worth. In the vastness of humanity, there are souls waiting for us; those who will love us effortlessly and unconditionally.

Pakistan's border crossing with Iran at Taftan, Gabd to remain open 24/7



Soon Times Correspondent Islamabad
Pakistani Ambassador to Iran Muhammad Mudassar Tipu announced on Friday that Pakistan's border crossing with Iran at Taftan and Gabd will remain open 24/7 to promote business between the neighbouring countries. Calling it a big step forward, the ambassador said it would hopefully sharply increase the flow of goods between the two countries and consequently widen economic opportunities. Pakistan and Iran on April 24 reiterated the importance of energy cooperation and electricity trade, despite the warning of potential sanctions hinted at by the United States following the then Iranian president Seyyed Ebrahim Raisi's three-day visit to Pakistan. 'Border of prosperity' Agreeing to turn the common border between the two states

from a 'border of peace' to a 'border of prosperity', both countries had reiterated the importance of cooperation in the energy domain, including trade in electricity, power transmission lines and Iran-Pakistan gas pipeline project. During Raisi's visit to Pakistan, both sides had underscored the imperative of a long-term durable economic partnership and collaborative regional economic and connectivity model, particularly for socio-economic development in Iran's Sistan-Balochistan and Pakistan's Balochistan provinces. This was stated by the Foreign Office in a 28-point joint statement, hours after the Iranian head of state had departed for Tehran from Karachi. The two sides had reviewed the entire spectrum of Pakistan-Iran bilateral relations, exchanged views on regional and global issues of mutual concern, and

signed multiple accords. The two countries, as per the statement, had agreed to expeditiously finalise the free trade agreement (FTA) and boost their bilateral trade to \$10 billion over the next five years through joint economic projects, setting up of joint border markets, economic free zones, and new border openings. Operationalise barter trade There was consensus to fully operationalise barter trade mechanisms between the two sides to facilitate economic and commercial activity, particularly under ongoing collaborative endeavours, such as border sustenance markets. Regarding connectivity, the two sides had expressed satisfaction over the regular shipment of goods under the TIR Convention and agreed to fully operationalize the Convention for further efficient, speedy and barrier-free trade. As members of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO), the two countries had expressed firm resolve to enhance cooperation in connectivity, infrastructure development and energy sectors and agreed to expand linkages between Gwadar and Chahbahar ports.

Public welfare in every sector is my first priority, says CM Maryam Nawaz



Soon Times Correspondent LAHORE Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has asserted that every sector related to public welfare is her priority.

CM Maryam Nawaz held a meeting with MNA Shehza Mansab and former MPA Chaudhry Abid Raza Kotla, discussed development in Nankana Sahib and Gujrat. During the meeting Special Assistant Zeeshan

Malik was also present. The chief minister assured to resolve the public crisis. PML-N leaders commended the CM's efforts for relief from inflation. CM Maryam Nawaz emphasised that every sector related to public development and welfare was her first priority. She vowed to resolve public issues in every condition stating that it's public right to access development and it's not a favour. She said solid waste management and landfill sites would be built across province. There is revamping of 2,500 basic health units and 300 rural health centres being done in Punjab. Punjab CM pledged to establish state-of-the-art cardiology and peds units in hospitals across districts. Maryam Nawaz said her government would ensure provision of the best health facilities in every districts to avoid the hassle of travel to other cities for health treatment.

Azam Swati's interim bail extended in controversial tweets case

ISLAMABAD The Islamabad Central Court has extended former minister Azam Swati's interim bail until June 11 in the controversial tweets case. Lawyers Ali Sohal Khan and Murtaza Turi appeared on behalf of the PTL leader. However, Swati's bail plea could not be heard due to special judge Humayun Dilawar being on leave. Later, Azam Swati's interim bail was extended until June 11. In his brief interaction with reporters on the Judicial Complex premises, Swati emphasised the supremacy of the constitution and law, stating that the country



would not function properly unless judges and generals ensure adherence to the legal framework.

Double whammy for Karachiites as scorching heat, power outage add to woes



Soon Times Correspondent KARACHI: There seems to be no respite for the citizens of the port city as rising mercury and power outages make their lives miserable, with the metropolis' electricity company defending its policies to cut the supply of consumers. Karachi sweltered at 38.2°C, a scorching 2.4°C above normal, with humidity reaching 62% on Thursday. This combination made it feel like a stifling 40°C, according to the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD). The citizens informed Geo that even the exempted areas were facing prolonged unannounced power

outages, while the loadshedding period has been increased in others. "The bill is the same. It is too hot, I can't even express the words to describe how I'm feeling. I have skin allergies, which exacerbate if I can't keep the air conditioner on," Rubina Mirza, a 60-year-old school teacher and a resident of Gulistan-e-Jauhar, told Geo.tv. A housewife complained that even though she pays the bill, her household faces loadshedding as others, who receive electricity through the same feeder, do not pay their dues. "The continuous loadshedding in this extremely hot weather has badly affected my mental health. The only thing that

comes to my mind all day is, 'there's gonna be a power outage, when will the power be restored,'" Salar Masroor, 40 and a resident of Korangi 6, said. "I pay my electricity bill on time but I am being punished for the KE's fault to recover dues and overcome power theft. This is not my duty to ensure 100% billing. This is collective punishment. This is not acceptable." Sindh's ministers have also expressed dismay at the prolonged power outages across the province, with one saying that a case would be lodged against Karachi-Electric (KE) if anyone were to die of heatstroke due to loadshedding. Residents of Korangi, Orangi Town, Landhi, Gulshan-e-Maymar, Liaquatabad, Mehmoodabad, Manzoor Colony, Sarjani, and New Karachi told that they were facing loadshedding of more than 12 hours. In several areas of Keamari, Lyari, Gadap, Quaidabad, and Safoora, the duration of loadshedding has increased to more than 10 hours. In response, a KE spokesperson said that uninterrupted power is being provided to 71% of the city, while the loadshedding schedule is available on the company's website. "Where there is non-payment of bills, there is more load shedding," he said, justifying the power utility's policy.

KP chief minister battles against tax on 'Niswar' in epic budget debate

PESHAWAR (Web Desk) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur on Friday opposed a proposal to impose tax on "niswar" - an addictive drug widely used in the province. The chief minister showed the resistance when a debate was held on the proposed budget for fiscal year 2024-25 in a cabinet meeting before it was tabled in the KP Assembly. Reports said the cabinet held an hour-long debate on taxing niswar in the budget. However, the cabinet members gave up the proposal after CM argued that "niswar is used by poor people and tax should not be imposed on it". KP Minister for Finance Aftab Alam presented Rs1754 billion annual budget for the fiscal year 2024-25 with a surplus

of Rs 100 billion in the provincial assembly after it was approved by the cabinet. The government has projected Rs 1,654 billion expenses, said the minister during budget speech in the assembly here, adding that as per the instructions of the Chief Minister Ali Ameen Gandapur the budget 2024-25 mainly focused on social protection, peace, employment opportunities, and economic development.

PTI leader Amir Mughal sent to jail on judicial remand

Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD The Islamabad anti-terrorism court has rejected police's petition for physical remand of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Amir Mughal. Islamabad police presented Amir Mughal before anti-terrorism court for physical remand in attack on police officials case. Judge Abul Hasanat Zulqarnain rejected the petition filed for physical remand and ordered to send Mughal to jail on judicial remand. A case was registered against PTI leader Amir Mughal at Islamabad's Karachi Company police station by complainant under Section 7 of Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA) and other six sections. PTI leader Amir Mughal and 25 other individuals were accused of attacking CDA and police officials. However, police arrested the PTI leader from central secretariat in Islamabad on Thursday. Also read: CDA seals PTI's central secretariat in Islamabad. The FIR stated that Amir Mughal resorted to



aerial firing during the CDA operation on Thursday night and he, along with mob, tried to attack police. According to FIR, Amir Mughal companions escaped from the scene during his arrest. It is pertinent to note that a CDA anti-encroachment team in collaboration with the district administration launched operation to remove encroachments and unauthorised constructions at the PTI's central secretariat located at Sector G8/4 in Islamabad. A portion of the PTI central secretariat was also demolished during the operation. The CDA officials stated that the illegal constructions of PTI offices were demolished.

IMF says 'significant progress' made in talks with Pakistan on new bailout package

Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Thursday stated that "significant progress" was achieved during talks with Pakistan towards reaching a staff-level agreement for an extended fund facility. An IMF team, led by Nathan Porter, the IMF's Mission Chief to Pakistan, visited Islamabad during May 13-23, 2024, to discuss the country's plans for a home-grown economic programme that can be supported under the IMF's Extended Fund Facility (EFF). The visit was undertaken on Islamabad's request. "The mission and the authorities will continue policy discussions virtually over the coming days aiming to finalise discussions, including the financial support needed to underpin the authorities' reform efforts from the IMF and Pakistan's bilateral and multilateral partners," Porter said in a statement. Pakistan is likely to seek at least \$6 billion under the new programme and request additional financing from the IMF under the Resilience and Sustainability Trust. Ahead of the discussions, the IMF had warned that downside risks for the Pakistani economy remained exceptionally high. The official said that building on the



exchange rate policies; improve public service provision through state-owned enterprise (SOE) restructuring; and promote private sector development, by securing a level-playing field for investment and stronger governance." Porter also praised the Pakistani authorities, private sector, and development partners for fruitful discussions throughout this mission. Bullish trend in PSX The lender's comments helped the benchmark share index KSE-100 scale a record high and breach the key 76,000 level during the intraday trade. Adnan Sheikh, assistant vice president, research at Pak Kuwait Investment Company, attributed the rise to the IMF's comment and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) promising investment. "Despite the 90% run-up in dollar terms over the past year, The KSE-100 is trading at price-earnings ratio 4x, which is well below its average," said Sheikh, adding that the ratio suggested that Pakistani equities might still have healthy room for further upside. On Thursday, the UAE committed \$10 billion to invest in promising economic sectors in Pakistan, without specifying the areas. The announcement came during Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's UAE visit.

economic stabilisation achieved through the successful completion of the 2023 Stand-by Arrangement, the IMF and the Pakistani authorities made significant progress toward reaching a Staff Level Agreement (SLA) on a comprehensive economic policy and reform programme that can be supported under an EFF. "The authorities' reform programme aims to move Pakistan from economic stabilisation to strong, inclusive, and resilient growth. To achieve this, the authorities plan to continue to strengthen public finances to reduce vulnerabilities by improving domestic revenue mobilisation through fairer taxation while scaling up spending for human capital, social protection, and climate resilience; secure energy sector viability, including reforms to reduce the high cost of energy; continue progress towards low and stable inflation by appropriate monetary and

Successful foreign tours hard to 'swallow' for rivals: Information minister

Soon Times Correspondent Islamabad A day after the United Arab Emirates (UAE) announced allocating \$10 billion for more investments in Pakistan, Information Minister Attaullah Tarar Friday said the government's opponents could not swallow the "successful visits" being undertaken by the new government to bring in investment opportunities in a bid to improve the economy. "Wherever we go, we talk about investment and trade. We don't talk about loans or grants," said the minister, addressing a presser in Islamabad, flanked by Commerce Minister Jam Kamal. The minister's comments came a day after Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif visited the gulf nation to meet with its President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan in Abu Dhabi on a day-long visit focused on inviting

investments in Pakistan. Tarar said the premier told the UAE that Pakistan does not need aid. The decision was taken "to strengthen the Pakistani economy, support it, and enhance cooperation between the two countries", UAE's WAM news agency reported on Thursday. Tarar, during the press conference, spoke about the role of Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), which was established to attract investment in the country.



Police shoot man in New Caledonia after protesters attack



A police officer and his colleague were "physically attacked by a group of around fifteen individuals" in Dumbea just outside the capital Noumea, forcing him to draw his weapon, said prosecutor Yves Dupas. The total death toll from over a week of riots now stands at seven. "In circumstances that have yet to be determined, the officer is said to have fired a shot from his service weapon to extricate himself from the physical altercation," Dupas said in a statement. "Initial findings show traces of blows to the officers' faces," the statement said. The officer who fired the shots was taken into custody, the prosecutor said, adding that a probe into voluntary manslaughter by a person in authority was launched. Such legal moves are usually automatic in France when a policeman kills an individual.

No evidence of terrorism in Raisi's helicopter crash, says report



TEHRAN The helicopter was not targeted by terrorism as it was following its pre-determined route and did not deviate from it, the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Iran report said. About one and a half minutes before the crash, the helicopter pilot communique with other pilots in the convoy. No evidence of bullets or similar objects was found on the helicopter wreckage. The helicopter caught fire after the crash. The report added that there were no suspicious issues in the communication between the control tower and the flight crew. Further details will be released as the investigation continues. The preliminary report from the Iranian General Staff did not accuse anyone of wrongdoing.



Israel launches deadly Gaza strikes, says ready for new truce talks

Israel expressed readiness to resume stalled talks on a truce and hostage release deal with Hamas.

PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES Israel launched devastating air strikes on Gaza Thursday (May 23), while also expressing readiness to resume stalled talks on a truce and hostage release deal with Hamas to pause the war raging since Oct 7. The Gaza Strip's civil defence agency said two pre-dawn air strikes had killed 26 people, including 15 children, in Gaza City. Agency spokesman Mahmud Bassal said one strike hit a family house, killing 16 people, in the Al-Daraj area, and another killed 10 people inside a mosque compound. There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military. Fierce street battles also raged in Gaza's Jabalia and Rafah where the armed wings of Hamas and its ally Islamic Jihad said they had fired mortar barrages at Israeli troops. International pressure for a ceasefire has mounted on Israel and its Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as three European countries said Wednesday they would recognise a Palestinian state. The week started with the International Criminal Court's prosecutor seeking arrest warrants on war crimes charges against Netanyahu and his defence minister as well as three Hamas leaders. Israel has angrily rejected those moves, voicing "disgust" over the ICC request and labelling any recognition of Palestinian statehood a "reward for terrorism". Senior foreign ministry official Jacob Blitsen told the envoys of Ireland, Norway and Spain on Thursday that there will be "serious consequences" for their relations with Israel after they recognise the State of Palestine.

Russia smashes train tracks in a battered Ukrainian border region where children are being evacuated



KYIV, Ukraine A nighttime Russian attack destroyed trains and tracks in Ukraine's northeastern Kharkiv region, officials said Friday, and authorities organized the evacuation of children from the area as it is being pummeled by the Kremlin's forces in a powerful new offensive. The overnight strike on rolling stock and railway tracks also damaged buildings, according to Ukraine's national railway operator Ukrzaliznytsia. Authorities have evacuated more than 11,000 people from the Kharkiv region since Russia launched an offensive there on May 10, regional Gov. Oleh Sinehubov said. Officials on Friday announced the mandatory evacuation over the next 60 days of 123 orphans and children living with their parents in the area. Russia's Kharkiv push appears to be a coordinated new offensive that includes testing Ukrainian defenses in the Donetsk region further south, while also launching incursions in the northern Sumy and Cherniviv regions. Russian President Vladimir Putin has said the Kremlin's army is attempting to create a "buffer zone" in the Kharkiv region to prevent Ukrainian cross-border attacks. Ukraine's problems have been mounting in recent months as it tries to hold out against its much bigger foe, and the war appears to be at a critical juncture. The new Russian offensive is stretching thin Ukraine's depleted ranks, exhausted by more than two years of war. Destroying the train network puts further pressure on the already overstretched Ukrainian army.

Top Russian military officials are being arrested. Why is it happening?



NEW YORK It began last month with the arrest of a Russian deputy defense minister. Then the head of the ministry's personnel directorate was hauled into court. This week, two more senior military officials were detained. All face charges of corruption, which they have denied. The arrests started shortly before President Vladimir Putin began his fifth term and shuffled his ally, longtime Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, into a new post. They immediately raised questions about whether Putin was reasserting control over the Defense Ministry amid the war in Ukraine, whether a turf battle had broken out between the military and the security services, or whether some other scenario was playing out behind the Kremlin's walls. A look at what's behind the arrests and why they are happening: HOW SERIOUS IS CORRUPTION IN RUSSIA? Corruption scandals are not new and officials and top officials have been accused of profiting from their positions for decades. Graft in Russia functions as both a carrot and stick. It's a way of "encouraging loyalty and urging people to be on the same page," as well as a method of control, said Sam Greene, director of Democratic Resilience at the Center for European Policy Analysis. Putin wants everyone to have "a skeleton in their closet," security expert Mark Galeotti said on a recent podcast. If the state has compromising material on key officials, it can cherry-pick whom to target, he added. Corruption, "is the essence of the system," said Nigel Gould-Davies, senior fellow at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London.

Sports & Showbiz

ICC announces star-studded commentary panel for T20 World Cup



(Web Desk) Some of the biggest names in cricket will provide their expertise during the broadcast of the upcoming tournament. ICC will continue to deliver an unmatched viewing experience during the Men's T20 World Cup 2024, bringing together some of the biggest names in cricket and broadcasting for the extravaganza from the nine locations across the USA and West Indies. Leading the commentary team are stalwarts like Ravi Shastri, Nasser Hussain, Ian Smith, Mel Jones, Harsha Bhogle and Ian Bishop. Adding to the insights on the modern game, the team will be joined by former Men's and Women's T20 World Cup champions such as Dinesh Karthik, Ebony Rainford-Brent, Samuel Badree, Carlos Brathwaite, Steve Smith, Aaron Finch and Lisa Shalekar. Former 50-over World Cup winners Ricky Ponting, Sunil Gavaskar, Matthew Hayden, Ramiz Raja, Iain Morgan, Tom Moody and Wasim Akram will also be lending their expert analysis to the upcoming tournament.



Shahid Afridi named ambassador for T20 World Cup 2024

(Web Desk) Pakistan legend Shahid Afridi has been named ambassador for the epic ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 in the West Indies and the USA. He joins an illustrious group of ambassadors, featuring Indian stalwart Yuvraj Singh, 'Universe Boss' Chris Gayle and the fastest man on Earth Usain Bolt. Afridi is synonymous with Pakistan's most memorable moments in T20 World Cup history. He played a pivotal role in their journey to the final in the inaugural tournament in 2007 and their triumph in the 2009 edition. Afridi came in clutch for Pakistan in both those years – he was Player of the Tournament in the 2007 edition where they fell on the final hurdle to arch-rivals India. However, they were quick to put that loss behind them and got their hands on the trophy in the next edition, where Afridi was the Player of the Match in both the semi-final against South Africa and the final for an all-round performance against Sri Lanka. The former Pakistan captain cherished his memories of the T20 World Cup and expressed his elation at joining the upcoming edition as a tournament ambassador. "The ICC Men's T20 World Cup is an event that is very close to my heart," said Afridi. "From being Player of the Tournament in the inaugural edition to lifting the trophy in 2009, some of my favourite career highlights have come from competing on this stage. "T20 World Cups have gone from strength to strength in recent years, and I'm thrilled to be part of this edition, where we will see more teams, more matches and even more drama than ever before. "I am particularly excited to witness the India v Pakistan fixture on 9 June. It is one of the great rivalries in sport and New York will be a fitting stage for this unmissable encounter between two great teams." Claire Furlong, ICC General Manager – Marketing and Communications, added: "Shahid completed in six ICC Men's T20 World Cups, two of which as captain and delivering a Player of the Match performance, when winning the trophy in 2009, so who better to join our all-star Ambassador team. "He's a fan favourite around the world and alongside Yuvraj Singh, Chris Gayle and eight-time Olympic gold-medallist Usain Bolt, will be bringing fans closer to the event."

Chahat Fateh Ali Khan's song 'Bado Badi' hits internet with 19m views just in one month



(Web Desk) Chahat Fateh Ali Khan's recently released song 'Bado Badi' hit the internet with 19 million views in just one month. The singer, in his latest release 'Bado Badi' on YouTube, enlisted the help of his friend as a model. Chahat Fateh Ali Khan has gained immense popularity as both a social media sensation and a talented singer, captivating audience with his viral interpretations of well-known tunes. The singer is well-known in his fraternity for his passion for singing.

Pakistan name squad for historic Volleyball Series against Australia



ISLAMABAD The Pakistan Volleyball Federation (PVF) on Friday had named a 14-member squad for the upcoming three-match volleyball series against Australia, marking the Australian team's first visit to Pakistan. PVF Chairman Chaudhry Muhammad Yaqoob said the Pakistan squad, led by Murad Khan and vice-captained by Muhammad Kashif Naveed, would compete at full strength against the strong Australian team. The series promises to be a thrilling competition for both teams and the entry for fans and supporters was free. The Australian team, comprising 20 members, would arrive in Islamabad on Sunday, May 26. The matches would be held at the Liaquat Gymnasium of Pakistan Sports Complex on May 28, 29, and 30, starting at 6:30pm. Yaqoob encouraged fans to come and cheer for the Pakistani team, which recently won the Central Asian Volleyball League. He also emphasized the need for government support to promote volleyball in Pakistan, despite the lack of resources. The Pakistani squad includes Waleed Khan, Murad Khan, Aimal Khan, Usman Farayad Ali, Fakhr Ud Din, Afaq Khan, Abdul Zaheer, Musawer Khan, Muhammad Hamad, Haider Ali, Nasir Ali, and Muhammad Yasen.