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35 Pakistani pilgrims died during Hajj: ministry

Official says due to temperature of 50°C, this was a "tough" Hajj; over 1,000 pilgrims have lost their lives this year



Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD At least 35 Pakistanis have lost their lives while performing Hajj this year due to extreme weather conditions, the Ministry of Religious Affairs confirmed on Thursday. The death toll from this year's Hajj has exceeded 1,000, an AFP tally said on Thursday, more than half of them unregistered worshippers who performed the pilgrimage in extreme heat. Fatalities have been reported by Egypt, Pakistan, India, Jordan, Indonesia, Iran, Senegal, Tunisia, and Iraq.

Director General of Pakistan's Hajj Mission Abdul Wahab Soomro said that as of 4pm on June 18, a total of 35 Pakistani deaths had been reported — 20 in Makkah, six in Madina, four in Mina, three in Arafat, and two in Muzdalifah. "Due to a temperature of 50°C, this was a tough Hajj," the official said. Soomro also dismissed social media claims of leaving the pilgrims "helpless." "We trust the Saudi government's information and we confirm it ourselves as well, whenever there's a death. We are informed." Meanwhile, the ministry added that under the Saudi government's rules,

they seek permission from the heirs of the family for burial. "After bathing [the body], funeral prayers are offered here and burial takes place in Saudi Arabia." In case the family wants the body back, it said, arrangements are made to send it to Pakistan. Media reports suggest that friends and family of missing Hajj pilgrims are searching hospitals and pleading online for news, fearing the worst. The Hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam and all Muslims with the means must complete it at least once. Its timing is determined by the Islamic lunar calendar, shifting forward each year in the Gregorian calendar.

PIA's post-Hajj flight operation gets under way



Soon Times Correspondent KARACHI The post-Hajj flight operation to bring back over 86,000 Pakistani pilgrims, under the government scheme, from Saudi Arabia started on Thursday. The first flight of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) carrying pilgrims reached Karachi. PIA's post-Hajj operation will continue till July 21. At least 250 flights will transport pilgrims from Jeddah and Medina to various cities in Pakistan. Upon arrival at the airport, the pilgrims will receive five litres of Zamzam water. Related Topics

Lawyers killing a test case for the government, says Law Minister Tarar



Soon Times Correspondent ATOKK Federal Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar on Thursday spoke at the condolence reference of the murdered lawyers in Attock where he assured of taking the killers to justice by declaring it as a test case for the government. "It is really sad that we will not be able to meet our friends again but I assure you that justice will prevail and we will do everything for the consolation of the bereaved families of Israr and Zulfiqar,"

the minister said. He said that this was a textbook case of anti terrorism. "Every case has its own merits, job of a lawyer is to present the case before the court and verdict is then announced on merit, no one will be allowed to go scot-free as lawyers are an important pillar of the society. "Good human beings and friends stay alive in our hearts forever. We should scratch our heads to stamp out events like these, psychological screening should be made necessary for on-duty security personnel in order to stave off Attock-like incidents, policy on bringing arms to the court premises should be made categorical." He added.

Why do we make everything controversial in Pakistan, asks CJP Isa



Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faez Isa has remarked, "Is it necessary to make everything controversial in Pakistan?" The CJP made these remarks on Thursday during the hearing on the appeal of the Election Commission against the formation of Election

Tribunals. He also remarked that differences also emerged between the President of Pakistan and Election Commission over the general elections schedule. Two-member bench comprising Chief Justice and Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghani was hearing the case. Sikandar Bashir represented the Election Commission (EC) and

Salman Akram Raja was the counsel of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf in the case. The EC lawyer informed the court that the case is pertaining to the interpretation of Article 219(C) of the Constitution of Pakistan. The Chief Justice asked Sikandar Bashir to apprise the court about some facts of the case. Following direction of the CJP, the EC lawyer informed the court that on Feb 14 last, the commission dispatched letters to all High Courts regarding formation of the tribunals. He said formation of the tribunals falls under the purview of the commission. He said through these letters all the High Courts were requested to furnish the names of judges. On February 20, he said the Lahore High Court forwarded names of two judges, and both were notified by the EC for the Election Tribunals. On April 26, two more judges were named as the Election Tribunals.

China's minister reaches Pakistan today, will preside over meeting on CPEC



Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD Minister of the International Department of the Communist Party of China Liu Jianchao will arrive here on Thursday on a three-day visit to Pakistan. Jianchao, who is also a member of the Communist Party's Central Committee will participate in third meeting of the Pakistan-China Joint Consultative Mechanism. During the visit, Liu Jianchao along with the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister will co-chair the Third Meeting of the Pakistan-China Joint Consultative Mechanism of the Political Parties on CPEC. He will also call on the senior civil and military leadership. According to the Foreign Office, Minister Jianchao is visiting on the invitation of Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar.

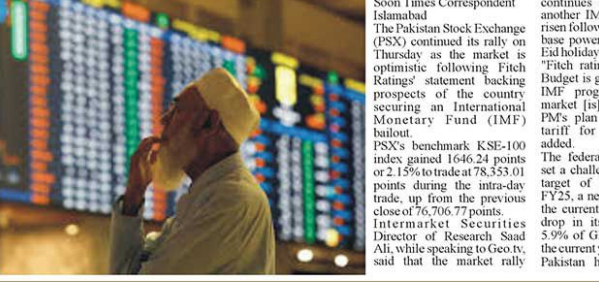
NA meets today to begin debate on budget 2024-25 amid PPP reservations



Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD The National Assembly has been summoned today (Thursday) to debate the federal budget 2024-25 whereas the opposition has decided to stage a strong protest during the session. The session will start at 5pm for which a two-point agenda has been issued. It is learnt that the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), who is an ally of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), will not take part in discussion due to differences with the government over announcement of the budget without consultation with it. Meanwhile, the PPP insiders said Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari was likely to meet Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to discuss his party's reservations over the federal budget before the start of the session. They said the PML-N had not made any serious effort to address their grievances. Therefore, the party had not committed to participating in the debate, they added.

PSX gains after Fitch backs budget proposals for IMF bailout

"Market rally continues as optimism for another IMF program [me] has risen following budget," says analyst



Soon Times Correspondent Islamabad The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued its rally on Thursday as the market is optimistic following Fitch Ratings' statement backing prospects of the country securing an International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout. PSX's benchmark KSE-100 index gained 1646.24 points or 2.15% to trade at 78,553.01 points during the intra-day trade, up from the previous close of 76,706.77 points. Intermarket Securities Director of Research Saad Ali, while speaking to Geo TV, said that the market rally

continues as optimism for another IMF programme has risen following the budget and base power tariff hike before Eid holidays. "Fitch rating thinks that the Budget is good enough for an IMF program. Also, [the] market [is] taking positively PFM's plan to reduce power tariff for industries," Ali added. The federal government has set a challenging tax revenue target of Rs1.3 trillion for FY25, a near-40% jump from the current year, and a sharp drop in its fiscal deficit to 5.9% of GDP from 7.4% for the current year. Pakistan had to reduce its

fiscal deficit as part of negotiations with the IMF, with which it is discussing a loan of \$6.5 billion, as it seeks to avert a debt default for an economy growing at the slowest pace in the region. In a statement a day earlier, Fitch Ratings said Pakistan's ambitious FY25 budget strengthens prospects for an IMF deal "We believe a new IMF deal will be agreed, underpinning other external funding." Arif Habib Limited (AHL) Head of Research Tahir Abbas also said that no major changes in the budget for the stock market and budgetary framework are in line with the IMF recommendation and expectations of signing a new and bigger programme.

Owais Leghari seeks Naqvi's help over protests at grid stations in KP

KP police were not registering cases against individuals involved in these incidents

Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD Federal Minister for Energy Owais Leghari has written a letter to Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi asking for help on the incidents at grid stations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Leghari has written a letter to the Interior Minister that "influential individuals" in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are leading protests on the premises of grid stations. The minister highlighted that provincial assembly members and others had unlawfully directed grid station staff to restore electricity, exacerbating line losses and electricity theft issues at affected feeders. This situation not only



jeopardizes grid station security but also poses risks to safety of the staff. He said that KP police were not registering cases against individuals involved in these incidents. Leghari also urged for immediate measures to prevent unauthorised access to grid stations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and demanded that cases be registered against those responsible for disrupting operations and threatening security. The loadshedding dispute between Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and centre intensified on Wednesday as Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur entered a grid station in his hometown of Dera Ismail Khan and restored the power supply.

Imran Khan's political advisor abducted from Lahore



Soon Times Correspondent Islamabad FIR states Ghulam Shabbir was abducted by unknown individuals two days ago while he was traveling to Islamabad. Political advisor to former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan has been abducted from Lahore. According to the police, an FIR regarding Ghulam Shabbir's abduction has been registered at the Kalna police station, with his son Bilal as the complainant. Shabbir is also the elder brother of PTI leader Shahbaz Gill. The FIR states that Shabbir was

abducted by unknown individuals two days ago while he was travelling from home to Islamabad. He had left his residence in Lahore's Khayaban-e-Amin late at night, headed towards Islamabad.



CDA, Cleanliness drive during Eid-ul-Azha

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday appreciated the Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Islamabad Capital Territory Administration for effectively carrying out the cleanliness drive during Eid-ul-Azha. On his X timeline, the prime minister also appreciated CDA Chairman and Chief Commissioner of Islamabad Muhammad Ali Randhawa over the commendable operations during the three days of Eid. "I deeply appreciate Muhammad Ali Randhawa, Chairman CDA/Chief Commissioner Islamabad and Islamabad Capital Territory administration for effectively executing a commendable cleanliness drive during Eid-ul-Azha. Shabash (Well Done).

Downfall of Pakistan's Economy



Pakistan is a blessed country that has a large number of mineral resources but after all of this, it is called a developing country or a less developed country. Why? The answer is our administration, our poor governance, and their inefficient policies. It does not relate to a specific government. It includes all the previous and present governments who did nothing for the development of Pakistan's economy. The result is that now our backbone becomes weaker day by day and the public watch this downfall patiently because they have no right to ask the question from administration about where their tax money has been spent. If someone tries to raise their voice against corruption the result is zero because the government has the power and hold on all institutions including the court. The Justice system is also run under the government's desire. Judiciary is the servant of the government. Why did the government fail to provide relief to the public even though they pay all taxes to the state? Some of them have no knowledge about their country's matters they love their leaders blindly. They have no concern about the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, they just cast their votes to get some money, in other words, they sell out their votes just for Rs. 5000. Most of them cast their vote based on family relations, or the basis of east system and some of them cast their vote to these corrupt people just on the orders of their spiritual leaders (Peers). They have no awareness about Pakistan's ideology and its issues.

They did not think about their forefather's sacrifices for the sake of building Pakistan. In other words, we are ignorant, we are hypocrites because we did not fulfill our duties as Pakistani citizens. It is sad to say that we are patwari, Youthias, and Jiallay but we are not Pakistanis. We forgot our values, culture, and ancestors' teachings. We remember the Iqbal and Quaid day but we forgot about their message and hard work for the sake of Pakistan. Not only the politicians but we are all responsible for our poor condition because we choose these corrupts through vote this way they came into power and looted our country but after seeing their poor and inappropriate work we did not condemn their bad governance. National Accountability Bureau failed to punish these corrupt politicians and stop the corruption in the country because behind the scene it is also run by powerful politicians and the NAB court is unable to hang out these corrupt that's why their corruption has been increasing day to day and because of this middleman suffers a lot. The main reasons for our Paralyzed Economy are: A large amount of Public Tax money has been spent on the luxuries of Politicians, Government officers, and Ministers in the name of allowances. Because of the minister's luxuries and corruption in the Development funds our budget always goes into the deficit. Due to the deficit budget, we have no other option except to borrow from the IMF the rate of interest has increased which results in a fall in investment and an increase in prices. Politicians never leave their luxuries so govt has no other option but to increase tax on the public and enjoy their luxuries. Our Balance of Trade is always unfavorable because our exports are always less than our imports. Our exports are fewer because our government made

ineffective and weak policies for their interest and failed to provide relief to the investors and promote the industry. Government and administration do not work properly and made effective economic policies because if the Pakistan economy has developed then poverty will be reduced which leads to human capital because of the increase in the Per Capita Income then it would be difficult for the politicians and ministers to make them fool. Government officials stole the public tax money and foreign aid which is in billions of dollars amount and run their businesses abroad rather than in the homeland but at the time of the election they came to Pakistan but those who are not live here and run their businesses abroad how they understand our economic and social issues!!! Rather than use the public tax money on public welfare they used it for their welfare. Every year a huge amount of National Treasure is spent on international tours of ministers. They went on international tours with family and friends at the expense of the nation's treasures even though they went on their business trips through public expenses. Now, open your eyes and see the reality of how a large amount of our national budget has been spent on our Politician's and ministers' welfare then how could we push our economy on the right track when our leaders and administration are doing dishonesty with Pakistan??? Every year millions of students are graduated from universities but have no employment here then most of them attempt suicide and most of them went abroad for work that's why we are facing the brain drain issue. If our educated youth went abroad then what will be the future of Pakistan??? Take steps today for your future before the corrupt politicians sell out the country and developed worlds take over us.

Scope of IT in Pakistan and it's Youth



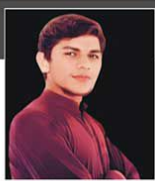
Iftikhar Uddin Anjum

The scope of IT in Pakistan is vast and rapidly growing, and the country's youth are playing a significant role in driving this growth. With over 60% of the population under the age of 25, Pakistan has a significant demographic dividend that is contributing to the development of the IT industry. Young Pakistanis are increasingly pursuing careers in IT, driven by the sector's growth potential and job opportunities. Many are opting for fields like software development, data science, digital marketing, and cyber security, where demand is high and talent is in short supply. The government is also providing support to young IT enthusiasts through initiatives like the Prime Minister's Youth Program, which offers training and funding for young entrepreneurs and startups. Additionally, various incubators and accelerators are providing resources and mentorship to young IT professionals, helping them turn their ideas into successful businesses. The impact of youth on Pakistan's IT industry is multifaceted: Innovation: Young Pakistanis are driving innovation in the IT sector, developing solutions that cater to local needs and global markets. Entrepreneurship: Many young IT professionals are opting for entrepreneurship, setting up their own startups and creating jobs for others. Skills development: Youth are acquiring specialized skills in

emerging technologies like AI, blockchain, and cloud computing, making Pakistan a competitive player in the global IT market. Digital transformation: Young Pakistanis are at the forefront of digital transformation in various industries like healthcare, finance, and education, leveraging technology to improve efficiency and productivity. E-commerce: Youth are driving the growth of e-commerce in Pakistan, with many starting their own online ventures or working for established companies. To fully harness the potential of youth in IT, Pakistan needs to address certain challenges, including: Education and training: Providing quality education and training programs that align with industry needs. Infrastructure: Ensuring adequate infrastructure, including internet connectivity and hardware, to support IT development. Funding: Providing access to funding for young entrepreneurs and startups. By addressing these challenges and leveraging the energy and creativity of its youth, Pakistan can unlock the full potential of its IT industry and emerge as a significant player in the global tech landscape. The future of IT in Pakistan looks promising, with youth driving innovation and entrepreneurship. As the industry continues to grow, it is likely to have a positive impact on the country's economy and society, creating jobs, improving living standards, and contributing to GDP growth. In conclusion, the scope of IT in Pakistan is vast and rapidly growing, and the country's youth are playing a significant role in driving this growth. By providing the necessary support and resources, Pakistan can harness the potential of its youth and emerge as a leader in the global IT

industry. Here we have question why you of Pakistan should Choose IT as a profession? The answer is IT is future of world and Pakistan and there are many reasons why youth should Choose it as a profession. High demand: IT is a rapidly growing industry with a high demand for skilled professionals, offering a wide range of job opportunities. Good compensation: IT professionals are generally well-compensated, with competitive salaries and benefits. Career growth: The IT industry offers a clear path for career advancement, with opportunities to move into leadership roles or start your own business. Constant learning: The IT field is constantly evolving, providing opportunities for continuous learning and skill development. Flexibility: IT careers offer flexible work arrangements, including remote work options and freelancing opportunities. Impactful work: IT professionals have the opportunity to work on projects that can positively impact society and improve people's lives. Global opportunities: IT is a global industry, offering opportunities to work with international companies and clients. Diverse field: IT encompasses various fields, such as software development, data science, cyber security, and more, offering diverse career paths. Government support: The Pakistani government is actively promoting the IT industry, offering support and resources for IT professionals. Growing industry: Pakistan's IT industry is growing rapidly, offering a wealth of opportunities for young professionals. By choosing IT as a profession, the youth of Pakistan can unlock a world of opportunities and contribute to the country's economic growth and development.

A History of Political Instability



Abu Zar Chafari

The conflict in Pakistan signifies uncertainty and chaos in its political life. This is problematic because numerous challenges hinder the proper functioning of the government, leading to widespread distrust among the populace. A constant source of conflict in Pakistan is the frequent changes in government leadership. Political instability has resulted in various forms and styles of government, with leaders being overthrown by rebellion, judicial intervention, or loss of trust. The lack of continuity in government adversely affects the administrative process, preventing the implementation of long-term policies. A major cause of this political conflict is the imbalance of power between the civilian government and the military. Pakistan's energy sector has traditionally been under military control, with military authorities exerting indirect influence on civilian governance. This power dynamic undermines democratic principles and institutions,

exacerbating instability. Additionally, Pakistan is home to many ethnic and religious groups that often conflict with each other. Politicians sometimes exploit these divisions for electoral gain, leading to further strife. Armed groups within these communities frequently engage in violence and influence politics. Economic issues such as poverty, inflation, and unemployment contribute to Pakistan's instability. High levels of poverty and inequality generate social tensions, resulting in protests and civil unrest. Economic instability undermines the government's ability to address complex problems and develop long-term development plans. Terrorism and militancy are also significant challenges to Pakistan's security. The country suffers from domestic and foreign-backed terrorists who disrupt stability and security. Militant groups often oppose the state and disrupt daily life through violence. Moreover, Pakistan's geographical location makes it vulnerable to foreign influences, adding complexity to its political system. External attempts to influence national politics increase tension and instability.

The partition of India and Pakistan led to unprecedented chaos and violence, displacing millions and causing countless deaths. This historical event fostered hatred and conflict between religious and ethnic groups. Despite the passage of decades, these divisive tensions persist with ethnic strife and conflict still prevalent in Pakistan. For instance, in Balochistan, low-level separatist movements have persisted for decades. Baloch separatists claim that the central government exploits the state's resources, leading to violence and instability. Similarly, in Sindh province, tensions between indigenous Sindhis and Urdu-speaking Mohajirs highlight the deep divides within Pakistani society. Pakistan's historical problems have disproportionately affected ethnic minorities. Although Pakistan is predominantly Muslim, minorities often face discrimination and violence. The treatment of Hindus, Sikhs, and other religious groups is a stark reminder of the challenges in promoting inclusivity and tolerance in a country rooted in religious identity. Additionally, Pakistan's early years were marked by political instability and power struggles. The frequent changes in leadership and the threat of military intervention have cast a long shadow over the country. The assassination of Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan in 1951 highlighted the mismanagement and despair of the young democratic nation. Globally, overt

and covert influences shape the destinies of nations, often determining power dynamics. For example, the United States, with its extensive military hegemony, has influenced global politics significantly. Military interventions in regions like the Middle East and Asia have led to regime changes and the re-establishment of alliances. The 2003 overthrow of Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq is a clear example. However, such control often breeds resentment and rebellion. America's interventionist policies have fueled anti-American sentiment, rebellion, and conflict, as seen in the long conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The rise of military powers like China has further changed the global landscape. The rapid expansion of the People's Liberation Army, especially in the Asia-Pacific region, has challenged traditional power structures, creating new geopolitical tensions. Conflicts in the South China Sea and tensions with neighboring countries exemplify the consequences of military expansion. Additionally, advancements in military technology, such as cyberwarfare and drones, have blurred the lines between war and conflict, increasing the risk of unintended

consequences.

Understanding and resolving these complex fault lines is crucial for fostering peace and stability. In the Middle East, for example, the Sunni-Shia divide, represented by the rivalry between Saudi Arabia and Iran, has fueled wars in Syria and Yemen, causing immense civilian suffering. Similarly, Africa's ethnic differences, tied to historical grievances and power struggles, pose significant security and development challenges. The Rwandan genocide, driven by long-standing conflict between Hutus and Tutsis, is a chilling reminder of the consequences of unchecked racism. One of the most significant obstacles to prosperity and international security is weak civil society. Ineffective, corrupt, or incompetent institutions can undermine the rule of law and hinder economic growth. In sub-Saharan Africa, weak governance structures exacerbate social problems, worsen corruption, and impede development. Corruption in countries like Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo diverts resources from essential services, deepening poverty. In conflict-torn nations like Afghanistan and Iraq, weak civil society institutions hinder reconstruction efforts, perpetuating corruption and violence. Even established democracies like the United States are not immune to weak civil society. Public trust in government institutions is eroding due to

increased polarization and misinformation.

Addressing these challenges requires innovative and integrated solutions. Economic globalization, conflict, and other global issues necessitate collaborative efforts to protect human health and promote sustainable development. For instance, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed fundamental societal conflicts and highlighted the need for economic resilience. Climate change also poses serious economic challenges, especially for vulnerable countries like the Maldives and Tuvalu. Inequality in income distribution remains a global problem, impeding social cohesion and economic success. Technological disruptions present both opportunities and challenges, necessitating proactive measures to address workforce changes and skills development.

Political conflict has been a recurring theme in Pakistan's narrative, significantly affecting its economic and geographical landscape. With a history marked by coups, weak governments, and tensions between civil and military authorities, Pakistan has struggled to achieve stability and prosperity. This comprehensive review explores the various impacts of political conflict in Pakistan on governance, markets, and social and regional issues. Changes in government, whether through democratic processes or military interventions,

Commissioner congratulates the DCs, ACs & others regarding cleanliness drive

Soon Times Correspondent
Sargodha:
Commissioner Sargodha Division Muhammad Ajmal Bhatti has congratulated the Deputy Commissioners, Assistant Commissioners and Municipal Officers of the four districts, the heads and field staff of other institutions for setting a new record in terms of cleanliness in the three days of Eid-ul-Adha. The commissioner said that a total of 9,817 metric tons of garbage was disposed off in the three days of Eid-ul-Adha in the four districts.

7838 MT in Sargodha, 661 MT in Khushab, 739 MT in Mianwali and 579 MT in Bhakkar were transported to the dumping site. A total of 1923 waste collection points were set up in the four districts, including 1273 in Sargodha, 215 in Khushab, 331 in Mianwali and 104 in Bhakkar. Similarly, in all the four districts, the workers picked up the garbage from 116 thousand 512 places and shifted it first to the temporary collection points and later to the dumping sites. Sacrificial animal carcasses were collected from 78, 872 places in

Sargodha, 12,255 places in Khushab, 14,378 places in Mianwali and 11,017 places in Bhakkar and destroyed under SOPs. A total of 1,398 complaints were received in the three days of Eid through the control rooms and other monitoring sources established in the four districts. Among them 426 were related to Sargodha, 258 related to Khushab, 378 related to Mianwali and 336 related to Bhakkar which have been resolved and Sargodha division has been made zero waste.

Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf shares a message on World Hydrography Day

Soon Times Correspondent.
Islamabad:
World Hydrography Day (WHD) is celebrated worldwide on 21st June each year to raise awareness about the importance of hydrography and how it plays an important role in improving our knowledge of the oceans. The theme chosen by International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) for WHD-24 is "Hydrographic Information Enhancing Safety, Efficiency, and Sustainability in Marine Activities," which aptly underscores the criticality of hydrographic services in contemporary maritime affairs. Annual celebration of this day emphasizes importance of hydrography as it underpins almost every activity associated with the sea including safety of navigation, security and defence, environmental protection, ports/harbour construction, coastal zone/disaster management and maritime boundary delimitation. Pakistan is blessed with over 1000 kms of coastline along with 290,000 Sq kms of sea area within its EEZ (Exclusive Economic Zone) and Continental Shelf (CS). Pakistan like other coastal states is responsible for hydrographic surveys and production of nautical charts/maps of its waters to provide accurate nautical information to the



mariners. On behalf of Pakistan, the National Hydrographic (comprising North Arabian Sea, Persian Gulf, Red Sea region) since 1976 for promulgation of Navigation Warnings. This is indeed a great honour for Pakistan, which shows the trust of the world community on capabilities and professionalism of our hydrographers. The Hydrographers have also remained instrumental in helping us determine the maritime boundaries and in past getting Pakistan's extended Continental Shelf area of 50,000 sq Kms approved from UN in 2015. As promoter of national maritime domain, it is also worth mentioning that PN/NHO in collaboration with China has also taken a lead role in first ever systematic hydrocarbon resource mapping of Pakistan's complete EEZ. Pakistan Navy celebrates this day every year to underscore the importance of hydrography towards its share in all marine and maritime related activities.

ANF recovered 236 kg & arrested 5 suspects in 7 operations



Soon Times Correspondent
Rawalpindi:
ANF continues operations against drug trafficking. ANF recovered 236 kg of drugs in 7 operations and arrested 5 suspects. ANF recovered 3.6 kg of ice from a passenger bound for Bahrain at Islamabad Airport. Capsules containing 900 grams of heroin were recovered from the stomach of a passenger going to Bahrain at Sialkot Airport. ANF recovered 254 grams of heroin and 200 grams of hashish from a passenger going to Doha in an operation at Islamabad Airport.

300 grams of hashish was recovered from the parcel sent to Karachi from the cargo office at Lahore Airport. 146 kg of hashish and 69 kg of opium were recovered from the vehicle near Motorway Toll Plaza Nankana Sahib. ANF recovered 15 kg of hashish and 800 grams of ice from a parcel sent to Multan from the courier office in Quetta. 5 kg hashish was recovered from two accused near Vihari in Multan. According to the spokesperson of ANF, investigations have been started by registering cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act against all the arrested accused.

Senators grill FBR chief over hike on hybrid, electric cars' taxes

PPP senator questions FBR chairman on imposing excise duty on sale and purchase of property



Soon Times Correspondent.
ISLAMABAD:
Senators Thursday grilled Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) Chairman Asim Ahmad over the hike in taxes imposed on hybrid and electric cars, among other items.
The Senate Standing Committee on Finance, in a meeting chaired by Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Senator Salim Mandivwala, in Islamabad raised an objection on the increased tax rate on electric and hybrid vehicles. During the meeting, independent Senator Faisal Vawda said that the use of electric vehicles is being encouraged all over the world.
"A sales tax of 25% has been levied on vehicles priced above Rs15 million," said Vawda.
The senator maintained that problems increase when a policy is made and revised. "No one sets up industry in this country because of changes in taxes and policies."
Responding to Vawda's objections, the FBR officials said that imported, not locally manufactured, vehicles have been taxed. In reaction to this, the politician said he knows who is taxing

vehicles.
The committee, however, adjourned the matter in the meeting.
The politician, who is a member of the Senate in an independent capacity, objected to the tax proposals made in the budget, announced last week by the federal government.
The government has, as per analysts, devised the budget in line with the recommendations of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), as Islamabad hopes to sign a new and bigger programme with the global lending institution.
The federal government had to increase taxes and reduce the fiscal deficit as part of negotiations with the IMF, with which it is discussing a loan of \$6 billion to \$8 billion, as it seeks to avert a debt default for an economy growing at the slowest pace in the region.
On the other hand, Vawda also lamented the imposition of taxes on property in the recently proposed budget, insisting that the market across the country has become stagnant.
"Now, a common man will not be able to buy a house," said the senator, sharing his viewpoint during the meeting.
Responding to Vawda in the meeting, the

FBR chairman said tax rates in the property sector are "fair".
"In the property sector, tax is 15% for filers and 45% for non-filers," said the FBR chairman. He also highlighted that the salaried class is taxed up to 35% and non-salaried up to 45%.
"How will the common man build a house with an increased tax on property," said Vawda in response to the official's comment.
The FBR chairman maintained that a Re1 per kilogram increase in Federal Excise Duty (FED) on cement has been proposed by FBR, as the board has not benefited from the increased rates of the commodity.
"Re1 is being raised so that FBR gets revenue," said the chairman.
During the meeting, the FBR chairman was also questioned about the FED imposed on plots.
"How excise duty is imposed on plots?" asked PPP senator Farooq H Naek.
"We wanted to impose sales tax," said the FBR chairman, who was then told by Naek that plots, in fact, neither come under the category of commodities nor services.
"Under which law did you tax the purchase of a plot? You have stretched the law and included them.

SNGPL disconnected 26 connections & imposed fine of Rs 3.55 million

Soon Times Correspondent
Lahore:
During the ongoing crackdown against gas pilferers, SNGPL continued raids in Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Islamabad. It disconnected 26 connections and imposed fine of Rs 3.55 million. In Lahore, the team disconnected 15 connections on illegal use of gas, booked an amount of Rs 2.19 million and lodged 1 FIR against gas pilferer. In

Multan the team disconnected 09 connections on illegal use of gas and lodged 2 FIRs against gas theft cases. The regional team of Sheikhupura disconnected 01 connection on illegal use of gas and booked an amount of Rs 0.77 million against gas theft cases. In Sahiwal the team disconnected 01 connection on illegal use of gas. The regional team of Gujranwala imposed fine of Rs0.59 million against gas theft cases.

IESCO Power Suspension Schedules for Today

Soon Times Correspondent
Islamabad:
According to Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO)'s spokesman, System Maintenance/Development Work is in process. Therefore power supply of below mentioned Feeders/areas will be temporary suspended as per given schedule:
On 21st June 2024, From 06:00 AM to 11:00 AM, Islamabad Circle, CDA Flats, G-8/2, Iqbal Town, UC Road, Charah, Melody, New Marvi, Park Enclave, F-10

Markaz, G-10/3, Industrial I&II, Carriage Factory, Golara II, Railway Road, Shalpur, Company Bagh, Kohala, Pearl Canton, Patriata, Angori Feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle, Medina Colony, Amerhanza Colony Feeders, GSO Circle, Bhui, Baral/MES-I, Gadari, CMH/MES-II feeders and surroundings will remain closed. IESCO management apologizes to its esteemed customers for the power outage. If the work is completed ahead of time, the power supply can be restored even before the scheduled time.



Minhaj Welfare Foundation organizes mass marriage ceremony

Soon Times Correspondent
Nowshera Soon Saksekar:
Organized by Minhaj Welfare Foundation Nowshera, the mass marriage ceremony of chaste girls was held under the patronage of Syed Shams-ul-Arifin Hamdani. It was the first of its kind in Soon Valley of four mass weddings in which apart from the bride and groom, their close relatives and representatives of various socio-political organizations of the city participated. On behalf of Minhaj Foundation Welfare, every

bride was given precious items of life necessities as dowry. Senior Vice President Pakistan Awami Tehreek, Khushab Malik Muhammad Riaz, Awan, Ghulam Haider Awan Chairman GM Foundation Ugalfi and others participated in the ceremony. The speakers appreciated the efforts of Dr. Muhammad Tahir-ul-Qadri and Minhaj Foundation. He said that marriage of many girls is delayed due to poverty. He thanked the organizers of the mass wedding.



Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in a group photo with the leadership and administrative staff of National Emergencies Operation Center in Islamabad on June 20, 2024.

Canada declares Iran's Revolutionary Guards a terrorist group



OTTAWA — On Wednesday listed Iran's Revolutionary Guards as a terrorist entity while calling on Canadians in the Islamic country to leave. "Our government has made the decision to list the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps as a terrorist entity under the Criminal Code," Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc told a news conference. Flanked by Canada's foreign and justice ministers, he accused the Iranian regime of "support for terrorism" and "having consistently displayed disregard for human rights both inside and outside of Iran, as well as a willingness to destabilize the international rules-based order." Foreign Minister Melanie Joly, noting that Ottawa broke off diplomatic ties with Tehran several years ago, urged Canadians against travel to Iran. "From this day forward, it's time to come back home," she added.

Shipping industry urges Red Sea action as Houthis sink second vessel



LONDON — Urgent action must be taken in the Red Sea to stop attacks on merchant shipping by Yemen's Houthis, leading industry groups said on Wednesday, after the sinking of a second ship. Iran-aligned Houthi militants first launched drone and missile strikes on the important trade route in November in what they say is solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza. In more than 70 attacks.



North Korea, Russia sign pact to give all available military help if other is attacked

The agreement for a "comprehensive strategic partnership" signed by Russian and Korean presidents

SEOUL — North Korea and Russia agreed to provide immediate military assistance if the other side faced armed aggression, under a pact their leaders signed during Russian President Vladimir Putin's first visit in 24 years. The pledge is seen as the revival of a mutual defence agreement under a 1961 treaty adopted by the Cold War allies that was annulled in 1990 when the Soviet Union established diplomatic ties with South Korea. The agreement for a "comprehensive strategic partnership" signed by Russian President Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un on Wednesday is one of the highest-profile moves in Asia by Moscow in years. "If either side faces an armed invasion and is in a state of war, the other side will immediately use all available means to provide military and other assistance in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter and the laws of each country," Article 41 of the agreement says. Article 51 of the UN Charter provides for the right of a member country to take individual or collective self-defence actions.

Fighting in Gaza's Rafah as tensions soar on Israel-Lebanon border

GAZASTRIP — Israeli air strikes and clashes between troops and Palestinian groups rocked Gaza on Wednesday (Jun 19), after Israel's army warned it had launched an "offensive" against the Lebanese Hezbollah movement on the country's northern front. Witnesses and the civil defence agency in the Hamas-run Gaza Strip reported Israeli bombardment in western Rafah, where medics said drone strikes and shelling killed at least seven people. The Israeli military has announced a daily humanitarian "pause" in fighting on a key road in eastern Rafah, but a United Nations



spokesman said days later that "this has yet to translate into more aid reaching people in need". More than eight months of war, sparked by Hamas's unprecedented Oct 7 attack on Israel, have led to dire humanitarian conditions in the Palestinian territory and repeated UN warnings of famine. The Rafah border crossing between Gaza and Egypt has been shut since Israeli troops seized its Palestinian side in early May, while nearby Kerem Shalom on the Israeli border "is operating with limited functionality, including because of fighting in the area", said UN deputy spokesman Farhan Haq.

Sudanese refugees flee UN camp in Ethiopia following attacks



BEIRUT — Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah on Wednesday warned "no place" in Israel would be spared in case of full-blown war against the Lebanese group, and threatened Cyprus if it opened its airports to Israel. "The enemy knows well that we have prepared ourselves for the worst... and that no place... will be spared our rockets," Nasrallah said in a televised address. Israel must expect "us on land, by sea and by air", he said. "The enemy really fears that the resistance will penetrate Galilee" in northern Israel, he said, adding that this was possible "in the context of a war that could be imposed on Lebanon". Israel and Hezbollah, a powerful Lebanese movement allied with Hamas, have traded near-daily cross-border fire since the Palestinian militant group's October 7 attack on Israel which triggered air in the Gaza Strip. The exchanges between the foes, which last went to war in 2006, have escalated in recent weeks, and the Israeli military said Tuesday that "operational plans for an offensive in Lebanon were approved and validated". Earlier, Foreign Minister Israel Katz had warned of Hezbollah's destruction in a "total war". Nasrallah said his Iran-backed group had been informed that Israel could use airports and bases in Cyprus if Hezbollah struck Israeli airports. Cyprus, a European Union member, has good relations with Israel and Lebanon, and lies close to the coast of both countries. "Opening Cypriot airports and bases to the Israeli enemy to target Lebanon would mean that the Cypriot government is part of the war, and the resistance will deal with it as part of the war," Nasrallah threatened.

Sports & Showbiz

Germany ease past Hungary to reach last 16 at Euros



STUTTGART (Germany) — Jamal Musiala and Ilkay Gundogan scored as hosts Germany became the first team to qualify for the last 16 of Euro 2024 on Wednesday after beating Hungary 2-0 in Stuttgart. Musiala struck for the second game running midway through the first half, much to the anger of Hungarian players who felt a foul should have been awarded in the build-up to the goal. Gundogan grabbed his side's second on 67 minutes as Germany eased to a second successive win in Group A, making sure they will progress to the knockout phase at least as one of the best third-placed sides. Julian Nagelsmann's men can wrap up top spot when they play Switzerland in Frankfurt in their final group fixture on Sunday. Hungary are starting at elimination after back-to-back defeats and must beat Scotland if they are to stand any chance of reaching the last 16. Germany unsurprisingly stuck with the same line-up that battered Scotland 5-1 in the first game of the tournament, ending a run of three major finals in which they had lost their opening match.

King, Murphy punch tickets to Paris as Ledecky wins again



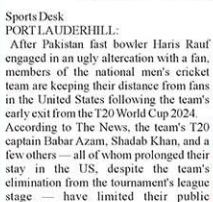
Los Angeles — Lilly King and Ryan Murphy are bound for their third straight Olympics after victories Monday at the US Olympic swimming trials, where Katie Ledecky expanded her options for her fourth consecutive Games in Paris. World record-holder King led the way to win the 100m breaststroke in 1min 05.43sec and line up a chance to regain the Olympic title she won in Rio de Janeiro in 2016. She was followed home by Emma Weber in 1:06.10 while Tokyo gold medalist Lydia Jacoby finished third — shut out of a chance to defend her title in the pressure-cooker trials that see only the top two finishers qualify for individual Olympic swims. Murphy, who won double backstroke gold in Rio in 2016, but settled for silver and bronze in Tokyo, won the men's 100m backstroke in 52.22sec, with rising star Hunter Armstrong second in 52.72. "I think I enjoy it a little bit more than I used to," Murphy, 28, said after casing to the victory before the massive crowd at Lucas Oil Stadium, home of the NFL's Indianapolis Colts. "I used to feel like I was going to throw up before every race, where now I can take it in a little bit more." Katie Grimes held off a furious challenge from Emma Weyant to claim the top spot in the women's 400m individual medley and secure a second berth at the Paris Olympics, having already qualified in open water. Grimes, 18, used her strong butterfly and backstroke to build a big lead but Weyant had inched ahead at the end of the breaststroke leg with Lilla Bognar also closing herself into contention. Grimes bore down on the closing freestyle to win in 4:35.00 with Tokyo silver medalist Weyant second in 4:35.56 and Bognar shut out of the Paris places in third. "I knew my backstroke was fine and I turned the wall for the breaststroke and I just said don't look back, don't look to the side," Grimes said. "I knew as long as I touched the wall at the same time as Emma I would be able to stick in there with her. So I was just trying to finish." In Paris, Grimes and Weyant will be chasing Summer McIntosh, who lowered the world record with a time of 4:24.38 at the Canadian trials in May. Grimes is a two-time world championships silver medalist behind McIntosh. Freestyle great Ledecky, whose seven Olympic gold medals include six in individual events,

Man arrested for plotting to kill Salman Khan



(Web Desk) — The Mumbai Crime Branch on Sunday arrested a man in Rajasthan who was plotting to kill Bollywood actor Salman Khan. Police said that the 25-year-old suspect posted a video on the YouTube channel Are Chhodo Yar, where he spoke about the Bishnoi Gang and the plot against the star. The Mumbai Crime Branch arrested the accused from Borda's village in Rajasthan. He was taken to Mumbai for further investigation, they said. The offence was registered at South Cyber Police Station in Mumbai vide under Sections 506(2), 504, 34 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) and Section 66(d) of the Information Technology (IT) Act.

Babar Azam, Shadab, others limit public interactions in US after Haris Rauf's brawl



Sports Desk — PORTLAUDERHILL: After Pakistan fast bowler Haris Rauf engaged in an ugly altercation with a fan, members of the national men's cricket team are keeping their distance from fans in the United States following the team's early exit in the T20 World Cup 2024. According to The News, the team's T20 captain Babar Azam, Shadab Khan, and a few others — all of whom prolonged their stay in the US, despite the team's elimination from the tournament's league stage — have limited their public interactions and are only meeting with people they are familiar with. This change in the team members' attitude towards fans follows a widely circulated video on social media, which showed Rauf, 30, engaging in a confrontation with a fan who made negative remarks targeting him. In the video, the pacer was seen stroking around with his wife, Mutza, when he suddenly became aggressive towards a fan, accompanied by a group of youngsters. The video showed Rauf running towards the fan despite his wife and others, present on the spot, trying

to hold him back. Later, on his X account, Rauf addressed the incident, clarifying his side of the story. He wrote: "I decided not to bring this up on social media, but now that the video is out, I feel it is necessary to address the situation. As public figures, we are open to receiving all kinds of feedback from the public. They are entitled to support or criticize us. Nevertheless, when it comes to my parents and my family, I will not hesitate to respond accordingly. It is important to show respect towards people and their families, irrespective of their professions."