



Islamabad POST

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Pope 'disgusted and angered' by Holy Quran's desecration

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UN rights chief warns against climate change

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Ayesha Ayaz wins 3 medals in Taekwondo

Detailed News On Page-06



Briefs

CM okays upgradation of shrines

ABBAS HASHMI

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Syed Mohsin Naqvi on Monday approved the programme of phased renovation as well as expansion of shrines of Sufi saints in the province. In the first phase, the shrine of

PICTURE ON PAGE 2

Hazrat Shah Shams Tabrez in Multan, of Hazrat Baba Bulle Shah in Kasur, of Baba Fariduddin Masood Ganj Shakar in Pakpattan and of Hazrat Syed Azizuddin Pir Makki in Lahore will be renovated as well as expanded. The chief minister said that more and more facilities would be provided at these shrines for the visitors.

Khattak wont reply to PTI's notice

DNA

PESHAWAR: Former defence minister and PTI stalwart Pervez Khattak has decided not to respond to the show-cause notice issued to him by the party leadership. Khattak, who was busy chalking out a new political strategy these days, had started approaching former members of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Assembly as well as the National Assembly for that, and had recently held meetings with politicians in Islamabad, Peshawar and Lahore. They disclosed that either the ex-minister would form a party of his own or would carve out a faction of PTI.

PTI terms IMF deal positive

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The PTI has termed the signing of a \$3 billion stand-by agreement (SBA) with IMF a positive development but at the same time it raised questions over the coalition government's economic plan to revive the ailing economy. Pakistan and the IMF reached a SLA on short-term SBA last week following a delay of nine months, which is subjected to approval by the Washington-based lender's executive board in mid-July.

Holy Quran desecration Pak demands action from Swedish govt

Prime Minister demands of the Swedish govt to take notice of the Islamophobic and hateful narratives

DNA / MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif on Monday strongly condemned the desecration of Holy Quran in Sweden, calling the country's government to take 'serious action' against the culprits, media reported. Addressing the federal cabinet today, the prime minister said that the whole Muslim Ummah including the government and people of Pakistan strongly condemned incident of burning a copy of Holy Quran in Sweden. PM Shehbaz Sharif demanded that a proper investigation should be conducted into the incident "without any interference".

PICTURE ON BACK PAGE

"Unfortunately, this is not the first incident to take place as such horrific incidents have taken place previously as well. They highlight that Muslims in Sweden, who are a minority, are facing Islamophobia and hatred," he added. He also demanded of the Swedish government to take notice of Islamophobic and hateful narrative against the Muslim population in their country. The premier also appreciated the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) for convening an urgent meeting on the issue and said that Pakistan endorsed their meeting and decision, with a hope that such Islamophobic incidents did not recur in

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PM orders action against human traffickers

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The government on Monday decided to cancel the passports and block the identity cards of the human traffickers and their abettors involved in the Greece boat incident. Additionally, the bank accounts of those deemed responsible will be frozen. Human traffickers involved will also face prosecution under the Money Laundering Act. This was decided during a meeting of the committee - formed by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif - probing the Greece boat tragedy. The Director General (DG) of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) emphasised the necessity of blacklisting the passports of the human smugglers involved in the boat accident. Authorities stationed at all airports across the country have been instructed to ensure that no suspect manages to flee abroad.

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Sahir Shamsah Mirza calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. - DNA

Nawaz to return in August

PML-N to launch campaign with verve

Maryam to handle affairs pertaining to party, election

DNA

DUBAI: The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) on Monday decided to start its election campaign with Verve. PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif presided over party meetings where discussions of political and legal issues took place. The PML-N bigwigs also talked about upcoming political tactics. On Nawaz's return to the country, it was agreed to greet him warmly. The session also discussed political and legal matters. Nawaz had entrusted tasks to PML-N Chief Organiser

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Inflation eases for first time in seven months

CPI inflation for Jun 2023 clocked in at 29.4 percent, Dar says

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar said on Monday that the Consumer Price Index (CPI)-based inflation came down to 29.4 percent during the month of June 2023 as compared to 38 percent recorded during May 2023. "As per the data released by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS), the CPI inflation for Jun 2023 clocked in at 29.4 percent compared to 38 percent YoY for May'23," the federal minister said in a tweet. Ishaq Dar said the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) had also performed well "as 2,334 points were added to the index by 1:00 p.m on Monday whereas at the exchange rate of Pak Rupee vs Dollar in open Market was recorded at Rs.270/272." Meanwhile, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported that the CPI-based

Continued on Page 06

PSX sees biggest single-day gain

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The stock market witnessed the highest single-day gain on Monday with the benchmark KSE-100 index rising more than 2,400 points following the agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The index was up 2,414 points at 43,867 at 11:30 am. It closed at 43,899 points, up 2,446.32 points from Friday's close of 41,452.68. "Historic day-on-day gain witnessed at PSX today with KSE-100 increasing by 2,446 points and closing at a 14 month-high," said Arif Habib Ltd. "On a DoD basis, it displayed the best performance ever.

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Israeli troops, drones kill 8 in Jenin attack

Sounds of gunfire and explosives were heard across the city Agencies

CENTRELINE REPORT

JENIN: Nine Palestinians were killed by Israeli army fire early on Monday, including eight in Jenin, according to the health ministry. At least 50 Palestinians were also injured. Israeli forces hit the city of Jenin with drone strikes on Monday as part of one of the biggest West Bank incursions in 20 years, involving hundreds of troops in gun battles that continued into the afternoon. Drones were clearly audible overhead and the sounds of gunfire and explosives were heard across the city hours after the strikes. The Jenin Brigades, a unit made up of resistance groups based in the city's crowded refugee camp, said it was engaging Israeli forces and had shot down one of the unmanned aircraft. At times during the morning, at least six drones could be seen circling over the city and the adjoining camp, a densely packed area housing around 14,000 refugees in less than half a square kilometre. The camp has been at the heart of an escalation of violence across the West Bank that has

Continued on Page 06

OIC, Qatar condemn Israeli acts

NEWS DESK

JEDDAH: The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) has condemned the Israeli operation, calling it a "heinous crime". "This heinous crime constitutes an extension of crimes and organised state terrorism practiced by the Israeli occupation against the Palestinian people," the OIC said in a statement. Meanwhile, Qatar has strongly condemned the repeated aggression of Israel against the city of Jenin, considering it a new episode in a series of continuous attacks by the occupation and its "horrific crimes" against the defenceless Palestinian people. The Qatari Ministry of Foreign Affairs

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Qatar envoy leaving Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Qatar to Pakistan is leaving Pakistan after completing his term. A reception in his honour was held today attended by the members of the diplomatic corps. It may be mentioned here that Ambassadors of Korea, Sri Lanka and Bosnia have already left Pakistan. The dean hosted reception in honor of His Excellency Sheikh Saud bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, Ambassador of the State of Qatar, on the occasion of the end of his tenure in Islamabad, in the presence of heads of diplomatic missions accredited to Islamic Republic of Pakistan. - DNA

Pakistan, Japan agree to deepen cooperation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and Japan on Monday agreed to further deepen and enhance their mutually beneficial bilateral cooperation in multiple areas including trade, investment, human resource development and exchange, IT, tourism and agriculture sectors. "We have also jointly agreed to explore the possibility of working together on targeted programs with higher impact in the domains of solarization, desalination and water purification and housing and infrastructure rebuilding in the floods affected areas in Pakistan, Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said in a joint press statement along with his Japanese counterpart Yoshimasa Hayashi in Tokyo. Earlier the two ministers held a meeting in a cordial environment. Both the Ministers appreciated the free bilateral relations while expressing readi-



TOKYO: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari calls on the Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida.

ness to engage further. In addition, the two side have agreed to conduct the language skill assessment tests for Japanese language in Pakistan to facilitate movement of the skilled workforce. FM Bilawal said the two sides also identified import of young Pakistani skilled human resource to Japan and their language training to be a prime area of cooperation. "We also deliberated on investments and joint ventures by Japanese enterprises in Pakistan." During his visit, he said he would also interact with private sector, local media as well as think-tanks to further broaden our engagement. I believe that both sides need to stay engaged at all levels to further positive dialogue and continue exploring more avenues of cooperation. The foreign minister also invited his Japanese counterpart to visit Pakistan at your convenience to further our discussions.

Continued on Page 06

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Experts stress importance of child-centric approach - Page 04

China and others grapple with understanding what the Wagner Group revolt means - Page 05

Wimbledon 2023: Iga Swiatek wins opener, Pegula advances - Page 06

NATO readies military plans to defend against Russia - Page 07

Pak, China discuss avenues for further cooperation - Page 08

UNFPA 2023 State of World Population Report launched

DNA

KARACHI: The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Pakistan on Thursday launched the UNFPA's global flagship report, the 2023 State of World Population (SWOP), in Karachi, Sindh Province. The report, titled '8 Billion Lives, Infinite Possibilities: The Case for Rights and Choices', was launched globally in April 2023, presenting the latest trends about population growth or decline, fertility rates, reproductive health, family planning, and migration around the globe. The SWOP cautions against controlling bodies to address demographic concerns. Family planning must not be used as a means for achieving fertility targets but as a tool for empowering individuals, and women should be able to choose if, when, and how many children they want to have. With an average annual growth rate of 2.41 percent in Sindh, the total current population is 56.3 million (2022), estimated to grow to 95.7 million by 2050. According to the SWOP report,

Pakistan will be among the eight countries to account for half of the projected global population growth by 2050, along with the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Egypt, Ethiopia, India, Nigeria, the Philippines and the USA. Pakistan's population is currently estimated at 240.5 million and is projected to reach 403 million by 2050.

The launch in Sindh was held at the Department of Public Health SZABIST, with Dr. Azra Fazal Pechuho, Sindh Minister for Population and Health as the Chief Guest. The event was also attended by senior officials of the Government of Sindh, Consul Generals of different countries, the President for SZABIST Shahnaz Wazir Ali, heads of national and international organizations, development experts, researchers, SZABIST faculties and students. Minister of Health and Population Dr Azra Fazal Pechuho shared her reflections on the report, mentioning that the gender element is crucial for balanced population development and progress for a nation together with education for women and employment. She also called for more

investments in reproductive health and family planning. "Family planning is an integral aspect of sustainable development. Family planning is not just a women's issue; it is also an economic issue and a development issue. We must invest in family planning for healthier and more productive populations, and more sustainable economic growth," said Dr. Pechuho. Stakeholders contended that population growth could be tackled more effectively by engaging all cross-cutting sectors directly, focusing on addressing inequalities in education, income, employment, regional connectivity, gender, and digitalization. The issue is beyond just contraceptive prevalence. It is about empowering people to take the right decision, and the power of decision is directly related to education for both females and males, behaviour, and livelihood. The report also discusses "population anxieties" felt in different parts of the world, including in Pakistan, in reaction to population growth or, in some cases, to low fertility rates or other demographic trends.



LAHORE: Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi inspecting the construction work on his visit to the under-construction Akbar Chowk flyover project.—DNA

LCCI condemns Holy Quran's desecration

LAHORE: Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry (LCCI) on Monday strongly condemned desecration of the Holy Quran and urged the government to raise the matter at international fora. "It is a vile act of racism, the business community strongly condemns this tragic incident and urges the international community to take a strong stand against it as this is not the freedom of expression but the terrorism," LCCI President Kashif Anwar, Senior Vice President Zafar Mahmood Chaudhry and Vice President Adnan Khalid Butt said in a statement issued here. They said that it was a good omen that the Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC) immediately convened a meeting but a unanimous strategy by the world was direly needed to stop such vile acts. The LCCI office-bearers said that desecration of the Holy Quran or any other holy book was a crime. They said that racism and xenophobia should not have any place in any part of the world. The Muslims respect everyone and everyone should respect Muslims, they added. They said that such an act contradicted international efforts to spread the tolerance and peace. All the countries around the globe should take effective measures to avoid such ugly acts, they added. The office-bearers of the Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry said that such willful despicable act could not be justified under the pretext of freedom of expression.—APP

CDA to organize public awareness walk about environment

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A public awareness walk is being organized on Wednesday to reduce environmental pollution in the City. The Environment Wing of the Capital Development Authority is commencing a series of plantations on the slopes of various highways, connecting roads, intersections, green belt and surrounding of Nul-lahs in the Islamabad city. According to the details, on Wednesday from 4 to 5 pm, an awareness campaign about ineffective and invasive or poisonous plants of different species will be launched in different areas of the city including Trail Five (5) Mar-

galla Hills, National Park so that a useful, healthy and better environment could be provided to the citizens of Islamabad. Furthermore, useful species of plants and trees would be planted for promotion of a healthy atmosphere in order to reduce plants which are harmful to the health of human beings. In addition, a step by step eradication of the papermulberry and its replacement with the local indigenous plants will be carried on. People from all walks of life, including people from private and public institutions, are invited to participate in this awareness walk to create awareness among the public regarding reduction of

environmental pollution, increasing green areas and plantation of new plants and species in accordance with the safety of human life. Also, the importance of a better environment can be highlighted in this awareness campaign. In addition to this special walk, information will be provided to the citizens regarding the utility of useful and human friendly plants. Resultantly, valuable opinions, views and thoughts of the citizens will also be obtained. In light of these opinions, views and thoughts plants and trees more compatible with the local environment will be planted in Islamabad city so that everyone can benefit from these trees and plants.



BISP disburses Rs. 44.965m in AJK

MIRPUR: Regional Director Benazir Income Support Program Dr. Abdul Aziz Qureshi has said that the Government of Pakistan was taking steps to provide relief to the poor and deserving women by utilizing all available resources for the betterment of the BISP beneficiaries'. "The BISP is playing a key role to eradicate poverty from the country", he added while addressing a meeting with a delegation led by District Councillor UC Jhandgraan and Secretary General PPP AJK Muzaffarabad Division Ch. Ijaz Iqbal, in BISP Regional Office in the State metropolis on Monday. The meeting discussed the measures taken by the government for the improvement of BISP women's beneficiaries of far-flung areas in AJK. The Regional Director BISP, while sharing information regarding the remittance of funds in the recent quarter, said that before Eid, 49885 women beneficiaries had received Rs. 44.965 million which, he added, was 50 percent of the total amount disbursed in AJK. He further said that the payment process was being restarted from July 4, 2023. "Now, Benazir Kafalat and Benazir Taleemi Wazaf educational scholarships will be made by designated retailers of Bank Al-Falah instead of camps", he revealed. Speaking on this occasion, Ch. Ijaz Iqbal District Councillor UC Jhandgraan and Divisional Secretary General PPP AJK, said that the BISP was a source of support for the poor. To ensure easy disbursement of funds to poor women living in remote areas and in view of the recent heat wave and traveling difficulties.—APP

Malik highlights population challenges in South Asia

ISLAMABAD: SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry former President Iftikhar Ali Malik said South Asia is confronted with a large population, with countries like India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh being among the most populous in the world—depleting plenty of resources. Chairing a round table conference on the "Impact of population explosion on the economy", he said the issue of poverty in South Asia is complex and cannot be attributed to a single factor, said a press release. He said the sheer number of people puts pressure on resources and infrastructure, making it challenging to ensure economic opportunities and adequate living

conditions for everyone. Lack of access to quality education is a significant factor contributing to poverty in South Asia, he added. "Education equips individuals with the necessary skills to improve their livelihoods and participate in economic activities. However, many people in the region face barriers such as inadequate school infrastructure, high dropout rates, gender disparities, and limited access to vocational training", he added. Iftikhar Ali Malik said South Asia experiences high levels of unemployment and under-employment as the region's economic growth has not been able to keep up with the increasing population, resulting in limited job op-

portunities. He said some countries in South Asia have experienced political instability, and internal conflicts, which disrupted economic activities, damaged infrastructure, displace populations, and hinder poverty alleviation efforts. He said a substantial proportion of the population in South Asia relies on agriculture for their livelihoods. However, agricultural productivity in the region is often low due to factors such as outdated farming techniques, lack of access to credit and modern technology, and vulnerability to climate change and natural disasters said adding that these challenges contribute to income instability and poverty among rural communities.—APP

RWMC cleanliness drive continues after Eid in Murree

DNA

MURREE: Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) on Monday said that the cleanliness drive was in full swing in Murree while heavy machinery and excavators were being used to remove rubbish from the roads. Talking to media persons, he said that the Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) was making all-out efforts to keep the hill station clear for tourists. He said that a large number of tourists visited Murree on the eve of the Eid festival which increased the responsibility of RWMC staff besides lifting animal waste. Rana said that RWMC con-



tinued its cleanliness drive at the hill station despite heavy rains during Eid days. Meanwhile, he added that RWMC removed over 9,000 tons of animal waste

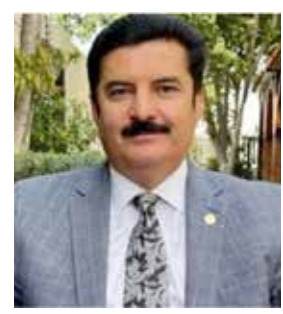
from the district during three days of Eid-ul-Azha. He said that a comprehensive cleanliness plan, in accordance with the policy of the Punjab Government, was chalked out for Eid-ul-Azha to get rid of entrails of animals under which 4,052 sanitary workers with 463 vehicles worked day and night during the Eid holidays. He said the waste was shifted to 17 permanent and 43 mobile transfer stations from where it was moved to the landfill site at Losar through dumpers. Rana said the Caretaker provincial Minister for Health Dr. Jamal Nasir, Commissioner Rawalpindi Liaqat Ali Chatta, Deputy Commissioner Hasan Waqar Cheema, and RWMC officials visited several district areas.

PPP poor friendly, mass serving party: Kundi

DNA

TANK: Minister of State for Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Faisal Karim Kundi has said Pakistan People's Party (PPP) was a poor friendly and mass serving party which had given numerous development projects in Tank. He expressed these views while addressing a public gathering here in Gule-Imam area in which various local body representatives of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) announced to join PPP. On this occasion, the state minister was accompanied by PPP Divisional General Secretary Malik Fateh Sher, District President Sardar Hidayat Ullah Khan Gandapur, renowned political figure Shakir Azim

Kundi, Mezban Ali Jan Israr Khan and other party representatives. Faisal Kundi, who is also Central Information Secretary of PPP, has challenged all political parties that no other party has given such development and public welfare projects to the Tank district which were given by his party. He said the public representatives of Tank did not pay any heed to the development of the area, however, the PPP tried to resolve the issues of people. The PPP provided the projects of Sui-gas, Passport Office, Working Forks Grammar School and Warren Canal Project, he added. Faisal Kundi said PPP takes steps for resolving electricity issues of Gule-Imam, Malazai, Gomal and other



areas of Tank and it would also provide Gas facility to these areas. He said after the end of PPP government in 2013, no development work was done in the area, said the PTI raised a slogan of 'Naya Pakistan' but did not fulfill any basic need of the people in Tank despite remaining in power for four years both in center and the province. The state minister said that despite

the fact that Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) Chief belonged to Dera Ismail Khan, the Tank and Dera Ismail Khan were facing a lot of electricity-related issues including load shedding, low voltage, and tripping. Faisal Kundi said he was ready to sit together with his political opponents to serve the public instead of oppression. He expressed the hope that his party would make the governments in the center and the province as well after the next general elections, saying, the journey of development would be restored in the area. He said that about 32,000 deserving women were getting stipends under Benazir Income Support Program (BISP). He mentioned that 4000 cards were

blocked during the previous tenure out of which about 1500 had been restored and the rest would also be restored. During the previous floods, Rs 470 million were distributed among the cardholders only in tanks. He said more deserving people should get themselves registered with BISP as the dynamic survey was underway. The state minister said a BISP office would be established in Gule-Imam area so that the people of this area do not have to travel to Tank for the purpose. He said that PPP had started its electoral campaign and the party would have its candidates in all constituencies of Dera Ismail Khan and Tank, adding, that success would be the destiny of the people and PPP.

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

JULY

July 01/Japan
Self Defence Day
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
July 23/Egypt
National Day
July 26/Cuba
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July 26/Liberia
National Day
July 30/Morocco
National Day

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Bomb Disposal.....15
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Islamabad.....1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance.1122
& Rescue Services.4451122
Motorway Police.....9266044
Motorway Police.9270601-20
Women Police Stations
Islamabad.....9222596
Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



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PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Enquiry.....117
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WASA Rawalpindi.5555489
CAA.....9281092



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MH.....5611116
Cantt Hospital.....9270907-11
DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666



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CDA.....9208301-04
Met Office.....9250360-6
RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: A large number of bikers takes shelter under flyover at Murree Road during heavy rain fall of Pre-monsoon spell.—Online

Chinese companies boost role in social development of Pak

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chinese companies have enhanced their role in social development of Pakistan, while addressing the country's economic and development issues. The companies are an integral part of CPEC. They are the torch bearer of this flagship project of BRI. They are not only helping Pakistan overcome its infrastructure problems but also investing in social development, skills, and environmental protection in Pakistan. According to a report carried by Gwadar Pro on Monday, unfortunately their work could not get the attention of the media and society. Propaganda played a major role to undermine the social development work of the Chinese companies. The propagandist kept the media and people busy with baseless theories and allegations against Chinese investment. Fortunately, the Chinese companies did not

pay attention to allegations and propaganda and kept their focus on projects and social development, skill, and environmental protection programs. All Chinese companies are investing in social development, but only a few have been selected for discussion. Sahiwal Coal Power and Port Qasim power plants. The Chinese companies not only helped to create thousands of jobs but also invested in building the capacity of hundreds of engineers and staff members. According to available data, Huaneng Shandong Rui Group, which built the Sahiwal coal power invested in 622 employees for building their capacity and sharpen their skills. Further segregation of data shows that 245 engineers were trained following the need for required skills at plants. Moreover, Huaneng Shandong Rui Group plant administration also built a capacity of 377 general staff members i.e., administration, computer, etc. Port Qasim also contributed to building the capacity of engi-

neers and staff members. Data shows that 2600 employees benefited from the capacity-building and skill development opportunities offered by the Port Qasim plant. It trained 600 engineers and 2000 general staff members. It is a huge number, especially in the engineering category. It will help Pakistan; as Pakistan has a shortage of qualified and trained engineers. These companies also assisted Pakistan during floods and COVID-19. Second, the Chinese Overseas Port Holding Company (COPHC) is another Chinese company, which is investing in social development. The major contribution of COPHC is in the sectors of education, waste management, environmental protection, and the provision of food. COPHC joined hands with the Chinese government to establish a good quality school in one of the most backward areas of the country. COPHC has donated books for the children and is also active in the day-to-day management of the school. Besides,

COPHC is also investing in environmental protection and making Gwadar beautiful. COPHC has committed to plant one million plants across Gwadar in addition to cleanliness drives. It is good to note that COPHC planted 400000 plants across the port and Gwadar city within one year of commitment. State Grid Cooperation is another Chinese company, which is investing in multiple initiatives. The company not only took care of employees but also contributed generously to support the government and community in the fight against COVID-19. It donated ventilators, monitors, protective clothing, masks, and other medical equipment or materials to the Pakistani government, communities, and hospitals. Moreover, State Grid Cooperation also distributed 40 tons of rice, flour, and other materials among the marginalized communities in the provinces of Punjab and Sindh. It helped many families avert the negative implications of lockdown during COVID-19.



ISLAMABAD: People fill their pots with clean drinking water from water filtration plant in I-8 Sector.—APP

IMF deal result of tireless efforts of Prime Minister

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain said on Monday the credit of IMF Staff Level Agreement goes to Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif and Finance Minister Ishaq Dar. The Prime Minister has once again proved

his leadership skills and the business community supports the steps taken to fully restore the confidence of the IMF, he said. Mian Zahid Hussain said that those anticipating a default have failed in their designs and the success of the standby program will depend on the capabilities of the current government, the caretaker government and the new government elected as a result of the election. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader

said that the SBA is very disappointing for the opposition while the public and the business community are satisfied, which is reflected in the increase of 2400 points in the stock market. If the country had gone bankrupt, the sufferings of the people would become unbearable and inflation would exceed the current level many times. Due to the efforts of the government, the country has temporarily come out of the uncertain situation, but the confidence of the IMF has

not yet been fully restored, he said. The business leader said that government should take all the necessary steps to improve relations with the IMF, for which the business community will continue to support it unconditionally. Mian Zahid Hussain said that as a result of the agreement, in addition to three billion dollars from the IMF, it will also be possible to obtain funds from the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, friendly countries and the international market at low interest rates.

IMF accord opportunity for economic reforms

MEHTAB PIRZADA



ISLAMABAD: President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari has said that the IMF agreement is a positive development for Pakistan

in a very difficult political, economic and international diplomatic environment. This success is possible due to the efforts of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar and their team. This agreement will prove beneficial for the struggling Pakistani economy. Now is the time for the government to formulate a long-term economic policy together with the political leadership and stakeholders so that Pakistan can stand on its own feet permanently. The current short-term agreement with the IMF gives Pakistan an opportunity

for sustainable economic reforms. In a statement issued on Monday, he said that the government has made the current agreement possible after a year-long discussion with the International Monetary Fund. This agreement was indispensable to gain the trust of other international financial institutions and friendly countries. Pakistan had to face political and economic situations at the local level and difficult diplomacy at the global level to reach this agreement, which was indicated by the Federal Finance Minister in his statement. This is the right time to

take measures like transparent and fast-track privatization of loss-making government-controlled enterprises, planning to increase tax net, increase exports and decrease imports. After the current agreement with the IMF some steps should be taken immediately. There is a need to focus on the promotion of regional trade, especially with ECO countries Turkey, Iran and Central Asian countries. Apart from this, special attention should be given to improving trade relations with African countries, ASEAN region and D8 countries and launching

direct flights. Railways, PIA, steel mills and energy sector should be privatized immediately and debts should be eliminated. He said that Pakistan has gone to international institutions many times in the past for obtaining loans, but due to the lack of reforms at a better basic level, no program could benefit. After the current debt, Pakistan has become the fourth largest IMF borrower in the world after Argentina, Egypt and Ukraine. It is our tragedy that despite having all the resources, Pakistan could not reach this point economically where we

should be. He said that we can deal with the challenges of rapid population growth, water problems and climate change only when the country stands on its feet economically. Pakistan's business community should be made part of the reform program. Focus should be on the development of SMEs, A sustainable policy should be brought forward for the promotion of small businesses. All political parties and stakeholders including the government should pledge that this IMF program will be the last for Pakistan.

More than 14,000 copies of Quran distributed

ISLAMABAD: Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Dawah, and Guidance continues its distribution of the Holy Quran, generously provided by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, to pilgrims departing from King Abdulaziz Airport in Jeddah after completing the Hajj rituals. As of today, a total of 14,100 copies have been distributed since the commencement of the distribution process. On average, 8,740 copies are distributed daily, which includes interpretations of the Holy Verses in various languages such as English, Indonesian, Urdu, German, Persian, Turkish, Malayalam, and Bengali. Upon arriving at King Abdulaziz Airport, the departing pilgrims expressed joy and gratitude for completing the Hajj rituals in a spiritually uplifting environment, the Saudi Press Agency reported.—DNA

Caretaker setup to be installed in Aug

DNA

SUKKUR: Federal Minister for Water Resources Syed Khurshid Ahmed Shah said on Monday that the current government would definitely complete its constitutional term, adding that the caretaker setup would be installed on the 11th, 12th or 13th of August after the completion of the term. While talking to the media in Sukkur after receiving a briefing from the irrigation authorities on Sukkur barrage and meeting a delegation from Balochistan, he said that an emergency would have to be imposed to extend the term which, he stated, would not be a good thing. "There is no problem of water shortage in the country, and it is hoped that there will be no problem of water shortage in Rabi season as well," he said. "After many years, the level of Tarbela Dam has increased to 12.6 feet after which the spillways of Tarbela Dam have been opened," he added.

'Timely elections need of hour'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Education Rana Tanveer Hussain on Monday stressed for timely elections within sixty days which is need of the hour to overcome the chaos and instability in the country. "The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) is actively preparing for the elections under the leadership of three-time Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif", he said while talking to a private news channel. PML-N supreme Nawaz Sharif will return from London and lead the party's poll campaign soon, he added. About the exact date of the elections, he said, it was the duty of the Election Commission of Pakistan to announce a date for general elections but we want early elections. The minister further called upon for ensuring free and fair general elections in the country and giving supremacy to the parliament, to move the country forward.

Pak, Syria to enhance industrial coop

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of Damascus Chamber of Industry, Ghazwan al-Masry during a meeting with Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to Syria, Shahid Akhtar, discussed means of enhancing and developing industrial cooperation between the two countries. According to the SANA news agency, during the meeting held at the Chamber's building in Damascus, Al-Masry stressed that the chamber was ready for full cooperation with the Pakistani side. He said the chamber would also facilitate communication between businessmen and industrialists in both countries.—APP

Briefs

Youth future depends on economic stability

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal said that the youth were the greatest asset of any country and a stable economy was directly linked with their bright future. He said this while talking to a Private news channel here on Monday. He said the youth should be given the opportunity to participate as respected partners in decision-making. "The youth talent can be utilized for addressing current socioeconomic challenges of the country," he added. He said, "The political grooming of youngsters will ensure a sincere and mature political leadership in the country." Replying to a question, he said, "Economic recovery on a fast track is the top priority of the present government." "The country is now on the right track after its agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and this 'Stand by Arrangement' will be helpful in the economic turnaround of Pakistan."—DNA

Death anniversary of Alam Lohar observed

ISLAMABAD: The death anniversary of renowned Punjabi folk singer Alam Lohar was observed on Monday. He was born in 1928 in the village of Achh in the district Gujarat of Punjab. He developed a new style of singing with "Chimta". Alam Lohar was famous for his rendition of "Heer Waris Shah" along with other songs such as "Saif-ul-Malook" and "Jugni". He was awarded Pride of Performance in 1979 by the government of Pakistan. Alam Lohar died on July 3, 1979, in a road accident. He was buried in Lalamusa.—APP

8 held, over 37 kg drugs recovered

MEHTAB PIRZADA
RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Pakistan in their ongoing operations against drug traffickers on Monday, nabbed eight accused including a woman, and recovered over 37 kg of drugs from their possession, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman. He said, in an operation at Islamabad International Airport, 1694 grams charras was recovered from the possession of a Sharjah-bound passenger, resident of Banu, going on flight no ER-703. In another operation near Tarnol Phatak, ANF intercepted a rickshaw and a car and arrested three accused, residents of Islamabad and Peshawar, and recovered 11 kg charras from their possession. In the third operation in the Lakpass area in Quetta, 10 kg charras and five kg Ice drug were recovered from secret cavities of a car. Drugs were being smuggled to Quetta from Dalbandin.

Literature for children

Experts stress importance of child-centric approach

By employing this approach, he said educators and authors can empower adolescents to understand and appreciate diverse subjects

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Experts have emphasized the importance of incorporating children into literature activities for nurturing their minds, needs and interests. Talking to media here Monday, an esteemed scholar Professor Dr. Ravish Nadim underscored the significance of children's literature and stressed the need for using a language accessible

to pre-teen children when crafting literature, stories, and humor targeted towards them. "For pre-teen children, it is crucial to employ 50 commonly used words from their daily language," he stated. He said that by using familiar vocabulary, writers can establish a deeper connection with young readers and facilitate better comprehension. Turning his attention to literature tailored for teenagers, Dr. Ravish suggested

that content should be presented using 100-word sentences. He emphasized that when introducing concepts like Shakespeare, science, or ethics to young minds, it is imperative to convey complex ideas in simple and accessible language. b By employing this approach, he said educators and authors can empower adolescents to understand and appreciate diverse subjects. Dr. Ravish raised concerns about the lack of children's involve-

ment in the manufacturing process of literature in Pakistan and noted that adults predominantly write, read, and critique children's literature, with little input from the target audience. Moreover, he said that national-level conferences and forums on literature often exclude children from active participation. He highlighted the importance of including children in these platforms, giving them a voice in shaping the literature that di-

rectly impacts their growth and development. Furthermore, Dr. Ravish emphasized the significance of incorporating cartoons in storytelling. "Cartoons serve as a powerful medium to engage young readers, sparking their imagination and fostering a love for literature" he added. He said that visual elements enhance the overall reading experience, making stories more accessible and captivating for children.



ISLAMABAD: Senator Danesh Kumar called on the Acting-President, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, Islamabad.—DNA

Gulzar exposes Modi's evil designs

ISLAMABAD: All Parties Hurriyat Conference vice chairman Ghulam Ahmed Gulzar has said that additional deployment of Indian troops in Kashmir under the pretext of security for Amaranth Yatra has made lives of Kashmiris miserable. Gulzar in a statement issued in Srinagar said, blanket security is provided to facilitate Amaranth pilgrims whereas Kashmiri Muslims are deprived of performing their religious rites including Eid congregation prayers, Kashmir media service reported. Expressing serious concern over the heavy deployment of Indian forces he said that under the grab of yatra, Modi regime is bringing more and more Hindus to Kashmir with the ill intention. He said that Kashmiris have never opposed the Amaranth Yatra but Modi is using this event for Hindu dominance to impose its devilish Hindutva agenda on Muslims. APMC vice chairman said that large scale movement of yatratis is disastrous for already fragile environment and it will

impact water bodies, glaciers, wild life, forests and lives of local inhabitants who have been kept under siege for about four consecutive years now. He said that RSS regime is hell bent on wiping out Muslims from Kashmir and yatra is used as a tool to create sense of fear among Muslims. Besides, Indian forces have intensified its genocidal campaign. Forcing Kashmiri Muslims to chant Hindu slogans, stopping Muslim girls from wearing Abaya, opening of wine shops in large scale, introduction of drug culture through its agents and promoting vulgarity is aimed at distracting Kashmiris through cultural invasion. The identity, culture, natural resource, employment religion, honour, dignity and most importantly existence of Kashmiri Muslims is under severe threat, he said and urged Muslims to get united to foil this cultural aggression and save their identity which is under Hindutva attack. Ghulam Ahmed Gulzar rejected the Indian malicious

propaganda campaign that Kashmiris are tired and made it clear that Kashmiris have sacrificed the lives of over six hundred thousand souls for the sacred and supreme cause of freedom. They will never ever forget or betray their blood of martyrs come what may. India has deployed its one million troops in the occupied terrorism if it deploys its whole army in Kashmir still defeat is its destiny as Kashmiris will never give up. The morale of valiant Kashmiris is as high as Himalayas; they can be killed but not defeated. Ghulam Ahmed Gulzar praised Pakistan for its consistent support to the just struggle of Kashmir freedom movement and expressed hope that Pakistan will expedite its diplomatic efforts for the peaceful solution of Kashmir dispute. He also appreciated the Kashmir and Pakistan diaspora for their intense and sincere efforts to promote Kashmir cause and expose Indian hegemonic designs.—APP

EU's perception of China false

DNA

ISLAMABAD: European Union's perception of China as a threat to the bloc's economic security does not have any justification, says a report carried by Gwadar Pro on Monday. European Commission and the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs issued the Joint Communication on European Economic Security Strategy on June 20. EU policy makers labeled it timely policy re-adjustment mitigating socio-economic and geopolitical spillover repercussions of ongoing confrontation at the international stage disturbing economies, communities and industries alike. Initially, it seems to form a common framework for maintaining and securing economic security through the promotion of the EU's economic base and competitiveness, guarding against risks, and partnering with the broadest possible range of countries to address shared concerns and interests. But the EU ESS potentially targets China without naming it. Comparative study of EU-USA and EU-China bilateral relations reveals that the EU is directly dependent on the US's geopolitical policies and geostrategic proxies. Thus the EU's perception of China as a threat to the bloc's economic security does not have any justification. It seems that the EU's new proposed ESS is a replica of Trump's protectionism and imposing of many socio-economic, trade and technological sanctions against China. It is suggested that mutual economic cooperation and economic security should be peacefully pursued so that neither side uses trade or supply chains as a weapon against the other. Economic security threat tagging will only sow seeds of suspicion leading towards more economic insecurity.

IMF program to boost economic stability and growth

ISLAMABAD: Chief Executive Officer Pakistan Furniture Council Mian Kashif Ashfaq on Monday said if implemented effectively, an International Monetary Fund (IMF) program will serve as a catalyst for economic stability, growth, and long-term development. Chairing a PFC board of directors meeting, he said an IMF bailout package will offer several benefits to Pakistan and its primary benefit is the provision of immediate financial support to address a country's balance of payment crisis and economic instability, said a press release. The package provides a substantial infusion of foreign exchange reserves, which can stabilize the currency and prevent a further decline in its value. "This stability fosters confidence among investors, both domestic and foreign, and helps fortify economic stability. By implementing economic reforms, such as fiscal consolidation measures, tax reforms, privatization of state-owned enterprises, and improvements in governance, Pakistan can achieve long-term economic stability and sustainable growth", he added. He said an IMF bailout signals the international community's support for the country's economic policies and can enhance investor confidence. This confidence attracts foreign direct investment (FDI), as investors view the country as more stable and less risky. He said increased FDI can spur economic growth, create jobs, and enhance productivity in various sectors, contributing to long-term development.

'Determination of finance minister is admirable'

ISLAMABAD: Former President of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt said on Monday the Finance Minister Ishaq Dar prevented the country from becoming bankrupt despite more than expected delay in the loan by the IMF. During this time, he continuously assured the nation that Pakistan will not default, and ensured all the repayments on time, which is laudable, he said. Shahid Rasheed Butt said that the commitment of the finance minister is commendable; we are proud of him and acknowledge his dedication. In a statement issued here today, he said that now is the time to take substantial steps to correct the direction of the country's economy and stabilize it.—APP

Gwadar's 1.2 MGD water plant completed: GPA

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In order to provide clean water to residents of Gwadar, 1.2 MGD seawater desalination plant has finally been completed as per schedule. Formal inauguration is all set to be executed by Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif during his likely visit to Gwadar after Eid Holidays. Talking to Gwadar Pro, Gwadar Port Authority (GPA) project director Dawood Baloch said water desalination plant has been done and dusted with a grant of Rs. 2 billion from China in collaboration with Gwadar Port Authority (GPA), National Engineer-

ing Services Pakistan and China Harbor Engineering Company (CHEC). Along with completion of Civil, mechanical and electrical work, Central room of 1.2 MGD desalination water plant is now up and running, he informed. Almost 90 percent manpower and human resource, he said, have been hired from local market of Gwadar and Balochistan. On a query, he said that all related equipment and apparatus have been installed in befitting manner to keep desalination water plant functional with full capacity. Alongside construction of 1.2 MGD desalination plant, an around 1 kilo meter

long water supply line from plant site to Gwadar city's main water supply network has also been laid down, he added. Completion of 1.2 MGD Water Desalination Plant, spreading over approximately one acre land area, reflects China's support for poor people of Gwadar desperately longing for clean water over the last many years. Besides drinkable water being supplied to people of Gwadar through water reservoirs, 1.2 MGD Water Desalination Plant project will be another source of clean water that will help meet the water demand of the Gwadar city and Gwadar port.



RAWALPINDI: A street vendor busy in watering seasonal fruit leechi to keep it fresh at Murree Road.—APP



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Ukraine's suffering

Light Perpetual, Francis Spufford's 2021 novel, begins with a V-2 attack upon a department store in London – inspired by the real-life bombing of a Woolworths in 1944. Five young lives are destroyed in an instant, which the author describes in a few short pages: we have seen only the briefest glimpse of spindly-kneed Alec and twins Jo and Val before their deaths. "What has gone is not just the children's present existence," he observes. "It's all the futures they won't get, too. All the would-be's, might-be's, could-be's of the decades to come. How can that loss be measured ...?" Spufford attempts that greater reckoning by writing the lives they might have lived: in many regards inconsequential, full of hopes and disappointments and failures, petty school cruelties, love, doggy dealings, violence and mental illness – yet inherently valuable. What might have seemed a literary conceit reminds us, devastatingly, what is lost when a life is cut short. More than 550 children have died since Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February last year: more than one a day. Hundreds more have been injured. Mourning the dead, the country's president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, has written not only of the destruction, but of what might have been: "Many of them could have become famous scholars, artists, sports champions, contributing to Ukraine's history."

On Tuesday, more names were added to the horrifying tally, with the attack on a pizza restaurant in a busy shopping area in the eastern city of Kramatorsk, in Donetsk. Four of the 10 confirmed deaths were children; at least 56 people were injured, some critically. In Ukraine, Russian forces have not only shown a ruthless disregard for civilians, but frequently appear to have targeted them – as they have in other wars. When children are killed, the sense of something being stolen is particularly visceral and compelling. Yet so much has been lost in Ukraine, even as many away from the frontline try to live somewhat as they did before the war, and as Ukrainian culture has flourished in defiance of Russian aggression. Flourishing lives have been struck down or stunted, and those already struggling have lost footholds which might have seen them on to surer ground – an estimated one in four Ukrainians are at risk of severe mental health conditions because of the conflict, according to the World Health Organization. Some of these losses will be felt elsewhere. Farmland strewn with mines lies untended: the crops that would have been grown might have sustained families far away. The cost of reconstruction has already been estimated at \$411bn. Whenever this war comes to an end, Ukraine will need support for years to come. But it is impossible to calculate what is lost when tens of millions are under assault, and so many must be mourned. How does one account for what could have been?



Underlying issues fertile ground for unrest

The riots in France, which erupted nationwide after a teenager of North African descent was shot dead by police during a traffic stop on June 27, have shaken the country and shocked the rest of the world. So far, more than 3,000 people have been detained, with the violence accompanied by widespread arson, looting and vandalism. Hundreds of police and firefighters have been injured in the worst social upheaval in the country for years. The riots have forced Emmanuel Macron to delay what would have been the first state visit to Germany by a French president in 23 years which was scheduled to start Sunday evening. Racial discrimination in law enforcement seems to have been the direct cause of the riots – there have been 21 fatal police traffic-stop shootings in France since 2020, most of the victims being of Black or Arab origin. Yet the latest killing was just the lighter that sparked the gas. The unleashing of violence and fury on such a scale reflects the wider problems in French society, such as poverty, joblessness and increasing social alienation. By the end of 2020, there were 10 million French people living in poverty, which was eight times more than in 1980. The COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine conflict have further aggravated the problem. Moreover, immigrants and their descendants are more likely to be unemployed than non-immigrants in general. The jobless rate among immigrants reached 12.9 percent in France in 2020, compared with 7.4 percent for non-immigrants. According to the French National Institute of Statistics, the living conditions of the country's 7 million immigrants are marked by greater poverty and difficulties related to employment. For years France has been applying a "color-blind" approach to public policy to reflect its tradition of universalism in the hope of uniting all French citizens regardless of their color and race. It even removed the word "race" from the country's Constitution arguing the term was outdated. But turning a blind eye to the sensitive issue has not prevented the gap between the reality and ideal from widening, nor has it helped the government properly address racial disparities that are becoming more acute within the country. France, like many other European countries, has taken in a large number of immigrants and refugees from North Africa after the "Arab Spring" and the wars and chaos caused by the US-led Western powers in the Middle East. This has aggravated racial tensions. Many people in France have already called on the government to recognize that universalism is a myth and explore alternative ways to address the problems that have emerged. At the same time, it should be noted that the violence is being exploited by some who hope to make trouble for Macron, who has been a vocal critic of Europe's Washington-led stance on the Ukraine conflict. With the immediate anger seemingly burning itself out, it is to be hoped that order can be restored in France at an early date before the flames of unrest are fanned and spread throughout an already troubled Europe.

China and others grapple with understanding what the Wagner Group revolt means

James Dorsey

Russian military personnel surrendered without a fight when Mr. Prigozhin took control of Rostov-on-Don, a city of one million people and home to the headquarters of Russia's Southern Military District, widely viewed as one of the military's most competent units. Similarly, Wagner fighters advanced along the M4 expressway to within 200 kilometres of Moscow, with no attempt by the military to stop them. A Deutsche Welle fact check of videos circulating

The sigh of relief in a swath of land stretching from China to Africa's Atlantic coast was audible when Yevgeny Prigozhin, a Russian oligarch who heads the Wagner Group, a state-funded private military company, called off his mutiny against President Vladimir Putin's military and security establishment. So were the concerns and unanswered questions the revolt raised about Mr. Putin's grip on power and the risks involved in the global rise of private military companies in the minds of Chinese, Central Asian, Middle Eastern, and African leaders. The core question is the Russian military's role. It remains unclear whether the military held back on Mr. Putin's orders or hedged its bets. Also unanswered is whether Mr. Prigozhin enjoyed support from within the military ranks. Russian military personnel surrendered without a fight when Mr. Prigozhin took control of Rostov-on-Don, a city of one million people and home to the headquarters of Russia's Southern Military District, widely viewed as one of the military's most competent units. Similarly, Wagner fighters advanced along the M4 expressway to within 200 kilometres of Moscow, with no attempt by the military to stop them. A Deutsche Welle fact check of videos circulating on social media allegedly showing the Russian Air Force bombing Wagner on the M4 concluded that they were fake. "Where was the Russian Air Force? Wagner may have had tanks, lightweight anti-aircraft systems, and some ground-to-air missiles, but long-range anti-missile and anti-aircraft defences have not been part of their modus operandi. Consequently, the mercenary convoys en route to Moscow could have been vulnerable to aerial assault," said Alessandro Arduino, an authority on private military companies. The question marks are compounded by reports that General Sergei Surovkin, the former top Russian military commander in Ukraine, knew in advance of Mr. Prigozhin's planned revolt. Another senior military officer, Lt. Gen. Vladimir Alekseyev, appeared on video chatting with Mr. Prigozhin after the Rostov-on-Don takeover. In addition, General Valery Gerasimov, the military's chief of staff and a target of Mr. Prigozhin's ire, has not been seen in public since the failed revolt. To be sure, Messrs. Suro-

vikin and Alekseyev issued separate videos criticizing Mr. Prigozhin and calling on him to halt his revolt. In addition, Putin sent a brigade loyal to Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov rather than a Russian military unit to Rostov-on-Don to confront the Wagner Group. Even though it did not come to a clash, Mr. Kadyrov is likely to see the mutiny as an opportunity to replace the Wagner Group. Without answers to the questions, Mr. Putin will be hard-pressed to demonstrate unity among Russia's military and political elite and that he retains complete control. That will affect foreign leaders' assessment of Mr. Putin as a reliable and stable partner. The Wagner revolt and questions about Mr. Putin's grip on power have diminished Russia's status as a credible security partner that has already been called into question by its inability to subjugate Ukraine. In addition, Mr. Putin's foreign friends in China, Eurasia, the Middle East, and Africa have long felt uneasy about the Russian invasion of Ukraine, even if they were not condemning it publicly or adhering to sanctions imposed by the United States, Europe, and others. Except for China, mediation proposals by African leaders, Indonesian President Joko Widodo, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and former Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett were primarily intended to demonstrate neutrality in the Ukraine conflict. So was China's plan, but China plays in a different league because many view it as the only power with real influence in Moscow. China has sought to capitalise in Central Asia on Russia's diminished status, where Russia was long seen as the region's security guarantor, and US neglect of the former Soviet republics. In May, President Xi Jinping unveiled a grand development plan focused on infrastructure and trade at a meeting in Beijing with the leaders of the five Central Asian states. Rather than wanting to replace Russia, China hopes to emerge as the dominant power in the region with Russia as its junior partner. If Ukraine wasn't enough of a headache, uncertainty about Mr. Putin's status is compounded by a lack of clarity about the future of the Wagner Group, particularly in the Middle East and Africa, where the Russian company may be first among equals, but Chinese and other private military companies also operate. Russia's defense ministry may be able to

control the group in Ukraine and Syria but could find subjugating Wagner more difficult in Africa. In contrast to Ukraine and Syria, countries with a strong Russian military presence, Russia has far fewer, if any, forces in the African nations where Wagner operates. Wagner has little incentive to surrender its positions in Africa, where it generates income from bolstering governments and warlords and lucrative mining deals. Wagner operates in Libya, Mali, Sudan, the Central African Republic, Chad, Mozambique, and Madagascar. Media reports said an unknown drone had attacked a Wagner base in Libya south of the rebel-held city of Benghazi days after the mutiny. Wagner positions in Syria were reportedly raided by Russian troops, detaining commanders of the group. Nevertheless, Wagner, acting independently, could be a concern for Chinese private military companies on the African continent. In contrast to Wagner, which effectively operates as a mercenary and combat force, Chinese companies, like Beijing DeWe Security Service, Huaxin Zhong An Security Group, and China Security Technology Group, serve primarily as protectors of Chinese investments, assets, and personnel. As a result, they have little contact with Wagner. Mali could emerge as a test case of what Wagner's post-revolt positioning could mean for Chinese companies. Mali has expelled United Nations peacekeepers scheduled to withdraw from the country before the end of this year, relying instead on Wagner. In 2021, Malian security forces freed three Chinese nationals abducted by unknown gunmen from a construction site in the country's north. In the future, China may have to turn to Wagner in an emergency if it does not deploy its own private military. Moreover, Russia's experience with Wagner raises the spectre of military forces revolting against ruling elites when many in China, Central Asia, the Middle East, and Africa believe that the era of popular revolts has run out of steam. That may not be an immediate domestic concern in China, but it is a worry given China's preference for stability in countries across Eurasia, the Middle East, and Africa, with which it maintains close economic and other ties. For now, China, like others, sighs in relief. However, the last word on the Wagner mutiny fallout has yet to be spoken.

A map that threatened South Asia

Qamar Bashir



In recent years, the rise of Hindutva has been a significant factor in India's political polarization. In addition, it has led to an increase in communal violence and discrimination against minorities. It will continue to gain popularity under Modi, resulting in increased political polarization and violence. Previously, it was confined to India, but India is now poised to spread it to its neighbors. It has neither the capability nor the capacity to treat its neighbors like the Nazi Germany had and it did to its neighbors, and if it attempts to do so

While inaugurating the new parliament building on 26 May 2023, Modi unveiled a mural depicting Akhund Baharat, a pillar of Hindutva philosophy. This peculiar mural reflected the desire and intent of the BJP to recreate the ancient Mauryan Empire built by King Ashoka by imposing BJP's poisonous rule over the same regions that were governed by Ashoka thousands of years ago. This encompasses the contemporary nations of Nepal, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives. In spite of India's assertion that the map depicted ancient history and not contemporary politics, it sparked a dangerous and damaging diplomatic dispute in the region. In 1923, Vinayak Damodar Savarkar formulated Hindutva, a poisonous ideology that encompasses the cultural justification of Hindu nationalism. The Sangh Parivar consists of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and other organizations. The Hindutva movement is a form of right-wing extremism that adheres to a concept of homogenized majority and cultural hegemony and has been described as "fascist in the classical sense." Some have also characterized Hindutva as a separatist ideology that fosters religious intolerance and imposes Hindu hegemony on India. Being fascist in nature, it is primarily based on the following five tenets: India is a Hindu nation; all Indians, regardless of their religious beliefs, are Hindus; Hinduism is a superior civilization; other religions, such as Islam and Christianity, are foreign and harmful to India; and Hindus must unite to protect their culture and traditions. This puritanic philosophy is like racist philosophy of Nazi Germany which in its attempt to purify Germany from racial impurities systematically killed 5 to 6 million Jews during World War II about two-thirds of the Jewish population of Europe and killed between 50 and 85 million people of many nationality both military and civilian. Later this demon of racial superiority killed its own creator, inflicted humiliating defeat to the entire German nation and divided Germany into two blocks and separated them socially, politically, financially and economically for 41 years. India, if not set its course right, it is argued, will face the same fate. The ideologies of both Nazism and Hindutva are based on the superiority of the race and the religion, and both emphasize the significance of national identity and cultural integrity. They both promote the notion that their respective nations are superior and regard other cultures as a threat. Hindutva is even more pernicious because it is based on religion rather than racism, as Germany was able to rid itself of the curse of racism after a crushing defeat, but religious beliefs are never eradicated because they provide a sense of community and belonging; people who share the same religious beliefs often feel a strong sense of connection with each other, which can make them resistant to changing their religious beliefs. In contrast, racial beliefs do not always foster the same sense of community. Many religious beliefs contain a strong moral component that adherents believe is always correct, making them resistant to altering their religious beliefs, even when confronted with evidence to the contra-

ry. Religious beliefs are revered and should never be questioned. They may become quiescent for a time but will reappear when fertile soil is provided. The BJP has made this fertile territory available to the Hindus of India. They have radicalized all Hindus through the poison of religious superiority and purity, which is rapidly expanding throughout India's entire social and political fabric. History demonstrates that the philosophy of religious purity has caused countless wars and inflicted unimaginable suffering on humanity. During the Crusades, 1.7 million people perished despite the world's population being only 300 million at the time. During the inquisition in European history, the Catholic Church persecuted and executed over a million individuals suspected of heresy. Hutu extremists murdered approximately 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus in Rwanda. Researchers are baffled as to why Modi depicted Ashoka's map, given that Ashoka and Modi are polar opposites. Ashoka was a Buddhist king who adhered to the tenets of nonviolence and compassion. His decrees emphasized the importance of tolerance, understanding, and respect for all individuals, regardless of religion or social standing. Modi, on the other hand, is a Hindu nationalist infamous for his sacrilegious policies against religious minorities, encouraging and protecting the mob to inflict inhuman violence on religious minorities by torching their places of worship, destroying their homes, and killing the adults who were sometimes the only breadwinners in the family. Muslims, India's greatest religious minority, are the most affected. In recent years, they have been the target of numerous violent assaults. Since the founding of India, more than 150,000 religious minorities have been killed in riots and premeditated attacks. For instance At least 400 incidents of violence against Muslims, including mob lynchings, rapes, and homicides, were reported in 2022 alone. Ashoka believed in opportunity equality, but under Modi's autocratic rules, minorities confront employment and education discrimination. Dalits (the lowest caste in the Hindu hierarchy) are less likely to be employed than non-Dalits, and they are more likely to be employed in low-paying professions, according to a 2021 study by the Indian Institute of Dalit Studies. India's domestic organizations and international human rights organizations, such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, have taken notice of and condemned this offense against humanity. The US Commission on International Religious Freedom categorized India as a Tier-2 persecutor of religious minorities. In a 2018 report, USCIRF accused Hindu nationalist groups of using violence, intimidation, and harassment against non-Hindus as part of a campaign to "Saffronize" India. A third of state governments enforced anti-conversion and/or anti-cow slaughter laws against non-Hindus, and rioters engaged in violence against Muslims whose families have been involved in the dairy, leather, or beef trades for generations and against Christians for proselytizing. The BJP is replicating what Hitler did to Nazi Germany. It has been injecting the poisonous Hindutva and Akhund Bharat philosophies, which have now attained the status of a cult in which adherents are willing to be slain or kill members of

other religions. After the publication of the map, India has shown a malicious intent to export this philosophy of hatred to the neighboring countries, putting the peace in the region and the world in grave danger and provoking a severe response from the affected nations and the international community. China's foreign ministry stated, "China is gravely concerned by India's recent release of a map that violates the status quo and threatens China's sovereignty and territorial integrity." - Pakistan stated, "India's map is an egregious violation of our territorial integrity and sovereignty." We strongly condemn this action and demand India withdraw it immediately." The foreign ministry of Bangladesh stated that the map "seriously violates" Bangladesh's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and that it represents "a deliberate attempt to undermine Bangladesh's legitimate interests." Nepal's reaction was the most severe. In response, Nepal proclaimed a new "Greater Nepal" that encompasses significant portions of India, including the strip of land connecting the north-eastern states to the rest of the country. The Kathmandu newspaper quoted former Nepalese Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli as saying, "It cannot be called fair if a country like India, which sees itself as an ancient and powerful country and a model of democracy, includes Nepali territories on its map and hangs the map in parliament." There were reactions from other countries and the international community as well. The United States expressed concern about the map, saying that it "could raise tensions in the region." The European Union said it "could have a negative impact on regional stability. A UN spokesperson said that the organization was "aware of the concerns" that had been raised and that it was "monitoring the situation." The U.S.-based non-profit Freedom House downgraded India's democracy from "free" to "partially free," while the Sweden-based V-Dem Institute has called India an "electoral autocracy." India's position has also slipped on the Democracy Index published by The Economist Intelligence Unit. Not only neighboring countries and the international community protested but also the nineteen opposition parties of India but on a different note. A joint statement issued by them on 23rd, May, 2023, stated that Modi's decision to "inaugurate the new parliament building by himself" was "not only a grave insult but a direct assault on our democracy which demands a commensurate response." The parties collectively boycotted the event, adding that "the soul of democracy has been sucked out from the parliament." In recent years, the rise of Hindutva has been a significant factor in India's political polarization. In addition, it has led to an increase in communal violence and discrimination against minorities. It will continue to gain popularity under Modi, resulting in increased political polarization and violence. Previously, it was confined to India, but India is now poised to spread it to its neighbors. It has neither the capability nor the capacity to treat its neighbors like the Nazi Germany had and it did to its neighbors, and if it attempts to do so, it will suffer the same fate as Nazi Germany. According to history, the demon of religious superiority and sanctity always consumes its creator.

Briefs

Pak demands action from Swedish govt

FROM PAGE 01
the future. During the meeting, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Monday heaped praise on Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir during a cabinet meeting for his "key role" in securing \$3 billion from Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) that eventually contributed to securing the International Monetary Fund (IMF) bailout. "Army Chief General Asim Munir played a key role in bringing \$2 billion from Saudi Arabia and \$1 billion from the UAE," the premier told his cabinet in a televised meeting. He briefed the cabinet about the nine-month stand-by agreement that his government reached with the Washington-based lender last week. He also thanked IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva for her role in the bailout package. "The first instalment from the IMF will be received in July," PM Shehbaz told the ministers. He added that China helped Pakistan several months before the deal just like it has done in the past, adding that if Beijing had agreed to roll over \$5 billion then things would have been different.

PM orders action...

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Furthermore, the committees directed the acceleration of operations to apprehend those who have thus far eluded the reach of the law. During the meeting, FIA officials provided an update on the progress made in the Lahore and Faisalabad zones, disclosing that 41 human smugglers involved in the tragedy have been arrested. To date, a total of 149 cases have been registered against the suspects following the completion of five inquiries.

Pakistan, Japan...

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He said Pakistan and Japan were longstanding friends and share a special bond based on deep rooted linkages that go far in history and time. The people of Pakistan carry a deep sentiment of warmth and affection for Japan and the Japanese people. We have always stood with each other in times of need, he said. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said last year, they had seen new energy and vigour in the relationship through continued high-level exchanges. "I also had the honour to meet Minister Hayashi at Phnom Penh, Cambodia on 4 August 2022 on the sidelines of the 29th Ministerial Meeting of ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF). Today we continued our discussions from that meeting," he added.

Israeli troops...

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triggered mounting alarm from Washington to the Arab world, without so far opening the way to a resumption of political negotiations that have been stalled for almost a decade. The Palestinian Ministry of Health has released a list of the names and ages of the eight people killed by the Israeli forces in the Jenin refugee camp. Al Araby TV channel correspondents and other journalists said they were directly targeted by Israeli live fire while reporting on events in the Jenin refugee camp.

OIC, Qatar condemn Israeli acts

FROM PAGE 01
warned of the fading opportunities for peace and the widening of the cycle of violence due to the continuous Israeli escalation in the occupied Palestinian territory. It also stressed the need for the international community to move urgently to provide the necessary protection for the Palestinian people, and to oblige Israel to stop its "flagrant violations" of international law and force it to respect the decisions of international legitimacy.



MILAN, ITALY: Deputy Editor Islamabad POST and known business figure of Pakistan Abid Raza being welcomed in Italy by Khalid Gondal President PML N Italy and Afzaal Gondal leading business figure of Italy. Both sides discussed matters of mutual interest. Khalid Gondal informed Abid Raza about PNL N structure in Italy and its contribution towards promotion of bilateral relations. - DNA

Wimbledon 2023: Iga Swiatek wins opener, Pegula advances

Rublev is one of 17 Russian and Belarusian players in the men's and women's singles draws after they were banned in 2022 following Russia's invasion of Ukraine

LONDON: World number one Iga Swiatek cruised into the Wimbledon second round with a 6-1 6-3 mauling of China's Zhu Lin on Monday in a fine start to her quest for a first Grand Slam title on grass. The 22-year-old Pole, who won the French Open title for the third time last month to make it four Grand Slam crowns, has yet to get past the fourth round of the London major. Zhu, ranked 34th in the world, earned a break point in the first game but Swiatek won 11 points in a row to sprint into a 3-0 lead. Another break put Swiatek, a renowned slider on clay and hard courts who has often struggled with her movement on grass, firmly in the driving seat. Zhu saved two set points at 5-0 but Swiatek sealed the first set a game later with a powerful crosscourt forehand winner. The pair traded breaks early in the second before Swiatek, who pulled out of her Bad Homburg semi-final on Friday due to illness, earned a second one and was 4-3 up when play was interrupted due to rain. It resumed after the roof on Court One was shut but Swiatek needed only seven minutes to win the two games she needed and sealed victory with a backhand winner. She is joined in the second round by fourth seed Jessica Pegula, who beat fellow American Lauren Davis 6-2 6-7 (8-10) 6-3. Andrey Rublev became the first Russian through to the sec-



ond round at Wimbledon as the seventh seed breezed past Australian Max Purcell 6-3 7-5 6-4 on Monday. Rublev is one of 17 Russian and Belarusian players in the men's and women's singles draws after they were banned in 2022 following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Wimbledon was the only one of the four Grand Slam tournaments to ban Russian and Belarusian players last year - a decision that resulted in ranking points being taken away from the event by both the ATP and WTA Tours. As part of their return, players from two nations are playing as neutrals and must sign a "waiver" pledging not to support Russian President Vladimir Putin's regime. Players are not allowed to receive state funding or have sponsorship from Russian or Belarusian companies. Rublev, who wrote "No War" on a camera lens at a tournament shortly after Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, was given a warm welcome by the crowd on a breezy Court Three. He looked comfortable on the grass as he proved a class above 64th-ranked Purcell to reach the second round. "Very happy to be back here after two years," Rublev said on court. "I'm happy to win my first match. To play in London it's a special feeling. To play at 11am and have a full stadium it's doubly special." - Agencies

LHC lifts stay on PCB Chairman election

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Monday lifted a stay order on the election of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman. Justice Anwar Hussain withdrew the injunctive order while hearing a petition filed by the PCB through its counsel Advocate Intiaz Rasheed Siddiqui. Last week, the LHC had stayed the election of the PCB chairman and sought replies from the federal government and other respondents to two identical petitions before two separate benches. During today's hearing, the court lifted the stay order and sent the case to LHC Chief Justice Muhammad Ameer Bhatti. Justice Hussain remarked that similar petitions had already been fixed before an LHC bench, suggesting that they be consolidated and assigned to that same bench. The elections for the new PCB chairman, after Najam Sethi - chief of the interim management committee - stepped down, were scheduled for June 27 with Zaka Ashraf, the prime minister's nominee, set for the hot seat. The matter went to the Balochistan High Court after Gul Mohammad Kakar, a member of the interim management committee, filed a petition challenging the elections, saying that the notification issued by the Board of Governors (BoG) on June 22 was against the PCB constitution. - DNA

Milan at crossroads after Tonali, Maldini shown door

MILAN: AC Milan fans have been hit with a painful double whammy after star midfielder Sandro Tonali was sold to Newcastle while they were still reeling from club icon Paolo Maldini's sudden sacking. Tonali was more than just a key man for Milan, he is a boyhood fan of the club considered a potential future captain who was the connection between the pitch and the San Siro stands. He was also a player who had repeatedly said in the past that he wanted to become what the Italians call a 'bandiera', a symbol of the club like Maldini and Franco Baresi before him. "I want to stay here as long as I can. If you ask me today I'd say for the rest of

my career," he said last winter. "But it's too early to make those sort of promises, desire isn't the only thing that matters in our lives as footballers, there are a lot of other factors... you can't make long-term predictions." The 23-year-old took a pay cut two years ago in order to stay at Milan following his deeply disappointing first season at the San Siro, on loan from Brescia. It turned out to be a good decision for both him and Milan as he was crucial to them winning their first league title in over a decade in 2022 and re-establishing them as a force in Europe following a run to the semi-finals in the most recent Champions League. A battering by local rivals Inter in the

last four notwithstanding the mood at Milan remained optimistic, boosted by star attacker Rafael Leao extending his contract with the club until 2028. But then technical director Maldini and his sporting director partner Frederic Massara, the pair who built the Scudetto-winning team, were dumped by Milan, sparking anger among fans and bewilderment among the players. Tonali's departure is another bitter pill to swallow for supporters after stars Gianluigi Donnarumma and Franck Kessie left as free agents in recent years, even if Milan will bank a huge sum that can be reinvested in the team (although Brescia will receive a reported 15 percent of a fee which could rise to as high as 80 million euros). It's also yet another sign that, like others among Europe's old guard, the seven-time continental kings simply cannot compete with the financial might of the Premier League and a handful of other super clubs. - APP

Ayesha wins three medals in Taekwondo C'ship



BANGKOK: Pakistan's prodigy Ayesha Ayaz won three medals in International Taekwondo Championship on Monday in Bangkok, Thailand. The 12-year-old - who belongs to Sawat - surprised the world with her exceptional skills in the Championship by winning the medals in the Under-12 category. In the 42kg class, she defeated players from three countries and bagged one silver and two bronze medals. More than 2,200 athletes from 40 countries participated in the event. It must be noted that Ayesha won a gold medal at the Al-Fujira International event in Dubai earlier this year, including a total of seven medals she has won at the international level. She was the only girl from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to go to Thailand to participate in the championship. Earlier on Sunday (July 2), a fourteen-member Pakistan taekwondo team was announced to represent the country in the 19th Asian Games to be held in Hangzhou (China) from September 23. Out of fourteen, the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) will sponsor 10 while the Pakistan Taekwondo Federation (PTF) will look after the travelling expenses of the rest of the four members. According to the details available with The News, two officials, Lt Col (rt) Raja Wasim Ahmad (President PTF) and Omar Saeed (CEO TFF) trips will be self-sponsored. Male athlete Mazhar Abbas and lady athlete Fateemah Tuz Zahraa will be sponsored by the taekwondo federation. The PSB will sponsor ten athletes and officials. These include Yousef Karami (coach from Iran), Saba Shamim (team head), Seongoh Choi (Korea-coach), and Najia Rasool (female coach). Haroon Khan, Mohammad Arbaz Khan, Hamza Omar Saeed, Naqash Hamdani, Naila, and Aqdasullah Qadeer - all these six athletes will be sponsored by the PSB. The fourteen-member squad includes six officials and eight athletes meaning only 55 percent of the contingent members will fight for medals at the Games. - Agencies

Asif Bhatti stranded at Nanga Parbat with 'snow blindness'

LAHORE: Pakistan's mountaineer Asif Bhatti is reportedly stranded at Nanga Parbat with snow blindness. According to the Alpine Club of Pakistan, Bhatti is stuck at C4, which is an altitude between 7,500m and 8,000m, on the ninth-highest mountain in the world. "Asif Bhatti, a Pakistani climber, is stuck at C4 with snow blindness at altitude 7,500m - 8,000m at Nanga Parbat 8,126m. He needs help," said Karrar Haidri, who is the secretary of Alpine Club of Pakistan. A group of climbers from the Karakorum expedition in Shimshal are preparing for a rescue mission to help him. They are currently waiting for helicopters to transport them to the higher camps. The 8,126-metre peak is considered dangerous due to its high fatality rate. The mountain has a daunting ascent along with the risk of unstable glaciers, avalanches and storms. Before its first ascent in 1953, 31 people died attempting to climb the peak which is why it was nicknamed "the Killer Mountain." The mountain is also called "the western anchor of the Himalayas." It has a 22.3% death ratio, making it the third most dangerous mountain peak in the world. Earlier, renowned mountaineers Naila Kiani and Samina Baig Sunday became the first Pakistani women to scale Nanga Parbat. Meanwhile, Sajid Sadpara successfully climbed Nanga Parbat without the help of supplementary oxygen and sherpas, local helpers, towards the end of last month. Before summiting Nanga Parbat, Sajid had also scaled the six highest peaks without artificial oxygen. - DNA

Inflation eases for first time..

FORM PAGE 01
inflation reached 29.4 per cent on a year-on-year (YoY) basis in June 2023 as compared to 38 percent in the previous month and 21.3 percent in June 2022. On a month-on-month basis, it decreased to 0.3 percent in January 2023 as compared to an increase of 1.6 percent in the previous month (May 2023) and an increase of 6.3 percent in June 2022. On a year-on-year basis, the top few food commodities that witnessed an increase in prices as compared to the corresponding month of last year included cigarettes (129.20 percent), Tea (113.09 percent), Wheat Flour (89.89 percent), Rice (72.83 percent), Potatoes (64.69 percent), Wheat (62.27 percent), Chicken (57.72 percent), Wheat Products (56.81 percent), Pulse Moong (50.50 percent), Pulse Mash (49.92 percent), Beans (47.60 percent), Ready-made Food (43.04 percent), Sugar (41.64 percent), Fresh Fruits (40.31 percent), Beverages (38.17 percent), Eggs (36.96 percent), Bakery and Confectionery (36.83 percent), Gur (36.60 percent), Milk Fresh (31.8 percent), Condiments and Spices (30.04 percent), Gram Whole (28.42 percent), Pulse Gram (24.14 percent), Cooking Oil (19.62 percent), Meat (18.50 percent), Fresh Vegetables (13.71 percent), Vegetable Ghee (8.90 percent) and Mustard Oil (5.97 percent), while tomatoes came down by 29.57 percent and onion 16.53 percent. The non-food commodities that witnessed an increase during the period on a YoY basis included

PSX sees biggest...

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In the last three trading sessions KSE-100 has increased by 3,834 points (+9.57%)," it said. Among the key stocks to advance, automakers rose 6-7.5 per cent on expectations that import restrictions would be lifted under the IMF deal. Several automakers including Pakistan Suzuki Motor Co had announced prolonged plant closures in 2023, citing import restrictions. Honda Atlas Cars (Pakistan) and Pakistan Suzuki shares rose 7.5pc to hit upper circuits while Indus Motor Company, which markets Toyota cars in the country, gained 6pc. Salman Naqvi, the head of research at Aba Ali Habib Securities, attributed the surge to the staff-level agreement with the Fund for a \$3 billion stand-by arrangement.

PML-N to launch...

FROM PAGE 01
Maryam Nawaz, the authority to handle affairs pertaining to the party and elections. He also directed for constitution of a committee for the election manifesto of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz. The PML-N also decided to launch the election campaign of the party from the current month with public meetings across the country. Nawaz also gave the party leaders instructions to create the party's narrative for the next elections while keeping the youth in mind. Nawaz Sharif also directed the senior party leadership to devise the party's narrative for general election in view of the issues related to youth. "Easy loans for youth and job opportunities will be added to the party's narrative for youth," party sources said. Sources in the PML-N say the party has not yet contacted anyone regarding any electoral alliance. They further claimed that whether the coalition government will enter into an electoral alliance or not has not yet been decided. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had also formed a team to complete the legal work for the return of former premier Nawaz Sharif to Pakistan. During their stay in the UAE, Nawaz and Maryam engaged in important meetings on the political and economic conditions of Pakistan. On the other hand, PML-N supreme Nawaz Sharif is set to depart for Saudi Arabia tomorrow after completing his stay in Dubai. His daughter and PML-N chief organizer Maryam Nawaz will also accompany him.

Briefs

France counts economic cost of unrest

PARIS: The economic cost is mounting in France after the fatal police shooting of a teenager sparked widespread unrest. Some of the worst violence and looting was reported in the southern port city of Marseille, where 400 businesses were vandalized, the local Chamber of Commerce and Industry has revealed. "All types of businesses have been targeted, especially those with valuable merchandise," the head of the chamber for Aix-Marseille-Provence, Jean-Luc Chauvin, told France Info on Sunday. An initial estimate by insurers has put the cost of the damage at more than 100 million (\$109 million), a number that will undoubtedly rise, he added.

According to Chauvin, for some stores it will take months to repair the damage, in particular those that were set on fire or whose stock was completely stolen.

France has been gripped by violent protests since Tuesday, after police in the Paris suburb of Nanterre shot and killed a 17-year-old French-Algerian boy identified as Nahel M. when he reportedly refused to comply during a traffic stop. The officer who fatally shot Nahel was swiftly arrested and charged with homicide, although the incident triggered a wave of nationwide violence that has since spilled over into Belgium and Switzerland.—DNA

Japan to go ahead with releasing nuclear waste into sea

TOKYO: The release of treated water from the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant into the ocean this summer will proceed as planned, with the exact timing yet to be decided, Japan announced on Monday.

"The treated and diluted water will be released into the ocean by strictly complying with regulations to ensure safety," Japan's Chief Cabinet Secretary Matsuno Hirokazu said. Hirokazu said the Japanese government is "intensifying its efforts to raise awareness about the comprehensive safety measures through television messages and online advertisements," Tokyo-based NHK News reported. He emphasized Tokyo will make a "thorough decision on the timing of the release, considering various factors and ensuring safety and reputation protection." Yamaguchi Natsuo, the chief representative of the Komeito party, the junior coalition partner along with the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, said: "The release should not coincide with the sea bathing season." Japan's water discharge plan, announced in April 2021, faced significant criticism from China, South Korea, North Korea, Taiwan, and international organizations, including the UN.—APP

Armenia fired upon Azeri military positions

BAKU: Baku on Monday said that illegal Armenian armed groups fired upon Azerbaijani military positions in the Aghdam district of the Karabakh region.

On July 3, members of illegal Armenian armed groups in the territory of Azerbaijan, where Russian peacekeepers are temporarily stationed, fired at the positions of our army located in the direction of the Aghdam region, the Azerbaijani Defense Ministry said in a statement. The statement said the Azerbaijani Army took "adequate response measures" in the area, adding that members of illegal Armenian armed groups also tried to build "long-term fortification devices." "As a result of urgent measures taken by our units, the works were immediately stopped," the statement concluded. Relations between the two former Soviet republics have been tense since 1991, when the Armenian military occupied Nagorno-Karabakh — a territory internationally recognized as part.—Agencies



MADINA: President Dr. Arif Alvi had good meetings with Bangladesh President Shahabuddin in Mecca, & Madina and with his childhood friend Salman Rehman (In white) now Member Parliament, Minister & Advisor in Bangladesh. —DNA

NATO readies military plans to defend against Russia

NATO, as an organization, does not provide weapons or ammunition to Ukraine. It's sought to avoid being dragged into a wider war with nuclear-armed Russia

NEWS DESK

BRUSSELS: Russia's armed forces are bruised but by no means beaten in the war in Ukraine, a top NATO military officer said Monday, as he laid out the biggest revamp to the organization's military plans since the Cold War should Moscow dare to widen the conflict. "They might not be 11 feet tall, but they are certainly not 2 feet tall," the Chair of the NATO Military Committee, Admiral Rob Bauer, told reporters. "So, we should never underestimate the Russians and their ability to bounce back."

U.S. President Joe Biden and his NATO counterparts are set to endorse a major shakeup of the alliance's planning system at a summit in the Lithuanian capital Vilnius next week.

NATO, as an organization, does not provide weapons or ammunition to Ukraine. It's sought to avoid being dragged into a wider war with nuclear-armed Russia. At the same time, it is massively reinforcing the security of member countries near Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. Around 40,000 troops are on standby from Estonia in the north down to Romania on the Black Sea. About 100 aircraft take to the skies in that territory each day, and a total of 27 warships are operating in the Baltic and Mediterranean Seas. Those numbers are set to rise. Under its new plans, NATO aims to have up to 300,000 troops ready to move to its eastern flank within 30 days. The plans divide its territory into three zones — the high north and Atlantic area, a zone north of the Alps, and another in southern Europe. Bauer



said that NATO's new planning is based on the strength of the Russian army before President Vladimir Putin launched the war on Ukraine almost 17 months ago. He said the war has depleted Russia's army, but not its navy or air force. Of Russia's ground forces, around "94% is now engaged in the war in Ukraine," Bauer said. "What we see in general is that the Russians are careful around NATO. They are not for seeking a conflict with NATO. I think

that is a sign that they are very, very busy," he said. "In the land domain, I don't think they have a lot of forces available to do anything to anyone else." "But we are convinced that the Russians are going to reconstitute," he said. "We will continue to look at them as a serious threat, in the maritime, and in the air especially, and in space, they are still very, very capable, let alone of course in nuclear." A revolt by Wagner mercenaries in Russia late last month raised deep security concerns in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland after a deal was reached for their leader, Yevgeny Prigozhin, to be allowed to take refuge in Belarus. Lithuanian President Gitanas Nauseda said that neighboring countries would face a heightened danger if the Wagner Group deploys its "serial killers" just over their border.

Vilnius lies around 35 kilometers (22 miles) from the Belarus border. Lithuania wants to have a permanent NATO presence on its territory. Germany signaled last week that it would be prepared to base soldiers there if requested. For the moment, though, NATO sees no imminent threat coming from Belarus. "We're confident we know what's going on, and right now we see no changes. But that doesn't take our eye off what we need to do every day," Major General Matthew Van Wagenen told reporters. "If we needed to change posture, we could do it rapidly." NATO's 31 member countries took part in a "force generation conference" last week in an effort to understand how many troops and how much equipment the alliance might have at its disposal to respond to any Russian attack.

UK forces killed 80 Afghan civilians between 2010-13

LONDON: British forces may have summarily executed 80 Afghan civilians between 2010 and 2013 during the US-led military occupation of Afghanistan, lawyers representing the victim families have unveiled at a public inquiry. One of the elite soldiers from the UK's elite Special Air Services (SAS) is believed to have "personally killed" 35 Afghans on a single six-month tour of duty as part of an alleged policy to terminate "all fighting-age males" in homes raided, "regardless of the threat they posed," the lawyers further unveiled as cited in a report on Sunday by The Guardian daily.

The latest details of war crimes committed by British troops during their 20-year engagement in Afghanistan were cited in a document submitted by the law firm Leigh Day to a new public inquiry into reported atrocities committed by SAS forces in Afghanistan, based on previous court disclosures submitted by UK's Defense Ministry (MoD). The elite SAS soldiers "routinely raided family compounds in search of Tal-

iban fighters, often at night-time, in the latter stages of the UK's long and bloody military deployment in Helmand province" that ended in 2014, the lawyers further unveiled. Leigh Day, the report noted, also argues that there were "at least 30 suspicious incidents which resulted in the deaths of more than 80 individuals" between 2010 and 2013, but until now there has been no independent public probe into what transpired.

Last December, according to the daily, British ministers announced the establishment of a statutory inquiry, led by appeal court judge Lord Justice Haddon-Cave, following increasing pressure after a string of investigative reports and civil cases confirming that UK's SAS troops had repeatedly killed Afghans in cold blood. Earlier estimates had pointed out that there were 54 Afghan victims from a single SAS unit, but the lawyers now argue the reported war crimes cover more British troops and a longer period than previously suggested, and "reveal credible evidence of a widespread and systemat-

ic pattern of unlawful extrajudicial killings" of Afghans by UK forces. According to the report, UK's military police launched Operation Northmoor in 2014, an investigation into reports of more than 600 war crimes committed by British forces in Afghanistan, including the alleged killing of civilians by the SAS. The probe, however, "was wound down in 2017 by ministers and closed in 2019, and the MoD claimed no evidence of criminality was found."

The report then cited the lawyers as further arguing that in the years that followed, there was "a wide-ranging, multilayered and years-long cover-up" involving senior British officers, officials and a range of inquiries. At one point, they emphasized, military police ordered the leadership of the UK's Special Forces not to delete any material held on their server. However, "in direct defiance of that order," staff at the Special Forces headquarters "permanently deleted an unknown quantity of data" shortly before military police investigators arrived to examine it. While full hearings are expected to begin next

fall, Haddon-Cave plans to issue a ruling on Wednesday and Thursday on a request by the British defense ministry to keep large parts of the procedures secret, without the presence of journalists or the public.

The British military demands that any pieces of evidence that "tend to confirm or deny the alleged involvement" of the SAS itself in Afghanistan be heard in secret — although it has been the subject of several documentaries reports and court hearings — as well as an order granting anonymity to all members of UK's armed forces. British forces were among the largest contingents of the US-led NATO military alliance forces that invaded Afghanistan from 2001 to 2021 to purportedly root-out the ruling Taliban government and terrorism across war-ravaged Afghanistan. However, after 20 years of their military occupation of the country — marked by many reports of war crimes against Afghan civilians and militants by the US-led forces — terror acts remained prevalent across the country and the Taliban rule was re-established in Kabul.—Agencies

Flooding displaces 10,000 around China

DNA

BEIJING: Heavy flooding has displaced thousands of people around China as the capital had a relative respite from sweltering heat. Beijing reported 9.8 straight days when the temperature exceeded 35 C (95 F), the National Climate Center said Monday. Such a streak was last recorded in 1961 — decades before most Beijing residents had air conditioning or even fans. A lack of rainfall may be contributing to the heat, with the typically dry capital receiving even less than usual this year. While temperatures have since moderated — Monday's temperature at midday was 33 C (91 F) — they are expected to rise again this week to as high as 39.6 Celsius (103 Fahrenheit) in Beijing and other parts of the country, authorities said. Meanwhile, more than 10,000 people were urgently moved to safety due to flooding in the central province of Hunan, the Xiang'xi Emergency Management Bureau on Sunday. Around 70 houses collapsed, 2,283 were damaged and farm fields were flooded. Losses so far have been estimated at least 575 million yuan (\$79 million). To the north in Shaanxi province's Zhenba county, authorities reported the worst flooding in 50 years had washed out roads and damaged homes. No deaths have been reported from the floods thus far. The heat this year has been unusual, although China has regular summer flooding. Eleven provinces — around half of China's land area — were expected to receive heavy rains in coming days, mainly in the humid south. In 2021, more than 300 people died in the central province of Henan. Record rainfall inundated the provincial capital of Zhengzhou on July 20 that year, turning streets into rushing rivers and flooding at least part of a subway line. China's worst floods in recent history were in 1998, when 4,150 people died, most of them along the Yangtze River.

Climate change spells 'terrifying' future

GENEVA: Climate change threatens to deliver a "truly terrifying" dystopian future of hunger and suffering, the United Nations' human rights chief warned Monday. Volker Turk slammed world leaders for only thinking of the short term while dealing with the climate crisis. Turk told a UN Human Rights Council debate on the right to food that extreme weather events were wiping out crops, herds and ecosystems, making it impossible for communities to rebuild and support themselves. "More than 828 million people faced hunger in 2021. And climate change is projected to place up to 80 million more people at risk of hunger by the middle of this century," said Turk. "Our environment is burning. It's melting. It's flooding. It's depleting. It's drying. It's dying," he said, evoking a "dystopian future". "Addressing climate change is a human rights issue... there is still time to act. But that time is now," he said. The 2015 Paris Agreement saw countries agree to cap global warming at "well below" two degrees Celsius above average levels measured between 1850 and 1900 — and 1.5C if possible.—APP

Greek parliament sworn in following Mitsotakis' win

ATHENS: Greece's new lawmakers were sworn in Monday, just over a week after a general election that saw a number of smaller fringe parties from the right and left of the political spectrum enter Parliament for the first time. The 300 members of parliament were inducted during a religious ceremony after the June 25 elections returned conservative Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis to power for a second four-year term in a landslide victory, crushing the left-wing opposition Syriza party and prompting opposition leader Alexis Tsipras to announce his resignation. Mitsotakis' New Democracy party now holds a comfortable parliamentary majority, with 158 seats

compared to Syriza's 48. Three far-right parties and one representing the far left reached the 3% minimum threshold for parliamentary seats. Only one of them has been in Parliament before. On the right of the political spectrum, two newly-emerging parties are the Spartans and the ultra-religious Niki party. The Spartans, who won 4.7% in the election and hold 12 parliamentary seats, are led by Vassilis Stigas and backed by jailed Ilias Kasidiaris, a former prominent member of the now-outlawed Golden Dawn party that had neo-Nazi origins and connections to multiple violent attacks targeting migrants and left-wing political activists. Tougher regulations were

introduced on election eligibility to block Kasidiaris from running as a candidate from inside prison. A party he had founded from behind bars was disqualified, and he switched his support to the Spartans. Niki, or Victory, with just under 3.7% of the vote, holds 10 seats and is led by 58-year-old primary school teacher and theologian Dimitrios Natsios. It draws support from the fringes of the powerful Greek Orthodox church and gained a following over its opposition to the COVID-19 vaccination program. The third fringe right-wing party is Elliniki Lysi, or Greek Solution, which returned to Parliament with 4.4% of the vote and 12 seats. It is led by Kyriakos

Velopoulos, known for his Greek regional television station broadcasts focused on historical and religious themes and alternative therapies. On the left, Plefsi Eleftherias, or Passage to Freedom, sailed into Parliament with just enough votes to meet the threshold, 3.17%, earning eight seats. It is led by Zoe Konstantopoulou, a former Syriza member who used to be the parliament speaker. Known for her fondness for marathon parliamentary sessions when she was directing the debates, the 46-year-old lawyer announced on election night that although her party had won only eight seats, "I am worth 100, and the others are each worth another 20."—Agencies

Time 'running out' to extend Ukraine grain deal: Akar

ANKARA: Defense Minister Hulusi Akar warned Friday that the clock was ticking for the extension of the Black Sea grain deal, which was mediated by Türkiye and the U.N. Ankara is engaged in talks with both Russia and Ukraine to continue the agreement with conditions similar to the initial ones, Akar said during a visit to the flood-hit southeastern province of Şanlıurfa. He also reiterated Türkiye's wish for an end to the conflict and bloodshed, adding that President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and other ministers are making efforts to achieve a solution as soon as possible. Ukraine insists on a 120-day extension of an agreement allowing the safe export of grain from Black Sea ports. Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal said Friday. "We insist that the grain agreement be open-ended and automatically extended for 120 days," Shmyhal told a government meeting. "Attempts by the aggressor to reduce the extension period are a manipulation to continue further blackmail and deepen a global food crisis. We have to prevent this."—Agencies

India's oil-buying spree hits new high

NEW DELHI: Russian oil exports to India climbed to a new peak last month, having risen for ten consecutive months, data from commodities analytics firm Kpler showed on Monday. Daily shipments to the South Asian country surged to 2.2 million barrels a day in June, according to Viktor Katona, head of crude analysis at Kpler. In May, Moscow accounted for 46% of India's total oil imports, making a sharp leap from the less than 2% mark imported prior to Western restrictions on purchases of Russian crude. Russia-sourced oil also pushed up the share of crude India imported from Commonwealth of Independent States members, including Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan, figures show. At the same time, Kpler warns that Indian oil imports may dip next month due to refinery infrastructure issues, which could limit its capacity to process heavy Russian crude. Meanwhile, June deliveries from India's traditional Middle Eastern suppliers, Saudi Arabia and Iraq, again lagged behind Moscow, as New Delhi snapped up Russian oil at hefty discounts, following a \$60-per-barrel price cap imposed by Western nations. While OPEC's share of Indian oil imports is on the wane, Russian supplies are likely to remain high after the country's largest oil producer, Rosneft, and India's top refiner Indian Oil Corp signed an agreement in March to substantially increase oil supplies and diversify oil grades delivered to India.—APP

S. Korea's labor union launches 2-week strike

SEOUL: South Korea's largest labor federation began a two-week strike on Monday, calling for ouster of President Yoon Suk Yeol's government. The strike is being led by Korean Confederation of Trade Unions (KCTU), which has accused Yoon's government of "devastating people's livelihoods, democracy and the labor sector," Seoul-based Yonhap News reported. Some 9,300 police personnel will be mobilized during the demonstrations, which are expected to run through July 15. "The president is using the authority given by the people to oppress workers and destroy the livelihoods, democracy and peace," a KCTU official said, calling for "the ouster of the Yoon government." Accusing the government of favoring large corporations over workers, the union is also seeking a hike in the minimum wage. The KCTU boasts a membership of around 1.23 million workers and expects around 400,000 of them to participate in the strike. However, the labor leaders said the collective action "is not expected to cause much inconvenience to the public as each industry's —Agencies

Briefs

France: Shot teenager's family opposes violence

WEB DESK

PARIS: The grandmother of the teenager shot dead by police during a traffic stop in a Paris suburb said on Sunday she wanted the nationwide rioting triggered by his killing to end, as France braced for a potential sixth night of unrest. Some 45,000 police were deployed again on Sunday night, according to Interior Minister Gerald Darminin, to deter rioters who have torched cars, looted stores and targeted town halls and police stations - including the home of the mayor of a Paris suburb, which was attacked while his wife and children were asleep inside. President Emmanuel Macron postponed a state visit to Germany to deal with the crisis. He was due to meet with leaders of parliament on Monday and with more than 220 mayors of towns and cities that have been affected by riots on Tuesday. The interior ministry reported 719 arrests following Saturday's funeral for Nahel in the Paris suburb of Nanterre, down from 1,311 on Friday night and 875 on Thursday night. But officials cautioned it was too early to say the unrest was over. "There was evidently less damage but we will remain mobilised in the coming days. We are very focused, nobody is claiming victory," Paris police chief Laurent Nunez said.

UK saw hottest June on record in 2023: Met Office

LONDON: The UK this year has seen its hottest June on record, both in terms of mean temperature and the average maximum temperature, the British Meteorological Office said Monday. "The average mean temperature of 15.8 degrees Celsius (60.44 degrees Fahrenheit) for June 2023 in the UK is the highest in a series since 1884," the Met Office said in a statement. The average temperature in June 2023 was 0.9 degrees higher than a previous joint record of 14.9 degrees registered in June of 1940 and 1976, according to provisional figures. "It's officially the hottest June on record for the UK," said the Met Office's Mark McCarthy. On the hottest day in June, the temperature reached 32.2 degrees Celsius, McCarthy said. "What's striking is the persistent warmth for much of the month, with temperatures widely into the mid 20s Celsius for many and even into the low 30s at times," he added.

Russia warns of US 'chemical provocation'

DNA

MOSCOW: The US is preparing Syrian jihadists for possible chemical weapons attacks in order to derail Damascus' diplomatic reengagement with other Arab nations, the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service (SVR) has claimed. The goal of the purported operation and subsequent media campaign would be to "show the Arab world that their choice to restore dialogue with [Syrian President] Bashar Assad was a 'strategic mistake'," a statement released by the Russian agency on Monday said. The SVR claimed that it had obtained at least two pieces of evidence to support its assessment. One was a report that two anti-government armed groups in the province of Idlib had practiced the deployment of chemical weapons in May. The region is not controlled by the Syrian government. The exercise involved local branches of the jihadist groups Hurras al-Din and Turkistan Islamic Party, and resulted in the poisoning of some 100 civilians, the SVR claimed. The Russian agency called both jihadist groups "CIA-controlled."

Pak, China discuss avenues for further cooperation

On the occasion, Ms Pang Chunxue reciprocated the sentiments about the deep-rooted friendly relations between both countries

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and China here on Monday discussed various avenues available for both countries to deepen bilateral relations in economic, trade, and financial sectors to expand the existing cooperation to unprecedented levels. According to a press statement issued by the finance ministry, the discussion was made during a call on the meeting of Charge d' Affairs, Embassy of the People's Republic of China, Ms. Pang Chunxue with Finance Minister Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar. Dar warmly greeted the Charge de Affairs and appreciated the deep-rooted historical bilateral relations between Pakistan and China. He informed the Charge de Affairs about the progress on the 9th review with International Monetary Fund (IMF) stating that Pakistan has successfully reached the staff-level agreement. He also apprised the Charge de Affairs about stability in the economy and how the government is making efforts to preserve this economic stability and move the economy towards growth. Additionally, he appreciated the Chinese support to Pakistan on multiple fronts and specifically thanked for the cooperation of Chinese Financial Institutions



with Pakistan during the last few months. Dar expressed gratitude to Ms Pang Chunxue for all the support and cooperation Pakistan has always been receiving from the leadership in Beijing.

On the occasion, Ms Pang Chunxue reciprocated the sentiments about the deep-rooted friendly relations between both countries. She also appreciated the efforts of the government of Pakistan to bring economic

stability to the country despite difficult economic circumstances. She further assured the Finance Minister that the Chinese government would continue to support Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting of federal cabinet. - DNA

Acting President for building martyrs monuments

"Pakistanis and foreigners should know that as a nation we are grateful to our martyrs," he said, adding visits of the people from different walks of life, particularly students to these monuments would reignite patriotism

SAIFULLAH

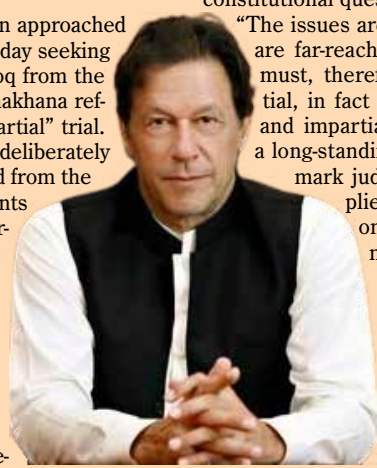
ISLAMABAD: Acting President Sadiq Sanjrani has written a letter to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif drawing attention towards the establishment of monuments of the martyrs of the nation in the federal and provincial capitals. He said there were no two opinions on the established fact that their forefathers gave everlasting sacrifices for the creation of the country. The sacrifices of the martyrs for the stability and integrity of the nation were also memorable, he wrote. "The martyrs are our heroes as the peace and security in Pakistan is the result of their unparalleled sacrifices," Sanjrani

said, adding, "As a nation it is our obligation that we should keep alive the martyrs in hearts of the people, particularly the youth." The Acting President said the federal and provincial governments should ensure the establishment of martyrs monuments at the federal and provincial capitals. The pictures of the martyrs and the Pakistani Flag should be put up at airports, government buildings, schools, important highways, railway stations and other places. "Pakistanis and foreigners should know that as a nation we are grateful to our martyrs," he said, adding visits of the people from different walks of life, particularly students to these monuments would reignite patriotism. It would also keep alive in the young generation passion to continue the mission of martyrs, he noted.

PTI chief seeks refusal of CJ IHC from bench

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: PTI Chairman Imran Khan approached the Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday seeking the refusal of Chief Justice Aamer Farooq from the bench hearing petitions against the Toshakhana reference in the interest of a "fair and impartial" trial. The reference alleges that Imran had "deliberately concealed" details of the gifts he retained from the Toshakhana - a repository where presents handed to government officials from foreign officials are kept - during his time as the prime minister and proceeds from their reported sales. Imran has faced a number of legal issues over his retention of gifts. The issue also led to his disqualification by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in the past. Last month, the PTI chief was indicted in the case. Subsequently, three identical petitions re-



lated to the said case against Imran's indictment and one seeking transfer of his case to another judge were filed in the IHC. After hearing the pleas, the court had temporarily halted criminal proceedings against the PTI chairman. In a petition filed through Barrister Gohar Khan, Imran said the arguments in the cases were yet to be completed as he sought the refusal of Justice Farooq from the bench on the grounds of "fair hearing, unbiased tribunal, access to justice and impartial proceedings". The plea said the applicant had raised several legal and constitutional questions in the subject cases. "The issues are unprecedented and their implications are far-reaching; the bench to decide these issues must, therefore, not only be unbiased and impartial, in fact but must also be seen to be unbiased and impartial," it stated, highlighting that "this is a long-standing principle" reiterated in several landmark judgments of the superior courts and applied to all proceedings. The petition went on to say that Imran believed he would not get "fair and impartial" justice from the bench. It further stated that the writ petition against the ECP was pending and its withdrawal was not decided yet, forcing the applicant to face the trial before the additional sessions judge without it being decided whether the electoral body could have filed such a case in first place.

Pope Francis 'angered and disgusted' by burning of Holy Quran

DUBAI: Pope Francis has condemned the burning of the Holy Quran in Sweden, saying that the vile act had "angered and disgusted" him and he refused to acknowledge the act as a form of freedom of speech. The comments came in response to the latest incident of Quran's desecration in Sweden when a man set a copy of the sacred book ablaze outside a mosque in the country's capital city last week. "Any book considered holy should be respected to respect those who believe in it," the pope said in an interview in the United Arab Emirates newspaper Al Itihad, published on Monday. "I feel angry and disgusted at these actions. 'Freedom of speech should never be used as a means to despise others and allowing that is rejected and condemned.' The abhorrent burning of the Holy Quran resulted in strong condemnation from several states, including Turkey, whose backing

Sweden needs to gain entry to the Nato military alliance. While Swedish police have rejected several recent applications for anti-Quran demonstrations, courts have overruled those decisions, saying they infringed freedom of speech. On Sunday, an Islamic grouping of 57 states said collective measures are needed to prevent acts of desecration to the Quran and international law should be used to stop religious hatred. Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia has summoned Sweden's ambassador to denounce the Quran-burning incident outside a Stockholm mosque that sparked a diplomatic backlash across the Muslim world, state media reported early Monday. The kingdom - home to the holiest sites in Islam, in Makkah and Madina - had already condemned Wednesday's incident in which an Iraqi citizen living in Sweden, Salwan Momika, 37, stomped on the Muslim holy book and set several pages alight. - Agencies

Boat tragedy: traffickers' passports to be blacklisted

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has decided to blacklist the passports of the suspected human traffickers involved in the Greek shipwreck incident and charge them under the Anti-Money Laundering Act. Last month, an Italy-bound fishing trawler reportedly carrying at least 800 people - including approximately 350 Pakistanis - capsized off Greece. The incident led to a day of mourning along with the launch of a nationwide crackdown on human smugglers with many subsequently arrested. A statement from the FIA spokesperson issued today said FIA Director General (DG) Mohsin Hasan Butt and North Additional Director General (ADG) Rana Abdul Jabbar visited the agency's Lahore Zone where they were briefed on the progress in the shipwreck investigation by Lahore Director Sarfraz Virk and Faisalabad Director Rai Ijaz Ahmed. The Lahore and Faisalabad directors informed the senior FIA officials that five inquiries had been opened and 149 cases registered so far in their zones, while 41 human traffickers were arrested.

JUI-F plays down PPP, PML-N huddle

DNA

LAHORE: The JUI-F has played down the recent meeting between top leaders of the PPP and the PML-N in the UAE, claiming that there is nothing out of ordinary about these huddles. According to media reports, PPP Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari and PML-N supreme leader Nawaz Sharif met in Dubai last week - on June 27 - to allegedly discuss a number of issues including the date for the next general elections and possible seat adjustments. Talking with reference to the meeting, JUI-F Deputy Secretary General Amjad Khan told media that it was not an official meeting and no official invitations were rolled out for it. "The meeting, in question, was between leaders of two parties, which is nothing out of the ordinary," he said.

Asad Qaiser secures bail in May 9 riots case

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Monday granted interim bail to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader and former National Assembly speaker Asad Qaiser until July 13 in a case related to May 9 violent protests. The riots were triggered almost across the country after PTI Chairman Imran Khan's arrest in the £190 million Al-Qadir Trust case on May 9 which led to the deaths of at least eight people and injured several others, prompting the authorities to arrest thousands of PTI workers. During the protests, the miscreants attacked the civil and military installations including - Corps Commander's House (Jinnah House) in Lahore Cantt and the General Headquarters (GHQ) in Rawalpindi. The military called May 9 "Black Day" and has decided to try the protesters under the Army Act, with Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir saying that the legal process in this regard has already begun.

Russia says foiled an assassination attempt

WEB DESK

MOSCOW: Russia has claimed to have thwarted a Ukrainian assassination attempt on Sergey Aksyonov, the Russian-installed head of Crimea. The Federal Security Service (FSB) said in a statement on Monday that it had arrested a Russian national recruited as an assassin by Ukraine's SBU intelligence agency, alleging the suspect had undergone explosives, reconnaissance and sabotage training in Ukraine. There was no immediate comment from Ukraine on the Russian allegation. It came amid Russian media reports that security has been stepped up in Crimea, the Black Sea peninsula which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014, and that additional security checks are being made on people wanting to cross a bridge from Russia's southern Krasnodar region into Crimea.

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