



# Islamabad POST

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**Secretary Yellen sees progress in US-China relations**

Detailed News On Page-07

**Joe Biden flies to UK amid cluster criticism**

Detailed News On Page-08



**Mbappe calls PSG 'divisive' in interview**

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## Legal action ordered

# PM condemns smear campaign against COAS

Shehbaz Sharif condemned the PTI chief, saying he has been badly exposed



SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday slammed Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan for launching a "vile, sinister and malicious" campaign against Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir. Taking to Twitter, the premier condemned the PTI chief, saying he has been badly exposed. "Imran Khan continues to engage in a vile, sinister and malicious campaign against COAS General Syed Asim Munir. His trick of using proxies to threaten the Army Chief of an assassination attempt has been badly exposed," he wrote on the microblogging site. PM Shehbaz Sharif said that the former prime minister was desperately working to coerce his way back into power after failure in a methodically planned attack on the state symbols.

He said that the PTI chief fails to realise that "the time of his politics of intimidation, violence and hatred is over". "Through such highly condemnable antics, he is only exposing himself, the core of which is defined by putting his personal interest (power grab) over everything else," the PM said. He reiterated that the people of Pakistan and the political parties strongly stood behind army chief Gen Munir and the armed forces, and will thwart any attempt and conspiracy at undermining Pakistan Army's prestige, honour, and integrity. Meanwhile, PM Shehbaz Sharif also ordered the authorities to take legal action against those involved in such malicious campaigns inside the country and abroad, a press statement shared by PM Office Media Wing said. The prime minister noted that similar minds were involved in the conspiracy of May 9. "It is a clear message to 9th May planners, facilitators and handlers that conspiracy against Pakistan and its institutions will be crushed," the statement added. PM Shehbaz further termed the mean, evil and violent media campaigns a result of the planning of miscreants, adding the conspirators had again become active against the political and economic stability in the country. The new media campaign was a part and parcel of that abhorrent campaign, which was launched against Shuhada, he maintained. The prime minister observed that the media drive against armed forces and its chief did not fall within the domain of

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## Govt urges caution as heavy rains expected

Estimated people that may be impacted by rains is 0.9 million

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Climate Change Minister Sherry Rehman on Sunday urged all public and non-government organisations to remain "vigilant and ready" as heavy rains with thunderstorms are expected across the country over the next 24 to 48 hours. The estimated number of people that may be impacted by rains, she said, was 0.9 million. "The highest amount of rainfall will be in Punjab's cities like Lahore, Narowal, and Sialkot. Other provinces have been alerted too for heavy to moderate rain," Rehman warned, adding that urban flooding alerts had been issued for cities and municipal areas with risks of landslides. The minister also stressed that "coordinated preparedness and proactive responses" saved lives and urged all the response teams to stay vigilant. The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) had earlier cautioned that there was a possibility of "severe thunderstorms" and "heavy rainfall" in North/Northeastern Punjab, including Lahore, Sialkot, and Narowal over the next 48 hours. It said there was a potential for thunderstorms and heavy rainfalls in Sindh's Karachi, Tharparkar, Sukkur, Larkana, Hyderabad, Badin, and Shaheed Benazirabad. In Northeastern Balochistan, thunderstorms were predicted in Sibbi, Zhob, Khlu, Killa Saifullah, Khuzdar, Barkhan, Loralai, DeraBugti, and Lasbela. Similarly, rainfall was expected in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan, Malam Jabba, and Balakot over the next two days. The NDMA also warned of urban flooding in municipal areas and landsliding in hilly regions. In its guidelines issued along with the forecast, the authority directed city and district administrations to

# Swiss FM lauds Pak's disaster management

Foreign minister Ignazio Cassis visits NDMA headquarters



SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Swiss Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis on Sunday met Chairman National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Lt Ge Inam Haider Malik to discuss key points related to disaster management and resilience. According to reports, foreign minister Ignazio Cassis visited NDMA headquarters and held an interactive meeting with the NDMA head. The meeting focused on various aspects of disaster preparedness and collaboration between the two countries in the field of disaster management. The NDMA Chairman emphasized the significance of local community engagement in order to enable disaster resilience. He highlighted the unprecedented Floods 2022 emphasizing the need for an efficient Early Warning System (EWS) in place to mitigate the adverse impacts of such disasters.

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## 'Switzerland could play role for peace'

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan could not afford tension in the region nor would like to waste its resources, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said Saturday, while urging Switzerland to play the role of catalyst in the region to promote peace. The prime minister was addressing a ceremony of signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Pakistan and Switzerland over disaster management, in Nathiagali. He termed the event as a vital step that would promote cooperation between the two countries to harness technology and expertise in the future to tackle the natural catastrophe jointly. PM Shehbaz Sharif said that they looked forward to the Swiss cooperation in terms of getting an advanced warning system and other gadgets to secure Pakistan as much as possible from natural disasters. He reiterated that Pakistan was facing the impacts of global climate change, despite the fact that the country had very little carbon footprints. Appreciating the Swiss foreign minister's remarks about the peace in the region, PM Shehbaz Sharif said that it was important to

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## Briefs

### PTI govt destroyed all institutions

DNA

LAHORE: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb said that the last government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) destroyed all the state institutions. Addressing a press conference at historical Radio Pakistan building in Lahore, the minister regretted that the last government completely ignored state institutions that help bring socio-cultural development and rather focused on infusing the youth mindset with hatred. Referring to the May 9 unfortunate incidents, she said miscreants burnt Radio Pakistan Peshawar building, setting on fire even the precious archive. Earlier in the day, she inaugurated different cultural projects at Radio Pakistan Lahore to help effectively promote soft image of the country.

### EU paying attention to human rights

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: European Union Ambassador to Pakistan Dr Riina Kionka has said that the organisation — comprising 27 European countries — is paying a lot of attention to the "crackdown on the PTI and [its] supporters in the aftermath of May 9" in the country. The EU ambassador's comment came in a video statement regarding the extension of Pakistan's GSP (Generalised Scheme of Preferences) Plus status. Ambassador Dr Kionka detailed Pakistan's current GSP Plus status, saying that "the proposed extension of the current regulation for GSP Plus in effect means no change for Pakistan at the moment, and the country enjoys the same trade preferences and access to the European market [as before]."

# PTI blasts Ahsan for his 'absurd' statement

Explaining needed about 'insane' minister's statement: Raouf Hasan

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Central Information Secretary Raouf Hasan lashed out at Ahsan Iqbal, whom he called craven insane' for his absurd statement that China warned establishment against 'new experiment' before 2018 polls, saying that was a shameful example of sacrificing Pakistan and its interests for personal and group interest. PTI CIS, in his reaction, strongly condemned the federal minister for his senseless statement against the most trusted and time-tested friend like China. However, Raouf Hasan said that it was nothing new, as these cabal of crooks always used national interests as an excuse for promoting and safeguarding their vested and personal politics interests.

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## Ahsan takes U-turn over statement

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal on Sunday said a recent statement of his, in which he appeared to say that China advised Pakistan to not "conduct any experiment" during the 2018 elections, was taken "out of context". His clarification follows media coverage of his statement made on Geo News' programme 'Jirga' last night, during which he discussed the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Iqbal had said, "Let me also tell you that it is in my personal knowledge that China — in

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# Pak 'cautiously' praises Afghan Taliban's steps

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has acknowledged steps being taken by the Afghan-led interim government to effectively combat cross-border terrorism and termed the relocation of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) militants from border areas a significant development. Asif Durrani, Pakistan's special representative on Afghanistan, told Voice of America that Afghanistan's interim rulers recently initiated certain steps to address Pakistan's as well as neighbours including China's cross-border terror concerns. "But it is premature to speculate on the outcome," he cautioned. Pakistan has witnessed a surge in terrorist attacks following Afghan Taliban's return to power in August 2021 and called upon

the interim rulers to take decisive actions against terrorists including the TTP responsible for cross-border attacks. "It's a serious issue. But steps are being taken to neutralise the TTP. We should also understand that it will take a while, but the process has been initiated," Durrani said in response to a recent Taliban announcement that TTP militants were being moved away from Afghan areas bordering Pakistan. "That is a step the Afghan government is taking, so we have to wait and see the results. It is too early in the initial stages, so it would be too early to comment," said the envoy. "But if this relocation of the TTP can actually happen and lead to peace along our borders, it would be a significant development and we would welcome it."

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# Exit polls: Mirziyoyev victorious in Presidential election

Onion polls put him ahead of his rivals; the list of voters included more than 19.5 million citizens, according to the Central Election Commission of Uzbekistan

ANSAR M BHATTI IN TASHKENT

TASHKENT, UZBEKISTAN: The incumbent President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev is set to be elected as the President of Uzbekistan as the opinion polls, till filing of this report on Sunday night, had put him ahead of his three rival candidates. President Mirziyoyev after his election is to spur the reform process approved by the people of Uzbekistan in the recently held referendum. The list of voters includes more than 19.5 million citizens, according to the Central Election Commission of Uzbekistan. 10,784 polling stations opened across the country. The voting process began at 8:00 am and ended at 8:00 pm local time. The final results shall be announced within 10 days. Uzbekistan held a national referendum a couple of months ago in which a new set of reforms was approved by the people of Uzbekistan. After the referendum the incumbent President decided to seek a fresh mandate from people therefore he called early Presidential elections. The last presidential election was held in October 2021. The president wanted to implement the new reforms by taking people of Uzbekistan on board that is why he decided to seek a fresh mandate so that he could pursue the reform process vigorously. A large number of foreign observers, journalist, members of the civil society have been invited to monitor the presidential election. A sizeable group comprising prominent personalities is also in Tashkent to monitor the elections.



President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev

Voting across the landlocked country of around 36 million people began at 8:00 am local time which continued uninterrupted till 8 pm. In some areas voting concluded even before time. The Uzbek government had made elaborate arrangements for the Uzbek Diaspora living in various countries. The Uzbek missions in various countries were turned into the polling station and the process was completed well before the holding of the Presidential election on July 9, 2023. Under the rule of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Uzbekistan has strengthened traditional relations with Beijing and Moscow. Both Pakistan and Uzbekistan also enjoy excellent relations. The recent visit of the Uzbek President to Pakistan had further strengthened this relationship. Pakistan values its relations with Uzbekistan, rooted in religious affinity, common values, geo-strategic



Voters exercising their right in the Presidential election



TASHKENT: Editor Daily Islamabad POST visiting a polling station. Tashkent delegation comprising parliamentarians and media people also witnessed the electoral process. Among them included Pakistani Senators Faisal Saleem Rehman, Sitara Ayaz, Editor Daily Islamabad POST/DNA and Centreline magazine Ansar Mahmood Bhatti and others. After the referendum while talking to members of the Parliament the President had said that It's easy to say, but



Voters exercising their right in the Presidential election

we have to work hard to put the reforms into practice. For these purposes, allocating an additional 30-40 trillion UZS from the State budget annually is necessary. Due to this, every year, we will have to build hundreds of new kindergartens, schools, and hospitals. "As a priority task, we will also use new opportunities to raise youth policy, development of education and upbringing, science, culture, and sports to a new level. We will regularly increase wages, pensions, allowances, and stipends. We will further expand the range of social services for our veterans, lonely elderly people, people with disabilities, and citizens in need of special attention and care", the President said. In the renewed Constitution, Uzbekistan is defined as a state of law. The number of norms on human rights guarantees has also increased thrice, he said.

## PM pays tribute to Fatima Jinnah

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday paid tribute to Mad-e-Millat Motarfa Fatima Jinnah on her 56th death anniversary. The prime minister said that she was a benefactor of the nation and had been a source of courage for Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release. "Despite her senility, she stood firm against dictatorship and played a historic role for the nation, democracy and the country," he added. The prime minister said Fatima Jinnah also played an unprecedented role during Pakistan Movement and for the motherland and offered sacrifices. He said that the personality of Fatima Jinnah was still a beacon of light for the young ladies and women of the country. The entire nation paid tribute to her contributions and would always stand indebted to her services, he added. The prime minister prayed for the high ranks of the departed soul and appealed to the nation to pray for her soul.—DNA

## IRSA releases 329,500 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 329,500 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 429,700 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1517.66 feet and was 119.66 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 173,500 cusecs and 161,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1194.30 feet, which was 144.30 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 97,700 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 225,300, 189,000, 152,500 and 84,700 cusecs respectively.—APP

## SACM directs to provide basic facilities to prisoners

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for Prison Hidayat Ullah Khan Afridi issued directives to jail authorities on Sunday to provide basic human rights along with other facilities to prisoners in lock ups. He said that it is the need of the hour to bring positive reforms in the jail system aimed at tackling crimes and making the prisoners responsible citizens of society. The Special Assistant issued these directives on the occasion of his surprised visit to District Jail Swat. He visited various sections of the jail while the jail superintendent Riaz Khan Mohmand gave a detail presentation on the administrative system of the prison. The caretaker special assistant urged the jail staff to keep a special focus on the cleanliness of the goal, adding that strict steps should be taken for jail security and no excuse will be tolerated in this regard.—DNA

## PAF cinema at Lahore Cantt closed down

LAHORE: The administration on Sunday announced closing the PAF cinema located in the Lahore Cantt area and converting it into an auditorium after completion of 10-year contract, sources told APP. The Lahore Cantt cinema was fully renovated and upgraded after it had been leased out to a private operator for 10 years. It had a capacity of 500 people in the auditorium, and all seats were sofa sittings. The cinema was launched in December 2010 in which many Pakistani celebrities participated. Former owner of the cinema Nadir Latif told APP that the story of closing down of film and cinema industry was not a secret now, but the downturn in the industry had led to collapse of sectors associated with it, such as cinemas. After revival of the film industry in Pakistan, people once again had started visiting cinemas in the past decade.—APP



LAHORE: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Ms. Marriyum Aurangzeb inaugurating the foundation stone for the construction of cinema building of projects at Radio Pakistan Station building.—APP

# High production cost real threat to SMEs

KARACHI: The ever-increasing cost of production in the country is the real threat to both large-scale manufacturing (LSM) and small-scale businesses (SMEs), as frequent upward revisions in policy rate and continuous fluctuations in rupee against dollar are posing further challenges in spite of optimism about foreign reserves, reaching over \$14 billion by the end of August 2023. This was stated by FPCCI former president and Businessmen Panel (BMP) Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar, observing that the aggressive economic measures, high borrowing rates, inflation, oppressive taxation and unstable currency have been negatively affecting running businesses, many of which have closed their operations, while the remaining are struggling for survival. With a view to deal with fiscal challenges Mian Anjum asked the government to work on the three-way strategy by implementing short-term goals that will

help to keep generating resources for smooth fiscal operations, medium-term goals where the government should focus on financial inclusion, documenting the economy by designing a system where all businesses can be registered and properly document their income including collection of sales tax, initiating the process of privatization as well as improving governance by introducing reforms in each sector. As a long-term goal, the country must focus on improving its human capital, and revamping IT sectors by extending facilities and providing all the requisite supports. In the same way, we also need to work on designing a comprehensive and proactive strategy to tackle challenges related to strengthening border security and implementing effective and comprehensive Anti-Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing measures holding accountable and taking to task all those who are involved in illegitimate activities, un-

dermining both our economy and national interests. The BMP Chief said that the government does not have any pragmatic plan to address this liability, apart from asking for more loans to repay existing debt. Likewise, the target for current financial year's exports is too low to meet the country's revenue. The conventional approach of focusing solely on improving exports while pursuing a passive and imprudent foreign policy towards neighboring countries, poses a significant challenge in meeting export targets. Despite strained relations, the United States remains the largest importer of Pakistani products. Still, there are no efforts to tap into the vast markets of neighboring countries or negotiate trade agreements with them. Even though Pakistan and China enjoy close relations yet the volume of exports to China is significantly lower compared to USA. Furthermore, the existing Pakistan China

Free Trade Agreement (PCFTA) tends to benefit Chinese-origin corporations more than Pakistani businesses, giving them greater market access at the expense of Pakistani products. Mian Anjum Nisar said that the government is neglecting two important factors, namely, Information Technology and export of human capital that together can contribute towards generating foreign exchange and mobilizing revenue. It is essential to concentrate on nurturing a skilled workforce and assisting them in securing international employment opportunities. This approach would have a positive impact on our foreign policy and help in building foreign exchange reserves. Given the era of the fourth industrial revolution, Pakistan should prioritize facilitating IT businesses, enabling their access to international markets. By doing so, we can assert our fair share in the international market for IT-related exports. It is good

that State Bank of Pakistan has outlined the central bank's vision for the future, with a strong focus on price stability. According to him, SBP has set a medium-term inflation target of 5% to 7% and is determined to achieve this goal within the next two years. In addition, efforts are being made to enhance efficiency, effectiveness, and stability in the financial sector. To this end, 'Strategic Plan SBP Vision 2028' has been developed, aiming to improve centre bank's credibility, independence, and inclusiveness. The SBP further emphasised the need to expand access to financial services for a larger segment of population and revealed that under Vision 2028, efforts would be made to bring more people into formal financial system. Furthermore, SBP is planning to connect Pakistan's remittance system with Arab Monetary Funds (AMF) Bana, a cross-border payment system.—DNA

## Jl to ensure basic necessities of citizens if comes into power: Siraj

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) chief Siraj ul Haq on Sunday claimed that if his party comes into power it would ensure the provision of basic necessities of citizens in the country. He stated this while addressing a 'workers convention' of his party as a chief guest which was organized here at a local marriage hall. He said if his party would be given a mandate by the people it would ensure the provision of education to the children, allowance to the elder citizens and health facilities for all citizens. He strongly condemned the incident of desecration of the Holy Quran in Sweden and demanded the government expel the Swedish ambassador from the country. On this occasion, General

Secretary (GS) of Jamaat-e-Islami Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Abdul Wasi said that Jamaat-e-Islami was an organization of brotherhood and love and always stands firm in front of oppressors. District Ameer Manzoor Masood Khattak thanked all the guests including party's chief Siraj ul Haq, saying, the large number of people participating in the 'Workers Convention' proved that the people were turning towards Jamaat-e-Islami. He said the Al-Khidmat Foundation working under his party served the flood victims with Rs 40 million during the devastating floods of last year. APP

## Those who burnt Quran are enemies of world peace

DNA

LAHORE: Interfaith dialogue is a requirement of the time and situation, and those who burnt the Holy Quran in Sweden are enemies of world peace and any bid to desecrate the religion or heavenly book should be declared a crime at the global level, said religious scholars. While addressing "Martyrdom of Sayedna Usman-e-Ghani" seminar here on Sunday, clerics and religious scholars said that martyrs own the highest place in the religion of Islam.

lam. The clerics added that Sayedna Usman-e-Ghani, may Allah be pleased with him, made tremendous efforts for compilation and make published the Holy Quran and made the Holy Quran safe until the Day of Judgment. The seminar was held in the chair of Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi Chairman Pakistan Ulama Council. The clerics said that we are grateful Pope Francis and the leadership of the Christian community and other non-Muslim religious leadership for condemning the burning of the Holy

Quran in Sweden. Pakistan Ulema Council supports and endorse the resolutions adopted by Organisation of Islamic Cooperation in the leadership of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The government should take immediate action against those who are campaigning against the armed forces of Pakistan and chief of the Army Staff and punish the criminals of May 9 and release the innocents. Speakers at the Shahadat Sayedna Usman Ghani seminar, said that extremist and terrorists have damaged the Islam and Muslims the most.

## Death anniversary of Sardar Abdul Qayum Khan observed

MIRPUR: The 8th death anniversary of former Azad Jammu & Kashmir prime minister Sardar Abdul Qayum Khan was observed here on Sunday. Paying rich tributes to the former prime minister of Azad Jammu Kashmir Sardar Abdul Qayum Khan, Chairman Kashmir Institute of International Relations (KIIR) Altaf Hussain Wani said that he was a great thinker, a dynamic and visionary politician blessed with vision that transcends the present state of affairs.—APP

## CTI lauds EDF for best training programs

LAHORE: Chairman of Carpet Training Institute (CTI) Ijazur Rehman has said that the ongoing training programs in the institutes established by the Export Development Fund (EDF) need to be further improved according to contemporary requirements. He said that keeping in view the promotion of exports, these programs should be research and development based to make them industry friendly," adding he said that by equipping the skilled workforce with modernity and technology, the best export products can be supplied in the global markets. He expressed these views while talking to the beneficiaries of the training programs of CTI here on Sunday. Ijazur Rehman said that the objective of the EDF is to remove the barriers faced by the exporters of export services, manufacturers of export products and general exporters in Pakistan so as to increase.—DNA

## Indirect taxations further increasing poverty

KARACHI: Opposing the idea of collecting radio license fee from the public through electricity bill, Pashan Democratic Party (PSP) Chairman Altaf Shakoor here Sunday said that indirect taxations are further increasing poverty by eroding purchasing power of inflation hit people. He said the citizens have already paid TV license fee through electricity bills and now charging radio license fee also as indirect tax is yet another atrocity to them. He said hardly any one watches PTV or listens to Radio Pakistan and making the taxpayers to feed these white elephants is illogical and unjust. He said the loss-making state owned entities should be sold to save the public from running them with their taxes. Altaf Shakoor said the government should not waste precious taxpayers' money to run the overstaffed and ill managed departments and organizations. He said recruitment on a political basis has already made the majority of the government entities undue burden on the budget. He said foreign loans are taking more than half of our budget and the rest is being devoured by loss-making state owned entities and private power producers through circular debt.—DNA

# ہم مل کے سب بدلیں گے

## چھوٹا خاندان... خوش حال پاکستان

بیٹا ہو یا بیٹی، دونوں ہی صحت مند اور خوشحال معاشرے کی پہچان ہیں  
بچوں کے بہتر معیار زندگی اور تعلیم و تربیت پر توجہ دیں  
بچوں کے حقوق کا تحفظ کریں اور ان کے مستقبل کو روشن بنائیں۔

محکمہ بہبود آبادی، حکومت پنجاب

www.pwd.punjab.gov.pk | Population Welfare Department Punjab | PWD Punjab

## 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
National Day
July 26/Liberia
National Day
July 30/Morocco
National Day

### Hotels & Restaurants



Serena Hotel.....111 133 133  
Marriott.....051- 2826121  
Monal.....0334-5421812



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



### Emergency

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



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PIA Flight Info.....114  
PIA Cargo.....9280979  
Railway Inquiry.....117  
Railway Exchange9270831-5  
WASA Rawalpindi..5555489  
CAA.....9281092



### Hospitals

CMH.....5611111  
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



### Departments

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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 view of the trucks parked outside Floor mills at Sector 1-11 as waiting for laborers to unload them, in Federal Capital. —Online

## All departments directed to remain alert during Monsoon

RAWALPINDI: Secretary Housing and Urban Development Punjab, Sajid Zafar Dall has directed all the departments concerned to remain alert during Monsoon. According to a district administration spokesman, the Secretary during a visit reviewed the preparations finalized by Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) for Monsoon. He informed that the Secretary also inspected the cleaning work of Nullah Lai at Gwalmandi bridge. After the forecast of the Meteorological Department, all the departments concerned need to be alert, said Sajid Zafar Dall. He said that WASA Rawalpindi had made extensive preparations for Monsoon, including timely cleaning of major

drains and sewage lines of the city along with Nulla Lai. While giving instructions to Managing Director (MD) WASA, the Secretary said that next two months are very important during which there is a need to be alert all the time and work in full coordination with the Meteorological Department. All possible precautionary measures should be adopted particularly in low lying areas, he said adding, machinery and staff should also be deployed so that in case of urban flooding, relief and rescue operation could be kicked off within shortest possible time frame. The Secretary further said that the Punjab government had provided timely funds for the annual cleanliness operation, due

to which WASA had completed the clean-up measures in Rawalpindi on time and it is hoped that the citizens would not face any difficulty during Monsoon season. He said that Commissioner Rawalpindi Liaquat Ali Chatta is personally monitoring the entire process and all institutions are working with the district administration under a comprehensive strategy. He informed that caretaker Minister for Housing and Urban Development and Chief Secretary Punjab had also visited Rawalpindi and expressed satisfaction over the arrangements for Monsoon. Earlier, MD, WASA Muhammad Tanveer while giving a briefing informed the Secretary that the agency had completed

all preparations before Monsoon. The Punjab government had released funds for cleanliness work of Nullah Lai and 11 other drains of the town. The cleaning work of Nulla Lai had been completed from Katarian Bridge to Murree Road, but machinery is working to remove the obstructions from Nullah Lai after the heavy rains of the past few days and this process would continue during Monsoon, he said. Similarly, the process of cleaning the major drains across the city was also completed before Eid-ul-Azha, he added. WASA had used modern winch machines for the first time for cleaning the sewage lines and this work was also completed on time, he said and

informed that Section-144 had been imposed to control dumping of solid waste in Nullah Lai. Several cases had been registered against those found dumping solid waste in Nullah Lai. The violators of Section-144 had also been sent behind the bars. MD WASA further informed that during monsoon rains emergency is enforced under which leaves of all the field staff are canceled and the staff remain present in the field round the clock. Five flood response units had been set up in the city at Liaquat Bagh, Moti Mahal, Commercial Market, Bagh Sardaran and Khayaban-e-Sir Syed. Heavy machinery and field staff had also been deployed at the flood response units. —APP

## Authorities directed to provide missing facilities in Govt Colleges

### DNA

RAWALPINDI: Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Liaquat Ali Chatta has instructed the authorities concerned to provide missing facilities in government colleges. According to a Commissioner Office spokesperson, the Commissioner chairing a meeting said that the administration would provide equal opportunities to the talented students. She informed that the Commissioner said that to make any organization successful, the intention and character of its head is more important than the resources.

## AIOU to provide free SSC education to students

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) will provide free education of Secondary School Certificate (SSC) to the students of Balochistan, merged districts and Gilgit Baltistan during the upcoming admissions. According to the AIOU's communique issued on Sunday, admissions are commencing from July 15th for the semester Autumn 2023 in matriculation to PhD programs. Vice Chancellor AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood has instructed the concerned regional directors to spread this message of the University



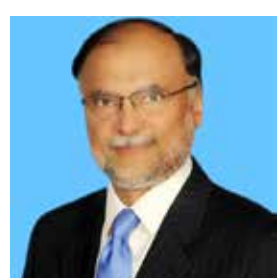
door to door, in their regions so that not a single student in these regions is deprived of this facility of AIOU. Dr. Nasir Mahmood said that the AIOU was trying hard to bring every citizen of Pakistan into the educational network. Education is a fundamental right and no one should be

deprived of high and quality education due to lack of financial resources, he said and added the University provides financial assistance to poor and deserving students to complete their studies. Students can contact the concerned Regional Office for these scholarships and financial assistance schemes. It is pertinent to mention here that AIOU was providing free education to the jail inmates to make them useful citizens for the society. Workshops, tutorial meetings and final exams for the prisoners are also held within the jail premises.—APP

## FTO Coordinator identifies De-dollarisation signs in global economy

SLAMABAD: Coordinator to Federal Tax Ombudsman Meher Kashif Younis on Sunday said that the payment of oil imported from Russia in "Yuan" is continuation signs of de-dollarisation surfacing in the global economy. Speaking at a seminar on "Impact of de-dollarisation on the health of the economy" organized under the aegis of Gold Ring Economic Forum, a strategic think tank, he said the sanctions that have frozen Russia out of the global banking system have seen a fresh push since March by the "BRICS" nations, Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa, to challenge the dollar's hegemony, said a press release. He said "some signs of de-dollarization are emerging," adding the trend was likely to persist even as the dollar maintains its "large footprint". Efforts by BRICS countries and other major commodity exporters to loosen the dollar's stranglehold on global commerce have ramped up since the start of the war in Ukraine, which saw the U.S. freeze a large chunk of Russia's foreign reserves. Since then Saudi Arabia and China have begun talks to settle Chinese oil sales with the yuan, Brazil and China have announced the phase-in of a yuan clearing arrangement for some trade between the two countries while China and Russia are also now doing a significant portion of their trade in yuan. Meher Kashif Younis said the rise in Yuan payments has given a boost to Beijing's endeavours to internationalise its currency, with Chinese banks promoting its use specifically for Russia oil trade. "This is part of the de-dollarisation move which is going on at the international level as the United States has been using economic sanctions as an instrument of war or punishment to the developing countries which is just a natural reaction. He said Pakistan in its history received its first shipment of Russian oil and payment was made in Chinese RMB, and "Our target is to import one-third of our required oil from Russia to ease burden on people. He further added, "This is the first time that in international trade we are using Chinese currency as a currency of international settlement or trade settlement.—APP

## Conspiracies against Nawaz unmasked before public



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal Sunday criticized that Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf's leadership who was busy in the conspiracy behind Nawaz Sharif, misled the people and pushed the country years behind have been unmasked before the public. PML-N Quaid Nawaz Sharif was disqualified under a conspiracy when the "Panama verdict was changed to Iqama", he said while talking to a private news channel. PML-N supreme leader and former prime minister Nawaz Sharif will return to the country soon before the election campaign, he added. "Chairman PTI's time has come to an end, he said, adding, he himself stuck under the burden of his own poor performance", he added.—APP



## NOTICE FOR ADMISSIONS

FALL  
2023

PAKISTAN INSTITUTE OF FASHION AND DESIGN

### 4-Year Degree Programmes:

1. Bachelor of Design (Fashion Design)
2. Bachelor of Studies (Fashion Marketing and Merchandising)
3. Bachelor of Design (Textile Design)
4. Bachelor of Design (Jewellery Design and Gemological Sciences)
5. Bachelor of Design (Furniture Design and Manufacture)
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- a) Applicants with 2nd division (495/1100) in Intermediate or equivalent or passing grades in eight subjects (including compulsory subjects) of 'O Level' and minimum 3 main subjects (no subsidiary) of 'A Level' only are eligible to apply for admission.
- b) It is mandatory for 'A Level' students to provide (IBCC) Equivalence Certificate. However, if at the time of admission student's 'A Level' result is not declared, the 'O' Level Equivalence Certificate must be attached with the admission application.
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  - The candidates from other provinces will appear in the centers set up by PIFD at Islamabad, Karachi, Peshawar and Quetta.
  - Admission Forms can be downloaded from PIFD website, [www.pifd.edu.pk](http://www.pifd.edu.pk)
- The candidates applying through downloaded forms will submit their applications along with the Cash / Proof of online payment of Rs. 1700/- in A/C # 50397000268851 (HBL, Expo Centre Branch, Johar Town, Lahore).

### Scholarships:

1. PIFD Financial Assistance Programme
2. HEC Need Based Scholarship Programme
3. National Endowment Scholarship for Talent (NEST)
4. Punjab Education Endowment Fund (PEEF)
5. Balochistan Education Endowment Fund (BEEF)

### Important Dates:

Last Date for Submission of  
Application: 12th August, 2023  
Entry Test: 20th August, 2023  
Interviews: 28th, 29th, 30th, 31st  
August & 1st September,  
2023

For any queries contact:  
[admissions@pifd.edu.pk](mailto:admissions@pifd.edu.pk)

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## Briefs

## Access to modern farming techniques key challenge to agri sector

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Rice Research and Development Board Punjab Shahzad Ali Malik on Sunday said that the agricultural sector in South Asia is confronted with various multiple challenges of limited access to modern farming techniques, inadequate irrigation facilities, fragmented land holdings, and insufficient post-harvest storage and processing infrastructure. Talking to a delegation of progressive farmers led by Muhammad Hussain Shah Pindi Shaikh Musa district Faisalabad said these factors affected productivity and contributed to food insecurity, said a press release. He said food insecurity continues to be a significant issue in many parts of South Asia. While on the other hand, the region has made progress in recent years in reducing poverty and improving overall food security, several factors contribute to the persistent challenges faced by many countries including Pakistan, he added. He emphasized that efforts must be made at the national and international levels to address food insecurity in South Asia said adding that these initiatives should include promoting sustainable agriculture practices, improving irrigation and water management, enhancing infrastructure for storage and transportation, investing in rural development, strengthening social safety nets, and supporting nutrition programs to address malnutrition.—DNA

## Kashmiris determined to carry on freedom struggle

ISLAMABAD: The All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) has said that Kashmiris are determined to carry on their struggle for the liberation of their motherland from Indian yoke. The APHC spokesman in a statement issued in Srinagar in the Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) on Sunday, said the killings, arrests and torture cannot defeat the Kashmiris' urge for freedom and they are ready to face Indian bullets but will not surrender. According to Kashmir Media Service, the Modi regime cannot defeat the spirit of Kashmiri people to win freedom and they have no option but to fight Indian illegal occupation. Kashmiris will continue sacrificing their lives till freedom from Indian clutches, he added. The APHC spokesman said that Kashmiri people were united to defeat India's nefarious designs in IIOJK and salute to the Kashmiri people for refusing to accept Indian hegemony. He maintained that the ongoing people's struggle against Indian tyranny would remain a golden page in Kashmir's history and the day was not far when Kashmiris would see the dawn of freedom. India's brutal military occupation of Kashmir is a challenge to the international community.—APP



ISLAMABAD: People are stand in queue for registration at low price floor counter at Utility Store in Sitara Market as due to extremely high inflation, common people are suffering a lot across the Country.—Online

## Chairman NDMA discusses disaster management coop with Swiss FM

ISLAMABAD: Chairman National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik on Sunday held an interactive meeting with Swiss Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis to discuss key points related to disaster management and resilience upon his visit here to NDMA headquarters. The meeting focused on various aspects of disaster preparedness and collaboration between the two countries in the field of disaster management, a news release said. The Chairman National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) emphasized the significance of local community engagement in order to enable disaster resilience. He highlighted the unprecedented Floods 2022 emphasizing the need for an efficient Early Warning System (EWS) in place to mitigate the adverse impacts of such disasters. He stressed the crucial role of disaster preparedness in Pakistan, stating that managing two simultaneous disasters can be a daunting task and have severe consequences. He apprised the Swiss delegation of inclusive and people-centric disaster preparedness system, mentioning three National Simulation Exercises (SimExs) conducted by NDMA to enhance disaster preparedness in Pakistan. The Chairman NDMA informed about the establishment of NEOC to generate National Common Operating Picture (NCOP) for all relevant stakeholders to mitigate likely impacts of disasters and setting up NDMA's Think Tank, NIDM to collaborate with think tanks, NGOs, INGOs, academia, and industry stakeholders both domestically and globally to develop effective policy recommendations and reduce disaster risk.—APP

## Pakistans survival linked to robust economy: Atif

IMF's difficult preconditions must for economic recovery

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former Vice President of FPCCI Atif Ikram Sheikh said on Sunday economic compulsions must overtake politics as the survival of the country is at stake while our future is linked to a strong economy. The IMF's deal has improved investors confidence and their tough reform preconditions are a must for economic recovery, which is badly needed, he said. Atif Ikram Sheikh who has also served as President ICCI and Chairman PVMA said in a statement issued here today that Pakistan was going through economic turmoil since last year and was desperately seeking

IMF bailout to avoid a default. On June 23, the IMF announced an SBA, a bailout package of \$3 billion for nine months; China provided a rollover of \$3 billion, while Saudi Arabia and UAE also helped Pakistan with billions of dollars which has improved the overall situation, he observed. The former government had negotiated the IMF bailout package of a \$6.5 billion loan programme in 2019 to be delivered over three years but decided not to implement the reforms for political reasons, leading to suspension of tranches by the lender. IMF's loans always draw criticism while loans from other sources which are costly and never debated, he said, adding that many of the bilateral financiers

always look to the IMF's decisions before extending the financial bailout packages. Atif Ikram Sheikh said that many believe IMF's structural adjustment programmes do not consider local realities; its emphasis on a free market economy impacts the poor and their other conditions hurt masses, therefore IMF programmes remain unpopular for the populist governments worldwide. In Pakistan, the governments regularly announce subsidies to address rising prices and win over the electorates, but these subsidies are not sustainable and add to the budget deficit. However, IMF programmes come with several conditionalities that are considered harsh on the poor, as it insists on removing subsidies

and reducing the budget deficit and other non-essential expenditures. Many governments criticise IMF conditions, yet they see the lenders support as the only means to gain confidence of creditors confidence. Pakistan must now reform the power sector so that the cost of electricity is recovered, remove all tax exemptions to boost revenue, improve foreign currency reserves, reduce the budget deficit and allow market determined exchange rate, he demanded. We are in an election season, during which the IMF conditionalities will put serious pressure on the populist measure of the government, but hard economic decisions have to be taken to save the country, he said.

## GSP+ status conditions are getting stringent

EU is a very important trade partner as 28 percent of our exports are going to this area; under GSP+ Pakistani goods have duty-free access on 66 percent of tariff lines

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former President of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt on Sunday demanded of the government to redouble efforts to get GSP+ status that is set to expire at the end of current year. The European Union (EU) is considering GSP+ status for Pakistan and other eight countries, and it will continue monitoring the human rights, freedom of media and labour rights in all the countries enjoying the status, he said. The EU has decided to introduce fresh legislation to continue the scheme for another 10 years, but there is a deadlock between the EU Council and the EU Parliament on the issue of migration,

he added. Shahid Rasheed Butt said in a statement issued here today that the EU Parliament strongly believes that trade should not be linked with the migration issue but the EU Council thinks otherwise. The EU Council includes ministers from each EU country, they meet to discuss, amend and adopt laws, and coordinate policies. The ministers have the authority to commit their governments to the agreed actions, he informed. It has been proposed that the current scheme should be extended for four years. The proposal will now be put to vote in the EU Parliament, where the legislature will decide the time period. By the time, the GSP+ scheme would be stringent, and some countries may not even qualify for

it, therefore Pakistani policymakers should try to be included in the list of countries enjoying the trade concession under the scheme. The countries enjoying the benefit will have to submit a plan of action to implement over 30 conventions to qualify and remain eligible for duty-free access of goods to EU markets, which may prove challenging for Pakistan. Shahid Rasheed Butt informed that Pakistani exports to EU were 5.5 billion Euros in 2013 which jumped to 6.64 billion Euros in 2021. However, Pakistans imports have also increased by 69 percent during the period. EU is a very important trade partner as 28 percent of our exports are going to this area; under GSP+ Pakistani goods have duty-free access on 66 percent of tariff lines.

## Rose &amp; Jasmine garden witnesses huge weekend rush

ISLAMABAD: On weekends, a huge rush of visitors with a festive mood was being witnessed at Rose & Jasmine Garden for arranging special barbecue parties where the smoked aroma of grilled food gave an opportunity to families to enjoy quality time with loved ones. Jasmine Park has witnessed a surge in daily visitors, drawing larger crowds compared to other recreational places, said a report aired by a Private news channel. Rose & Jasmine garden is becoming the most popular recreational spot for families as it is equipped with necessary modern facilities for the visitors, said a CDA worker. The trend of arranging barbecue parties has become the main hub of attraction for citizens, where relatives and friends are invited to have fun and enjoy delicious cuisines prepared from sacrificial meat, said a visitor. It is the best place to enjoy such parties which is not only gives us an opportunity to enjoy the weekend with loved ones but also gives us a chance to taste different types of dishes made of sacrificial meat.—APP

## IMF loan alone wont put economy back on track

ISLAMABAD: The All Pakistan Business Forum (APBF) has termed the IMF deal with Pakistan as a positive development for the economy but warned that Pakistans liquidity risks remain high in spite of the staff-level agreement with the International Monetary Fund for a Stand-by Arrangement of \$ 3 billion for a nine-month period, as this bailout alone cant put economy back on track. APBF President Syed Maaz Mahmood said that the multilateral donors financing might not bring any significant impact on struggling economy, as the sustainable solution to Pakistans economic issues lies in the structural reforms and consistent policies. He said that the obvious reason: 4,069 million dollar foreign exchange reserves are simply not enough to meet even one month of imports, 3.68 billion dollar estimated decline in remittance inflows, clocking at 24.8 billion dollars July-May 2023 compared to 28.48 billion dollars during the comparable period the year before. Besides this decline in exports, home remittances by the Pakistanis abroad, the other desired form of foreign exchange earnings, also fell from 31,782 million dollars during July-June 2022 to 27,744 million dollars in 2023. APBF chairman Ibrahim Qureshi said that the deal would end speculation of a possible default, but the countrys debt troubles wont end there, as the more IMF aid will be needed in 2024, he added.—DNA



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## Coercive measures demanded against violators on motorways

MASHKOOB NAQVI/APP

ISLAMABAD: Constructed in the 1990s as countrys one of flagship projects, Pakistan motorway had presented a plausible travelling facility to commuters, nagged by full of hassle travelling on Grand Trunk Road and other arteries leading to different cities from the Federal Capital. No horns, no screeching and no lanes violations had been the hallmark of Islamabad-Lahore (M-2) and Islamabad-Peshawar (M-1) motorways as the specially raised Police force always stood guard to ensure smooth travelling and penalize the violators. But, in recent years especially, the policing quality deteriorated with passenger buses, loader vans and privately driven vehicles most often violating speed limits, lane discipline and other violations resulting in lethal accidents like one happened recently in Salt Range claiming lives of around 13 passengers. If we talk specifically, the Beats at Kala Shah Kaku to

Sukheki and from Kallar Kahar to Chakri are the worst regions governed plagued with rampant violations by the passenger buses and mini trucks ferrying milk, animals and broiler chicken from Punjab to Islamabad and beyond. They have adopted a common habit of continuously using the center lane, over speeding with most of buses running at around 120 and cars from the cars, jeeps and other LTVs from the extreme right fast lane. People have also complained of mini trucks slowly moving in the lanes designated for fast moving vehicles and the ruthless bus drivers blowing horns and flashing lights behind the cars plying in center lane at the specified speed limit of 120. Although the motorway police has taken certain measures to streamline traffic on motorways, yet the unruly drivers find space for violations endangering theirs and others lives. Why strict action is not taken against the violators, questioned Rashid Mahmood, a frequently traveler of motorways from Islamabad to La-

hore and Multan. I often see vehicles crossing me when I was driving at permissible speed limit of 120 kilometers per hour. He noticed that most of these buses show their route details from cities in Punjab to destinations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Sometimes, they run buses continuously in the center lanes, blowing power horns and lights on high beam irking forerunners. Crossing LTVs from the fastest lane is yet their another hazardous practice. Their abrupt lane changing, Rashid states takes aback LTV drivers, seeing a giant bus crossing them wrongly and forcing them to apply sudden brakes. When a bus driver was questioned about this mindset, he had no valid reason except that it being his habit to run faster than others and reach the destination earlier than the competitors. Although the violations tendency is rampant among the drivers of less known companies leading to Peshawar and other Khyber Pakhtunkhwa cities, yet those driving buses of commonly deemed

as responsible transport companies like Faisal Movers and Daewoo adopt the same course. There was a time when these bus drivers could never even think of lanes violation and over speeding, said another commuter, Javed Chaudhry. But in recent past, we have astonishingly seen motorway as free for many people. He also pointed out that many costly vehicle owners take it as their right to continuously drive in the crossing lane for kilometers without any reason. May be it is for ridiculing the law or for satisfaction of ego for owning a costly vehicle. Chaudhry also complained of the vehicles ferrying poultry birds, milk and animals from Punjab to Islamabad and cities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa continuously using middle lane on too slow speed hindering the way of fast moving LTVs. No doubt that the Motorway Police keeps busy in managing traffic at certain points through patrolling and installing speed limit cameras but these measures feel too short of nabbing the violators.

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## Sino-US tech cooperation

In an attempt to chip away at the already shaky foundations of the China-US relationship, some Republican lawmakers last week urged the US State Department to not renew a decades-old bilateral agreement on scientific cooperation on the grounds that it would help China modernize its military. In a letter sent to Secretary of State Antony Blinken, the chair of the US House of Representatives' Select Committee on China Mike Gallagher and nine other Republican representatives alleged that the deal, set to expire on Aug 27, would enable Beijing to use "academic researchers, industrial espionage, forced technology transfers, and other tactics to gain an edge in critical technologies, which in turn fuels the People's Liberation Army modernization", and thus it should be scrapped. The US-China Agreement on Cooperation in Science and Technology was the first bilateral accord signed by the two countries after relations were normalized in 1979. It has to be renewed about every five years and is seen as a symbol of robust government-to-government science and technology collaboration that continues to this day. Moreover, over the past four decades, more than 30 protocols and deals in a wide range of areas – including health, engineering, climate change and environmental protection – have been signed, and hundreds of joint programs conducted under the framework of the agreement, laying solid common ground upon which the two countries could build mutual trust and broaden cooperation. Those who call for an end to China-US cooperation in the fields of science and technology seem ignorant of the fact that the agreement is not a favor granted to China by the US, but a partnership that enables both Chinese and US scientists as well as scholars and students to learn from and share with each other research data, experience and expertise to the benefit and prosperity of both countries. Any politically motivated setbacks in terms of China-US cooperation in science and technology will not only cause more damage to the already souring bilateral relations, but also compromise their joint efforts to address such global issues as climate change. Washington has always said it has no intention to trigger a conflict with, or contain China, and wants to maintain a stable relationship that has "guardrails". But sincerity is subject to proof, and it is actions, not words, that really count. The outcome on the science and technology agreement – one of the few remaining fruits of Sino-US cooperation on the basis of equality, reciprocity and mutual benefit – will serve to show to what extent the US is willing to do damage control in terms of its relations with China.



## Ukraine and the EU

One of Vladimir Putin's mistakes when plotting his invasion of Ukraine was to underestimate European solidarity. The Russian president's territorial aggression moved the continent's centre of strategic gravity, but not in the direction he had intended. The Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, made an emergency application for EU membership within days of the invasion. The country's candidacy was formally accepted within months. At a summit in Kyiv last week, the European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, said it was impossible to conceive of a future for the EU without Ukraine. That would not have been said before the war. Candidacy for EU membership is less important to Mr Zelenskyy's war effort than military hardware, but weapons have also flowed from European states. Military aid and institutional integration are two arms of the same embrace. That reflects a psychological adjustment in the west – a shaking off of complacency and belated recognition that Mr Putin is a tyrant who cannot be appeased. For many Ukrainians, participation in the European project has expressed the ambition of national self-determination since the 2013 Maidan uprising, triggered by the refusal of Viktor Yanukovich, the country's pro-Moscow president at the time, to sign a trade agreement with Brussels. The EU flag is a more potent symbol of democratic aspiration in Ukraine than it is in most member states. There is still a significant gap between the ideal of solidarity and the reality of EU accession. The bloc exists by virtue of political will, but that is expressed as a complex edifice of treaties and institutions. To meet the entry criteria, previous candidates from eastern Europe went through arduous processes of political and economic reform. The EU's current structures would need reform to accommodate such a populous and economically debilitated new member. Everything from the allocation of seats in the European parliament to agricultural subsidies would have to be revised. EU membership can lead to increased regional disparities – which would need careful management in a postwar environment. Ukrainian accession would tilt the balance of influence on the European Council away from the EU's 20th-century western core towards its 21st-century joiners in the east. Some founder members suspect that process has gone far enough already. The extent of continental solidarity would be tested by a process that turned net recipients from the shared budget into net contributors. When speaking of Ukraine's EU membership, Ms Von der Leyen and other continental leaders are careful to match certainty about the destination with vagueness over the timetable. It isn't going to happen quickly. There is a general recognition in Brussels that Kyiv's candidacy is unique, but there is not much flex in the rules and enormous wariness of bending them (as Eurosceptic British politicians learned to their frustration when negotiating Brexit). But Ukraine must not be fobbed off with abstractions. Kyiv can be offered treaties and a security partnership that illuminate a credible path to full membership. The EU is slow and inflexible much of the time, but in a crisis it can be remarkably innovative. Russia's aggression has been the galvanising force, giving new political impetus to continental solidarity. That energy must now be harnessed to the practical task of guaranteeing Ukraine's future in the club of European democracies.

## PM Laptop Scheme: a great relief to the youth

Waheed Hussain



Keeping the pace with the rest of the world, the federal government has initiated the "Prime Minister's Youth Laptop Scheme 2023." According to details, hundred thousand laptops would be distributed among the students in first-phase in 2023. At the opening ceremony on 7th July at Convention Center in Islamabad, the Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif assured the huge gathering, that all laptops would be distributed, purely on the merit. We hope that the PM words

Modern technologies have revolutionized the world. 21st century information technology systems have shifted the conventional mode of interaction in all spheres of life. These technologies have provided immense opportunities to the youth, especially students, to get education-knowledge and fulfill their future aspirations, becoming most efficient, successful and self-reliant citizens of the globe.

Keeping the pace with the rest of the world, the federal government has initiated the "Prime Minister's Youth Laptop Scheme 2023." According to details, hundred thousand laptops would be distributed among the students in first-phase in 2023. At the opening ceremony on 7th July at Convention Center in Islamabad, the Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif assured the huge gathering, that all laptops would be distributed, purely on the merit. We hope that the PM words would be translated into practice in the letter and spirit. A laptop in the hands of a student is like a weapon. A college or a university level student cannot think of achieving the degree without a laptop. With the help of this technology he or she will be able to record his or her class lectures, prepare notes and presentations in comfortable manner. This smart technology helps the student to reach to the treasure of knowledge related to his/her study program (the subject in which the students seek a degree program). The new discoveries, innovations related to a particular field, enable students to compete with the rest of the world. Our students would not be able to stand against the international standards, both as an educational degree or the work experience, if they do not have an easy access to the new research and developments, taking place in various fields, through modern information systems. The laptop is very viable and reliable solution which can take the student to the top.

The Prime Minister laptop scheme is extremely beneficial for a student, whose parents, or a family were short of financial resources, in times of soaring inflation. The country's economy and financial position has put a lot of burden on those, whose monthly income an expenditure has a huge gap. Paying for the children's education has become very tough. Naturally, after paying a handsome amount as a semester fee, sparing from hundred to two hundred thousand rupees

for the laptop was a dream. This dream has come true for huge number of students through government laptop scheme. This program will enable thousands of students to own a personal laptop, particularly those, whose parents were unable to arrange the required amount for purchasing this compulsory technology. When the privileged classmate enjoys the facility, the deprived students felt depressed resulting in badly affecting their studies and grades. The confidence in a student, either in the class or in company of university fellows, comes through the enabling environment. If that environment is not equally provided to all students, most of them would fail to achieve their set targets. Laptop is a great facility for the less privileged students in our society. Another great advantage of the laptop facility to the students, was that along with their studies, they could earn handsome amount, while serving various national and international organizations. Laptop helps in distance learning it also helps in the distance learning. I know many young girls and boys, who along with their studies, working online for various Information Technology, Marketing, Event Managements and Communication companies by using their laptops. The students and fresh degree holders get online projects making lot of money without physically attending any office. Hopefully those young people who would get the laptop through this scheme would use them for self-employment.

The laptops technology had been various useful during the covid period. Like many countries of the world, Pakistan was also shut down for preventing the spread of the deadly disease. The concept of work from home was introduced to reduce the human physical interaction. Hundreds of thousands of students had attended their lectures online through laptop technology. Many of them were those students who had received their laptops from PML (N) Punjab government. Basically, this present laptop scheme of the federal government is the continuation of the past PML (N) Punjab governments initiative, when the present Prime Minister Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif was the Chief Minister of Punjab. The Punjab government of Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif had distributed one million laptops to the students' period between 2008 to 2018. One million students mean a facility to the ten hundred

thousand families throughout Punjab. It was a great relief to the masses at that time and is a relief them today as well.

We must keep this fact in mind that country is passing through severe financial crisis. There is a huge gap between the government revenues and expenditure. The country needs billions of dollars in the current financial years to pay back (debts and interests on the debts) to the international financial institutions including IMF and bilateral loans to the friendly countries. As a result, the government is under great pressure from International Monetary Fund (IMF) to curtail and control all kinds of spending. In such a tight financial situation allocating funds for schemes like laptop is a great decision of the government. For this the Prime Minister Muhammad Shahbaz Sharif and Finance Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar must be appreciated. The present laptop scheme is being supervised and executed by the Youth Affairs Division, headed by the Special Assistance to the Prime Minister on Youth Affairs, Miss Shiza Fatima. No doubt, she is a hard-working and competent team member of Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif's government. She put a lot of efforts to launch this scheme successfully in a very short period of time. Our political leadership should encourage the young politicians to come up with new ideas and energy for providing real relief to masses. Laptop scheme is poor and low-income oriented program which needs to be supported. However, such schemes also had brought lot of financial scandals in the past. Some of the accusations no doubt was politically motivated both by the opposition and some segments of the media without any evidence. We hope as the prime minister assured that laptops would be distributed on the merit, he should also make it sure that some corrupt elements within the government hierarchy may not misuse their authority for the personal gains and ultimately bring a bad name to the prime minister and his government. Actually, the tax payer money was mostly lotted during the selection process of the companies (tendering process) and purchasing process of products. The senior bureaucrats who are part and parcel of such schemes must make it sure that transparency is being followed from beginning till the end of the scheme. Transparency would make this program a great success.

## Erdogan's new era and the changing World

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



In his third term, Erdogan has pledged to combat inflation and foster a productive economy. However, achieving this objective necessitates making arduous choices and implementing reforms. He must decide whether to raise interest rates to curb inflation and defend the lira or devalue the currency to boost exports and enhance competitiveness. Additionally, he must address structural issues

Turkey is a nation characterized by vast territories, spanning across two continents, Europe and Asia, and occupying a crucial position in regional and international affairs. Such a role has been predetermined by Turkey's destiny. Nonetheless, these destinies bring forth numerous challenges, both internal and external, which have a profound impact on Turkey's destiny and identity. In May 2023, Turkey conducted its presidential elections, resulting in the re-election of Recep Tayyip Erdogan for a third term. Erdogan is a charismatic leader who has significantly transformed Turkey's political, economic, and social landscape since his entry into the political arena at the beginning of the second millennium. Additionally, he has pursued an assertive and ambitious foreign policy, often leading to disagreements with both allies and neighboring nations. Currently, Erdogan faces a pressing issue in the form of an economic crisis that has plagued Turkey in recent years. The country grapples with soaring inflation rates, high unemployment, an expanding trade deficit, and dwindling foreign exchange reserves. Erdogan's unorthodox monetary approach of maintaining low interest rates and relying on currency swaps and injections from allies has failed to stabilize the Turkish lira. Since 2020, the lira has experienced a devaluation of over 40% against the US dollar. Numerous economists express concerns that Turkey is edging towards a balance of payments crisis unless international confidence is restored, and foreign investment is attracted.

In his third term, Erdogan has pledged to combat inflation and foster a productive economy. However, achieving this objective necessitates making arduous choices and implementing reforms. He must decide whether to raise interest rates to curb inflation and defend the lira or devalue the currency to boost exports and enhance competitiveness. Additionally, he must address structural issues within the economy, such as low savings, high debt, low productivity, and reliance on imports. Furthermore, Erdogan must confront the social consequences arising from economic hardships, including poverty, inequality, and discon-

tent among the urban middle class. To address this predicament, Erdogan appointed the economist Mehmet Cismak as Minister of Treasury and Finance. Another significant challenge confronting Erdogan revolves around the refugee crisis resulting from the civil war in Syria, as well as the instability in Iraq and Afghanistan. Turkey currently accommodates over four million refugees, primarily Syrians who have fled violence and persecution in their home country. While Turkey has received acclaim for its humanitarian response and generosity towards refugees, it has also encountered criticism and resentment from segments of Turkish society who accuse refugees of usurping employment opportunities, resources, and services intended for the local population. Erdogan endeavors to strike a delicate balance between maintaining his humanitarian stance and responding to popular pressure for refugee deportation or resettlement. Furthermore, he has employed the refugee card as a bargaining chip with the European Union, leveraging the threat of opening borders and triggering a new wave of immigration unless Turkey receives increased financial aid and political support from Brussels. Erdogan must find a sustainable solution to the refugee crisis in his third term that respects the rights and dignity of refugees while addressing the concerns and needs of the Turkish people. Cooperation with the international community, particularly the European Union and NATO, is essential to share the burden and responsibility of hosting and integrating refugees. Moreover, efforts must be made to facilitate the resolution of conflicts in Syria and Iraq, ensuring the preservation of peace and stability in Afghanistan. The forthcoming municipal elections in March 2024 represent another formidable challenge for Erdogan as they will serve as a crucial test of his popularity and legitimacy. Municipal elections hold significance as they determine the control of local administrations and services in Turkey's major cities and regions. Furthermore, these elections reflect the prevailing sentiment and public opinion towards Erdogan's policies and performance. In the previous municipal elections in 2019, Erdogan

experienced a significant setback when the ruling Justice and Development Party lost control of Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, and several other major cities to opposition parties. This outcome was perceived as an indication of Erdogan's declining popularity. Opposition parties capitalized on their victories by delivering improved services, transparency, and accountability to their constituents. To maintain his hold on power and safeguard his legacy, Erdogan must regain the ground he lost in the upcoming municipal elections. He must regain the trust and support of urban voters, particularly the youth, women, Kurds, secular individuals, and minority groups. Addressing their grievances and demands for increased democracy, freedom, justice, and pluralism is imperative. Erdogan must also confront a united and confident opposition bloc that challenges him on multiple fronts. Since the onset of the Syrian uprising that escalated into a civil war, Erdogan has staunchly criticized and opposed the regime of Bashar al-Assad. He has supported various rebel groups fighting against the Assad regime and engaged in military intervention in northern Syria to establish a buffer zone along the Turkish border. Erdogan has accused Assad of committing atrocities against his own people and called for his removal from power. However, Assad managed to survive and reclaim most of the territory lost to the rebels, thanks to support from Russia, Iran, and Hezbollah. Assad has also regained some international recognition and legitimacy, as some Arab and European countries have resumed diplomatic relations with his regime. Assad has expressed willingness to engage in political dialogue and negotiations with the opposition and other stakeholders under the auspices of the United Nations. Erdogan must determine whether to continue his adversarial approach towards Assad or alter his policy and seek reconciliation. This decision requires a careful evaluation of the costs and benefits associated with each option in terms of security, stability, and influence in Syria. Additionally, Erdogan must take into account the perspectives and interests of his allies and partners, including Russia, Iran, NATO, and the United States, who possess differing agendas and expectations concerning Syria.

## Briefs

## PM condemns smear campaign against COAS

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freedom of expression, but it was only a conspiracy, and it was a legal responsibility to eradicate such tendency with full strength. He said the nation would foil such attempts in such a manner as it had frustrated the attempt on May 9 to stir violence and vandalism in the country. He also expressed the nation's resolve not to allow the disappointed and panicked elements to create new crises in the country.

## Swiss FM lauds Pak's disaster...

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He stressed the crucial role of disaster preparedness in Pakistan, stating that managing two simultaneous disasters can be a daunting task and have severe consequences. He apprised the Swiss delegation of the inclusive and people-centric disaster preparedness system, mentioning three National Simulation Exercises (SimExs) conducted by NDMA to enhance disaster preparedness in Pakistan. The NDMA Chairman underlined the importance of reaching out to regional universities for knowledge sharing and capacity building. Swiss Foreign Minister Ignazio Cassis expressed his gratitude for MoU on disaster management cooperation between Switzerland and Pakistan. He lauded NDMA's achievements in the relief and rehabilitation of flood-hit people. He highlighted the similarity in topography and challenges faced by both countries and emphasized the importance of technological knowledge in dealing with complex disaster management. The Swiss Minister lauded the development and achievements in disaster management in Pakistan and expressed his anticipation for future cooperation based on the MoU. The meeting concluded with an agreement to continue to work closely together to enhance disaster management capabilities and share best practices in the field.

## 'Switzerland could play role for...'

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maintain peace in this part of the world and that Switzerland could play the role of catalyst to promote peace in the region. "There could be no lasting peace in this part of the world till their issues including Kashmir were resolved," he added. He said that Pakistan liked to promote progress, and prosperity, eradicate unemployment, and poverty, and enhance education, IT, industry, women empowerment, and agriculture for the well-being of the people.

## PTI blasts Ahsan for his 'absurd'

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He stated that the state of Pakistan was a captive of the misguided narratives of the politically active criminal professional families. Raouf Hasan went on to say that this man was craven in an attempt to accuse Chana of muddling in Pakistani politics in order to add weight to his false narrative. During the PTI era, this criminal group continued to target the CPEC through its false statements in total disregard of their negative ramifications, he added. Raouf Hasan stated that China's senior diplomat in Pakistan had to appear before the media to expose their lies. PTI CIS said that the puppet prime minister should explain to the nation about the statement of his long-tongued, lying and conspiratorial minister. He went on to say that the prime minister should tell the nation that on whose blessing and instructions efforts were being made to involve China like trusted friend in internal politics.

## World No.1 Alcaraz survives test, Rybakina cruises

"I'm really happy with the level that I played to get through this really tough match," said the relieved 20-year-old. The US Open champion was playing his second match in two days after rain delays earlier in the week

LONDON: Carlos Alcaraz reached the last 16 at Wimbledon on Saturday after a tough battle against Nicolas Pietrangeli as defending women's champion Elena Rybakina snuffed out the hopes of Britain's final hope Katie Boulter. Rain returned to the All England Club, meaning play on Centre Court started under the roof and later forced an early end to the action on the outside courts. Top seed Alcaraz is seen as the biggest threat to Novak Djokovic, who is gunning for a record-equalling eighth men's title and 24th Grand Slam crown overall. But the Spaniard, who won the grass-court Queen's tournament last month, was made to work hard for the win by his Chilean opponent, seeded 25th, before prevailing 6-3, 6-7 (6/8), 6-3, 7-5. Alcaraz bounced back from losing his first set of the tournament to lead 2-1 but narrowly avoided going a double break down in the fourth set before rediscovering his mojo.

"I'm really happy with the level that I played to get through this really tough match," said the relieved 20-year-old. The US Open champion was playing his second match in two days after rain delays earlier in the week. Djokovic, by contrast, moved serenely into the last 16 late on Friday, beating Stan Wawrinka in straight sets. Alcaraz will face big-serving Matteo Berrettini in the fourth round after the 2021 runner-up beat Alexander Zverev 6-3, 7-6 (7/4), 7-6 (7/5). Unseeded Berrettini feels



he has a point to prove after missing last year's tournament due to a bout of Covid. "I love to play here," said the Italian. "Last year I missed it and I still didn't heal from that withdrawal. This tournament changed my career, my life and I'm really happy." Last year's surprise women's champion Rybakina made short work of wild card Boulter, who was the only British player left in the tournament, romping to a 6-1, 6-1 win in just 57 minutes. The Kazakh third seed had not previously

hit her best form at Wimbledon but 89th-ranked Boulter had no answer to her opponent's superior power. Rybakina fired seven aces in her 20 winners, breaking her opponent five times. Last year's beaten finalist Ons Jabeur also progressed, thanking the rain for the part it played in her victory, interrupting the deciding set. The Tunisian sixth seed lost the first set but battled back to beat Bianca Andreescu 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 and set up a last-16 clash with two-time champion Petra Kvitova.

"I've got to thank the rain a little bit for letting me speak to my coach and have a bit of perspective about the match," she said. "I felt like I didn't play my best tennis." Kvitova stayed on track for a third title by beating Serbian qualifier Natalija Stevanovic 6-3, 7-5 while Australian Open champion and second seed Aryna Sabalenka saw off Russia's Anna Blinkova. Men's third seed Daniil Medvedev lost the first set against close friend Marton Fucsovics but recovered to win in four sets. Greek fifth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas, who beat Andy Murray in a five-set thriller over two days in the second round, eased past Serbia's Laslo Djere in straight sets. Holger Rune saved two match points to defeat Alejandro Davidovich Fokina, with the Spaniard left to regret deciding to serve underarm when he was just two points from winning. The Danish sixth seed came through 6-3, 4-6, 3-6, 6-4, 7-6 (10/8) after Davidovich Fokina served underarm at 8/8 in the final-set tiebreaker. Holger was quick to it, winning the point to go to match point, which he converted when the 31st seed netted a forehand. "I didn't expect the serve like that but I was fast to reach it," said Rune after the four-hour clash. He will face either US 10th seed Frances Tiafoe or former semi-finalist Grigor Dimitrov in the next round. Bulgaria's Dimitrov had won the first two sets when the match was called off due to the weather and light conditions.

## Gen (r) Arif reelected as Olympic Council of Asia Vice President

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan added another feather in its cap as Pakistan Olympic Association (POA) President Lt. Gen (R) Syed Arif Hasan has been reelected as the Vice President of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) for the next four years (2023-2027) in office during 42nd General Council elections held at Thailand capital Bangkok. The general assembly of Olympic Council of Asia reposed trust on the abilities of President Pakistan Olympic

Association to take over the reign for South Asia. It is under Gen. Arif Hasan dynamic leadership that the Olympic family of Pakistan has secured autonomy as envisaged in the Olympic Charter. The re-election of POA President as Olympic Council of Asia Vice President is a big achievement for Pakistan as it will surely benefit the country in making its presence felt at the important international forum. Speaking on the occasion Lt Gen (r) Arif Hasan said that he is thankful to all the member countries for reposing trust in me, adding

that I will continue to serve OCA interests and would make all possible efforts to uphold the interest of the Olympic charter. He said that the decision by OCA also shows that Pakistan has gained respect in the Asian sports fraternity. "My election is also an indication that Pakistan sports is being respected throughout Asia," he said. Meanwhile Sheikh Talal Fahad Al Ahmad Al-Sabah was elected the new President of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) as Sheikh Talal received 24 of the 44 votes cast, while the OCA Director

General, Mr. Husain Al-Musallam, received 20. Former Secretary General of the OCA, Randhir Singh of India, had led the OCA as Acting President since 2021. Sheikh Talal, 58, is the son of the first OCA President, Sheikh Fahad Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, who was President from 1982 to 1990, and the younger brother of the previous OCA President, Sheikh Ahmad Fahad Al-Sabah, who led the organisation from 1991 to 2021. The Olympic Family of Pakistan extends heartfelt congratulations to Lt. Gen (R) Syed Arif Hasan on his re-election as Vice President. We applaud his continued commitment and invaluable contributions to the growth and development of sports in South Asia. During the general assembly meeting OCA has announced that the 6th Asian Indoor and Martial Arts Games in Thailand in November 2023 have been postponed to February-March 2024. Originally set for November 17-26, 2023, the new dates for AIMAG 6 are February 24 to March 6, 2024.

## Mbappe calls PSG 'divisive' in interview

"We did what we could," said Mbappe. "You have to talk to the people who make the team, who organise the squad, who build this club."

PARIS: France striker Kylian Mbappe has called his club side Paris St-Germain "divisive" as doubts intensify over his future at the French champions. The 24-year-old, whose contract at PSG expires in 2024, made the comments to France Football magazine. PSG's all-time leading scorer has told the club he will not sign a new deal. "I think that playing for PSG doesn't help much because it's a divisive team, a divisive club," Mbappe is reported as saying. Paris St-Germain chairman Nasser Al-Khelaifi said he would not allow Mbappe to leave on a free transfer when his contract expires next summer. Mbappe, who has won Ligue 1 five times with PSG since joining from Monaco in 2017, scored 41 goals in all competitions last season as he helped the club clinch an 11th league title. But they once again failed in their quest for Champions League success as they were knocked out in the last 16 by Bayern Munich. "We did what we could," said Mbappe. "You have to talk to the people who make the team, who organise the squad, who build this club." Luis Enrique was appointed head coach last week, replacing Christophe Galtier, and takes over a squad in transition. PSG have already allowed Argentine World Cup winner Lionel Messi, 36, to join MLS side Inter Miami, while the future of Brazil forward Neymar, 31, is also in doubt. - Agencies



## Shandur polo festival concludes successfully in Chitral

ISLAMABAD: A three-day enthralling colourful celebrations of traditional Shandur polo festival concluded successfully in Chitral valley where thousands of tourists from all across Pakistan including International tourists had participated in the event and enjoyed polo matches. The provincial government in collaboration with Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) has made all-out efforts to promote sports and tourism while the polo game found special attention for the tourists, PTV News channel reported. The world's highest polo field, Shandur, Upper Chitral, is the site of the annual polo festival, which features teams from Gilgit Baltistan and Chitral. A foreign tourist admired that the unique location of the polo ground makes it a popular destination for adventure seekers and polo enthusiasts. The final match of the festival was played between Chitral and Gilgit Beltistan teams, said a local visitor. The festival also concluded with special traditional, cultural, and adventurous activities including music and dance in the evening at the world's highest polo ground at Shandur. Along with this, administration officials, including high civil and military officials, a large number of local people and other guests had attended the event. - APP

## Volkanovski stops Yair to retain featherweight title

LAS VEGAS: Alexander Volkanovski brilliantly stopped Yair Rodriguez to retain his featherweight title at UFC 290 in Las Vegas. Australia's Volkanovski dominated Mexican Rodriguez before ending the fight on the ground in round three with a flurry of punches. It is the 34-year-old's fifth title defence since winning the belt from Max Holloway in 2019. After the bout, Volkanovski revealed he requires surgery on an injury. "I'll be completely honest with you, I need a bit of surgery on my arm," he said. "But I want that lightweight belt, I'm still coming for that. I'm coming back, watch out." In the co-main event in Nevada, Brazil's Alexandre Pantoja beat Mexico's Brandon Moreno by split decision to win the UFC flyweight title in a gripping back-and-

forth contest. Pantoja, 33, was narrowly out-struck by Moreno over five rounds, but got the better of the grappling exchanges in a bout described by UFC commentator Daniel Cormier as "the fight of the year to this point". The main event was set up at UFC 284 in February, when Volkanovski narrowly missed out on becoming a double champion as he suffered a points defeat by lightweight title-holder Islam Makhachev. With Volkanovski's attention elsewhere, an interim featherweight title bout took place on the same evening, with Rodriguez, 30, superbly submitted Josh Emmett. Rodriguez, alongside Moreno and women's flyweight champion Alexa Grasso, was one of three Mexican champions in the UFC heading into

the event and said in the build-up "Mexicans were showing the world what they're capable of". In Volkanovski, however, he was facing a fighter many believe to be the greatest featherweight of all time. Both fighters appeared relaxed, soaking in the atmosphere as they made their way towards the octagon, with Volkanovski revealing a scratch under his right eye which had been covered by a plaster during the lead-up to the fight. Volkanovski struck first in the opening minutes, landing a takedown and controlling the rest of the round on the ground. Rodriguez started to open up in the second, throwing a number of his signature flamboyant kicks without landing, before Volkanovski gained control again with a takedown. - Agencies

## Mexico, Panama reach Gold Cup semis

Ajax right-back Jorge Sanchez went close to a first-half opener for Mexico, driving into the box and firing a low shot that was well saved by Ticos keeper Kevin Chamorro

MIAMI: Mexico and Panama booked their places in the last four of the CONCACAF Gold Cup with victories on Saturday in their quarter-final ties against Costa Rica and Qatar. Ismael Diaz blasted a hat-trick in the space of nine second-half minutes as Panama marched on with a 4-0 win over Qatar. Record eight-time Gold Cup champions Mexico reached the last four of the tournament for the ninth straight edition thanks to a 2-0 win over Costa Rica. Ajax right-back Jorge Sanchez went close to a first-half opener for Mexico, driving into the box and firing a low shot at the near post that was well saved by Ticos keeper Kevin Chamorro. Mexico, beaten by the USA in the final two years ago, dominated for long stretches but were given a reminder of Costa Rica's threat when Anthony Contreras found space for a shot but his effort lacked power and was comfortably dealt with by veteran keeper Guillermo Ochoa. It threatened to be a frustrating night for Jaime Lozano's side but they finally broke through in the 52nd minute when Kendall Weston barged Henry Martin to the ground and Orbelin Pineda side-footed home the spot kick. Costa Rica struggled to penetrate the Mexican defense and had to resort to long-range attacks, the best of which saw an Aaron Suarez effort dip just over the bar.



At the other end, Luis Chavez went close to a second with a free-kick that flew narrowly over the bar and then Santiago Gimenez flashed a shot just wide. The victory was wrapped up for Mexico with three minutes of regulation time remaining - Roberto Alvarado burst down the left and pulled the ball back, just behind Erick Sanchez, who scuffed the ball home. Guest team Qatar had to shuffle their pack in Dallas with six players suspended due to an accumulation of yellow cards and Panama proved to be too strong for the Asian champions. The Canamels took the lead in the 19th when Eric Davis whipped in a great cross from the left and Edgar Barcenas buried a header into the far corner. The goal rush for Diaz started in the 56th minute when he was fed a perfect through ball by the impressive Adalberto Carrasquilla, burst in from the left and cleverly slotted into the near post. Diaz made it 3-0 with a poacher's finish after Carrasquilla's drive blocked and after a brief scramble the ball fell to the Panama striker, who picked his spot for his second. The hat-trick was completed when, after smart exchange with Jose Fajardo, Diaz burst away from the Qatari defenders and fired home with confidence. - Agencies

## Ahsan takes U-turn over statement

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their usual diplomatic manner - tried to convey to that time's establishment that you should not conduct any new experiment because [then] CPEC will get derailed." Members linked to the coalition government, have on multiple occasions, accused the then-PTI government of harming progress on the multi-billion dollar CPEC project. "And then they [China] were told that 'no, whoever comes next, rest assured, we will keep them right and they will continue [CPEC]'. When host Saleem Safi sought confirmation of his claim, the minister went on to explain, "It is in my knowledge that in their usual cautious manner, they had conveyed that any sort of experiment for change will not be in Pakistan's favour and will destroy CPEC as well. "Therefore, you should not interfere in the elections - let fair and free elections take place", he quoted the Chinese officials as saying to the establishment. Iqbal then asserted that at that time, "everyone could see that PML-N government will come to power once again if fair and free elections were held". When further asked by the host about how the Chinese officials knew from before that the PTI government would allegedly worsen the CPEC progress, he answered: "It is not about that what the PTI would do - it is about disruption." In his clarification tweet, the PML-N leader said, "My statement about China in a TV interview is out of context which needs clarification. China maintains a policy of non-interference in domestic affairs of other countries."

## Pakistan 'cautiously' praises...

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Durrani added that Pakistani military operations had deprived the TTP of any territorial control and their relocation from border areas suggests they have now also become a "liability" for the Afghan Taliban. "Comparatively, Afghanistan is now very peaceful but there are pockets of TTP, ETIM, and other groups that are a source of concern. Both Pakistan and China hope that the Afghan government will take practical measures," Durrani said. "As President Biden has also alluded to the cooperation, which Afghan Taliban and American authorities have had in taking counterterrorism measures, the same expectation we have, and the process has started. Hopefully, we will have some positive results in the near future," Durrani told VOA.

## Govt urges caution as heavy...

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ensure contingency traffic plans for areas vulnerable to flooding in cities, especially Lahore, Gujranwala, Sialkot, and Faisalabad. "All district administrations should ensure completion of stock-taking and reconnaissance and public awareness/information in vulnerable areas, especially Marala Headworks on River Chenab and Jassar on River Ravi with respect to chances of flood flows until July 20," it said. The NDMA further directed all the stakeholders to maintain "proactive coordination" to ensure prompt response at the grassroots level. According to the authority, 68 people have been killed across the country in monsoon rains since June 26 while over 120 were left wounded. In the past week, Lahore received record-breaking rain which claimed dozens of lives and submerged roads in several localities. Meanwhile, eight children were buried alive in KP after a landslide hit the Shangla district.

## Briefs

## Admin prohibits dumping of solid waste in Nullahs

RAWALPINDI: Deputy Commissioner (DC) Rawalpindi Dr. Hassan Waqar Cheema under Section-144 imposed in Rawalpindi, has prohibited dumping of solid waste and construction material in Nullah Lai, its tributaries and other major drainage nullahs. According to a district administration spokesman, the violators of the order had been warned of strict action on dumping solid waste and building material into Nullah Lai, its tributaries and other major Nullahs which is causing blockages and hindering the natural flow of water which not only creates an unhygienic environment but also increases the risk of waterborne disease for the residents. Under Section-144, swimming/bathing in Nullah Lai, its tributaries and other major Nullahs particularly during monsoon season poses immediate danger and serious consequences, including the risk of drowning. The order issued by DC Rawalpindi to remain in force for a period of seven days i.e July 5 to July 11 within the revenue limits of Rawalpindi. —DNA

## RDA seeks suggestions, proposals on peri-urban plan

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) has invited suggestions and proposals on Peri-Urban plan of three tehsils of Rawalpindi district, Kalar Syedan, Taxila and Kahota. According to a RDA spokesman, chairing a meeting held here about the new determination of urban limits and completing the Peri-Urban Structure Plan and Side Development Zone, Rawalpindi, the Director General, RDA said that the citizens' objections and suggestions related to three tehsils would be appreciated.

The consultant of Mott MacDonald Pakistan Company gave a detailed presentation about the proposals of Peri-Urban Structure, he said adding, the meeting was informed about the new urban limits and restrictions in Peri-Urban Structure Plan. The objections and suggestions could be submitted in the office of the Director, Metropolitan Planning and Traffic Engineering (MP&TE), RDA Muhammad Tahir Meo within next seven days so that these could be incorporated in the plan. He said, Director MP&TE could also be contacted during office hours on 051-5554043.—APP

## Rescue-1122 on high alert to cope with possible flood in Nullah Lai

RAWALPINDI: The emergency service, Rescue-1122, which is fully equipped to cope with the possible flood in Nullah Lai, has been put on high alert to cope with emergencies. According to a Rescue-1122 spokesman, the rescuers deployed in low-lying areas, particularly in Katarian, Gawalmandi, Sowan and other low-lying areas would remain on high alert round the clock to provide timely emergency response, medical treatment and transportation facilities to possible flood victims. The Rescue-1122 has also requested people not to stand on the banks in low-lying areas along Nullah Lai during flood and follow instructions given by the departments concerned. However, the administration had also completed all the arrangements to cope with the flood situation, he added. According to a district administration spokesman, Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) under the directives of the Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, Li-aquat Ali Chatha had completed the cleanliness work of Nullah Lai. The small drains were also cleaned so that water in the Nullah Lai during Monsoon rains could flow smoothly. WASA Rawalpindi spokesman informed that the Agency on the directives of the Punjab government had completed a special campaign to clean sewerage lines.—APP



TASHKENT: President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev and his family posing for a picture on the occasion of the Presidential Election 2023.—DNA

## Protests as Israel's govt carries on judicial overhaul

The grassroots movement has staged protests for over six months since Netanyahu's government unveiled the overhaul plan. But in recent weeks, the protests had shown signs of weakening

TEL AVIV, Israel: Israel's anti-government protest movement gained new momentum as tens of thousands of people spilled into the streets of cities across the country to oppose Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's contentious plan to overhaul the judicial system. The grassroots movement has staged protests for over six months since Netanyahu's government unveiled the overhaul plan. But in recent weeks, the protests had shown signs of weakening. Plans by the government to push forward with the overhaul

next week in parliament, coupled with the firing of Tel Aviv's police chief, who was accused of being too sympathetic to the protesters, appeared to breathe new life into Saturday's demonstrations. Some 150,000 people thronged central Tel Aviv, with large rallies in Jerusalem and other major cities. Late Saturday, dozens of people attempted to block Tel Aviv's main highway, but they were quickly cleared away by police. Scuffles broke out, and police sprayed a water cannon at the crowd. Netanyahu's allies have pro-

posed a series of changes to the Israeli legal system aimed at weakening what they say are the excessive powers of unelected judges. The proposed changes include giving Netanyahu's allies control over the appointment of judges and the power to overturn court decisions they do not support. His opponents say the plan will destroy the country's fragile system of checks and balances and concentrate power in the hands of Netanyahu and his allies. They also say that Netanyahu has a conflict of interest because he is on

trial for corruption charges. Wide swaths of Israeli society, including reserve military officers, business leaders, LGBT and other minority groups, have joined the protests. A legislative committee chaired by a Netanyahu ally last week approved a bill that would prevent Israel's courts from scrutinizing the "reasonableness" of decisions made by elected officials. The legislature could hold a preliminary vote on the bill as early as Monday. The "reasonableness standard" was used by the Supreme Court earlier this

year to strike down the appointment of a Netanyahu ally as interior minister because of a past conviction for bribery and a 2021 plea deal for tax evasion. Critics say removing that standard would allow the government to pass arbitrary decisions and grant it too much power. Protesters also condemned the ouster of Tel Aviv's police chief, Ami Eshed, who said this week he was forced to resign because of political pressure to act violently toward protesters. Eshed regularly clashed with the hard-line national security minister,

Itamar Ben-Gvir, who has demanded that police take a tougher stance against months of anti-government protests. Saturday's protest is the latest in a series of demonstrations which, since January, have seen thousands of Israelis take to the streets. Netanyahu put the overhaul on hold in March after mass protests erupted in opposition, but announced last month that the plan would move forward. The protests have blocked roads, disrupted the country's main airport and thronged major cities.—APP

### Wanted member of bike lifter gang held

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad capital police Golra police team apprehended a wanted member of bike lifter Gang involved in a series of bike lifting incidents in various areas of the city and recovered stolen motorbike from his possession, a police public relations officer said. He said that, following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad capital police had started a crackdown against criminal elements involved in car and bike lifting incidents in order to save the precious lives and property of citizens. Following these directives, the Golra police team used technical and human resources and succeeded in apprehending a wanted member of a bike lifter gang involved in numerous bike lifting incidents in various areas of the twin cities. Police team also recovered a stolen motorbike from his possession. The accused was identified as Bakshish Elahi. Cases have already been registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway. During the preliminary investigation the accused confessed to being involved in numerous bike lifting incidents in various areas of the city.

### 15 absconders involved in heinous crime held

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad capital police teams have arrested 15 absconders during the last week involved in heinous crime, a police public relations officer said. He said that, following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, special tasks were assigned to all police officials to ensure the arrest of proclaimed offenders and absconders involved in heinous crimes. During the crackdown, the Islamabad capital police, Aabpara, Kohsar, Margalla, Tarnol, Industrial Area, Sabzi Mandi, Noon, Bani Gala and Golra police station team arrested 15 absconders during the last week involved in heinous crime. CPO/DIG Operations Islamabad said that the Islamabad capital police are taking all possible steps to eradicate crime from the city and those involved in heinous crimes and illegal activities will be dealt with iron hands. Safety to the lives and property of the citizens is the foremost priority of Islamabad capital police, he added. He also directed all senior officials for effective crackdown against the accused involved in heinous crimes. "Safety and security of the citizens is our foremost priority and no laxity will be tolerated in this regard" he maintained. —DNA

### Soon Valley becomes center of attraction for researchers

ISLAMABAD: The unique patch of daunting mountains in the Salt Range of the Pothohar region of Pakistan, the Soon Valley has become a centre of attraction for researchers and news seekers to unearth different modern scientific and nature-based solutions adopted to preserve rainwater and treat wastewater in the country. The cup-shaped valley is famous for mining silica sand, crush and coal for the past many decades. Soon Valley becomes a wetland complex based on different lakes of Khabheki, Jhalar and Uchali that are part of the Ramsar Convention and collectively known as the Uchali Complex. Interestingly, the area temperature of the Valley is 3-4°C less than that of the federal capital and makes it ideal for off-season crop cultivation like cauliflower, potatoes and green chillies. The Institute of Urbanism organized an exposure visit for journalists to unearth the various modern strategies adopted by the WorldWide Fund for Nature (WWF-Pakistan) to cope with growing water demand and shortage spiking up side by side. The Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety Division also conducted a study to gauge the potential of the area for introducing low-cost earning schemes through the cultivation of off-season crops.—APP

## Yellen sees progress in US-China ties at end of visit

BEIJING: United States Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen has said her talks with top Chinese officials in recent days were "direct" and "productive" and helped put the US-China relationship on a "surer footing". Yellen, who departs Beijing on Sunday, told a news conference that the US and China remained at odds on a number of issues but expressed confidence that her bilateral meetings, which totalled about 10 hours, had advanced Washington's efforts to stabilise fraught relations between the world's two biggest economies. "The US and China have significant disagreements," Yellen told reporters at the US Embassy in Beijing, citing her government's concerns about what she called "unfair economic practices" and Beijing's recent pu-

nitive actions against US firms. "But President [Joe] Biden and I do not see the relationship between the US and China through the frame of great power conflict. We believe that the world is big enough for both of our countries to thrive," she said. Yellen's four-day visit is Washington's latest attempt to repair US-China ties, which have been battered over issues from Taiwan to technology and that have drawn allies into their rivalry, affecting companies and trade ties. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken visited Beijing last month in the first visit by the top US diplomat of the Biden presidency, while climate envoy John Kerry is expected to visit China this month. The US diplomatic push comes ahead of a possible meeting between Biden and his Chinese counter-

part, Xi Jinping, as soon as September's Group of 20 summit in New Delhi or the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation gathering scheduled for November in San Francisco. While Yellen's trip did not produce specific breakthroughs, China's official Xinhua news agency said late on Saturday that the secretary's meeting with Vice Premier He Lifeng yielded an agreement to "strengthen communication and cooperation on addressing global challenges". Both sides also agreed to continue exchanges, the read-out added. Yellen said on Sunday the objective of her visit was to establish and deepen ties with China's new economic team, reduce the risk of misunderstanding and pave the way for cooperation in areas such as climate

## Yemen oil tanker rescue 'progresses well,' UN says

## WEB DESK

AL-MUKALLA: The UN said that the current operation to salvage the decaying Safer tanker is proceeding efficiently and that the long-awaited transfer of more than a million barrels of crude oil from the tanker to a new one will begin "soon." "The work to prepare the FSO Safer for the offloading of its oil has progressed well," Russell Geekie, communications advisor for UN Humanitarian Coordinator David Gressly, told Arab News. "We expect the replacement vessel Nautica to sail from Djibouti to the Safer site very soon to take on the oil. Once it begins, the transfer operation will take about two weeks," he said. After years of resistance, the Iran-backed Houthis permitted international engineers to board the deteriorating FSO Safer tanker moored off Hodeidah in western Yemen. Local and international environmentalists and officials have long warned of a massive environmental catastrophe in the Red Sea if the ship exploded or fell apart because it has not been subjected to normal maintenance since the Houthis took control of Hodeidah province in early 2015. Images of seawater flowing into the tanker's rooms as rust eats away at the walls have grabbed international attention during the past three years. The UN official said that even if the tanker was unloaded it would still pose a threat, pleading for additional donations to complete the mission, which includes recycling the tanker and attaching the new ship to the anchor leg.

## UN warns Sudan faces 'full-scale civil war'

WAD MADANI, Sudan: Conflict-torn Sudan is on the brink of a "full-scale civil war" that could destabilize the entire region, the United Nations warned Sunday, after an air strike on a residential area killed around two dozen civilians. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Sunday condemned the air strike in Omdurman, which he said "reportedly killed at least 22 people" and wounded dozens, his deputy spokesperson Farhan Haq said in a statement. Guterres "remains deeply concerned that the ongoing war between the armed forces has pushed Sudan to the brink of a full-scale civil war, potentially destabilizing the entire region," Haq said. He added: "There is an utter disregard for humanitarian and human rights law that is dangerous and disturbing." The Ministry of Health reported "22 dead and a large number of wounded among the civilians" from the strike on Khartoum's sister city Omdurman, in the district of Dar Al-Salam, which means "House of Peace" in Arabic. After nearly three months of war between Sudan's rival generals, the air strike is the latest incident to provoke outrage. Around 3,000 people have been killed in the conflict, survivors have reported a wave of sexual violence and witnesses have spoken of ethnically targeted killings. There has been widespread looting, and the UN warned of possible crimes against humanity in the Darfur region. A video posted by the health ministry on Facebook showed apparently lifeless bodies after the airstrike, including several women. The narrator says that residents "counted 22 dead." The paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF), fighting the regular army, claimed that the strike killed 31. Since the war began, paramilitaries have established bases in residential areas, and they have been accused of forcing civilians from their homes. Nearly three million people have been uprooted by Sudan's fighting, among them almost 700,000 who have fled to neighboring countries according to the International Organization for Migration. The UN and African blocs have warned of an "ethnic dimension" to the conflict in the western region of Darfur, where the United States, Norway and Britain have blamed the RSF and allied militia for most of the widespread violations.—DNA

## Vital aid access for Syria to be voted on again

NEW YORK: The United Nations Security Council will vote once again on Monday to renew permission for the UN to deliver humanitarian aid to northwest Syria from a crossing on the border with Turkey. For nearly a decade, the UN has used this fragile cross-border mechanism to access civilians in opposition-held parts of northern Syria. But now there is growing concern that Russia will use its veto at the Security Council to end

it. Aid workers have warned that a failure to renew the UN's mandate could spell disaster for Syrians in the northwest, where 4.1 million people still rely on humanitarian aid to survive. The UN delivers most of this aid through a single border crossing known as Bab al-Hawa. In an open letter to the Security Council, a group of 32 NGOs operating in Syria described Bab al-Hawa as "the most critical supply line" for providing food, medical care and shelter. In February,

southern Turkey and northern Syria were hit by massive earthquakes and Syrians found themselves waiting days for life-saving assistance as the UN cited difficulties getting to Bab al-Hawa. The Security Council has long been divided over Syria. Most members support cross-border operations, including France, the United Kingdom and the United States, permanent members who are calling for the mandate to be extended from six months to one year.—APP



ALEXANDRIA: Ambassador Sajjad Haider attended the Kupala Night Festival in Alexandria Belarus with colleagues from the diplomatic corps.—DNA

## Briefs

### 'Incompetent, corrupt': Donald Trump castigates Joe Biden

WEB DESK

LAS VEGAS: Former President Donald Trump criticised incumbent President Joe Biden and accused him of corruption and incompetence in Las Vegas Saturday before he left to attend a UFC event meeting Dana White, actor Mel Gibson, and others. While speaking to the Republican volunteers, the 2024 presidential candidate commented on the country's economy, crime, and border issues, mentioning another frontrunner for the Oval Office, Ron DeSantis. The 77-year-old said Biden was a "corrupt, incompetent leader who has been compromised by China and Ukraine." He remarked that DeSantis was "highly overrated and has no personality". Trump came down hard on the US president, declaring that "the gloves are off", accusing him of taking "\$10,200,000 from China." "We have a corrupt, incompetent leader in the White House. And I wouldn't have said this a few weeks ago," he said. "He's totally compromised. In history, there has never been a scandal like this," said the former president, who has been indicted two times in several cases, including hush money payment and retaining classified documents at his residence.

### Five dead in Jhelum gas cylinder blast

DNA

JHELUM: At least five people died and 15 others sustained injuries when a three-storey building collapsed due to a powerful gas cylinder explosion in Jhelum on Sunday. According to initial reports, the three-storey hotel located on the Grand Trunk Road in Punjab's Jhelum collapsed after a cylinder exploded in the kitchen. Rescue officials said that as many as 15 injured have been recovered and shifted to the Jhelum District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital. Two of the injured — who were in critical condition — have been transported to Rawalpindi, they added. District Emergency Officer (DEO) Saeed Ahmen said that the first and second storeys of the building have been cleared, adding that some people are still trapped in the basement of the hotel. He maintained that a search and rescue operation is underway to recover all the people trapped under the debris of the building. Taking to Twitter, the Jhelum police said that all available resources are being utilised to rescue the lives of the people trapped under the debris of the building.

### Pak on 'alert' after India releases water in Ravi

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) on Sunday issued a fresh warning regarding the possibility of "low floods" in River Ravi after India released approximately 185,000 cusecs of water from the Ujh Barrage. Citing the Pakistan Commissioner for Indus Waters (PCIW), the NDMA stated: "Considering previous record approx 65,000 cusecs is expected to reach within [the] next 20-24 hours." This, the NDMA said, may lead to low floods in the floodplain areas of Punjab's Jassar region. Taking to its official Twitter handle, the disaster management authority wrote: "As per PCIW, India has released approx 185,000 cusecs water from Ujh Barrage (River Ravi)." "As per previous record, last year India had also released 173,000 cusecs and approx one third of released water i.e. 60,000 cusecs reached at Jassar causing Low Flood level (gauging point on River Ravi)."

## DNA



ISLAMABAD: Pakistani Senators Faisal Saleem Rehman, Sitara Ayaz, Editor Daily Islamabad POST/DNA and Centreline magazine Ansar Mahmood Bhatti and others posing for a picture during a reception hosted by the Central Election Commission of Uzbekistan. The media and parliamentary delegation is in Uzbekistan for the coverage of the Presidential elections. — DNA

# Russia says intercepted a missile over Crimea

The Moscow-appointed governor of Crimea, Sergei Aksyonov, said interception of the missile by Russian air defenses didn't result in any damage or casualties. He didn't offer any details, including the type of the missile and its origin

NEWS DESK

CRIMEA: Russian-installed authorities in the Crimean peninsula on Sunday reported shooting down a cruise missile near the city of Kerch and briefly suspending traffic on the Kerch bridge that links the annexed territory to Russia. The Moscow-appointed governor of Crimea, Sergei Aksyonov, said the interception of the missile by Russian air defenses didn't result in any damage or casualties. He didn't offer any details, including the type of the missile and its origin. In the nearby Russian region of Rostov, authorities on Sunday also reported shooting down a missile. Gov. Vasily Golubev said the missile was Ukrainian, and its debris damaged the roofs of several buildings. No casualties have been reported. Such attacks far beyond the front line on Russian regions on the border with Ukraine or the annexed Crimean peninsula have become common during the war in Ukraine that has just surpassed its 500-day mark. Officials in Russian regions and Moscow-appointed authorities in Crimea, which was illegally annexed in 2014, have regularly reported explosions, drone strikes, and even cross-border raids by Ukrainian saboteurs. Kyiv has never openly taken responsibility for these attacks. Last October, a massive explosion severely damaged the Kerch bridge — a key transport and supply route for Russian troops in Crimea — leaving it out of commission for weeks. In what appeared to be the first direct admission



of Kyiv's involvement, Ukraine's Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Maliar in a Telegram post on Saturday listed the attack among the country's main achievements in the war so far. "(It's been) 273 days since (we) carried out the first strike on the Crimean bridge in order to disrupt the logistics for the Russians," Maliar wrote. Among other successes, she also mentioned the sinking of the Moskva cruiser — something the Russian authorities refused to attribute to a Ukrainian attack. Maliar's post on Sunday caught the attention of Russian state media and officials. Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova once again called President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's government a "terrorist regime" in an online statement condemning the attack.

In other developments:

— One of the defense commanders of the Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol who returned to Ukraine on Saturday announced going back to the battlefield. The sprawling steelworks was the last bastion of resistance as Russian forces took control of the port city early on in the war. Azovstal's more than 2,000 defenders left the steelworks in mid-May 2022 and were taken into Russian captivity. The five leaders, some of whom were part of the Azov national guard regiment that Russia denounces as neo-Nazi, were freed in a September prisoner swap and taken to Turkey, where they were to remain until the end of the war under the Turkish president's protection. On Saturday, however, Zelenskyy brought them back to Ukraine. There was no immediate official explanation of how this squared with the conditions of the exchange. Speaking to reporters in Ukraine upon returning, Denys Prokopenko — one of the five commanders — said he will return to the battlefield. "I am deeply convinced that the army is a team effort. And from today we will continue the fight together with you. We will definitely have our say in battle," Prokopenko was quoted by Ukrainian media as saying. — The death toll from the Russian missile strike on Lyman, a city in the partially occupied Donetsk region that was struck on Saturday, rose to nine on Sunday. Lyman is a few kilometers (miles) from the front line, where Russian troops have recently intensified fighting in the forests of Kremenna.

### 'Key ringleader' of human trafficking arrested

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) on Sunday said it had arrested one of the two main human traffickers in connection with the Greece and Libya shipwreck tragedies. 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. Separately, there have been two other notable incidents of boats drowning off the coast of Libya in the Mediterranean Sea this year in which several Pakistanis — among others — had lost their lives. The first incident took place in February and the other in April, but the authorities did not specify in which case the latest arrest was made. According to a statement from the FIA spokesperson issued today, Mohammad Saleem Saniyare — a key figure in the Greek tragedy — was arrested in Gujrat in a major operation by the watchdog's local team.

### London court convicts PTI supporter

DNA

LONDON: A supporter of PTI has been found guilty by the Westminster Magistrates' Court of criminal damage to the Pakistan High Commission after launching a violent attack on the premises — nine days after the arrest of Imran Khan on May 9 in Islamabad. Geo News has learned that Amir Wasim Chaudhary, 51, of Woodlands Lane, Leytonstone, East London, was charged with one count of criminal damage to the building. The charge and conviction follow Chaudhary's attack on Pakistan High Commission in Knightsbridge at around 22:11hrs on May 18. Scotland Yard sources have confirmed that it received an emergency call from the Pakistani authorities on the night of May 18 when Chaudhary appeared in front of the commission in London, raised slogans for "Haqeeqi Azadi" and against govt of Pakistan.

### Biden flies to UK amid concern over cluster bombs

WEB DESK

LONDON: US President Joe Biden is heading to Europe ahead of a Nato summit after several allies questioned his decision to send cluster bombs to Ukraine. The UK and Canada are among those who voiced concern about supplying the bombs, which are widely banned because of the danger they pose to civilians. The US says they are needed because Ukraine's weapon stocks are dwindling. Mr Biden will arrive first in the UK, on Sunday evening, before heading to Lithuania for this week's Nato summit. On Monday, he will meet Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to discuss various issues, including the war in Ukraine. He

will also meet King Charles on Monday — the first time the pair have met since the King was crowned. The US confirmed it was sending cluster bombs to the Ukraine on Friday as part of a military aid package worth \$800m (£626m). Mr Biden said it had been a "very difficult decision" but that he had eventually acted because "the Ukrainians are running out of ammunition". But a number of Nato allies quickly distanced themselves from the decision. Mr Sunak did not directly criticise his US counterpart but made clear that the UK was one of 123 countries that had signed up to the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which bans the production or use of the weapons. Canada, New Zealand and Spain — all Nato members, like the US and UK — also stated their opposition to the weapons. "No to cluster bombs and yes to the legitimate defence of Ukraine, which we understand should not be carried out with cluster bombs," Spain's Defence Minister Margarita Robles said.

### EU envoy blasts Israel over deadly Jenin raid

RAMALLAH: A European envoy denounced Israel over the "proportionality" of the force it uses as international envoys toured the Jenin refugee camp in the occupied West Bank following a deadly raid. His remarks echoed UN chief Antonio Guterres who on Thursday told reporters "there was an excessive force used by Israeli forces" in its 48-hour operation, the largest Israel has staged in the occupied Palestinian territory for years. It included air raids and armoured bulldozers ripping up streets. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has repeatedly referred to the refugee camp as a "terrorist nest" because of the presence of Palestinian armed fighters. European Union representative to the Palestinian territories Sven Kuehn von Burgsdorff made his comments as he led a delegation of UN officials and diplomats from 25 countries to the camp in the northern occupied West Bank. "We are concerned about the deployment of weaponry and weapons systems which question the proportionality of the military during the

operation," Kuehn von Burgsdorff said of the operation, in which 12 Palestinians — including five children — were killed. More than 140 others were wounded and 30 are in serious condition, according to the Palestinian health ministry. One Israeli soldier was killed during the raid. "The military assault on Jenin was painful. What happened is a violation of international law," von Burgsdorff said. "This cycle of violence has to end, it cannot continue. If there is no political solution to the conflict, we are going to stand here in a week's time, in a month's time, in a year's time, with nothing changed." As the delegation toured the camp, residents peered out of holes left in the walls by Israeli rockets, and local authorities tested a new camp-wide alarm system to warn of future raids. Last Wednesday, three independent human rights experts said the Israeli air attacks and ground actions in Jenin "amount to egregious violations of int'l law and standards on use of force and may constitute a war crime". — Agencies

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