



# Islamabad POST

Saturday, July 22, 2023

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 25

**UK PM narrowly avoids wipeout in local polls**

Detailed News On Page-08

**Turkiye working for the Black Sea grain deal**

Detailed News On Page-07

**Waseem's world title fight postponed**

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## Briefs

**Billawal vows to fight for flood victims**

NAZIR SIYAL

LARKANA: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Friday vowed to provide ownership rights to the flood-stricken people. Addressing an event, Bhutto-Zardari expressed his resolve to build two million homes in Sindh during a speech. He continued, "From today, good days have started for the flood-stricken people. He admitted the masses were facing severe economic hardships. Bhutto-Zardari continued, "That is why we are bringing revolutionary projects for the public". He pledged to adopt the ideology of former prime minister Benazir Bhutto to every nook and cranny of the Sindh districts. Bhutto-Zardari asserted: "By winning the general elections, we will expand the projects". Foreign minister took a swipe at PTI chief, saying, "PTI's doctrine is to make the rich even richer."

**Azam joins probe in Al-Qadir case**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Azam Khan, former principal secretary to ex-prime minister Imran Khan, on Friday reportedly told National Accountability Bureau (NAB) that he was the "eye-witness" to all transactions that took place in the Al-Qadir Trust case, media reported. Azam appeared before the accountability watchdog in the Rawalpindi office in connection with the investigation of the £190m settlement case where he recorded his statement in front of the joint investigation team and answered questions. NAB issued a notice to the former principal secretary on July 20, directing him to appear at NAB Rawalpindi at 10am today related to the case, which also involves a property tycoon.

## Holiday Notice

The offices of daily Islamabad POST shall remain closed on Saturday on account of weekly off therefore there will be no newspaper on Sunday.

— Editor

## SIFC meeting held

# Govt focuses on attracting investment

The meeting was chaired by PM, attended by COAS, Chief Ministers, Ministers

ANSAR M BHATTI / DNA

ISLAMABAD: The second meeting of Special Investment Facilitation Council was held in Islamabad on Friday with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in the chair. The meeting was also attended by Chief of Army Staff, Chief Ministers, Federal and Provincial Ministers and high-level government officials. The Apex Committee expressed satisfaction on functioning of SIFC and its strategy to outreach the potential investors through conduct of seminars and project inaugurations. The Apex Committee also reviewed various projects presented by ministries for broaching with investors under the umbrella of SIFC. At the end, after a fruitful discussion and consensus, the Prime Minister gave approval of projects for attracting investments from friendly countries in Agricultural, Livestock, Minerals, Mining, IT and Energy Sectors, and also directed to extend impeccable facilitation to the investors, interested in undertaking and actualising these projects. Last month, The Government had constituted Special Investment Facilitation Council for the economic revival of the country. The event was chaired by the Prime Minister and attended by the Chief Ministers, Federal and Provincial Ministers, Chief of Army Staff and high-level government officials.

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# 'IMF acknowledges PTI role' Attempts to delay elections to harm economy: PTI

PTI sees IMF SBA as an opportunity to protect vulnerable citizens

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) said that they welcomed the IMF staff commitment to support 'national elections in Fall 2023' and to anchor the economy during the transition to the new government because only free and fair elections would be crucial to reduce political uncertainty and build confidence in the economy. The PTI warned that any attempts to delay or sabotage the elections will create further hurdles in the way of stabilizing the economy and financial support from the international development partners. The PTI issued its whitepaper on recently released IMF Staff Report and said PTI leadership welcomed the Executive Board approval of the \$ 3 billion IMF Standby Arrangement (SBA), and they hope that the 9-month arrangement will bring economic stability to Pakistan, after a painful year of PDM government that has led to record high inflation and created record unemployment. It was said that IMF staff report acknowledged that the

Continued on Page 06

# Desecration of Quran: PM urges OIC action

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday called upon the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the civilized world to come forward and take steps to put an end to the abominable practice of desecration of the holy books. "The attitudes that incite religious hatred, promote violence and encourage terrorism and militancy, need to be checked," he said in a tweet. The prime minister said no civilized society would allow the desecration of holy personages, symbols and divine books in the name of freedom of expression. "The grant of permission to desecrate the Holy Quran, Torah & Bible is part of a sinister, vile and despicable agenda whose sole aim could be to threaten world peace," he said. The prime minister said: "We should not let a handful of Satanic characters undermine our shared values of peace, and tolerance, pluralism."



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairs 2nd Apex Committee Meeting of Special Investment Facilitation Council SIFC. Chief of Army Staff, Chief Ministers, Federal and Provincial Ministers are also attending. — DNA

# Pakistan wants end to Ukraine conflict: FO

Russia seeks explanation after journalist's expulsion



SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch has expressed the hope that Ukraine conflict will be solved soon on the basis of negotiations and Pakistan is ready to play its part in promoting a dialogue to end this war. Responding to a question at her weekly news briefing in Islamabad on Friday, she said Pakistan and Russia are friends we have a very solid relationship. She said Pakistan's engagement with Russia will continue and Islamabad is concerned about sufferings of the civilian population on both sides. Replying to another question, the Spokesperson said Pakistan has raised its concerns with the Afghan interim authorities regarding the use of Afghan soil in carrying out terrorist activities inside Pakistan. She said Pakistan expects that Afghanistan will adhere to its commitments it made with the international community to not allowing any individual or group for using its soil to pose threat to regional peace and security. Regarding Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba ongoing visit to Pakistan,

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# Most difficulties over No new taxes on agriculture, real estate sectors: Dar

Dar refutes reports of further taxes in wake of IMF pact

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Friday firmly denied media reports claiming the imposition of additional taxes on agriculture and real estate sectors to meet the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) requirements. "I am categorically announcing on the floor of the house that there will be no new taxes on agriculture and real estate. We have faced numerous hardships due to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) requirements, and we have diligently met all the prior actions," the finance minister said while speaking at the National Assembly. The minister further emphasized that the news was entirely baseless and lacked truth, clarifying that all fiscal decisions made by the government were aimed at fulfilling IMF's requirements and commitments. Senator Ishaq Dar also offered his readiness to provide detailed information on these specific issues to anyone seeking clarification.



Discussing the economic situation, the finance minister mentioned that if the government continued its present policies, the inflation rate was expected to decrease to 7 per cent, based on the working of the State Bank. Attributing the country's economic hardships to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's backtracking from commitments, Senator Dar proudly stated that with the government's efforts, Pakistan had successfully reached an agreement of \$3 billion with the IMF. As a result, the State Bank of Pakistan received the first tranche of \$1.2 billion to stabilize the economy. Speaking on the current foreign exchange reserves, he informed that reserves had reached their highest position since October 2022.

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# Military trials AGP seeks time on right to appeal

Hearing adjourned till August 01 Curative review against Justice Faez goes

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: Attorney General for Pakistan (AGP) Mansoor Usman Awan on Friday requested the Supreme Court for a month on the matter of granting the right of appeal to people to be tried in military courts. "This matter needs very careful consideration; It has to be done in

Continued on Page 06

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial has approved the federal government's petition seeking the withdrawal of a curative review filed by previous Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)-led

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# Surging terror attacks in KP worry authorities

The province has seen a surge in terrorist attacks — from improvised explosive device blasts to suicide bombings — since late last year

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: A fourth terrorist attack in the last 48 hours rocked Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as the authorities foiled yet another militant attack on a checkpoint in the provincial capital of Peshawar on Thursday. The province has seen a surge in terrorist attacks — from improvised explosive device blasts to suicide bombings — since late last year when the Tehreek-e-Taliban (TTP) ended its ceasefire with Islamabad. In the latest attack, which took place late at night, eight terrorists were sent running for their lives when police personnel fought back as the militants tried to attack the Riaz Shaheed Police Post in Peshawar's Sarband area. Superintendent of Police (SP) Cantt Waqas Rafiq said as a result of police remaining "high alert," the cops could thwart the attack as terrorists tried to target the checkpoint at night. It wasn't the only attempt that militants had made. The checkpoint came under attack on June 7. A report from the province's counter-terrorism department showed that 665 militant attacks had taken place in a year

## 4 injured in blast in KP's Bajaur district

BAJAUR: At least four people were injured on Friday in a blast in the Geelay area in the Mamund Tehsil of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Bajaur district, police said. According to Mamund Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Sattar Khan, a vehicle was targeted. He added that the bomb was detonated via remote control. The injured were taken to the Khar district headquarters (DHQ) hospital there, the DSP added. Meanwhile, Bajaur District Police Officer (DPO) Nazeer Khan told Dawn.com that the passengers were heading home after the Friday afternoon prayers when the bomb was detonated. The DPO further said that following the incident, the police had cordoned off the area. He added that an investigation was under way but the reason behind the victims being targeted could not yet be ascertained. The blast comes a day after five policemen were martyred in two separate attacks in KP while 12 people, including nine policemen, were injured. Terrorists had attacked an official compound in the Bara Bazaar in the Khyber district while a police post in Peshawar's Regi Model Town area had come under attack. — DNA

— from June 18, 2022, to June 18, 2023 — with the most, 140, taking place in North Waziristan. The latest attack came hours after suicide bombers targeted a compound in Bara Bazar in Khyber District, martyring four cops and 10 others — including police officers and civilians. Police officials said cops intercepted two suicide attackers at the police station adjacent to Bara bazaar and the entrance of the tehsil headquarters complex — which houses Bara Police Station, government offices, and a counter-terrorism department (CTD) cell. The KP police suffered another attack before the Bara ambush, when two cops were martyred, and two others were injured in a firing incident in the Regi area of Peshawar. Police said that unidentified armed men opened fire on the cops at the entry checkpoint near Regi Model Town Police Station and fled. The martyred were

identified as Head Constable Wajid and driver Farman. Before that, on July 18, a suicide blast took place near security forces' vehicle in Peshawar's Hayatabad area. At least 10 people, including seven law enforcers, sustained injuries in the blast. In light of the rising militancy, Pakistan's government has warned Afghanistan against providing safe havens to the banned TTP — a terrorist organisation targeting security forces. The top brass of the Pakistan Army has recently said that sanctuaries and liberty of action available to terrorists of proscribed TTP and other groups of that ilk in Afghanistan is one of the major reasons impacting the security of Pakistan. 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. Terror activities in the country have soared by 79% during the first half of 2023, a statistical report released by the independent think tank Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies (PICSS) showed.

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## Mayor reviews security arrangements for Muharram

PESHAWAR: Mayor Peshawar Haji Zubair Ali Friday visited the control room established to monitor the overall security situation before the 9th and 10th of Muharram. "It is the responsibility of all schools of thought to maintain an atmosphere of national unity, religious harmony, and brotherhood during the holy month," he added. On the occasion, Mayor Peshawar also reviewed the CCTV cameras, street lights, and other arrangements in detail, directing officers to remain in the Supreme Command Post for immediate action in case of any problem. The mayor was informed that meetings and processions were being continuously monitored from the control rooms. Haji Zubair asked the policemen and officers on duty to further improve security and implement the safety and security plan in view of the current situation. Meanwhile, Director East Rehman Khattak, Director West, Riaz Awan, Focal Person Engineer Muhammad Riaz Khan, Chairman Imran Naveed, and others reviewed the Muharram arrangements in different areas of Peshawar including Kohati Gate, Muhammad Ali Johar Road, Sarki Gate, Qissa Khawani Bazar, Ko Cha Risaldar and other areas.—DNA

## NUST holds 19th annual National Engineering Robotics Contest

RAWALPINDI: The last two decades have seen tremendous activity in the field of Robotics as part of its efforts to promote Robotics in Pakistan, NUST College of Electrical & Mechanical Engineering (CEME) has been holding the National Engineering Robotics Contest (NERC) since 2003. Over 200 teams from all over the country took part in the 19th annual edition of this prestigious competition held in the second and third week of July. NUST CEME organised the event in collaboration with STEM Careers Program and HEC. The five-day event was split into nine categories, including Indigenous Robots, Modular Robots for Schools and Universities, Robowars, Aero, etc. What set the competition apart was the demographic diversity it entailed. A special award "Akhtar Nawaz Prize" was dedicated to those teams that came from far-flung areas of Pakistan. The event sponsors included MRS Technologies, Graana, Headstart School, Sapien Hall School, Robotics World Pvt. Ltd., Education Resource Network and Buraq Tractors. Dr Rizwan Riaz, NUST Pro-Rector Research, Innovation and Commercialisation, was the chief guest. He complimented the efforts of NUST CEME towards the promotion of Robotics in Pakistan, especially amongst the youth. He termed NERC an ideal platform for honing their innovation potential and problem-solving.—APP

# SCO's success hinges on settling bilateral issues

Regional solutions to bilateral problems termed crucial for success of SCO

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) has the potential to create synergy and offers a viable alternative to SAARC, provided the regional problems are solved regionally. Unless the bilateral equations are settled and cohesion is maintained between member states, the future contours of SCO would remain undefined.

This was observed during a roundtable discussion titled 'Regional Cooperation in the Eurasian Region: Role of the SCO' held at the Institute of Policy Studies, Islamabad. The forum analyzed the significance of the SCO as a vital platform for fostering regional stability, economic development, and connectivity in the Eurasian region, with a particular focus on Pakistan, and evaluated the outcomes of the SCO Summit hosted by India on July 4.

The roundtable was addressed by Ambassador (r) Masood Khalid, Pakistan's former ambassador to China, Dr. Sarwat Rauf, associate professor, NUML, Ambassador (r) Abdul Basit, Pakistan's former high commissioner to India, Ambassador (r) Syed Abrar Hussain, vice chairman, IPS, Meher Kashif Younis, veteran industrialist and former senior vice president Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Dr. Faisal Javed, assistant professor, FUUAST, Karachi, and Prof Dr. Fakhru-Allah, director research and academic outreach, IPS. Underscoring the potential of the SCO, Ambassador Masood said



that the organization has gained strength as compared to SAARC and ECO. The expansion of the SCO after inclusion of Iran along with the geographical spread of dialogue partners and observer states rooting for multipolarity instead of pledging to US-led Western domination has added a new dynamic to the evolving regional architecture of the SCO. Despite having disputes, member states are keen to promote economic cooperation, linkages, trade, and access to the outside world. The security, development, and connectivity-driven regional architecture of the SCO provides Pakistan with an

opportunity to engage proactively while aiming to become economically strong. Dr. Sarwat maintained that despite India misusing the SCO platform for blame game, Pakistan would remain in focus as a geo-strategic location and trade hub. To Pakistan, the SCO may present a solution to the economic meltdown and security conundrum, provided embedded historical problems are resolved. In this regard, Pakistan needs to enhance multilateral diplomacy efforts and mend the Afghan Taliban supportive image that it still carries, she recommended. While the SCO has

potential, its realization demands the resolution of bilateral disputes and other inherent discrepancies that may impede its growth, observed Ambassador Abdul Basit. For instance, the hardened stances of states like India, its reservations about the Belt and Road Initiative, the differences of opinion and mistrust, and bilateral disputes might remain there for years to come. Unless the bilateral equations are settled, the future contours of the SCO would remain undefined, he said. Meher Younis stated that the SCO incorporates 46% of the global population and is

the biggest consumer market, with a huge younger generation and land mass. To gain benefits from these factors, Pakistan must pay attention to development-oriented engagement, people-to-people interaction, cultural diplomacy, economic diplomacy, agricultural diplomacy, natural resources diplomacy, joint research, and technological and academic interactions. These prospects are further multiplied by the expansion of the SCO, said Dr Faisal Javed. However, maintaining cohesion is crucial for greater influence and realization of these potentials.

## Auction of Capital Street Islamabad plots concludes

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Two-days auction of Capital Street Islamabad plots organized by CDA has been concluded. The Capital Street Islamabad project received a healthy and welcoming response from investors. During the two-day auction, 18 plots were sold for 3.82 billion rupees. According to the details, CDA is going to establish Capital Street Islamabad on the pattern of JBR Dubai, City Walk Dubai, and Nizami Street Baku on 27 acres near Shakar Parian adjacent to Pak China Friendship Center. For

which 500 square yard plots were offered through auction by CDA. Plots in Capital Street Islamabad will be designated for cafes, restaurants, bistros and eateries, etc. It is pertinent to mention that during the two-days auction, investors particularly from national and international food chains, restaurants, bistros and people related to the food and beverage industry directly participated in the bidding process and got plots of their choices. On the second day of the auction, 8 plots of Capital Street Islamabad were auctioned for 2.007 billion rupees. On the second day of the auction, Plot No.12

of Capital Street Islamabad was auctioned for Rs.24.35 crore, Plot No.13 was auctioned for Rs.20.35 crore, Plot No.16 was auctioned for Rs.20.65 Crore, Plot No.17 was auctioned for Rs.22.15 crore, Plot No.15 was auctioned for Rs. 25.25 crore. Similarly, Plot No.18 of Capital Street Islamabad was auctioned for Rs. 22.65 crore, Plot No.19 was auctioned for Rs. 19.10 crore and Plot No.20 was auctioned for Rs. 22 crore. Collectively, during the two-day auction of Capital Street Islamabad plots, 18 plots were sold for Rs. 3.82 billion. It is pertinent to mention here that Capital Street Islamabad is being

built on the models of JBR Dubai, City Walk Dubai and Nizami Street Baku. Capital Street Islamabad will cover 27 acres, 500 square yard plots are offered for auction. Plots in Capital Street Islamabad are reserved for cafes, restaurants, bistros and eateries etc. The auction was monitored by the auction committee constituted under the Chairmanship of CDA Member Finance. Other members of the committee include Member State, Member Planning and Design, DFA-II, DG Law, Director Urban Planning, Director Regional Planning, Director State Management-II and Director Finance Bids received after thorough scrutiny will be placed before the CDA Board, which is the Competent forum to accept or reject the bids.

## Rivers Indus, Kabul run in low flood with rising trend

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Flood Commission (FFC) has said that rivers Indus and Kabul are experiencing low flood with the rising trend in its Tarbela-Kalabagh, Kalabagh-Chashma reaches, and Wasrak and Nowshera respectively. According to the daily FFC report on Friday, yesterday's high flows in River Chenab at Marala, Khanki, Qadirabad and River Ravi at Jassar have receded and now they are flowing normally while rest of the major Rivers are also flowing with 'No Flood Condition'. A healthy Combined Live Storage of 9.490 MAF (70.59 % of maximum value of 13.443 MAF) is available at present. According to FFD, Lahore, Monsoon Low over Northwest Bay of Bengal (India) has re-

mained stationary since the last 24 hours. This is resulting into penetration of Moderate Monsoon current from the Bay of Bengal into most parts of Pakistan except for Balochistan. It is likely to get intensify further. As regards other weather systems, yesterday's trough of Westerly Wave has moved away Eastwards, but another fresh trough prevails over Northern parts of Afghanistan. Seasonal Low although weak, continues to prevail over Balochistan. For the ensuing 24 hours, FFD, Lahore has predicted scattered to widespread wind thunderstorm/rain of moderate intensity with isolated heavy falls and very heavy falls at one/two places over Islamabad, Punjab.—APP

## Rupee sheds Rs1.67 against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani Rupee on Friday witnessed Rs1.67 devaluation against the US Dollar in the interbank trading as it closed at Rs286.81 against the previous day's closing of Rs285.14. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of dollars in the open market stood at Rs289.5 and Rs292.5 respectively. The price of the Euro decreased by 53 paise to close at Rs 319.13 against the last day's closing of Rs 319.66, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen went down by 02 paise to close at Rs2.02, whereas an increase of 71 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound.—APP

## KP CM inaugurates Phase-I of Rashakai Special Economic Zone

PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Muhammad Azam Khan inaugurated Phase-I of the Rashakai Special Economic Zone, marking a significant milestone in China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) here on Friday. The Rashakai Special Economic Zone, strategically located at the nexus of economic growth, stands as a testament to the strong partnership between Pakistan and China. CPEC has become a symbol of friendship between the countries and a model for cooperation between developing countries. Addressing the gathering, the Chief Minister appreciated the exceptional efforts and unwavering commitment of China Road and Bridge Corporation (CRBC) and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development & Management Company (KPEZDMC) for successfully completing Phase-I of the project six months before the completion date. The chief minister thanked the government of China, the companies involved and public sector entities for their unflinching support to the project and all those who contributed to the completion Phase-I Rashakai SEZ. Encompassing 247 acres of modern facilities designed to attract domestic and foreign investors, Phase I of the Rashakai SEZ promises to spur economic growth and job creation, further strengthening Pakistan-China cooperation and bilateral relations under the umbrella of CPEC. Presently, Phase-I houses 18 zone enterprises, with 07 under construction; mobilizing an estimated investment of Rs. 85 billion. As the Rashakai SEZ takes its place on the path to becoming a catalyst for regional prosperity, creating employment opportunities for the local population, and attracting foreign direct investment, plans are already underway for the subsequent phase. These forthcoming endeavors will focus on expanding infrastructure, streamlining business processes, and attracting key industries, unlocking the SEZ's full potential, as part of the ongoing decade of CPEC.—APP

## COMSTECH launches program to help Somalia

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: COMSTECH has launched Somalia Science and Technology Cooperation Program jointly with the Embassy of the Republic of Somalia in Islamabad, and in coordination with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Science & Technology, on Friday at COMSTECH Auditorium. The Coordinator General COMSTECH, Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary emphasized the need of joint collaborative country specific programs to address the specific needs of the each OIC member state with tailor made solutions. He appreciated the efforts of the Ambassador of Somalia, H.E. Shirwa Abdullahi Ibrahim and the coordination of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Science and Technology, Pakistan, for launching this program. The Charge de Affairs, Embassy of the Republic of Somalia, H.E. Shirwa Abdullahi Ibrahim appreciated the visionary initiative taken by the COMSTECH leadership to address the S&T needs of his country. He thanked Prof. Choudhary for starting the country specific programs for OIC member states spe-

cifically in African continent. He said this program will contribute further mutual collaboration. The High Commissioner of Pakistan in Nairobi, Kenya, H.E. Ms. Saqlain Syedah addressed the launching ceremony online and appreciated the COMSTECH initiative for Somalia, and other African OIC member states. The Rector of the University of Lahore, Dr. Muhammad Ashraf, applauded efforts of COMSTECH for expanding collaborative programs with African countries. He said that being a member of CCoE the University of Lahore is an active partner in all its programs. He informed that more than 500 foreign students including 360 African students are

enrolled at the University of Lahore and it has also established a Medical College in Uganda. Chairman, Association of Private Sector Universities of Pakistan, Prof. Dr. Ch. Abdul Rehman, said I extend my heartfelt support on behalf of my university and the Association of Private Sector Universities to the COMSTECH Somalia S&T Co-operation. He said we will foster scientific and technological advancements, promote collaboration, and contribute to the development and progress of Somalia and the entire OIC region. The Ambassador of Pakistan to Niger, Mr. Ahmed Ali Sirohey and Justice Dr. Syed Mohammad Anwar Ali, Aalim Judge, Federal Shariat Court Islamabad appreciated the COMSTECH efforts

for the S&T development in the OIC region and expressed their full support for COMSTECH programs. COMSTECH in close coordination with the OIC General Secretariat, Jeddah, has launched several new initiatives and programs for the capacity building of OIC states, particularly for the African OIC LDCs. Somalia, being one of the largest OIC member states in the African continent will play a leading role in implementation of COMSTECH programs in the region. Under this program top two universities of the Somalia will be able to join the COMSTECH Consortium of Excellence (CCoE) as associate member. COMSTECH will offer 10 fellowships to the Somali students, researchers and

technical personnel, and in collaboration with the relevant institutions in Somalia COMSTECH will organize thematic workshops and training courses on emerging technologies relevant to the national and regional needs. COMSTECH in collaboration with Islamic Development Bank and OIC General Secretariat will conduct health camps for high quality cataract services to improve vision related quality of life and reduce blindness related poverty. COMSTECH in collaboration with the relevant institutions in Somalia and Pakistan will also arrange training programs in ophthalmology and neuro-critical care for Somali healthcare providers.




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## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### JULY

- July 01/Japan Self Defence Day
- July 01/Singapore Armed Forces Day
- July 01 / Canada National Day
- July 01/Somalia Independence Day
- July 04/USA Independence Day
- July 05/Algeria Independence Day
- July 09/Argentine Independence Day
- July 09/Mongolia Revolution Day
- July 14/France National Day
- July 15/Brunei Sultan's Birthday
- July 21/Belgium National Day
- July 20/TRNC Independence Day
- July 23/Egypt National Day
- July 26/Cuba 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 Islamabad.....9222596  
Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



### Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115  
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

CDA.....9221334-43  
CDA.....9208301-04  
Met Office.....9250360-6  
RDA.....5555864  
TMA.....5770886  
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

### Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: Former Ambassador to Germany Shahid Kamal cuts the ribbon along with others to inaugurates the paintings exhibition of German Artist Dagmar Rauwald entitled "Invention VS Convention" at Comsats Art Gallery in Federal Capital.—Online

## Islamabad airport set for 15-year outsourcing

Khawaja Saad Rafique emphasized that open competitive bidding would be ensured, allowing the best bidder to be given the opportunity to operate the airport

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Aviation Khawaja Saad Rafique on Friday said that Islamabad International Airport would be outsourced for a period of 15 years to improve its operational activities. In response to a calling attention notice in National Assembly sponsored by MMA lawmaker Maulana Abdul Akbar Chitrali regarding the outsourcing of the airport, the minister clarified that the move does not equate to privatization. Instead, it aims to bring in proficient operators to enhance airport operations, he said. Khawaja Saad Rafique emphasized that open competitive bidding would be ensured, allowing

the best bidder to be given the opportunity to operate the airport. The process, he said will be profit-oriented, ultimately benefiting the national exchequer. The International Finance Corporation will serve as the consultant, and already 12-13 companies have shown interest in participating in the bidding process, he added. The minister assured that the process would be transparent and adhere to all rules and regulations. However, the minister clarified that the runway and navigation operations would not be included in the outsourcing process. Highlighting the success of outsourced airports in

other countries like India and Turkiye, Khawaja Saad Rafique mentioned that even Madina airport has been efficiently outsourced to deliver enhanced services. The minister also stressed the need to restructure Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) to address its substantial deficit, which has reached Rs. 80 billion this year and is projected to increase to Rs. 259 billion by 2030 if not dealt with appropriately. He asserted that no employees would be laid off, and all existing staff would retain their job security and privileges. However, he also mentioned that best practices

would be implemented to ensure facilities at airports are efficiently managed. Regarding the future plans for PIA, Khawaja Saad Rafique informed that the total liability of PIA amounts to Rs. 742 billion, with only 27-28 planes currently operational. He urged the necessity to save the institution and underscored the importance of the restructuring legislation, which has been approved by the National Assembly in the previous sitting. To address the deficit, the minister revealed plans to restore flights to the UK within three months, followed by the resumption of flights to the US and Europe.

Khawaja Saad Rafique issued a warning that immediate reforms were crucial to prevent further escalation of the deficit in the coming days. He acknowledged that a statement from a former federal minister for Aviation had created problems for PIA. However, he assured that all audits and tests have been successfully cleared, demonstrating the government's commitment to transparency and accountability. Furthermore, as the minister overseeing the Railway portfolio, he recommended engaging industrialists to invest in the railway sector instead of opting for privatization.

## Bilal accuses PTI chief for creating 'cypher drama'

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator to Prime Minister on Economy and Energy Bilal Azhar Kayani on Friday accused the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan for creating the 'cypher drama' for political gains as was now confirmed by his former principal secretary, Azam Khan. Addressing a news conference here, he said Azam Khan recorded his statement that proved the reality of cypher in front of Pakistani people. He said, Imran Khan himself had asserted that "Cypher can now be manipulated for creating a narrative against the establishment and the opposition". Highlighting some instances, Bilal said that it was a tradition of the PTI chief and his party to violate the Constitution

for political gains adding that this trend has been going on for the past 10 years.

He referred to the 2013 sit-in protests, led by the PTI chief, as an example of how the party had violated the constitution in the past adding, the May 9 incidents also indicate how the constitution was trampled and violated. "Imran Khan constantly damaged diplomatic relations and pushed the country to the verge of default", he added. Kayani explained that a vote of no confidence motion was filed on March 08, and on April 10, the PTI chief was legally removed from his position following the vote of no confidence motion. The Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) had chosen Shehbaz Sharif as the

Prime Minister of Pakistan, he added.

He expressed firm resolve that the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) would continue to take the country's journey towards economic stability and growth. Highlighting the accomplishments during the PML-N's tenure, he mentioned the successful launch of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) between 2013 and 2018, the addition of 12,000 megawatts of electricity to the national grid and the eradication of load shedding. Under the leadership of Nawaz Sharif, the country completed the first International Monetary Fund (IMF) program in the history, he asserted.—APP

## Increasing electricity tariff a major threat to economy

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain said on Friday that the rising prices of electricity and gas have become a big threat to the people and the economy. If energy prices continue to rise, thousands of businesses will close, exports will plummet, and millions of people will be unemployed, he said. Mian Zahid Hussain said that the energy sector has become a major threat to the economy. This sector is facing issues like capacity charges, inadequate collection of bills, theft,

line losses, subsidies, poor governance, and increasing corruption. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that the power sector faces losses of Rs 600 billion every year, and that consumers have to pay 71% capacity payment in their electricity bills. Because the need for electricity in Pakistan is 12 thousand megawatts in winter and 25 to 27 thousand megawatts in summer, due to which the government needs to install power plants with a capacity of 27 thousand megawatts, he said. The business leader said that consumers have to pay an extra 800 billion rupees annually for new power plants to satisfy the increasing need. He observed that there is a need for reforms in

this sector, which will result in making power cheaper by eliminating power losses and capacity payments so as to boost industry, promote commerce, employment, and exports. The government has been assuring the IMF for the last 15 years that a plan has been drawn up to end the circular debt, whose implementation will bring the situation under control, but to no avail. Mian Zahid Hussain said that the first assurance of the elimination of the infamous debt was made in 2008, when it increased from 51 billion to 189 billion rupees in five months. For decades, neither the IMF's demands nor our excuses have changed. Now the circular debt of the electricity and gas sectors has increased.

ISLAMABAD: Kissan Ittehad Council (KIC) President Khalid Mehmood Khokhar Friday hailed the present government's revolutionary initiative 'Green Pakistan' that eventually revive agriculture economy, enhance food security by replacing typical agricultural processes with contemporary agriculture technologies with focus on rural areas. Talking to a PTV news channel, he said the initiative was also aimed at offering vast opportunities to farmers and growers to reduce poverty through increased yields and create new green jobs especially in rural areas, ensure food security on a sustainable basis, and significantly reduce the environmental and economic costs of agriculture. Pakistan's agricultural industry will now be revolutionized under this program which will utilize the knowledge, abilities, research and technological advancements of several organizations together with contemporary irrigation techniques. He further highlighted that research and developments are important in the new farming paradigm, adding, farming in all categories and forms is linked to rural development, alternative sources of income and youth employment.—APP

## COMSATS Art gallery presents German Artist

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ex-Ambassador to Germany from Pakistan H.E Dr. Shahid Kamal along with Worthy Rector COMSATS University Prof. Dr. Sajid Qamar inaugurated "Intention v/s Convention" exhibition of German Artist Dagmar Rauwald at COMSATS Art Gallery on Friday (Today). Mr. Ghulam Muhammad Memon Executive Director for ECO Science Foundation also attended the exhibition as guest of Honour. H.E Dr. Shahid Kamal extended his gratitude to Dagmar Rauwald for coming to Pakistan and exhibiting her work over here. He expresses his pleasure over successful commencement of the show by COMSATS Art Gallery. "Art is the best medium to bring people of two different nations closer and to bridge the gap," he added. Dr. Shahid Kamal expressed his delight to see foreign artists taking interest in coming to Pakistan. He said such activities will be beneficial for bringing up a good image of Pakistan in the World." Rector COMSATS University Prof. Dr. Sajid Qamar expressed his pleasure over visit of Dagmar Rauwald on this occasion. He said we are extremely honored to have Dagmar Rauwald amongst us and are pleased that she has showcased her Art Work in COMSATS Art Gallery. Her art works are beautiful and the technique used is unique. There is so much to be learnt from an artist who has travelled the World.

## Green Pakistan initiative to revive agri economy

ISLAMABAD: Kissan Ittehad Council (KIC) President Khalid Mehmood Khokhar Friday hailed the present government's revolutionary initiative 'Green Pakistan' that eventually revive agriculture economy, enhance food security by replacing typical agricultural processes with contemporary agriculture technologies with focus on rural areas. Talking to a PTV news channel, he said the initiative was also aimed at offering vast opportunities to farmers and growers to reduce poverty through increased yields and create new green jobs especially in rural areas, ensure food security on a sustainable basis, and significantly reduce the environmental and economic costs of agriculture. Pakistan's agricultural industry will now be revolutionized under this program which will utilize the knowledge, abilities, research and technological advancements of several organizations together with contemporary irrigation techniques. He further highlighted that research and developments are important in the new farming paradigm, adding, farming in all categories and forms is linked to rural development, alternative sources of income and youth employment.—APP

## PM's Public Affairs and Grievances Wing addresses 98pc complaints

ISLAMABAD, Jul 21 (APP):In-Charge Minister for Prime Minister's Public Affairs and Grievances Wing, Murtaza Javed Abbasi said on Friday that over 98 percent of the complaints received by the Wing this year have been successfully resolved. Talking to the media during the launch of a special WhatsApp number for the wing and the option to send text messages, the minister revealed that a total of 11,471 written complaints were received this year, out of which 11,280 (98.3 percent) have been resolved, with the remaining under process. The wing is also addressing complaints related to provincial matters and the provinces have been directed to appoint focal persons to ensure efficient resolution, he said. The minister said that the introduction of the WhatsApp number and other social media platforms was aimed at providing an avenue for lodging complaints related to both federal and provincial institutions. These initiatives, he said are in line with Prime Minister Mian Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif's directives to further strengthen the Prime Minister's Public Affairs and Complaints Wing. To enhance the transparency of the verification process for complaints, necessary steps are being taken while open Kutcheries at the district and divisional levels will be organized to address complaints effectively, he said and added disciplinary actions will be taken against officials of institutions providing false statements about complaint resolution. The minister emphasized that prompt resolution of complaints was a top priority and measures would be in place to verify the status of resolved complaints—DNA

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## Briefs

## Rivers' flows indicate stabilisation

ISLAMABAD: The National Emergencies Operations Centre (NEOC) on Friday in its recent update observed that the water flows in the major rivers of the country indicated stabilisation with a receding trend amid a decline in monsoon rains in the country.

According to the latest update issued by the NEOC, the flow of water in Chenab, Ravi and Kabul rivers was showing stabilisation with a decrease, while the flow of water in the Eastern River had also stabilised. It noted that the overall situation was normal, whereas the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) had directed the departments concerned to activate the drainage system in the flood-prone areas during the monsoon rains. It also advised to ensure the timely evacuation of people from low-lying areas at the time of possible risks of inundation. However, the required emergency personnel and machinery should be prepared to deal with the flood situation.—APP

## 10 drug peddlers, bootleggers, illegal weapon holders netted

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi police in an action against suspected drug peddlers, bootleggers, illegal weapon holders, and other law-breakers here on Friday arrested 10 accused besides recovering over 1220 grams charras, 17 liters liquor, five 30-bore pistols, ammunition, and other items from their possession. According to a police spokesperson, Bani police held Dilshad and recovered 1220 grams charras. Rattaamral and Naseerabad police rounded up Hameed Khan and Amir on recovery of 17 liters liquor. Waris Khan, Airport, Taxila, Dhamial and Rawat police netted Nasir, Shoab, Mehnat Gul, Ali and Saqib and recovered five 30-bore pistols and ammunition from their possession. Sadder Wah police in their operation arrested an accused, Zia for molesting a 12-year-old boy while Phagwari police nabbed a bike-lifter namely Saqib Siddique and recovered four stolen motorcycles from his possession. Separate cases have been registered against all accused while further investigations are underway.—APP

## Rupee sheds Rs1.67 against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani Rupee on Friday witnessed Rs1.67 devaluation against the US Dollar in the inter-bank trading as it closed at Rs286.81 against the previous day's closing of Rs285.14. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of dollars in the open market stood at Rs289.5 and Rs292.5 respectively. The price of the Euro decreased by 53 paise to close at Rs 319.13 against the last day's closing of Rs 319.66, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The Japanese Yen went down by 02 paise to close at Rs2.02, whereas an increase of 71 paise was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which traded at Rs369.12 as compared to its last day's closing of Rs368.41. The exchange rates of the Emirates Dirham and the Saudi Riyal increased by 45 paise each to close at Rs78.08 and Rs76.47 respectively.—APP

## Weekly inflation falls by 0.07 pc

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The weekly inflation, measured by the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed a nominal decrease of 0.07 percent for the combined consumption group during the week ended on July 20, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported on Friday. The SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 258.45 points as compared to 258.63 points during the past

week, according to the PBS data. As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 29.16 percent. The weekly SPI with the base year 2015-16 = 100 is covering 17 urban centers and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups. The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs 17,732, increased by 0.51 percent and went up to 267.24 points from last week's 265.88 points. The SPI for consumption groups from Rs 17,732-22,888, Rs 22,889-29,517, and

Rs 29,518-44,175; however increased by 0.35 percent, 0.20 percent, and 0.03 percent respectively while it declined by 0.28 percent for consumption group above Rs 44,175. During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 30 (58.82%) items increased, 09 (17.65%) items decreased and 12 (23.53%) items remained stable. The items, which recorded a decrease in their average prices on a week-on-week (WoW), included onions (10.29%), chicken (8.57%), bananas (8.34%), wheat flour (0.98%), vegetable ghee 1 kg (0.49%), vegetable ghee 2.5 kg (0.39%), cooking oil 5 liter (0.30%), petrol (3.40%) and diesel (2.64%). The items that recorded an increase in their average prices on a week-on-week (wow) basis, included tomatoes (36.06%), chillies powder (20.17%), sugar (4.77%), eggs (4.70%), gur (3.66%), shirting (2.64%) and garlic (2.31%).

## ICCI and LCCI vow to abide by law : Ahsan

Kashif Anwar and Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari discussed the key features of the new trade law and analyzed its various aspects. Kashif Anwar said that the new trade law has determined a 2 years term for the office bearers of trade bodies and trade bodies should abide by the law

FAISAL SHIEKH

ISLAMABAD: Kashif Anwar, President, Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) held a meeting with Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) during his visit to ICCI and discussed with him the matter of 2 years term for the office bearers of trade bodies determined by a new trade law.

Rizwana Asif President Islamabad Women Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Riffat Shaheen President Rawalpindi Women Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Sajjad Sarwar President Islamabad Chamber of Small Traders & Small Industries, Tariq Khan Jadoon President Rawalpindi Chamber of Small Traders & Small Industries, Khalid Iqbal Malik Group Leader ICCI, Zafar Bakhtawari former President ICCI and Secretary General UBG and others were present on the occasion.

Kashif Anwar and Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari discussed the key features of the new trade law



and analyzed its various aspects. Kashif Anwar said that the new trade law has determined a 2 years term for the office bearers of trade bodies and trade bodies should abide by the law.

Ahsan Bakhtawari said that a new trade law has increased the term for the office bearers of trade bodies from one year

to 2 years and added that all chambers of commerce & industry of the country should take a united stand on this issue. It would promote unity among the business community of the entire country and help resolve their key issues with one voice. The business leaders were of the view that the one-year term for the office

bearers of trade bodies was a short period to perform effectively and deliver for the business community while the 2 years term would provide them ample time to work for the welfare of the business community and facilitate them in business development that would ultimately help improve the economic growth of the country.

Kashif Anwar and Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari also discussed the key issues being faced by the economy and resolved that both chambers would develop closer cooperation with each other and work jointly to resolve the key issues of the business community in order to promote business and economic interests of Pakistan.

## IPEF: More noise than signal

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Overall, if analyzed holistically and pragmatically, the Indo-Pacific Economic framework (IPEF) is more like a noise than a signal. It sounds like this all-too-obvious political publicity stunt is about economic connectivity and inclusion. But on practical grounds, it lacks solid set of rules and regulations, impairing free, fair and impartial global market. It also demotivates trade facilitation and tax reductions mechanism, according to a report carried by Gwadar Pro on Friday. The reason why IPEF advocates zero-sum game lies in its essence and the resulting conspiracy. Access to the US market under the US-led framework is extremely ambiguous, creating serious obstacles for Indo-Pacific nations to make binding commitments to the high standards sought by the Biden administration. After US

unilaterally quit from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), it has been intensifying endeavors to reclaim its economic leadership in the Indo-Pacific region, striving to put forth alternative to China's economic strategy, in shape of IPEF. However, Biden administration does not want to channelize IPEF at the expense of its own market, technically disallowing the rest of IPEF partners, especially economically unstable countries, to enjoy US business ecosystem. According to opinion piece published in renowned media, US national security advisor Jake Sullivan has said the framework is a means for the US to "strengthen ties with allies and partners for the purpose of increasing shared prosperity." But analysts noted it is "more marketing than policy." Lack of consistency in implementing global economic policies has already drawn ire of international players, especially those part

of US-led framework. It is smothering belief that with change of command, US changes its economic strategies. The Trans-Pacific Partnership, an ambitious major trade pact involving the Indo-Pacific countries, was part of President Barack Obama's strategic pivot to Asia. Trump pulled the US out of the trade pact in 2017, after it drew criticism from the protectionist end of the US political spectrum. Nobody knows what will happen with IPEF after Biden is gone. The biggest problem with IPEF is Washington's mounting rivalry to "free trade." There are no market access or tariff reduction provisions in the framework, which destroyed trade incentives that countries in the region long for. It was also difficult for the Biden administration to promise sufficient political and economic capital to IPEF. Several developing countries in the framework have demanded clean energy as a signifi-

cant interest in the IPEF. But while renewable energy is cheaper than fossil fuels, the start-up costs of increasing renewable energy production in a country are skyrocketing in the wake of on existing infrastructure, where carbon-intensive energy generation continues to rule. Regional partners and countries would urge to pour financial support from the US in eliminating their coal sectors gradually. But apprehensions remain about the funding and execution of these initiatives, especially since IPEF has not been approved by the US congress and its political sustainability has been questioned. No doubt, the verbal features of IPEF include trade facilitation, access to the digital ecosystem, financial assistance for clean-energy transition, and increased investment in the improvement of infrastructure and taxation and anti-corruption.

## Chemicals valuing \$8.928 bln imported in FY 2-22-23

ISLAMABAD: Agriculture and other chemicals imports into the country during the fiscal year that ended on June 30, 2023, decreased by 36.61 per cent as compared to the imports of the corresponding period of last year. During the period from July-June, 2022-23, agriculture and other chemicals costing \$8.928 billion were imported as compared to the imports of \$14.085 million in the same period last year. Meanwhile, the import of fertilizer manufactured was reduced by 28.52 per cent as 903.693 metric tons of fertilizer valuing \$604.376 million were imported as against the import of 1.290 million tons costing \$845.538 million in the same period last year. However, during the last fiscal year, the imports of insecticides into the country grew by 1.45 per cent as about 37,188 metric tons of insecticides valuing \$204.666 million imported as compared to the imports of 34,622 metric tons worth \$201.732 million of the same period last year. By June 30, 2023, the country spent \$2.273 billion on the imports of plastic materials and imported over 1.636 million tons of plastic materials as compared to the import of 1.942 million tons valuing \$3.135 billion in the same period last year. During the fiscal year 2022-23, the imports of plastic materials grew by 27.50 per cent as compared to the imports of the corresponding period of last year. In order to fulfill the local requirements, medicinal products worth \$1.328 billion were also imported during the period under review as against the imports of \$4.052 billion in the same period last year.—APP

## Removal of Shehryar from Adiyala Jail unlawful

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan termed the removal of PTI senior leader Shehryar Afridi from Adiyala Jail by unknown men as completely unlawful and illegal, urging the judiciary to take a stand and stop this sheer violation of their fundamental rights and blatant victimisation of members of Pakistan's largest political party.

In a strong reaction to the unlawful removal of Shehryar Afridi from Adiyala Jail, PTI Chairman strongly condemned the unlawful move, which, he said, was a clear indication of prevalent lawlessness and high-handedness in the country.

Imran Khan said: "Removal of Shehryar Afridi from Adiyala Jail day before yesterday by unknown men is completely illegal and shows the sheer lawlessness and high-handedness in the country."

He went on to say that as highlighted by his lawyer, the sole purpose of putting Shehryar through this torture and persecution is to coerce him into recording 164 CrPc statement against him (Khan), adding that now he had been slapped with another frivolous FIR in Bhawalpur, accused of being involved in a ridiculous case of stolen wheat. "I urge our judiciary to take a stand and stop this complete violation of our fundamental rights and blatant victimisation of members of Pakistan's largest political party," he added.

"I urge our judiciary to take a stand and stop this complete violation of our fundamental rights and blatant victimisation of members of Pakistan's largest political party," he added.

## ANF recovers 101 kg drugs in four operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting four operations across the country managed to recover 101 kg of drugs and arrested four accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Friday. He informed that two operations were conducted at Islamabad International Airport and ANF recovered 146 Ice-filled capsules from the possession of three passengers, going to Oman and Bahrain by flight number PK-187 and WY-348. In another operation near Kot Abdul Malik Toll Plaza, Sheikhupura, 21.6 kg opium, and 52.8 kg hashish were recovered from a vehicle. An accused resident of Peshawar was also arrested during the operation. In the fourth operation, over 26 kg hashish concealed in plastic bags was recovered from a deserted area near Zero Line Torkham.—APP

## MNAs raise various issues in NA

ISLAMABAD: On the 2nd day of its farewell session on Friday, members of the National Assembly (MNAs) raised various issues and problems of their respective constituencies and sought prompt action by the concerned quarters for its quick addressal. Speaking on point of order, Salahuddin of Mutahida Qaumi Movement Pakistan (MQM) said Hyderabad Electric Supply Company (HESCO) power distribution system has obsolete and excessive power load-shedding has made the lives of people miserable in the summer season. Electricity in many areas of Hyderabad remained suspended for weeks instead of hour, he added. He said houses of their associates were being attacked and the police was

reluctant to register cases against the culprits. He urged the ministers for power and interior to take notices in this regard. Salahuddin while drawing attention of the Speaker towards non-interest of CDA officials into constructing "Yadgar-e-Dastoor and Bagh-e-Dastoor" sought his ruling. Despite lapse of three months, the CDA did not started work on it and the officials were making hurdles in its way, he remarked. Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf directed the CDA to take the issue seriously besides referring the issue to the privilege committee and fix responsibility in this regard. Maulana Abdul Akbar Chitrali said that he raised the issue of high rate of wheat prices in Chitral. The price of wheat's sack has increased from Rs

6,000 to Rs 12,000. The government should fulfill its promise made with the people of Chitral, he added. Agha Hassan Baloch said he and his party was against violence but the house of his party leader Akhtar Managil was attacked with heavy weapons resulting injuries to few children. Romina Khurshed Alam said Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Secretariat of National Assembly was globally acknowledged. She lamented that fake news about the efforts of SDGs were published by certain media group. Ali Wazir on a point of order said that people were being abducted and they were receiving 'chits' for extorting money. Peshawar also witnessed frequent bomb blasts during the last few days, he added.—APP

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## Surging violence

The recent surge in militant attacks within Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) demands immediate attention, as the toll of lives lost and casualties continues to rise. In the face of multiple consecutive attacks within such a short time span, it is evident that militants possess the capacity to launch coordinated strikes on multiple fronts within the country.

Tragedy struck in the Bara Bazaar of Khyber district, where a blast claimed the lives of three policemen and left seven others injured. Authorities confirm that both attackers were neutralised by the police, highlighting the intensity of the exchange as both deadly gunfire and explosive blasts ensued. Another attack in Peshawar's Regi Model Town area, resulted in the martyrdom of two more police officers. The preceding Tuesday witnessed yet another devastating assault, as a suicide bomber targeted a vehicle carrying Frontier Corps personnel in Peshawar's Hayatabad. The explosion caused injuries to six paramilitary personnel and two civilians. The relentless nature of these attacks demonstrates the militants' ability to strike with impunity, endangering both law enforcement personnel and innocent civilians.

Alarming statistics released by the Pakistan Institute for Conflict and Security Studies echo these tragic events. According to their report, the first half of this year already witnessed a steady rise in terror and suicide attacks, claiming the lives of 389 people nationwide. This data underscores the urgent need for a comprehensive and sustained counterterrorism strategy. To effectively address this escalating menace, we must bolster security measures at vulnerable checkpoints and enhance coordination between regional security forces in order to thwart future attacks.

The recent surge in militant attacks in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa demands collective resolve from all segments of society. The rise in violence and the militants' ability to strike across various regions of Pakistan necessitates an immediate response. Pakistan must unite against these militants and prevent the establishment of Taliban strongholds in Pakistan as well as Afghanistan, as it is imperative that we dismantle these violent networks and reclaim peace and stability throughout the nation.



## Scientists victims of coercion

A study released by the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences at the end of last month on the results of an online survey it conducted on behalf of the Asian American Scholar Forum has put the spotlight on the widespread fear among US-based scientists of Chinese descent conducting routine research and academic work in the country. The survey revealed "a strong sense of uneasiness and fear" among the respondents. Out of the 1,304 scientists of Chinese descent surveyed, 72 percent said they did not feel safe as an academic researcher, 42 percent are fearful of conducting research, and 65 percent are worried about collaborations with Chinese researchers or institutions. Most remarkably, 61 percent said they thought about leaving the United States for another country due to the Chinese-hostile social environment in the US. The PNAS attributed this to the China Initiative launched in 2018 by the Department of Justice. The initiative, supposedly formalized the concerns of the Donald Trump administration about alleged "Chinese economic espionage" on the back of the trade war it was waging against China. In reality, it primarily targeted US-based academic scientists of Chinese descent for scrutiny on the grounds of alleged "research integrity" issues. The most prominent of these being a failure to disclose relationships with Chinese institutions on federal grant applications. The initiative was heavily criticized for racial profiling by both the scientific community and civil rights advocates in the US, leading to an end to it under that official name in early 2022. But not before at least 150 scientists of Chinese descent were put under official investigation, 24 of whom faced criminal charges, while many more were investigated in secret. To quote FBI director Christopher Wray in a US Congress hearing, more than 2,000 investigations were launched during the implementation period of the China Initiative, or one every 10 hours. Since the end of World War II, the US has welcomed and absorbed talents from all over the world, including China, in order to maintain its primacy in science and technology. But contrary to this practice, the US under the Trump administration began putting the squeeze on Chinese talents. President Joe Biden has continued the policies of his predecessor targeting Chinese researchers. In a talk with ethnic Chinese overseas in the 1950s, Premier Zhou Enlai famously compared them to daughters of a family that married into another family, who in traditional Chinese culture could play a positive role in promoting the relations between the two families. Ironically, the China Initiative and the broader prejudice against people of Chinese descent in US society will only serve to undermine the US' global leadership in science and technology.

## A rail link to reshape the region

Qamar Bashir



The project is expected to be completed by the end of 2027, and by 2030, trains will be able to transport up to 15 million tonnes of products annually. The line will facilitate both passenger and freight services, reduce cargo delivery periods between Uzbekistan and Pakistan by approximately five days and transport costs by at least 40 percent.

With the signing of the protocol, it would begin the phases of meticulous planning, resource allocation, and project implementation, as well as a concerted, coordinated efforts to establish robust

Pakistan, Uzbekistan, and Afghanistan have signed an agreement to build a 760-kilometer-long (472-mile-long) railway track connecting the three nations. The railroad will travel from Termez, Uzbekistan to Kharlachi, Pakistan via Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan. The project is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2027 at a cost of \$2.8 billion. The success of the rail link will depend on a number of factors, including the political stability of the region, the availability of financing, and the continued, unconditional, and willing cooperation of the three countries. Nonetheless, the potential advantages of the rail link are substantial, and the initiative has the potential to transform the region. The concept of a rail connection between Pakistan, Uzbekistan, and Afghanistan dates back many years. In the 1970s, the Soviet Union proposed constructing a railroad connecting the three nations. Due to the 1989 Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, however, the project was never completed. The ratification of the agreement on July 18 in Islamabad, in the presence of "high-ranking" railway officials from the three countries, brought the age-old concept to fruition. According to plan, the rail route will traverse Termez, Uzbekistan, Afghanistan's Mazare-Sharif and Logar provinces, and conclude in Pakistan via the Kharlachi border crossing in the Kurram tribal district near the Afghan border. Reportedly, the financing for this 760 km railway track has not yet been finalized, however, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development have all expressed interest in lending support to the project, but no formal commitments have been made. Russia has also said that it would be willing to assist in laying down the railway and supplying locomotives and rolling stock, provided the project is able to attract fundings. In the absence of any firm commitments from international financial institutions, it is possible that the signatory countries will have to fund it themselves which seems uphill task keeping in view the dilapidated financial outlook of both Pakistan and Afghanistan, but if financial arrangements are made, it would be a major boost to regional trade and economic development.

The project is expected to be completed by the end of 2027, and by 2030, trains will be able to transport up to 15 million tonnes of products annually. The line will facilitate both passenger and freight services, reduce cargo delivery periods between Uzbekistan and Pakistan by approximately five days and transport costs by at least 40 percent. With the signing of the protocol, it would begin the phases of meticulous planning, resource allocation, and project implementation, as well as a concerted, coordinated efforts to establish robust regional connectivity. The project's strength rests in its capacity to stimulate regional trade and economic growth, generate employment, and provide cost-effective industrial raw materials and utilities to enhance the competitiveness of industrial services and agricultural outputs. The project is expensive and

may be difficult to finance, is likely to encounter security challenges, particularly while passing through Afghanistan, and may require years to complete. It will create numerous opportunities, including the possibility of linking with the Gwadar port, which would provide Central Asian countries with access to a warm-water port, and extending to other nations in the region. It may also face hazards such as political instability in one or more of the involved countries and imminent economic challenges, such as a decline in global trade and a dearth of export substitutes. This project would provide Pakistan with an efficient and time-saving way to export its agricultural products, such as wheat, sugar, rice, maize, and vegetables and fruits such as apples, oranges, tomatoes, and potatoes, dairy products, such as milk, yogurt, and cheese, meat and poultry, such as beef, chicken, and lamb, and a variety of processed food products, including canned food, spices, frozen food, and snacks. Pakistan can export cotton, wool, and silk in the textile industry, as well as a variety of home appliances, including refrigerators, televisions, washing machines, and electronics besides sports goods and surgical instruments. Uzbekistan is a major producer of cotton, which is used to create textiles such as clothing, home furnishings, and other products. In addition to cotton, Uzbekistan also produces grapes, melons, and tomatoes. In addition, it is a significant producer of meat and dairy products, including beef, lamb, and milk. It grows wheat and other cereal grains. It also produces gold, silver, and copper, among other minerals. It has a developing manufacturing sector and produces a range of appliances, including refrigerators, televisions, and washing machines, as well as mobile phones, computers, and televisions, as well as a range of construction materials, including cement, steel, and lumber. Afghanistan's mineral wealth allows it to export copper, iron, gold, and lithium for use as basic materials in the production of finished goods. In addition to being a significant producer of agricultural products such as fruits and vegetables, it can also export carpets and other similar items. Afghanistan has oil and gas reserves that could be used to produce gasoline, diesel, and aviation fuel for export to Pakistan and Uzbekistan, where they could be used to fuel automobiles, generators, and other machinery. The rail link could also be connected to the strategically located Gwadar port in Pakistan for the benefit of the entire region and the globe by giving Central Asian countries access to a warm-water port and giving Pakistan a new route into Central Asia and beyond. Once fully operational, it would help reduce poverty by creating a significant number of employment opportunities in the construction, operation, and maintenance of the rail link, and its increased trade and transportation efficiency would make it more attractive to investors. The signing of the contract occurs at

an important time. The somewhat shaky peace in Afghanistan may have been a major factor in the other two countries' decision to move forward with the project, despite the fact that other nations of the world may view it with skepticism due to the unrecognized status of the interim Afghan government and its deliberate refusal to adhere to the Doha Agreement. Nonetheless, the region is presently experiencing a period of relative peace and stability, which has made the signing of this and other high-value projects such as CASA 1000 and TAPI gas pipeline possible. The success of these essential initiatives will establish a regional ecosystem to promote economic industrial, trade and investments. The success of the project will also depend on the strong political will of the states and should not be affected by the change of governments in the respective countries, the allocation of sufficient and timely resources to it, and the hiring of credible, experienced, and resourceful contractors who have the ability, expertise, and resources to adhere to the project's timelines in letter and spirit. Importantly, the success of the project would largely depend on the security and safety of the entire region, the eradication of terrorism from all countries, the destruction of terrorist safe havens, especially in Afghanistan, and the creation of a law and order situation that ensures the safe, secure, and effortless movement of goods along the route and to its destinations. The security situation in Afghanistan will be the most difficult barrier for this project. Contrary to the Doha Agreement, Afghanistan is providing safe havens to over 6000 fully armed and trained Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) terrorists who are carrying out terrorist attacks all along the border, putting the lives and properties of people living in border areas in great danger and in constant state of fear. They have also martyred scores of civilians and security personnel in recent days, prompting the Army Chief to warn Afghanistan to eliminate these terrorist groups which have ransomed the security and stability of the entire region. These terrorist groups pose a significant risk to all such projects traveling through Afghanistan, necessitating the Afghan government's efforts to rid the country of the dangers of terrorism and extremism. The donor agencies' commitment of huge funds will also be contingent on the security and safety and establishment of law and order in Afghanistan, in the absence of which the donor agencies will naturally shy away from making any commitment for provision of funds, and one does not need rocket science to understand that cash starved Afghanistan and Pakistan are unable to fund this initiative with their own funds. With Afghanistan's security issues resolved, the project makes a lot of economic sense.

## Biden's mixed results hurting his reelection chances

Dr. Majid rafizadeh

The rising cost of living, along with the cost of basic needs and commodities, high interest rates, supply chain issues, a dwindling workforce and high inflation are putting a lot of pressure on the working class and on small businesses. It was reported in December last year that the average American family had lost about \$7,100 in purchasing power due to inflation and higher interest rates during Biden's presidency. For example, Ashley Bachman

US President Joe Biden has now been in office for two and a half years, which gives us enough time to examine his progress on major domestic and foreign policy issues. Biden has already announced that he will be running for reelection in 2024. The success or failure of his administration's domestic and foreign policies will play a crucial role in his bid for reelection. Biden's approval rating this month dipped to one of its lowest points so far. In general, a majority of Americans disapprove of the job he is doing as president, according to the Reuters/Ipsos poll. Biden's approval rating lingered at 40 percent in early July, which is slightly lower than the previous month's approval rating and is lower than the approval ratings of many of his predecessors, including Barack Obama and George W. Bush, at this point in their respective presidencies. On the domestic level, the key issues for the American public include employment, inflation, immigration, the healthcare system and the crime rate. But the single most important concern for the American people is most likely related to the economy.

The rising cost of living, along with the cost of basic needs and commodities, high interest rates, supply chain issues, a dwindling workforce and high inflation are putting a lot of pressure on the working class and on small businesses. It was reported in December last year that the average American family had lost about \$7,100 in purchasing power due to inflation and higher interest rates during Biden's presidency. For example, Ashley Bachman, a mother of three and restaurant owner from West Virginia, stated: "Unfortunately, after COVID we have been hit with another crisis. The crisis of rising costs of everything ... Our little restaurant has been bleeding money due to all the increased costs and I don't know how much longer we'll be able to continue with the prices the way they are." And Chuck Mills, the owner and operator of his family's

manufacturing company in Oklahoma, said: "The lack of workforce and supply chain issues, combined with inflationary pressures, have made this economy the most difficult economy I have dealt with in over four decades." Another key issue is the national debt, which increased by almost \$4 trillion in the first two years of the Biden administration. Some people also disapprove of the White House's approach to immigration, as there have been about 6 million illegal border crossings since Biden assumed office. There has also been an increase in the number of drug trafficking and human trafficking offenses. On the other hand, the president's most noticeable domestic accomplishments include passing the Bipartisan Infrastructure Deal, aka the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. Biden signed this \$1 trillion infrastructure bill into law. According to the White House, it will rebuild "America's roads, bridges and rails, expand access to clean drinking water, ensure every American has access to high-speed internet, tackle the climate crisis, advance environmental justice, and invest in communities that have too often been left behind." The Biden administration also launched a historic \$20 billion program in grant competitions for investment in clean energy. In addition, the Biden administration's Inflation Reduction Act provides \$369 billion for climate-related investments and offers tax breaks. When it comes to Biden's foreign policy, a majority of Americans disapprove of the way the president is handling America's affairs. This is most likely due to the administration's approach to the Russia-Ukraine conflict. His approval rating for the way he handled Russia in the buildup to its invasion last year was just 36 percent, according to a Gallup poll. Although some people believe that the president's cautious foreign policy has kept the US from being dragged into a full-fledged war with Moscow, many believe the administration has failed to adequately handle the situation.

This is likely because the Biden administration does not appear to have an articulate and clear agenda or an endgame for resolving the conflict. In other words, the administration's policy seems to be anchored in only providing weapons, ammunition and financial assistance to Ukraine. For example, Biden in February announced nearly half a billion dollars of additional assistance for Kyiv, including "the delivery of artillery ammunition, anti-armor systems, and air surveillance radars to help protect the Ukrainian people from aerial bombardments." However, National Public Radio reported: "After Congress appropriated more than \$112 billion in military and economic support in the space of a single year — and with no signs of an end to the conflict — polls show a growing number of Americans feel the United States is giving Ukraine too much." Another foreign policy issue affecting Biden's approval rating is the August 2021 withdrawal from Afghanistan, which many people viewed as being poorly planned. On the other hand, the Biden administration has fulfilled the president's promise of repairing the damaged ties between the US and its European allies. Under Biden's predecessor Donald Trump, relations between the transatlantic partners appeared to have been undermined beyond simple disagreements. The Biden administration has pursued a more conventional foreign policy with the EU by reaffirming American support for NATO. This has allowed Biden to restore normality in transatlantic ties. Nevertheless, challenges remain when it comes to trade and subsidy concerns. In a nutshell, Biden's overall approval rating is low due to his administration's handling of key issues, including the economy and foreign affairs. In order to increase his odds of winning the 2024 presidential election, the president needs to gain more support and improve his popularity by employing more informed domestic and foreign policies.

—Courtesy: Arab News

## Briefs

## Govt focuses on attracting investment

FROM PAGE 01

During a high-level meeting, the Government unveiled an elaborated 'Economic Revival Plan' in the wake of economic hardships being confronted by the country. The plan envisages capitalizing Pakistan's untapped potential in key sectors of Defence Production, Agriculture / Livestock, Minerals / Mining, IT and Energy, through indigenous development as well as investments from friendly countries. To fast-track the development of projects, establishment of Special Investment Facilitation Council has been undertaken to act as a 'Single Window' interface for the potential investors as well as to adopt a unified approach.

## No new taxes on agriculture, real estate sectors: Dar

FROM PAGE 01

The total liquid foreign reserves were reported to be US\$ 14,065.3 million, with the central bank holding \$8,727.2 million, thanks to inflows from Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and the IMF. The central bank had received \$2.0 billion from Saudi Arabia, following \$1.2 billion from the IMF, and \$1.0 billion from the UAE, contributing to the net foreign reserves held by commercial banks at US\$ 5,338.1 million. The finance minister reassured the public that the government had made all due payments in accordance with international agreements, further demonstrating its commitment to meeting obligations on time. Highlighting the government's commitment to financial transparency, Senator Dar shared the IMF agreement and stated that it would be made available on the Ministry of Finance's website for public information. The minister also handed over a copy of the agreement to the lower House of Parliament.

## AGP seeks time on right to...

FROM PAGE 01

such a way that the country's position at the global level is not affected," the AGP said. The AGP's request came during a hearing of identical petitions challenging the government's decision to conduct trials of civilians in military courts. The six-member bench comprising Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial, Justice Ijazul Ahsan, Justice Munib Akhtar, Justice Yahya Afridi, Justice Sayeed Mazhar Ali Akbar Naqvi and Justice Ayesha Malik. At the start of the hearing, AGP Awan took to the rostrum and reiterated the need for military courts. He also assured the bench that arrests were made very carefully after a thorough investigation. He further contended that according to the Army Act, those breaking the discipline of civilian forces came under the law. He then said he wanted to brief the court on the amendments to the Army Act. However, Justice Akhtar inquired: "Does injuring an army officer amount to preventing him from performing his duty?" He further slammed the AGP for contradictory statements: "On the one hand, it is stated that the state cannot make any law beyond human rights.

## Surging terror attacks in...

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KP interim Information Minister Feroz Jamal said the police are equipped to deal with the rising terrorist activities but also noted that the Afghan government's actions could help curb militancy. "If there is peace in Afghanistan, there will be peace in Pakistan. Anyone involved in cross-border terrorism should be dealt with [in Afghanistan]," the information minister said.

## Seminar on China-Pakistan Relations

## Pak-China enjoy a symbiotic relationship based on trust

Amb. Mahmood further stressed that friendship with China has from outset been cornerstone of Pakistan's foreign policy, where both countries have enjoyed a stable and growing relationship marked by strategic trust

DNA

SHANGHAI: The 15-member delegation visiting China participated in a Seminar, titled "China-Pakistan Relations in International Dynamics," organized by the Pakistan Study Centre, Fudan University, Shanghai. The delegation, being led by Ambassador Sohail Mahmood, Director General ISSI includes diplomats, leading academics, researchers and media persons. The seminar was moderated by Dr. Talat Shabbir, Director China-Pakistan Study Centre (CPSC) and Dr. Zhang Jiegen, Associate Professor and Executive Director, Pakistan Study Centre, Fudan University.

The speakers in various sessions included: Prof. Lin Minwang, Professor and Assistant Dean, Institute of International Studies, Fudan University; Dr. Tahir Mumtaz Awan, Head China Study Centre, COMSATS University, Islamabad; Prof. Zhang Jiadong, Professor and Director of the Centre for South Asian Studies, Fudan University; Dr. Ayesha Alam, Head Pakistan Studies Department, Hazara University; Prof. Xin Qiang, Professor and Associate Director, Center for American Studies, Fudan University; Prof. Dr. Kausar Takrim, Director, China Study Centre, University of Peshawar; and Prof. Guo Xuetang Professor



and Associate Dean, Law School, Shanghai University of International Business and Economics. DG ISSI Ambassador Sohail Mahmood was the keynote speaker of the seminar. Dr. Zhang Jiegen, in his welcome remarks, gave a brief overview of the Fudan University and Pakistan Study Centre. In his introductory remarks, Dr. Talat Shabbir stressed the peaceful rise of China for the good of humanity across the globe and highlighted that the Pakistan-China friendship has grown from strength to strength, where both countries enjoy a symbiotic relationship based on trust, goodwill,

and close cooperation. Addressing the seminar on "The Philosophy of Chinese Diplomacy: From Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative to Global Civilization Initiative," Prof. Lin Minwang noted that President Xi Jinping's three Initiatives are linked to the "Chinese dream for the world" which envisages a shared future for all including both its immediate neighbors and the world community. China's role in developing the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB); role in stabilizing situation in Afghanistan, and role in facilitating rapprochement be-

tween Saudi-Arabia and Iran is a testament to China's commitment towards an international community where China is not 'free-rider' but a responsible power. During his remarks, Dr. Tahir Mumtaz Awan, dilated on the theme, "The Friendship Diplomacy and Emerging Chinese Initiatives for Global Good." He stated that China's various Initiatives are complemented by its other projects aiming at South-South Cooperation, people-to-people exchanges, health projects, and efforts for enhanced environment cooperation indicating China's expressed desire for shared pros-

perity across the globe.

Expressing his views on "Pakistan's Development Model and the CPEC," Prof. Zhang Jiadong underlined that Pakistan holds immense potential in terms of its labor dividend and infrastructural development. Pakistan's unique geography and its good relations with major powers further positions it to be a bridge between various parts of the world. In this milieu, CPEC and Pakistan's pivot to geo-economics complement each other.

Dr. Ayesha Alam, in her remarks, discussed the theme "CPEC: A Gateway to Regional Connectivity." She stressed that China's development projects including six-major corridors in various parts of the world are a testament to China's commitment to global development. She further highlighted that it is the collective responsibility of both Pakistan and China to counter anti-CPEC propaganda which usually emanates from India and the West.

Expressing his views on, "Regional Implications of China-US Strategic Rivalry," Prof. Xin Qiang highlighted that the China-US rivalry is seen as a long-term, systematic, and global rivalry. He observed that it would manifest itself in all corners of the world and would likely affect various dimensions including economy, security, hi-tech, and even architecture.

## Pakistan qualify for final of Emerging Asia Cup

Omar scored 88 runs in 79 balls with help of 10 fours and a six. Meanwhile, Haris played a brisk knock of 52 runs in 43 balls which included five fours

DHAKA: Pakistan A defeated Sri Lanka A by 60 runs in the semi-final of the ongoing Emerging Asia Cup on Friday. The Men in Green will face the winner of the second semi-final between India A and Bangladesh A.

While chasing a target of 323 runs, the home side were bowled out for 262 in 45.4 overs. Pacer Arshad Iqbal was the pick of the bowlers for Pakistan after claiming figures of 5-37. Mubasir Khan and Sufiyan Muqeem bagged two wick-

ets each for the winning side. Sahar Arachchige and Avishka Fernando scored 97 runs each for Sri Lanka but it was not enough to get their side over the line. Earlier, fifties by Omar Bin Yousuf and captain Mohammad Haris powered Pakistan A to 322 against Sri Lanka A. After deciding to bat first in Colombo, the Pakistan cricket team were bowled out for 322 on the final ball of the innings. Omar scored 88 runs in 79 balls with the help of 10 fours and a six. Meanwhile,

Haris played a brisk knock of 52 runs in 43 balls which included five fours. Mubasir Khan and Tayyab Tahir chipped in with 42 and 26 runs, respectively. Mohammad Wasim Jr provided impetus at the back-end of the innings with a cameo of 24 runs in 17 balls. He smacked two sixes and a four. For Sri Lanka, Chamika Karunaratne, Pramod Madushan and Lahiru Samarakoon claimed two wickets each. The final of the event will be held on Sunday, July 23, in Colombo.

**Pakistan:** Sahibzada Farhan, Saim Ayub, Tayyab Tahir, Qasim Akram, Omar Yousuf, Mohammad Haris (c), Mubasir Khan, Amad Butt, Mohammad Wasim, Sufiyan Muqeem, Arshad Iqbal.  
**Sri Lanka:** Dunith Welalage (c), Lasith Croopulle, Avishka Fernando, Minod Bhanuka, Pasindu Sooriyabandara, Ashen Bandara, Sahar Arachchige, Dushan Hemantha, Chamika Karunaratne, Lahiru Samarakoon, Pramod Madushan. - Agencies

## Switzerland sour Philippines' World Cup debut with 2-0 win

DUNEDIN: Switzerland made a winning start to their Women's World Cup campaign with a 2-0 victory over debutants Philippines at Dunedin Stadium on Friday, thanks to Ramona Bachmann's first-half penalty and a close-range effort from Seraina Piubel. Inka Grings' side were awarded a penalty by VAR after midfielder Coumba Sow was caught by a stray boot from Jessika Cowart in the box late in the first half, with forward Bachmann coolly slotting the ball past goalkeeper Olivia McDaniel. "I wasn't that nervous, but I knew it was an important moment," Bachmann told reporters. "I knew that it would be important for our team to get to half-time with a 1-0 so I was really focused and I obviously tried to score, but I feel quite confident in shooting penalties. So I was really calm." The Philippines, coached by former Matildas manager Alen Stajic, made history as they became the first team from their country - male or female - to appear at the finals of a global soccer tournament. And they were denied an early opener when midfielder Katrina Guillou's strike was ruled out for offside. Ana-Maria Crnogorčević, Switzerland's top scorer and most capped player, fired over from close range before Bachmann's penalty put them ahead. Switzerland dominated the second half and deservedly doubled their lead through midfielder Piubel, who smashed home in the 64th minute after McDaniel denied Crnogorčević and Sow. - Agencies

## Waseem's world title fight postponed

LAHORE: Pakistani boxer Mohammad Waseem's world title fight has been postponed due to non-issuance of visa. Waseem, who is currently in Scotland, was scheduled to travel to Dubai for his fight but his visa application was rejected due to incorrect information. Immediately after rejection, Waseem's Dubai-based Disrupt Promotions re-applied for visa but the application couldn't process in limited time. Star boxer and three-time WBC flyweight world silver champion Waseem was scheduled to face four-time world champion Donnie Nietes of the Philippines tomorrow [July 22]. "Unfortunately, the fight has been postponed. There is not enough time to wait for the visa as all the other participants have reached Dubai," Waseem's manager told GeoSuper.tv. "This fight will now be rescheduled in mid of August. His promotion is planning to collaborate for a big event in Saudi Arabia. Hopefully, his fight will now take place in Saudi Arabia," the manager added. Meanwhile, Waseem, in a video message, said that it is disappointing for him that the fight has been postponed. "I worked really hard in the camp for this fight. My aim was to win the title for Pakistan. I would like to thank my promotions for this opportunity. I am hopeful that this fight will be rescheduled soon," he concluded. - DNA

## Ronaldo topples Kylie by charging £1.8m per post on Instagram

NEW YORK: Cristiano Ronaldo has surpassed the social media personality Kylie Jenner on Instagram's rich list as the footballer now charges £1.8m per post, becoming the highest-paid star on the social site. Ronaldo, 38, with 597 million followers, is the most followed individual on Instagram. He has now impressively rates in a staggering £1.87 million per sponsored post, compared with Kylie Jenner 25, who earns £1.47 million for each post. Ronaldo would often promote the likes of sports website LiveScore, wellness brand Thebody and cryptocurrency exchange Binance on his Instagram account. On the other hand, Kylie would post about cosmetics brands like Kylie Cosmetics, and Kylie Swim while also working with other fashion brands. Kylie has the fifth most (397 million) followers on Instagram but she earns more than those who have more followers than her. After Ronaldo, the seven-time Ballon d'Or winner and the FIFA World Cup 2022 winner Lionel Messi is the second most-followed individual with 480 million followers who earns £1.38 million per sponsored post. Messi is closely followed by Selena Gomez, with 426 million followers who earn £1.35 million for each post, while Dwayne Johnson - with 387 million followers - is in fifth place with £1.33 million. Kim Kardashian



- another media personality - also made the top ten as she earns £1.31 million per sponsored post. She has 362 million followers on Instagram. Meanwhile, American singing sensation Ariana Grande came in seventh on the list, very closely behind Kim with £1.3 million per post, while Beyonce rakes in £1.08 million for each post. Cristiano topping the list is his latest huge milestone after he was named the world's highest-paid athlete by Forbes at the beginning of May, with his annual earnings this year said to top £109 million. - Agencies

## Classy Spain send Women's World Cup warning

WELLINGTON: Rampant Spain issued a Women's World Cup warning on Friday with a 3-0 win over Costa Rica while Switzerland ensured there would be no fairytale debut for the Philippines. Goalkeeper Chiamaka Nnadozie was meanwhile the hero for Nigeria by saving a penalty to earn them a 0-0 draw with Olympic champions Canada. Spain's build-up to the tournament in Australia and New Zealand was clouded by a simmering row involving a group of 15 players who refused to feature under coach Jorge Vilda. Three eventually returned to the squad for the World Cup and one of them, Aitana Bonmati, was on the score-sheet in Wellington as La Roja launched wave after wave of attacks at the overwhelmed Costa Rican defence.

An own goal put Spain on their way and after Bonmati netted, Esther Gonzalez made it three in a ruthless six-minute first-half spell to kill off Costa Rica in double-quick time. In truth Spain should have won by many more - Jennifer Hermoso fluffed a first-half penalty - and did not miss their two-time Ballon d'Or winner Alexia Putellas. Putellas started as a substitute, but ominously for Spain's rivals for the title, came off the bench for the last 13 minutes, allaying fears about a possible injury. She only returned in April from a serious knee injury. This World Cup is just two

days and five games in, but already there has been a penalty in every game. In the first match Friday, Nnadozie denied Canada and their record-breaking goalscorer Christine Sinclair from the spot in front of 21,410 fans



in Melbourne. Nnadozie called it a dream come true as both sides took a point in a tight-looking Group B which is topped by Australia following their 1-0 win over Ireland on Thursday, again through a penalty. "It

was a great thing today that we were able to at least get something and it was a dream come true for me personally," said the goalkeeper, who was named player of the match. The 22-year-old Paris FC stopper said she wanted revenge on Sinclair - the all-time top scorer in international football - after conceding against the forward previously. "When she took the ball, I was like, 'Okay, it's Sinclair again', because the last time we played against them, she scored against me. "I was very angry, and I told myself, this is the opportunity to make things right." The Philippines were beaten 2-0 by Switzerland as their World Cup debut fell flat. The tournament minnows thought they had taken the lead in the first half in the New Zealand city of Dunedin but the goal was ruled out for offside in front of 13,711 spectators. If that was the correct call, the VAR decision which gave the Swiss a penalty on the stroke of half-time was more contentious. Ramona Bachmann was nevertheless unerring from the spot, sending goalkeeper Olivia McDaniel the wrong way. The Swiss, ranked 20th in the world to their opponent's 46th, were good value for their lead and doubled it in the 64th minute when Seraina Piubel slammed in a rebound from close range for a routine win. - Agencies

## Attempts to delay elections to harm...

FROM PAGE 01

PTI leadership support has paved the way for the IMF SBA and led to the Board's approval. As the largest national party in Pakistan, we will always support actions for the benefit of the country and the welfare of the people, despite our strong apprehensions about the fascist actions of the PDM government against the citizens and political opponents. The PTI whitepaper showed that the IMF staff report acknowledged the gains made under the PTI government. "Following the program approval in July 2019, the authorities' decisive policy implementation started to reverse Pakistan's large imbalances" left by the PMLN government in 2018.

It was said that IMF staff notes that under the PMLN government the 'misaligned economic policies—including large fiscal deficits, loose monetary policy, and defense of an overvalued exchange rate—eroded macroeconomic stability, increased external and public debt, and depleted international reserves'.

## "Cypher can lead to Khan's..."

FROM PAGE 01

He termed the former principal secretary to the ex-PM Azam Khan's professional statement "important", saying the former premier's aide has validated his opponents' allegations. Imran's top aide had revealed in the professional statement that the then-prime minister last year used the diplomatic cypher sent by Pakistan's envoy to Washington to concoct a narrative against the establishment and opposition.

## Curative review against...

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government against Senior Puisne Judge Qazi Faez Isa. CJP Bandial had reserved the verdict on the federal government's plea earlier in April this year. The CJP disposed of the petition on the basis of withdrawal, according to the verdict announced today (Friday). The Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM)-led government had requested the apex court to withdraw the curative review petition filed against Justice Isa. President Dr Arif Alvi had approved the withdrawal of the curative review petition and Civil Miscellaneous Application against Justice Isa, on the advice of PM Shehbaz, through Article 48 of the Constitution. President Alvi had also signed his Power of Attorney in favour of Advocate-on-Record (AOR). In 2021, the then government of Imran Khan filed a curative review petition against the order of the majority in the review petitions of Justice Isa passed on April 26, 2021.

## Pakistan wants end to Ukraine conflict: FO

FROM PAGE 01

Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said it has been the first ever move of this kind since the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries in 1993. She said Pakistan and Ukraine have agreed to enhance mutually beneficial cooperation in trade, investment, higher education, agriculture, defence, and information technology for the mutual benefit of both countries. They agreed on the importance of regular dialogue and engagement and decided to hold meetings of various institutional mechanisms in due course. She further said that it was also agreed to deepen cultural exchanges and people-to-people contacts. The Spokesperson also spoke about the founder and President of Jammu and Kashmir Democratic Freedom Party Shabbir Ahmad Shah, who completed six years of his continued detention this month.

## Briefs

## China to explore more 5G use scenarios

ISLAMABAD: China will explore more use scenarios for 5G technology in a wide range of sectors including industry, mineral mining and ports operation, with more than 3,000 enterprises expected to build 5G-wired factories in 2023, said a senior government official. Zhao Zhiguo, chief engineer of China's Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT), said that the country will accelerate research and development (R&D) of the next-generation 6G technology. By the end of June, a total of 2.93 million 5G base stations have been put into services in China, with the number of 5G smartphone users reaching 676 million and the connected Internet of things (IoT) devices hitting 2.12 billion, according to the MIIT. 5G has been applied in 60 major economic categories in China and is expanding to sectors including manufacturing, medical treatment, education and transport. The amount of use scenarios has reached over 50,000 types, Zhao said. Zhao pointed to efforts to boost the development of 5G network and application as well as accelerate 6G R&D so as to build solid foundation for developing China into a manufacturing and internet power as well as contribute to the building of digital China, China News service reported. While comprehensively enhancing 5G network quality, the authorities will continue to expand 5G coverage in major scenarios in urban areas as well as rural regions. In addition, efforts will also be made to promote 5G RedCap's development to further reduce costs and increase application scale, according to Zhao.—Agencies

## Cambodia heir leads final rally ahead of polls

PHNOM: Cambodian leader Hun Sen's eldest son and chosen successor hailed "victory day" in a final rambunctious rally Friday, ahead of one-sided elections that his father's ruling party is guaranteed to win. One of the world's longest-serving rulers, Hun Sen has played off tensions between the United States and China to buttress his grip on power, and critics say that more than 30 years after UN-brokered peace accords ended decades of bloody conflict, his rule has left Cambodian democracy in a sorry state.

A crowd of tens of thousands of supporters on motorbikes, dressed in bright blue, gathered under grey skies to hear Hun Manet's speech before he roared off in a huge celebratory motorcade parade around the capital Phnom Penh. It was the final rally before Sunday's election, which has seen all meaningful opposition either disqualified or exiled, leaving voters no choice but to hand Hun Sen's Cambodian People's Party (CPP) a majority in the 125-member parliament.—APP

## 'Lioness' near Berlin still on the loose

BERLIN: German police extended the search Friday for a wild animal believed to be a lioness roaming the outskirts of Berlin more than 24 hours since the last reported sighting.

In a story that has fascinated Germany and given rise to a slew of satirical memes on social media, two people spotted what appeared to be a lioness early Thursday chasing a wild boar down a street outside the capital and made a short, grainy video. But their account and a sighting by police officers remain the only evidence so far of the wild animal, more at home on the African savanna than the sandy soil of eastern Germany. Police continued combing the streets of suburban communities southwest of Berlin in the small hours of Friday using night-vision goggles and drones but called off a forest search until daybreak.—Agencies

## Turkiye working against end of Black Sea grain deal

Erdogan said Putin has expectations from Western countries on the grain deal, adding: "Western countries need to take action in this regard"

DNA

ANKARA: Ending the Black Sea grain deal as announced this week would hit hard in numerous ways, warned Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, adding that Turkiye is already working to prevent this. "The termination of the Black Sea grain initiative will have a range of (harmful) effects, ranging from raising global food prices, in some regions to famine, and then new waves of migration. We do not hesitate to take the initiative to prevent this," Erdogan told reporters on Thursday on the presidential plane returning from a three-nation Gulf tour. "I believe that by discussing the issue in detail with (Russian President Vladimir) Putin, we will ensure the continuation of this humanitarian movement," he added, hinting at Turkiye's unique role as a country on good terms with both Russia and Ukraine, which helped it originally broker the deal along with the UN. On July 17, Russia suspended its participation in the deal, which it signed last July along with Turkiye, the UN, and Ukraine to resume grain exports from three Ukrainian Black Sea ports passed after the Russia-Ukraine war began in Febru-

ary. But even when renewing the deal in previous months, Moscow has complained that the Russian part of the agreement was not being implemented. Erdogan said Putin has expectations from Western countries on the grain deal, adding: "Western countries need to take action in this regard." Under the landmark deal, more than 33 million tons of grain was shipped from Ukrainian ports, preventing a global food crisis, he said, adding: "The continuation of such a vital initiative in terms of its results is for the benefit of humanity." Erdogan denied rumors that Turkiye's importance in mediation between Russia and Ukraine has fallen. "On the contrary, we are currently maintaining our relations with Russia. Both Foreign Minister Hakan (Fidan), and (National Intelligence Organization) MIT head Ibrahim (Kalin) continue their negotiations," Erdogan added. The president added that he might soon have a phone call with Putin without waiting for a possible August meeting. Previously, Erdogan said Putin is expected to visit Turkiye in August to discuss bilateral relations and regional issues, including the Black Sea grain deal. "Russia also has some expectations. If these are met, Russia is



in favor of active operation of this grain corridor," he added. Turkiye will use all its diplomatic tools to make sure the Black Sea grain deal resumes, he said, adding: "A consensus has been reached that serves humanity in a war environment, and we will do our best to keep it going. He said hopefully: "I believe that we will ensure the continuation of the Black Sea Grain Initiative before the process is prolonged." Turkiye, internationally praised for its unique mediator role between Ukraine and Russia, has repeatedly called on Kyiv and Moscow to end the war, now over 500 days old, through negotiations. Turning to this week's three-nation Gulf tour, which included

Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the UAE, Erdogan said regional issues should be addressed through regional cooperation. "In this respect, we agreed on the continuation of our consultation and coordination on regional issues," he added. Turkiye has entered a new era in its bilateral relations with Saudi Arabia, said Erdogan, adding that Ankara furthered its cooperation with five agreements it signed with Riyadh.

Turkiye and Qatar marked the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, Erdogan said, adding that he agreed with Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani to further extend "excellent" cooperation in various fields. During his visit to the UAE, Erdogan said Ankara and Abu Dhabi signed a total of 13 deals worth \$50.7 billion. There is a substantial potential between Turkiye and the UAE in the areas of trade and investment, Erdogan said, adding: "With the joint agreement we signed, we have raised our relations to the level of a strategic partnership. We established a high-level strategic council mechanism. With the establishment of the mechanism, we have provided a platform where we can discuss issues on our agenda at the highest level." The Gulf visit saw the signing of "the biggest" defense and aerospace export contracts in

Turkish history, he said. "All these agreements, beyond their monetary rewards, are signs of the Gulf countries' trust in Turkiye's economy and industry," he added. On Sweden's pending NATO membership bid, Erdogan said Stockholm's accession to the alliance is at the discretion of the Turkish parliament. At a recent NATO summit in Lithuania, Erdogan agreed to forward to the Turkish parliament Sweden's bid to join NATO for a ratification vote. As parliament is currently on summer recess, it will take up the legislation this fall. All current members of NATO have to agree to any new additions. Finland and Sweden applied for NATO membership shortly after Russia launched its war on Ukraine in February 2022. Although Turkiye approved Finland's membership to NATO, it is waiting for Sweden to fulfill its commitments not to provide shelter to terrorists and supporters of terrorists and not to facilitate their actions. "We will follow the promises and guarantees given by the Swedish side. We will take action according to the steps Sweden takes," Erdogan explained. "Turkiye joining the EU – a nation that is the locomotive of NATO, with its second-strongest army – will also add vitality and strength to the union," Erdogan said.

## 1 dead, 3 injured in knife attack in Seoul

SEOUL: At least one person has been killed and three others have been wounded after a man went on a "stabbing rampage" near a subway station in the South Korean capital Seoul on Friday, according to the South Korean police. The attack happened near Exit 4 of the Sillim subway station in southwest Seoul at 2:07 p.m. (0507 GMT), police said, as cited by South Korean state media, adding that the suspect was detained by police at the scene. In a report, the police announced that the suspect was a 30-year-old man who was not in an abnormal state at the time of the incident, and the investigation into the motive for the crime is ongoing. A video posted on local television station YTN's YouTube channel showed police apprehending the suspect, who had sat down on steps passively as armed police approached him and placed him under arrest. "The man shouted he didn't want to live anymore as he was being apprehended by the police," the news media reported. Eyewitnesses at the scene said the suspect stabbed a man in the back multiple times before running off and attacking more people, the Chosun Ilbo newspaper reported. South Korea is generally a very safe country in the world, with a homicide rate of just 1.3 per 100,000 people in 2021, according to official statistics.—APP

## Climate activists disrupt British Open

HOYLAK: Climate activists disrupted the British Open on Friday, setting off a smoke flare and throwing orange powder onto the Royal Liverpool course. The Just Stop Oil group said three people were involved in the demonstration at the 17th hole during the second day of the tournament at Hoylake. British golf's landmark tournament is the latest high-profile sporting event to be targeted by Just Stop Oil in recent weeks following interruptions at Wimbledon and during the second Ashes cricket Test at Lord's. "At around 12.20 pm three Just Stop Oil supporters ran onto hole 17 at The Open in Royal Liverpool," the group said in a statement. "They set off a smoke flare and threw orange powder paint on the green before being removed by security." American golfer Billy Horschel escorted a woman wearing a Just Stop Oil T-shirt covered in orange paint off the green of the links course and handed her over to a police officer. The woman and a man wearing a similar T-shirt were both handcuffed and marched off the course by several police officers. Open organisers were prepared for a protest and stressed they had put in extra security precautions.—Agencies

## Senior doctors in England begin 1st strike in decade

LONDON: Senior doctors across England began a 48-hour strike on Thursday, their first industrial action in a decade. The strike over pay dispute by thousands of consultants and members of the British Medical Association (BMA) will continue until 7 a.m. local time (0600GMT) on Saturday. The two-day action, which prompted postponement of thousands of already scheduled appointments, becomes the first walkout by senior doctors since 2012. On June 27, the BMA said that 86.08% of their members – over 20,700 members – voted for walkout. Britain's National Health Service (NHS) warned that the walkout would have the most severe impact in its history. "This could undoubtedly be the most severe impact we have ever seen in the NHS as a result of industrial action, with routine care virtually at a standstill for 48 hours," Stephen Powis, NHS national medical director, said in a statement on Wednesday. It also comes two days after the end of a five-day strike by junior doctors, which affected over 100,000 appointments, according to the NHS.—APP

## Millions rally across Iran to condemn desecration of Qur'an in Sweden

TEHRAN: Millions of Iranians have taken to the streets across the country after Friday prayers to voice their strong condemnation of the recent desecration of the Holy Qur'an, the second such incident in less than a month. The mass rallies were held in major Iranian cities on Friday, a day after a Sweden-based Iraqi refugee desecrated the Muslim holy book during a demonstration outside the Iraqi embassy in Stockholm amid strict protection provided by the Swedish police. The appalling act opened the floodgates of protest across the world's Muslim community, with the Iranian Foreign Ministry summoning the Swedish ambassador to Tehran and conveying the Islamic Republic's vehement condemnation of the heinous act.

"The repeated desecration of the Holy Qur'an in Sweden, with the authorization of the country's government, has hurt the feelings of the Muslim world and followers of monotheistic religions," Seyyed Mohsen Mahmoudi, the deputy head of Islamic Development Coordination Council, told reporters on Thursday. Stressing that the Iranian nation will on Friday condemn the act of this "mercenary agent backed by the Swedish government," Mahmoudi said, "The Islamic world must condemn this heinous act." Calling on Iran's Foreign Ministry to deal decisively with the sacrilegious move, the official said, "The Muslim world must confront this ignorant government with all its might." This was the second time Momika was dis-

respecting the Qur'an amid the approval of Sweden's authorities. He set a copy of the holy book on fire on June 28, prompting similar raging protests across the Muslim world and causing the Iranian Foreign Ministry to summon Sweden's chargé d'affaires. In a communiqué issued after the rallies on Friday, the demonstrators called on the Iranian Foreign Ministry, in tandem with other Muslim countries, to reconsider diplomatic relations with the government in Stockholm. The sacrilege comes as Western countries are "deeply worried about the increasing expansion [of Islam] and the shining of the divine words and fear the world's inclination towards Islam," it reads. Urging for unity among Muslim nations, demonstrators

asked all Muslim states to establish a "united front" in the face of "Westerners' wicked actions." They also called on Muslim scholars to ask their governments to boycott the import of Swedish products. Also on Friday, people in Iraq and Lebanon staged rallies on Friday to condemn the latest act of desecration. A day earlier, demonstrators in Baghdad broke into the Swedish Embassy and set part of it on fire to show their anger at the sacrilegious act. The Iraqi government also ordered the Swedish ambassador to leave and decided to withdraw its envoy from Stockholm for permitting the desecration of the Holy Qur'an. People in Pakistan also took to the streets to voice their indignation at the insult to the holy Muslim book.—Agencies

## Macron demands 'sound answers' after riots shake France

PARIS: President Emmanuel Macron on Friday asked his government to draw lessons from recent riots sparked by the police shooting of a teenager, or risk deep divisions in France. The killing of Nahel M., 17, during a traffic stop last month prompted protests, riots and looting, with many accusing the government of allowing a culture of institutional racism in the police force to fester. Speaking at a cabinet meeting a day after a government reshuffle, Macron said the riots had highlighted "a risk of fragmentation, of deep division, of the nation". There was a "need for authority and respect", Macron told the ministers. "We must draw the lessons from what happened, and provide sound answers," he said. This task would "shape" the government's work after the summer break, said Macron. The most intense urban violence since 2005 sparked a debate about law and order, immigration, racism and police brutality. Thursday's cabinet revamp has been widely interpreted as a signal by Macron to move on from a series of crises since his re-election last year, which also included widespread protests over a hike in the French retirement age. The reshuffle was limited in scope, with Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne, crucially, remaining in her post. That choice reflected his wish for "continuity and efficiency", Macron said. Macron also told the cabinet meeting that France needed to bring its finances back on a solid footing after spending to bolster the economy during the Covid pandemic and energy subsidies for households triggered a sharp rise in deficits and debt. "After the summer, we will have to prepare the country, in a way, for a demanding framework and order in terms of public finances," Macron said. This, he said, would put France in a position to start repaying debt, cut taxes further and allow "a reasonable management of our deficits".—Agencies

## Israel 'on the brink of civil war'

TEL AVIV: The former head of Israel's so-called internal security service, Shin Bet, has warned that the occupied territories are on the brink of "civil war" as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's extremist cabinet presses ahead with its radical and destructive policies. Nadav Argaman raised the alarm on Thursday as he expressed support for the Israeli military reservists who are threatening to stop showing up for duty in protest at the occupying regime's so-called plans to overhaul the judiciary. Hundreds of military reservists have announced that they will no longer volunteer to carry out their specialized duties – among them air force pilots – if the so-called judiciary reform plan is passed. The Knesset's Law, Constitution and Justice Committee on Thursday approved a bill that aims to strip judges of their authority to challenge cabinet decisions seen as "unreasonable," paving the way for the bill to pass its final votes in the Knesset. Describing Netanyahu's overhaul scheme as a "regime coup," Argaman said, "I am certain that if the legislation passes, there will be those who say, 'We will not be part of the security force of a dictatorship.' We'll see people leaving [the security forces]; we'll see a fraying." Pointing to the months-long protests against the so-called reform plan in the occupied territories, Argaman said, "Any legislation that does not have a broad consensus will lead... Israel to chaos. On Monday, a law is set to pass... I am fearful for... Israel. I greatly fear that we are on the brink of civil war."—APP



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Interior Rana Sana Ullah Khan cutting Ribbon during the inauguration of Dolphin force in Islamabad. IGP Dr. Akbar Nasir and DIG Shoeb Khurram Janbaz are also seen in the picture. – DNA

## Baku accuses Armenia of 'illegal activities' in borders

BAKU: Azerbaijan accused Armenia of intending to continue "illegal activities" on its territory over Yerevan's rejection of a road into the disputed Karabakh region proposed by Azerbaijan. "The fact that Armenia ... rejects this road (Aghdam-Khankendi) by any means possible proves that the claim of a 'tense humanitarian situation' in the region is groundless and that Armenia intends to continue illegal activities on the territory of Azerbaijan," a statement by the country's Foreign Ministry said. The statement came in response to comments made by Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinian during a government meeting earlier in the day. It said Yerevan's repeated claims on the Lachin road over the past eight months show the country's intention to "use the issue for its political purposes and to obstruct the peace treaty negotiations that

have been progressing recently." It further said Armenia's claim that Azerbaijan is taking steps to carry out "ethnic cleansing" in the Karabakh region is "quite wrong and dangerous." The statement defined Pashinian's conditions on the form of dialogue between Baku and Armenian residents in Karabakh as "unacceptable" and a direct challenge to Azerbaijan's sovereignty and territorial integrity. It also said Armenia is clearly trying to make the process of border delimitation between the two countries fail, given that Yerevan "does not fulfill its obligation to withdraw the Armenian armed forces from the territory of Azerbaijan, continues to provide financial support to the territory, and emphasizes its territorial claims in various letters, statements and speeches." "Azerbaijan, as the initiator of the peace process with Armenia in the aforementioned

areas, is interested in establishing peace, stability and security in the region and is an active party in the negotiation process. If Armenia is interested in peace, it should stop efforts that hinder the peace process," it concluded. Karabakh has been at the center of a decades-long territorial dispute between the two countries. Azerbaijan in April set up the border point at the entrance to the Lachin corridor, exacerbating allegations from Armenia of a Karabakh "blockade." Tensions soaring over the move left another half a dozen people killed from both sides since December. Baku fervently denied the claims, saying the checkpoint was created in response to security threats from Armenia and citing the transfer of weapons and ammunition to the Karabakh region. Earlier this month, it temporarily halted the checkpoint pending an investiga-

tion into the Armenian branch of the Red Cross for alleged smuggling. The latest developments followed a monthslong protest by Azerbaijani environmental activists, which Yerevan claims spurred a humanitarian crisis and food and fuel shortages. Azerbaijan insisted at the time that civilian transport could go unimpeded through the Lachin corridor. In February, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) – the U.N.'s top judicial body – had ordered Azerbaijan to ensure free movement on the road. The two former Soviet republics fought two wars to control the mountainous region of Karabakh in the 1990s and again in 2020. Six weeks of fighting in autumn 2020 ended with a Russian-sponsored cease-fire that saw Armenia cede swathes of territories it had controlled for decades. There have been frequent clashes at the two countries' shared bor-

der despite the ongoing peace talks between Baku and Yerevan under mediation from the European Union and the United States. When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, ethnic Armenian separatists in Karabakh broke away from Azerbaijan. The ensuing conflict claimed some 30,000 lives. With major regional power Russia struggling to maintain its decisive influence because of the fallout from its war on Ukraine, the conflict has also drawn Western mediation efforts. Washington has been sponsoring peace talks, hosting ministers from both sides to hammer out an agreement twice this year alone, while the European Union has been mediating at the level of leaders between the former Soviet republics. Baku and Yerevan say "tangible progress" was made at these talks but emphasize "more work" is needed.—Agencies

## Briefs

**1 killed, 14 injured as van plunges into ravine**

DNA

GILGIT: At least one passenger was killed and 14 were injured on Friday after a van plunged into a ravine in the Bathrat village of Gilgit-Baltistan's Ghizer district, rescue officials said. Rescue 1122 Rescue and Safety Officer (Ghizer) Raja Ajmal Nazeer confirmed the casualties, adding that three of the injured were in critical condition. Among those three, one was shifted to the Gilgit Hospital while the other two were referred to the Gupis Hospital. Nazeer further said that three others were shifted to the Ghizer district headquarters hospital while the rest of the injured were sent home after providing them with first aid. Stating that there were a total of 15 passengers in the van, he said that rescue teams had been deployed to the site of the incident.

**CJP accepts govt's plea against curative review**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial has approved the federal government's petition seeking the withdrawal of a curative review filed by previous PTI-led government against Senior Puisne Judge Qazi Faez Isa. CJP Bandial had reserved the verdict on the federal government's plea earlier in April this year. The CJP disposed of the petition on the basis of withdrawal, according to the verdict announced on Friday. PDM-led government had requested the apex court to withdraw the curative review petition filed against Justice Isa. President Dr Arif Alvi had approved the withdrawal of the curative review petition and Civil Miscellaneous Application against Justice Isa, on the advice of PM Shehbaz, through Article 48 of the Constitution. President Alvi had also signed his Power of Attorney in favour of Advocate-on-Record (AOR).

**China agrees to reschedule \$2bln debt**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: China has agreed to reschedule over \$2 billion publicly guaranteed debt of Pakistan for a period of two years, providing a major relief to the government that is in the process of rebuilding foreign exchange reserves through fresh loans and rolling over maturing debt. The ECC of the Cabinet on Thursday approved the revised terms of the agreement reached between Islamabad and Beijing, according to senior Pakistani officials. Finance Minister Ishaq Dar chaired the meeting. Pakistan has built two nuclear power plants in Karachi that have a combined generation capacity of 2,117 megawatts. The total cost of the plants is \$9.5 billion, including the \$6.5 billion financing from China. The loan was extended by the Export-Import (Exim) Bank of China.

**Taliban say EU bans 'not beneficial to any side'**

KABUL: The interim Taliban administration on Friday said sanctions and bans will not benefit the people of the war-torn nation. Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said putting Taliban leaders on the sanctions list "is not beneficial to any side." "Instead of using pressure and sanctions, interaction, dialogue and understanding should be used. Repeating the failed experience against Afghans and imposing politics did not give results," the spokesman said in a statement. His statement came after the European Council imposed restrictive measures against 18 individuals and five entities, including three Taliban key leaders, under the EU Global HR Sanctions Regime. - Agencies

# Russia hits Ukraine's grain, practises seizing ships

Kyiv responded with a similar warning about ships headed to Russia. "Terrorist attacks are when Russian anti-ship missiles hit shopping malls, hospitals, and grain terminals," tweeted Mykhailo Podolyak, a Ukrainian presidential adviser

KYIV: Russia pounded Ukrainian food export facilities for a fourth day in a row on Friday and practised seizing ships in the Black Sea in an escalation of what Western leaders say is an attempt to wriggle out of sanctions by threatening a global food crisis. The attacks on Ukraine's grain, a major part of the global food chain, followed a vow by Kyiv to defy Russia's naval blockade on its grain export ports following Moscow's withdrawal this week from a UN-brokered safe sea corridor agreement. "Unfortunately, the grain terminals of an agricultural enterprise in Odessa region were hit. The enemy destroyed 100 tons of peas and 20 tons of barley," regional governor Oleh Kiper said on the Telegram messaging app. Photographs released by the emergency ministry showed a fire burning among crumpled metal buildings that appeared to be storehouses. Two people were injured, Kiper said, while officials reported seven dead in Russian air strikes elsewhere in Ukraine. Moscow has described the attacks as revenge for a Ukrainian strike on a Russian-built bridge to Crimea - the Ukrainian Black Sea peninsula seized by Moscow

in 2014. It accuses Ukraine of using the sea corridor to launch "terrorist attacks." Russia said its Black Sea fleet had practised firing rockets at "floating targets" and it would deem all ships heading for Ukrainian waters to be potentially carrying arms. Kyiv responded with a similar warning about ships headed to Russia. "Terrorist attacks are when Russian anti-ship missiles hit shopping malls, hospitals, and grain terminals," tweeted Mykhailo Podolyak, a Ukrainian presidential adviser. The attacks on grain export infrastructure and anxiety over shipping drove prices of benchmark Chicago wheat futures towards their highest weekly gain since the February 2022 invasion. The U.N. Security Council was due to meet later over Russia's exit from the grain deal, which aid groups say is vital to fend off hunger in poor countries. Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan, a sponsor of the deal, said he hoped talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin could revive it, warning its collapse would drive up prices, create hunger and potentially cause new waves of migration. Moscow says it will not participate in the year-old grain

deal without better terms for its own food and fertiliser sales. Western leaders accuse Moscow of seeking to loosen sanctions imposed over its invasion of Ukraine, which already exempt exports of Russian food. Russian grain has moved freely through the Black Sea to market throughout the conflict. A Polish broadcaster reported on Friday that a military reconnaissance drone of unspecified origin had crashed near a base in southwestern Poland this week. NATO military alliance member Poland has been reinforcing its border with Belarus, where Russia's Wagner mercenary force has taken up residency after a failed mutiny last month. Belarus has said Wagner fighters are training its troops near the Polish border. Residents in Poland close to the frontier report having heard shooting and helicopters. In Russia, investigators detained prominent nationalist Igor Girkin, a former commander of Russia's proxy forces in Ukraine, who had publicly accused Putin and army chiefs of not prosecuting the war in Ukraine harshly or effectively enough. "This is a direct outcome of Prigozhin's mutiny: the army's command now wields

greater political leverage to quash its opponents in the public sphere," said Tatiana Stanovaya, founder of the R.Politik analysis firm. Inside Ukraine, four people were killed in 80 Russian attacks on settlements in the southern Zaporizhzhia region over the past 24 hours, regional governor Yuriy Malashko said. A married couple in their fifties were killed in Russian shelling of the city of Kostiantynivka in the eastern region of Donetsk, the general prosecutor's office said. And in the northern region of Chernihiv, a woman's body was pulled from rubble after a missile strike, regional governor Viacheslav Chaus said. Russia had already used almost 70 missiles and almost 90 Iranian-made drones to attack so far this week, mostly targeting Odesa and other southern regions, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said in his nightly video address. Russia sent tens of thousands of troops into Ukraine last year and claims to have annexed nearly a fifth of its territory. Moscow says it is responding to threats posed by its neighbour; Kyiv and the West call it an unprovoked war of conquest. - Agencies

## PM Shehbaz telephones President Arif Alvi

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday telephoned President Dr. Arif Alvi to inquire about his health. According to PM office, the prime minister expressed best wishes for the President and prayed complete and early recovery of Dr. Arif Alvi. Besides, the Prime Minister also expressed his deep grief and sorrow over the sad demise of Nawab of Junagarh Nawab Muhammad Jahangir Khanji. In his condolence message, PM Shehbaz Sharif prayed to the Almighty Allah to rest the departed soul of Nawab Muhammad Jahangir Khanji in peace and grant courage to the bereaved family to bear this loss. The prime minister said Nawab Muhammad Jahangir Khanji, throughout his entire life, raised his voice against the illegal Indian occupation of Junagarh state.

## Zelenskiy sacks Ukraine's envoy to UK after criticism

DNA

KYIV: President Volodymyr Zelenskiy dismissed Vadym Prystaiko as Ukraine's ambassador to Britain on Friday, days after the envoy publicly criticised the president. A presidential order, which said Prystaiko had also been removed as Ukraine's representative to the International Maritime Organization, gave no reason for the dismissal. In an interview with Sky News last week, Prystaiko was asked about remarks by outgoing British Defence Secretary Ben Wallace suggesting Kyiv should show more gratitude for weapons deliveries to its allies to fight Russia's occupying forces. Zelenskiy responded by saying Ukraine was always grateful to Britain, a staunch ally. He was also quoted by British media as saying Wallace could let him know how to express his gratitude or how "we could get up in the morning and express our words of gratitude to the minister." Asked whether Zelenskiy was being sarcastic, Prystaiko told Sky there was "a little bit of sarcasm" when the president "said that each and every morning he will wake up and call Ben Wallace to thank him." "I don't believe that this sarcasm is healthy," he said, adding that the Russians "have to know that we're working together." Zelenskiy's order did not say who would replace Prystaiko, 53, an experienced diplomat and former vice prime minister who had held the post as ambassador to Britain for three years.

## 20 dead, dozens trapped in deadly India landslide

DNA

NEW DELHI: Twenty people have died and more than hundred are still trapped after a massive landslide hit a village in the western Indian state of Maharashtra. The landslide occurred in Irshalwadi village in Raigad district on Wednesday night and flattened out several homes. Rescue efforts have resumed after they were halted on Thursday night due to heavy rain. Officials say the disaster spot is located on a hilltop and the tough terrain is hindering rescue operations. Around 105 people are still missing, the Maharashtra government has said. Several states in India have been receiving heavy rainfall over the past two weeks, triggering floods and landslides. India's weather department has said that heavy rainfall will continue over the next few days in parts of Maharashtra state, including Raigad district.



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Secretary Asad Majeed Khan receives new Iranian Amb. Dr. Reza Amir Moghaddam. FS congratulated Amb. Moghaddam on his appointment and said he looked forward to working with him towards further strengthening Pak-Iran cooperation. - DNA

## Prosecutor: Imran Khan culpable in May 9 probe

LAHORE: An anti-terrorism court in Lahore on Friday extended the bails of PTI Chairman Imran Khan in five cases registered in connection with violence in the country on May 9, as the prosecutor informed the court that the police have found the ex-PM "guilty" during their investigation. In the last hearing, the court had directed the former premier to become a part of investigation and extended his bails until June 21 (today). The cases in question concern the attacks on Jinnah House, Askari Tower, the Shadman Town police station, vandalism at the PML-N office in Model Town, and the setting ablaze of a container when protests erupted in the country following Imran's arrest in the Toshakhana case. Judge Abher Gul Khan presided over today's hearing, with both Special Prosecutor Farhad Ali Shah and Imran's counsel Barrister Salman Safdar present before the judge. At the outset, Shah informed the court that the police had concluded their investigation, and their findings indicated the PTI chairman's guilt on the charges. After the prosecutor's statement, the court summoned lawyers from both sides to present their arguments during the next hearing, scheduled for August 8. Later, when speaking to the media outside the court, Shah stated: "The chairman of PTI has been found guilty," emphasising that the police had completed their probe. - DNA

## British PM narrowly avoids wipeout in local polls

WEB DESK

LONDON: British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's governing Conservatives lost two strategically important parliamentary seats on Friday but unexpectedly retained former leader Boris Johnson's old constituency in a setback for the opposition Labour Party. The Conservatives' narrow victory in Uxbridge and South Ruislip gave Sunak some breathing space to try to narrow Labour's large lead in the polls by tackling inflation

and a cost-of-living crisis before a national vote expected next year. Sunak said the win showed that upcoming election was not a "done deal". In a cafe in the constituency, he told reporters: "The message I take away is that we have to double down, stick to our plan and deliver for people." But the scale of the challenge was highlighted by the loss of the once safe Conservative parliamentary seat of Selby and Ainsty in northern England, where Labour overturned the biggest Conservative majority at a by-election since World War Two. "This is

a big step forward towards the general election. Never before in our history have we done this," Labour leader Keir Starmer told reporters in Selby. The Conservatives also suffered a crushing loss in a third vote to the centrist Liberal Democrats in Somerton and Frome. But the retention of former prime minister Johnson's seat just outside central London by fewer than 500 votes ensured Sunak avoided becoming the first British leader to lose three by-elections on a single day in more than half a century. Sunak, a former finance minister and investment banker, has tried to use his technocratic leadership to restore the Conservatives' credibility after a series of scandals last year forced Johnson to resign as prime minister, and economic turmoil prompted his successor, Liz Truss, to quit after just six weeks.

## Dealers defer petrol pumps shutdown for two days

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Petroleum Dealers Association (PPDA) has deferred strike to shut fuel pumps across the country for two days. The development came after the association members held negotiations with State Minister for Petroleum Musadik Malik, who arrived in Karachi earlier today (Friday) in a bid to convince the PPDA to call off the nationwide strike. In a statement, the PPDA said they might hold another round of negotiations with the government after two days. A day earlier, the PPDA announced shutting down fuel pumps across the country from July 22, demanding an increase in profit margins amid an inflation crisis. "We will shut down all petrol pumps across Pakistan on July 22, 6pm," said the association, which further says it has more than 10,000 members. In a statement, the association said the petroleum minister was informed about their concerns but to no avail. The official communique said interest rates and inflation have hit operators' businesses and called for the dealership margin to be increased. It said sales have slumped by 30% due to Iranian fuel being smuggled into the country. "Around 8,000-9,000 (operators) ... represented by us, will be shut on July 22," Abdul Sami Khan, chairman of the association, told Reuters. The association said the supply of petrol will remain suspended until the demands are met. Pakistan is dealing with a weakening currency and a prolonged period of inflation with the national rate hitting 29.4% in June, down from a record high of 38% in May. - DNA

## Gold rates in Pakistan extend minor gains

KARACHI: Gold prices in Pakistan on Friday extended gains despite a decrease in international rates. According to data issued by All-Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association (APSGJA), the price of gold (24 carats) gained Rs1,800 per tola and Rs1,542 per 10 grams to settle at Rs222,900 and Rs191,100, respectively. Meanwhile, the price of the yellow metal lost \$12 to settle at \$1,966 in the international market today. The gold rate has been volatile in Pakistan recently amid continued political and economic uncertainty, and high inflation. People prefer to buy gold in such times as a safe investment and a hedge. Data shared by the association showed the price of silver also made minor losses as it fell by Rs150 and Rs128.6 to settle at Rs2,650 per tola and Rs2,357.68 per 10 grams, respectively. - APP

# Taiwan launches drone blitz to counter China

MONITORING DESK

TAIPEI: Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen has launched a drone program aimed at countering China's massive drone arsenal. Handout footage by Thunder Tiger Group and Taiwan Presidential Office. Montage by Catherine Tai. After Ukraine deployed drones to successfully offset Russia's advantages on the battlefield, Taiwan's leaders took note. But an internal report presented to President Tsai Ing-wen contained an alarming finding: In drones, Taiwan lagged far behind its much more powerful adversary - China. Now, the island has enlisted commercial drone companies in a bid to catch up. In the summer of 2022, just months after Russia invaded Ukraine, Taiwan's president gathered senior officials from her ruling party in downtown Taipei. On the agenda: How was Ukraine, in its war with Russia, successfully offsetting the advantages of a much more powerful foe? President Tsai Ing-wen was given an inter-

state media. These drones range from jet-powered, long range surveillance aircraft to small quadcopters deployed by ground troops. "One small drone could blow up a tank that is worth tens of millions." Clearly outmatched, Tsai "pressed the button" on the creation of a strategic plan to close the gap, said a person who attended a series of meetings in which the drone strategy was forged. Under the "Drone National Team" program, Taiwan is recruiting the island's commercial drone makers and aviation and aerospace firms in a joint effort with the military to fast-track the building of a self-sufficient drone supply chain. "We need to quickly catch up, with thousands of drones," aerospace entrepreneur Max Lo, the coordinator of the drone effort, told Reuters in an interview. "We are trying our best to develop drones with commercial specifications for military use. We hope to quickly build up our capacity based on our existing technology so that we can be like Ukraine." The aim, according to a government planning

document reviewed by Reuters, is to build more than 3,200 military drones by mid-2024. These will include mini-drones that weigh less than two kilograms as well as larger surveillance craft with a range of 150 kilometers. To accelerate production, the government is for the first time enlisting private companies in the research and development phase of a weapons program. At least nine private firms have joined the effort. Thunder Tiger Group, best known for making radio-controlled model aircraft for leisure and commercial use, is typical of the type of companies recruited by the government. Participants have expertise ranging from aviation to telecommunications to the production of electronic components for applications like GPS positioning. Hawk Yang, the head of Thunder Tiger's R&D department, told Reuters his firm is now developing drones for Taiwan's military, including pilotless ship- or land-based surveillance helicopters with four-meter-long rotors that have a range of 400 kilometers and can stay airborne for up to six hours.