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CM Maryam Nawaz orders timely completion of development projects

Maryam reaffirms commitment to supporting entrepreneurship in Punjab



Soon Times Correspondent LAHORE
Presiding over a meeting of the Provincial Planning and Development Board, the Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz directed the authorities to expedite the progress on ongoing projects. Chairing the meeting, Punjab CM was briefed on the Annual Development Programme (ADP) for year 2024-25. She instructed the Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) to develop a dashboard for real time monitoring of the development projects in the province to ensure transparency.

The CM was briefed on the initiative of patrolling ambulances at every interchange of the

motorway. She was also informed about the foreign assistance extended in 106 projects in Punjab. It was told in the meeting that deadline for 189 kilometers Chichawatni to Layyah and 93 km Multan to Vehari roads was Aug 13. Moreover, work on Sahawal to Samundri and Bahawalnagar to Jhangra roads will also get started from Aug 13 onwards. Besides, Faisalabad, Chiniot and Sargodha roads construction shall start from July 31 onwards.

Maryam Nawaz ordered immediate release of funds worth Rs400 million for ongoing projects. For revamping health sector, she ordered to issue 25pc universal health insurance funds on quarterly basis.

At the conclusion of the meeting she ordered relevant authorities to submit the Planning Commission Form-1 (PC-1) of all the schemes by July 15.

Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz stated on Thursday that fostering a conducive environment for entrepreneurship ranked high among the priorities of the Punjab government.

In a message marking the Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises Day, the chief minister highlighted the significance of encouraging innovation in small businesses and entrepreneurship, emphasising that enterprises formed the backbone of the economy.

Parvez Elahi granted exemption from court appearance in PA illegal recruitments case



Soon Times Correspondent LAHORE
Former Punjab chief minister Parvez Elahi filed an application with the anti-corruption court on Thursday requesting exemption from appearance in the Punjab Assembly illegal recruitment case. Duty Judge Arshad Bhatta of the anti-corruption court, who presided over the hearing, learned that Parvez Elahi could not attend the proceedings due to illness.

PTI to move IHC against 'travesty of justice' in illegal marriage case



Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD
Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader Omar Ayub said on Thursday the party would move the Islamabad High Court against, what he said, absolutely ridiculous decision of the district and sessions court of Islamabad.

Speaking to media outside Islamabad's court after rejection of former premier Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi's plea for suspension of sentences in the alleged illegal marriage case, he declared it a

Imran Khan, Bushra Bibi's appeal seeking dismissal of Iddat case conviction rejected

PTI leader Omar Ayub condemns decision, announces party would challenge it

Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD
An Islamabad court on Thursday rejected former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi's appeal seeking suspension of their sentence in an illegal marriage case.

Islamabad Additional District and Sessions Judge Muhammad Afzal Majoka announced the order which was reserved after the conclusion of arguments by both the parties.



Soon Times Correspondent LAHORE
The Islamabad High Court (IHC) for its transfer to another court after Maneka expressed a lack of trust in him.

The IHC later listed the case for hearing in the court of Islamabad Additional District and Sessions Judge Muhammad Afzal Majoka. On June 13, the IHC also ordered the court to decide the couple's request for suspension of their sentence within ten days.

PTI leader Omar Ayub, addressing the media after the announcement of the verdict, condemned the court's rejection of the appeals and announced that the party would challenge the decision.

While hearing a plea filed by Bushra Bibi's former husband Khawar Maneka, a district magistrate on February 3 convicted Bushra and Imran and sentenced them to seven years in prison for contracting marriage on January 1, 2018, without Bushra first observing the mandatory waiting—iddat—period. The couple had challenged the judicial magistrate's order in the

IHC also ordered the court to decide the couple's request for suspension of their sentence within ten days.

At the hearing of the case on June 21, Imran's counsel Salman Akram Raja has contended that no one is allowed to peep into the private matters of a woman while referring to an earlier verdict written by a bench also comprising famous scholar Mufti

People sitting in parliament lack integrity, Hafiz Naem



Soon Times Correspondent LAHORE
Jamaat-islami Pakistan emir Hafiz Naemur Rehman has said the people who are sitting in the parliament have nothing to do with the democracy and the constitution of Pakistan.

Speaking at an event held by the Lahore High Court Bar Association (LHCBA), Hafiz Naemur Rehman said the election process should be protected from becoming hostage to promote the democratic values.

"It is a irony of the situation that political parties in Pakistan do not have democracy in the parties," he said, adding that only the JI and the lawyers' community have democracy in their sections. He said participants in the American wars on Pakistani soils against terrorism had nothing to do with the democracy and constitution.

Power tariff likely to increase by Rs3.41 per unit



Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD
The power tariff in Pakistan is likely to increase by Rs3.41 per unit due to the monthly fuel adjustment (MFA), according to media reports.

The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) is set to hear an application from the Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPA) requesting the hike.

The CPA has cited an increase in the monthly fuel adjustment for May as the reason for the proposed tariff rise.

According to the CPA, 12.26 billion units of electricity were generated last month, with a production cost of Rs9.12 per unit. If the application is approved, the tariff hike would place an additional burden on consumers already grappling with high electricity prices.

This potential increase follows a series of recent hikes. Earlier in the financial year, the basic electricity tariff was also increased, moving from Rs7.91 per unit in the last fiscal year to Rs7.50 per unit.

No country allowed to interfere in Pakistan domestic affairs: Dar



Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD
Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar on Thursday made it categorically clear that no country was allowed to interfere in Pakistan's internal matters and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs had reacted swiftly to a resolution passed by the US House of Representatives against alleged irregularities in February 8 elections.

Explaining the basic features of

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's government in the National Assembly, Dar said the resolution and was ready to table one in the House to counter the move and share the country's stance.

At the same time, he expressed his desire to hold constructive talks with the United States on different issues for maintaining a close relationship.

CPEC AND IRAN-PAKISTAN

GAS PIPELINE
He said the previous government (the one led by PTI founding chairman Imran Khan) had stopped work on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which was reinstated by Shehbaz. CPEC was placed on backburner because of "our own mistakes". Dar noted — a reference to the fact that no major project was launched under the initiative after the PTI replaced the PML-N government in 2018.

Pakistan-China friendly ties are role model for global community, says Mohsin Naqvi

All fool-proof security measures have been taken for Chinese nationals, he stressed



Soon Times Correspondent NEW YORK
Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi reaffirmed that friendly bilateral ties between Pakistan, China were an example for the global community. He also highlighted that all strict measures have been taken for foolproof security of Chinese citizens.

Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi met with Peoples Republic of China counterpart Qi Yanjun at the Chinese

establishment of SPU for the safety and security of foreign nationals, especially Chinese and ensured full support for SPU training and other matters.

On the occasion, Mohsin Naqvi presented the progress report on the tragic incident of Dasu Qi Yanjun commended Pakistan's professionalism and efforts for tracing of the case.

Chinese counterpart invited Mohsin Naqvi to Global Security Forum to be held in September in China. Mohsin thanked Qi Yanjun by accepting the invitation.

Federal Minister Mohsin Naqvi also invited his Chinese counterpart for Pakistan's visit. Mohsin Naqvi announced that China's interior ministry advisory group will visit Pakistan soon.

The interior minister reaffirmed Pakistan-China friendly bilateral ties and hailed it as a role model for the global community.

He also highlighted fool-proof security measures for Chinese nationals' security. It is pertinent to note that Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi and Chinese counterpart Qi Yanjun both are attending the 4th UN COP Conference in New York.

LHC orders young doctors to call off the strike immediately

LHC's CJ directed doctors to resume their duty and ensure the guarantee to call off the strike.

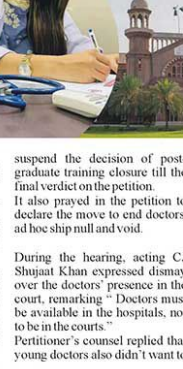
Soon Times Correspondent LAHORE
The Lahore High Court (LHC) has ordered young doctors to call off strike across government hospitals immediately.

LHC's acting Chief Justice Shujaat Ali Khan heard the petition filed by the Young Doctors Association (YDA) for an inquiry into the Sahawal incident.

YDA's president Dr. Shabbir Niaz filed the petition through advocate Noshah Khan, making Punjab government and other respondents.

The petitioner requested the formation of a judicial inquiry committee for the investigation of the Sahawal incident and to declare the Punjab Health Department's actions illegal after the Sahawal incident.

YDA pleaded to the court to



continue protest but the circumstances were problematic.

LHC's CJ directed doctors to resume their duty and ensure the guarantee to call off the strike.

The president of YDA made sure to discuss the issue in the doctors' council.

CJ Shujaat Ali remarked "Punjab is the largest province with 120 million population who connect with you daily. LHC's CJ added, "Doctors and engineers are assets of this country. There is no monarchy and Akhbari rule here. We will provide every kind of safety and security to doctors."

Consequently, LHC directed YDA to file the petition again by amending and ordered to call off the strike across the hospitals immediately.

suspend the decision of post-graduate training closure till the final verdict on the petition. It also prayed in the petition to declare the move to end doctors' ad hoc shift null and void.

During the hearing, acting CJ Shujaat Khan expressed dismay over the doctors' presence in the court, remarking "Doctors must be available in the hospitals, not to be in the courts."

Petitioner's counsel replied that young doctors also didn't want to

Interfaith harmony

Pakistan is stepping up efforts to bring people together and strengthen inter societal linkages. Ambassador Masood Khan has told a group of faith leaders representing different religions. The Pakistani envoy was speaking during a roundtable, hosted by the embassy, at which the discussion centered on promoting peace and understanding among different religious communities and assimilated societies. "Such gatherings," Masood Khan stated, "provide a platform for broader perspectives about each other's faith." He urged the participants to focus on

commonalities, tearing down the barriers that divide the people. Participating in the dialogue were faith leaders, diplomats, representatives from the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), think tanks, and civil society. Addressing the issue of religious minorities, Ambassador Masood Khan called the killing of minorities a crime against humanity. He assured the audience that the government was taking all steps to curb religious intolerance and stem the abuse of blasphemy laws. Speaking to the occasion,

former U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan, Anne Patterson, also said that interfaith dialogue could curb violent extremism. Daniel Spiro, representing the Jewish Islamic Dialogue Society (JIDS), emphasized the shared heritage of Abrahamic religions and the importance of treating all people with dignity. Dr. Surinder Singh Gill, Director Sikhs for America organization commended Pakistan for facilitating Sikh pilgrimages and the Kartarpur Corridor initiative, a peace gesture also lauded by the international community. Other speakers including Rizwan Jaka, Chairman of Adam Center, Mike

Crowe, member of All Neighbors, Alok Srivastava from American Hindu Coalition and Ms. Karina Hou, social activist and renowned artist, and Ms. Ayesha Khan, a Pakistani American community leader, also echoed similar sentiments, calling for healing the tensions and promoting cooperation among societies. The speakers emphasized the significance of interfaith dialogue and the government's efforts to protect the rights of minorities in Pakistan. Despite the challenges, all faith leaders expressed confidence in continued progress and cooperation toward a more inclusive and equitable society.

World's Drug Control Day



Iftikhar Uddin Anjum

Each year on June 26th, the international community observes World Drug Day, also known as the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking. Established by the United Nations General Assembly in 1987, this day serves as a call to action for individuals, communities and governments to come together and combat the pervasive issues related to drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking. World Drug Day is not just about highlighting the problem; it's about celebrating progress, raising awareness, and reinforcing global efforts to mitigate the impact of drugs on society. The challenge posed by drug abuse and illicit trafficking is immense and multifaceted. According to the World Drug Report 2023 by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), around 275 million people worldwide used drugs in the past year. Among them, more than 35 million people suffer from drug use disorders, requiring treatment services. The repercussions of drug abuse ripple through societies, affecting health, security, and development. Drug addiction often leads to severe health consequences, including mental health disorders, infectious diseases (such as HIV/AIDS and hepatitis), and overdoses. In 2021, over 500,000 deaths were attributed to drug use, either directly through overdoses or indirectly through diseases associated with drug abuse. The impact of drug abuse and trafficking extends beyond individual health, infiltrating the fabric of communities and societies. Families are torn apart, and crime rates soar as drug users often resort to illegal activities to support their addictions. Communities experience reduced economic productivity, increased healthcare costs and heightened social instability. Illicit drug trafficking further complicates the issue by fueling organized crime and violence. Drug cartels and trafficking organizations often have deep-rooted connections to corruption and violence, destabilizing regions and undermining the rule of law. The economic power of these illicit operations can be staggering,

rivaling the GDPs of some countries, and their influence can pervade political systems, making it difficult to implement effective drug policies. World Drug Day emphasizes the importance of a coordinated, international response to these challenges. The UNODC plays a central role in guiding global drug policies, providing a framework for countries to align their efforts. This includes promoting balanced approaches that combine demand reduction (prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation) with supply reduction (law enforcement, crop eradication, and interdiction). One of the key strategies in tackling drug abuse is education and prevention. Awareness campaigns are crucial in informing the public about the risks associated with drug use and promoting healthy lifestyles. Schools, communities, and media campaigns can all play a part in disseminating information and fostering environments where drug abuse is less likely to take root. Treatment and rehabilitation services are equally critical. Effective treatment should be accessible, affordable, and tailored to meet the needs of individuals. This often requires integrating medical, psychological and social support to address the complex nature of addiction. Countries with comprehensive healthcare systems are better equipped to provide these services, but resource-limited settings often struggle to meet the demand for treatment. Law enforcement remains a crucial component of the global drug control strategy. This includes efforts to dismantle trafficking networks, interdict drug shipments, and enforce legal penalties for drug-related offenses. However, a purely punitive approach has proven insufficient and sometimes counterproductive. Modern strategies increasingly emphasize the importance of addressing the underlying social and economic factors that drive drug abuse and trafficking. Successful examples of this approach include the decriminalization policies seen in Portugal, where drug use is treated more as a public health issue than a criminal one. Since implementing these policies in 2001, Portugal has seen a significant reduction in drug-related deaths and HIV infection rates, demonstrating that a balanced approach can yield positive results. The global nature of drug trafficking necessitates international cooperation. Countries must work together to share

intelligence, coordinate operations and support each other's efforts. Initiatives like the Global SMART Programme by the UNODC facilitate the sharing of information on emerging drug trends and threats, helping countries stay ahead of traffickers. The principle of shared responsibility underscores the need for both producing and consuming countries to take action. Producing countries must address the cultivation and production of drugs, often linked to poverty and lack of alternative livelihoods. Consuming countries, on the other hand, must focus on reducing demand and providing treatment and rehabilitation for users. The fight against drug abuse and trafficking is continually evolving, with innovations in technology and policy offering new tools and strategies. Advances in forensic science and technology enable more efficient tracking and interdiction of illicit drugs. Digital platforms are being used to disseminate prevention messages and support networks for those in recovery. Policy innovation is also crucial. Many experts advocate for harm reduction strategies, which aim to minimize the negative health and social impacts of drug use. Examples include needle exchange programs, supervised injection sites, and drug substitution therapies. These approaches have been successful in reducing the transmission of infectious diseases and preventing overdose deaths. World Drug Day serves as a poignant reminder of the ongoing battle against drug abuse and illicit trafficking. It is a day to reflect on the progress made, acknowledge the challenges that remain, and renew our commitment to creating a world free of drug abuse. The combined efforts of governments, international organizations, communities, and individuals are essential in addressing this complex issue. As we look to the future, continued innovation, cooperation and dedication will be key in ensuring healthier, safer, and more resilient societies. The observance of World Drug Day calls for a multifaceted approach balancing prevention, treatment, law enforcement and international collaboration to create a comprehensive strategy against the global drug problem. Only through sustained effort and shared responsibility can we hope to make meaningful progress in the fight against drug abuse and illicit trafficking.

Mob ready to protest against shameful taxes



Amjad Rana

Budget are creating panic among the people of Pakistan due to inefficient ruler performance. The economic situation in Pakistan, exacerbated by budget issues and inefficient governance, is causing significant concern among its citizens. Factors contributing to this include high inflation, rising unemployment, increasing debt, and inadequate public services. Key areas of concern include inflation. The rising cost of goods and services has severely impacted purchasing power, making everyday essentials unaffordable for many. High unemployment rates, especially among the youth, lead to economic instability and social unrest. Debt. Pakistan's mounting national debt has placed a heavy burden on the economy, limiting the government's ability to invest in critical areas such as infrastructure, education, and healthcare. Public Services: Inefficient management and corruption have led to inadequate public services, further straining the lives of ordinary citizens. Political Instability: Frequent changes in leadership and political instability have hindered consistent policy implementation, exacerbating economic problems. Addressing these issues requires comprehensive reforms, transparent governance, and effective economic policies to restore stability and confidence among the population. The economic challenges facing Pakistan are multifaceted and deeply rooted, with significant impacts on the daily lives of its citizens. Here are more detailed insights into these issues. Inflation in Pakistan is driven by multiple factors, including currency depreciation, rising fuel prices, and supply chain disruptions. Additionally, heavy reliance on imported goods makes the economy vulnerable to global price fluctuations. Impact: Inflation erodes purchasing power, making it difficult for people to afford basic necessities such as food, healthcare, and education. This leads to an increase in poverty and socioeconomic disparity. Unemployment: Causes: Structural issues in the economy, such as a lack of diversification and over-reliance on a few industries, have stymied job creation. Moreover, political instability and bureaucratic inefficiencies deter both domestic and foreign investment. High unemployment rates lead to economic stagnation and can contribute to social unrest.

Youth unemployment is particularly problematic, as it results in a loss of potential productivity and innovation. Persistent budget deficits, borrowing to cover expenditures, and reliance on international loans contribute to the rising national debt. Additionally, servicing this debt consumes a significant portion of the national budget. High debt levels limit the government's ability to invest in critical infrastructure and social programs. It also leads to higher taxes and reduced public spending, which can stifle economic growth. The inefficiency and corruption within public institutions lead to inadequate delivery of essential services such as education, healthcare, and law enforcement. This not only hampers quality of life but also undermines public trust in the government. Impact: Poor public services exacerbate inequality and hinder human capital development, which is crucial for long-term economic growth. Political Instability: Causes: Frequent changes in government, political infighting, and lack of continuity in policy implementation create an unpredictable business environment. This instability can deter both local and foreign investments and disrupt economic planning. Political instability undermines economic confidence, disrupts development projects, and can lead to social unrest. It also complicates the formulation and implementation of long-term economic policies. Possible Solutions: Economic Reforms: Implementing structural reforms to diversify the economy, improve tax collection, and reduce reliance on foreign aid and debt. Governance enhancing transparency, reducing corruption, and improving the efficiency of public institutions. Investment in Human Capital: Increasing investment in education and healthcare to build a more skilled and healthy workforce. Creating a conducive environment for private sector development through regulatory reforms and incentives. Strengthening social safety nets to protect the most vulnerable populations from economic shocks. These challenges require coordinated efforts from the government, private sector, and international community. Sustainable economic growth and improved quality of life for citizens can be achieved through comprehensive and well-implemented policies. Pakistan faces significant economic challenges that are creating widespread anxiety among its citizens. These challenges, including high inflation, rising unemployment, mounting national debt, inadequate public services, and political instability, are deeply interconnected and require urgent attention. These issues necessitate

comprehensive economic reforms, improved governance, and strategic investments in human capital and infrastructure. Key steps towards resolution include diversifying the economy, enhancing transparency and efficiency in public institutions, creating a supportive environment for private sector growth, and strengthening social safety nets. With coordinated efforts from the government, private sector, and international community, Pakistan can work towards restoring economic stability and improving the quality of life for its citizens. Sustainable economic growth and social development will be achievable through consistent and effective policy. Here is an expanded conclusion with more specific points to address the economic challenges in Pakistan. Political instability, has created a crisis of confidence among its citizens. The current situation underscores the urgent need for comprehensive reforms and a collaborative approach to stabilize the economy and ensure sustainable growth. Key Actions for Economic Stability and Growth: Economic Diversification: Encouraging growth in various sectors such as agriculture, manufacturing, and services to reduce dependency on a limited number of industries. Innovation and Technology: Promoting technological advancements and innovation, particularly in information technology and renewable energy, to create new economic opportunities and need to improve governance. Implementing stringent anti-corruption policies and ensuring transparency in government dealings to restore public trust and attract foreign investment. Streamlining bureaucratic processes and enhancing the efficiency of public institutions to deliver better services and support economic activities. Developing and implementing strategies to reduce national debt through prudent fiscal management, renegotiation of loan terms, and exploring debt relief options. Tax Reforms: Broadening the tax base and improving tax collection mechanisms to increase government revenue without imposing undue burden on the populace. Investing in education and vocational training to equip the workforce with the skills needed for a modern economy. Enhancing healthcare infrastructure and services to improve overall public health, which is crucial for a productive workforce. Simplifying regulations and reducing red tape to create a more business-friendly environment that encourages entrepreneurship and investment. Providing incentives and support for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which are vital for job creation and economic diversification.

Pakistan Bureau of Statistics held consultation meeting regarding the 7th Agriculture Census 2024



Soon Times Correspondent Islamabad: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics held a consultation meeting on 27 June 2024 for the upcoming 7th Agriculture Census 2024. Digital Integrated Census. The main objective of the meeting was to present the design, implementation plan and proposed agricultural census questionnaire and training manual to academicians, researchers and concerned departments including Agriculture Extension, Livestock and Crop Reporting Services. Pakistan Bureau of Statistics Chief Census Commissioner Dr. Naeem Al Zafar (Sitara-i-Imtiaz) welcomed the participants and highlighted the importance of pre-training counseling sessions and the role of integrated approach in the effective conduct of

agriculture census. He emphasized that an integrated agriculture census is necessary to obtain comprehensive data that accurately reflects the second major component of GDP, the agricultural sector. Muhammad Sarwar Gondal, (Sitara-i-Imtiaz), Member (SS/RM) and Focal Person for Agriculture Statistics, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics informed the participants about the use of modern methods to improve agricultural policies etc. He apprised the participants about the integrated approach adopted for the first time in Pakistan to collect comprehensive information on agriculture, livestock and machinery. He emphasized the importance of data-driven policies and compared them with other countries in the region. He further apprised the forum that Pakistan Bureau of Statistics has made modern progress in line with digital

transformation. Also, the Department of Statistics has developed its own modern software, which includes digitization of all activities related to human resource management, training, monitoring and field operations, data management, data quality comparison and analysis to improve performance. GIS-based monitoring dashboards are also provided. He also highlighted initiatives like use of social media handles for effective awareness, 24/7 call center and SMS gateway for complaint handling and technical support. Pakistan Statistics Authority Director General Dr. Anjad Javed Sindhu presented the roadmap for finalizing the questionnaire and training procedure. It covered stakeholder consultation and comparative studies, highlighting the process of designing the agricultural.

SIC reserved seats case: CJP Isa questions ex-President Arif Alvi's election date decision

Soon Times Correspondent KARACHI: Chief Justice of Pakistan Qazi Faes Iza has questioned as to why former President Arif Alvi had not set a date for elections on behalf of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) despite being associated with the party. The chief justice made the remark as he led a 13-member full court hearing the petition filed by the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) against the denial of reserved seats. Earlier during the hearing, Justice Jamal Mandokhel had stated that it is every candidate's right to get a symbol election. "A candidate participates in the elections, not the party, the candidate only shows his affiliation with the party, the candidate has the right to get the symbol for the election," he added. Today's court session followed Attorney General, Mansoor Usman



Awari's submission of the government's written reply to the apex court. The reply opposes the SIC's plea to allocate reserved seats for women and minorities in the National and provincial assemblies. In the detailed 30-page submission, the government argues that reserved seats for minorities and women should be allocated to political parties that participated in the elections and won at least one seat. The allocation should be based on the

party's total number of seats won, as stipulated by the law. "Independently elected candidates are counted towards reserved seats for women and non-Muslims only when they join political parties within 3 days of publication of names of the returned candidates in the official Gazette" under Articles 516(d) and (e), as well as 106(3)(c), the AGP's response read. The SIC neither contested the general elections as a political party nor filed any list of candidates for reserved seats for women and non-Muslims, under Section 104 of the Election Act, 2017, it further stated. The attorney general said that the approval of the SIC's appeal would be an "antithesis to the democracy" and "will weaken the political parties who participated in the electoral process". Meanwhile, PTI has filed a petition in the SC seeking to intervene in the ongoing case.

Punjab weather update: expect rain, hailstorms, and strong winds this week

Soon Times Correspondent KARACHI: The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has announced good news for people of Punjab as it predicted the likelihood of significant rainfall, hailstorms, and strong winds across the province. The department stated that a cluster of low-pressure clouds has moved into Pakistan from the western direction, following which Lahore can experience strong gusts of wind today, with rain expected tomorrow. The current temperature in Lahore stands at 31 degrees Celsius, and it could reach a maximum of 39 degrees Celsius. Following rain predictions in the province until July 1, the Disaster Management Authority Punjab (PDMA) has put Punjab on alert. PDMA has warned of potential urban flooding in Rawalpindi, Lahore, Sialkot, Gujranwala, and Narowal, alerting local administrations accordingly. The rise in solar panel installations



necessitates protective measures during severe storms. Authorities in flood-prone districts are advised to clear rivers and canals, and urged against crossing them during rainy and flood conditions. Besides strict enforcement of laws prohibiting bathing in rivers and canals is also recommended. The alert aims to ensure readiness; rescue agencies and drainage authorities are urged to remain vigilant, as per DG PDMA. The public is advised to comply with government instructions and contact the PDMA helpline 1129 in emergencies.



Minister of State for IT and Telecommunication Ms. Shaza Fatima Khawaja addressing Roundtable on IT and Digitalisation with Swedish companies in Islamabad on June 27, 2024.

Anti-corruption nabs Patwari who embezzled transfer fees

Soon Times Correspondent Sargodha: Anti-corruption Sargodha nabs Patwari who embezzled transfer fees. Akhtar Khan Patwari did not deposit the transfer fee of 24, 949 rupees in the government treasury and embezzled it. On this, the Regional Director Anti-Corruption Sargodha approved judicial action against Akhtar Khan Patwari and ordered the arrest of the accused. The accused had obtained interim bail from the court of Special Judge, Anti-

Corruption Sargodha to avoid arrest. The investigation team of Anti-Corruption Sargodha presented evidence against the accused in the court of Special Judge, Anti-Corruption Sargodha, on which the Special Judge Anti-Corruption Sargodha dismissed the interim bail of accused Akhtar Khan Patwari. Anti-Corruption Sargodha team headed by Circle Officer, Anti-Corruption Mianwali arrested accused Akhtar Khan Patwari.

Pakistan to 'participate' in UN-hosted Doha talks on Afghanistan

Soon Times Correspondent ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has decided to participate in the United Nations-hosted talks on Afghanistan in the Qatari capital scheduled for this weekend, diplomatic sources earlier this month, Taliban authorities also confirmed their participation in the third round of the Doha talks scheduled to start on June 30, a Taliban spokesperson had told AFP after smothering an invitation to the previous round. The sources said Pakistan's Special Representative on Afghanistan Asif Durrani and Ahmad Naseem Warraich,



assistant secretary for West Asia in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, will represent Pakistan in the talks. It should be noted that Pakistan has times and again requested the Taliban

government to stop cross-border terrorism from Afghanistan into Pakistan by preventing its territory from being used by the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and other terrorist groups. The diplomatic sources said the Afghan Taliban's interim government had boycotted the second Doha talks of 2024 over the participation of women and civil society representatives.

It would be the first time that Afghanistan's interim administration will sit face to face with special representatives on Afghanistan from different parts of the world, they maintained.

The sources said prior to the Doha talks, the United Nations held consultations with representatives of the Afghan civil society present inside and outside Afghanistan. After completion of the talks, representatives of the civil society members and women would hold discussion with the special representatives on Afghanistan on July 2. "In the third Doha talks, progress on recognising the Afghan Taliban and Afghanistan's interim government is out of the question," the diplomatic sources added. Restrictions on women's rights continue to prevent Afghanistan's "reintegration" into the international community, a senior UN official said on June 21, noting the Taliban's participation in upcoming talks in Doha is not legitimisation of the isolated government. Since their 2021 return to power, Taliban authorities have not been formally recognised by any nation.

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 temporarily suspended as per given schedule: On 28th June 2024, From 06:00 AM to 11:00 AM, Rawalpindi City Circle, Saundpur Road, Noon Feeders, Rawalpindi Cant Circle, Morgah, Pindi Board, Park View, Car Chowk, Jail Park, Fuji Foundation, CBR-II Feeders, Attock Circle, Muslim Town Feeder and surrounding areas will remain closed.

Moreover, From 28th June to 1st July, from 05:00 am to 11:00 am, load management of 30 to 40 megawatts can be done at 132 KV Sohan and Bakra Mandi grid stations if required and from 28th June to 18th July, From 08:00 AM to 06:00 PM, load management of 20 MW in normal condition and 50 MW in contingency condition can be done at 132 KV Chhatar Pre, New City Mirpur, Mirpur, Islamabad, Chakswari and Dhudial grid stations. 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.

UNIFORM PROCUREMENT FOR PRIVATE SECURITY COMPANY, FCSS
TENDER NOTICE
 Sealed Single stage – two envelop bids (Technical Proposal & Financial Proposal) in separate envelopes are invited from Government approved (Tax-registered authorized firms) along with samples for the supply of uniform articles for Security Guards of FC Security Services for the year 2024-25. The bids must reach the office of Operations Manager FCSS Lahore on 05-07-2024 before 1100 Hours which will be opened on the same date at 11:30 hours in the presence of bidders by the Technical committee. Tenders with CDR for 1 item will be given instead of all items recoded in the tender. Bid Security 2% of total value must be attached with tender (Financial Proposal) in the name of Operations manager FC Security Services

S/No.	Item	Quantity	S.No.	Item	Quantity
1	Uniform with Badges	530	2	Chappli	530
3	Socks	520			

1. Bidding Documents / Technical specification / Terms and Condition can be obtained from the office of the undersigned on any working days during office hours
 2. Under clause 33(1) in the PPRA Rules 2004 "the procuring agency may reject all the bids or proposals at any time prior to the acceptance of a bid or proposal"

OPERATIONS MANAGER FC SECURITY SERVICES
 House No.175, Block B, Phase – 1, Bankers Cooperative Housing Society Lahore
 Ph: No.0335-0971193 & 0311-1212984

EU leaders to agree on top jobs, strategic agenda with focus on defence



BRUSSELS
European Union leaders are to agree on Thursday on the strategic course for the EU and on the people to run its institutions for the next five years, with special focus on helping Ukraine fend off Russia and bolstering the EU's own defenses.

Leaders of the 27 EU countries are to start their two-day summit by signing a security agreement with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy to demonstrate their support for the country fighting off Moscow's invasion for a third year. The leaders will reiterate their pledge to support Ukraine as long as it takes, stressing that "Russia must not prevail" and that Ukraine must get back the land annexed by Moscow, draft conclusions prepared for the summit showed.

Global hunger monitor says Sudan faces risk of famine in 14 areas



CAIRO
There is a risk of famine in 14 areas across Sudan if the conflict between military factions escalates further, a global hunger monitor said on Thursday. The assessment means that famine has a realistic chance of occurring under a worst-case scenario in the 14 areas, which include parts of Darfur, Khartoum, Kordofan and El Gezira state, according to an update from the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC).



Gazan child dies of malnutrition as Israel continues strikes

With nearly half a million people facing severe food insecurity, the risk of famine remains high.

Web Desk
Another child died of malnutrition in northern Gaza overnight and six people were killed and several wounded in renewed Israeli bombing of residential areas of Gaza City, Palestinian health officials said on Thursday. In the southern city of Rafah, a one-time place of refuge where Israel says it is close to completing an almost month-long operation against Hamas fighters, residents said the military had flattened several districts over the past few days.

More than eight months into Israel's war on Gaza triggered by the Hamas-led cross border attack on Oct. 7, and officials say the enclave remains at high risk of famine, with almost half a million people facing "catastrophic" food insecurity. "We are being starved in Gaza City, and are being hunted by tanks and planes with no hope that this war is ever ending," Mohammad Jamal, 25, a resident of Gaza City, told Reuters via a chat app. The death of another girl in Wednesday raised the number of children who have died of malnutrition and dehydration to at least 31, a health official said, adding that the war made recording such cases difficult. Israel denies accusations it has created the famine conditions, blaming aid agencies for distribution problems and accusing Hamas of diverting aid, allegations the militants deny.

Former Chinese defense minister expelled from ruling Communist Party over graft allegations

BEIJING
Former Chinese defense minister Li Shangfu was expelled from the ruling Communist Party and is being investigated for corruption and bribery, the official Xinhua news agency reported Thursday. Li was removed from office in October 2023 after disappearing from public view for almost two months. China's former defense minister Li Shangfu has been expelled from the ruling Communist Party and accused of corruption, likely setting up a trial that could lead to his getting life in prison.



The Defense Ministry on Thursday said Li had abused his authority to enrich himself by taking bribes and granting favors in violation of military and party discipline. Such charges have been leveled in past by numerous military leaders under the rule of President and party leader Xi Jinping, who also heads the armed forces as chairman of the Central Military Commission and has made a crackdown on corruption a hallmark of his rule since taking power more than a decade ago. Li dropped out of sight for almost two months last year before being removed from office. Insiders have alleged a widespread purge of officers suspected of conspiring with outside forces or simply being insufficiently loyal to Xi. High ranking officers occupy an elevated position in Chinese politics and can command extensive privileges.

How the Biden-Trump debate could change the trajectory of the 2024 campaign



ATLANTA
President Joe Biden and his Republican rival, Donald Trump, will meet for a debate on Thursday that offers an unparalleled opportunity for both candidates to try to reshape the political narrative.

Biden, the Democratic incumbent, gets the chance to reassure voters that, at 81, he's capable of guiding the U.S. through a range of challenges. The 78-year-old Trump, meanwhile, could use the moment to try to move past his felony conviction in New York and convince an audience of tens of millions that he's temperamentally suited to return to the Oval Office.

Biden and Trump enter the night facing fierce headwinds, including a public weary of the tumult of partisan politics. Both candidates are disliked by majorities of Americans, according to polling, and offer sharply different visions on virtually every core issue. Trump has promised sweeping plans to remake the U.S. government if he returns to the White House and Biden argues that his opponent would pose an existential threat to the nation's democracy. With just over four months until Election Day, their performances have the rare potential to alter the trajectory of the race. Every word and gesture will be parsed not just for what both men say but how they interact with each other and how they hold up under pressure.

Democracy: American democracy has overcome big stress tests since 2020. More challenges lie ahead in 2024. Trump and Biden haven't been on the same stage or even spoken since their last debate weeks before the 2020 presidential election. Trump skipped Biden's inauguration after leading an unprecedented and unsuccessful effort to overturn his loss to Biden that culminated in the Jan. 6 Capitol insurrection by his supporters.

South Africa demolish Afghanistan's dreams, reach their first T20 World Cup final



Sports Desk
South Africa demolished Afghanistan's T20 World Cup dream in ruthless fashion on Wednesday, thrashing the minnows by nine wickets with more than 11 overs to spare to reach the final of the cricket showpiece for the first time. Left-arm wrist-spinner Tabraiz Shamsi (3 for 6) and gangling pacer Marco Jansen (3-16) spearheaded the rout of Afghanistan's brittle batting lineup for just 56 off 11.5 overs after they chose to bat. Fast bowlers Kagiso Rabada and Anrich Nortje maintained the relentless pressure with two wickets apiece at the Brian Lara Stadium in Trinidad. On a surface which encouraged all bowlers but left Afghanistan with too little to defend, South Africa lost Quinton de Kock early in reply for Fazalhan Ferooqi's tournament-leading 17th wicket. But Reeza Hendricks (29 not out) and captain Aiden Markram (23 not out) saw them to victory at 60 for one off 8.5 overs to advance the Proteas to Saturday's final in Barbados where they will face the winners of Thursday's second semi-final between title-holders England and unbeaten India in Guyana. "We assessed pretty early that the wicket was giving us something to work with so it was just about sticking to our plans, keeping it simple and getting the results," Man of the Match Jansen said of South Africa's bowling display, which effectively ended the match as a contest.

Hungary exit Euro 2024, but end group stage on a high



STUTT GART, Germany
Hungary came into Euro 2024 tipped as dark horses after going unbeaten in 2023 but their inexperience on the big stage showed as they missed out on qualifying for the 16. The players can hold their heads high after collecting three points from the group stage, one more than they did in the last Euros. However, there will be a sense of missed opportunity given the mistakes they made in Germany. Marco Rossi's side recovered from two losses to secure a dramatic 100th-minute 1-0 win over Scotland in their final group game to keep alive their hopes of advancing. They were in contention until the final Group F matches on Wednesday when Georgia beat Portugal 2-0, meaning they slipped to fifth in the third-place rankings due to a worse goal difference than Slovenia. "In hindsight, it was a bit of a disadvantage to us that Hungary were in the first group to finish their fixtures, so several other national teams already knew exactly what was required of them before their own last match," the Hungarian football federation said. **OPENING DEFEAT**
In truth, Hungary were on the back foot from the 12th minute of their first match. Their defence was caught napping as Switzerland's Kwadwo Duah slotted in the opener before Michel Aebischer had time and space to double the lead. Rossi said it was the most ashamed he had been of his team's performance in almost four years. They did pull one back through Barnabás Varga from a cross by captain Dominik Szoboszlai, but the damage was done in a 3-1 defeat. A match against tournament hosts Germany was always going to be tricky, though Hungary did have 10 total attempts on goal and had an equaliser disallowed for offside. However, it was clear the Germans had extra quality, confirmed in a clinical 2-0 win for Julian Nagelsmann's side. Germany's first competitive victory over Hungary since the 1954 World Cup final.

Zaheer Iqbal gifts luxurious BMW i7 to Sonakshi Sinha



(Web Desk) - Bollywood actor Sonakshi Sinha's husband Zaheer Iqbal gifted her a lavish BMW i7, valued at millions of dollars. On June 23, the pair tied the knot and registered their marriage under the Special Marriage Act. Following a private ceremony, the couple threw a lavish reception at Mumbai's posh Bastion. Notable Bollywood celebs as well as family, friends, and relatives attended the event. The white BMW i7 the couple drove to the reception gave rise to rumors in the Indian media that Zaheer had given Sonakshi the expensive vehicle as a gift. The automobile, which is estimated to be worth 20 million Indian rupees, has received a lot of attention on social media.

Bangladesh team likely to visit Pakistan in August for Test matches



(Web Desk) - Bangladesh cricket team is expected to arrive in Pakistan in third week of August to play two Test matches against the hosts. The Test matches are part of the World Test Championship. The Pakistan vs Bangladesh matches would be played in Karachi and Rawalpindi sources said. The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) and Bangladesh Cricket Board are currently holding talks to finalise the schedule. Sources said Bangladesh cricket team is proposed to reach Pakistan by August 20. The first test match is likely to start from August 25 and the second test match would be played in the first week of September.