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PM Shabbaz takes notice of unbridled load-shedding as shortfall tops 6,000MW

PM to receive briefing on power demand and supply



Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has taken notice of the unannounced electricity loadshedding lasting up to several hours in both urban and rural parts of the country, as the power shortfall exceeded 6,000 megawatts on Tuesday amid an ongoing heatwave.

According to details, the premier will receive a briefing on the demand and supply [gap] of electricity during a crucial meeting scheduled to take place today [Tuesday].

At present, the national demand for electricity stands at 26,000 megawatts against the production of only 19,814 megawatts, indicating a shortfall of 6,186 megawatts.

Due to the power shortfall, rural areas are experiencing up to eight hours of power cuts, while urban centres are

facing power outages of up to six hours. In areas with high line losses, electricity loadshedding may extend up to 14 hours.

During the meeting, PM Shehbaz will review progress of the ongoing crackdown on power pilferage as well as the issue of power loadshedding being observed by the provinces, notably Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

On May 18, KP Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur threatened to take over the Peshawar Electric Supply Company (Pesco) if it failed to extend relief to the people of the province within 15 days.

Nevertheless, a consensus was reached during a meeting of Energy Minister Sardar Awais Ahmad Khan Laghari with CM Gandapur on Monday, where the Centre and province decided to address electricity-related issues collectively.

Soon Times Correspondent LAHORE



Prominent PML-N leader Khawaja Saad Rafique called for the withdrawal of a new amendment to the National Accountability Ordinance, which allows the extension of the remand period of an accused from 14 to 40 days.

In a comment posted on the social media platform X, the former minister criticised the NAB law as a black law enacted by the despotic [Pervez Musharraf]. He highlighted its historical use by military, civil and judicial dictators to serve their own interests, noting that many innocent people had fallen victim to it. Rafique unequivocally said that endorsing the NAB law was unacceptable, describing the extension of the remand period from 14 to 40 days.

Govt officials likely to get 10-15% raise in salary, pension



Board of Revenue (FBR) tax revenues and non-tax revenues as well as restricting the expenditures side.

Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD The government is working on different proposals for salary increases in the range of 10 to 15% for public sector employees in the upcoming budget for 2024-25.

Amid the wish of the government to strike a deal with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) under Extended Fund Facility (EFF) at a range of \$6 billion, the government will have to demonstrate its political will to place stringent fiscal measures including raising revenues of both Federal

the government is mulling over the options to fix the FBR tax revenue target of over Rs12.5 trillion in the coming budget. On the salaries front, the Ministry of Finance wants to raise the salary by just 10%. Still, there might be some pressures so there might be a fiscal adjustment to jack it up to 2.5% or a maximum of 5% to increase the salary increase in the range of 12.5 or 15% in the next budget.

There is another proposal under consideration to jack up monetisation of cars for higher grade officers of grades 20, 21, and 22 in the range of 20 to 25%.

Supply of fertilizers to farmers will be ensured at all costs: CM Maryam

Soon Times Correspondent LAHORE Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz pledged to ensure the supply of fertilizers to farmers at all costs.



Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz reviewed the fertilizer requirements and availability in the province. During the briefing, it was reported that the demand and production of urea fertilizer in Punjab is approximately 6.5 million tons.

Maryam Nawaz expressed satisfaction with the decreasing trend in fertilizer prices and ordered strict and effective measures to prevent hoarding. The meeting also stressed the need for a fool-proof procedure to ensure the availability of fertilizer to farmers. The Chief Minister directed the implementation of effective digital monitoring of fertilizer supply from the plant to

the dealer.

Recommendations for amendments to the Pesticides and Fertilizers Act were also considered during the meeting. A principled decision was made to establish a special helpline for registration in the Kisan Card Programme.

CM Maryam stated that the supply of fertilizers to Punjab's farmers will be ensured. She highlighted that any neglect in preventing the hoarding and smuggling of fertilizers will not be tolerated and that the interests of every farmer will be protected.

FIA starts investigations against individuals involved in propaganda



Soon Times Correspondent RAWALPINDI

The Federal Investigation Agency has started investigation against various individuals involved in propaganda against the state institutions.

Mainly, the accounts on social media which were involved in targeted campaign would be questioned and in this regard, various persons from Rawalpindi were investigated.

The inquiry against the suspects involved in social media campaign would be completed in the upcoming few days.

The institution, previously, also launched investigation against those involved in hateful campaign against the state institutions.

Punjab Forensic Science Agency to be made authority



dependence on other departments would end. He said the draft law would be approved by the Punjab Assembly. After becoming an authority, the officers of the Punjab Forensic Science Agency would be able to inspect the crime scene themselves.

The officers will also collect evidence by taking photographs of the crime scene. Mengal said after establishment of the authority, the officers would be able to take several steps to trace perpetrators.

Soon Times Correspondent LAHORE The Punjab Forensic Science Agency will be made an autonomous institution.

Interior Secretary Noorul Amin Mengal said after the Punjab Forensic Science Agency would be given the status of an authority, its

Nawaz Sharif reclaims PML-N presidency after a gap of six years



Soon Times Correspondent LAHORE Former prime minister Nawaz Sharif has been elected the president of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) unopposed in the party's general council meeting held on Tuesday.

Sharif has become the party head after six years as Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif stepped down from the position a few days ago.

Nawaz Sharif had stepped down

as the president of the PML-N six years ago due to a Supreme Court ruling in the Panama Papers case, disqualifying him as the country's prime minister in 2017.

The following year, the then chief justice of Pakistan, Mian Saqib Nisar, ruled that an individual disqualified under Articles 62 and 63 of the Constitution could not serve as the head of a political party.

According to sources in the PML-N, 11 party members had received nomination papers for

the top position.

The PML-N had formed a five-member election commission led by PML-N Punjab chapter President Rana Sanaullah and comprising Iqbal Zafar Jhagra, Ishrat Ashraf, Jamal Shah Kakar, and Khayal Das Kohistan to conduct the election for the top slot.

As per the schedule, the nomination papers from the candidates were to be received between 10am and 12 noon, with their scrutiny scheduled between 1pm and 2pm and the polling around 4pm.

Gandapur to remove poor performers from his cabinet



Soon Times Correspondent PESHAWAR To two members of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa cabinet are soon likely to be removed over unsatisfactory performance, government sources say, as Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur has already given them a warning.

The sources say Gandapur will apprise Imran Khan - the PTI founding

chairman - of the situation resulting out of these provincial ministers not showing any progress.

Any progress during the meeting between the chief minister and the party founder will lead to their dismissal, they said, but added that they would be given the last before the extreme action.

In case, the said ministers are unable to

change the state of affairs even after that, they will ultimately be removed from the cabinet.

The sources claim that the chief minister wants to see best out of his team in their respective departments and is following a zero-tolerance policy on the subject.

When it comes to their replacements, the sources say, the decision-making powers rest with Gandapur and Imran.

Therefore, the chief minister will announce the decision only after consulting the party founding chairman who is currently incarcerated in Central Jail Rawalpindi, commonly known as Adiala Jail.

It is important to note that the sources did not share the names of those who may fall prey to the decision.

Youn-e-Takbeer: Nation observes 26th anniversary of successful nuclear tests

Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD

The nation is observing the 26th anniversary of Youn-e-Takbeer today (Tuesday) with zeal and fervour in remembrance of the successful nuclear tests conducted by Pakistan in the hills of Chaghai.

Pakistan, with the successful nuclear tests, became the seventh nuclear-armed country in the world and the first in the Islamic world.

The nuclear tests not only demonstrated Pakistan's resolve to safeguard the country's territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty but also the desire to preserve strategic balance in South Asia.

On the occasion of Youn-e-Takbeer, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Acting President Yusuf Raza Gilani and services chiefs felicitated the nation. Day symbolises collective effort of national power. PM Shehbaz congratulated the people of Pakistan, saying the day



symbolises the collective effort of all facets of national power, overcoming what seemed like an insurmountable challenge and achieving a milestone in the country's defense capabilities.

"May 28 signifies more than just a mere commemoration of a day; it encapsulates the narrative of our nation's arduous yet remarkable path towards establishing a credible minimum deterrence," the prime minister wrote on X.

The premier said that Nawaz Sharif, on this historic day in 1998, demonstrated bold leadership by rejecting nerve wrecking pressures and inducements to make Pakistan a

nuclear armed nation.

"I also pay tribute to Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the founder of Pakistan's nuclear programme for his strategic Foresight and unwavering commitment to the cause," said the prime minister.

"Momentous occasion" Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee (JCSC) General Sahir Shamsullah Mirza and services chiefs, on behalf of the armed forces, extended warm felicitations to the nation.

According to Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), this momentous occasion commemorates the historic achievement of Pakistan's nuclear tests in 1998, which successfully established credible minimum deterrence and restored the balance of power in the region.

The armed forces and the nation pay tribute to the unwavering dedication and selfless sacrifices of all those who contributed to this remarkable feat, achieved against overwhelming odds, said the statement. Youn-e-Takbeer testament to nation's resilience

Heroes of Youm-e-Takbeer

Federal Minister for Industry, Production, and Food Security, Rana Tanveer on Tuesday paid tribute to the nation's heroes on the occasion of Youm-e-Takbeer. "I pay tribute to the senior leadership of Pakistan Muslim League, especially former Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, senior military leadership and scientists of Pakistan," said Rana Tanveer. According to the Ministry of Industry statement, due to his determined will and courage, the defense of Pakistan became impregnable for ever. He said that Pakistan's political, military, and scientific leadership came together to achieve this milestone, making May 28 a proud day for the nation. Pakistan has crossed an important milestone in the face of constant defense threats. Today is definitely a proud day for us, as our dear country has emerged as a nuclear power on the map of the world, he added. Rana Tanveer emphasized that Youm-e-Takbeer symbolizes the power of unity and strong will, enabling the nation to overcome external and internal challenges. He urged the nation to come together under the green crescent flag to defend the country and stabilize Pakistan's economy.

Hungary's Anti-Corruption Protests



Dr. Muhammad Akram Zahoor

investigation into the Schadt-Volner case, a major corruption scandal in Hungary. Thousands of people waved Hungarian flags and reacted loudly as Magyar read a statement accusing senior officials from the ruling Fidesz party of corruption due to their long hold on power. The crowd chanted, "Jail them! Jail them!" in response. Since 2010, Prime Minister Viktor Orban and the Fidesz party have dominated Hungarian politics, using their supermajority to change election rules, control the judiciary, limit independent media, and weaken the role of political opponents.

Magyar publicly broke with Fidesz after a scandal involving a pardon led to the resignation of Hungarian President Katalin Novak and caused Magyar's estranged ex-wife, former Justice Minister Judit Varga, to withdraw from politics. Varga, who had planned to lead Fidesz in the upcoming European Parliamentary elections, claimed that Magyar's recording was forced and part of a long-standing scheme to blackmail her, and she accused him of abusing her during their marriage. Magyar has consistently denied these accusations. On March 26, Magyar spent several hours at the Prosecutor-General's Office and stated that the recording implicates officials in several crimes. He also mentioned that he possesses many more recordings related to the Schadt-Volner case and intends to share them with investigators. The Schadt-Volner case involves possible illegal activities by Gyorgy Schadt, the head of the chamber of judicial officers, and a former state secretary at the Justice Ministry, Pal Volner, and reportedly includes wiretaps and classified information. Magyar believes that prosecutors have no other

choice but to summon several government members as witnesses and insists that they must summon the prime minister as well. He argues that Prime Minister Orban is aware of much more wrongdoing than Magyar and his ex-wife knew. Magyar has accused Antal Rogan, a loyalist of Orban who manages the prime minister's cabinet office and government messaging, of having significant influence within a corrupt political group. Fidesz officials have dismissed Magyar's accusations as baseless and an attempt to harass his ex-wife. Magyar has called for a major rally in Budapest on April 6, hoping it will be the largest demonstration in the last 14 years to push for change. His previous call for an anti-government protest on March 15, a national holiday, drew an estimated 35,000 people, where he announced his intention to start a new political party. This rally followed significant anti-government protests in February, sparked by a controversial presidential pardon granted to a man convicted of helping cover up sexual abuse at a children's home.

The Hungarian political landscape, shaped by Fidesz's decade-long supremacy and its strategic alterations to the political system, remains resistant to immediate upheaval. However, the sustained public demonstrations and the mounting pressure from figures like Magyar indicate a brewing discontent that could eventually lead to significant shifts in Hungary's political dynamics. While the immediate future may not mirror the swift changes seen in 1968 France, the persistent and organized efforts of the Hungarian opposition could pave the way for a gradual transformation in the country's governance.

Lifestyle Choices and Cancer Risk Reduction



Secerat Fatima

The cell is the basic structural and functional unit of life. A cell is often termed as a single room in which all biological processes take place. Cells form the basis of life, and trillions of cells combine to form the human body. Cells are referred to as the building blocks of a living organism, as they replicate to give rise to the body's structure and perform essential functions. There are trillions of cells working in the human body, and the function of each cell is of utmost importance. In this vast universe, Allah has not created anything without purpose, and similarly, every cell in our body has a specific and necessary function. Problems can arise if cells do not work properly, as thousands of cells work together to perform specific functions in our body. Cell division is a continuous process that occurs in the human body, ensuring its growth and stability. Simply put, cell division is the process in which a parent cell divides into daughter cells. It is a simple multiplicative process that forms new cells from older ones. Any abnormalities in cell division and replication can lead to a disorder known as "cancer." Abnormal cells divide uncontrollably and spread to form tumors in the body, disrupting normal bodily functions. Cancer has the adverse ability to develop and spread in any tissue and organ of the body. Malignant tumors are the most dangerous type of cancer, as they can invade neighboring cells and cause severe destruction. It is important to note that cancer does not have a single cause. While the most common concept of cancer is based on uncontrolled cell reproduction, this is not the complete picture. In addition to spontaneous internal mutations, external agents such as radiation, chemicals, hormonal drugs, and other toxic substances can disrupt the normal process of cell division and cause cancer. Almost 40 to 60 percent of cancer cases are attributed to exposure to environmental chemicals in food, such as pesticides, herbicides, and preservatives. Cancer can bring a person to the brink of death.

Therefore, every individual should take special precautions to protect themselves from deadly diseases like cancer. Every human should choose a healthy lifestyle for an active and hearty life. These healthy habits not only help prevent cancer but also allow a person to live a disease-free life. It is mandatory for individuals to quit smoking if they desire a healthy and productive life. Tobacco contains 7,000 chemicals, 250 of which seriously affect human health, with 60 being carcinogens that can directly cause cancer. Carcinogens are so devastating for human health that they directly damage the DNA of cells and cause uncontrolled cell division. When tobacco smoke comes into contact with body organs such as the mouth and lungs, it causes severe irritation and inflammation. Smoking increases the risk of weakening immunity, as it plays a detrimental role in lowering white blood cell counts and causing inflammation. Continuous smoking can lead to lung cancer, which is the leading cause of death among men worldwide. According to 2012 statistics, 1.6 million people globally died due to lung cancer, a number expected to increase in the near future. Lung cancer is the second most prevalent cancer among men in Pakistan, with a high prevalence of tobacco use among men aged 25 to 44, particularly in rural areas, where illiteracy and lack of education are significant contributing factors. Alcohol consumption significantly contributes to the development of various types of cancer in the human body. Acetaldehyde is produced as a byproduct of alcohol metabolism and is a carcinogen that significantly increases cancer risk. Alcohol stimulates the high production of estrogen in women, which can cause breast cancer. Alcohol also affects the immune system, lowering the body's immunity, making it less capable of detecting and destroying cancerous cells. Moreover, a weakened immune system makes the body more vulnerable to other infections. Alcohol has a severe impact on the liver, disrupting its activity and causing mutations. Known as liver cancer, recent studies have shown that even small doses of alcohol have highly detrimental effects on the human body, making it advisable to avoid alcohol entirely for a

healthy life. Healthy and balanced diet planning is an exceptional solution to treat cancer in the body. Healthy food choices are essential for maintaining a robust body. A balanced diet, including foods from all food groups such as fruits, vegetables, legumes, pulses, meat, and dairy products, is recommended for cancer patients. To maintain a stable and healthy body, all nutrients are essential and should be consumed in adequate quantities. While carbohydrates, fats, and proteins are all crucial for normal body functioning, proteins are particularly recommended for cancer patients. Cancer patients often undergo complex treatments, including chemotherapy and radiation, which can lead to muscle loss and weakened immunity. Protein plays a significant role in the healing process by repairing tissues and promoting growth. For patients who need to fulfill their protein requirements, lean protein sources such as skinless poultry, fish, and boiled eggs are excellent choices. Additionally, easily digestible proteins can be obtained from plant sources such as pulses, legumes, and beans. To boost immunity, fresh fruits and vegetables containing antioxidants, vitamins (E and A), and minerals are essential. Garlic can strengthen the immune system, soy foods can help shrink tumors, and carotenoids found in some fruits and vegetables can protect cells from free radicals and reduce the risk of cancer. The impact of fats on human health varies depending on the type consumed. Saturated fats have highly detrimental effects on human health and are commonly obtained from animals, including red meat, poultry, and full-fat dairy products. Coconut oil and palm oil are also rich sources of saturated fats. Saturated fats are responsible for increasing blood cholesterol levels, which pose a significant threat to human health by increasing the risk of heart diseases. They are also a major cause of weight gain and obesity, which directly influences the risk of cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and cancer, particularly colorectal cancer. In contrast, healthy fats, known as monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats, are mainly obtained from plants such as olive oil, nuts, seeds, and fish, which also contain healthy.

Pakistan Eyes Economic Lessons from Indonesia: A Path to Prosperity



Islamabad, Pakistan, in its pursuit of economic revitalization, looks to Indonesia for inspiration, recognizing the parallels between the two nations. With a shared vision for economic growth and prosperity, Pakistan seeks to glean insights from Indonesia's successful policies, particularly in trade liberalization, security enhancement, and fostering religious harmony. Learning from Indonesia's experience, Pakistan envisions a transition towards becoming an export-oriented nation. By attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in export-focused industries, Pakistan aims to break free from the debt trap, reallocating significant savings towards public welfare, especially in education and healthcare. Embracing Indonesia's tax reforms and structural models, Pakistan aims to strengthen its fiscal framework, fostering a conducive environment for business growth and investment. By streamlining tax policies, Pakistan aspires to enhance revenue collection and promote economic stability. Furthermore, Pakistan endeavors to harness the power of its tourism sector, drawing inspiration from Indonesia's success. Through investments in infrastructure and visa facilitation, Pakistan seeks to boost tourism exports, unlocking the economic potential of its scenic northern

regions, including Hunza, Gilgit-Baltistan, Skardu, Hazara, Galiyat, and Kaghan. Atta-ul-Karim, an Indonesian National and Chairman of the International Creative Exchange (ICE), underscores the pivotal role of tourism and education in fostering Pakistan's "Creative Economy" and forging stronger ties with Indonesia. ICE, a non-political organization, aims to facilitate knowledge exchange and collaboration between the two nations, paving the way for economic integration and prosperity. In a joint press conference with the Charge d'Affaires of Indonesia in Islamabad, Rahmat Hindiarta, emphasized the importance of bilateral cooperation, highlighting initiatives to upscale trade volume and people-to-people contacts between the two fraternal countries. ICE's vision aligns with the objectives of both Pakistan and Indonesia, seeking to bridge the gap between business communities and foster collaboration in trade and investment. Through its endeavors, ICE aims to contribute to the economic advancement and well-being of both nations. As Pakistan embarks on this journey of economic transformation, it looks to its Indonesian counterpart as a beacon of success, forging new pathways to prosperity and growth.

Road Safety Seminar at M-14 with cadets of Isakhel cadet college

Soon Times Correspondent
Mianwali: Under special initiative regarding Seminars by IG National Highway and Motorway Police, Road Safety seminar was conducted yesterday under supervision of Zonal Commander Motorways North Farid Khan by SC M-14. Pre Cadets of Isakhel college were given lecture and tips along with shields and principal Malik Ferrozidin paid the vote of thanks to high ups.



Pakistan trade deficit to increase by over \$4.16bn in 2024-25: IMF

ISLAMABAD
The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has predicted an increase in Pakistan's trade deficit during the next fiscal year, sources say, as Finance Minister M u h a m m a d Aurangzeb is set to present the 2024-25 budget next week. Pakistan will see the trade deficit jumping by \$4.165 billion in FY25, says the Washington-based lender at a time when two sides held talks in Islamabad for another IMF program. Although the dialogue did not produce a staff-level agreement, the IMF noted that a significant progress had been made towards reaching a deal for an Extended Fund Facility (EFF). The statement was issued after an IMF team, led by mission chief Nathan Porter, concluded discussions with the authorities after arriving in Pakistan on May 13. "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. Pakistan is likely to seek at least \$6b under the new programme and request additional financing from the IMF under the Resilience



and Sustainability Trust, which covers climate funding. Read more: Federal development budget Rs1,200bn, tax collection target Rs12,500bn. Ahead of the discussions, the IMF had warned that downside risks for the Pakistani economy remained exceptionally high. "The authorities' reform program aims to move Pakistan from economic stabilization to strong, inclusive, and resilient growth," Porter added. Coming back to the trade deficit, the IMF has estimated that Pakistan's imports will increase by \$5.517bn and the exports by \$1.352bn. As far as the overall figures are concerned, the IMF says Pakistan is likely to have imports worth \$60.48bn against the exports of \$32.76bn, which translates into a trade deficit of around \$27.72bn. On the other hand, sources in finance ministry revealed that Pakistan was likely to witness a trade deficit of \$23.76bn during the outgoing fiscal year, with the country exports projected to reach \$31.20bn.



We should celebrate Youm-e-Takbir with full national enthusiasm: AC Martin

Soon Times Correspondent
Newsheera Soon Sakesar: A rally was held under the leadership of Assistant Commissioner Irfan Martin regarding Youm-e-Takbir of Pakistan. Rescue 1122, teachers, police

personnel and others participated in the rally. Participants in the rally carried banners and placards highlighting the importance of the invincibility of the Islamic State. Assistant Commissioner Irfan Martin said that we are proud of the

scientists. We should celebrate Youm-e-Takbir with full national enthusiasm. Our defense is impenetrable. At the end of the rally, prayers were made for the security of Pakistan.

Navy thwarts major drug smuggling attempt in Arabian Sea

PNS Aslat seizes large quantity of narcotics estimated to be worth thousands of dollars in int'l market, says ISPR



drugs are estimated to be worth thousands of dollars in the international market. This successful operation underscores the navy's effective maritime surveillance and its commitment to combating drug trafficking. The navy's warships regularly conduct these patrols to prevent drug smuggling, piracy, and human trafficking at sea. On Saturday, the navy deployed the PNS Aslat to conduct regional maritime security patrols in the Indian Ocean. This deployment aims to safeguard merchant vessels entering and exiting Pakistani ports. Additionally, PNS Aslat's presence seeks to enhance the security of international shipping routes, ISPR said. Throughout its mission, the warship will engage in collaborative efforts with allied nations while also undertaking independent operations. Equipped with advanced weaponry and sensors, the warship is prepared to tackle diverse threats and execute various maritime missions effectively.

Soon Times Correspondent
Karachi The Pakistan Navy (PN) on Tuesday successfully intercepted a significant drug smuggling operation in the northern Arabian Sea, according to a

statement from the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR). During a routine patrol as part of the regional maritime security patrol, the naval ship PNS Aslat seized a large quantity of narcotics. The confiscated

Pakistan heatwave pushes temperatures to 52 C, westerly to hit upper areas

MOHENJO DARO
Upper parts of the country are expected to get much needed relief amid a persistent heatwave with the arrival of a westerly after temperatures rose above 52 degrees Celsius (125.6 degrees Fahrenheit) in Pakistan's southern province of Sindh, the highest reading of the summer and close to the country's record high amid an ongoing heatwave. Extreme temperatures throughout Asia over the past month were made worse most likely as a result of human-driven climate change, a team of international scientists have said. Read more: South Asia - the global pollution hotspot: Pakistan, India see fourfold increase in vehicles since 2000. In Mohenjo Daro, a town in Sindh known for archaeological sites that date back to the Indus Valley Civilization built in 2500 BC, temperatures rose as high as 52.2 C (126 F) over the last 24 hours, a senior official of the Pakistan Meteorological Department, Shahid Abbas told Reuters. The reading is the highest of the summer so far, and approached the town's and country's record highs of 53.5 C (128.3 F) and 54 C (129.2 F) respectively. Mohenjo Daro is a small town that experiences extremely hot summers and mild winters, and low rainfall, but its limited markets, including bakeries, tea shops, mechanics, electronic repair shops, and fruit and vegetable sellers, are usually bustling with customers. But with the current heatwave, shops are seeing almost no footfall. "The customers are not coming to the restaurant because of extreme heat. I sit idle at the restaurant with these tables and chairs and without any customers," Wajid



Ali, 32, who owns a tea stall in the town. "I take baths several times a day which gives me a little relief. Also there is no power. The heat has made us very uneasy," lose to Ali's shop is an electronic repairs shop run by Abdul Khaliq, 30, who was sat working with the shop's shutter half down to shield him from the sun. Khaliq also complained about the heat affecting business. Local doctor Mushtaq Ahmed added that the locals have adjusted to living in the extreme weather conditions and prefer staying indoors or near water. "Pakistan is the fifth most vulnerable country to the impact of climate change. We have witnessed above normal rains, floods," Rubina Khurshed Alam, the prime minister's coordinator on climate, said at a news conference on Friday adding that the government is running awareness campaigns due to the heatwaves. The highest temperature recorded in Pakistan was in 2017 when temperatures rose to 54 C (129.2 F) in the city of Turbat, located in the Southwestern province of Balochistan. This was the second hottest in Asia and fourth highest in the world, said Sardar Sarfaraz, Chief Meteorologist at the Pakistan Meteorological Department. The heatwave will subside in Mohenjo Daro and surrounding areas, but another spell is expected to hit other areas in Sindh, including the capital, Karachi - Pakistan's largest city.

PTI asks judiciary to expedite May 9 accused cases

Soon Times Correspondent
ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) reiterated its demand on Monday to nullify military trials of civilians involved in the May 9, 2023 violence. The party urged the judiciary to expedite cases of individuals who have been detained for over a year. Speaking to reporters, PTI spokesperson Raoof Hasan highlighted that despite the Supreme Court ruling declaring civilian trials in military courts unconstitutional, many young individuals remain unjustly detained, suffering under state oppression. Hasan emphasized the urgency of the situation, noting that it has been over a month since the request to form a larger bench for appeals against the apex court ruling was made. However, the case remains unscheduled since the last hearing on April 24. The spokesperson pointed out the immense suffering endured by the

families of these victims due to inhuman conditions faced by those unlawfully imprisoned. He also highlighted the violation of fundamental human rights, particularly during the harsh summer conditions. Hasan underscored that the Constitution prohibits the trial of civilians in military courts, especially by appointing defense ministry employees as judges. He asserted that in any civilized democratic society, civilian trials in military courts are nonexistent. He condemned the practice of falsely accusing citizens and prolonging their military trials, labelling it a systematic attack on human rights. The Supreme Court, he urged, should immediately establish a larger bench to hear intra-court appeals against military court trials and proceed with these cases urgently.

The Supreme Court must ensure protection of both the Constitution and fundamental rights, and should order the release of those currently in military custody, the spokesperson added. Meanwhile, the PTI spokesperson underscored the significance of May 28, commemorating Pakistan's successful nuclear tests as a testament to national determination, sacrifice, and unity. However, he criticised certain groups for exploiting Pakistan's peaceful nuclear programme for political gain.



Ireland officially recognises Palestinian state



LONDON
Ireland officially recognised a Palestinian state on Tuesday, the government said in a statement, defying Israel which had condemned the plan.
The government approved the recognition in a cabinet meeting on Tuesday morning.
"The government recognises Palestine as a sovereign and independent state and agreed to establish full diplomatic relations between Dublin and Ramallah," the statement said.
"An Ambassador of Ireland to the State of Palestine will be appointed along with a full Embassy of Ireland in Ramallah."
Irish Prime Minister Simon Harris the move was about keeping hope for peace alive.

Dutch parties to propose former intelligence chief as new prime minister



AMSTERDAM
Former Dutch intelligence chief Dick Schoof will be presented on Tuesday as the proposed prime minister of the Netherlands' incoming rightwing government, public broadcaster NOS said citing sources close to the matter.
Election winner Geert Wilders earlier this month reached an agreement on forming a new government with three other conservative parties, after ruling himself out for the top job in the cabinet.



As Israel attacks Rafah, Palestinians are living in tents and searching for food

Entry of fuel has fallen to about a third of what it was before the Rafah offensive, according to OCHA.

DEIRAL-BALAH, Gaza Strip
The tent camps stretch for more than 16 kilometers (10 miles) along Gaza's coast, filling the beach and sprawling into empty lots, fields and town streets. Families dig trenches to use as toilets. Fathers search for food and water, while children look through garbage and wrecked buildings for scraps of wood or cardboard for their mothers to burn for cooking.
Over the past three weeks, Israel's offensive in Rafah has sent nearly a million Palestinians fleeing the southern Gaza city and scattering across a wide area. Most have already been displaced multiple times during Israel's nearly 8-month-old war in Gaza, which is aimed at destroying Hamas but has devastated the territory and caused what the United Nations says is near-famine.
FILE - Palestinians displaced by the Israeli bombardment of the Gaza Strip set up a tent camp in Rafah on Dec. 6, 2023. (AP Photo/Hatem Ali, file)

sprawling into empty lots, fields and town streets. (AP Photo/Hatem Ali, file)
Palestinians displaced by the Israeli bombardment of the Gaza Strip set up a tent camp in Rafah on Dec. 6, 2023. (AP Photo/Hatem Ali, file)
The situation has been worsened by a dramatic plunge in the amount of food, fuel and other supplies reaching the U.N. and other aid groups to distribute to the population. Palestinians have largely been on their own to resettle their families and find the basics for survival.
"The situation is tragic. You have 20 people in the tent, with no clean water, no electricity. We have nothing," said Mohammed Abu Radwan, a schoolteacher in a tent with his wife, six children, and other extended family.
"I can't explain what it feels like living through constant displacement, losing your loved ones," he said. "All of this destroys us mentally."
Families usually have to buy the wood and tarps for their tents,

which can run up to \$500, not counting ropes, nails and the cost of transporting the material, the humanitarian group Mercy Corps said.
Israeli authorities controlling all entry points into Gaza have been letting greater numbers of private commercial trucks into the territory, the U.N. and aid worker say. More fruits and vegetables are found in markets now, and prices on some have fallen, Palestinians say.
Still, most homeless Palestinians can't afford them. Many in Gaza have not received salaries for months and their savings are depleting. Even those who have money in the bank often can't withdraw it because there is so little physical cash in the territory. Many turn to black market exchanges that charge up to 20% to give cash for transfers from bank accounts.
Meanwhile, humanitarian convoys with supplies for the U.N. and other aid groups to distribute

for free have fallen to nearly their lowest levels in the war, the U.N. says.
Previously, the U.N. was receiving several hundred trucks a day. That rate has dropped to an average of 53 trucks a day since May 6, according to the latest figures from the U.N. humanitarian office OCHA on Friday. Some 600 trucks a day are needed to stave off starvation, according to USAID.
In the past three weeks, most of the incoming aid has entered through two crossings from Israel in northern Gaza and via a U.S.-built floating pier taking deliveries by sea. The two main crossings in the south, Rafah from Egypt and Kerem Shalom from Israel, are either not operating or are largely inaccessible for the U.N. because of fighting nearby. Israel says it has been letting hundreds of trucks through Kerem Shalom, but the U.N. has only been able to collect about 170 of them on the Gaza side over the past three weeks because it can't reach the crossing.

Polish man sentenced to life in Congo on espionage charges has been released and returned to Europe



WARSAW, Poland
Congolese authorities have released a Polish man who was sentenced there to life in prison on espionage charges, Poland's foreign minister said Tuesday.
Radek Sikorski wrote on social media platform X that Mariusz Majewski was back in Europe. Sikorski posted a brief video of himself apparently talking to Majewski over the phone to welcome him back. He did not say where exactly Majewski was.
The 52-year-old was detained by Congolese forces in February and later faced a military court in the restive Central African nation, accused of spying. Last week he received a life sentence in prison. No details were released as to where he was held.
Poland's Foreign Ministry protested Majewski's innocence. Last week President Andrzej Duda spoke on the phone with Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi seeking to obtain Majewski's release.
Poland does not have a diplomatic mission in Congo.
Last week, Polish Foreign Ministry spokesman Pawel Wronski said without elaborating that Majewski "is not a spy, he is a member of a travelers club" and was just following his "passion in life."
Wronski said it was due to a chain of coincidental circumstances and events that he found himself in Congo and his "behavior was the result of a lack of knowledge of local customs."
Earlier this month, the Congolese army said it had foiled a coup attempt and arrested the perpetrators, including some foreigners. Several U.S. citizens are among those arrested.

Sports & Showbiz

Mohsin Naqvi rewards Wheelchair cricketers for Asia Cup triumph



LAHORE
Chairman Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Mohsin Naqvi on Monday presented a cheque worth rupees 1.5 million to the Pakistan Wheelchair cricket team on winning the Asia Cup 2024.
The Pakistan Wheelchair cricket team had overcome Sri Lanka in the final of the Asia Cup Wheelchair championship 2023 in Nepal last year. It was Wheelchair cricketers consecutive title.
In order to the team's achievement, Chairman PCB invited members of the Pakistan Wheelchair Cricket team to the PCB Headquarters at Gaddafi stadium and congratulated them on their triumph.
Mohsin Naqvi lauded the team's efforts and expressed best wishes for the team's continued success. He also assured PCB's support for the Wheelchair Cricket Team in its future endeavours.

OpenAI's Johansson gaffe pushes voice cloning into spotlight



Paris
OpenAI was forced to apologise to actor Scarlett Johansson last week for using her voice -- or something very similar -- on its latest chatbot, throwing the spotlight on to voice-cloning tech.
Although OpenAI denied the voice they used was Johansson's, her case was not helped by CEO Sam Altman flagging the new model with a one-word message on social media -- "Her".
Johansson voiced an AI character in the film "Her", which Altman has previously said is his favourite film about the technology. Right from the start, AI voice cloning has proved problematic.
Last year, British firm Elevenlabs sued Johansson for the wrong reasons when it released its voice-cloning software. Internet pranksters immediately began pushing out deepfaked celebrities -- Harry Potter star Emma Watson was shown reading Hitler's Mein Kampf. Law enforcement warned that AI clones could be used to extort money from loved ones over the phone.
The technology has developed rapidly in the past year becoming far more realistic and nuanced. Danish entrepreneur Victor Riparbelli, CEO of British AI firm Synthesia, told AFP it was largely down to a program called Tortoise that was released two years ago.
The program's developers threw thousands of hours of voice data into their model in an unstructured way and discovered it not only learnt what to say but how to say it.
"That was a pretty big paradigm shift," Riparbelli said on the sidelines of last week's VivaTech conference in Paris. Tortoise was an open source program and Elevenlabs was the first to go to market using it. OpenAI uses similar systems though they do not release any details.
"Not very good"
Much of the controversy around voice cloning has focused on concerns over people misusing the software. But the claim against OpenAI is unusual because it is the company itself accused of playing fast and loose.
"It was very unfortunate that OpenAI did that -- really not very good," Katya Laine, CEO of TALKR AI, told AFP at VivaTech. "If they actually cloned her voice without her knowing then I think that's very very bad," said Riparbelli.
The two entrepreneurs are among hundreds harnessing AI voice programs for uses that they argue will make companies more efficient. Laine's firm provides virtual voice assistants -- essentially AI customer service agents.

Anant Ambani, Radhika Merchant set for another pre-wedding bash



(Web Desk) - Anant Ambani and Radhika Merchant are all set to again grace their pre-wedding gala from May 28.
Anant Ambani and Radhika Merchant are set to enjoy a luxurious pre-wedding cruise. The couple's festivity will be attended by several famous faces.
Anant and Radhika's cruise will take place between May 28 and June 1, 2024.
It is reported that approximately 800 guests will be present at the event.
The cruise is set to include a memorable 4,380 kilometre journey from Italy to the South of France and back.

Ronaldo breaks Saudi Pro League scoring record



Riyadh
Cristiano Ronaldo broke the record for the most goals in a Saudi Pro League season when he struck for the 34th and 35th time in Al Nassr's final game of the campaign.
"I don't follow the records, the records follow me," the 39-year-old Portuguese forward tweeted afterwards.
The former Real Madrid and Manchester United star struck in first-half stoppage time and again in the 69th minute with a header as Al Nassr defeated Al Ittihad 4-2 at home on Monday.
The previous record for most goals in a single season was the 34 scored by the Moroccan Abderrazak Hamdallah in 2018-19.
Al Nassr were already assured of a second-place finish, coming a distant 14 points behind champions AlHilal.