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Azma's fake video: TikToker held, PTI worker among six booked



Soon Times Correspondent
LAHORE
The FIA Cybercrime Wing on Saturday arrested a TikToker and registered a case against six people, including a PTI woman worker, for allegedly uploading and sharing a fake objectionable video featuring Punjab Information Minister Azma Bokhan. TikToker identified as Muhammad Shafiq was arrested from Gujrat for allegedly uploading and sharing the fake clip. Preliminary investigation has revealed that the accused was in contact with PTI Secretary Information Raouf Hasan, the FIA claimed. According to an FIR, PTI worker Falak Javid allegedly circulated news about the fake clip before it went viral on social media. The other accused nominated in the FIR included Hassan Toor, Shahab-ud-Din, Asma Tabasum and Muhammad Shafiq.

Mohsin Naqvi honours police sacrifices on Police Martyrs' Day



Soon Times Correspondent
ISLAMABAD
Federal Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi stated that Police Martyrs' Day is a day to remember the sacrifices of brave souls of the nation. In his message for Police Martyrs' Day, Minister Naqvi paid tribute to the great sacrifices of all police martyrs, emphasizing that they were a source of pride for the entire nation. He highlighted that police officers and personnel have always been at the forefront in combating crime. He praised the exemplary services of police across all provinces in maintaining peace. He acknowledged that police officers and personnel have made significant contributions in the fight against terrorism, inscribing their names in history with their precious blood. "Martyr SSP Ashraf Marth, Martyr Captain Mubeen, and all police martyrs will forever remain alive in our hearts," he said.

Federal government is accountable to public on expensive agreements with IPPs: Barrister Saif



Soon Times Correspondent
PESHAWAR
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Advisor Barrister Muhammad Saif argued that the government was accountable to the public on expensive agreements with IPPs, instead of berating the KP government. KP information advisor lashed out on the federal government, stating, "The fake government is robbing people through the expensive agreements with the IPPs. Load Shedding and inflated electricity bills have made people's lives hell." In his statement, he stated that the federal government was hiding its poor governance through allegations on the KP government by federal ministers and advisors. Barrister Saif insisted that terrorism was a cross-border challenge and the federal government was responsible for administration and safety and security of borders.

Punjab government to provide interest free loans for homes

The forms for the program could be obtained from AC, DC office



Soon Times Correspondent
LAHORE
Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz has approved the three models of 'Apni Chhat, Apna Ghar' project. Maryam Nawaz chaired the special session to review the progress on the project and key decisions were granted approval. Housing Secretary retired captain Asadullah Khan gave a detailed briefing on the project in the meeting. The PTIB will design a special portal for the 'Apni Chhat, Apna Ghar' project, and eligible candidates

could submit their application online at the comfort of home. The forms for the program could be obtained from the assistant and deputy commissioners' office. Maryam Nawaz has also directed to provide toll free numbers for the public facilitation. Owners of one to five marlas plots could get an interest free loan. On the direction of Punjab CM, owners would get interest free loans with easy instalment plans. Around 70 thousand plot owners across cities and rural areas would get loans. PC-1 has been approved for

ground and three-story apartment on government land, and feasibility study would be concluded soon. 'Thatta' allottees would get three and five marla homes in private schemes and pay the instalments of loans in five years. Punjab CM has removed the service charges for loans and the government will pay the service charges on the loan payment through microfinance organisations. Model homes have been built under the pilot project. CM Maryam Nawaz has directed to include the living room in the map of model houses.

PM pays tribute to Shaheed police officers, personnel on Youm-e-Shuhada-e-Police



Soon Times Correspondent
ISLAMABAD
Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday paid tribute to the martyred police officers and personnel and said that their sacrifices in line of duty and eradication of crimes were unprecedented. On the Youm-e-Shuhada-e-Police, the prime minister said that the day reminded them of the valour and bravery displayed by the police force. "In the fight against terrorism, the police force had always played a leading role and police personnel

laid down their lives to secure and brighten the future of nation," PM Office Media Wing, in a press release in Urdu language, quoted the prime minister as saying. He further said that the entire nation was proud of its martyred police personnel and saluted them on their sacrifices. The prime minister said that it was the government's responsibility to look after the bereaved families of Shaheed police officers and personnel and reiterated that no leniency in this regard would be tolerated. "The prime minister assured that the federal government would take all possible steps for the provision of education and health facilities to the children of shuhada, adding that the bereaved families would be taken care of in every possible way. The prime minister further recollected that during his tenure as chief minister of Punjab, he and announced a big and historic package for the martyred police personnel.

Imran Khan forms committee to review corruption allegations in K-P



Rawalpindi Web Desk
Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan has responded to corruption allegations in Khyber-Paktunkhwa by forming a three-member committee to review governmental matters. The move comes after provincial minister Shakeel Khan raised concerns about corruption in the province. The committee comprises former Governor Shah Farman, Qazi Anwar, and Anti-Corruption Advisor Musaddiq Abbasi. Their mandate is to thoroughly examine the operations of the K-P government and provide a detailed report to Imran Khan. Confirming the formation of

the committee, Shah Farman stated, "The three-member committee has been established under the guidance of our founder, and we will strictly adhere to the directives issued by him." This development follows a meeting between Minister Shakeel Khan and Imran Khan, during which the minister expressed concerns over corruption within various provincial departments.

PPP calls for National Assembly dissolution, fresh elections amid political tensions

PPP Secretary General Nayyar Bukhari emphasizes need for a fresh mandate if government feels 'threatened'



Soon Times Correspondent
ISLAMABAD
The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) has urged the federal government to dissolve the National Assembly and hold new elections amidst growing political tensions. This advice came from PPP Secretary General Nayyar Hussain Bukhari, who emphasized the need for a fresh mandate if the government feels threatened. In an interview with a private television channel, Bukhari stated, "If the government perceives a threat, it should dissolve the assembly and initiate new

elections." He suggested that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif should send an advisory to President Asif Ali Zardari to dissolve the assembly and pave the way for elections. Bukhari expressed concerns about the government's reluctance to communicate its issues with the PPP. "PPP is ready to strengthen the government in Parliament, but it should deliver something meaningful. President Zardari has repeatedly stated his willingness to mediate discussions and play a constructive role, but there must be a willingness to engage in

dialogue," Bukhari said. He cautioned that any derailment of the political system could harm the country. The PPP leader also reflected on the party's acceptance of the election results, despite having reservations. "We accepted the election results with reservations. If we hadn't supported the PML-N, would the parliament and the Chief Executive's office be functioning today?" he questioned, underscoring the PPP's role in stabilizing the government.

Govt says judges' dissenting notes cast doubt on SC reserved seats case verdict

Info minister expresses concern that decision could set a precedent for members to freely switch party affiliations

Soon Times Correspondent
ISLAMABAD
Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Attaullah Tarar, has raised concerns over the recent Supreme Court decision involving the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and the allocation of reserved seats. During a press conference in Lahore, Tarar highlighted the dissenting opinions of two Supreme Court judges, Justice Aminuddin Khan and Justice Naeem Akhtar Afghani, which have cast doubts on the majority verdict. Tarar criticized the Supreme Court's delay in issuing a comprehensive written decision, asking, "Why have the remaining judges not released their written opinions yet?" He noted that the dissenting judges have suggested that implementing the



decision might require suspending certain constitutional articles, a move he deemed problematic. The minister elaborated on the implications of the dissenting notes, questioning the potential for "floor-crossing" if members of the Sunni Ittehad Council (SIC) were to occupy PTI seats. "Is this not a violation of Articles 62

and 63?" Tarar asked, referring to the constitutional provisions that outline qualifications for parliamentarians. He also expressed apprehension about the decision setting a precedent for future political manoeuvres, where members could freely switch party affiliations. "The dissenting notes have put a big question mark on the majority decision," Tarar stated, emphasizing the need for clarity on the constitutional and legal issues raised by the judges. Tarar warned that suspending constitutional articles to facilitate the decision could undermine Pakistan's legal framework. "If the impression of unilateral relief from the Supreme Court's decision persists, it will damage the constitution and the rule of law," he argued, highlighting the potential legal and constitutional fallout.

POLICE MARTYRS' DAY

Federal Minister for Interior Mohsin Naqvi has paid rich tribute to the great sacrifices of police martyrs on Police Martyrs' Day. He said that this day is a reminder of the unforgettable sacrifices of brave police personnels who are the pride of the entire nation. Interior Minister said that police officers and personnel have

always been at the forefront in curbing crimes. He praised the exemplary services of police forces in all provinces for maintaining peace and order. He also acknowledged the sacrifices of police officers and personnel in the war against terrorism, saying that they have written history with their precious blood. Furthermore,

he said that SSP Ashraf Marth, Captain Mubeen, and all police martyrs are always alive in our hearts and will remain so. The sacrifices of police martyrs are invaluable which can never be forgotten. Interior Minister stated that on Police Martyrs' Day, we express solidarity with the families of martyrs. He emphasized that we stand with

the families of police martyrs and will also be there for them. He said that welfare of the families of police martyrs is responsibility of the Government. Interior Minister reiterated that a true nation always honors its martyrs. He underscored that there will be no compromise regarding the honor and respect of martyrs.

IPPs and Power Sector Reform



Rai Muhammad Zaka Ullah Khan

ensure that inputs like fuel prices are decided by government in a proper exchange rate and the prices of electricity buying by IPPs. In addition, more the government pay capacity charges (investment) to investors. In capacity, include cost of land purchase, design, installation, taxes, insurance, debt servicing, administration and return on equity. They government make such a plan in which government pay subsidies to private investors from public taxes. These new power plants enhance the power generation capacity. Now the electricity power generation capacity of Pakistan is 41557 MW. Nevertheless, the maximum demand is only 31000 MW. So their is supply high but demand is low. Further, more the important thing is that transmission and distribution capacity of Pakistan is only 22000 MW to supply electricity to peoples. Its mean we can make electricity 41 thousands MV. But our distribution capacity to customer is only 22000 MV. We cannot distribute the electricity that we produce. As a result, the government of Pakistan pays heavy capacity charges to IPPs from public taxes. The total budget of the Pakistani government is 18,887 billion PRs for the financial year 2024-25, in which the government allocates PRs 1,094 trillion in subsidies to the power sector. The government provides subsidies to IPPs to help keep electricity prices low. For the financial year 2023-24, the subsidy was PRs 584 -13824. Additionally, an interesting point is that the capacity payments to IPPs are linked to dollar indexation, which means that the payments increase when the value of the rupee decreases against the dollar. This has been criticized as it leads to a significant burden on the government and ultimately the consumers.

Due to the agreements with Independent Power Producers (IPPs), Pakistan has become one of the most expensive countries in the region

in terms of electricity costs. This high cost of electricity is driving up production expenses for industries across the country. As a result, Pakistani exporters are struggling to compete in the global market because their goods are becoming too expensive. This situation is leading to potential cancellations of export contracts, as international buyers are starting to overlook Pakistani products in favour of cheaper alternatives from other countries. The high electricity costs are not only affecting domestic consumers but also harming Pakistan's export-driven industries, which are crucial for the country's economic growth. Therefore, it has become necessary for the government to provide electricity at lower prices if they want to enhance their economic conditions.

The government should urgently renegotiate the capacity payments with Independent Power Producers (IPPs). These payments are a major burden on the economy, as they require the government to pay for electricity that may not even be used, leading to excessive costs. The government should retire all power plants that run on furnace oil, LNG and imported coal, as they produce extremely expensive electricity. There are approximately 22 such plants that generate electricity at rates between 40 to 55 rupees per unit, which is unaffordable for most consumers. These plants are not cost-effective and contribute to the financial strain on the energy sector. In the end, the government should invest in improving the power transmission infrastructure. Enhancing the transmission system would increase power consumption efficiency and boost productivity across the country. This would also reduce the need for high capacity payments, ultimately benefiting Pakistan's economic stability. These measures are crucial to make electricity more affordable, reduce financial stress on the government, and support the broader economy.

The New Composition of European Union



Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaher

The recent European Union elections have delivered a diverse and multifaceted outcome, reflecting the complex political landscape across the continent. There are total number of seats in the European Parliament, which is 720. The seats are divided among various political groups, each represented by a different color. The largest group is the European People's Party (EPP), which holds 189 seats. This group has experienced a decline of 13 seats from the previous parliament. The Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) holds 135 seats, showing a decrease of nine seats. Renew Europe (RE) has 79 seats, with a gain of 23 seats. The Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA) has 53 seats, gaining 11 seats. The European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) hold 76 seats, with a significant increase of 19 seats. Identity and Democracy (ID) holds 58 seats, losing nine seats. The Left has 37 seats, gaining two seats. Non-Inscrits (NI), a group of non-aligned members, holds 45 seats, with a decrease of 17 seats. There are also 46 seats classified as 'Others,' representing various smaller parties and independent candidates.

Germany, the largest country by population, has the most seats with 96. The distribution includes significant representation from EPP, S&D, and Greens/EFA. France has 81 seats, with a notable presence of the National Rally party within the ID group, as well as significant representation from EPP and S&D. Italy holds 76 seats, with a strong showing from ID, EPP, and S&D. Spain has 61 seats, with a major presence from S&D and EPP. Poland, with 53 seats, shows a strong performance from ECR and EPP. Other countries such as Romania, Netherlands, Belgium, and Greece have varying

distributions, reflecting their unique political landscapes.

The overall voter turnout for the European Union elections stands at 51%, indicating that just over half of the eligible voters participated. Countries with the highest voter turnout include Belgium and Luxembourg, where voting is compulsory, showing nearly 90% participation. Other countries with high turnout include Denmark, Sweden, and Germany, all with over 60% participation. Conversely, some countries such as Slovakia, Slovenia, and Croatia have lower turnout rates, ranging between 20% and 40%.

The European Union election results reveal several important trends and insights into the current political climate across Europe. The Greens/EFA group has seen a notable increase in seats, reflecting growing support for environmental issues and sustainability across Europe. Renew Europe (RE) has also gained seats, indicating a shift towards centrist and pro-European Union policies. The EPP and S&D remain the largest groups in the European Parliament, despite experiencing some losses. Their continued dominance highlights the ongoing support for traditional center-right and center-left ideologies. The ECR and ID groups have made significant gains, particularly in countries like Poland, Italy, and France. This trend reflects the rising influence of right wing, nationalist, and Eurosceptic parties across the continent. Voter turnout varies widely between countries, with some showing strong engagement and others lagging behind. High turnout in countries with compulsory voting laws suggests that such policies may effectively increase participation.

The results of the European Union elections have several implications for the future direction of the EU. With the increased presence of Greens/EFA and Renew Europe, environmental and centrist policies are likely to gain more attention in the European

Parliament. The continued strength of traditional parties ensures that issues like economic stability, social welfare, and integration will remain central to the EU's agenda. The rise of right-wing parties poses challenges to the EU's unity and its pro-European agenda. Addressing the concerns of nationalist and Eurosceptic voters will be crucial for maintaining cohesion within the union. The varying voter turnout rates highlight the need for strategies to increase political engagement and participation across all member states. This could involve educational campaigns, reforms to make voting more accessible, or considering compulsory voting laws. The changing composition of the European Parliament will affect the balance of power and the formation of coalitions. Collaboration between different political groups will be essential for effective governance and decision-making.

The recent European Union elections have underscored the diverse and evolving political landscape across Europe. With significant gains for the Greens, liberals, and right-wing parties, alongside continued support for traditional parties, the results reflect a complex interplay of ideologies and priorities. As the European Parliament moves forward, it will face the challenge of addressing a broad spectrum of issues while navigating the dynamic political environment. The varying voter turnout also emphasizes the importance of fostering greater political engagement among EU citizens to ensure a truly representative and robust democratic process.

The changing composition of the European Parliament will affect the balance of power and coalition formation. Effective governance and decision-making will require collaboration between different political groups. The election results underscore the diverse and evolving political landscape in Europe, with significant gains for Greens, liberals, and right-wing parties, alongside continued support for traditional parties. As the European Parliament moves forward, it will face the challenge of addressing a broad spectrum of issues while navigating a dynamic political environment.



JI's sit-in against inflation continues for 10th day

Two rounds of negotiations between Jamaat-e-Islami and government committees have so far failed to produce any results

Soon Times Correspondent
RAWALPINDI:
The sit-in of Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) against inflation and exorbitant power bills has entered in 10th day in Rawalpindi.
Meanwhile, the JI is also staging sit-in in Karachi for last two days. Addressing the workers in Rawalpindi, senior JI leader Liaquat Baloch demanded forensic audit of all the agreements signed with the Independent Power Producers (IPPs).
"Pakistan is facing political, constitutional, parliamentary and democratic crises these days," said Liaquat Baloch.
The government has lost its writ and instability is rampant in the country, he added.
He was of the view that people from every walk of life have joined the sit-in of Jamaat-e-Islami.
Jamaat-e-Islami's protest against high electricity prices, exorbitant taxes, and inflation has entered its 10th day at Rawalpindi's Liaquat Bagh. Despite cloudy skies and pleasant weather in Rawalpindi, the determination of the protestors

remains steadfast. Participants were served naan and hot halwa for breakfast.
Two rounds of negotiations between Jamaat-e-Islami and government committees have so far failed to produce any results. Deputy Amir of Jamaat-e-Islami, Liaquat Baloch, is expected to announce the party's next steps in a press conference.
Jamaat-e-Islami has declared that the sit-in will continue until their demands are met and may extend the protest nationwide.
Meanwhile, one side of Murree Road remains open for traffic, and business activities continue as usual.
Previously, JI postponed the sit-in scheduled for August 2 at D-Chowk in Islamabad. It was agreed that the rally would be held on July 26 now.
According to sources, Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi contacted the leadership of Jamaat-e-Islami, requesting the postponement of the sit-in.
During a press conference in Lahore on Thursday, JI leader Hafiz Naeem-ur-Rehman stated that the sit-in date was changed

due to the observance of Ashura. He said that considering the requests from scholars and the security situation during Muharram, JI decided to postpone the sit-in until after Ashura.
Rehman criticized the government for its handling of electricity bills, claiming they have shaken the country. He highlighted that the middle class and traders are particularly distressed, with no segment of society spared by the government's actions.
The JI leader warned of worsening conditions in the coming days, citing the recent increase in commercial electricity rates by Rs8 per unit. He questioned how economic improvement could be achieved under such circumstances, noting that even residential areas are not receiving relief.
The JI leader announced that instead of the sit-in, protests and camps would be held in all cities across the country on July 12, with further sit-ins in various cities on July 14. On July 24, convoys from different cities will head towards Islamabad.



Local Body Elections Should Be Held Immediately In Punjab: Ali Asif



Soon Times Correspondent
Sargodha:
Member of Provincial Assembly of Pakistan Theer-e-Insaf Ali Asif said during a meeting with the representatives of Shaheen Regional Network that people's problems should be solved at the local level. For this, it is necessary to hold local body elections immediately. He further said that the people are deprived of their representatives due to

non-holding of local body elections. I will raise my voice in every forum inside and outside the Assembly to hold transparent local body elections as soon as possible so that development and welfare works can be implemented at the local level. The Constitution of Pakistan enshrines in the basic principles of policy that our country shall have local governments. The Supreme Court of the country has interpreted Article

7 of the Constitution to mean local governments after the federation and provinces. Article 140A of the Constitution obliges the provincial governments to establish local governments. Despite such clear constitutional restrictions, the absence of elected local governments in Punjab and the continuous delay in elections are cause of concern.

SNGPL East Region Takes Major Action Against Gas Theft

Soon Times Correspondent
Lahore:

In a significant operation against gas theft, a commercial consumer on Band Road, Lahore, has been caught stealing gas worth millions of rupees through a direct bypass. During excavation in front of the commercial consumer's main line, gas theft was detected through a direct bypass. The commercial consumer had connected a direct bypass from the service line using a clamp, and was using the stolen gas for large-scale wire manufacturing in two furnaces. To steal a larger quantity of gas, the consumer was also using a large compressor. This substantial gas theft was causing a monthly loss of millions of rupees to the national exchequer. The Special Task Force swiftly acted, disconnecting the commercial meter. Evidence of the direct bypass and compressor was recovered from



the site. The consumer involved in gas theft has been fined Rs 32.5 million. Legal proceedings against those involved in the gas theft have also been initiated. SNGPL is committed to ensuring the safe and reliable delivery of natural gas across its network. The company remains vigilant against any fraudulent activities that threaten country's operations and the national interest.

New Gwadar International Airport expected to become operational on August 14



Soon Times Correspondent
ISLAMABAD:
The New Gwadar International Airport is expected to become operational on August

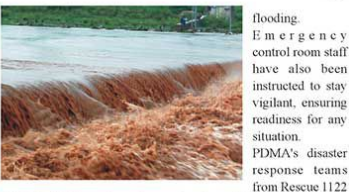
14, with all preparations nearly complete. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is likely to oversee the soft launch of this significant project.
A special Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) flight from Karachi is scheduled to be the first to land at the New Gwadar International Airport, marking a historic moment for the region. Constructed at an estimated cost of Rs54.98 billion, the airport features runways built to international standards,

capable of accommodating large aircraft such as the Airbus A380. The Gwadar International Airport is a key project under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and represents a significant milestone in the collaboration between China and Pakistan. According to sources, the Civil Aviation Authority has constructed the airport in partnership with Chinese experts. Currently, only four per cent of the operational section remains incomplete. Other development projects related to the airport are expected to be finished by December 2025.

Punjab on high alert as PDMA issues flood warning

Soon Times Correspondent
Islamabad

Punjab's Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) has issued warnings about high to extremely high flood levels in the region's hill torrents due to continuous rainfall in the mountainous areas of Koh-e-Suleiman.
The PDMA spokesperson stated that the water flow is increasing steadily, prompting urgent alerts to local authorities.
Director General Irfan Kathia of PDMA has instructed relevant administrations to remain on high alert.
An alert has been issued to the Commissioner of Dera Ghazi Khan and district commissioners to prepare for potential



flooding. Emergency control room staff have also been instructed to stay vigilant, ensuring readiness for any situation.
PDMA's disaster response teams from Rescue 1122 have been placed on high alert, with DG Kathia emphasising the importance of sufficient fuel stocks for rescue operations. He also urged that citizens be kept informed of the current situation to ensure public safety. Further, the evacuation of people and livestock from riverbanks is a priority, and Kathia has stressed the need for effective communication of safety measures to the public.

"Soon Valley Literary Society" is actively engaged in a tree plantation initiative.

Soon Times Correspondent
Khushab
A poetry event of "Tree Plantation Campaign 2024" was held by the "Soon Valley Literary Society." In the second phase of this initiative, we are, fortunately, starting to plant trees in the Soon Valley. The saplings were provided by young poetess "Maryam Awan" from Naushera. The society's administration extended their gratitude and congratulations to her for her commendable contribution. They expressed their happiness at the enthusiasm shown by the youth and girls of the Soon Valley to take action. We are hopeful that, with Allah Almighty's grace, Soon Valley will once again thrive and flourish in the coming years, and that the trees we are planting will benefit future generations with their shade. We pray that Allah Almighty grants us success in our mission and rewards everyone who has played a part in this tree planting campaign (especially Maryam Awan) in afterlife. Ameen Sum'Ameen



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 05th August 2024, From 06:00 AM to 10:00 AM, Islamabad Circle, T&T, Angoori, Treat, Sohnan Road, Ghori Garden, Sharifabad, Burma, Khanna Dak, Lohi Bhir, Peer Suhawah, Bari Inam, Khayaban Iqbal, Industrial I, II & III, Ward, Old PTN, Ittihad

Foundry, SH Steel, Sadiq Steel, SES, Fazal Ghee, U-Phone Feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle, Katarian, Holy Family, F-Block, Bani, 4th Road, I-1/4/3 Feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Zaraj I & II, IST, Dhok Awan, Mohra Nagyal, NPF-II Feeders, Chakwal Circle, Sarkal, Chakral, AI Qaim Mill, Dhoda Feeders and surrounding areas 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.



Philippines, Germany commit to reaching defence pact this year

MANILA
The Philippines and Germany on Sunday committed to signing a defence cooperation agreement this year, vowing to stand for the international rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific region.

German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius and his Philippine counterpart Gilberto Teodoro committed to establishing long-term relations between their armed forces to expand training and bilateral exchanges, explore opportunities to expand bilateral armaments cooperation and engage in joint projects.



France invites its citizens to leave Lebanon due to military risks

Web Desk
France has invited French citizens in Lebanon to leave the country due to a risk of military escalation in the Middle East, the foreign ministry said on Sunday in a travel advisory.

The French foreign ministry reiterated that it advised French citizens against travelling to Lebanon.

Air France extends suspension of flights on Saturday, Air France said it and its affiliate Transavia were further extending their suspensions of flights between Paris and Beirut until at least Aug 6, amid rising regional tensions.

Airlines are avoiding Iranian and Lebanese airspace and cancelling flights to Israel and Lebanon, as concerns grow over a possible regional conflict, after the killing of senior members of militant groups Hamas and Hezbollah this week.

Air France suspended flights between Paris and Beirut last Monday, two days after a strike in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights killed 12 children and teenagers, which Israel and the United States blamed on Hezbollah.



50 killed in Bangladesh clashes as protesters push for PM to resign

Violence broke out when student groups protested against quotas for government jobs

DHAKA
Web Desk
At least 50 people were killed and dozens injured in clashes in Bangladesh on Sunday as police fired tear gas and lobbed stun grenades to disperse tens of thousands of protesters calling for Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina to resign.

The unrest, which spurred the government to shut down internet services, is its biggest test since deadly protests when Hasina won a fourth straight term in January elections boycotted by the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party.

Two construction workers were killed on their way to work and 100 injured in the central district of Munsingaj, during a three-way clash of protesters, police and ruling party activists, witnesses said.

"They were brought dead to the hospital with bullet wounds," said Abu Hena Mohammad Jamal, the superintendent of the district hospital.

Police said they had not fired any bullets, however, when some improvised explosives were detonated and the area turned into a battleground.

Violence broke out elsewhere in the South Asian nation, as protesters blocked major highways.

At least three people were killed and 50 injured in the northeastern district of Pabna during a clash between protesters and activists of Hasina's ruling Awami League, witnesses said.

Two more were killed in violence in the northern district of Bogura, hospital officials said.

A group attacked and vandalised the capital's Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical College Hospital as student protesters launched a non-co-

Palestinian kills two, wounds two in stabbing attack in Israel

HOLON, Israel
A Palestinian attacker killed two people and wounded two others in a stabbing spree in central Israel on Sunday before being shot dead by police, Israeli authorities said.

The stabbings took place during morning rush hour in the city of Holon, near Tel Aviv. The attacker stabbed people near a gas station and a park, Israel's ambulance service said.

Two senior citizens, a man and woman, were killed and two other people were wounded and rushed to hospital, medical officials said.

"The terrorist was quickly neutralized by one of our officers at the scene and prevented him from carrying out an even worse attack," police spokesman Eli Levi said on Israel's Channel 12.

A police statement said police were present in force at the scene and were "conducting extensive searches with a helicopter and additional resources."

The Islamist group Hamas, which is at war with Israel in Gaza, said in a statement that the stabbing attack was a "natural response" to Israeli attacks on Palestinians and to the assassination of the group's leader, Ismail Haniyeh, last week in Tehran.

However, it stopped short of claiming responsibility for Sunday's attack.



Ukrainian drones and missiles kill 3 in Russia and Crimea, after bombing of Kharkiv leaves 3 dead



CARACAS
Thousands of Venezuelans marched across the South American country over its contested election, as President Nicolas Maduro told supporters some 2,000 people had been arrested during protests against the results.

Venezuela's electoral authority, blasted by critics as favoring the ruling socialists, proclaimed Maduro the winner in last Sunday's vote, saying on Monday he obtained 51% compared to 46% for his authority reaffirmed a similar margin on Friday.

The published election result sparked widespread allegations of fraud and protests. Subsequently security forces cracked down on protests which Maduro's government labeled part of an attempted US-backed coup.

"This time there will be no forgiveness," Maduro told supporters at a rally in Caracas, where he said some 2,000 people had been detained in connection to "crimes" during the protests. He pledged "maximum punishment."

Maduro's supporters said they were defending democracy.

Today we are here heading the call of our president ... to defend democracy," Alfredo Valera, president of Venezuela's Futur union, who took part in a pro-government caravan in Caracas, told state television.

Elsewhere, opposition supporters marched to demand justice, buoyed by the presence of leader Maria Corina Machado, who emerged from hiding on Saturday to join her demonstrations on the streets of Caracas.

"Just as it took us a long time to achieve electoral victory, now comes a stage that we take day by day, but we have never been as strong as today, never," Machado told supporters in Caracas.

Supporters were happy to see Machado on the streets after the leader said in a Thursday op-ed for the Wall Street Journal that she was hiding and feared for her life.

Sports & Showbiz

Pakistan's Nasir Iqbal clinches Bega Open 2024 squash title in Australia



KARACHI:
Pakistan's acclaimed squash player Nasir Iqbal has added another feather to his cap by clinching the Bega Open 2024 title in Australia.

Iqbal triumphed over Hong Kong's second-seed Matthew Lai in the final with an 11-6, 11-1 and 11-3 victory, bagging his career's 17th title and winning a \$12,000 prize money.

The final, which only lasted for 24 minutes, reflects the Pakistani player's prowess and skill on the court.

With this fresh achievement, Iqbal has now won four out of his last five tournaments and is now slated to take part in tournaments in Malaysia.

The Pakistani player's victory comes



Imane Khelif's father defends daughter amid gender eligibility

Sports Desk
The father of the Algerian boxer, Imane Khelif, who is participating in the ongoing Paris Olympics, finally broke silence over the criticism directed at his daughter regarding her gender.

Terming the attacks targeting Imane "immoral", the father — Amar Khelif — shed light on athletes with Differences of Sexual Development (DSD) competing in sports competition, stating that his daughter honored his family.

This debate arose after Italian boxer Angela Carini exited the match within 46 seconds due to a series of painful blows from Khelif at the 2024 Paris Olympics on August 1.

Previously, in 2023, the 25-year-old failed a gender eligibility test at the International Boxing Association (IBA) World Championships. She was, however, allowed to participate at the Paris Games by the International Olympic Committee.

In an interview at his simple, cinderblock home on the outskirts of the northern Algerian city of Tiarret, her father said he was proud of his daughter and backed her to win a medal for all of Algeria.

"Having such a daughter is an honour because she is a champion; she honoured me, and I encourage her, and I hope she will get the medal in Paris," he said. "Imane is a little girl who has loved sports since she was six-years-old."

He shared with Reuters an official-looking document that showed her birthday. "This is our family official document, May 2, 1999, Imane Khelif, female. It is written here, you can read it, this document doesn't lie," he said.

Khelif fell foul of IBA eligibility rules that prevent athletes with XY chromosomes from competing in women's events when she was disqualified hours before her gold-medal bout in New Delhi last year.

Additionally, Bouchara Rebhi, a 17-year-old who dreams of turning pro, scooped Khelif's snayers.

"I know Imane Khelif is the champion of Algeria many times, the champion of Africa as well, and also the Arab champion," she said.

Squad for Pakistan-Bangladesh Test Series expected to be announced till Tuesday

LAHORE
The PCB selectors are expected to announce the national squad for the Pakistan and Bangladesh Test series on Monday or Tuesday.

According to PCB sources, consultations are ongoing between Cricket Advisor Waqar Younis and the national team captain and coach.

Several players may not retain their spots due to form and fitness issues.

Sources suggest that Mohammad Husrain is likely to be included in the Test squad. However, Fahim Ashraf, Wasim Junior, Sami Ayub, and Nauman Ali face challenges in securing a place, while Imam-ul-Haq's inclusion will be debated.

Additionally, there is a possibility of including Saibzada Farhan in the squad. Decisions regarding Ameer Jamal and Hasan Ali will be made after assessing their fitness.

The Bangladesh team is scheduled to arrive in Islamabad on August 17, with the Test series between Pakistan and Bangladesh set to begin on August 21.

It is expected that there will be several changes to the Test squad.

US swim star Katie Ledecky makes history at Paris Olympics



Adding yet another feather in her cap, US swim star Katie Ledecky won 9th gold medal in 800 metres freestyle category during the ongoing Paris Olympics on Sunday.

Ledecky powered to a fourth straight 800m Olympic freestyle title to equal the record for most gold medals won by a woman athlete in any sport. She equals Soviet Union gymnast Larisa Latynina's 50-year-old record.

With this fresh achievement, Ledecky became the second woman athlete who won nine gold medals in the history of the Olympics.

She has dominated in the 800m since winning the event as a 15-year-old at the London Games in 2012, and while she was pushed all the way by Australian Ariarne Titmus, the defence of her crown never truly looked in danger.

The 27-year-old hit the wall in 8min 11.04sec, ahead of Titmus (8:12.29) and the United States' Paige Madden (8:13.00).

"I knew Ariarne was going to give me everything she had," said Ledecky.

"I felt confident coming into it, but it was gonna be tough no matter what all the way down to the finish. I just had to stick in the race and trust myself, trust my training, trust that I know how to race that event



and I am just kind of relieved that I got my hand on my wall."

A ninth gold drew her level with former Soviet-era artistic gymnast Latynina as the only women ever to collect that many titles.

The greatest distance swimmer the sport has seen, she had already won the 1500m and earned silver in the 4x200m freestyle relay and bronze in the 400m freestyle in Paris.

No other woman swimmer has won gold at four different Olympics and Ledecky said that was the record that gave her particular satisfaction.