



# Islamabad POST

Tuesday, June 21, 2022

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**Sheikh Sudais unveils biggest operational plan for Hajj 2022**

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**Pakistan transitioning to geoeconomics**

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**Max Verstappen wins Canadian Grand Prix**

Detailed News On Page-06



## Briefs

### Task force on minority rights

**DNA**  
ISLAMABAD: In a bid to protect the rights of minority groups in the country, Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif on Monday approved the establishment of a task force on the rights of minorities. Taking to Twitter, PM Shahbaz stated: "Our non-Muslim citizens are part & parcel of our national fabric." This body will oversee the implementation of measures regarding the rights of minorities and will present quarterly reports to him, wrote the prime minister.

### Fawad dubs NAB bill NRO-2

**DNA**  
ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Central Senior Vice President Fawad Chaudhry said that NAB bill amendment was an NRO-2 for Sharif and Zardari families as corruption cases amounting to Rs. 1100 billion would go out of NAB jurisdiction after the amendment. Speaking at a press conference here, he said that NAB bill amendment would benefit Panama cases as well as the coteries of these two families. Fawad said that PTI celebrated 'Black Day' against NAB law amendment on Monday, because cabal of crooks and NAB-wanted people did the amendment to exonerate themselves of mega corruption cases.

### Sherry warns of heavy monsoons

**DNA**  
ISLAMABAD: Minister for Climate Change Sherry Rehman has urged the national and provincial disaster management authorities and relevant local authorities to take all-out precautionary measures to cope with possible disastrous impacts of the expected monsoon rains. In a statement on Monday, she said provincial governments must exercise vigilance and preparedness for the upcoming monsoon to brace for low to high-intensity floods.

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# Deal with IMF within two days

Miftah says govt will not withdraw income tax exemption announced for salaried class



SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Finance Minister Miftah Ismail has expressed hope that the government would reach an agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to revive the stalled \$6 billion programme within "a day or two". He made the remarks while speaking to reporters at the Parliament House in Islamabad on Monday. Responding to a question, Miftah said the IMF did not have any

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## Dollar soars past Rs210 in interbank trade

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The US dollar continued its upward march on Monday as it rose above Rs210 against the local currency during early morning trade in the interbank market. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the rupee depreciated sharply by Rs2.45 to close at an all-time low of Rs210.2 against the dollar from Friday's close of Rs207.75. In the open market the greenback was trading at Rs214 as of 4:50pm. Meanwhile, domestic gold prices also hit an all-time high of Rs147,250 per tola. Saeed Bin Naseer, director of Mettis Global, told Dawn.com that the rupee remained under pressure on the first day of the week due to the news of banks running out of dollars over the weekend.

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# Russia to 'intensify' fighting: Zelensky

Meanwhile, Kyiv awaits a historic decision from EU on its membership

NEWS DESK

KYIV: Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky warned Sunday that Russia was likely to intensify its "hostile activity" this week, as Kyiv awaits a historic decision from the European Union on its membership application. Nearly three months after Russia launched invasion of his country, Zelensky said there had been "few such fateful decisions for Ukraine" as the one it expects from the EU this week, adding in his evening address that "only a positive decision is in the interests of the whole of Europe." "Obviously, we expect Russia to intensify hostile activity this week... We are preparing. We are ready," he continued. Ukraine said it had also repulsed fresh attacks by Russian forces on the eastern front, rocked by weeks of fierce battles as Moscow tries to seize the industrial Donbas region.

Continued on Page 06

## Russia's grain blockade 'real war crime': EU

LUXEMBOURG: EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said Monday that Russia should be held "accountable" if it keeps blocking the export of vitally needed grain from Ukraine. "One cannot imagine that millions of tonnes of wheat remain blocked in Ukraine while in the rest of the world people are suffering hunger. This is a real war crime," Borrell said at a meeting of European Union foreign ministers. The West has demanded Moscow stop blockading Ukraine's Black Sea ports to allow vast stores of grain to be taken to world markets as fears rise of famines in vulnerable regions. The EU backs United Nation efforts to mediate a deal between Ukraine, Russia and Turkey to get the grain out but these have failed to make any headway so far.

Continued on Page 06

# French envoy to host reception for B-International consortium

B-International is a collaborative capacity building project in higher education between Pakistan, the UK, France, Italy, and Spain

DNA

ISLAMABAD: On the occasion of the very first meeting of the B-International consortium in Pakistan the French Ambassador to Pakistan, Nicolas Galey, has invited the representatives of these 8 universities, along with the ambassadors of UK, Italy and Spain, and representatives from the Higher Education Commission of Pakistan and the European Delegation in Pakistan. B-International is a collaborative capacity building project in higher education between Pakistan, the UK, France, Italy, and Spain, and is co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme of the European Union. The project brings together 4 prestigious universities in Pakistan; COMSATS University Islamabad; LUMS; NUST and PIFS, and 4 top-notch European Universities: Cardiff Metropol-



itan University (UK), Ecole Centrale de Nantes (France), University of Bologna (Italy), University of Salamanca (Spain) - all working together in the spirit of internationalisation. The French Embassy in Pakistan strongly supports academic cooperation between Pakistani universities and their counterparts in France and Europe. Such a project deserves to be celebrated: the B-International

project will reinforce the Pakistan's HEC Vision 2025 on internationalization through building capacity within the Higher Education sector, enhancing international collaboration, and supporting the development of global mind-sets of the youth. The first two years of the B-International project has coincided with a global pandemic, meaning all of the B-International Partners are yet to meet face-to-face. Nevertheless, colleagues from the 8 universities across Europe and Pakistan have worked passionately and tirelessly for the last two and a half years adapting work plans and delivering to achieve endless success in the name of internationalisation and B-International. This international visit to Islamabad marks the very first time that the B-International consortium members from both Europe and Pakistan have met in person.

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ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Spain Manuel Duran Gimenez-Rico calls on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force. - DNA

## Ambassador of Spain calls on Air Chief

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Spain, Manuel Duran Gimenez-Rico called on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force in his office. The visiting dignitary appreciated the professionalism of PAF personnel and the exceptional progress made by PAF over the years, especially through indigenization. The Air Chief highlighted that both countries enjoy cordial relations and reiterated his resolve to further enhance the existing bilateral cooperation between the air forces of the two countries. Various matters of mutual interest and professional cooperation also came under discussion during the meeting.

## Covid cases see slight uptick

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is witnessing another surge in Covid-19 cases as 171 confirmed cases were reported by the National Institute of Health (NIH) in the past 24 hours. The rise in active cases in different cities has risen, with 57 coronavirus patients in critical care at present. No deaths have been reported so far. The national positivity rate stands at 1.53 per cent, whereas that of Sindh has been recorded to be as high as five per cent.

# 'Black day' President rejects NAB (Amend) bill

"Poor will continue to be jailed for petty crimes while corrupt rich will be free to loot & plunder", says President



SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has also sent back the National Accountability (Amendment) Bill unsigned saying the Bill as passed by the Parliament is regressive in nature, it will promote corruption by ensuring that the long arm of the law has been crippled. However, in view of the 'deeming' provision under Article 75 (2) of the Constitution of Pakistan, the National Accountability (Amendment) Bill, 2022 will be enacted into law even if the President of Pakistan does not sign it. The President of Pakistan official Twitter handle wrote on Monday: 'President has not signed the bill amending NAB Ordinance. He wrote that as conceived originally, the bill took inspiration from Hazrat Umar's

Continued on Page 06

## 'New NAB law will protect white collar criminals'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan while declaring June 20 a black day said that the National Accountability (Amendment) Bill 2022 will protect white collar criminals from accountability. In a series of Tweets on Monday, the former prime minister highlighted that Rs1,100 billion of the Rs1,200 billion that was being investigated by the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) would now be out of its jurisdiction.

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

Table listing National Days and Armed Forces Days for June, including dates and names of the days (e.g., June 02 / Italy National Day/ Independence Day).



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan Khazar Farhadov and others taking keen interest in the refugee's handicraft products at the occasion of World Refugee Day ceremony at Kehkashan Hall, Serena Hotel. - APP

NH&MP to launch 'demerit point system'

ISLAMABAD: On the direction of Inspector General of National Highway and Motorway Police (NH&MP) Khalid Mahmood, the department will launch a demerit point system. The system will rely on a national driving license repository (NLDL) of over 8 million driving licenses, said a press release.

Pakistan earns \$2,197 million from IT exports

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan earned US \$2,197.787 million by providing different Information Technology (IT) services in various countries during the ten months of fiscal year 2021-22. This shows growth of 29.29 percent as compared to US \$1,699.860 million earned through provision of services during the corresponding period of fiscal year 2020-21.

Marriyum grieved over demise of journalist's mother

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Monday expressed deep grief and sorrow over the death of the mother of senior journalist Zeeshan Javed. In a statement, the minister said she was saddened to learn about the death of Zeeshan Javed's mother and she shared the grief of the bereaved family.

Court Notice

In The court of Nadeem-Masood Bhattar Tehsil-Dar-Gujrat Title Sidra Syed versus: Wazir Mehdi etc. Amended Suit for Separation and Possession Separately Notice to: Wazir Mehdi S/o. Habib Ali, Syeda Dure-Najaf, Qasoor Mehdi, Zanoobia Marawat D/o. Habib Ali, Qudsia Shirin D/o. Nasir Ali Presently Residing in Bartania, Tahira Khadija D/o. Nasir Ali, Faizan Haider Son, Samia Tahir, Syeda Malika Tahira D/o. Seerat Sajjad, Imran Haider, Musharraf Abbas S/o. Seerat Sajjad, Jaza Batool D/o. Habib Ali, Badarul Dija Fatima D/o. Habib Ali, Maniza Fatima, Nafees Zahira Araf Adeela Zahira D/o. Wazir Ali Presently Residing Denmark, Syed Mudassar Ali Alam S/o. Wazir Ali, Syeda Ejaz Fatima Widow, Syeda Rubab Tahira, Syeda Mubina Tahira Daughters, Syed Farooq Hussain Husband, Syeda Khazreena, Syeda Tahmina Daughters, Syed Sohail, Syed Adeel Sons, Tabinda Konain D/o. Habib Ali, Late Rizwana Tahira D/o. Nasir Ali (La walad), Abu-ul-Kamal Dawar, Abu Tarab Khawar Sons Habib Ali R/o. Madina Syedan Tehsil & District Gujrat. Whereas in the above mentioned case it has been proved to the satisfaction of the court that the above mentioned defendant is not served in ordinary way. It is therefore proclaimed under order 5 rule 20 CPC that if the said defendant will not appear personally or through a duly authorized agent or pleader in court at 8 AM on 25-06-2022. Otherwise case will be decided ex parte. Court Reporter Gujrat 0333-8409964 Qaisar Mehmood Warrach

PCI webinar calls for cooperation, connectivity Ex-FS Tahmina Janjua & Mushahid reject any new Cold War

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: An international webinar comprising experts from 3 continents called for greater cooperation and connectivity to combat common challenges like Climate Change, hunger, poverty, and the Pandemic, rejecting any notion of confrontation or a new Cold War. The webinar was organized by the Pakistan-China Institute under its flagship 'Friends of Silk Road' series, titled 'Big Power competition in the post-pandemic World Order and the Belt and Road Initiative', with speakers from Pakistan, China, Cambodia, Sri Lanka, UK, and the US.

efforts to limit China on all fronts as 'unfortunate,' because they will have major ramifications not just for the global South, but also for the US and its allies, because such development impacts everyone, not just the one being targeted. In his keynote, Senator Mushahid Hussain said Pakistan was in a strategic

and developmental initiative in the 21st Century. He hoped all Asian countries would stay away from any Cold War. He said while the US was still clinging to a military-centric approach, as evident through the QUAD, AUKUS, and seeking a global NATO, conversely, China sought an economic-driven vision through connectivity and regional cooperation, particularly BRI which now has 145 countries and 32 international organisations in its fold.

Former Sri Lankan naval commander, Jayanath Colombage debunked the debt-trap theory surrounding China's Belt and Road Initiative. Sri Lanka owes less than 10% of its foreign debt to China, according to him, and that 10% is actually highly advantageous to Sri Lanka because it has produced enormous economic prospects for the country's citizens. Furthermore, he urged aligning the Belt and Road Initiative with China's domestic economic conditions so that both nations can secure high-quality BRI project development. Mustafa Hyder Sayed, Executive Director of the Pakistan-China Institute said that the implications of big-power competition, whether intended or unintended, affect us all. The growing uncertainty on the world stage has had an impact on Pakistan's middle class. He stated that we must learn to balance our relationships and reprioritize economic and food security as the most important factors.



location where huge transformations and transitions were taking place, including the retrenchment of American power, the peaceful rise of China, and Pakistan endeavoring to be the hub of regional connectivity through CPEC, by making a transition from geopolitics to

tensions and has had unexpected consequences like food and fuel shortages. Senator Mushahid Hussain underlined the need for proactively promoting CPEC, which is the flagship of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which he termed the most significant diplomatic



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Emergency Ambulance.....1122 & Rescue Services.4451122
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Motorway Police.....9270601-20
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- CMH.....5611111
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RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
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Shifa International.4603666



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- CDA.....9221334-43
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Met Office.....9250360-6
RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Islamabad Metropolitan

- Corporation.....9209224
Potohar Town.....9209224
Rawal Town.....5773343

Water Tank

- Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Ruet-e-Hilal committees to meet on June 29

ISLAMABAD: Central and Zonal Ruet-e-Hilal committees would meet on June 29 in their respective offices for sighting the crescent of Zul Hajj 1443 A.H. 'The meeting of Central Ruet-e-Hilal committee for sighting the crescent of Zul Hajj 1443 will be evening of June 29, responding Q a d a ' h jri) in the Pakistan Meteorological Department, Camp Office Met Complex, Main University Road Gulistan-e-Johar, Karachi,' said a notification of the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony. The meetings of zonal and district Ruet-e-Hilal committees would be held at their respective headquarters at the same time. Similarly, the meeting of zonal Ruet-e-Hilal committee, Islamabad would be held at the building of Ministry of Religious Affairs.



TCB-1 660MW's unit-1 set to enter commissioning Back energisation is among the first steps in commissioning a power plant, in which the plant is energised in reverse order through the national grid for performing various tests

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: The 1,320 megawatts Thar Coal Block-1 (TCB-1) power plant has achieved an overall 85% work progress and the 660MWs unit-1 is close to entering commissioning, a senior official of TCB-1 told Gwadar Pro on Monday. TCB-1 is the largest indigenous coal-based power plant project in Thar Block-1 under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) initiative. The mine-mouth plant will utilise the coal extracted by Sino-Sindh Resources Ltd. (SSRL).

TCB-1 and SSRL are owned by Shanghai Electric, which has spent around US\$3 billion to realise Pakistan's dream of cheaper electricity from Thar coal reserves in Sindh province. The official said that work was underway at a fast pace to connect the power plant to the national grid through Matiari-Lahore High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) transmission line. 'We are in close coordination with the National Transmission and Dispatch Co. Ltd. to ensure early back energisation of unit-1 of the power plant,' he

said. Back energisation is among the first steps in commissioning a power plant, in which the plant is energised in reverse order through the national grid for performing various tests on the power plant and synchronising it with the national grid. The back energisation will take three to four months after which unit-1 will be ready for commercial operations, the official said. The company is striving to start commercial operations by the end of the current year. Both units are expected to start electricity production early next year, he said.

Saudi investors keen to invest in Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A high-level trade delegation of Saudi Arabia visited Pakistan led by Fahad Bin Mohammed Al-Bash, Chairman, Saudi-Pak Business Council and held B2B meetings with the members of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) in a local hotel to explore business collaborations in areas of interest. The delegation was representing various sectors including edible oil & fats, food processing, trading, building materials, tourism & hospitality, manufacturing, medical tools & equipment, Fintech, pharmaceuticals and infrastructure services. The delegation would also visit Lahore and Karachi. Speaking at the occasion, Fahad Bin Mohammed Al-Bash, Chairman, Saudi-Pak Business Council said that the Saudi investors were keen to leverage business

and investment opportunities in Pakistan. He stressed that the high-level government-to-government relations between the two countries should be matched with strong trade relations to achieve better results. He urged that the private sectors of both countries should tap business opportunities in each other's country in order to complement their economies. He said that

20 percent of the workforce in Saudi Arabia was from Pakistan and his country wanted to import more trained workers from Pakistan. He said that many sectors of the Saudi economy including chemical industry, real estate and tourism offered good opportunities to Pakistani investors. He said that they have seen a lot of business opportunities in Pakistan and were working with the embas-

sies of both countries to leverage them up to maximum level. He said that exhibitions of Saudi products in Pakistan and Pakistani products in Saudi Arabia would be organized to introduce the export potential of both countries. He hoped that the visit of the Saudi trade delegation to Pakistan would help in further promoting bilateral trade between the two countries. Addressing the delegation, Muhammad Shakeel Munir, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry said that Pakistan offers great opportunities of JVs and investment in various sectors of its economy including mines & minerals, oil & gas, housing & construction, infrastructure development, renewable energy, information technology, food processing, edible oil, logistics, sports, tourism & hospitality. He stressed that Saudi investors should capitalize on them to earn lucrative returns.



## Briefs

AIOU  
Commences  
MS, PhD  
Exams from  
June 24

ISLAMABAD: Final examinations of MS/M.Phil and PhD programs offered in spring semester 2022 by the faculty of social sciences & humanities will begin on June 24. These exams will continue till July 6. Datesheet and roll number slips are available on CMS portal. These exams will take place at AIOU's main campus in Islamabad. According to the Controller Examinations, Dr. Muhammad Ajmal Chaudhry, date sheets of the programs offered by the Faculty of Sciences, Faculty of Education and Faculty of Arabic will also be announced soon. - APP

Rains intensify  
threat of  
dengue

RAWALPINDI: The present spell of showers in the Rawalpindi region has increased the threat of dengue 'larvae breeding', which requires extraordinary measures to handle it urgently as the Pakistan Meteorological Department predicted more rains in the upcoming days. Chief Executive Officer District Health Authority Dr Lubna Ishaq, while talking to APP, said that the prevailing weather was suitable for breeding dengue larvae and asked the concerned to remove stagnant water in outdoor and household settings to stop mosquitoes from breeding after rain and submerged water. - APP

Over 0.6 mln  
youth to get  
employment  
in Qatar

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Narcotics Control Nawabzada Shahzain Bugti on Monday said more than 0.6 million people would be provided employment opportunities in Qatar in different fields of services sector. He said this during his meeting with Ambassador of Qatar Sheikh Saoud bin Abdulrahman bin Faisal AlThani here, said a news release issued here. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for SAFFRON, Senator Muhammad Talha Mahmood in a group photo at the occasion of World Refugee Day ceremony at Kehkashan Hall, Serena Hotel. - DNA

Indian troops  
martyr  
one more  
Kashmiri  
youth

ISLAMABAD: The local forces in their fresh act of state terrorism in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir martyred one more Kashmiri youth in Pulwama district on Monday morning. According to Kashmir Media Service, Indian troops and paramilitary force during cordon and search operation martyred the youth in Chatapora area of Pulwama district. - APP

NDMA  
issues fresh  
downpour  
alert

ISLAMABAD: The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) on Monday issued advisory for all departments concerned to remain alert as series of heavy rains may start in the country from today. According to the latest advisory released by Pakistan Meteorological Department, the series of torrential rains with winds and thundershowers, beginning in upper and central parts of the country from Monday, will continue till Wednesday. The relevant authorities including all provincial departments, National Highway Authority, Frontier Works Organisation and other institutions asked to remain alert and take precautionary measures to avoid any untoward incidents. The new rain spell might trigger landslides in vulnerable areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Galyat, Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. The heavy falls may generate flash flooding in local nullahs in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. - APP

Speakers call for tapping  
handicrafts export potential

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Speakers at a webinar called for tapping and promoting Pakistani handicrafts export potential, says a report published by Gwadar Pro. The webinar on pricing strategies and logistic solutions for the export of handicrafts from Pakistan to China was jointly organized by the Consulate General of Pakistan in Shanghai and the Trade Development Authority of Pakistan. Hussain Haider, Consul General of Pakistan in Shanghai on the occasion explained that there is a wide range of import prices for handicrafts in China depending upon unique attributes of the product and its positioning in the Chinese market. With the right strategy, handicrafts can become a huge potential product for Pakistan to export to China. On this occasion, Mr. Anderson Wang, CEO of Zhejiang Eman Logistics International Company, presented different options for exporters from Pakistan to ship their products to China. His company, which also has a warehouse in Karachi,

can help Pakistani companies ship their products to various regions of China. He introduced Pakistan's permanent pavilion in Yiwu city, Zhejiang province, which is managed by his company. He added that "we encourage handicraft suppliers from Pakistan to dispatch samples of their products for free display in Pakistan's permanent pavilion." Ms. Echo Li, Senior Partner in St. Fulin Group, said that in the Chinese market, high prices are not impediments to sales. Chinese buyers are willing to pay high prices for handicrafts that meet their tastes and requirements. She underlined the need to highlight culture, history and unique style of handicrafts to optimize their sales in China. In promoting the handicrafts industry, Directorate of Creative and Cultural Industries, Punjab Small Industries Corporation (PSIC) has completed the publication of several books on different regional crafts and provided training in design and capacity building to the artisans. Artisans are also offered interest-free loans. Sikandar Hayat, Assistant Director, Creative & Cultural Industries, PSIC, believes that special hubs and centers may

be established where artisans may be guided for linkages and sale of handicrafts in all the potential countries. Zhang Bing, a Chinese businessman who has been manufacturing and trading handicrafts to China in Pakistan for 8 years, told Gwadar Pro that Pakistani jade and gems are very popular with Chinese consumers. "Compared with the raw materials of Chinese handicrafts, Pakistan's natural raw materials have great advantages. The complicated textures of Islamic flowers and animals are very exquisite. In addition to gem-inlaid decorations, wall paintings made of natural stone are admired by Chinese consumers." He further said that "if Pakistani craftsmen can improve their quality control from material selection to production and straighten out their sales channels, they will definitely expand their exports to China and other countries." "Pakistan has a rich history and culture and excellent craftsmanship. However, we are mostly unable to access the international handicrafts market. We need to review our strategy to promote our handicrafts to the world by raising awareness,

such as holding exhibitions for handicrafts, utilizing E-marketing channels, etc." Dr. Sana Durrani, Chairperson of Balochistan Women Business Association and Executive Director of Handicrafts Brand GHINDAA said in a recent interview with Gwadar Pro. Under the leadership of Dr. Sana Durrani, more than 400 poor women were trained in handicraft skills in 3 districts of Balochistan. The development of handicrafts is not only an important source of income for Pakistani women but also the inheritance and innovation of traditional culture. Very restricted handicrafts of Pakistan are exported to other countries as it lacks market surveys and sales channels. Chinese people like cultural products, and with the continuous improvement of the country's economy, the size of the handicraft market and consumer expenditure continue to grow. Accordingly, it is important to provide insights from the industry in China on how to best price handicrafts and provide logistics solutions for prospective and existing Pakistani exporters.

Addition of  
3,275 MW  
to enhance  
power  
generation

ISLAMABAD: The total installed power generation capacity of the country will touch to 37,951 MW with the addition of 3,275 MW during 2021-22 in the national grid. As per the official data, out of total 3,275 MW, the share of nuclear energy would be 1,145 MW, 990 MW coal, 660 MW wind, 100 MW solar and 380 MW hydel. The share of hydel generation in installed generation capacity would touch 10,278 MW, Oil 6,507 MW, RLNG 6,507 MW, Gas 3,427 MW, Coal (imported) 3,960 MW, Coal (local) 1,650 MW, Nuclear 3635 MW, Wind 1,895 MW, Solar 500 MW and Bagasse 259 MW. Meanwhile, an amount of Rs 91.587 million has been specified for 13 WAPDA hydropower generation projects, Rs 15,923 million for 2 nuclear power projects and Rs 5,795 million for eight power projects in Azad Jammu and Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan in the budget for fiscal year 2022-23. Similarly, the existing transmission lines have been extended by addition of 549 km, 990 km and 1,772 km on 500 kV, 220 kV and 4660 kV respectively. - APP

SAARC CCI urges  
SA states to reshape  
monetary policies

ISLAMABAD: President SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry Iftikhar Ali Malik Monday urged the South Asian countries to carefully reshape their monetary and fiscal policies to counter external shocks and protect the vulnerable while laying the foundation of green, resilient and inclusive growth in the wake of Russia-Ukraine conflict. Talking to a delegation of women entrepreneurs led by Maheen Kashif the popular octogenarian trade leader said that conflict will gradually slide down the growth of fragile and uneven South Asia due to persistent economic challenges.

He said South Asian countries are already grappling with rising commodity prices, supply bottlenecks and vulnerabilities in financial sector. He feared the conflict will put the world on the brink of food crisis paving way for starvation of millions. He said rising fuel prices have sparked a frantic search for alternative energy and those crops are increasingly attractive besides skyrocketing food prices will ignite protests and unrest. He said war will amplify those challenges further contributing to inflation, increasing fiscal deficits and deteriorating current account balance. - APP

Capital's air quality  
becomes healthy  
after rainfalls

ISLAMABAD: The air quality of the federal capital on Monday became healthy after the recent heavy rainfalls turned the weather serene and pollution-free. The air quality was healthy as suspended particles were recorded below permissible limits in the atmosphere along with the pollutants' ratio due to consistent rainy weather and reduced vehicular traffic on the roads. The air quality data has been collected by Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) that monitors air pollutants ratio for 24 hours based on three intervals of eight hours data collection from different locations. The Pak-EPA data revealed that the air quality throughout the three intervals of data monitoring remained low as the pollutants were below the permissible limits of national environmental quality standards (NEQS). The hazardous air pollutant particulate matter of 2.5 microns (PM2.5), which was a lethal atmospheric contaminant, remained 16.33 micro grammes per cubic meter on average, which is lower than the NEQS of 35 micro-grammes per cubic meter and denotes the air quality healthy. The PM2.5 is generated through combustion of an engine, industrial emissions, burning garbage or inflammable material and dust blown up by fast moving cars on non-cemented patches of the roads. Moreover, the frequent forest fires in the federal capital also created high suspended particles, dust and particulate matter in the atmosphere. However, a spike was witnessed during the peak

hours of hot dry weather in the past week that was mainly due to congestion of automobiles plying on the roads after schools vans, office buses and public cars caused congestion on the main thoroughfares, an official of EPA told APP. The particulate matter had remained above the permissible limits beyond 40 microns prior to the onset of rainfall which was mainly due to persistent hot and dry weather. The nitrogen dioxide (NO2) and sulphur dioxide (SO2) were recorded below permissible ratio as it was recorded 3.99 and 11.33 micro-grammes per cubic meter in past 24 hours in the atmosphere against the NEQS of 80 and 120 micro-grammes per cubic meter respectively. These effluents were mainly produced during the operational activities of industrial plants and factories that were already under control, he said. He urged the masses with respiratory conditions and other critical heart or lungs diseases to avoid prolonged outdoor visits and wear face coverings and goggles when the air quality was unhealthy while venturing outdoors. The Pakistan Meteorological Department had also cautioned of torrential rains expected from Monday (June 20) night to Wednesday (June 22) due to a strong weather system entering the upper and central parts of the country on Monday that would result into an inclement weather. The US Embassy air quality data also reported good air quality in the Capital with 25 AQI that denoted less prevalence of PM2.5 and other atmospheric pollutants.



ISLAMABAD: Girls take keen interest in traditional truck art plates during handmade handicraft exhibition titled "Evening with Crafts". - DNA

JUNE 2022

Pakistan's Premier News &  
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## Assange and West's 'freedom'

The United States and its allies such as the United Kingdom like to portray themselves as champions of freedom of speech. The US lawmakers proposing the China Social Media Reciprocity Act claim that information, whatever its intended purpose, should flow freely in cyberspace, accusing China of blocking the free flow of "ideas" espoused by the US on Chinese social media. The hounding of Julian Assange, founder of WikiLeaks by the US shows the hypocrisy of their words. Fighting extradition to the US, the Australian citizen was in exile for two years, sought asylum in the embassy of Ecuador to the UK for seven years, and has since been imprisoned by the UK for three years. On Friday, the UK government finally authorized his extradition after the UK High Court overturned a lower court ruling against his extradition. In its initial extradition request in 2019, the US Department of Justice charged Assange with conspiracy to break into a classified computer system to obtain "national defense information". It issued a new indictment 12 days later, charging Assange with 17 counts under the US Espionage Act. The charges relate to the 750,000 classified US documents and diplomatic cables that were published by WikiLeaks that exposed secret US military operations and the inner workings of US diplomacy, as well as possible war crimes and the use of torture by the US military. While Assange and his supporters defend his actions as freedom of the press, the US authorities disagree and regard him as a "foreign threat" and WikiLeaks as a "hostile intelligence service". Which is a revealing about-face, as when Assange founded WikiLeaks in 2006 the US paid little attention to it. It was not until Assange published the large numbers of US documents relating to its wars in Afghanistan and Iraq that the US charged him with spying. Clearly, while it is okay to leak other countries' documents, it is a grave offense to leak those of the US. The US likes to pursue such political lawsuits. Meng Wanzhou, chief financial officer of Huawei, was detained by the Canadian police on Dec 1, 2018 at the request of the US, which cited a trumped-up economic charge to cover its true political motives. Assange's lawyer says he will appeal the UK government's decision, so his legal battle will continue to drag on. But his case has already torn the fig leaves from the claims of the US and the UK that they are bastions of free speech.

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily  
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 Member APNS / ABC Certified  
 Vol: 02 Issue: 341  
 Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com  
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## Academia and industries must collaborate

MUHAMMAD OMAR IFTIKHAR

There is a need for academia to work in collaboration with the industries. The universities and especially the business schools should have a close link with organizations that are related to the courses and degree programs the business schools are offering. Industry experts should be invited by the universities to share their experiences and insights. This will provide the students with practical and relevant information about Pakistan's industrial outlook that is not available in textbooks. The teachers should also plan a meeting with industry professionals and take their students with them. For instance, the students studying Supply Chain and Logistics should visit companies where supply chain and logistics are a part of their daily operations. The students of Entrepreneurship can meet entrepreneurs who began from scratch and are running their businesses successfully. Such interactions will provide students with the practicalities of life and what actions one must pursue to become a success. While the business schools are endeavoring to create linkages with industries, the efforts must be streamlined and planned accordingly. Each university must invite at least ten businessmen, entrepreneurs, or heads of departments every month. The discussions with the guests will broaden the students' mental horizons. They will also relate the classroom lectures with the real-world insights the guests will share. Moreover, such interactions will also enhance the thought process of the faculty members who should remain updated with what is happening in the industrial sectors of Pakistan and abroad. Such an academia-industry collaboration should begin from the schools and colleges. Every school and college should invite two to three industry experts every month who can share the basic idea of what companies do. This will enlighten the students about the workflow so it may facilitate their learning once they enter a professional college or university after passing their intermediate or A-levels.



## A new Kazakhstan in the making

Ansar M Bhatti



Kazakhstan has experienced significant challenges in the first half of 2022, predominantly the tragic events in January, when Kazakhstan suffered the worst violence in its thirty years as an independence state following an armed coup attempt by terrorist and criminal groups. Yet rather than look inward, the government of Kazakhstan has used these challenges as an opportunity to transform the country into a new Kazakhstan

The people of Kazakhstan ostensibly set the basis for a new Kazakhstan when they voted overwhelmingly in favour of the Referendum that took place on Sunday, June 05, 2022 to determine whether the people wanted to have a new look-country with more powers to the parliament and the people. As announced by the Central Election Commissioner 77.18 per cent of the population voted in favour of the referendum. The officials of the Central Election Commission further told the media that out of over 11 million eligible voters over 07 million voters took part in the exercise. The turnout thus remained at 68.6 per cent. Those who voted against stood at 18.6 percent while 2.58 votes

were declared invalid. The election commission officials termed the entire election drill as satisfactory and according to them no issues whatsoever were reported from anywhere. The commission also praised the government for extending its full support to all those conducting the election. The Secretary General of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Zhang Ming in his briefing lauded the role of the Kazakh authorities for making befitting arrangements for the successful holding of the referendum. He said his mission visited a number of polling stations and found no violations anywhere. The SCO Secretary General further said the Kazakh Ministry of Foreign Affairs spared no efforts in facilitating the foreign delegates for efficient performances of their duties such as monitoring and physical visits to the polling stations. The Russian representative was also all praise for the Kazakh authorities for making excellent arrangements. He said he visited a number of polling stations located outside of Nur Sultan randomly. He was happy to see the enthusiasm and interest with which people thronged to the stations to cast their votes. The referendum exercise drew huge interest from all and sundry. This scribe visited a number of polling stations in the Capital Nur Sultan and the suburban areas. A brief chat with the people at each polling station showed how keen were the people to have the new system in place. After the referendum the Kazakh constitution will see a lot of changes with a view to turning the current super-presidential system

into an inclusive presidential system. The changes seek to grant more powers to the parliament and the people of Kazakhstan. 33 out of 99 Articles shall be amended plus two new articles shall be introduced. The amendments are aimed at a significant transformation of Kazakhstan's political system. Their objective is to expand citizen participation in state governance and ensure substantial democratization of political processes. After these reforms Kazakhstan will now become a Presidential system from a super-presidential form of government. They will enhance the multi-party system and create new opportunities for the participation of all citizens in the electoral processes. The emergence of new political parties is expected to cover almost the entire electoral landscape. The creation of the new Kazakhstan goes side by side with the concept of building a Second Republic, which envisions the modernization of the model of state governance. These measures make it clear that Kazakhstan's leadership is well aware of the problems in society and is making every effort to address thorny issues through reforms in the political and economic spheres of the country. During our briefing with the Deputy Foreign Minister Mr. Roman Vassilenko when I asked him as to how the Referendum may impact upon the foreign policy of the country, he said, the reforms will lead to a new level of democratization in the country, never seen before adding reforms matter outside of Kazakhstan because through these reforms the country has demonstrated that it is embracing political principles that are most respected and valued in the international community; particularly by counties with developed democracies. It means that Kazakhstan can be counted upon to stand on the side of political progress, to show respect for international law, and to contribute to global security and development. The amendments would also cut the powers of the president and ban the membership of the President in political parties for the period of his presidency. Similarly a ban at the constitutional level for the close relatives of the President on holding managerial positions in state and quasi state structures has also been introduced. As per the new changes a constitutional court shall also be established. Anyone who finds that legal acts violate their constitutional rights would be able to apply to the court and get protection. Death penalty has also been prohibited through there were hardly any

death penalties in Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan has experienced significant challenges in the first half of 2022, predominantly the tragic events in January, when Kazakhstan suffered the worst violence in its thirty years as an independence state following an armed coup attempt by terrorist and criminal groups. Yet rather than look inward, the government of Kazakhstan has used these challenges as an opportunity to transform the country into a new Kazakhstan. It is also true that establishment of a new Kazakhstan will not happen overnight. It is indeed a deep and long process of social transformation, but as it goes, where there is will, there is way. The Kazakh government under the leadership of President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev has taken upon itself the onus of building a new Kazakhstan and that too in a very short span of time. As the SCO Secretary General said in his briefing, the Kazakh government is doing an excellent job by empowering its people and giving them their rights with the ultimate goal of true democratization of the country. From a tourist point of view, Kazakhstan has a lot to offer to the visitors. During the week-long visit I could only visit a few places in the Capital Nur Sultan and Burabay, a tourist resort located 250 KMs away from the Capital. Nur Sultan can rightly be called the City of the Future. The city abounds in a number of high rises. The infrastructural development is phenomenal. Inflation, like other countries, has also hit Kazakhstan but even then prices of especially the daily use items have not been allowed to sky-rocket. People are friendly and hospitable. Kazakhstan, among the Central Asian states, happens to be the largest country with a population of around 19 million. After the reforms, the country is likely to expand its outreach to the outer world with a view to not only fetch more and more Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs) but to sell its products in various world markets. Both Pakistan and Kazakhstan have a lot in common. Desire and interest is there to expand bilateral cooperation. As announced by the Ambassador of Kazakhstan, direct flights between the two countries may start in September this year, which means bilateral relations will get a considerable boost. Then, direct flight from Lahore to Almaty will be yet another good excuse for people of both countries to diversify their trade and business relations particularly. Regional connectivity is yet another area where the Kazakh leadership would like to see the progress sooner rather than later.

Kazakhstan, being located in the very heart of Eurasia, is strategically interested in turning to be a regional transportation hub. This is in the best interests of not only Kazakhstan, but also of other countries. This is also true for countries of South Asia, like Pakistan, through the territory of Afghanistan. There is no denying the fact that the leadership of Kazakhstan genuinely wants to promote peace and stability in the region especially. At the same time the Kazakh leadership wishes to have a safer world free from elements of mass destruction. Since Soviet times, all major nuclear facilities have been located in Kazakhstan. After the independence, the Kazakh leaders decided to do away with all sorts of nuclear facilities with a view to send a message to the outer world that Kazakhstan desires peace at home and peace abroad. The anti-nuclear policy of the Kazakh government has been widely hailed by the world. It was after the decision of the Kazakhstan leadership to wind up the nuclear facilities, that the other countries having similar facilities came under huge pressure to also abandon these facilities for the ultimate good and well being of humanity. Summing up, one should hope that after the constitutional amendments Kazakhstan will appear on the world map as a democratic country whose leadership earnestly wants to share power with the people of Kazakhstan. More power to the parliament will definitely place the MPs in a much better position to play an active and cardinal role in law making and other related parliamentary businesses. Power sharing ostensibly is a difficult call. The Kazakh President Mr. Tokayev has accepted this challenge especially keeping in view the fate of the Soviet Union when the then President Mikhail Gorbachev decided to democratize the country and that move had led to the disintegration of the Soviet Union. President Tokayev and his aides are confident that nothing of that sort will happen in Kazakhstan as the new reforms and constitutional changes seek to not only empower the Kazakh people but they also ensure a better and prosperous future for them. The way Kazakhstan is positioning itself in the comity of nations and the way an economic turn-around is being put in place, one can easily predict that Kazakhstan is going to be a leading developed country in the years to come.

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## America and the Middle East

Hafed Al-Ghwel



Unsurprisingly, Washington is also strangely passive in its response to the worsening political and economic situation in Tunisia, even as the initial enthusiasm for President Kais Saied's power grab has cooled, which should have elicited a forceful response urging the return to, and promotion of, consensual democratic solutions to Tunisia's crises

For more than half a century, US engagement across the Arab region, and the wider world, has been premised on "preventive diplomacy," which entailed knowing more about foreign nations and their citizens than any other country on the planet. It meant that US embassies were right-sized, well-financed, adequately staffed and well-pre-

pared to deal with emergent crises that could eventually spawn threats or leave Washington exposed and vulnerable in endless, quarrelsome quagmires abroad. At one point, the State Department was usually the first port of call during innumerable efforts to, for instance, de-escalate tensions and prevent conflicts around the globe. A massive diplomatic footprint allowed for careful and effective interventions that channeled aid and comfort to allies, along with clear channels to telegraph the intentions of the White House to known adversaries who were not keen on getting caught on the wrong side of America's ire. In a nutshell, everyday diplomacy made it easier for the US not only to navigate complex landscapes the world over, but to lead a liberal global order on the cusp of maturity given the demise of the Soviet Union. Up until the disastrous War on Terror, it was the tireless, and often thankless, efforts by State Department personnel to build or rebuild institutions that safeguarded American interests abroad, long before belligerents

and adversaries resorted to the force of arms to service their nefarious aims. Unfortunately, that was then. Now, American diplomacy is tinged with a profound reluctance to engage meaningfully, or forcefully, for example to help settle quarrels that have subsequently spilled over into extraterritorial proxy affairs in Libya and Syria. Meanwhile, an ill-timed "pivot" to Asia and Europe has only sparked a scramble among regional powers to establish their own hegemonies across the Arab region. Since 2011, the American capacity to intervene in conflicts, build post-war institutions and guide transitions competently has sharply declined, guided by an illogical aversion to risk that has resulted in a reduced US presence in several parts of the Middle East. The consequences of that blunder in decision-making are already playing out in Afghanistan, Syria, Lebanon, Tunisia and Iraq, to name but a few. Prior to the disastrous War on Terror, American engagement across the Arab world was defined by a characteristic enduring, knowledgeable and consistent presence that was immune to Washington's constantly shifting political winds. A hallmark of this steady, dependable presence was the cultivating of deeply embedded contacts, which made it possible to develop local understanding and make its findings or conclusions intrinsic to policymaking and broader strategic maneuvering. After the 2012 Benghazi attack, however, the State Department began to prioritize risk aversion, introducing bureaucratic security processes or over-cautious restrictions that left staffers, civilians and others sequestered in embassies and unable to fully engage with counterparts in a part of the world with relationship-based societies that emphasize personal contact. In the years since, a knee-jerk response

that prioritizes safety over cultivating crucial relationships to safeguard American interests has created an unsustainable model for engagement that is partly responsible for the disappointing crisis response in Libya. There, Washington appears as a lumbering, disinterested reactionary, far too comfortable taking a backseat to the competing external interests seeking to dominate a landscape battered by conflict and political malaise, despite its still palpable influence on the North African country's trajectory in its quest for full democratization. Even after other Western embassies have returned to Libya, the US and Canada remain notable exceptions, preferring instead to run their operations from neighboring Tunisia, which is currently beleaguered by its own political crisis due to a presidential "self-coup." Unsurprisingly, Washington is also strangely passive in its response to the worsening political and economic situation in Tunisia, even as the initial enthusiasm for President Kais Saied's power grab has cooled, which should have elicited a forceful response urging the return to, and promotion of, consensual democratic solutions to Tunisia's crises. This prioritization of risk aversion in diplomatic engagement is clearly depriving Washington of much-needed local knowledge and understanding, thus making it more challenging to foresee grave threats, let alone craft effective preemptive action. Granted, the post-9/11 era has significantly altered the Middle East and North Africa region, and the ensuing "hard power game" between Moscow, Beijing and Washington makes it impossible for the State Department to simply return to any sort of pseudo-MENA-centric posture. However, the US must not unilaterally disarm itself by retreating from areas where others are stepping up.

The foreign policy community in Washington must surrender the zero-sum view that America can only pursue its interests in the region by taking on a maximalist agenda or through a complete remaking of the Middle East. Indeed, while there is broad consensus that the previous two decades of the post-War on Terror world have produced far too few successes, the jury is still out on what America's posture in the Arab world should be and whether it can meet with "success" – whatever that means. It is this ambivalence and uncharacteristic waffling that has driven a few of America's partners in the region to seek out new relationships and make new calculations in their engagement with the US going forward. Clearly, the priority for the State Department should not only be insisting on an enduring presence but also a return to the dynamic engagement of the pre-9/11 world, which balanced security interests with economic, political and mutually beneficial cooperation across a range of arenas, not excluding repairing the Arab world's broken food, water and energy nexus. That level of engagement would require more-involved contact and forceful demonstrations of intent, instead of the current muted responses and absence. At this rate, America's waning Middle East diplomacy only serves to act as a stalking horse for geopolitical rivals who do not want to repeat Washington's failures and end up spending blood, treasure and diplomatic capital in pursuit of narrow, out-of-touch aims. Without a much-needed turnaround, only tragedy awaits. After all, a frequent conclusion of American foreign policy is often that where the State Department retreats, a Pentagon hammer emerges – one that sees almost every convulsion as a nail rather than a development that is in equal parts concerning and an opportunity to influence outcomes.

Courtesy: Arab News

## Briefs

## Deal with IMF within two days

FROM PAGE 01

objection over the increase in the salaries of the government employees. He also added that income tax exemption announced for salaried individuals will not be withdrawn and the government will shield those earning less than Rs1.2 million annually. The finance minister said only the rich will be taxed while the poor will be given a relief.

The government is looking for new avenues to increase burden on the rich and may impose taxes on gifts, jack up rates for corporate sectors as well as allow unconditional import of gold to bring it into the tax ambit. Other measures are also being considered to bridge gaps with the International Monetary Fund before the end of the month. The global lender still sees the government's budget numbers unrealistic that require more taxation measures along with cuts in expenditures. The Finance Bill 2022-23 that Miftah Ismail tabled in the National Assembly on June 10 may undergo some major changes to raise maximum tax from the rich.

In addition to finding more sources of income to the satisfaction of the IMF, the government also wants to give a message to the less-privileged classes that the elite class is also paying more than their usual annual tax contribution, according to the sources.

Pakistan is halfway through a \$6 billion, 39-month IMF programme that had stalled over the lender's concerns over the status of some of its objectives, including fiscal consolidation. The next tranche that Pakistan is to receive upon a successful review is \$900 million, and a green light from the IMF would also open up other global funding avenues. The finance minister said that Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was angry over the tax hike and urged to reduce the tax burden on masses. He said the government refunds of pharmaceutical companies will be reimbursed in the next four days.

## Dollar soars past Rs210..

FROM PAGE 01

"The dearth of dollar at banks resulted in low or negative swap premiums as the country's foreign exchange reserves continue to run dry," he pointed out. An announcement from the IMF regarding the revival of the loan programme or updates on inflows from China could help stabilise the exchange rate, Naseer added.

## French envoy...

FROM PAGE 01

It is a key milestone in the projects. Colleagues from Europe will have the first opportunity to deepen their understanding of Pakistan. This trip is also the start of many visits to all partner nations in EU across the remainder of the project. Connecting in person, peer to peer, faculty to faculty. Institution to institution will bolster the collaborative and capacity building efforts and ensure sustainable impact of the B-International project and the connections regarding Higher Education between Pakistan, UK, France, Italy and Spain.

## Russia's grain...

FROM PAGE 01

The 27-nation bloc has struggled to counter Moscow's claims that rising prices and shortfalls in the Middle East and Africa are down to EU sanctions imposed over the invasion of Ukraine. "I want to insist that it's not European sanctions that are creating this crisis - our sanctions don't target food, don't target fertilisers," Borrell said. "The problem comes from the Russian blockade of Ukrainian grains." French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna insisted that "Russia must stop playing with global hunger" as it seeks leverage on the West. "Leaving cereals blocked is dangerous for stability in the world," she said. - APP



HANOI: Ambassador of Pakistan to Vietnam and Laos participated, along with the Commercial Secretary, in the Forum "Vietnamese Lychees Go Global" hosted by the Ministry of Information and Communications. - DNA

# Sheikh Sudais unveils biggest operational plan for Hajj

Sheikh Abdulrahman Al-Sudais, president of the General Presidency for the Affairs of the Two Holy Mosques, launched the plan in the presence of the minister of Hajj and Umrah, Tawfiq Al-Rabiah, and the director of the General Directorate of Public Security, Lt. Gen. Mohammed Abdullah Al-Bassami

## NEWS DESK

MECCA: Saudi Arabia's General Presidency for the Affairs of the Two Holy Mosques on Sunday launched its operational plan for this year's Hajj season. The presidency confirmed its readiness to receive 1 million pilgrims, saying that it has mobilized 10,000 male and female employees and workers to serve the worshippers. Sheikh Abdulrahman Al-Sudais, president of the General Presidency for the Affairs of the Two Holy Mosques, launched the plan in the presence of the minister of Hajj and Umrah, Tawfiq Al-Rabiah, and the director of the General Directorate of Public Security, Lt. Gen. Mohammed Abdullah Al-Bassami. Al-Sudais said that all topics, services and programs were being followed up minute by minute to ensure the highest quality, through a set of indicators supervised by the presidency around the clock. He said that the presidency had launched smart applications and electronic platforms that would facilitate and enrich visitors' experiences, revealing that the



number of beneficiaries of this digital service had reached more than 160 million. Al-Sudais said that the presidency has allocated King Abdulaziz Gate, King Fahd Gate, and Bab Al-Salam Gate for the entry of pilgrims and visitors, adding that the presidency has

allocated a total of 144 gates for the entry of worshippers to the Grand Mosque. In addition, the presidency is working on distributing 3 million Zamzam water bottles a day in the Grand Mosque, and 1 million Zamzam water bottles in the holy sites.

Al-Sudais said that the full operational capacity of chapels of the third expansion, the outer courtyards and the King Fahd expansion has been completed. The courtyard will be dedicated solely to pilgrims, with the allocation of special chapels in the basement,

and the ground and first floors to perform the Tawaf ritual. He said that the presidency had implemented the highest standards of environmental protection in the services provided in the Two Holy Mosques. "Thank God, it was confirmed that the two Hajj seasons for the past two years were free from any epidemic cases inside the Two Holy Mosques, noting that the environment of the Grand Mosque was the most sterilized worldwide," he said.

A diverse package of services had been prepared to empower pilgrims, facilitate their rituals and enrich their experience, especially since this year's Hajj season comes after two Hajj seasons that were exceptional in their organization, enabling people to perform their rituals while procuring the ideal healthy religious atmosphere. Al-Sudais said that 2,000 electric vehicles had been provided to serve the elderly and people with disabilities, in addition to providing 500 engineering staff, and that the sermon of Arafah would be translated into 10 different languages.

## Hubert Hurkacz clinches Halle Open title

HALLE: Hubert Hurkacz put on one of the best performances of the 2022 grass season so far, dismantling world number one Daniil Medvedev in the final of the Halle Open to claim his first title of the year.

Hurkacz broke Medvedev three times en route to a 6-1, 6-4 victory on grass, which gave him his first tour-level prize. The 2021 Wimbledon semi-finalist was imperious behind his serve and powerful from the baseline as he cruised to his first ATP 500 title in 63 minutes.

The fifth seed will move up two spots to number 10 in the ATP Live Rankings after winning his fifth tour-level event. He joins Carlos Alcaraz, the current World No. 7, as the seventh player in the Open Era to win his first five tour-level championship matches.

For the second week in a row, Medvedev was in a grass-court final. The World No. 1 struggled to find his top-level throughout the title match, just as he did against Tim Van Rijthoven in his Hertogenbosch a week ago. Medvedev is now 0-3 in tour-level finals in 2022, and he's still looking for his first triumph since winning the US Open in September.

Hurkacz now has a 3-2 advantage over Medvedev in their ATP Head2Head series. The 25-year-old also won the pair's only prior matching this season, at the Miami Open presented by Itaú quarter-finals in March. - DNA

## Verstappen wins Canadian Grand Prix

## SPORTS DESK

MONTREAL: World champion Max Verstappen increased his lead in this year's Formula One title race on Sunday when he drove his Red Bull to a thrilling victory in a close-fought Canadian Grand Prix. The 24-year-old Dutchman controlled a tactical race from pole position through three safety car interventions and resisted intense late pressure from Ferrari's Carlos Sainz to win by under a second. Seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton, who on Friday declared his car as "undriveable", came home third for Mercedes to claim his second podium of a difficult season ahead of team-mate

George Russell in fourth. It was Verstappen's first Canadian victory in his 150th career start, his sixth this year and the 26th of his career, hoisting him 46 points clear of his rivals in the championship. "I was giving it everything," said Verstappen. "But so was Carlos. He was pushing, charging, pushing, charging. Naturally, it's easier to charge with DRS! I had fun today." Sainz said: "We were quicker, faster all race, but it's difficult to overtake round here. I'm particularly happy with the race pace and with the pressure we put on Max." Hamilton, a record seven-time winner in Montreal, cheered the big crowd - part of a weekend attendance of 338,000 - and said he was "overwhelmed to get third place. It's been

quite a battle, but we've never given up. I've been inspired by my crew." Ferrari's Charles Leclerc, who started at the back of the grid after taking a penalty for a new engine, finished fifth ahead of Esteban Ocon of Alpine. Valtteri Bottas and his Alfa Romeo team-mate Zhou Guanyu were later promoted to seventh and eighth after Fernando Alonso in an Alpine was penalised five seconds for his defending against Bottas. The Spaniard slipped to ninth with Lance Stroll 10th for Aston Martin. After Saturday's deluge, the race began with a mixed-up 'wet' grid - with Leclerc, Perez and several others out of their normal race positions - as Verstappen made a clean start from his

15th pole position to take control. Behind him, Kevin Magnussen made a dazzling departure from fifth to challenge Hamilton, but the Briton resisted and retained fourth as the order settled, Russell making his move early to pass Mick Schumacher for seventh. On lap three, Sainz passed Alonso, who had been unable to deliver the attacking start he promised, to take second and begin his pursuit of Verstappen. Perez suffered ill-luck on lap nine when, battling in midfield after starting 13th, his Red Bull lost drive at Turn 13. "I've lost the engine, man," he told the team as a Virtual Safety Car (VSC) was deployed and Verstappen and Hamilton pitted promptly to switch from mediums to hards.

## Russia to 'intensify'...

FROM PAGE 01

Earlier, Zelensky vowed his troops would not give up the south of the country, after he visited the frontline there. But Zelensky's defiance came as NATO's chief Jens Stoltenberg warned that the war could grind on "for years" and urged Western countries to be ready to offer long-term military, political and economic aid. "We must not weaken in our support of Ukraine, even if the costs are high - not only in terms of military support but also because of rising energy and food prices," Stoltenberg told German daily newspaper Bild. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson issued a similar warning, saying a failure to provide sustained support for Kyiv would risk "the greatest victory for aggression" since World War II. Ukraine has repeatedly urged Western countries to step up their deliveries of arms since the February 24 invasion, despite warnings from nuclear-armed Russia that it could trigger wider conflict. Zelensky spoke Sunday after making a rare trip outside Kyiv a day earlier to the hold-out Black Sea city of Mykolaiv, where he visited troops nearby and in the neighbouring Odessa region for the first time since the invasion.

## President rejects NAB (Amend) bill

FROM PAGE 01

incident when asked about source of extra cloth in his cloak. The onus in financial crimes is on the accused to provide a money trail. "Unfortunately there were flaws in NAB's implementation. It was misused for political exigencies by those in power & by vested interests. While public clamored for return of looted wealth, long judicial processes & poor prosecution failed most efforts.

Instead of improving the law to avoid miscarriage, to close loopholes & make it stronger, we are weakening it beyond recognition. These changes will demolish accountability, creating a façade of justice that blatantly hides a corrupt elite capture ensuring exploitation of the common man in an unjust society. "Poor will continue to be jailed for petty crimes while corrupt rich will be free to loot & plunder. He said that: I personally abide by the Constitution, we must act upon injunctions of Quran and Sunnah, and above all I am answerable to Allah asking for His forgiveness."

## 'New NAB law will...

FROM PAGE 01

"Entire economy and political system of Pakistan was derailed through US-backed regime change conspiracy simply to give this cabal of crooks another NRO. PMLN's Dastgir confirmed this," said Khan. "Today, with this one amended NAB law we are heading towards destruction by removing white collar criminals from accountability," he wrote.

The PTI chairman further noted that at a time when Pakistan's economy had stabilised and was moving towards sustainable growth of 6%, the conspirators chose to destabilise Pakistan by sending the economy into a tailspin and dropping a price bomb on people - "just to give these criminals NRO".

## Pakistan Cricket Board holds General Body meeting

LAHORE: The PCB General Body meeting took place at the National High Performance Centre on Monday, 20 June. In accordance with Clause 20 of the PCB Constitution 2019, the General Body considered and expressed their views on the audited accounts and PCB Annual Report, which are now available for viewing and downloading at the corporate website under Documents. The General Body was also provided with a snapshot of Pakistan cricket and received a briefing on the steps and measures being taken to bolster Pakistan cricket's foundations by strengthening grassroots cricket. The General Body was informed the Pakistan men's sides were presently ranked fifth in Tests and, third in ODIs and T20Is, while they are placed in fourth position on the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup Super League, which is a qualifying event for the 2023 World Cup. The General Body was updated on the busy and tough 2022-23 cricket season for the men's side that includes the tour to Sri Lanka for two Tests and the ACC T20 Asia Cup, Netherlands for three ODIs and Australia for the ICC Men's T20 World

Cup in October. The subsequent home series includes split tours by England and New Zealand, while the West Indies will return for three T20Is in January/February 2023. The women's side will feature in the Birmingham Commonwealth Games and T20 World Cups in South Africa, while their ICC Women's Championship fixtures will be against Ireland at home and away in Australia. PCB Chairman Ramiz Raja also announced rewards of PKR1million each for the Pakistan blind and deaf cricket teams in recognition of their performances at the international level. The General Body meeting was held following January's elections of the Pakistan Deaf Cricket Association. This meant under Clause 24(1), the requisite quorum was available for convening the meeting. PCB Chairman Ramiz Raja chaired the meeting, while Mr Syed Sultan Shah (Chairman, Pakistan Blind Cricket Council) and Mr Irfan Miraj (President, Deaf Cricket Association) also attended the meeting along with their office-bearers, who participated as observers on the special invitation of the PCB Chairman. - DNA



BEIJING: Celebrated Chinese figure skating gold medalist of Beijing Winter Olympics Zhang Dan posing for a photo with children as she visits Pakistan embassy Beijing. - DNA

## Briefs

## Pakistan, Iran discuss electricity supply

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Power Engr. Khuram Dastgir Khan on Monday held a meeting with Iran's Minister for Energy Ali Akbari Mehrabian in Tehran and discussed various aspects of electricity supply from Polan (Iran) to Gwadar. The meeting was also aimed at increasing avenues of cooperation in the field of energy between both the neighbours, said a press release issued here. Khurran lauded Iran for its cooperation in energy sector and reiterated his country's commitment to further strengthen the relations. He stressed the need to expedite the electricity import project, it further said. Both long term and short-term energy plans also came under discussion. - APP

## Strong quake hits eastern Taiwan: USGS

TAIPEI: A 6.0-magnitude earthquake struck Monday in Taiwan's east, 38 kilometres south of Hualien city, the US Geological Survey said. There were no immediate reports of damage or injuries. The quake had an estimated depth of 10 kilometres, according to USGS, and struck at 09:05 local time (0105 GMT).

A clip of a tranquil lakeside scene suddenly beginning to violently judder as the ground moved was posted on Facebook by a national park in Hualien. "This is a really big earthquake... Hope everyone stays safe!", the caption read, adding the clip had been taken from one of its camera feeds in the park. An AFP reporter in Taipei felt shaking, and local media said the quake was felt across the island. The Taipei Metro stopped briefly when it hit, according to one passenger, before continuing at reduced speed for several stops. A second smaller tremor hit about half an hour later, according to Taiwan's Central Weather Bureau.

"In this area (where the quake hit today) there were only two earthquakes above 6.0 magnitude since 1990 and one close to 6.0 magnitude," Chen Kuo-chang, head of Taiwan's Central Weather Bureau's Seismological Center, said at a press conference. "The most shallow one was today's and we think it may be linked to fault activities," he added. He said that the weather bureau was not ruling out more aftershocks above 5.0 magnitude in the next two days.

Taiwan is regularly hit by earthquakes as the island lies near the junction of two tectonic plates. The island does not issue tsunami warnings unless a quake is more than magnitude 7.0. Some earthquakes of 6.0 or more can prove deadly, although much depends on where the quake strikes and at what depth. But the USGS gave a "green" ranking to the threat posed by the latest quake, predicting a low likelihood of either casualties or damage. - Agencies

## Foreign travelers, bloggers visit Shusha

BAKU: A group of 24 tourists and bloggers from ten different nations visited Azerbaijan's liberated lands to witness Armenia's 30-year-long destruction in the occupied territories, Azernews reports. As part of the trip, the travelers visited Azerbaijan's liberated Shusha, Aghdam and Zangilan cities to familiarize themselves with the Armenian vandalism, as well as the restoration and reconstruction activities carried out there following the 44-day war. Commenting on the tour, Azerbaijani MP Sevinj Huseynova stated that such visits are critical in expressing Azerbaijani reality to the world community. "As a result of its historic victory in the Second Karabakh War, Azerbaijan liberated its lands from Armenian occupation. During the 30 years of occupation, Azerbaijani territories were vandalized, all infrastructure, cultural and historical monuments were destroyed, and ecocide was committed. - DNA

## RCCI demands removing anomalies in the budget

Litigation between landlord and tenant will increase manifold and caution that since more powers given to Inland officers, the authority may be misused and likely to increase blackmailing and corrupt practices

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The business community has demanded that double taxation and anomalies be removed from the Fiscal budget 2022-23. The procedure for fair value assessment to collect tax on deemed income from an unused property and deemed rental income is not clear. Litigation between landlord and tenant will increase manifold and caution that since more powers given to Inland officers, the authority may be misused and likely to increase blackmailing and corrupt practices. Tax slabs in proportion to the electricity bill are not realistic. Addressing the post budget session at the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) President Nadeem Rauf said that the Government must introduce incentives to broaden the tax net.

The Session was chaired by President Nadeem Rauf while on this occasion group leader Sohail Altaf, vice president Talat Awan, convener of tax affairs committee Faraz Fazal, Shehzad Malik, president of small chamber Sheikh Asif, representatives of Anjuman-e-Tajirun, Sheikh Hafeez, Tariq Jadoon, Tahir Bhatti, Raja Jawad, executive members and



chamber members were also present. Faraz Fazal, Convener of the Tax Affairs Committee, gave a detailed briefing on the key provisions and changes in the Income Tax and Sales Tax sections of the Fiscal Budget 2022. Group leader and former President Sohail Altaf said that no concessions or incentives have been given to the overseas who send billions of dol-

lars in remittances to Pakistan every month. At present the country needs dollars, he added. The fixed tax regime for small traders is a welcome step, however, there is ambiguity in some cases which needs to be removed. The finance minister in his budget speech announced that there will be no audit for next four years, but it has not been included in the

budget document. We demand that the policy regarding tax audit be clarified, he said. In the post-budget meeting, the 0.25 percent tax imposed on the IT sector was opposed and also demanded that the tax exemption for IT be maintained. The establishment of ADRC for resolving tax disputes is welcome but the limit of Rs 100 million should be abolished.

## Senate delegation participates in conference on Migration at Istanbul



FOREIGN DESK

ISLAMABAD: A three-member delegation of the Senate, led by Senator

Azam Khan Swati, has participated in the global parliamentary conference on Migration at Istanbul, Turkey on Monday. Two other Senators including Anwar Lal Dean and Tahir Bizin-

jo were also part of the delegation, said a news release.

Global Parliamentary Conference with the theme "Parliaments and the Global Compacts on Migration and Refugees: How to Bring About Stronger International Cooperation and National Implementation?" is organized with the collaboration of the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye (GNAT) and Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

The global parliamentary conference in Türkiye will offer an important opportunity for parliaments and their members to take stock of the state of implementation of the Global Compacts and of old and new challenges that stand in the way of stronger collective, bilateral and national action. The conference aims to collect a series of best parliamentary practices and to identify further concrete steps that parliaments can take to promote more robust international cooperation and national implementation.

## Macron allies seek to find majority after France poll blow

PARIS: Allies of French President Emmanuel Macron started working Monday to cobble together a working parliamentary majority to salvage his second term, after his alliance crumbled in the election against surges from the left and far-right. Macron's Ensemble (Together) coalition emerged as the largest party in parliamentary elections but was dozens of seats short of keeping the parliamentary majority it had enjoyed for the last five years. It will now begin work to try and find a majority by forming deals with other parties on the right, stirring up turmoil unprecedented in French politics in recent years. Macron, 44, now also risks being distracted by domestic problems as he seeks to play a prominent role in putting an end to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and as a key statesman in the EU. The election saw a new left-wing alliance make gains to become the main opposition, while the far-right under Marine Le Pen posted its best legislative performance in its history. "This situation constitutes a risk for our country, given the challenges that we have to confront," Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne said in a televised statement Sunday, vowing: "We will work from tomorrow to build a working majority." The outcome severely tarnished Macron's April presidential election victory when he defeated the far-right to be the first French president to win a second term in over two decades. "It's a turning point for his image of invincibility," said Bruno Cauteres, a researcher at the Centre for Political Research of Sciences Po. The options available to Macron, who has yet to publicly comment on the result, range from seeking to form a new coalition alliance, passing legislation based on ad hoc agreements to even calling new elections. - Agencies

## Spanish PM thrashed in Andalusia election

NEWS DESK

SEVILLE: Spain's main opposition Popular Party secured a landslide win in a regional election in Andalusia on Sunday, dealing a blow to Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez ahead of a national vote expected at the end of 2023. The conservative Popular Party (PP) won 58 seats in the 109-seat Andalusian regional parliament, which will allow it to govern alone in Spain's most populous region, near final results showed. That is more than double the 26 seats it won in the last election in 2018 when it ousted the Socialists from office from the southern region, a longtime stronghold for the party. The Socialists captured 30 seats, its worst ever result in the region which is home to some 8.5 million people - almost a fifth of Spain's population. That is down from 33 in the last election in 2018 when they were ousted from power in the region by the PP in the wake of a scandal over the misuse of public funds.

The Socialists had governed Andalusia without interruption since 1982 when the region government was established. "This victory is that of moderation and of

another way of doing politics," said the PP's number two, Cuca Gamarra. This is the Socialists' third consecutive regional election loss to the PP after votes in Madrid in May 2021 and Castilla y Leon in February. Sanchez's leftist coalition government has been struggling to deal with the economic fallout from Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which has fuelled inflation worldwide, especially through increasing energy prices.

Losing in Andalusia would be a "severe blow" for the Socialists and would mean "Sanchez might face an uphill battle to get re-elected" next year, Antonio Barroso, an analyst at political consultancy Teeno, said before the election. "The PP seems to be gaining increasing momentum, and voter concerns about inflation might only make it more challenging for Sanchez to sell his government's achievements in the next legislative election," he added. Spain's inflation rate hit 8.7 percent in May, its highest level in decades. Sanchez's government has rolled out a swathe of measures to help consumers, including a subsidy on fuel prices at the pump, an increase in the minimum wage, direct grants to truck drivers and financial support for some farmers.



STOCKHOLM: Pakistani activist and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai visits Pakistan embassy Sweden and meets ambassador Zahor Ahmed. - DNA

## Hopes fade for Finland, Sweden NATO accession

Sweden has also said that its independent weapons export agency would be prepared to review its policy once the country was a NATO member

AGENCIES

STOCKHOLM: Finland and Sweden are to discuss their stalled NATO bids with Turkey in Brussels on Monday, but hopes are fading they will be able to resolve their dispute before an alliance summit next week, experts say. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg was to meet with representatives from the three countries to try to make progress on the Nordic nations' membership applications, which have been blocked by Ankara. "I think it is possible but it would be very difficult," Paul Levin, director of the Institute for Turkey Studies at Stockholm University, told AFP. "It would require both sides to show real willingness to make some compromises," he said.

NATO and the two Nordic countries had expected the application process to be quick. But Ankara's last-minute opposition caught them all off-guard, at a time when NATO is keen to display a unified front vis-a-vis Russia. Ankara has accused Finland and Sweden of providing a safe haven for the outlawed Kurd-

istan Workers' Party (PKK), listed as a "terrorist" group by Turkey and its Western allies. Ankara has also demanded that they lift their weapons freezes on Turkey. Any NATO membership deal must be unanimously approved by all 30 members of the alliance, and fears are now mounting that Turkey could delay the Nordics' bids indefinitely.

Finnish Prime Minister Sanna Marin recently expressed fears that unless the issues are resolved "before Madrid, there is a risk that the situation will freeze." Ankara's anger has primarily been directed at Sweden. "Sweden does view the PKK as a terrorist organisation and has done so since 1984", Levin said, adding that it was "arguably the first country apart from Turkey" to do so. "So in that sense Sweden does not really stand out" from other European countries. However, Sweden has expressed support for the YPG, a US-backed Syrian Kurdish group, and its political arm, the Democratic Union Party (PYD). Ankara views the YPG, which fought against the Islamic State group in Syria with Western support, as the PKK's Syria offshoot. In a bid to ease An-

kara's concerns, Swedish Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson has stressed that Sweden has been beefing up its anti-terror laws in recent years, with new stricter legislation coming into force on July 1.

Sweden has also said that its independent weapons export agency would be prepared to review its policy once the country was a NATO member. Levin noted that one area where Sweden does stand out in Europe is that it is "generally more sympathetic to the broader Kurdish cause." The Scandinavian country is home to around 100,000 Kurds, which Levin described as "influential" and "successful in mobilising".

"In that sense, maybe Turkey is right to put the spotlight on Sweden", Levin said. According to Li Bennich-Bjorkman, a political science professor at Uppsala University, the Kurdish issue is the crux of the problem with Ankara. "There is a real conflict between Sweden's view of the Kurdish issue and Turkey's demands on Sweden", she told AFP. Meanwhile, the Swedish government is also being squeezed on the home front, with its hands tied by an independent lawmaker with Kurd-

ish roots. Amineh Kakabaveh is a former Left Party member of Iranian-Kurdish origin sitting in parliament as an independent since 2019. In November, she provided the deciding vote to bring the Social Democrats into power - in exchange for deeper cooperation with the PYD. "She's in a very strong position because the Social Democrats need her vote", Elisabeth Braw, a Nordic expert at the American Enterprise Institute, told AFP. Kakabaveh has threatened to vote against the government's budget proposal this week if Sweden agrees to sell arms to Turkey. The Swedish government's two sets of negotiations with Kakabaveh and Ankara "are very difficult to reconcile", Levin noted. If not resolved before then, Sweden's legislative elections in September could end the deadlock with Ankara. Kakabaveh is not expected to be re-elected to parliament, which would enable the government to negotiate more freely with Turkey. "It really looks like the Swedish government is trying to step away from this agreement with Kakabaveh in order to be able to have this discussion with Turkey", Levin said.

## 'SCO playing vital role for regional security'

BEIJING: Secretary-General of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Zhang Ming said that the organization as a multilateral platform for open, mutually beneficial and equal cooperation in Eurasia played important role to help maintain regional security and stability. He made these remarks in his video address to the participants of the session, ASEAN-EAEU-SCO: Integration Segment of the Greater Eurasian Partnership, which took place as part of the 25th St Petersburg International Economic Forum 2022, according to SCO Secretariat here on Monday. The secretary general emphasised the SCO's readiness for active interaction with the EAEU, ASEAN and other partner international organisations in order to build stable and trust-based relations in accordance with the memorandums signed before. Among the participants in the discussion were Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Panin; Executive Secretary of the CSTO Parliamentary Assembly Sergei Pospelov; Deputy Chairman of the CIS Executive Committee - Executive Secretary of the CIS Denis Trefilov; Executive Director of the Secretariat of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia Kairat Sarbay; Rector of the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration Vladimir Mau; Taihe Institute Professor, SCO Secretary-General in 2016-2018 Rashid Alimov; and Alexei Maslov, Director of Institute of Asian and African Countries, Lomonosov Moscow State University. - APP

## Armed men kill at least 20 civilians in Mali

AGENCIES

DAKAR: Raiders in Mali killed at least 20 civilians in attacks on villages near the northern town of Gao over the weekend, while a landmine killed a UN peacekeeper in the troubled region. "Criminal terrorists" on Saturday killed at least 20 civilians in several hamlets in the Anchawadj commune, a few dozen kilometres north of Gao, said a senior police officer who asked to remain anonymous. A local official blamed the attacks on militants and put the death toll at 24, saying the killings occurred at Ebak, some 35 kilometres north of Gao, the region's main town.

The official described a "general panic" in the area. The situation in Anchawadj was "very concerning," and civilians were fleeing the area fearing further violence, he added. Following the bloodshed on Saturday, a landmine killed a UN peacekeeper on Sunday as he was out on patrol further north in Kidal, the head of the UN's MINUSMA Mali force, El Ghassim Wane, tweeted.

## 'IS Syria ambush kills 15 pro-regime fighters'

FOREIGN DESK

BEIRUT: A militant ambush on a bus in remote eastern Syria left at least 15 pro-government fighters dead on Monday, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. The war monitoring group said it was not immediately clear if those killed were from the regular army or allied militia. The attack took place on the road linking the city of Raqa, which used to be a major IS hub and is under Kurdish control, to the government-controlled city of Homs. The Observatory said several other fighters were critically wounded. The official state-run agency SANA confirmed 13 casualties and quoted a military source saying that the ambush took place at around 6:30 am (0330 GMT). Observatory head Rami Abdel Rahman said the ambush was the deadliest of its kind since a similar attack in early March also killed 15 in the Palmyra region. Another 10 soldiers and allied pro-regime forces were killed in an attack last month on an army bus by non-IS rebel forces in the northern province of Aleppo.

**Briefs****NDMA issues fresh downpour alert**

ISLAMABAD: The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) on Monday issued advisory for all departments concerned to remain alert as series of heavy rains may start in the country from today.

According to the latest advisory released by Pakistan Meteorological Department, the series of torrential rains with winds and thundershowers, beginning in upper and central parts of the country from Monday, will continue till Wednesday. The relevant authorities including all provincial departments, National Highway Authority, Frontier Works Organisation and other institutions asked to remain alert and take precautionary measures to avoid any untoward incidents.

The new rain spell might trigger landslides in vulnerable areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Galyat, Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan. The heavy falls may generate flash flooding in local nullahs in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. The NDMA has also advised public living in low-lying areas to remain alert and immediately report any kind of emergency to the authorities concerned. — APP

**5 UK citizens released by Taliban****AGENCIES**

LONDON: The Taliban has freed a veteran television cameraman and four other British nationals held in Afghanistan for six months, his friends and former colleagues said on Monday.

Peter Jouvenal was one of a “number” of Britons that the government in London in February said were being held by the Taliban.

On Monday, UK Foreign Secretary Liz Truss tweeted the government had “secured the release of five British nationals” held in the country. Her department said in a separate statement that the five “had no role in the UK government’s work in Afghanistan and travelled to Afghanistan against the UK Government’s travel advice.” “This was a mistake,” it added. Truss and the Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) gave no further details about the Britons.

In Kabul, Afghanistan government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said on Twitter that the Britons were “carrying out activities against the country’s laws and traditions of the people of Afghanistan.” “After consecutive meetings between the IEA (Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan) and Britain the said persons were released yesterday (Sunday)... and handed over to their home country,” he added, without confirming the names of those released. “They promised to abide by the laws of Afghanistan, its traditions and culture of the people and not to violate them again.”

**Govt urged to take Senate in confidence on TTP talks**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party’s veteran leader Senator Raza Rabbani on Monday urged the government to take the Senate in confidence on the talks being held with Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

Supporting the stance of Senator Mushtaq Ahmad Khan of Jamaat-e-Islami at the floor of upper house of parliament, he said there was a faction of the TTP which had increased terrorist activities in the country as they were demanding the rollback of Federally Administered Tribal Areas.

Rabbani said this was important issue which would be decided by the nation instead of taking decision behind the closed-door. Sending ‘Jirga’ for resolving the issues was a good option but it was not the substitute of the parliament, he added. He said until and unless the agreement would not be discussed in the parliament, its acceptability would remain questionable. — APP

# India and Bangladesh floods displace millions

## Some Bangladesh government officials have described the recent flooding as the country’s worst since 2004

**MONITORING DESK**

DHAKA: At least 59 people are known to have died in lightning strikes and landslides triggered by severe monsoon storms in India and Bangladesh. Millions of people have been stranded while emergency workers have struggled to reach those affected.

Forecasters are warning that the flooding is expected to get worse over the next few days. Some Bangladesh government officials have described the recent flooding as the country’s worst since 2004.

Unrelenting rains over the last week have inundated vast swathes of the country’s north-east region, exacerbated by run-off from heavy downpours across mountains in neighbouring India. Schools have been converted into makeshift shelters, while

troops have been deployed to evacuate households cut off from neighbouring communities as a result of rising waters.

“The whole village went under water by early Friday and we all got stranded,” Lokman, whose family lives in Companiganj village in Bangladesh, told AFP news agency.

“After waiting a whole day on the roof of our home, a neighbour rescued us with a makeshift boat. My mother said she has never seen such floods in her entire life,” the 23-year-old added. Sylhet, in northeast Bangladesh, has seen villagers wade through streets that were flooded up to their knees.

In Assam state in neighbouring India, more than 1.8 million people have been affected by floods after five days of incessant downpours. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma told reporters he had instructed

district officials to provide “all necessary help and relief” to those caught in the flooding. “Our house is submerged in water. I’ve never seen such huge floods in my life,” Husna Begum, a resident of Udiana village in Assam, told the BBC.

The 28-year-old has been living in a rickety plastic tent with her children since Thursday. “There is no drinking water in the camp here. My son has a fever, but I am unable to take him to the doctor,” she said.

Ronju Chaudhary, who lives in the same village, described the scale of the flooding. “We are surrounded by water on all sides. There’s water inside our homes too,” he said. This week’s rains came as Bangladesh’s Sylhet region was still recovering from its worst floods in nearly two decades in late May, when at least 10 people were killed and four million

others were affected.

Syed Rafiqul Haque, a former lawmaker, said Bangladesh was at risk of a humanitarian crisis with “almost the entire Sylhet-Sunamganj belt... under water and millions of people... stranded”. Some 3.1 million people were displaced in the region, officials said, with 200,000 of them now being housed in makeshift shelters on higher ground.

Seasonal monsoon rains represent a lifeline for farmers across South Asia, but typically cause deaths and destruction to property every year. Bangladesh and India have both experienced increasingly extreme weather in recent years.

Environmentalists - while not ascribing single weather events to climate change - do warn it could lead to more disasters, especially in countries that are low-lying and densely populated.

**PIA flight carrying Pak students arrives in Xian**

BEIJING: The first batch of Pakistani students, who were stuck in the motherland following Covid-19 pandemic, arrived in Xian, China. PIA special flight PK-6854 with 90 students on board took off from Islamabad International Airport and landed at Xian Xianyang International Airport at 15.00 local time, official sources told APP here on Monday. All the students will undergo 14-day quarantine in Xian as per Covid-19 control and prevention measures imposed by the local government for the passengers arriving from abroad. Later, the students will go to their universities in different cities to continue their education.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in his last month’s telephonic conversation with Chinese Premier Li Keqiang discussed the issue of Pakistani students who were desirous of returning to China to resume studies. Premier Li Keqiang had assured that China accorded high priority to this matter. Resultantly, the two sides agreed for phased return of the Pakistani students subject to the Covid-19 situation in China. The Chinese side had agreed to allow around 250 Pakistani students for return to China enabling them to continue their studies in the Chinese universities in different cities. — DNA



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan Khazar Farhadov meets with Farrukh Iqbal Khan, Director General of Economic Coordination and OIC Division of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan. — DNA

**Aleem Khan wealthier than CM Hamza, Buzdar**

ISLAMABAD: PTI dissident leader Aleem Khan has accumulated more assets than the incumbent Punjab Chief Minister Hamza Shehbaz and former CM Usman Buzdar, according to the asset details of the provincial assembly members.

The Election Commission of Pakistan has released asset details of the Punjab Assembly members. According to the list, Punjab Chief Minister Hamza owns assets worth Rs410.43 million, while his predecessor Buzdar is in possession of assets amounting to Rs50.80 million. But dissident PTI leader and ex-MPA Aleem Khan (who has been de-seated on May 20, 2022 after the ruling of the election commission on PTI rebel members) has declared assets worth more than Rs1.70 billion. Chief Minister Hamza has declared assets worth Rs410.43 million which also included 11 residential houses worth Rs130.64 million. He has three agricultural lands worth Rs30.97 million. He also declared himself in debt of Rs90.71 million. CM Hamza’s first wife Mehrun Nisa owns assets worth Rs5 million. His second wife Rabia Hamza possesses wealth worth Rs30.74 million. Former Punjab chief minister Buzdar has declared assets worth Rs50.80 million. Aleem Khan’s declared assets are worth more than Rs1.70 billion. Former provincial minister Murad Raas owns assets worth Rs380 million. Mian Mehmood Rashid is in possession of assets worth more than Rs180 million. — DNA



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party’s veteran leader Senator Raza Rabbani on Monday urged the government to take the Senate in confidence on the talks being held with Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP).

Supporting the stance of Senator Mushtaq Ahmad Khan of Jamaat-e-Islami at the floor of upper house of parliament, he said there was a faction of the TTP which had increased terrorist activities in the country as they were demanding the rollback of Federally Administered Tribal Areas.

Rabbani said this was important issue which would be decided by the nation instead of taking decision behind the closed-door. Sending ‘Jirga’ for resolving the issues was a good option but it was not the substitute of the parliament, he added. He said until and unless the agreement would not be discussed in the parliament, its acceptability would remain questionable. — APP

## Bulldozers became a vehicle of injustice in India

Critics say the real reason behind the demolition had nothing to do with the alleged illegality of the building and that he was being punished for being a vocal critic of the [BJP] government

**NEWS DESK**

NEW DELHI: Bulldozers, invented 100 years ago, have been used across the world to build homes, offices, roads and other infrastructures, but in recent years, they have become a weapon in the hands of India’s Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government to destroy homes and livelihoods of the minority Muslim community, says BBC in its fresh report.

The report says that nowhere are these excavators more visible than in the politically crucial Uttar Pradesh state of India. “Their latest outing was last Sunday when authorities in the city of Prayagraj (formerly Allahabad) tore down the home of political activist Javed Mohammad, alleging that it had been illegally built — a claim his family denied. Critics said the real reason behind the demolition had nothing to do with the alleged illegality of the building and that he was being punished for being a vocal critic of the [BJP] gov-

## Alarming rise of Islamophobia in India denounced

TEXAS: American Muslim scholar and civil rights leader Imam Omar Suleiman has denounced the alarming rise of Islamophobia, illegal arrests and demolition of Muslim homes in India. Imam Omar Suleiman addressing a protest gathering in Dallas, Texas, on the rise of Islamophobia and demolition of Muslim homes in India, said it is the responsibility of all Muslims and the people of conscience to stand against this, as genocide affects the whole world order. In India, the Muslims who are threatened with genocide account for one-tenth of the world’s Muslim population, he added. He also condemned those fascist regimes for collectively dehumanizing Muslims. “India and Israel apply the exact same actions of dehumanization. India calls it citizenship act; Israel calls it the Jewish state law” States the imam. “If you consider the Israel model, then expect the Palestinian resistance. Expect that spirit to come up. Because we have Razan al-Najjar in Palestine and we have Afreeen and Muskaan in India”, he added. The leader also criticised the Republicans, Democrats, Trump, Obama, and Joe Biden as human rights violation enablers, for welcoming Modi, “the butcher of Gujarat”, who was once banned in the country. He said, “We know we are comfortable over here. We know it is very easy for us to raise our voices over here, but we are inspired by those young people that are raising their voices over there and we stand with them.” — DNA

**IHC dismisses Defamation case against Imaan Mazari****COURT REPORTER**

ISLAMABAD: Human rights activist Imaan Mazari, who is the daughter of PTI leader Shireen Mazari, issued an “unconditional” apology in the Islamabad High Court (IHC), following which a case registered against her regarding derogatory statements about institutions was dismissed. During the proceeding of the hearing today, the court remarked that as Mazari apologised and showed regret on her remarks, there was no need for an FIR. The court further added that the human rights activist has also assured that she would refrain from passing derogatory statements in the future.

IHC Chief Justice Athar Minallah heard the case on Monday. Mazari appeared in court along with her lawyer Zainab Janjua. A case was registered against Imaan at Islamabad’s

Ramna police station under PPC sections 138 (Abetment of act of insubordination by soldier) and 505 (Statements conducing to public mischief). The lawyer had issued remarks regarding the institution earlier this month when her mother was detained by Punjab’s anti-corruption department in a case related to the encroachment of a piece of land in District Rajanpur. In the FIR registered against Imaan, the complainant said: “The above-named lady abused the senior military leadership of the Pakistan Army. Her derogatory statements are highly disparaging.” “Such statements, made with the intent to cause and create unrest and Chaos in the Pakistan Army which is also leading to the punishable offence,” the FIR read. But in her response to the IHC, the lawyer rejected all the claims made in the FIR saying that attempts were being made to stop her from her activism.

**Medical board formed for Amir Liaquat’s autopsy**

ISLAMABAD: The Sindh government has formed a medical board to exhume the dead body and conduct a postmortem of deceased PTI leader and television host Dr Amir Liaquat Hussain. Earlier Thursday, a Karachi judicial magistrate had directed the authorities to fix a date for the exhumation of Liaquat’s body for carrying out postmortem. According to notification issued by the Sindh Health Department, the “exhumation board”

will exhume the body and conduct a post-mortem on June 23, Thursday. “... for carrying out order of XXTH Judicial Magistrate East, Karachi, dated 18.06.2022, regarding exhumation of the dead body of deceased Dr. Aamir Liaquat Hussain, to ascertain the cause of death, an Exhumation Board has been constituted,” the notification reads. Headed by Karachi Police Surgeon Dr Summayya Syed, the board will exhume the grave at in the Graveyard of Abdullah Shah Ghazi Shrine in the presence of the magistrate, the notification added. The boards comprise following doctors: Karachi Police Surgeon Dr Summayya Syed Police Surgeon Karachi; Abbasi Shaheed Hospital, Additional Police Surgeon Dr. Shahid Nizam. — DNA

**ATC grants PTI leaders interim bail****DNA**

LAHORE: An Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) in Lahore granted interim bails until June 28 to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders in another case pertaining to violence during the party’s May 25 Islamabad long march. The police had registered 42 cases against senior leaders and workers of the PTI for agitation in the aftermath of clashes erupted between the police and the PTI leader in the provincial capital.

The PTI leaders granted interim bail include PTI Central Punjab President Dr Yasmin Rashid, former energy minister Hammad Azhar, Mian Muhammad Aslam Iqbal, Mian Mahmood-ur-Rasheed, Jamshed Iqbal Cheema, Musarrat Cheema, Andeeb Abbas and others.

Subsequently, the court approved the PTI leaders pre-arrest bail till June 28 and directed them to submit surety bonds worth Rs100,000 each. In a separate case on Friday, the anti-terrorism court (ATC) extended Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders’ bail until June 28, 2022.

On June 10, anti-terrorism court (ATC) issued non-bailable arrest warrants for 17 Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders, including former federal ministers Hammad Azhar, Shafiqat Mahmood, Yasmin Rashid.

**Britain set for biggest rail strike in decades**

LONDON: Britain’s railway network this week faces its biggest strike action in more than three decades in a row over pay as soaring inflation erodes earnings.

Rail union the RMT said that more than 50,000 workers will take part in a three-day national strike, coinciding with major events including the Glastonbury music festival. Schools are warning that thousands of teenagers taking national exams will also be affected.

The RMT argues that the strikes are necessary as wages have failed to keep pace with inflation, which has hit a 40-year high.

Jobs are also at risk with passenger traffic yet to fully recover after the lifting of coronavirus pandemic lockdowns. Countries around the world are being hit by decades-high inflation as the Ukraine war and the easing of Covid restrictions fuel energy and food price hikes. The strikes are planned for Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday in the biggest dispute on Britain’s railway network since 1989, according to the RMT.

The union has also announced a 24-hour walkout of its members on the Tube, London’s underground railway network, planned for Tuesday. Rail operators, however, warn of disruption throughout the week — with lines not affected by strike action nevertheless reducing services. “Talks have not progressed as far as I had hoped and so we must prepare for a needless national rail strike and the damaging impact it will have,” said Andrew Haines, chief executive of Network Rail, which looks after the country’s rail tracks. — APP

**Ukraine attacked sea oil drilling platforms****WEB DESK**

MOSCOW: The head of Moscow-controlled Crimea on Monday accused Ukraine of firing on oil drilling platforms off the coast of the peninsula that was annexed by Russia in 2014. “This morning the enemy attacked the drilling platforms of Chernomor’netgaz,” Sergey Aksyonov said on Telegram, referring to the Crimea-based oil and gas company. “I am in contact with our colleagues from the defence ministry and the FSB (security agency), we are working on saving people,” he added. According to him, five people had been saved, three of them injured, while the search continued for others “with the involvement of patrol ships and aviation”.