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Yoon Suk-yeol calls for relationship of trust with Japan

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Sri Lanka's new president sworn into office

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Iranian envoy meets Human Rights Minister

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Briefs

Biden tests positive for Covid-19

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: United States President Joe Biden has tested positive for COVID-19, is experiencing "very mild symptoms" and will continue to carry out his duties, the White House has said. Biden, 79, will isolate at the White House, had been in contact with members of staff and will participate in planned meetings, the president's Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre announced in a statement Thursday morning. The president has begun taking Paxlovid, an antiviral drug recommended for those at risk of severe illness.

Fazl seeks verdict in 'foreign funding' case

BUREAU REPORT

BANNU: JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rahman Wednesday raised questions over the delay in the announcement of the verdict in the PTI's prohibited funding case - which was reserved by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on June 21. It should be noted that on June 15, Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja directed not to refer to the PTI's case pertaining to prohibited funding for the party as the "foreign" funding case. Speaking to journalists in Bannu, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa today, Fazl said that the court has the authority to make decisions; however, legislation is the right of the Parliament.

Aftab Sultan appointed as NAB chairman

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The federal government on Thursday appointed former director-general Intelligence Bureau (IB) Aftab Sultan as the chairman of the National Accountability Bureau (NAB). Aftab Sultan was appointed as the NAB chairman after the formal approval of the federal cabinet meeting held on Thursday.



RAWALPINDI: Mehmet Pacaci, Turkiye Ambassador to Pakistan called on General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) at GHQ. - DNA

Turkiye envoy lauds Pakistan's role for stability

The COAS says that Pakistan highly values brotherly relations with Turkiye

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Turkish Ambassador Mehmet Pacaci on Thursday met Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa here at GHQ and appreciated Pakistan's role for regional stability. During the meeting, matters of regional security situation, mutual and professional interest with special emphasis on defence and security collaboration between the two brotherly countries, were discussed, an Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release said. The COAS said, "We highly value our brotherly relations with Turkiye which are deeply rooted in history and entrenched in our cultural and religious affinities". The visiting dignitary pledged to play his role for further improvement in diplomatic co-operation with Pakistan at all levels.

Turkiye envoy calls on CAS

MAHNOOR ANSAR / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force (PAF) Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu Thursday said Pakistan and Turkiye had longstanding religious, cultural and historical bonds which were manifested through strong ties between the Air Forces of the two countries. The Chief of Air Staff (CAS) made these remarks at a call on paid by Turkish Ambassador Mehmet Pacaci to him here,

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Pak condemns India's persecution of Yasin

Mr. Malik has taken the desperate decision of going on a hunger strike unto death

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan strongly condemns India's recent move of implicating Hurriyat leader Muhammad Yasin Malik in two more fictitious cases, which have been crafted around incidents that took place more than thirty years ago and have been reopened under the draconian Terrorist and Disruptive Activities Act (TADA) in a clear attempt to perpetuate Yasin Malik's political victimization. Mr. Yasin Malik is already serving out a life-sentence awarded to him after a sham trial by an Indian court on May 25, 2022. Regrettably, Yasin Malik is also being denied

the right of personal appearance in the ongoing trial, in complete contravention of legal and democratic norms. Once again, India has employed judiciary as a tool to damage the morale of the Kashmiris by making their true leadership a target of flagrant prejudice. Left with no legal recourse and faced with blatant denial of his rights, Mr. Malik has taken the desperate decision of going on a hunger strike unto death from 22 July 2022. The inhuman incarceration of Mr. Yasin Malik, his sham trials under fabricated cases, his fallacious conviction and the malevolent attempts at defiling the legitimate struggle of the Kashmiris for their right to self-determination as "terrorism" is nothing but further corroboration of India's known credentials of being a serial violator of human rights and usurper of the fundamental rights of the Kashmiri people.

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Imran Khan threatens mass movement if mandate stolen



STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: PTI Chairman and former prime minister Imran Khan Thursday warned against changing loyalties of his partymen and stealing PTI's mandate in Punjab. He claimed that the government employed all efforts to defeat his party in Punjab by polls. Addressing his party workers in a televised speech, Khan expressed his anger with the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) even after winning the by-election. He said that those who conducted the Punjab by-election should be punished. Accusing Chief Election Commissioner (CEC)

Zardari to Elahi: snub Imran and join us

ALI HAMZA

LAHORE: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari has told Punjab chief minister candidate and Pakistan Muslim League-Q leader Pervaiz Elahi to snub Imran Khan and join him, warning that otherwise their political fight would turn into personal animosity. As the word goes that even the calmest person has an extent, it has ostensibly happened with PPP co-chair after 'U-turns' he experienced on Elahi's part. Zardari, who is deemed as the kingmaker in local politics, a placid individual, and the one who is tasked to shift the balance of votes in favor of PML-N's Hamza Shahbaz, has apparently freaked out at what Elahi has done in the past. Elahi was nominated as the chief minister for Punjab by its political rival - PML-N - just because of Zardari's efforts - and certainly his persuasive abilities - when the PTI government was near to losing the power in the center and then in

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Russia starts gas supplies to Europe

A total shutdown of imports or a sharp reduction in the flow from east to west could have a catastrophic effect

AGENCIES

BERLIN: Russia on Thursday restored critical gas supplies to Europe through Germany via the Nord Stream pipeline after 10 days of maintenance, but suspicion lingered that the Kremlin would trigger an energy crisis on the continent this winter. Germany, which is heavily dependent on Russian gas, had feared that Moscow would not reopen the pipeline after the scheduled work and accused Moscow of using energy as a "weapon". The showdown came amid the worst tensions in several years over Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Germany believes Russia is squeezing supplies in retaliation for Western sanctions over the war. Klaus Mueller, head of Germany's energy regulator, the Federal Network Agency, said that by late morning gas flows were on track to return to 40 percent of the pipeline's capacity - the same reduced level as before the maintenance work. "But given the missing 60 percent (of supply) and political instability, there is no reason to sound the all-clear," he tweeted. German Economy Minister Robert Habeck angrily dismissed Russian claims that it was a guarantor of Europe's energy supply, saying that Moscow had become a growing "insecurity factor" in the sector.

'Russia storing weapons at nuclear plant'

KYIV: Kyiv on Thursday accused Moscow of storing heavy weapons at Europe's largest nuclear power plant in occupied Ukrainian territory, after Russia said Ukraine's troops had fired on the facility. Ukraine state energy company Energoatom said on social media that Russia had moved over two dozen pieces of military equipment and ammunition into the engine room of the first reactor. "The occupiers continue to cynically violate all norms and requirements regarding fire, nuclear and radiation safety of the NPP operation, keeping heavy military equipment, ammunition, weapons and explosives just in the engine room of the power unit of the largest nuclear power plant in Europe," it said. Russia earlier on Thursday accused Ukraine of firing this week on the Zaporizhzhia plant, claiming a "catastrophe" was narrowly avoided "by luck".

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KPK, Japan & UNDP launch policing plans for merged areas

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) Police, government of Japan, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Thursday launched the policing plans for the merged areas of the province. The first ever policing plans were introduced for seven districts of merged areas that included Bajaur, Mohmand, Khyber, Orakzai, North Waziristan, South Waziristan, and Kurram. The plans provide a road map for the smooth transition of the post-merger local policing system to the formal policing and justice system in the merged areas, a news release said.

The plans also present a context-specific framework to deliver people-centred policing services through collaborative partnerships with local communities and other agencies of the criminal justice system. Furthermore, the plans also propose recommendations to federal, provincial, and district-level decision makers in address-

ing resource and capacity gaps. The launch event highlighted the importance of joint efforts between KP Police and development partner to foster a people-centred policing system in the merged areas. The efforts were crucial to restoring public security services, rule of law, sustainable peace, and development in the region. Speaking at the event Inspector General of Police KPK Moazzam Jah Ansari said, "I extend my sincere gratitude to my team in KP Police and UNDP for their exceptional work in developing the very first policing plans for the merged areas." He said the plans presented a necessary road map to guide the post-merger transition in policing and better service delivery to the people. On behalf of the KP Police, he extended his thanks to UNDP for its technical advice and assistance, and the government of Japan for its generous funding. Japanese Ambassador to Pakistan WADA Mitsuhiro thanked UNDP and KP Police for their pioneering efforts to strengthen policing in the merged areas.

"Improving the local police service in merged areas is a key priority in ensuring a smooth transition to equitable public security and justice delivery in the post-merger districts. Therefore, the development of the police plans is a crucial milestone in achieving this essential objective," he maintained. UNDP Pakistan Resident Representative Knut Ostby said the policing plans would guide the trajectory for a better policing system that is responsive to the needs of local communities. In addition to this, the infrastructure support to build new police stations and training former Levies and Khasadars who were recently integrated into KP Police will complement and add value to this crucial transition phase in the merged areas. The initiative also includes infrastructure development support to build five new police stations in districts Bajaur, Mohmand, North Waziristan and Kurram, and train 278 former Levies and Khasadars who were recently integrated into the KP Police.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, Shazia Marri talking to the media. – DNA

Pakistan, Iran to enhance collaboration in various areas of common interest

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Science and Technology Agha Hassan Baloch and the Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Pakistan, Seyyed Mohammad Ali Hosseini in a meeting held here agreed to enhance collaboration in various areas of common interest. The senior officials of the ministry including Scientific Advisor Zain ulAbidin also attended the meeting. Speaking on the occasion, the federal minister highlighted the deep rooted cordial and fraternal relations between two countries based on faith and cultural affinities. He said Pakistan always highly values its brotherly ties with its neighboring country which have stood the test of time. It is a matter of great satisfaction that bilateral relations are witnessing an upward trajectory marked by high level exchanges in political, economic, defense and security spheres. Agha Hassan Baloch said that the two countries could benefit from each other's experience in various areas of common interest. Pakistan and Iran are amongst the founding members of ECO. And ECO Science Foundation is inter-governmental organization working under Ministry of Science and Technology. The federal minister

said that Iran was the first country to recognize the state of Pakistan and the two countries have shared history and literature. "We both have convergence of views in number of areas ranging from Kashmir to Palestine and mutually desire to see the lasting peace and stability in the region and on taking joint stand against rising Islamophobia," he said. Agha Hassan highlighted the tremendous opportunities for cooperation that exists between the two countries. He said that Pakistan can learn from the expertise of Iran in the field of science and technology, and we have strong intentions for enhancing collaboration in various areas of common interest. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Seyyed Mohammad Ali Hosseini said deep historical, cultural, religious, linguistic, art links and commonalities between the two countries are a suitable ground for the expansion of scientific, educational and academic relations between the two countries. He said that the University of Tehran is willing to make a Technology/IT park in Islamabad. He stressed that MoUs should be expedited be-

tween Pakistani and Iranian universities to enhance exchanges. He said that Iran and Pakistan have a border of 900 km and both countries should take advantage of that to strengthen each other as the both countries have great potential for extensive collaboration in the areas of energy, trade and science. The federal minister praised the current government's efforts in showing the keen interest in the field of science and technology. He said the opening of new border crossing points and early operationalization of the first border market at Mand-Pashin will strengthen people to people linkages and formal trade and commerce for local people. The federal minister said that both countries should make efforts to strengthen trade via long Pakistan-Iran border that demarcates the Iranian province of Sistan and Balochistan from the Pakistan province of Balochistan. Gates should be built on the border, which will boost the economy through trade in the areas of Taftan, Turbat, Buleda and Panjgur. The ambassador invited the federal minister to travel to Iran and learn about the Iran's progress in the field of science and Technology parks. – APP



Pak export to Italy, remittances cross US\$ 2 billion

ISLAMABAD: The exports to Italy and remittances to Pakistan has crossed US \$ 2 billion, recording highest ever annual growth where both the sectors observed highest growth as compared to any other potential market. Posting multiple records of growth, Pakistan's earnings from Italy in exports and remittances crossed \$ 2 billion in Financial Year 2021-2022. A substantial growth in Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from Italy was also witnessed during the record breaking year, said a press statement issued here. Italy became the seven billion dollar export country for Pakistan in the world during the year with a record growth of export volume to \$ 1146 million, while the remittances from Italy were also on the path to touch billion dollars soon with a total of \$ 857 million during the year. June 2022 also set the record for highest export volume ever to Italy in a single month crossing \$ 144 million. Italy posted the highest growth both in workers remittances among all countries with high numbers of Pakistan diaspora and for exports among the top ten export destinations of Pakistan. This phenomenal growth in exports and remittances has come at a time when European economies in general and Italian economy in particular is slowing down and facing multiple challenges due to Ukraine war. The exports to Italy of \$1.15 billion in FY 2021-22 are 46% higher than the previous year, while the remittances are 41 % higher for the same period than the last year. While talking to media, Pakistan's Ambassador to Italy, Jauhar Saleem paid glowing tributes to the Pakistani exporters for their initiative and hard work and to the Pakistani diaspora in Italy for standing by the country in a most challenging economic environment. He also shared that Pakistan had posted a record trade surplus of \$ 573 million during the financial year 2021-22 which

is 91% higher than the previous year. According to the envoy, the value added sectors were the main drivers of the exceptional export growth with exports of plastic products increasing by 208%, sports goods 80%, leather 42%, home textiles 36% and garments 35%. The ambassador also shared that even as the pandemic hit global footwear market witnessed a contraction of shrank demand during the year, Pakistan's exports of footwear to Italy increased by 19% in the year and Italy has become the 3rd largest export destination for Pakistani footwear. Italy is also the 5th largest destination for Pakistani home textiles and ranks No.6 in garments exports. Ambassador Saleem also informed that with the revival of market activities after removal of pandemic related restrictions in Italy, the Pakistan Embassy in Italy was further pacing up its activities to connect Pakistani businesses with Italian firms to sustain the exports and FDI growth. During the just concluded financial year, Pakistan received Italian investment in the sectors of food processing, chemicals, construction, leather, footwear, energy related equipment and IT. The Ambassador also shared that some of the recent joint ventures between leading Pakistani and Italian footwear firms were enabling technology transfer, international marketing skills and supply chain management to Pakistani firms. Moreover, Italy was also providing technical support in agriculture sector especially related to olive and olive products. Similarly, Italy is supporting the efforts for reduction of risks of Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOF) and hydrogeological hazards in mountainous areas by establishing an evidence-based assessment and monitoring system for glaciers in Gilgit Baltistan. – APP

FCCI displays provisional voter's list

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) has displayed on notice board and uploaded on the FCCI website the provisional voter's list for the Election 2022-23. 4450 voters are eligible to cast their vote. Among these 1124 are from the corporate and 3326 belong to the associate class. According to the Election schedule objections could be filed with secretary general FCCI about the eligibility of any voter up to July 28 (Thursday). Secretary general will dispose of these objections on August 2 while appeals against the decision of secretary general to FCCI Election commission could be submitted up to August 5. The election commission will dispose of these appeals up to August 8. The appeals against the decision of election commission could be filed to the Regulator (DGTO) up to August 11. The decision of the Regulator will be final and these appeals could be disposed of up to August 22. The final voters list would be displayed on notice board and uploaded on the FCCI website up to August 24 in addition to forwarding the same to the Regulator. The FCCI election for the year 2022-23 would be conducted in accordance with this voters list.

FS co-chairs 3rd meeting of CPEC's JWG-ICC

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The 3rd meeting of the CPEC Joint Working Group (JWG) on International Cooperation and Coordination (JWG-ICC) was held in the virtual mode today. The meeting was co-chaired by Foreign Secretary Sohail Mahmood and China's Assistant Foreign Minister Wu Jianghao. Senior officials of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs on both sides as well as relevant organs including Pakistan's Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives and the Board of Investment, and China's National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) also participated. During the meeting, both sides reviewed continued implementation of CPEC and its expansion to jointly agreed priority areas. The Foreign Secretary underscored the centrality of the time-tested Pakistan-China All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership in Pakistan's foreign policy. The Foreign Secretary underlined that the timely completion of CPEC projects and steady progress on realizing important projects in the pipeline was energizing bilateral cooperation and further strengthening the foundation for Pakistan's economic modernization and enhancing the capacity for sustained progress and prosperity. It was agreed that CPEC's development had reached a new point, with increasing emphasis on high-quality development of industry, agriculture, IT, and science and technology, while ensuring tangible socio-economic benefits for the people.

Khan suffering from 'Zardari phobia': Sherry

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Vice President Senator Sherry Rehman on Thursday said PTI Chairman Imran Khan was still suffering from 'Zardari phobia' as he was accusing PPP co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari of bribing his party's members of the Punjab Assembly. Responding to the allegations levelled the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chairman against the PPP leader, Sherry said in a statement said blaming Asif Zardari for vote buying was like that of hoax accusations hurled by Imran Khan against 'Mr X' and 'Mr Y'. "Imran Khan considers Asif Ali Zardari behind his every failure and accuses him of defection of his party members and MPAs," she added. The minister alleged that Imran Khan in fact showed his distrust in his assembly members as evident from his allegations of 'buying and selling their allegiance' by Asif Ali Zardari. "A few days ago, he criticized the Supreme Court and now he wants it to get his (party members) number completed in the assembly." First the PTI leaders pressurized the Election Commission by accusing it of rigging, and was now pleading the same to stop the horsetrading of their party members, Sherry Rehman said. She claimed, "The PTI leaders are asking the apex court and the ECP to interfere in their internal political affairs." Instead of blame game, she advised, the PTI should fix its internal political affairs. – APP

President for industry experts' inclusion in varsities

Rector of IIUI, Professor Dr Masoom Yasinzai, and senior officials of the University attended the meeting

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday said that shifting the universities from physical to online education system, setting up university advisory boards with members from industry, agriculture and services sectors was essential for speedy progress and development of the country. The president, during a follow-up briefing on International Islamic University, Islamabad (IIUI), at Aiwan-e-Sadr, urged the universities to offer short-term online and hybrid courses to exponentially increase the supply of human resource equipped with marketable skills. Rector of IIUI, Professor Dr Masoom Yasinzai, and senior officials of the University attended the meeting. During the meeting, the president called upon the varsities to activate their senates to perpetually provide visionary and strategic guidance, in addition to setting up advisory boards with members from industry, manufacturing, agriculture and services sectors. This, he said, would help them to continuously improve upon their curricula and to undertake focused research and development activities for helping the private

sector align with current and future market-driven needs. It would also help meet the ever-changing customers' needs and demands, and competing in the regional and international markets in terms of quality and cost-effectiveness of our products and services. The president said that the public sector universities should change their behaviour from a secured job attitude to pro-active. They should also endeavour to continuously improve their skills and knowledge base and carry out market-driven research and development in coordination with private sector industry leaders. He further emphasized that universities, in addition to four-year degree courses and PhD programmes, should also offer short skill-based degrees and diploma programs framed and modulated in coordination and input from the Chambers of Commerce and Industry and industry leaders to increase the supply of skilled and educated human resources to speedily narrow the supply and demand gap. President Alvi highlighted that globally, educational institu-

tions were rapidly shifting from physical education systems to hybrid and online education systems to increase the pace of learning and exponentially increase the number of students. He said that Pakistani universities should benchmark the best online practices of the universities from the developed world and emulate and adopt these best practices for transforming the education systems to remain competitive and relevant. The president said that Higher Education Commission (HEC) should continuously review its Online and Distance Learning policy and take concrete and time-bound actions to encourage the universities to shift to the online mode of education. He also advised HEC to proactively market its 24,000 courses of discounted Coursera Programs to institutions under its purview for their faculty members and students in a time-bound manner. President Alvi said that Allama Iqbal Open University and the Virtual University of Pakistan should further improve their curriculum and

processes, and offer their academic and learning products to those countries where the online and virtual education system was either in infancy or didn't exist, especially the Islamic countries. He said that the universities should take a critical review of their curriculum and their education and learning system in a holistic and thorough manner to identify behavioural, attitudinal and learning issues to eliminate the underlying reasons behind conflict, discomfort and polarization in students and faculty members to ensure that both the faculty and students were fully focused on gaining knowledge, which was the main purpose of universities. President Alvi appreciated the role of IIUI in promoting education, research, technology and innovation for the benefit of society and the Muslim Ummah. Earlier, Rector IIUI thanked the president for his continuous patronage and guidance to IIUI and briefed the meeting on steps taken by the university to implement various directions and advice given by the president to bring about marked improvement in its performance in all disciplines. – APP

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 - July 01 / Singapore Armed Forces Day
 - July 01 / Canada National Day
 - July 01 / Somalia Independence Day
 - July 04 / USA Independence Day
 - July 05 / Algeria Independence Day
 - July 09 / Argentine Independence Day
 - July 09 / Mongolia Revolution Day
 - July 14 / France National Day
 - July 15 / Brunei Sultan's Birthday
 - July 21 / Belgium National Day
 - July 20 / TRNC Independence Day
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ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Indonesia Adam Tugio giving details of the photo exhibition held at the Lok Virsa under the aegis of the Indonesian embassy. The exhibition will continue till July 24. DNA

POL products' import gradually reducing: Malik

Musadik Malik stressed the need for 'serious interventions' to create balance in the country's imports and exports to prevent rupee's further devaluation against the dollar and ensure economic stability

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Petroleum Dr Musadik Malik on Thursday said import of petroleum products was witnessing a gradual decline due to effective policies and management of the incumbent coalition government, under the wise leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. "This June, the country imported almost 9 per cent less petroleum products with effective management as compared to the same month of the last year," the minister said

while addressing a news conference along with Minister for Power Khuram Dastgir Khan here. In June 2021, he said around 778,000 Metric Ton (MT) petrol was sold in the country that came down to 704,000 MT in June 2022, showing a 9 percent decrease. Similarly, there was an 8-9 percent decline in the sale of diesel oil used in heavy vehicles and agriculture machinery. "This has significantly reduced the country's energy import," he added. Besides, he said there was almost a 30 per cent projected reduction in consumption of petrol, if



comparison was drawn between July-2021 and July-2022. "In July last, almost 818,000 Metric Ton petrol was consumed, and the consumption projection for the current month (July) is 580,000 MT." Likewise, he said around 730,000 MT diesel was consumed in July 2021, which was expected to be consumed approximately 500,000 MT in the current month. He expressed the confidence that the fuel import would further decline in the coming days as the Petroleum Division was closely monitoring the situation on a daily basis. Musadik Malik stressed

the need for 'serious interventions' to create balance in the country's imports and exports to prevent rupee's further devaluation against the dollar and ensure economic stability. He said the good development was that the country's strategic reserves were at the record highest level despite the reduction in import of petroleum products. Sharing details, the minister said current 34-day petrol and 66-day diesel stocks were available to meet the country's energy needs. "We are creating a balance between import and maintaining reserves," he added.

122 youths graduate from skills training programme

DNA

RAWALPINDI: UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, and Inspire Pakistan held a graduation ceremony for the first intake of Afghan refugees and Pakistani students of the Urban Cohesion Hub in Rawalpindi. A total of 122 students including 62 refugee and 59 Pakistani students obtained their certificates, having completed a three-month training in various education and livelihood courses. Graduates also received a livelihoods kit to start their careers, including sewing machines for tailors and stove tops and a set of pots and utensils for budding chefs. The Urban Cohesion Hub is a community centre which provides a safe space where women, men, boys and girls of all backgrounds can meet for social events, recreation, education and livelihood programmes, and avail of mental health and legal

support. Established with the objective of empowering refugee and host community youth, skills training programmes are offered three times a year to transition into the job market and fulfil their immense potential as active members of their host communities. These include English language training, computer courses, cosmetology, tailoring, and cooking classes. Born and raised in Pakistan, Anmol, an Afghan refugee enrolled herself in the culinary arts course. "I found this course very exciting and I learned how to prepare many cuisines," she said adding she wanted to establish a home-based cooking business to support herself and her family. "It seems that now my dream will come true." In the past four years, UNHCR in partnership with the NAVTTC and other NGO partners provided market-led vocational and technical skills trainings to

over 9,000 youth including refugees and Pakistanis in 46 trades in Pakistan, which has helped them to have sustainable income generation opportunities. UNHCR's Deputy Representative in Pakistan, Tammi Sharpe, and Commissioner for Afghan Refugees, Farid Ullah Jan, attended the event joined by Inspire Pakistan CEO, Qaiser Siddique. Noting that an estimated three million Afghans including 1.3 million registered Afghan refugees and 0.84 million Afghan Citizen Cardholders (ACC) are hosted generously by the people of Pakistan, Farid Ullah Jan underscored the support extended by the Government of Pakistan in health, education, wash, livelihood, international protection, and called for continued investment by the international community in all sectors including training and skills development programmes.

Rates of construction material increased by 20%

ISLAMABAD, JUL 21 (DNA) - The increase in petrol prices and a weakening Pakistan rupee against US dollar has led to a 20% increase in the construction material. The new rates of the construction materials with 20percent increase have been notified in Punjab. The official prices of cement, bricks, gravel and other construction material have been increased. The price of first-class bricks has been increased from Rs12,500 to Rs14,000 in official rates. The price of a bag of cement has been increased from Rs 720 to Rs1020. The price of a bag of white cement has been increased from Rs1350 to Rs1550. Punjab Finance Department has issued a formal notification of new rates of construction materials. - DNA

ECP rejects PTI candidate's plea for votes recount

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Thursday rejected the PTI's application for votes recount in 21 polling stations of PP-7 on which the by-election was held four days ago, on July 17, 2022. PTI candidate Shabbir Awan had filed the petition in the ECP after the high court order. PML-N's candidate had beaten PTI's Awan by just 49 votes following which the latter approached the returning officer (RO), who refused to count the votes again. It was only after that the PTI candidate had moved the high court. In the brief ruling, CEC Sikandar Raja said that the petitioner, PTI candidate Shabbir Awan, could neither prove any fraud or irregularity during the polls, nor was he able to state the reasons for the recount. During the Punjab by-elections on Sunday, PML-N's Raja Sagheer had won the by-poll on the provincial assembly seat with a margin of just 49 votes, defeating Awan. The PTI had also raised questions over the delayed announcement of the result in the constituency. Subsequently, Awan submitted an application to the returning officer and requested a recount. His plea was, however, rejected drawing criticism from the PTI. Later, Awan had approached the Lahore High Court's Rawalpindi bench assailing the RO's "illegal decision" of rejecting plea for recount in PP-7. But on Wednesday, the court restrained the RO from consolidating the result of PP-7 and converted Awan's petition challenging the RO's decision to reject plea for recount into an application to be taken up by the ECP. - DNA

Resolution of consumer issues top priority

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) conducted a Round Table on Regulatory Reforms from consumers perspective. The event was chaired by Mr. Masroor Khan, Chairman OGRA along Mr. Muhammad Arif, Member (Gas) & Mr. Zainulabideen Qureshi, Member (Oil). The senior executives of OGRA's Corporate Affairs Division, Gas Department with designated officers from Islamabad, Peshawar and Lahore were also present.

In the opening remarks, Mr. Masroor Khan, Chairman OGRA said that OGRA believes in connecting with stakeholders and resolve the chronic issues affecting the consumers. He further said that 51 percent problems are solved immediately when the stakeholders sit under one roof and rest 49 percent can be resolved by bridging communication gaps. Zainulabideen Member Oil expressed his views and said that criticism should be taken positively, which can guide to the right direction. Representatives from Hydrocarbon Development of Pakistan, Ministry of Energy (Petroleum Division) were also present. The representatives of Sarhad Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Rawalpindi, Islamabad Chambers of Commerce & Industry, Chairman Cooperative CNG Association, KPK Mr. Alamzeb raised their issues regarding SNGPL, billing etc. Consumers from general public were also present & submitted their queries to the Authority. SNGPL answered all relevant queries. The OGRA advised SNGPL to address the issues and resolve them to the best satisfaction of the consumer. In the closing remarks, Mr. Muhammad Arif, Member (Gas) OGRA assured that OGRA is committed to resolve the consumer problems by utilizing all the available resources.

Police arrest five for aerial firing

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi district police on the directives of City Police Officer, Rawalpindi conducted raids in different areas and netted five accused for aerial firing and possessing illegal weapons. According to a police spokesman, Mandra police held an accused namely Saqib Ali who was allegedly involved in aerial firing. Police also recovered a 12 bore rifle and rounds from his possession. Pirwadhai police rounded up Bilal for possessing a 30 bore pistol and ammunition. Saddar Wah police also recovered a 30 bore pistol and ammunition from Muhammad Fayyaz. Similarly, Rawat police held Yasrab Ali with a 30 bore pistol and ammunition while Murree police arrested Junaid and seized a 30 bore pistol and ammunition. Separate cases have been arrested against all the accused while further investigations are under process, he added. Senior Superintendent of Police, Operations Rawalpindi Waseem Riaz Khan said that strict action in accordance with the law was being taken against lawbreakers. - APP

Five bids to smuggle wheat foiled

RAWALPINDI: The Food Department and Taxila Police on Thursday foiled five bids to smuggle wheat and seized over 2,440 bags. According to a district administration spokesman, the food department officials with the help of Taxila police confiscated five trucks loaded with 2,440 bags of wheat. The truck drivers namely Attaullah, Gulam Ali, Safian, Hassan and Suleman were also arrested by the police, he added. The spokesman said the district administration had directed the authorities concerned to strictly monitor the movement of wheat and take strict action in accordance with the law against the rules violators. - APP

IT Ministry, SCO agree to increase co-op

Federal Minister for IT Syed Amin Ul Haque apprised the SCO Secretary General about the steps taken by Ministry of IT in the field of information technology and telecommunication. We want to work with SCO in Artificial Intelligence, Cloud Services and digital connectivity, he said

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Secretary General of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Ambassador Zhang Ming, called on Federal Minister for IT and Telecommunication Syed Amin Ul Haque here on Thursday. Matters of common interest and related to Information and Communication Technology were discussed during the meeting. The two sides agreed to increase cooperation between Ministry of IT and Telecommunication, and SCO Secretariat. Federal Minister for IT Syed Amin Ul Haque apprised the SCO Secretary General about the steps taken by Ministry of IT in the field of information technology and telecommunication. We want to work with SCO in Artificial Intelligence, Cloud Services and digital connectivity, he said, adding that Pakistan can become digital hub regarding IT experts,



better facilities and time zone for SCO member countries. The Federal Minister for IT said that the IT sector of Pakistan has great potential. Ministry of IT is playing effective role for the development of IT and Telecommunication sector of Pakistan. He said empowerment of youth especially women is the topmost priority of Ministry of IT. SCO Secretary General Zhang Ming paid tribute to Federal Minister for IT for the important steps taken in the field of IT and Telecommunication. Steps for empowerment of women, data protection, and provision of broadband services in unserved and underserved areas of the country are laudable, he added. He said the SCO member countries can work on Artificial Intelligence, and regarding e-education, e-health and e-commerce in far-flung areas. Additional Secretary (Incharge) MOITT Mohsin Mushtaq and senior officers of the Ministry were present in the meeting.

Briefs

RDA issues notices to 12 illegal housing schemes

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) on Thursday issued notices to 12 illegal housing schemes. According to RDA spokesman, the Metropolitan Planning and Traffic Engineering (MP&TE) Directorate, RDA was taking legal action against illegal advertisements and marketing of illegal housing schemes. The authority had issued notices to 12 housing schemes namely New Metro City, Gujar Khan, Tariq Sharif Smart City, Gujar Khan, Prizam Town, Gujar Khan, Capital Valley at Mouza-Thalian near new airport, Life Residencia at Mouza Mori KhatranFateh Jang road, Seven Enclave at MouzaPindRanjha road, Mannan City at MouzaChahanChakri road, Lake View City at MouzaChahanCahkri road, Faha Fatima at MouzaKhingarchakri road, Park Zameen Town at MouzaMistriChakri road, Hawks Melbourne City at MouzaBaggaSheikhanChakBeli Khan road and Kashmir Valley at Mouza Jollay Chakwal road. He informed that the housing schemes had been directed to submit documents including mortgage deed, deed of surrender and No-Objection Certificate (NOC) taken from the Environment Protection Department etc. The societies had also been instructed to submit all the required papers, otherwise the approval of the layout plans of the housing schemes would be withdrawn/canceled, he added. - APP

Imran gets interim bail till July 30 in vandalism case

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A district and sessions court in Islamabad on Thursday extended the interim bail of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan till July 30 in 10 cases pertaining to alleged vandalism during the party's Azadi March held on May 25. Judge Kamran Basharat Mufti heard the cases against Imran Khan. While the judge approved an application filed by the ex-prime minister seeking exemption from personal appearance and extended his interim bail. During the course of the proceedings, Imran Khan's counsel pleaded with the court to also grant his client interim bail in a case registered in Kohsar police station. At this, the judge remarked that since he was seeking a fresh bail in the case, personal appearance of the suspect is necessary. Session Judge said that the case number 425 has fresh bail so the order will be given when the suspect while appear while the junior lawyer prayed to the court to extend the date of the hearing of fresh bail. Accepting the plea, the court also extended the date of the hearing of fresh bail till July 30

Nine drug peddlers, bootleggers arrested

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi police on Thursday arrested nine accused including a female in an action against suspected drug peddlers and bootleggers besides recovering over 3500 grams charras, 15 liters liquor and two liquor bottles from their possession. A police spokesperson said that Waris Khan police held Arshad with 1620 grams charras, Arslan with 1410 grams charras, Ahsan Ilyas for having 190 grams charras while a female drug peddler namely Saba was netted for possessing 205 grams charras. Naseerabad police arrested, Shabbir and Irfan for having 220 grams charras. Sadiqabad police nabbed Owais for having five liters liquor while R.A.Bazaar police rounded up Rahol for carrying 10 liters liquor. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Visitors taking interest in various pictures on the occasion of cultural exhibition arranged by the Indonesia embassy at LokVirsa. - DNA

Evaluation of nuclear-cyber nexus imperative: experts

DNA

ISLAMABAD: There was a great need to understand and evaluate the nuclear nexus with menacing cyber activities as the lingering cyber threat was increasing day by day, said Omimah Khan, an international nuclear security researcher. She was addressing a webinar titled 'Cyber Threats and Nuclear Weapons: Unfolding the Real Problems' organized by the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) here on Wednesday. She asserted that nuclear activities when combined with cyber activities made a very lethal combination and sought critical attention, particularly with reference to nuclear espionage, which had the potential to jeopardize the security of all state, non-state, and ideological groups.

Ms Khan mentioned real life cases of cyber sabotage to the nuclear capabilities of states to enunciate the vulnerability to cyberattacks. Mentioning the Manhattan Project (1940) espionage, and the hacking of strategic defence nuclear plans by the German hackers who worked for the Soviet KGB in 1986, Ms Khan asserted that the two events not only demonstrated the theft of nuclear information but also the psyche of the state leaders. To enunciate further the degree of vulnerability, she quoted the unprecedented Chinese espionage on the American W88 thermonuclear warhead, where Chinese

hackers, with their extraordinary cyber skills, stole highly sensitive and crucial data for years. A strategic attack on nuclear infrastructure was by definition a non-discrete cyberattack, and was highly pertinent in the contemporary world, she said. She highlighted the most recent instance of Stuxnet, a malicious computer worm developed in 2010, which in July 2020 attempted to disparage the nuclear facility in Natanz, Iran by interfering in the uranium enrichment process at the Natanz plant.

With that, given the situation of Pakistani nuclear facilities at high risk of a cyber-attack, Ms Khan suggested for a serious need for Pakistan to work on the strategic development of nuclear reinforcements. She

asserted that Pakistan needed to integrate all stakeholders, i.e., private, administrative, and international, and take them on board to analyze the strategic challenges and ascertain the factors leading to these challenges. Furthermore, Pakistan needed to increase its diplomatic activities at international fora with respect to its exposure to cyberattacks in order to gain maximum support and assistance. Lobbying for a collective resolution at multilateral fora with the aim of asserting that a cyber-attack on the nuclear arsenal of one state is an attack on all states was the need of the hour, she said. Lastly, she underscored that there was an urgent need in the country to revise and reconsider its policy options before another cyber 9/11 or cyber Pearl Harbor occurred.

Solar tube wells powered by Chinese technology successful

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Solar tube wells powered by Chinese technology is a success story in Pakistan, and the same technology will be used in the KP's southern district of Tank, Gwadar Pro reported on Thursday. To resolve the long-standing water problem in the area, the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) has decided to set up solar-powered tube wells in the area. Talking to Gwadar Pro, Engineer Muhammad Suhail said that the solar tube wells are the easiest way to permanently resolve the drinking water issue in Tank. Several villages in Tank lack portable water and villagers rely on rain-fed ponds, causing water-borne diseases such as hepatitis, cholera, typhoid, diarrhea, etc. In many areas of the district, people and animals drink water from the same rain-fed ponds. However, the provincial government has come up with an idea to resolve the long-standing water issue of Tank with photovoltaic technology. "Solar tube wells powered by Chinese technology is a success story in Pakistan, and the same technology

will be used in this project," he added. "Twenty-eight solar-powered drinking water tube wells have been approved for the district," said Faisal Amin Khan, Minister for Local Government, Elections and Rural Development Department. He said that tenders have been issued and work will start shortly. According to Mr. Khan, another

25 more tube wells are in pipeline under Chief Minister's special package for city and villages in Tank, adding "These will resolve the long-standing water issue". According to Mr. Suhail, solar energy is one of the cheapest and most viable solutions for the energy crisis in Pakistan. Under Annual Development Programme 2022-23, the Government of KP has allocated Rs 150 million for the construction of water supply sanitation schemes, and solar electrification of solar tube wells in Tank. Solar is one of the key business areas in KP province. The government solar projects in the public sector include the electrification of 4,000 masjids and the solarisation of 8,000 schools and basic health units in the province. Besides, the government has approved five feasibility studies of a total of 249.5 MW solar projects in the private sector.



ISLAMABAD: Representative of Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus Dilsad Senol presenting a souvenir to the Turkiye ambassador Mehmet Pacaci during her visit to the Turkish embassy. - DNA

Pakistan's ICT exports to keep growing

In addition to big cities, Pakistan also needs to look for opportunities in other far flung cities where youths can work as freelancers and provide other outsourced services

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's ICT exports could grow by 30% over the next few years as long as we provide well-trained human resources, infrastructure for ICT projects in universities, support industry in terms of tax incentives and take full advantage of ICT cooperation opportunities under the CPEC framework. This was stated by Prof. Dr. Waqar Mahmood, Director of Al-Khwarizmi Institute of Computer Science (KICS), University of Engineering and Technology (UET) in an interview with Gwadar Pro. Pakistan's telecommunication, computer and information services exports during the first 11 months of fiscal year 2021-2022 surged to 2.381 billion at a growth rate of 25.45 percent in comparison to 1.898 billion during the corresponding period of last fiscal year, according to Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. Prof. Dr. B.S. Chowdhry, Professor Emeritus of Faculty of Electrical, Electronics, & Computer Engineering, and Advisor of Mehran University

of Engineering & Technology (MUET), Jamshoro, believes that the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic created a unique opportunity for Pakistan's ICT exports. Government subsidies and Pakistan's overall labor cost advantage attract customers from all over the world. As per Pakistan Economic Survey 2021-2022, investment (FDI & local) in the telecom sector during July to February FY2022 crossed 930.1 million. During July-March FY2022, the telecom sector contributed Rs. 163.3 billion (estimated) to the national exchequer in terms of taxes, regulatory fees, initial and annual license fees, activation tax, and other taxes. Good infrastructure and well-trained workforce are necessary for the development of ICT. Prof. Dr. Waqar explained that Pakistan has 44 million broadband subscribers and more than 100 million mobile users, which obviously shows that ordinary people have access to some ICT services. 25,000 + graduates enter the industry every year and 600,000 + individuals are

employed in all aspects of the industry. "In addition to big cities, Pakistan also needs to look for opportunities in other far flung cities where youths can work as freelancers and provide other outsourced services. They can participate in the export of ICT's overall products once they are assisted by the government's cutting-edge services and tool training," Prof. Dr. Waqar further said. Dr. Miftah Ismail, Minister for Finance and Revenue announced in the federal budget 2022-2023 speech that the government has allocated Rs 17 billion for imparting training in IT sector, providing youths with laptops, improving network and promoting IT export. Both experts agreed this encouraging move is in the right direction. In conjunction with the development support provided by CPEC, Pakistan's ICT industry will continue to grow at a steady pace. China and Pakistan have conducted extensive cooperation in various fields, including agriculture, transportation, education and health, and Pakistan's ongoing ICT provides

strong support for this. It is significant to enhance all-round cooperation between China and Pakistan in ICT and the digital economy. In 2007, UET became a partner of Southern University of Science and Technology for the program of UNESCO Higher Education Innovation Centre in Pakistan. Many advances have been made within this cooperation framework, including smart classrooms, where online education has played an important role in the COVID-19 era. Prof. Dr. Waqar recommended setting up more digital transformation centers with collaboration between China and Pakistan. There is a need to encourage local IT companies to participate in CPEC for eventual entry into the Chinese market, Advisory Council on Information Technology (IT) and Digital Economy said recently. Prof. Dr. B.S. Chowdhry reaffirmed the necessity to involve Pakistani start-ups in CPEC. He added that venture capital in promising Pakistani tech companies is an important way to support the development of the ICT industry.

6,979,016 people immunised COVID-19 shot

RAWALPINDI: As many as 6,979,016 people, including 44,797 health, had jabbed themselves against the lethal coronavirus (COVID-19) across the district since the vaccination administering drive launched on March 10, 2021. According to the latest data released by the District Health Authority here Thursday, 14 more people were diagnosed with fatal coronavirus during the last 24 hours, raising the district's tally of confirmed cases to 47,094, including 43,536 from Rawalpindi and 3,558 from other districts. Among the new cases, five were reported from the Rawalpindi Cantonment and Potohar town area, two from Rawal town and one from Gujar Khan and Taxila. In addition, the report informed that 86 were quarantined in home isolation while no patient was admitted to any health facility. District Health Authority updated that during the last 24 hours, 1,542 samples were collected, out of which 1,528 were declared negative, while the positivity rate was recorded at 0.90 per cent. - APP

Police launch search operation, eight arrested

RAWALPINDI: Police on special directives of Superintendent of Police, Saddar Ahmed Zaneer Cheema on Thursday launched search operation in Sangral and Rajar areas in the jurisdiction of Chontra Police Station and arrested eight accused besides recovering two Kalashnikov, two 12 bore rifles, two 30 bore pistols and a large number of bullets. According to a police spokesman, the search operation was conducted in Sangral and Rajar areas and eight accused namely Hassan, Ismail, Ali, Abadat, Mufta, Amar, Abdullah and Muhammad Naveed were arrested for possessing illegal arms were sent behind the bars. He informed that heavy police contingents, Elite Force, Special Branch personnel and Ladies police under the supervision of SHO Chontra police station conducted search operation and took action in accordance with the law against the lawbreakers. - APP

Dr Umer appointed as VC, RMU

RAWALPINDI: The Specialized Healthcare and Medical Education Department, Punjab, appointed Dr Muhammad Umer as vice-chancellor (VC) of Rawalpindi Medical University (RMU) here on Thursday. According to a notification issued here, in the exercise of powers vested under sections of RMU act 2017, the department had appointed Professor Umer VC RMU for four years from July 21, 2022, to 2026. Many doctors and students of RMU and allied hospitals congratulated the appointment of Dr Umer as the VC, RMU. - APP

Quranic calligraphy exhibition inaugurated

RAWALPINDI: The Punjab Arts Council organised a group Islamic calligraphy exhibition here on Thursday in connection with the Diamond Jubilee celebrations of Pakistan. Director of Punjab Arts Council Waqar Ahmed, while speaking as the chief guest of the exhibition, said that the artists had beautifully written the Quranic verses. He said that the art of Islamic calligraphy has a prominent and unique place in our civilisation and culture. At the same time, today's youth stepped into the field of Islamic calligraphy with a good attitude and new ideas. The youth's work is a means of expressing the realities of life, and the Holy Quran written in the artworks from Pakistan and around the world in the exhibition was a source of pride for us. Waqar said that the Punjab government paid full attention to promoting and developing all art genres. - APP

Some positivity in China-EU ties

THE ninth round of the China-EU High-Level Trade and Economic Dialogue, held virtually on Tuesday, was pragmatic, candid, efficient and constructive, according to the Chinese Ministry of Commerce. Agreement was reached on trade and investment liberalization and facilitation, mutual openness, fair competition, intellectual property rights protection and business investment optimization, the ministry said in its statement.

This represents a remarkable step forward from the state of affairs at the 23rd China-EU Summit in early April, which EU High Representative Josep Borrell described as a "dialogue of the deaf", when such divisive topics as the conflict in Ukraine and human rights in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region prevented the two parties from even producing a joint statement.

The latest dialogue was of far-reaching significance for both China and the EU because it indicated impressive political will to maintain economic and trade engagement despite all the differences between the two sides that have been overly politicized recently and have disrupted the otherwise highly mutually beneficial economic and trade ties that have served both sides well for decades. Since China and the then European Economic Community established diplomatic relations in 1975, both sides have known full well the cultural and political differences between them. And there were no lack of occasions and topics on which they had divergent views. But nothing prevented them from developing generally friendly and profitable economic and trade ties. The fruitful China-EU cooperation, especially in the economic and trade field, has thrived and ballooned to its present-day scale and depth because they have strived to find stable middle ground where economic and trade ties could prosper largely free of political disturbances. Close China-EU economic and trade ties have benefited both parties tremendously.

They are especially important at this time when the global post-pandemic recovery is struggling to gain traction. There has never been a greater pragmatic need for the two sides to work together to overcome the economic challenges they face.

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I heard your country needs a Prime Minister

Dirty politics

ONE would've thought that PTI's astonishing win over PML-N in Punjab's by-elections would make Imran Khan soften his tone a little about the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in general and the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) in particular. Quite to the contrary, however, the PTI chairman has ramped up his assault on all important state institutions, including the ECP, and it is pretty clear that he intends to stay hot on all fronts till he finds his way back to the PM house.

That's a little awkward because the election result itself is the strongest vindication possible of the claim that no institution, CEC or the so-called establishment, overstepped its constitutional limit.

Yet Imran is still blaming them for rigging when his party emerged the clear winner by a very wide margin. It appears, with the benefit of hindsight, that PTI itself was pretty surprised by the final result. For, all the way to the election it made a lot of noise about interference, to the extent that Imran and his associates called the CEC an agent of PML-N. The idea must have been to blame the system, as usual, if the result went against the party. But the fact that it didn't seems also to have left PTI groping for a new narrative, which it did not have so the skipper kept up with the old theme.

Now the perception is that Imran will keep attacking the ECP and the CEC with the same venom till the PTI's foreign funding case reaches a conclusion. It is not expected to go the party's way, so from its point of view, it makes a lot of sense to keep the pot boiling and use it to its advantage whenever the verdict comes. PM Shahbaz Sharif has also urged the ECP to bring the case, which has now lingered for close to a decade, to an end. And if the recent past is any guide, the PTI can be expected to go ballistic against the ECP if the conclusion is not to its liking.

Strengthening democracy

Dr. Abdus Sattar Abbasi

"The PML-N should accept the results of the by-polls with an open heart and concede to the decision of the masses. Winning and losing are part of politics, therefore, the party should now focus on its weaknesses identify them, and then overcome them. God willing, everything will be fine." Another PMLN leader also appeared on TV screen and said

IRRRESPECTIVE of diverse discussions about the dynamics and outcomes of recently held by-elections in Punjab there are some interesting gestures which suggest evolution of our political and democratic traditions. Noticing both winning and losing candidates together in a room in Multan was pleasant. Acceptance of defeat by the vice president Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PMLN) was rare in Pakistani politics at least during last three decades, which I remember; none of the losing party has ever conceded defeat in such a sober manner. She said, "The PML-N should accept the results of the by-polls with an open heart and concede to the decision of the masses. Winning and losing are part of politics, therefore, the party should now focus on its weaknesses identify them, and then overcome them. God willing, everything will be fine." Another PMLN leader also appeared on TV screen and said, "I accept that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has won and the party

wholeheartedly accepts the opinion of the public." One of PMLN leaders tried to contend that results are their success because PMLN didn't win these constituencies in 2018; therefore securing four seats is still a good performance.

On the other hand senior vice president of PTI also acknowledged the statements of PMLN leaders but with some conditions, anyhow it was all satisfying to observe political maturity in staunch rivals. This behavior can certainly reduce existing tensions among political opponents which have been intensified among masses due to extremely harsh stances of leaders about their competitors. It seems if there is a competition among present-day politicians to evolve hostile jargons and bad nicknames for opponents. It is indeed sad to notice roars during political rallies in appreciation of hostile jargons and bad nicknames providing justification to leaders that masses need this type of language.

I think it is weak justification; leaders can set the tone of their followers to any direction from hostility to approval and from hatred to compromise. It is unbecoming of a leader to establish demarcations in the society on the basis of strife and contempt. Historically those who exercised the option of inculcating animosities to serve their purposes have been regarded as pseudo-leaders. Therefore, those who are at the positions of leadership should keep in mind that how they desire to be remembered in the days to come.

Second amazing dimension of by-elections was a massive turnout. Atmosphere was equally hot on the ground in these constituencies and on both mainstream and social media platforms. Supporters of both main parties didn't miss any opportunity to engage any individual for the support of their respective party. I wasn't registered voter in any of the constituencies in this by-election but one of my colleague spent almost an hour to brief me about the dynamics of his constituency and result confirmed that his analysis was correct; it shows the commitment and involvement of masses at the grassroots during recent elections which I think is a good indicator for strengthening democracy in the Country.

According to the FAFEN, "An impressive 49.7 percent turnout in the by-elections for 20 Punjab Assembly constituencies on July 17, 2022 augurs well for an otherwise struggling

democracy in Pakistan. Compared to the GE-2018, PTI increased its share of seats (from 8 to 15) and polled votes from 684,820 (32%) to 1,048,632 (47%). PML-N also increased its tally of seats from one to four and votes from 547,599 (25%) to 883,632 (39%) of the polled votes. Compared to GE-2018 both parties added to the number as well as the percentage share of the polled votes at the expense of independent candidates and other parties."

Third important aspect of by-polls is that masses were quick to respond to the decisions of the government. Despite extensive justifications by the PMLN that it was PTI which is responsible for current instant inflation, hike of petroleum prices and devaluation, people retaliated and voted against PMLN. This speaks rising political awareness and the might of conventional and unconventional media. Now voters have several sources of information to verify, compare and analyze given facts.

They are specifically concerned for their prosperity, growth and progress. They listen to every stance and opinion, they consider every opportunity to interact and learn, they explore every option and avenue, and they utilize every method and approach to secure their interest. In future, probably, it will be quite difficult for both political and non-political forces, especially those who operate from behind the curtain, to manipulate public opinion. It has been observed that people are very wisely selective even to the calls for protest and agitation; however, still there are some hot buttons in the society which can trigger instant violence and anarchy which can only be controlled through increased literacy.

Deviation from party policy is an emerging dimension of democratic process in Pakistan which needs detailed deliberations to determine where freedom of a member of the parliament to exercise his opinion vanishes and where party based totalitarianism starts. Anyhow, there are contradictory claims about the election of the chief minister of Punjab on the 22nd of this month. We hope sanity and the spirit of the constitution will prevail to strengthen democracy in the Country.

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Why 'Zionist' Biden gave no hope to Palestinians

Asli Nur Duzgun

The United States, which was the first state to recognise the state of Israel in 1948, took over the protectorate of Israel after the British mandate

US President's concern for besieged people rings hollow as fist-bump with Tel Aviv tells where Washington's heart lies. "I did say, and I say again, you need not be a Jew to be a Zionist," US President Joe Biden said during his recent visit to Tel Aviv, driving home the centrality of Israel in American diplomacy in the Middle East. Two days later, at Bethlehem, Biden appeared to be speaking for the long-suffering Palestinians as he made a case for the "two-nation" theory but acknowledged that an independent state was just a dream at this moment. The hopelessness in his speech was unmistakable.

The irony could not have been lost on the Palestinian people. But Biden's statements should not come as a surprise. In fact, he has only extended the same line of thought and action as many of his predecessors. No amount of sugar-coating can hide the fact that as far as the US, Israel, and Palestine go, protecting the interests of the Zionist state will always be a priority for Washington.

Later, when the US President spoke about his first visit to Israel as a Senator just before the 1973 Arab-Israeli war, his aim was to remind the world that the US would stand by Israel even in the event of military aggression by Tel Aviv. The Zionist reference by Catholic Biden, the high point of his speech, also showed how similar is his thinking and policy to his immediate predecessor Donald Trump. This is despite Biden's persistent efforts—and a general perception—to show that he is the opposite of Trump.

Biden might have insinuated that he would not be as harsh as Obama by avoiding any reference to the first Black US President. In his speech, Biden also emphasised the "bone deep" connection between the Jewish and American people, even harking back to Biblical times. By deeply sharing the "chosenness" and "manifest destiny", Israel has always been more than an ally for the US. All these Puritanical myths are now the secular rules of the American state's civil religion, and Israel is an important part of this civil religion. For this reason alone, Israel is sometimes called the "51st state of the US".

— Courtesy: TRT World

Middle East politics: From hyper to hybrid

Marwan Bishara

America's relative decline, amid China's rise and Russia's resurgence, has prompted its allies to pursue hybrid, non-exclusive foreign relations based solely on their national and regime interests. It is as if Israel's chutzpah has finally rubbed off on its neighbours, friends and foes alike. Like Tel Aviv, important Middle Eastern players want American arms and American aid but not America's advice

AS a new type of Cold War came to dominate American-Russian relations after the latter's invasion of Ukraine, major Middle Eastern players are maintaining a distance, refusing to take sides. It is a sign that the hyper-strategic alliances that polarised the region, and the world, during the old Cold War are turning hybrid, fluid, pragmatic and unpredictable. During the old Cold War, the Middle East was characterised by greater foreign intervention and relatively more frequent high-intensity conflicts. The post-Cold War was even worse for the ill-fated Middle East – in the past 20 years, it featured most of the world's

deadliest conflicts. But as the wars in Syria, Yemen and Libya wind down; as regional conflicts reach dead ends, and regional and global powers show signs of faintness and fatigue, a new geopolitical environment is now taking shape. This new dynamic was demonstrated clearly during the recent American-Arab summit in Jeddah and the trilateral summit between Russia, Iran and Turkey in Tehran. Last week's summit in Jeddah exposed the divergence and distrust between the US and its partners/clients in the Middle East. President Joe Biden tried to convince them to increase oil production and cease all cooperation with Moscow, to no avail. Despite Washington's pleas and pressures, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt gave no sign that they may stop dealing with Moscow on energy and trade any time soon. This is a far cry from the 1980s, when Saudi Arabia enlisted on Washington's side in the Cold War, helping to dislodge the Soviet forces out of Afghanistan, and pushing down the price of oil under American pressure.

During his first trip to the region as president, Biden, who had only recently railed against the "pariah" regimes that rule in the Middle East, swallowed his tongue and pride at the service of the "national interest". Yet, Riyadh and Cairo rejected US dictates and even questioned its strategic competency and staying power, considering its humiliating withdrawal from Iraq and Afghanistan and its erratic behaviour over the past two decades.

America's relative decline, amid China's rise and Russia's resurgence, has prompted its allies to pursue hybrid, non-exclusive foreign relations based solely on their national and regime interests. It is as if Israel's chutzpah has finally rubbed off on its neighbours, friends and foes alike. Like Tel Aviv, important Middle Eastern players want American arms and American aid but not America's advice.

Despite being Washington's closest regional ally and the first stop on President Biden's Middle East trip, Israel has also refused to acquiesce to US wishes on not only Russia but also Iran and Palestine. In fact, Israel, which has taken the tail-wagging-the-dog dynamic to a whole new level, yet again treated America like no more than a dumb puppy. Like Israel, Saudi Arabia and its regional allies, Turkey, which straddles east and west, geographically and geopolitically, has gone hybrid for some time now. In this week's trilateral summit in Tehran, this major NATO member has reached new agreements with Washington's strategic foes, Iran and Russia; even proposing arms sales

to the ayatollahs. After NATO allies refused to sell it air defence systems on acceptable terms, Turkey turned to NATO's foe, Russia, to purchase its sophisticated S-400 system, to Washington's utter dismay. Since then, Saudi Arabia has shown similar defiance, initiating talks with Moscow to purchase the Russian system.

And like Turkey, Israel and Saudi Arabia, Iran is also trying to pursue hybrid relationships, allying itself with China and Russia while remaining open to collaboration with Europe and insisting on negotiating a return to the Nuclear Deal with the United States. And since its invasion of Ukraine, Russia has become more dependent on Iran to counterbalance American and Turkish influences in Syria. Meanwhile, these central Middle Eastern players are pursuing hybrid relations within the region as well as beyond it. Iran and Saudi Arabia may be arch enemies, stuck in a Cold War logic of sort, but they are also involved in direct diplomatic talks aimed at reducing tensions in the Gulf and finding accommodations on regional hotspots, like Yemen, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon, etc.

Similar dynamics emerged between UAE and Iran, as the UAE normalised relations with the Assad regime in Syria and sort of pulled out of the Yemen war, while at the same time establishing diplomatic, security and strategic relations with Iran's arch enemy, Israel.

In short, the new hybrid geopolitical dynamics look nothing like the rigid and hyper bi-polarity that divided and dominated the world for decades. Since the world fights wars as it makes business and as it does politics, using similar tools and methods, this shift will likely prove lasting and global. In other words, and at the risk of oversimplification, expect more governments to pursue hybrid policies in an increasingly hybrid environment characterised by hybrid work, hybrid cars and hybrid warfare.

This will further complicate the global and regional dynamics, producing a dizzyingly changing reality, making it ever harder to predict what might come next; where a new explosion might occur, or whether certain countries might reach accommodation tomorrow. All of this begs the question: Will the shift from hyper to hybrid relations bring stability; or even peace to the Middle East? It might indeed reduce inter and intra-national instability for some time, but unless and until regional actors use that window to address the urgent questions of justice and human rights, expect more of the same instability and violence.

— Courtesy: Al Jazeera

Briefs

Turkiye
envoy
calls on
CAS

FROM PAGE 01
A PAF news release said. During the meeting, both the dignitaries discussed matters of professional and mutual interest. While appreciating professionalism of Pakistan Air Force, the ambassador acknowledged PAF's rising indigenous capacity in aviation industry. The Air Chief highlighted that both the countries enjoyed cordial relations and reiterated his resolve to further enhance the existing bilateral cooperation between the two brotherly countries. The Air Chief further said, "Pakistan values its relations with Turkiye, which are based on convergence on all important issues relating to regional peace, security and stability".

Pakistan
condemns
India's...

FROM PAGE 01
The Kashmiris' struggle for the right of self-determination is indigenous and cannot be dampened by the draconian strong-arm tactics of the Indian Government. Pakistan urges the Indian government to refrain from victimizing the true representatives of the Kashmiri people by way of inhuman detentions and implication in baseless cases. India must release all political prisoners detained on trumped-up charges, stop human rights violations in IOJK, and lift the brutal military siege. Pakistan also calls on the international community to take cognizance of India's inhuman and illegal detention and treatment of Yasin Malik and ensure that the Kashmiris are given the opportunity to exercise their right to self-determination as espoused under the relevant UN Security Council resolutions and as per their own wishes.

50 PTI
MPAs can
vote for CM
Hamza

FROM PAGE 01
PTI MPAs can either use their right to vote [for Hamza] or they might refrain from casting their votes altogether, the interior minister claimed while addressing a press conference. Sanaullah said "politically aware" lawmakers, who might understand PTI Chairman Imran Khan's "wrongdoing", will not support their party's nominated candidate - Pervez Elahi - for Punjab's top office. The interior minister claimed that "Elahi does not deserve to become the chief minister" and demanded he voluntarily withdraws from the race. He added that honourable lawmakers should "not waste" their votes by the PML-Q leader, who Khan had earlier termed a "dacoit". "We will use all our political options to the fullest," the interior minister vowed as he said that the PML-N was in contact with the opposition lawmakers. "The ones in PTI, who still have a conscience, will not vote for Elahi," the interior minister said - just a day after he stated, "PML-N will not let the Elahi become the provincial chief executive easily."

Russia
starts gas
supplies to
Europe

FROM PAGE 01
"In fact, Russia is using the great power we gave it to blackmail Europe and Germany," Habeck of the ecologist Green party told reporters. Enduring German reliance on Russian gas coupled with alarming signals from Moscow have turned up the pressure on Europe's top economy. A total shutdown of imports or a sharp reduction in the flow from east to west could have a catastrophic effect, shutting factories and forcing households to turn down the heat. Even the resumption of 40 percent of supplies would be insufficient to ward off energy shortages in Europe this winter, experts warned.

Pak, Turkiye, Azeri speakers
hail new "Asian century"

Pakistan's invariable support to Azerbaijan and Turkey will continue being evident and present upon all the platforms, Mr Ashraf remarked before mentioning Azerbaijan's having freed her lands and stressing the necessity of attaining constant peace and security in region

DNA

ISTANBUL: The second Trilateral Meeting of the Chairs of the parliaments of Azerbaijan, Pakistan and Turkey has taken place in Istanbul on 21 July. In his opening notes, Chairman of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey Mustafa Şentop underlined the fact that the relations amongst our countries were unlike ties between other countries. "Nurtured and strengthened by the common history, culture and religion, our fraternity has evolved to set the standards that are within the reach of but few nations and countries. Turkey, Azerbaijan and Pakistan are coming to the fore as three of the biggest Muslim World democracies. The unique relations amongst our nations have manifested themselves in the mutual support given at the most difficult times," Mr Şentop was saying. He referred to the justice restored in the Garabagh Area of Azerbaijan and said that the eventual opening of the Zangazur Corridor would increase the region's economic prosperity. Chair of the Milli Ma-



jlis Sahiba Gafarova greeted the participants on behalf of the Azerbaijani parliament and expressed her gratitude to the leader of the GNAT Professor Mustafa Şentop for having made this meeting possible and for the cordial hospitality alike. Mrs Gafarova said she trusted that forthcoming discussions to be held and decisions to be made at the session were certain to make the triple co-operation stronger yet in the name of the interests and successes of our

countries and nations. The speaker of the Azerbaijani legislature mentioned the sixth Democracy and National Unity Day celebrated in the brotherly Turkey on the 15th of July. On that day six years ago, the Turkish people had demonstrated national unity and solidarity. The Turks had rallied to their leader, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, to save the independence and sovereignty of their Motherland and to stand up for their statehood and democracy.

It was with deep veneration that Sahiba Gafarova commemorated the shahids who had given their lives while the coup attempt had been discouraged. She said that the people and state of Azerbaijan had condemned that treacherous putsch encroachment in no uncertain terms from its very first instances - and had shown that they stood by Turkey as ever. Parliaments are not merely the bodies passing laws today. Rather, their roles have been enlarged

considerably in the modern epoch; already parliamentary diplomacy has evolved into a substantial international collaboration medium and provides additional channels of inter-state co-operation and dialogue whilst also contributing to the handling of national concerns. Together with the national governments, parliamentary diplomacy is working on protecting national interests. Speaker of the National Assembly of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, too, told Chairman of the GNAT Mustafa Şentop of his appreciation of the meeting and the brotherly efforts made. He recalled the meeting held in Baku and thanked also the Azerbaijani side for the high organisational level attained at it. According to Mr Ashraf, such triple assemblies are very importance in terms of continuing our advancement. Pakistan's invariable support to Azerbaijan and Turkey will continue being evident and present upon all the platforms, Mr Ashraf remarked before mentioning Azerbaijan's having freed her lands and stressing the necessity of attaining constant peace and security in region.

West's sanctions cannot force
Moscow to change course

AGENCIES

MOSCOW: Moscow says sanctions by the West against Russia over Ukraine war cannot force the Kremlin to change course, five months into a military operation in the ex-Soviet country. On February 24, Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered a "special military operation" in Ukraine to demilitarize and "de-Nazify" the ex-Soviet country and to "liberate" Donbas, composed of two breakaway regions of Donetsk and Luhansk. Two days prior to the war, Moscow had officially recognized the two regions as independent republics. Luhansk has already fallen under the full control of Russian forces. Since the onset of the operation, the United States and its European allies have supplied billions of dollars' worth of weaponry to Ukraine and imposed waves of unprecedented sanctions on Moscow, despite Russia's repeated warning that such Western flood of weapons will only prolong the war.

In a virtual press conference on Thursday, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov stressed that such tough sanctions would not force Moscow to change its course in Ukraine. "Even the harshest sanctions have never made countries change their position," Peskov emphasized. The Kremlin has time and again stressed that the Western flood of weapons and arrays of anti-Russia sanctions will not force Moscow to end the operation before achieving its objectives in the former Soviet republic. Elsewhere in his remarks, Peskov said Europe's gas delivery problems are due to what he called "technical difficulties" created by Western economic sanctions, as the Nord Stream1 pipeline reopened following maintenance but with a decreased flow. "Any technical difficulties linked to this are caused by those restrictions that European countries introduced themselves," Peskov said at the presser. Moscow has already significantly curtailed its gas sup-

ply to Europe - through the Nord Stream 1 pipeline that transports gas from Russia to Germany - by 40 percent, which has helped to push up European and British gas prices, prompting such gas-dependent countries to desperately find alternative suppliers and ways to tackle the shortage months ahead of the winter. Peskov, however, stressed that accusations that Moscow was using gas deliveries as political blackmail were "completely unfounded." Putin warned on May 12 that the West's sanctions would eventually backfire, stressing that "the continuation of the obsession with sanctions will inevitably lead to the most difficult consequences for the European Union." Data by the International Energy Agency (IEA) shows Russian natural gas flows to the EU have fallen below 100 million cubic meters a day in July compared with flows of almost 400 million cubic meters roughly this time last year. Europe was on edge during the 10-day Nord Stream 1 repair works, fearing that

Russia would not reopen the taps in retaliation for the sanctions. Peskov said Russian state energy giant Gazprom is ready to "fulfill its responsibilities in full" but that Western sanctions "do not allow the repair of equipment" critical for its work. He said the technical reasons are associated "with the impossibility of proper technological maintenance." The Kremlin spokesperson further emphasized that the sanctions do not allow the proper "repair of equipment", including the "turbines at compressor stations." Earlier this month, Yasmin Fahimi, the head of the German Federation of Trade Unions (DGB), warned that top German industries were on the verge of collapse due to cuts in Russian gas supplies. Putin assured this week that Gazprom would meet all its delivery obligations. "Gazprom has fulfilled, is fulfilling and will fulfill its obligations in full," he told reporters in Tehran after holding talks with the leaders of Iran and Turkey.

Yoon calls for
relationship of
trust with Japan

FOREIGN DESK

SEOUL: President Yoon Sukyeol has a strong commitment to improving ties between South Korea and Japan and believes the two countries should build a relationship of trust based on common interests, his top diplomat said Thursday. Foreign Minister Park Jin made the remark after giving a policy briefing to Yoon following a visit to Tokyo earlier this week. "He has a strong commitment to improving South Korea-Japan relations and believes that South Korea and Japan should build a relationship of trust going forward in line with our common interests," Park told reporters. "That is why we are working to find reasonable solutions from that point of view," he said. Relations between South Korea and Japan have been badly frayed in recent years due to disputes stemming from Tokyo's 1910-45 colonial rule of the Korean Peninsula, including the issues of compensation for victims of forced labor and wartime sexual slavery. Park's visit to Tokyo was the first by a South Korean foreign minister in four years and seven months, demonstrating Yoon's commitment to mending the bilateral relationship. The two sides discussed the issue of compensation for South Korean forced labor victims, which has taken on new urgency ahead of the Supreme Court's verdict on whether to liquidate the assets of two Japanese companies to enforce a 2018 ruling ordering their payment of compensation to the victims. "We need to quickly find solutions considering Japan's concerns about liquidation and the advancing age of the victims," Park said. "I explained our position during my visit to Japan and relayed the message that it is important that Japan take sincere steps in response." Japan has maintained that all issues of compensation were fully covered under a 1965 agreement that normalized bilateral ties.

Djokovic unlikely
to play US Open

SPORTS DESK

KARACHI: Serbian tennis star Novak Djokovic is unlikely to participate in the tournament as the US Open organisers said they would "respect" American government regulations regarding the travel of unvaccinated athletes. Non-citizens must have a COVID-19 vaccination to enter the US. Djokovic missed the Australian Open earlier this year because he is not immunized. In July, the 35-year-old Serb who won Wimbledon said he would "hopefully wait for some good news." The tournament in New York takes place from 29 August to 11 September. Three-time US Open champion Djokovic has been named on the entry list for the final Grand Slam of the year, but that is routine, rather than an indication that he will be allowed to play. "Per the Grand Slam Rule Book, all eligible players are automatically entered into the men's and women's singles main draw fields based on ranking 42 days before the first Monday of the event. "The US Open does not have a vaccination mandate in place for players, but it will respect the US government's position regarding travel into the country for unvaccinated non-US citizens," a US Open statement read. With his victory at Wimbledon, Djokovic now has 21 Grand Slam trophies, one fewer than Rafael Nadal, who has 22.

Indonesia, Australia committed to
strengthening bilateral relations

ANTARA

JAKARTA: Indonesia's government is committed to intensifying bilateral relations with Australia in social, cultural, economic, trade, and food security approaches following Australian Prime Minister (PM) Anthony Albanese's recent visit to Indonesia, Presidential Staff (KSP) Chief Moeldoko stated. "Indonesia lauded PM Albanese's visit to Indonesia some time ago. We hoped the relations between the two countries would continue to improve," he noted after receiving a visit from Australian Ambassador to Indonesia, Penny Williams, at the Bina Graha Building, Jakarta, on Thursday. He later affirmed that bilateral relations between Indonesia and Australia would continue to improve, both through business and cultural activities. "Political dynamics in both countries are normal, leadership changes, and so on, but the axis must not change. The two countries must improve bilateral relations, especially



through strengthening people-to-people relations both through business and culture," Moeldoko stated. Earlier, PM Albanese visited Indonesia and met with President Joko Widodo on June 5-7 to discuss bilateral relations between the two countries. Albanese's arrival to Indonesia marked his first bilateral visit since being sworn in as prime minister of Australia on May 23, 2022, as well as signaled the importance of Indonesia's position

for Australia. Australia is an important partner for Indonesia in various fields, including in health and food security. Australia is committed to working with Indonesia to tackle the foot and mouth disease (FMD) epidemic that has hit livestock, such as cattle, buffalo, and goats, in Indonesia. Meanwhile, in terms of the food security issue, Moeldoko invited Australia to cooperate in developing the sorghum crop industry.

Turkiye denies claims it attacked civilians in Iraq

Iraq summoned Ankara's ambassador to Baghdad over the attack and its state agency said the government will call back its charge d'affaires in Ankara. Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi also declared Thursday a national day of mourning

NEWS DESK

ANKARA: The Turkish Foreign Minister has denied reports that Turkey carried out attacks targeting civilians in Iraq's Duhok province, where a strike killed eight and wounded 23 on Wednesday. Mevlut Cavusoglu said on Thursday that Iraqi authorities should not fall for what he labelled a "trap". Turkey has previously on Wednesday rejected claims by Iraqi officials and state media that it had carried out an attack on a mountain resort in the

northern Duhok province. At least four missiles hit the resort area of Barakh in the Zakho district of the semi-autonomous Kurdish-run region of northern Iraq, district mayor Mushir Mohammed said on Wednesday. All the casualties were Iraqi citizens. Iraq summoned Ankara's ambassador to Baghdad over the attack and its state agency said the government will call back its charge d'affaires in Ankara. Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhimi also declared Thursday a national day of mourning.

He dispatched a delegation to the area led by Foreign Minister Fuad Hussein and ordered an investigation into the incident. Those killed included three men, three women and two children, Zakho health official Amir Ali told reporters. Cavusoglu told state broadcaster TRT Haber that Turkish military operations in Iraq have always been against the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), saying the attack on Duhok was also carried out by what he called "terrorists". Turkey regularly carries out air attacks in northern Iraq

and has sent commandos to support its offensives as part of a long-running campaign in Iraq and Syria against Kurdish PKK and Kurdish Syrian YPG fighters. Ankara regards both as terrorist groups. Cavusoglu said reports blaming Turkey for the attack were attempts by the PKK to hinder Ankara's counter-terrorism operations. "The whole world knows we would never carry out an attack on civilians," Cavusoglu said, adding the Turkish military had told his ministry that no such attack was carried out by Turkey. "Following this attack,

which we believe the [PKK] terrorist organisation carried out, we are ready to hold talks with Iraqi officials. We can cooperate for the curtain of fog to be lifted. Until that is lifted, it is not right to blame Turkey," he said. In April, Turkey launched a new offensive in parts of northern Iraq, called Operation Claw-Lock - part of a series of cross-border operations started in 2019 to combat the PKK, which is based in the mountainous regions of northern Iraq. The PKK took up arms against the Turkish

state in 1984. More than 40,000 people have been killed in the conflict, which in the past was mainly focused in southeast Turkey, where the PKK sought to create an ethnic homeland. Dozens of Iraqis gathered on Wednesday outside the Turkish embassy in Baghdad to protest against the attack. The top United Nations envoy to Iraq also condemned it and called for an investigation. Cavusoglu said while there were protests outside the embassy and other Turkish offices, there were no reports of damage or injuries.

Imran Khan
threatens
mass...

FROM PAGE 01

Sikandar Sultan Raja of being biased, the PTI chairman said that he has never seen a "dishonest" election commissioner like him before. Khan, highlighting the alleged wrongdoings of the CEC, said: "We [PTI] continued lodging complaints about rigging but the ECP did not pay heed." "We do not want to contest the general elections under the leadership of the incumbent chief election commissioner," he said, adding that if the biggest political party of Pakistan [PTI] doesn't trust the CEC, then "he should resign." He further added that the PTI, during its tenure, emphasised the adaptation of the electronic voting machine (EVM); however, all those who are now in the government opposed the suggestion because "they knew that with the help of EVMs, nearly 130 methods of rigging could be eliminated." Khan reiterated that those who conducted the by-elections in Punjab should be punished as they used all tactics to defeat the PTI. "If people's mandate is stolen in the Punjab Assembly tomorrow during the chief minister election, then I am warning that the country would head towards a condition like Sri Lanka and after that, whatever happens, it would not be my responsibility," he said. Khan further warned that if things are not done in a democratic manner, then people's reaction would not be in his control as the nation is now aware and enlightened and "they will not sit silently." The PTI chairman said that if the mandate of the people is respected in tomorrow's, election then tomorrow "we will thank Allah and celebrate." He added that when PTI's government will come into power after the chief minister's election tomorrow, then all those who broke the laws and Constitution and wronged PTI workers, supporters, and leaders will be punished. Khan highlighted that the ECP postponed the local body elections in Sindh due to a rain forecast, however, similar requests for deferring the LG polls in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa were turned down. "this CEC has taken all steps that go against the PTI." He further the CEC of being biased during the Daska by-elections last year, saying that he had ordered re-polling on the seat to ensure the PTI's defeat.

Zardari to
Elahi: snub
Imran and
join us

FROM PAGE 01

Punjab just three months back. But Elahi later crossed over to Imran Khan camp in a move that surprised many. Zardari has conveyed his 'ferocious' message to Elahi through his elder brother PML-Q Chief Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain after his efforts to coax him to vote for Hamza yielded nothing in a meeting on Wednesday. Zardari said that he persuaded the PML-N chief to nominate Elahi as the chief minister when PTI's Usman Buzdar had stepped down ahead of the no-confidence motion against then-prime minister Imran Khan. He had even conveyed a congratulatory message to Elahi on the development. But this was short-lived as Zardari learned the very next morning that Elahi threw his weight behind Imran Khan and emerged as the joint candidate of the PTI-PML-Q coalition for the Punjab chief minister. Now, furious by Elahi's decision; the PPP leader is of the view that it was his moral responsibility to block Elahi's way which translates to 'personal war' instead of a political one.

'Russia
storing
weapons...

FROM PAGE 01

Foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said Kyiv was seeking to create "conditions for a nuclear disaster, not only on its territory, but throughout Europe". The Zaporizhzhia plant in southeast Ukraine is the largest in Europe. Russian troops took control of it in March, early in their invasion of Ukraine. Zakharova said Ukrainian forces had fired on it twice this week - on July 18 and July 20 - from a drone.

Briefs

Kazakh capital to introduce COVID curbs

FOREIGN DESK

NUR-SULTAN: COVID-19 curbs are set to be in place in the Kazakh capital starting from July 23 as the city entered the «yellow» zone, Kazinform correspondent reports. The corresponding order was issued by the chief medical officer of Nur-Sultan city. The order obliges the wearing of masks in places of mass gathering as well as in public transport, except for children under 5 and during eating. According to it, it is banned to hold offline meetings with a number of attendees over 10 people. Pregnant women, workers who should not get a COVID-19 vaccine because of health issues and those came into contact with a COVID-19 infected should switch to remote work. Holding mixed events among groups and classes in education facilities is not permitted under the order. It also requires conducting awareness-raising work on timely vaccination and revaccination against COVID-19, carrying out disinfection measures, ensuring proper work of ventilation and air conditioning systems in crowded places, including public transport.

Uzbekistan lifts state of emergency

NEWS DESK

TASHKENT: Uzbekistan decided Wednesday to lift a state of emergency in the autonomous republic of Karakalpakstan, which had been rocked by deadly clashes earlier this month. Emergency measures that included a curfew and restrictions on entry and exit from Karakalpakstan were lifted earlier than planned as order had been restored in the region, said Uzbekistan's President ShavkatMirziyoyev in the presidential decree he signed. The additional security forces that were deployed to the region have also started to withdraw, the sources noted.

India has robbed Kashmiris of every right

ISLAMABAD: The All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) has said that India has snatched every right including the right to speech in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). According to Kashmir Media Service (KMS), the leadership in a statement issued in Srinagar said the Modi-led Indian regime is not even allowing Kashmiris to assemble and speak their mind and has gagged the media while journalists are harassed without any reason. — APP

Central Asian Leaders pledge further cooperation

NEWS DESK

BISHKEK: Leaders from five Central Asian nations have ended a summit in the Kyrgyz resort town of Cholpon-Ata with a pledge to increase cooperation to strengthen the region as Russia – the main strategic and trade partner of the region – is being weakened by its war in Ukraine. The meeting ended on July 21 with the signing of the Agreement on Friendship, Neighborliness, and Cooperation for Development of Central Asia in the 21st Century by the leaders of Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan. Tajik and Turkmen leaders did not sign the document, citing domestic proceedings. The summit was the first gathering of heads of state in the region since Russia – which was not a participant in the meeting – launched its invasion of Ukraine five months ago. Despite Moscow's waning influence in the region, none of the five presidents in attendance mentioned the war in Ukraine. The meeting came just weeks after several dozens of people were killed in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan after security forces brutally clamped down on anti-government protests in their respective autonomous regions, Gorno-Badakhshan and



Karakalpakstan. Meanwhile, more than 200 people were killed in unrest in Kazakhstan in January, prompting Nur-Sultan to invite Russian-led security forces to swoop in and help restore order. This year's summit was held as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbeki-

stan have seen social unrest in the past two years while the cost of living has been on the rise in the region, with the situation exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic, severe droughts, supply issues, and the war in Ukraine. "There is a necessity to prevent security crises created by those who use

social, economic, inter-ethnic, religious issues as excuses and I call for joint efforts for that," Kyrgyz President SadyrJaparov said. Another focus of the meeting was the situation in Afghanistan, where Taliban militants are nearing the first anniversary of their takeover of the country following the withdrawal of international forces in August 2021. Tajik President Rahmon said the five nations should keep the developments in the war-torn nation under "permanent focus" as they may affect geopolitical situation in Eurasia in general. "According to our prognosis, the situation in Afghanistan may go from bad to worse. Since taking over the country, Taliban leaders have failed to provide assurances to the international community, Afghan citizens with security, or solve social and economic challenges," Rahmon said. Talking about disputed border issues in the region, especially border-related problems between Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan that have caused deadly shootouts in recent years, Kazakh President Qasym-ZhomartToqayev offered to assist the Tajik and Kyrgyz governments in finding a peaceful solution to ward off further violent clashes. Toqayev's offer appeared to be an attempt to sideline Russia from its usual role of ironing out differences between former Soviet republics.

Italian PM Mario Draghi resigns

AGENCIES

ROME: A year-and-a-half after he was appointed as Italy's unelected head of a unity government, Mario Draghi has resigned as prime minister. He told President Sergio Mattarella he was standing down after three parties in his government refused to back him in a confidence vote the night before. The president asked him to remain as caretaker leader and early elections are expected this autumn. Far-right leader GiorgiaMeloni is already being tipped to win. MrDraghi, 74, was a popular choice as prime minister, dubbed Super Mario for his handling of the eurozone crisis as head of the Central Bank. In February last year, he took on the task of guiding the Covid pandemic economic recovery, but was ousted by a big conditional reforms. Before head-presidential Quirinale, was given a round of applause in the lower house of parliament. "Even central bankers have their hearts touched sometimes. Thank you for all the work done in this period," he told MPs. He first tendered his resignation a week ago when a populist party in his broad-based government refused to back an economic package for businesses and families. President Mattarella had asked him to stay in the post and, after days of silence, MrDraghi told the upper house of parliament he would continue - if the political parties were prepared to back a strong, cohesive government: "Are the parties and you parliamentarians ready to rebuild this pact?" For several hours, Italians waited with bated breath for the answer, before three of the parties decided they would not back him in a vote of confidence.



The Milan stock market fell for the second day in a row. Another key indicator closely watched in Italy, called the spread, soared 9%; that is the gap between Italian and German 10-year bonds. President Mattarella said his government would remain in office to handle current affairs, but did not say exactly what would happen next. Elections were due to take place in the first half of 2023, but will most likely be brought forward to late September or early October once parliament is dissolved. The parties set to benefit most from the political crisis include the far-right League and centre-right Forza Italia and both snubbed MrDraghi in Wednesday night's crunch vote. However, it is the far-right Brothers of Italy (Fdi) party that is topping the opinion polls, and leader GiorgiaMeloni is viewed as a possible prime minister. She was not part of the unity government and has repeatedly called for snap elections over the past week. "I have my own ideas on how this nation should be governed, what should be done, what its industrial strategy should be," she said. Italy's political turmoil has also divided leading figures in some of the parties. Two ministers from Forza Italia, Renato Brunetta and MariastellaGelmini, have quit the party in protest at the decision to snub MrDraghi. The populist Five Star movement which triggered the crisis last week also saw a defection. Soave Alemanno said she no longer recognised her party and the instability now facing Italy jeopardised EU funding and abandoned reforms.

Zong 4G, Sehat Kahani provide over 12000 free sessions

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Zong 4G, a leading cellular and digital service provider in Pakistan, has reached a new milestone of providing free online health consultation to over 12000 underprivileged people, in collaboration with the leading telemedicine enterprise of Pakistan, SehatKahani. Ensuring that people had access to free healthcare, especially during the pandemic, Zong enabled the customers to gain free sessions through the promo code: ZONGSEHAT. Resultantly, more than 5000 consultations for non-covid patients and over 7000 consultations for Covid patients have been provided across the length and breadth of the country. Recognizing the importance of timely and accurate information to the public, Zong also conducted several health awareness sessions through

Facebook Live, reaching millions with knowledge about various health concerns including diabetes, obesity, Covid-19, Mental health etc. As part of the partnership, Zong 4G and SehatKahani also launched an influencer campaign to reiterate their commitment to digital health inclusion. Continuing the momentum, the company is also set to celebrate the more than 12000 free health consultations, a milestone on Twitter spaces. On the achievement of this milestone, Zong spokesperson commented, "One of the core values we have at Zong 4G is creating a digitally and socially inclusive Pakistan. Our partnership with SehatKahani is a testament to ensure that the people in far-flung areas that are deprived of health resources, get medical attention at the ease of their home, especially during the times of crisis."

The spokesperson added, "We congratulate SehatKahani on the fulfillment of this milestone. Having the best connectivity is imperative for delivering digital health services. And our partnership with Zong 4G leverages the best connectivity to achieve this milestone. The outstanding achievement and continuous efforts reflect that, and also aligns with Digital Pakistan agenda." While Dr. Sara Saeed Khurram, CEO of SehatKahani, commented, "We congratulate Zong for an impactful collaboration of over 12000 e-health sessions." She added, "Our aim was to ensure that each and every Pakistani has access to health services. And our partnership with Zong is a sheer reflection of that. Through sustainable and digital health services, we are creating a more inclusive Digital Pakistan."



ISLAMABAD: Turkish ambassador Mehmet Pacaci called on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force. — DNA

Australia battles fresh Omicron outbreak

MONITORING DESK

SYDNEY: Australia reported one of its highest daily death tolls from the novel coronavirus on Thursday while hospital admissions hovered near record levels, as authorities struggle to get ahead of highly contagious Omicron variants. The BA.4/5 variants are good at evading immune protection from vaccination or prior infection and have been driving a surge of new infections globally. Australia is reporting the highest daily numbers since the first Omicron wave earlier this year, with 89 deaths from the coronavirus on Thursday and 90 on Wednesday. Just over 55,600 new cases were recorded on Thursday, the highest since May 18. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said state leaders and federal health officials have not recommended making masks mandatory in indoor venues, despite calls by some doctors to do so. Australia avoided the high death tolls seen in other countries during the first waves of the pandemic thanks largely to high levels of public compliance with tough social distancing restrictions. But there is little public appetite for a return to such measures to defeat the latest surge in infections and Albanese has resisted pressure from some health experts to impose mask mandates. "It's no good having a mandate unless it's enforced," Albanese told ABC Radio. He said health officials also had to take into account the effects of tough restrictions on mental health.

No contact with US on peace talks: Russia

NEWS DESK

MOSCOW: Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said on Thursday there had been no contact with the United States over peace talks with Ukraine. "The American administration forbids its wards in Kyiv to even think about talks with us, and evidently forces them to fight to the last Ukrainian," Zakharova told reporters. Peace talks between Russia and Ukraine have been frozen since early April, when ceasefire talks brokered by Turkey in Istanbul collapsed. Ukrainian President VolodymyrZelenskyy has played down the prospect of peace talks while Russian troops still occupy Ukrainian territory. On Wednesday, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that peace talks with Ukraine made "no sense". Russian President Vladimir Putin said on July 7 that his country had not "started anything yet in earnest" in Ukraine, and dared the West to try to defeat it on the battlefield.

'Time is running out' to meet climate targets

WEB DESK

NEW YORK: Despite some positive developments towards reducing carbon emissions, global efforts need to be accelerated, as progress has been too limited and slow, according to the president of the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference, better known as COP26. In an email interview with Anadolu Agency, Alok Sharma stressed that time is running out to take more concrete steps towards stemming climate change and reducing carbon emissions, as the world faces more and more extreme weather events. Sharma, a British Cabinet minister, also spoke about the ongoing energy crisis, Europe's search for alternate energy sources, as well as the future of green transformation targets. Anadolu Agency: According to the Paris Agreement, net emissions will be reduced by 50% by 2030 and will be 0 by 2050. How close is the world to this goal? Sharma: The (2021) Glasgow Climate Pact, forged amongst nearly 200 countries, was historic. Based on the commitments made in that pact, and indeed outside the negotiating rooms, I believe that we were able to say with credibility that we kept alive the prospect of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees above pre-industrial levels, and that we had supported the most vulnerable. I am pleased that we have

seen some progress since November. We've got 16 new, revised NDCs (nationally determined contributions). We've got a handful of new long-term strategies. Over 2.5 billion people are now covered by adaptation plans. And extensive work to scale up and improve access to finance is continuing. But, collectively, the progress has been too limited, and just too slow. All while the evidence tells us that time is running out, from the science of the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) reports, to the wildfires, droughts, and floods to which the world is sadly too often witness. So, across all the commitments we made in Glasgow, we simply must quicken the pace. If we don't, next year's Global Stocktake will make clear that we are not delivering on the Paris goals, that 1.5 degrees is moving further, and frankly irreversibly, out of reach, and that we risk going beyond our limits to adapt. The consequences of that would be grave, for every sector, and for every country. This is about the immediate impact on the lives and livelihoods of many millions around the world. So, I will continue to urge countries and companies to redouble their efforts, to ensure that their emissions targets represent the highest possible ambition, and to implement the commitments that they have made. Q: Russia is the biggest energy supplier to Europe. The ten-

sion between the parties led Europe to seek other energy sources such as nuclear and fossil fuels like coal. How do you evaluate Europe's search for those energy sources? How will nuclear and fossil fuel usage affect green transformation targets? Sharma: A lot has changed in the months since COP26. We are facing multiple global crises, much precipitated by the Putin regime's illegal, brutal, and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. Many now recognize that climate and environmental security are completely interlinked with energy and national security. And whilst countries must deal with their immediate energy needs, many have understood that our shared long-term energy futures do not lie in fossil fuels. Governments around the world are responding, and accelerating the move to clean power. The European Commission, for example, announced that the European Union will increase renewables deployment to help reduce dependency on Russian hydrocarbons. And here in the UK, we have recently published our Energy Security Strategy, to turbocharge our deployment of wind, of solar, of nuclear, and of hydrogen. This includes five times as much offshore wind, five times as much solar, and a significant uplift in nuclear hydrogen, with the aim that 95% of our electricity will come from low carbon sources by 2030. And we're aiming to increase this to 100% by 2035.

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Briefs

ECP issues victory notification of 19 MPs

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has issued victory notifications for 19 candidates, who were elected as MPA in the recent Punjab by-polls. On July 17, by-elections on the 20 vacant seats of the Punjab Assembly were held after the ECP de-seated dissident MPs of PTI. The result of PP-7 Rawalpindi is withheld as the case is under hearing in the ECP on the orders of the Lahore High Court's Rawalpindi bench. However, after ECP rejected the PTI candidate's plea, the notification of PP-7 constituency winner will also be released shortly. It may be noted that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) emerged victorious in the majority of the seats in the crucial by-elections on the 20 Punjab Assembly. Out of 20, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) secured 15 seats, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz clinched four seats and one seat was secured by an independent candidate.

Pakistan sees uptick in daily Covid infections

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's coronavirus cases have consistently registered an uptick over the last three days, with the country reporting 599 infections in the last 24 hours, data from the National Institute of Health (NIH) showed on Thursday morning. This brought the total number of cases reported in the country to 1,548,394 since the pandemic started in 2020. A day earlier, the country reported 592 cases and on July 19, 459 cases surfaced overnight, data from the NIH showed.

As per the latest statistics, the active COVID-19 case count in Pakistan has exceeded the 10,000 mark again, hitting 10,004. The last time the active case count grew past 10,000 was on July 16 when the number of cases stood at 10,003. The new COVID-19 infections were detected after diagnostic testing on 21,315 samples, placing the country's positivity rate at 2.81%. Meanwhile, three patients suffering from coronavirus succumbed to the disease overnight, taking the country's COVID-19 death toll to 30,455, while 265 patients recovered during the same period. However, 170 patients are still being treated in critical care units, said the NIH.

SC seeks more evidence against Rana Sana

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court (SC) on Thursday asked the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to share with it more proofs in support of its contempt of court allegation against Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah. A two-member bench of the apex court, headed by Justice Ijaz Ahsan, heard the PTI's petition against Rana Sana. Justice Ijaz, on the occasion, while referring to the interior minister's statement in which he had said that five members of the Punjab Assembly (MPAs) could disappear prior to the election for the Punjab chief minister on July 22, 2022, remarked that if these MPAs were whisked away by the state, it would be a 'criminal offence', and only then this could be declared 'contempt of court', and not before.

"Please tell us as to how we could call it 'contempt of court'," he said, adding the court could not order any action merely on the basis of assumptions. "How can we accept that Rana Sana had made threatening calls to the PTI MPAs and also offered them money?" Justice Ijaz asked, and in the same breath made it clear that the SC had an eye on any breach of law.

Vietnam assumes chairmanship of ASEAN committee Islamabad

The meeting also discussed the issues of aiming at strengthening ASEAN-Pakistan relations in all fields and sectors

ISLAMABAD: The ASEAN Committee Islamabad (ACI) Chairmanship hand-over Ceremony took place On 21 July, at the Embassy of Viet Nam in Islamabad. Ambassador of Viet Nam Nguyen Tien Phong assumed the ACI Chairmanship from Ambassador of Thailand Chakkrid Krachaiwong. The meeting also discussed the issues of aiming at strengthening ASEAN-Pakistan relations in all fields and sectors. The meeting was attended by the ACI member countries including Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, Myanmar, Brunei and Malaysia. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is a regional grouping that aims to promote economic and security cooperation among its ten members: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. ASEAN was established in August 1967 with the purpose of accelerating the economic growth, social progress, and cultural development in the region, and promoting regional peace and stability. - DNA



ISLAMABAD: From left to right: DHMs of Brunei, the Philippines, Ambassadors of Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, Indonesia and Charge d Affaires of Malaysia posing for a picture on occasion of hand over ceremony. - DNA

ADB says Pakistan's growth 'recovering slightly' in FY23

MONITORING DESK

MANDALUYONG: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has projected that Pakistan's economic growth will "recover slightly" in fiscal year 2022-23 (FY23) on the back of structural reforms. In a supplement report of the Asian Development Outlook released on Thursday, the ADB stated that Pakistan's GDP growth was expected to be moderate in FY22, which ended in June, on fiscal tightening measures to manage growing demand pressures and contain external and fiscal imbalances. The ADB stated that it marginally revised inflation figures for FY22 and "substantially" for FY23, citing effects of rising food and energy prices internationally as well as the government's hike in energy tariffs and removal of subsidies in the oil and power sectors in line with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) agreement. The report noted that headline inflation is at double-digit levels in most of the Caucasus and Central Asia, in Mongolia in East Asia, Pakistan and Sri Lanka in South Asia, and Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar



in Southeast Asia. In addition, inflation in India was at seven per cent, higher than its central bank's target of 2-6pc, the report added. It stated, however, that "inflation in the rest of developing Asia's large economies remain manageable. So for the region as a whole, inflation remains moderate on average and much lower than elsewhere in the world." It revised South Asia's inflation forecast to 7.8pc from 6.5pc in 2022 and 6.6pc from 5.5pc in 2023 on the back of increased prices of fuel, food and other commodities in the international market and domestic factors in

some countries. The supplement report revised the growth forecast for developing Asia from 5.2pc to 4.6pc for 2022 and from 5.3pc to 5.2pc for 2023, reflecting "worsened economic prospects because of Russia's continued invasion of Ukraine, more aggressive monetary tightening in advanced economies and Covid-19 lockdowns" in China. "Even though the impact of Covid-19 has declined across most of developing Asia, the economic fallout from Russia's invasion of Ukraine on the region has increased. War-induced supply disruptions and escalating sanctions imposed on the Russian Federation have led to global commodity prices spiking and remaining higher than 2021's already elevated levels. Because of this, inflationary pressures have increased in many regional economies." The report stated that risks to developing Asia's economic outlook remained elevated and mainly associated with external factors. These risks included a substantial slowdown in global growth, aggressive monetary tightening by central banks, fallout from the war in Ukraine leading to price hikes, and rising food prices and shortages.

CEC should formally join PML-N: Fawad

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Reaction over the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) decision pertaining to the results of the by-elections in PP-7, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Central Vice President Fawad Chaudhry advised the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja to formally announce his joining of Pakistan Muslim League-N (PML-N). In a statement here on Thursday, Fawad stated that the ECP's decision was certainly disappointing, but not surprising due to the past record of the commission. He said that if the issues were dealt with sans taking into account the constitution and laws and rules and regulations, such kind of decisions were made. "There is a long list of ECP's decisions which have been overturned by the High Courts," Fawad added. He stated that the commission completely disregarded the instructions of the High Court in this matter as well. He advised that the CEC should better to free himself from all kinds of difficulties and troubles and announce his joining the PML-N.



Pakistan highly values ties with Germany: FM

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari received a telephone call from Germany's Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock, today. Besides discussing bilateral ties, the two Ministers exchanged views on the regional situation. The Foreign Minister underscored that Pakistan highly valued its relations with Germany, both bilaterally and in the context of the EU, which should be further expanded in all areas of mutual interest. The Foreign Minister recalled Foreign Minister Baerbock's visit to Islamabad last month which had added further momentum to growing collaboration in the bilateral relationship. The Foreign Minister added that Pakistan and Germany had robust economic engagement and concerted efforts should be made to further strengthen it. He expressed Pakistan's interest in deeper bilateral engagement in the field of climate change and capacity enhancement of our scientific institutions dealing with climate change. The Foreign Minister also appreciated Germany's steadfast support for Pakistan's GSP Plus status, which is a mutually beneficial arrangement. In the context of situation in Afghanistan, Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari underlined that Pakistan had been facilitating the evacuations on a humanitarian basis. - DNA

Iranian envoy calls on Human Rights Minister

ISLAMABAD: Iranian ambassador to Pakistan H.E. Seyyed Mohammad Ali Hosseini called on Federal Minister for Human Rights Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada on Thursday. Secretary Human Rights Afzal Latif and other senior officers of the ministry were also present in the meeting. Both sides reiterated resolve to enhance bilateral cooperation in the field of human rights. Pirzada underscored cordial brethren relations of more than seven decades between the two countries based on cultural, religious and historical commonalities. The Iranian ambassador extended felicitations to the minister on assuming the charge and congratulated him on successful accom-



ISLAMABAD: Iranian ambassador to Pakistan Seyyed Mohammad Ali Hosseini called on Federal Minister for Human Rights Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada. - DNA

plishment of his various political assignments. He said that Iran was willing to enhance mutual cooperation in the field of Human Rights and particularly the judicial cooperation. Ambassador said that the special focus of Iranian government was on women rights and their empowerment. He stressed to have strong economic and business ties and the maximum cooperation in the exchange of prisoners. He further invited the minister on an official visit to Iran to attend a ceremony in August where sideline meeting would also be arranged to enhance bilateral cooperation in human rights. He mentioned about two MoUs between the two governments on extradition/exchange of prisoners and for protection and promotion of human rights. He emphasized upon the need of cooperation among Muslim countries to confront the hype of Islamophobia and blasphemy incidents. He appreciated role of Pakistan on diplomatic fronts to successfully counter the menace of Islamophobia. Minister for Human Rights highlighted the tremendous opportunities for cooperation that exists between the two neighboring countries. He said that people of Pakistan have deep devotion and respect for Iran over the warmth and facilities that Iranian government have been proving for pilgrimages especially on Taftan Boarder. - DNA

Lukashenko says Belarus is 'authoritarian'

MINSK: Belarus President Alexander Lukashenko admitted on Thursday that he ran an authoritarian state but claimed there were no political prisoners in his isolated country. "Yes, our system of power is tougher. I even do not rule out the word 'authoritarian'," Lukashenko told AFP in an exclusive interview in the capital Minsk. Belarus rights group Viasna says the country currently has 1,259 political prisoners. But Lukashenko dismissed "talk of hundreds" of imprisoned people and claimed that "no one from the opposition" was currently being held in prison. Referring to people who took part in historic protests against Lukashenko's controversial re-election in 2020, he said: "These people spoke out against the state. Not against the authorities - against the state and their own nation." The 67-year-old leader crushed the demonstrations with the help of Russian ally President Vladimir Putin. Key protest leaders are now either imprisoned or in exile. "I am no dictator," Lukashenko insisted, while admitting that Belarus had "elements of authoritarianism." "I do not even remember if those prominent bandits, who fomented this mutiny, if they are in prison," he said. "Perhaps one or two have been convicted," he added. Among those who fled Belarus in 2020 is Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, a political novice who ran against Lukashenko in the August 2020 polls in place of her jailed husband. - APP

NEPRA asked to increase power tariff by Rs9.90 per unit

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPA) has sought hike in power tariff by Rs9.90 under the monthly fuel adjustment mechanism for June. According to National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA), it will conduct hearing on CPA plea for power tariff hike on July 28. K-Electric, the sole power utility in Karachi, also submitted a request to the NEPRA seeking another hike of Rs11.39 in tariff under fuel adjustment charges. According to the request, the power utility has requested a massive increase of Rs11.39 for the month of June 2022. The national power regulator will take up the KE's plea for a hearing on July 28, 2022. The CPA has stated in the application that in June, 24.22% of electricity was generated from water, 13.57% from coal, 10.48% from furnace oil, 10.66% from domestic gas, 24.43% from imported LNG and 9.12% from nuclear fuel. - APP

Sri Lanka sees new president sworn into office

WEB DESK

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's Ranil Wickremesinghe has been sworn in as president, amid hopes that he will pull the country out of its economic suffering. The 73-year-old took his oath at the tightly-guarded parliament complex on Thursday. Mr Wickremesinghe - the former prime minister - is seen as deeply unpopular with the public, but some protesters have said they will give him a chance. Sri Lanka has seen months of mass unrest over an economic crisis. Many blame the Rajapaksa administration for mishandling the nation's finances, and see Mr Wickremesinghe as part of the problem. But there were few demonstrations on the streets the day after Mr Wickremesinghe won the parliament vote. "He is here - and we will see what his actions are. If we don't get any food, any medicine, we'll be on the streets," one woman who had joined protests last week told the BBC. Mr Wickremesinghe - who won a majority among lawmakers with the backing of Rajapaksa's ruling party, the Sri Lanka's People's Front (SLFP) - took pains to distance himself from the old leaders.

TiE, US Embassy host Startup Cup's grand finale

The U.S. Embassy's Chief Public Affairs Officer, Aaron Tarver, added that "The US Embassy sponsorship of the Pakistan Startup Cup has and will continue to increase entrepreneurial and startup activity across the country through sustained coaching and mentorship

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Indus Entrepreneurs (TiE) Islamabad joined forces with the United States Embassy in Islamabad to host the Grand Finale of the 2022 Pakistan Startup Cup at the Islamabad Marriott Hotel. The Pakistan Startup Cup is a local business model competition designed to increase the quality and quantity of entrepreneurs throughout the community. The event was attended by the Ministry of Information Technology, Ministry of Finance, and U.S. Embassy Islamabad. The

chief guests distributed cheques and prize money to the winning teams from across Pakistan. Speaking on the occasion, the President of TiE Islamabad, Murtaza Zaidi, said "Over the last decade, the Pakistan Startup Cup has mentored more than 2,000 startups. The competition engages leading industry experts to mentor startups and help them refine their business models. We have proudly partnered with the U.S. Embassy to provide our entrepreneurs with an enabling environment." The U.S. Embassy's Acting Public Affairs Officer, Aaron Tarver, added that "The U.S. Embassy sponsorship of the Pakistan Start-

up Cup has and will continue to increase entrepreneurial and startup activity across the country through sustained coaching and mentorship. This can only help generate a robust entrepreneurship culture in local communities in every region." More than 900 startups benefited from coaching and business preparation activities and mentoring through the competition this year. They were narrowed down to the top 21 business ideas, with teams presenting the ideas at the finale with an eye towards the first-place cash prize of one million rupees to invest in their business. The second and third place winners also re-

ceived cash to develop their startup ideas. The Pakistan Startup Cup aims to connect, scale, and inspire entrepreneurs and innovators from across the country. This year, the eighth cycle of Pakistan Startup Cup was launched in Quetta, Gilgit, Mirpur, Lahore, Islamabad, Peshawar, and Karachi. The top 21 startups from across Pakistan participated in over 170 hours of workshops and over 50 hours of mentoring from industry experts. The business applications received in the competition included new ideas in ed-tech, health-tech, fin-tech, agri-tech, e-commerce and food businesses, among others.