



# Islamabad POST

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**Blinken visits tiny Tonga as US continues diplomacy in Pacific**

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**Pak, Kazak trade potential \$1 billion**

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**Messi runs riot in first Inter Miami start**

Detailed News On Page-06



**A step towards an extended interim regime?**

## Caretakers get more powers

Parliament gives nod to the Election Act amendments; PTI says amendments are "unconstitutional and illegal"

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: A joint session of parliament (both Upper and Lower houses) Wednesday approved amendments to the Election Act 2017, granting additional powers to the caretaker government to take important decisions on the economy and engage with international institutions. The bill was tabled in the joint session by Parliamentary Affairs Minister Murtaza Javed Abbasi which was approved with a majority vote. The sub-clauses 1 and 2 of Section 230 of the election act related to the functioning of caretaker government have been amended. Under the amendments, the interim setup will not have the authority to sign any new agreement and make decisions on bilateral and multilateral agreements. The caretaker government will be able to exercise powers on matters related to the ongoing projects, according to the amendments. The development came after the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) successfully persuaded its allies in the Centre to approve a bill granting additional powers to the caretaker setup.

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## Cabinet approves E-Safety, Personal Data Protection Bills 2023

MAHNOOR ANSAR / DNA

ISLAMABAD: The federal cabinet on Wednesday approved the E-Safety Bill 2023 (E-Safety Bill 2023) on the recommendation of the Ministry of Information Technology (IT) to protect user data and prevent illegal and illegal use of information systems. Under this law, a comprehensive framework will be established to ensure the protection and unauthorized use of user data on all types of online services, online shopping, data provided to various companies, and social networking

PICTURE ON THE BACK PAGE

websites in Pakistan. After the approval of the bill, heinous crimes like online harassment, cyberbullying, and blackmail will be effectively prevented. The meeting of the cabinet was held here with Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in chair. The federal cabinet also approved in principle the Personal Data Protection Bill 2023 on the recommendation of the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication. Under this bill, the government will ensure the security of the user's personal information/data of various organizations

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### Briefs

**Punjab CM visits flood affected areas**

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Muzaffar Elahi has visited flood-affected areas alongside River Chenab's banks where he was given a briefing about the flood situation. Earlier, Punjab reached Sahmal village near Chinoti city for observing the flood situation. On the occasion, Commissioner Faisabab Salwat Saeed, RPO Dr Abid Khan, and Deputy Commissioner Asif Raza were present. Meanwhile, Punjab CM also visit the Tehsil Headquarters Hospital of Bhawana. He reviewed the medical facilities provided to the patients, Punjab Chief Minister also visited the Medical Emergency ward of the hospital.

**Rana Ansar first female Dy Speaker of Sindh PA**

KARACHI: In a major development, Mutahida Qami Movement-Pakistan's (MQM-P) Rana Ansar became the first woman opposition leader in the Sindh Assembly. A notification issued by the assembly's secretariat, de-notified PTI Haleem Adil Sheikh as the opposition leader after he lost the backing of lawmakers. The same notification also notified Ansar as the opposition leader. This is the third time that the opposition leader has been changed in the provincial assembly during the current tenure. The notification was issued after the MQM-Pakistan submitted an application to Sindh Assembly Speaker Agha Siraj Durrani earlier today for Ansar's appointment as the opposition leader. - DNA

## PM Shehbaz Sharif says More laptops if given mandate in next polls

Claims this is how the revolution will come and this is the only way to make the nation progress"



NAZIR SIYAL / DNA

KARACHI: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said that if given a mandate in next general elections, his next government would distribute around one million laptops across the country annually as part of the vision to support the talented youth. The prime minister, addressing a ceremony for the distribution of laptops and cheques for youth business loans, said with support from allies, a mechanism would be formulated - to be equally funded by centre and provinces - to distribute up to 1000,000 laptops across all provinces.

"This is how the revolution will come... This is the only way to make the nation progress," the prime minister told the ceremony also attended by Sindh governor, chief minister, federal ministers, MQM leaders, provincial ministers, diplomats, and representatives of bankers.

He said youths from across the country needed to be equipped with education and provided maximum resources for country's swift progress. Mentioning the launch of the capital venture initiative for freelancers on Tuesday, he lauded the youngsters' talent for developing the projects like converting banana peels into different products and drones for agricultural use. He said it would be sheer injustice if the talented youths were not provided with the required resources as they were the guarantee for the country's prosperity. He said the incumbent government was in the process of distributing 100,000 laptops announced for the fiscal 2022-23 while the provision for another 100,000 laptops had been made in the budget 2023-24 which would be distributed purely on merit, without any nepotism. Prime Minister Shehbaz said the caretaker government should also ensure the merit in laptops' distribution

Continued on Page 06

## Pakistan-GCC partnership has new momentum

DR. ALI AWADH ASSERI

PRIME Minister Shehbaz Sharif of Pakistan is nearing the end of a challenging yet fruitful tenure, marked by major policy decisions. One of his strategic moves was to deepen investment and trade ties with Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar. These leading economies of the Gulf Cooperation Council have also demonstrated a willingness to contribute to Pakistan's economic stability and revival. Pakistan has always prioritized economic, defense and cultural relations with the Kingdom and other Gulf nations. This historically rooted relationship is based on the common bonds of religion and culture, mutually beneficial economic needs and shared strategic interests in regional stability and global peace. The GCC region plays a crucial role in Pakistan's economy, serving as the primary source of energy imports and foreign remittances. It is also home to the largest number of Pakistani expatriate workers. The ongoing economic diversification and regional reconciliation in the Gulf, particular-

ly under the Saudi Vision 2030, offer ample opportunities for Pakistan to attract GCC investments in the development sector, as well as to export skilled manpower and tradable commodities to the Gulf nations. Pakistan's civilian and military leaders understand the vital role GCC investments can play in putting the crisis-ridden economy on a steady course toward sustainable progress. Among the major policy initiatives to this end is the establishment of the Special Investment Facilitation Council, which is tasked with attracting foreign direct investment from GCC countries in the fields of agriculture, minerals and mining, information technology, and defense production. This important step is being complemented by the launch of the Pakistan Sovereign Wealth Fund and the conclusion of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement with the UAE. The current civil-military consensus on the GCC's pivotal economic role has emerged against the backdrop of tangible progress made by the present government on the economic, political, security and foreign policy fronts. Sharif faced significant challenges upon

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### NATIONAL DAY OF EGYPT



ISLAMABAD: Chief Guest Ms. Sherry Rahman Federal Minister for Climate Change, Ambassador of Egypt Tarek Dahroug and other cutting cake to celebrate the National Day of the Arab Republic of Egypt, at the Islamabad Serena Hotel. - DNA

### Bilawal-Lavrov talk Pak, Russia discuss variety

FM informed his Russian counterpart on his discussions on BSGI with the FM of Ukraine and Turkiye, the US Secretary of State and the EU chief



SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari held a telephone conversation with Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov of the Russian Federation today. The two Ministers had a useful exchange on bilateral matters and growing co-operation in diverse areas.

Continued on Page 06

## Toshakhana case SC rejects Imran petition seeking to stay trial court proceedings

Justice Afridi directed the IHC to hear Khan's pending petitions together

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court (SC) on Wednesday rejected Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan's plea seeking a stay on the trial court's proceedings in the Toshakhana case. The former prime minister, the first to be voted out of office through a no-trust vote last year in April, had approached the top court after being denied relief from the Islamabad High Court (IHC). The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) had, on October 21 last year, disqualified the former prime minister in the Toshakhana reference under Article 63(1) (p) of the Constitution for making "false statements and incorrect declaration".

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## PTI chief grieved over martyrdom of Adnan

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan expressed his heartfelt grief over the martyrdom of Additional SHO Adnan Afridi in an attempt to foil a terrorist attack in district Khyber and criticized the government of crooks and money launderers for using police and intelligence

Continued on Page 06

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Newspaper  
holiday on  
Saturday

DNA

KARACHI: The All Pakistan Newspapers Society has announced that member publications of the All Pakistan Newspapers Society will observe one closed holiday on Saturday, July 29, 2023 on account of ASHURA. Consequently, there will be no morning newspapers on Sunday, July 30, 2023 whereas the evening newspapers not appearing on Saturday, July 29, 2023 may bring out their editions on Sunday, July 30, 2023, if they so desire.

SAID-ERDA  
with KP-BOIT  
to foster  
economic  
growth

PESHAWAR: The United States Agency for International Development's Economic Recovery and Development Activity (USAID-ERDA) has started the promotion of private sector-led economic growth in the tourism and hospitality sector throughout Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and its Newly Merged Districts (NMDs). A 5-year Activity Implemented by Associates in Development (AiD) Pvt Ltd, aims to strengthen and modernize the agriculture sector and promote micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) to accelerate economic growth in the region, said a press release issued here on Wednesday. USAID-ERDA in collaboration with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Investment and Trade (KP-BOIT), organized a one-day private sector consultative workshop on the tourism and hospitality sector. The consultations were aimed to identify key challenges to private sector investments, practical solutions for improving the business enabling environment, identifying pertinent national and international best practices and action plans for private sector engagement in the tourism and hospitality sector of the province. The consultative workshop was attended by private-sector tourism enterprises, tourism experts, tourism services providers, skills providers and experts from relevant donor-funded programs. —APP

Book fair  
held at Agri  
University  
Dera

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: A one-day book fair was held at Agricultural University here Wednesday to promote reading culture among students. Vice-Chancellor Professor Dr. Shakibullah inaugurated the book fair which was participated by a large number of leading booksellers, publishers and printers and booksellers of the country. They displayed a wide range of books on different topics at subsidized rates. Speaking at the opening ceremony, the VC underlined the need for inculcating a habit of book reading among the students who were considered as architects of the country's bright future. He was of the view that books were a rich source of getting knowledge to keep pace with the changing world and in this regard culture of reading should be promoted. He also said that building good character of children was also necessary besides imparting them quality education. —APP

Pak, Kazakhstan trade potential  
\$1 billion: Ambassador Kistafin

The Ambassador said that the delegation of Islamabad Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry under the leadership of its leader Ms Samina Fazil should visit the cities of Almaty, Astana and other cities of Kazakhstan and evaluate the business opportunities there so that they can have an idea about the local market and during this time both in sides strong business links can be established between the women entrepreneurs

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan, Yerzhan Kistafin on Wednesday said that Pakistan and Kazakhstan have potential of \$1 billion of bilateral trade for which the communication and interaction between both sides is pivotal. The Ambassador said that Islamabad Women's Chamber of Commerce and Industry (IWCCI) and other local business chambers can play an important role in increasing bilateral trade between Pakistan and Kazakhstan and in their cooperation with the business community of both sides. Yerzhan Kistafin said that 47% contribution to the economy of Kazakhstan is currently from Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) which are growing day by day. He said that women have a very important role in the economy of Kazakhstan, women entrepreneurs are the owners of big brands in Kazakhstan, and there are a lot of women especially in the textile, clothing, fashion and IT sectors. Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan, said this while addressing the seminar on theme of "Small and Medium Enterprises and Women Entrepreneur" organized by IWCCI along with Founder President of IWCCI, Mrs Samina Fazil here in local hotel. The Ambassador said that the delegation of Islamabad Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry under the leadership of its leader Ms Samina Fazil should visit the cities of Almaty, Astana and other cities of Kazakhstan and evaluate the business opportunities



there so that they can have an idea about the local market and during this time both in sides strong business links can be established between the women entrepreneurs. Meanwhile, the ambassador of Kazakhstan said that Kazakhstan is currently the most attractive country for foreign investment. In the last 10 years, the volume of foreign investment reached \$400 billion in Kazakhstan, and in the same way, the volume of for-

ign investment in the last fiscal year 2022 was \$26 billion in the economy of Kazakhstan. He said that Kazakhstan currently ranks 25th in the World Bank, Ease of Doing Business ranking in the world. The Ambassador said that the two countries can establish bilateral trade and mutual cooperation in textile, pharmaceutical and agriculture, tourism and IT. Talking on the bilateral banking channel, he said that a mutual agreement

has been finalized between the Bank of Punjab and the Bank of Uzbekistan, which will facilitate the opening of L.Cs. While discussing the transit trade between Pakistan and Kazakhstan, he said there are two options for transit trade routes, one is the route through Afghanistan to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. The second route for transit trade is from China to Kyrgyzstan to Kazakhstan, from which the first transit consignment has success-

fully reached Kazakhstan through the Sust border located on the historical Silk Route and there is a possibility of further progress in the future. The Ambassador of Kazakhstan said that transit trade consignment is a continuation of the recent Quadrilateral Traffic in Transit Agreement (QTTA), which will speed up the trade between the countries in the near future. He said that this trade agreement was signed between Pakistan, China, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. The Ambassador of

Kazakhstan said that the transit trade agreement and customs agreement between the two countries will be signed soon, the implementation of which will have a positive impact on bilateral trade. He said that Pakistan is the fifth largest market in the world in terms of population, with which Kazakhstan's trade links are very important. He said that there are many opportunities for ties between the both countries in education and especially in medical education.

Two robbers shot dead, cop  
injured in Karachi's Korangi

One of the robbers was killed on the spot while the other was caught wounded. However, he died soon after due to loss of blood

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Two robbers were shot dead, while a cop was injured during the former's encounter with police in Karachi's Korangi area on Wednesday. During the incident, one of the two dead robbers was injured. He was arrested and shifted to a hospital

but later succumbed to his wounds. Korangi SSP Tariq Nawaz said that the muggers tried to rob a medical laboratory, but an exchange of fire took place when the police encountered them. He said that one of the robbers was killed on the spot while the other was caught wounded. However, he died soon after due

to loss of blood. The video of the police encounter surfaced on social media. The incident looked like an action scene from a movie as a heavy exchange of fire took place between the robbers and police after the law enforcers encountered them, who had taken a few citizens hostage. Several gunshots were heard before the po-

lice party tried to negotiate with the robbers to let the hostages go. However, it ultimately ended up with the robbers shot dead as the police took action after failure in talks. Police said that cash, a motorcycle and pistols were recovered from the robbers. Further investigations are underway, they added.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif visits the residence of former Mayor Rawalpindi and PML-N leader Sardar Naseem to express condolences upon the demise of his mother. —APP

## Naval Chief chairs command and staff moot

During the conference, participants assessed evolving maritime situation in the region and discussed a range of topics related to national security, geostrategic affairs, combat readiness and discussed various service policies

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Command & Staff Conference of Pakistan Navy concluded at Naval Headquarters, Islamabad. The Conference was chaired by Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi. During the conference, participants assessed evolving maritime situation in the region and discussed a range of topics related to national security, geostrategic affairs, combat readiness and discussed various service policies. Readiness for disaster relief operations amid potential flood alerts

during ongoing monsoon season in the country was also reviewed. The Naval Chief emphasized on maintaining perpetual combat readiness to effectively thwart any aggression against Paki-

stan. He also directed all naval commands to be fully ready for humanitarian assistance during the ongoing monsoon season. The Naval Chief lauded the initiatives undertaken towards capability development through

acquisition of emerging technologies. The Admiral expressed full confidence over high state of operational preparedness of Pakistan Navy to meet challenges while safeguarding the maritime frontiers of Pakistan.

The Command & Staff Conference serves as an apex decision-making body of Pakistan Navy wherein; Chief of the Naval Staff, Principal Staff Officers and Field Commanders review Pakistan Navy policies and plans.

Director Excise and  
Taxation visits RCCI

RAWALPINDI: Director Excise and Taxation Rawalpindi Imran Aslam visited the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) and called on President RCCI Saqib Rafiq and other office bearers. Senior Vice President Muhammad Hamza Sarosh, Vice President Faisal Shahzad, Former Presidents Raja Amir Iqbal, Saboor Malik, executive committee members, trade association's representatives, distinguished members of RCCI and women members were also present in the meeting. President Chamber Saqib Rafiq briefed the Director Excise and Taxation on the ongoing activities and future programs of the Chamber. He said that the Rawalpindi Chamber would support all efforts to bring transparency in the tax collection system, eliminate irregularities, unnecessary notices from the tax department etc. He appreciated the initiatives of bringing an online system against harassment and duplicate notices, mobile app and online payments system. Director Excise and Taxation Rawalpindi Imran Aslam told the traders that the Excise Department has increased the efficiency of the department for the payment of taxes including vehicle registration, professional tax, and has introduced facilities through online and mobile app-based technology. It has introduced a biometric system for purchase and sale and transfer of vehicles and online fee and tax payment system, which has brought transparency along with saving time and also improved tax collection. He welcomed the Chamber proposals to bring in a procedural and automated tax assessment system. —DNA

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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



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



### Hospitals

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



### Departments

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

### Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

# Ahsan for collective efforts to tackle 'malnutrition' challenge

Sharing some statistics, Ahsan Iqbal said around 40 per cent of children were having stunting growth-related issues, 80 per cent faced deficiency of calcium, zinc and iron, 60 per cent vitamin C and 25 per cent vitamin B, 64 per cent faced insufficient protein problem, 75 Folate-deficiency and 30 per cent were getting excessive fat

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Wednesday stressed for collective efforts to tackle the confronted challenge what he called 'hyper malnutrition', affecting the physical and mental health of children. "After last year's floods; the challenge of malnutrition is no longer malnutrition but it has become the challenge of hyper malnutrition as the flood-calamity hit the poorest of the poor," the minister was addressing the launching ceremony of the National Multi-sectoral Nutrition Programme to reduce stunting and other forms of malnutrition. He said the federal government had launched this initiative which would be implemented in collaboration with all stakeholders including provinces,

donors and active community. Terming the nutrition-related issues 'alarming,' the minister said "Today is the age of knowledge revolution which requires creativity and innovation driven by cognitive skills. And it all depends on children's nutritional health." Sharing some statistics, Ahsan Iqbal said around 40 per cent of children were having stunting growth-related issues, 80 per cent faced deficiency of calcium, zinc and iron, 60 per cent vitamin C and 25 per cent vitamin B, 64 per cent faced insufficient protein problem, 75 Folate-deficiency and 30 per cent were getting excessive fat. He emphasized to address the issue of malnutrition on a priority, warning that it could lead to affecting children's physical and mental health. The minister was of the view to engage professionals on at least a five-year contract to advance the social



sector programmes; and get rid of typical bureaucratic hurdles. He expressed astonishment that Pakistan attained the nuclear capability despite opposition by the international community, but when the world was willing to help Pakistan in executing social sector programmes like health, education and nutrition with appropriate funding, there seemed lack of seriousness in

making a headway. The minister termed peace, stability and consistency in policies as 'prerequisites' to achieve the required goals of nation development and prosperity. The incumbent government, he said, set a direction and tried to put in place critical national development programmes for a better future of the country after coming into power in April 2023. The minister recalled that when the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government came into power after 2013 elections, the development budget was around Rs340 billion which was increased to over Rs1000 billion by 2018. Unfortunately, he said the journey of national development stopped with the installation of the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) government after the 2018 elections

as during its tenure the development budget came down to Rs550 billion. Now, the incumbent government restarted the economic growth engine by allocating a record Rs1150 billion development budget in the current fiscal year, adding, in the last Public Sector Development Programme an amount of Rs 714 billion was allocated and its utilization stood at 100.5 per cent. The minister said the government tried its best to steer the country out of the economic crisis by moving the development wheel at a faster pace by making sufficient availability of funds. Accordingly, he said the government introduced a five-E framework for Pakistan's progress, focusing on Exports, E-Pakistan (digital revolution), Environment, Energy, and Equity & Empowerment in a bid to find the permanent solution to the confronted crisis.

## Police education wing organizes four-day road safety workshop

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police (Education Wing) organized a four-day Road Safety Workshop at COMSATS University Islamabad which emphasized the importance of observing road safety and traffic laws, not only for one's own safety but also for the safety of others. More than 50 drivers and other staff members participated in the workshop, where they were educated about road safety and cautious driving. On this occasion, special guest SP (Traffic) Chaudhry Abid Hussain emphasized the importance of observing road safety and traffic laws, not only for one's own safety but also

for the safety of others. He urged everyone to act responsibly while driving, follow traffic rules, and encourage others to do the same. He emphasized that being a responsible citizen means adhering to the law and avoiding negligence, which ensures our safety and the safety of others. Protecting the lives and property of citizens is our foremost duty, he added. According to the police spokesperson, the special instructions of Capital City Police Officer Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, Islamabad Capital Police organized a 4-day Road Safety Workshop at COMSATS University Islamabad, where more than 50 drivers and other staff members participated. The participants

were educated about road safety, cautious driving, and other traffic laws. This initiative was carried out by the SP Traffic Education Wing, In-charge Sub-Inspector Muhammad Shafique Bajwa, and his team. The workshop covered topics such as the dangers of using mobile phones during driving, the importance of seat belts and helmets, the risks of driving without helmets on motorbikes, the consideration of the rights of other road users, the use of the headlight beam, the use of zebra crossing, dangers of speeding, and other traffic laws. At the end of the ceremony, In-charge (Admin) Muhammad Sajid Rasool and Azhar-ul-Hassan from the

Transport section were honoured with commemorative shields, and certificates were distributed among the participants who completed the Road Safety Workshop successfully. They, along with other partners, appreciated the initiative of Islamabad Capital Police and highlighted the importance of such workshops. They stated that such workshops are essential as they provide valuable knowledge about various aspects of road safety that many were not aware of. The Education Wing's officer encouraged the participants to follow traffic laws and drive with responsibility to ensure the safety of themselves and others on the road.

## PM reviews ongoing rehabilitation

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has chaired the third meeting of the International Partners Support Group to review the ongoing rehabilitation and reconstruction of the flood-affected areas in the country. The meeting of the Group, which was formed after the Resilient Pakistan Conference in Geneva, was held here on Tuesday to mark one year of the devastating floods that exacted a heavy toll on Pakistan. In a tweet on Wednesday, the prime minister said that in his speech during the meeting, he reiterated the coalition government's unwavering commitment to build back better under the Resilient Recovery, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction (4RF) Framework. "I appreciated all the international development donors, partners and friendly countries for their timely and generous assistance and assured them of transparent, effective and efficient utilization of foreign assistance duly audited by a third party of global repute," he added. He also thanked the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) that had carried out excellent coordination and collaboration between the government of Pakistan and the international community.—DNA

## COMSTech and University of Sargodha sign MoU

ISLAMABAD: The Coordinator General COMSTech, Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary and the Vice Chancellor of the University of Sargodha, Prof. Dr. Qaisar Abbas, signed Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at the COMSTech secretariat in Islamabad on Wednesday. The officials of COMSTech and the University of Sargodha were also present in the MoU signing ceremony. Both parties agreed to develop and implement joint educational and scientific programs in the fields of science, technology and innovation and collaborate in joint organization of international events, such as workshops, conferences, symposia, seminars, exhibitions, and training courses. COMSTech will offer associate membership of COMSTech Consortium of Excellence to the University of Sargodha and the registration in the OIC technology and innovation portal. University of Sargodha will benefit by arranging the visits of distinguished scholars to the university under COMSTech distinguished scholars program. COMSTech will provide support in placement of students, academics and scientific personnel at the University of Sargodha along with international academic exchanges. COMSTech will develop a program in association with the University of Sargodha through which students from OIC states will conduct research in different fields of science, technology and innovation at University of Sargodha. Both institutions will jointly work on the faculty development, imparting training and consultation for the establishment of science park at the University of Sargodha, and launching of a technician training program. The University of Sargodha is a major public sector university in Punjab, started its journey in 1929 with the establishment of De'Montmorency College, later renamed as Government College Sargodha, and was awarded the university charter in 2002. COMSTech is the OIC ministerial standing committee on scientific and technological cooperation, established in Makkah by the third Islamic Summit in 1981. COMSTech works for strengthening cooperation among OIC member states in science and technology and undertake follow-up-actions for implementation of the resolutions of the OIC.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of France to Pakistan Nicolas Galey visited Data Darbar shrine during his recent visit to Lahore.—DNA

# Growing youth population: Challenges and Opportunities

Ms. SABAHAT ALI

Pakistan, like many other developing countries, is experiencing a significant demographic shift, marked by a substantial increase in its youth population. With nearly two-thirds of its populace under the age of 30, the country faces both challenges and opportunities in harnessing the potential of this youth dividend. This article explores the implications of Pakistan's growing youth population and how it can pave the way for a brighter future while addressing critical challenges. Challenges: Education and Skill Gap: One of the major challeng-

es is ensuring access to quality education and skill development for the burgeoning youth. Despite notable efforts, Pakistan's education system continues to grapple with inadequate infrastructure, low teacher-student ratios, and outdated curricula. Bridging the gap between education and employable skills is vital to empower the youth and promote economic growth. Unemployment and Underemployment: As the youth population expands, so does the demand for employment opportunities. However, Pakistan faces a rising challenge of unemployment and underemployment among young people. The lack of job opportunities, coupled with an ever-increasing labor

force, poses a serious threat to the country's stability and social cohesion. Political Involvement and Youth Engagement: Engaging the youth in the political process is essential for fostering a more inclusive and representative democracy. Unfortunately, the disillusionment of the youth with politics and governance is a pressing concern. Creating platforms for meaningful participation and addressing their concerns can help cultivate a more politically active and responsible youth population. Opportunities: Demographic Dividend: If harnessed effectively, Pakistan's growing youth population can be transformed into a demographic dividend, propelling the nation's

economic growth. By investing in education, skill development, and entrepreneurship, the youth can become a productive workforce capable of driving innovation and progress. Entrepreneurship and Innovation: The youth are often at the forefront of innovation and technological advancements. Encouraging entrepreneurship and supporting startup ecosystems can create job opportunities, boost economic growth, and address the challenge of unemployment. Initiatives like government-backed loans, mentorship programs, and incubators can nurture the entrepreneurial spirit among the youth. Social Change and Activism: Pakistan's youth has demonstrated a strong inclina-

tion towards social activism and change. Their engagement in social and environmental causes can drive positive transformation and contribute to building a more equitable society. Empowering young activists and providing platforms for their voices to be heard can lead to lasting societal improvements. Digital Connectivity: With the proliferation of digital technology, the youth in Pakistan have greater access to information, knowledge, and global trends. Leveraging this digital connectivity can open up new avenues for learning, skill development, and economic participation. Promoting digital literacy and expanding internet accessibility can unlock vast op-

portunities for the youth. Conclusion: Pakistan's growing youth population presents a double-edged sword of challenges and opportunities. Addressing the education and employment gaps is crucial to harness the potential demographic dividend. Empowering the youth through education, skill development, and political engagement can pave the way for a brighter future for Pakistan. By fostering an environment that supports innovation, entrepreneurship, and activism, the nation can unlock the full potential of its young generation and shape a prosperous and inclusive society. —Email: alisabahat3@gmail.com

## PM condoles with PMLN leader

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday visited the residence of former Mayor Rawalpindi and PMLN leader Sardar Naseem here to express condolences upon the demise of his mother. He prayed to Allah Almighty to elevate the ranks of the departed soul in paradise and grant courage to the bereaved family to bear this loss with fortitude. Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb was also present on the occasion.—APP

## ANF seizes over 158 kg drugs in seven operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting seven operations across the country managed to recover 158 kg drugs and arrested seven accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman. He informed that ANF recovered 98 heroin-filled capsules from the possession of a Sharjah-bound passenger, resident of Khyber, who was going on flight no PK-181, arrested at Islamabad International Airport. In another operation, 91.2 kg hashish and 28.9 kg opium were recovered from a vehicle intercepted near Ravi Motorway Toll Plaza Lahore. Two accused residents of Rawalpindi were arrested during the operation. In third operation, four packets of opium were recovered from the possession of a motorcyclist, resident of Multan rounded up near Band Bosan Road Multan. While on the pointation of the accused, eight more packets of opium were also recovered from his house. A total of 16.8 kg of opium was recovered from the accused.—APP

## NDMA Chairman for public awareness on Monsoon risks

ISLAMABAD: The Acting Chairman National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) during a NEOC session with key stakeholders on Wednesday emphasized undertaking encroachment clearance in and around river beds and conducting public awareness campaigns to maximize the general public's knowledge of risks associated with the monsoon season. The Acting Chairman NDMA presided National Emergencies Operations Centre (NEOC) session with key stakeholders on the current monsoon situation, a news release said. He also underscored the news to enhance vigilant monitoring of rivers and reservoirs during monsoon season. The session was attended by representatives of PMD, FFC, PDMA, SDMA, GBDMA, FFD, Provincial and Irrigation Departments, SUPARCO and PCIW. The Acting Chairman NDMA reviewed the situation of major Dams and the regulation of river flows during ongoing monsoon spells. The PMD briefed about the heavy rainfall observed in the areas of Sindh and Punjab and the expected heavy rainfall in the Northwestern Parts of Balochistan and in the Northern parts of Punjab, Khyber Pakhtoonkwa from 26 July to 1 August.—DNA

## Briefs

PAC  
Organized  
Mehfil-e-  
Musalama

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Punjab arts Council organized a Mehfil-e-Musalama in the memory of great sacrifice of Hazrat Imam Hussain. Mehfil-e-Musalama was presided over by Muhammad Izharul Haq, while Nasir Ali Nasir performed the duties of host. Speaking at Mehfil-e-Musalama, Muhammad Izharul-Haq said that the incident of Karbala drew a boundary between right and wrong, oppressor and oppressed, which cannot be erased for the rest of the world. Karbala is the story of Imam Hussain and his Ahl al-Bayt truthfulness, bravery, principledness and self-sacrifice, which was written with their own blood. This story is completely free from any worldly interest and greed. Therefore, its brilliance increases with every passing moment, he added. Director of Arts Council Waqar Ahmad said that the incident of Karbala teaches us that instead of bowing down in front of tyranny, we should stand against it because supporting oppressors is a crime in itself. The incident of Karbala is a story of human pride and exaltation. Assistant Director Punjab Arts Council Muhammad Suleman said that the martyrdom of Hazrat Imam Hussain awakened consciences and paved the way for the revolution of the hearts instead of the mind. Imam Hussain's beliefs and actions are the best source of character building through Masalma poets. Day of Ashura is a day of greatness, great events of history are connected with it, he added. Ahmad Farooq, Saleem Shehzad, Ahmad Raza Raja, Imran Aami, Aqeel Shah, Hafeezullah Badal, Ijaz Khan Sahar, Husam Hur, Saddam Fida, Tasoore Hussain Fanwat, Rukhsana Thaman, Maria Naqvi, Ahsan Saim, Fayyaz Hussain Shah, Prof. Atiqur Rahman, Naushaba Hashmi, Saeed Raja, Colonel Shahab Ahmad Qureshi, Rukhsana Sehar, Mudassar Abbas offered prayers to Imam Hussain and martyrs of Karbala. Mehfil-e-Musalama was attended by a large number of people from twin cities.

IRSA releases  
463,700  
cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 463,700 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 547,200 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1531.00 feet and was 133.00 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 307,200 cusecs and 278,700 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1220.25 feet, which was 170.25 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 65,000 cusecs and 10,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded as 324,600, 372,100, 295,600, and 218,300 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 73,700 cusecs of water released at Nowshera, and 79,200 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

ICCI and HAP mull to  
organize handicrafts expo

Ms. Maryam Iqbal, Chairperson, Handicrafts Association of Pakistan said that promotion of handicrafts businesses would reduce poverty & help in women empowerment

FAIAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Ms. Maryam Iqbal, Chairperson, Handicrafts Association of Pakistan (HAP) visited Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) and held a meeting with Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President ICCI to organize a handicrafts expo in Islamabad to promote trade and exports of this sector. The foreign diplomats and other stakeholders would also be invited to the expo. Both sides also exchanged views on the need of bilateral cooperation to promote the interests of handicrafts businesses.

Speaking on the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that Pakistan produces a wide range of handicrafts, including textiles, embroidery, beadwork, block printing, patchwork, woodcrafts, pottery, jewellery & stone car-



ving and there is a great need to organize exhibitions of these products to promote their trade and exports. He said that the handicrafts industry plays an important role for the economy as it provides jobs to women, brings prosperity and earns precious foreign exchange with the minimum capital investment. He said that

the country's economy cannot achieve smooth growth without the better participation of women in economic activity and the handicrafts is the only industry, which offers great opportunities for women participation in productive activities. He said that Pakistan should learn from the Chinese experience, which has

become the world's biggest manufacturer of handicrafts, accounting for over 40% of global trade. He said that Joint ventures between women entrepreneurs of Pakistan and China should be encouraged to promote the handicraft industry and uplift Pakistan's economy. Ms. Maryam Iqbal, Chairperson, Handicrafts Association of Paki-

stan said that promotion of handicrafts businesses would reduce poverty & help in women empowerment. She said that the rising cost of inputs, lack of easy access to finance and poor marketing network were the major hurdles that were holding back this industry from its actual growth potential. She stressed that the government should take measures to reduce the cost of doing business for this sector, help in its proper marketing, set up expo centres for this sector and encourage frequent exhibitions of handicrafts products to promote this sector up to its real potential. She also briefed the President ICCI about the plans and activities of her Association for the betterment of the handicrafts sector. Ameer Hamza, Khalid Chaudhry, Kashif Zaheer, Malik Mohsin Khalid, Zulqarnain Abbasi and others were present on the occasion.

Xinjiang, GB customs  
deepen trade coop

In their opening remarks, they said, China and Pakistan have long enjoyed a close partnership in various sectors, including trade. The customs departments of Xinjiang and Gilgit Baltistan play a crucial role in facilitating smooth cross-border trade between the two countries

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The customs authorities of Xinjiang, China, and Gilgit Baltistan, Pakistan held an online meeting to discuss and strengthen trade cooperation between the two regions and explore new avenues for economic collaboration. Hao Weiming, Director General of Urumqi Customs led the meeting from the Chinese side while Syed Fawad Ali Shah head of the Customs Administration of the Gilgit Baltistan represented the Pakistani side. In their opening remarks, they said, China and Pakistan have long enjoyed a close partnership in various sectors, including trade. The customs departments of Xinjiang and Gilgit Baltistan play a crucial role in facilitating smooth cross-border trade between the two countries. During the meeting, according to China Economic Net, officials from both sides discussed measures to stream-

line customs procedures, improve border infrastructure, and enhance information sharing. These efforts are aimed at promoting efficient trade facilitation and ensuring the smooth movement of goods across the China-Pakistan border. Chinese side told that in 2022 total value of imports & export from Xingjiang to Pakistan was RMB 2.92 billion, an increase of 248.2 percent year on year while in the first half of this year, the import and export from Xingjiang to Pakistan was RMB 1.90 billion, a year-on-year increase of 247.8 percent. Syed Fawad Ali Shah, head of the Customs Administration of the Gilgit Baltistan said that Pakistan wants to further deepen collaboration with China in diverse fields particularly in the field of technology and speedup customs clearness from both sides. He also mentioned that Xinjiang has a unique advantage and a role in the All-Weather strategy cooperative partnership between China and

Pakistan, all along the border customs of China and Pakistan, and maintaining communication and close cooperation in promoting the flow of trade at ports, facilitating the entry and exit of personnel and participating in international assistance. The meeting also provided an opportunity for stakeholders to exchange insights on emerging trends in international trade and explore potential areas for future collaboration. Both parties expressed their commitment to deepening their cooperation in order to maximize the benefits of bilateral trade. This meeting serves as a testament to the strong ties between China and Pakistan, as well as their shared commitment to fostering economic growth through mutually beneficial trade partnerships. It reinforces the importance of effective customs management in facilitating seamless cross-border transactions and promoting regional economic integration.

FAPUASA  
& APUBTA  
reach accord  
with HEC

ISLAMABAD: The representatives of APUBTA, All Public Universities BPS Teachers Association, and FAPUASA, Federation of All Pakistan Universities Staff Association, held a meeting with Higher Education Commission (HEC) officials and agreed on the submission of the circulated draft promotion statutes for the BPS university teachers. The statutes were jointly written by HEC, FAPUASA, and APUBTA and were shared with the stakeholders in December 2021. The meeting was attended by the HEC officer Nasir Shah Khattak DG, QAD. The FAPUASA team was led by Prof Dr Aamir Ali, President ASA QAU and FAPUASA, Dr Faiz ur Rahim, General Secretary of ASA IIUI and FAPUASA Prof. Dr Rizwan Kobab, Dr Farooq Buzdar and Dr Zafar and APUBTA team led by President Dr Sami ur Rahman and General Secretary Dr Imtiaz Ahmad, and attended by other members Prof Dr Asif Jan, Dr M Iqbal, Dr Akhtar Hussain, and Mr Jawad. The FAPUASA Central President Prof. Dr Kaleem and all the members played a very positive role in supporting the BPS faculty and stressed for approval of draft statutes in its meeting with the HEC Chairman and Executive Director held on July 14.—APP

Climate  
Change or  
Climate Bomb?

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Climate change had turned into a climate bomb and could possibly lead to the collapse of human civilization, if timely action was not taken, said Michael Dowd, Eco-theologian. He was addressing a round table discussion titled "Age of Adaptation: A Transformed World with Closing Window for Climate Security" organized by the Institute of Regional Studies here. He said that the stability of the biosphere had been on a decline for centuries and an unstoppable collapse for decades. He said that there was compelling evidence reflecting a prevailing sense of denial to accept the climate change as a reality. Adding to the discussion, Dr Farooq, Assistant Professor of Metrology at COMSATS University, Islamabad, stressed on the improvement of data collection methods for the accurate forecasting of climate-induced disasters. There was a huge research gap regarding the link between weather patterns of Pakistan and the rising sea levels which must be filled, he added. Mr. Arif Afridi, an Environmentalist from the Ministry of Water Resources, suggested that flood water could be used for harvesting the water-intensive crops in areas facing water scarcity. Dr Kanwar Javed, a Senior Researcher at National Institute of Maritime Affairs (NIMA) reflected on the importance of local government bodies for the effective implementation of National Climate Change Policy. He further iterated that allocation of finances to operationalize the actions was imperative and required mobilization of our own funds rather than relying completely on foreign assistance. Mr. Faheem Sardar, Senior Policy Specialist at the National Security Division (NSD), highlighted that climate change was more than an ecological threat to Pakistan, with it being used as a weapon against the country. He further added that information was power and accurate information datasets were integral to draw predictive models in order to facilitate precise decision-making. Ambassador Nadeem Riyaz, President Institute of Regional Studies (IRS), in his concluding remarks, said that the climate change was a national security threat to Pakistan.

Seafood  
exports  
increase by  
15.18% to  
\$496 mln

ISLAMABAD: The exports of fish and fish preparations increased by 15.18 percent during the fiscal year 2022-23 as compared to the last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. The country earned \$496.312 million from seafood exports during July-June (2022-23) against the exports of US \$430.898 million in July-June (2021-22), showing growth of 15.18 percent, PBS reported. In terms of quantity, the exports of fish and fish preparations increased by 28.86 percent going up from 166,362 metric tons in FY 2022-23 to 214,367 metric tons the previous year. However, on a year-on-year basis, seafood exports decreased by 3.37 percent to \$39.644 million in June 2023 as compared to exports of \$41.025 million during June 2022. In terms of quantity, the exports witnessed a 4.04 percent increase going up from 18,008 metric tons in FY 2021-22 to 18,735 metric tons last year. On a month-on-month basis, the seafood exports declined by 21.62 percent when compared to the exports of \$50.578 million in May 2023, according to PBS data. In terms of quantity, fish exports went down by 15.15 percent in June 2023 compared to the exports of 22,081 metric tons in May 2023. It is pertinent to mention here that the overall trade deficit witnessed a decline of 43.03 percent during the fiscal year 2022-23 as compared to the previous year (2021-22).—APP

BISP  
reactivates  
accounts of  
192,000

ISLAMABAD: The accounts of around 192,000 deserving beneficiaries of Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) have been reactivated who were expelled from the program during the previous government's tenure. According to an official source, around 850,000 women beneficiaries were expelled from the BISP by the previous government due to various reasons without giving them the right to appeal. Out of 1,92,000 beneficiaries whose accounts have been restored, 95,000 beneficiaries have received their quarterly installment of Benazir Kafalat scheme so far while the others will receive their payments soon.—APP



ISLAMABAD: A flag hoisting ceremony was held at the High Commissioner of Maldives to celebrate 58th Independence Day of Maldives.—DNA

A rapidly growing  
population is biggest threat

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Haripur Chamber of Commerce and Industry said on Wednesday that the biggest threat facing the country is not being addressed. Pakistan is facing climate challenges, terrorism, floods, drought, corruption, instability, energy crisis, a sinking economy, water scarcity, mafia rule and other

threats, but a major threat is a rapidly growing population, a ticking time bomb, which is not being handled on merit, it said. Pakistan's available resources and infrastructure is unable to bear the burden of such a large population, said Khurram Sheikh, Patron-in-Chief, Haripur Chamber of Commerce and Industry. In a statement issued here today, he said that in 1950 the population of Pakistan was 34 million which has now increased

to over 240 million and in the next twenty-seven years it will be more than 400 million. The system will be unable to cater for the needs of the population like providing health, education and employment etc. and the system will simply collapse. Pakistan's population has been experiencing exponential growth over the past few decades. Several factors contribute to this increase including high birth rates, limited access to

family planning services, cultural norms, and beliefs, he observed. Khurram Sheikh said that the GDP growth rate sometimes increases and sometimes decreases, but the population growth rate continues to increase straining vital resources, crippling the economy, and overwhelming social infrastructure. He said that at present, about forty percent of the population is suffering from food insecurity.



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## Green cooperation helps narrow differences

CHINA and Europe have generally been on good terms with each other in recent decades. Their close economic interdependence and friendly overall relations have formed a virtuous circle that has made bilateral ties particularly resilient. In spite of all the geopolitical factors disrupting their constructive engagement, such historical resilience, coupled with the existential threats brought by global crises, suggests that the two sides will continue to work together. As the United States intensifies its mobilization of all available resources for what it defines as decisive strategic competition between "democracies and authoritarian regimes", the European Union as a key US ally has found itself under greater pressure to "de-risk" in relation to China. The EU summit last month indicated that under Washington's influence, the European perception of China has changed strategically, and, as a result, European policy toward China is undergoing substantial modification as the bloc recalibrates its relations with the US.

Being identified as a "systemic competitor", however, does not close the door to cooperation. Just four days after European heads of state released a joint statement that outlines a tougher stance on China, Beijing and Brussels held their fourth High-level Environment and Climate Dialogue, in which they vowed to strengthen their cooperation to accelerate the global green transition. This is not just a simple message that geopolitical disruptions will not keep the two parties from cooperating. It also signals that no matter how they position their diplomatic relations, the two parties recognize, that as major emitters, they are obliged to work together to mitigate the common existential threats of climate change and biodiversity loss that confront humankind.

If geopolitical calculations are driving wedges between China and Europe, climate change has emerged as a promising bridge of bilateral cooperation. The two sides are serious about their climate commitments, making practical efforts and showing practical accomplishments. The European Green Deal and its legislation as well as the Chinese 1+N policy framework both showcase aggressive domestic endeavors to honor their respective commitments. Their promise to join hands to tackle the triple crises of climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss will certainly be conducive to efforts to address these threats.

Their discussion about future avenues of cooperation, which put considerable emphasis on the practice of the circular economy, a recent policy initiative on the Chinese government's agenda, sounded especially relevant because climate-friendly, sustainable development will be of critical significance not only to the long-term benefit of China and Europe, but also the rest of the world, not excluding the United States.

The two sides cooperating on implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework will be a fitting starting point for their shared endeavor to take meaningful action to reverse the triple trends that otherwise spell calamity for all.

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## Israel's far-right government

WHEN the Knesset curtailed the power of Israel's supreme court this week, it was a pivotal moment in the country's history. Should the law be enacted, and survive legal challenge, it will undermine the independence of the nation's judiciary and its role as the guarantor of its liberal-democratic values. But this is the price that Benjamin Netanyahu is prepared to pay to keep his government together – even if divisions in Israel deepen. Mr Netanyahu leads the most ultranationalist and religiously conservative government since the country was founded. His politics are those of division. Those on the streets, threatening strikes, or in the army refusing to serve, are the enemies he wants to have. He casts them as liberal Israelis who want to retain the status quo that the country's more nationalist and religious citizens want to smash. Israel's social contract has already been broken in part by rising inequality: a fifth of Israelis live below the national poverty line, but so do almost half of the ultra-Orthodox – and a third of Arab Israelis.

While voicing demands to protect democracy within Israel, the protesters have been noticeably quieter about the denial of freedoms to Palestinians on the West Bank, which Israeli forces have occupied since 1967. True, some demonstrators chanted "Where were you in Hawara?" at security forces following the horrendous attack by Israeli settlers seeking revenge for the murder of two brothers shot dead by a Palestinian gunman. But the army was there – and has been criticised for doing very little to stop what even Israeli rightwing commentators called "Jewish terrorism". A better question for Israelis is why they were in Hawara at all. The extremist allies of Mr Netanyahu have been growing in political significance due to the unchecked expansion of illegal settlements in the occupied territories and the sharply rising ultra-Orthodox population. Their political parties are the bulwarks of the government: Religious Zionism, which embraces an ideology of Jewish supremacy, and United Torah Judaism, which wants the ultra-Orthodox way of life undisturbed and subsidised. Both groups need each other to remain in government. Both see the supreme court as a block to their ambitions. The success of the far right is down to Mr Netanyahu, who has polarised Israeli politics in the last 15 years. He has normalised outright racism, political smears and lies. The scale of deceit is such that Mr Netanyahu, who claims to be an energetic 73-year-old, shocked the public last week by undergoing emergency surgery for a long-known heart problem.

The ruling coalition won last year's election by the narrowest of margins, just 30,000 votes. Yet it proposed all but abolishing the role of the supreme court as the sole check on executive power. When the backlash did for its original plans, the government decided to achieve its aims by "salami-slicing" its programme into a number of smaller bills. This way it can weaponise its supporters' outrage by suggesting that their opponents protest too much. There's no sign that the government will slow down. One member of Mr Netanyahu's party says that the government is ready to push further measures to "override" court rulings that strike down legislation.

## Broken Myth of Gwadar Port

Qamar Bashir

The pace of development of Gwadar port is though facing multiple challenges but fact remains that Gwadar Port is more suitable for regional and international trade compared to other ports in the region for a number of compelling reasons including but not limited to; it is located on the Arabian Sea, at the mouth strait of Hormuz, which gives it easy access to major trade routes in the Indian Ocean and the Middle East, the Strait of Hormuz is a major shipping lane that connects the Persian Gulf to the Arabian Sea and has the potential to boost economic development in Pakistan and the region, create jobs, attract investment, and facilitate trade. It is a valuable asset to Pakistan and the region. It was a deep sea port with a depth of 14.5 metres (now 11.5 metres), allowing it to handle huge container...

DURING a ceremony in Dera Ismail Khan on July 25th in the presence of the Prime Minister, Moulana Fazal ur Rehman made a stunning revelation about Gwadar port. He stated that Gwadar, which we trumpeted all over the world as the deepest sea port in the region capable of harbouring mother ships, which no other port in the area or neighbouring countries could, is no longer as deep as we thought, having already lost its depth from 18 metres to 11 metres and continuing to lose depth even now, and thus no mother ship or even large ship could dock here. This was such an eye-opening surprise that it prompted me to conduct further investigation on Maulana's heartbreaking remarks. Yes, the assertion is valid, and it is possible that this is one of the reasons why the Gwadar port has yet to emerge as a significant port in the region or all over the world.

According to one study, which was published in the journal "Marine Geology" in 2022, the port is losing depth at a rate of roughly 1.5 centimetres per year. The authors of the study attributed this to a combination of natural forces, such as Indus River sediment transfer, and human actions, such as dredging and deforestation. Another study, published in 2021 in the journal "Environmental Science & Technology", discovered that the port is also threatened by climate change. The authors of the study discovered that the sea level in the vicinity of Gwadar is increasing at a rate of roughly 3 millimetres per year, and that this is likely to accelerate in the future. Aside from dredging, one option was to minimise the quantity of silt delivered into the port by the Indus River, create seawalls to protect the port from flooding, and plant trees to assist stabilise the coastline. The success of dredging, which is now the only short-term solution to restore Gwadar Port's depth, is mostly dependent on the amount of sediments carried to the sea by Pakistan's river system. According to a survey, the Indus River transports an estimated 300 million tonnes of silt to the Arabian Sea each year, which is increasing due to fast melting glaciers, insufficient forest cover, a lack of river water treatment, soil erosion, and human rubbish dumping. This silt, however, is necessary for the formation of the Indus River delta, which is a crucial environment for a variety of plants and animals and serves to safeguard the shoreline by producing sea bed sedimentation. But it is easier said than done; the cost of dredging a port where 300 million tonnes of sediment are added every year must be a perpetual and continuous process that is prohibitively expensive and unsustainable, necessitating a permanent solution that involves cleaning the Indus water of sediments before it is discharged into the sea. The Port of Los Angeles recently finished a dredging project that cost \$1.6 billion to dredge 20 million cubic yards of material, equivalent to 30 million tonnes of material, and transport it to a disposal location 20 miles offshore. Consider the cost of dredging 300 million tonnes of material transported to the sea each year by the Indus River alone.

During a preparatory meeting on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)'s Joint Working Group (JWG) on Transport Infrastructure held on 22 May, 2022, it was observed that due to negligence of the previous regime, the depth of Gwadar port has decreased to 11 metres which should be 18 metres deep for navigation of big ships; which is preventing the anchoring of big ships on the port. The meeting proposed urgent measures to initiate the dredging process at Gwadar Port so that Gwadar port will be made a viable transportation of big ships. The Gwadar port dredging project was started in 2015 and was supposed to be completed in 2017, but it was delayed due to our notorious incompetence, incapacity, and vested interests, and as usual, blame was placed on the political situation in Pakistan and the lack of dredging equipment. The China Harbour Engineering Company Ltd (CHEC) is now dredging Gwadar Port with the goal of increasing the depth of the port's navigational channel to at least 14.5 metres from its current depth of 11.6 metres. The dredging job is being done in two stages. Dredging the navigational channel is the first phase, which is presently underway. The second phase, which will commence after the first phase is finished, will include dredging the approach channels and berthing areas, which would cost Rs. 4.7 billion and is expected to be completed by the end of this year. However, the price will be affected by currency fluctuations, fuel costs, and labour charges. Once completed, it will allow larger ships to operate smoothly, enhance port capacity, and ensure smooth ship movements in the entry channel, which is critical for Gwadar Port's future development.

Sedimentation is not the only issue confronting Gwadar port. Other issues include infrastructure and connectivity issues, political instability, law and order issues, a lack of trained and productive labour force, and the threat of terrorism and insurrection, to name a few. It is hampered by a lack of nearby road and rail networks, which are critical for efficiently delivering commodities to and from the port. It has formidable security prob-

lems because of its location in a sensitive region, Balochistan, which has been plagued by security issues and insurgency. Another factor discouraging international investors from committing to large-scale projects like the development of Gwadar port is Pakistan's precarious economic and political situations. While Gwadar port is still under construction, regional countries have build several well-established ports, such as Dubai's Jebel Ali, which already has a strong infrastructure and connectivity advantage, and Chabahar of Iran, which provides the shortest and safest route to India, Afghanistan, and Central Asian Republic to warm waters and connects them with the rest of the world. For example, while Gwadar Port was inaugurated on November 14, 2007, and Chabahar Port in Iran was inaugurated on December 3, 2017, Chabahar is attracting far more business than Gwadar, despite the fact that, unlike Gwadar, which is located on the mouth of the Strait of Hormuz, Chabahar Port is located on the Gulf of Oman and is a shallow-water port developed by India as a way to bypass Pakistan and connect India to Afghanistan and Central Asia. The following is a comparative statement of the business won by these three ports in the last five years:

Year	Gwadar Port	Jebel Ali Port	Chabahar Port
2018	\$100 million	\$15.3 billion	\$ 150 million
2019	\$ 120 million	\$ 16.2 billion	\$ 170 million
2020	\$ 140 million	\$ 17.1 billion	\$ 190 million
2021	\$ 160 million	\$ 18 billion	\$ 210 million
2022	\$ 180 million	\$ 18.9 billion	\$ 230 million

The myth of Pakistan offering a warm water port of Central Asia is also broken as Chabahar is nearer to Central Asian countries. It is fully operational and well connected with the interior of Iran and Central Asian countries by road and rail links without being marred by any security or safety, law and order or political instability issues. Whereas, Gwadar port is poorly linked via road links, has no train links as it now suffers from security and safety, law and order and uncertain economic and political issues. Have a look at the country wise distance of Central Asian countries to Gwadar and Chabahar:

Country	Distance from Gwadar Port (km)	Distance from Chabahar Port (km)
Afghanistan	1,060	760
Kazakhstan	2,500	1,500
Kyrgyzstan	2,800	1,800
Tajikistan	2,300	1,300
Turkmenistan	1,700	900

The pace of development of Gwadar port is though facing multiple challenges but fact remains that Gwadar Port is more suitable for regional and international trade compared to other ports in the region for a number of compelling reasons including but not limited to; it is located on the Arabian Sea, at the mouth strait of Hormuz, which gives it easy access to major trade routes in the Indian Ocean and the Middle East, the Strait of Hormuz is a major shipping lane that connects the Persian Gulf to the Arabian Sea and has the potential to boost economic development in Pakistan and the region, create jobs, attract investment, and facilitate trade. It is a valuable asset to Pakistan and the region. It was a deep sea port with a depth of 14.5 metres (now 11.5 metres), allowing it to handle huge container ships, something many other ports in the region do not have due to shallower water depths. It has less depth than Jebel Ali Port, which has a depth of 17 metres and is the deepest port in the Middle East, allowing it to handle huge container ships. Gwadar is superior to Chabahar, whose depth ranges from 2 to 11 metres but is still deep enough to accommodate some large container ships. Gwadar Port has the potential to become a significant transshipment centre for the region, which means goods might be brought to Gwadar Port and then transferred to other ships for further transportation.

Like many other projects Gwadar port is facing our trademark, inefficiencies, vested interests, corruption, lack of competency, capacity and above all lack of political will. As a nation, if we want to make Gwadar port a success we have to set our direction right, automate processes, private the businesses and processes to bring efficiency, make it a free port which have least amount of government interferences otherwise like all other public sector assets which are bleeding wound to the national exchequer, we will add one more white elephant into them, and then we will be offering special prayers for making Gwadar port a success and for progress and prosperity of our country which uptill now has not worked.

## Israel at an inflection point after Netanyahu's Pyrrhic victory

Osama Al-Sharif

Israel's founding fathers envisioned a secular, liberal and socialist state. First Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion was quoted as saying: "Since I invoke Torah so often, let me state that ... I am not religious, nor were the majority of the early builders of Israel believers. Yet their passion for this land stemmed from the Book of Books .. (The Bible is) the single most important book in my life." One Israeli critic said that Ben-Gurion planted the roots of a secular state but at the same time sowed the seeds of its destruction – the seeds of religious-messianic evil

VICTORIES, on the battlefield and in political arenas, can often be short-lived or, even worse, they can easily turn out to be Pyrrhic. This is almost certainly what happened on Monday, when the ruling Israeli coalition passed the first item in a controversial judicial overhaul that, critics believe, will undermine the independence and oversight of the judiciary over government policies. The far-right coalition, led by Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu, scored its first victory after a six-month-long battle to undermine the power of the Israeli Supreme Court and move the 75-year-old state closer to becoming an authoritarian one. This is the opinion of almost half of Israelis, who, in their tens of thousands, have protested against the so-called judicial overhaul since it was first unveiled in January.

For outsiders, the legislative quarrel may seem arcane and unfathomable, but for most Israelis, on both sides of the divide, it is a matter of absolute survival: Whatever happens next will decide the identity of the Israeli state. This should matter not only to Israelis, but also to all those who have vehemently supported Israel since its onset.

Israel's founding fathers envisioned a secular, liberal and socialist state. First Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion was quoted as saying: "Since I invoke Torah so often, let me state that ... I am not religious, nor were the majority of the early builders of Israel believers. Yet their passion for this land stemmed from the Book of Books ... (The Bible is) the single most important book in my life."

One Israeli critic said that Ben-Gurion planted the roots of a secular state but at the same time sowed the seeds of its destruction – the seeds of religious-messianic evil. Another historian wrote in Haaretz that Ben-Gurion was a pragmatic politician and, to realize his life's ambition, the establish-

ment of the state, he enlisted religious messianism because nationalism alone is an empty shell that needs something juicy inside to muster enthusiasm. He no doubt thought he would be able to control the wild weeds that would grow in his garden. These weeds are now flourishing in the state of Israel. Israel has been hijacked by a coalition of far-right parties, each with its own agenda. A politically affiliated Netanyahu is leading a coalition of fanatics who are certain to take Israel from the secular, liberal and democratic state that it projected itself as to the world for many years into an unknown ultra-Orthodox entity. It will certainly not be liberal, nor will it be democratic. The followers of Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich have something else in mind. While the two once-fringe politicians may not agree on everything, they both want to see a new Israel: One that is ultranationalist and ultrareligious with an agenda that seeks to recreate a biblical Israel.

Netanyahu, now 73 and with signs of failing health, may have never wanted to lead such a coalition. It is doubtful that he can now rein in his two rebellious partners, Ben-Gvir and Smotrich. Most analysts forget that the entire judicial overhaul scheme was concocted by Likud Justice Minister Yariv Levin, who is seen by critics "as leaving the indelible impression that he was not seeking to improve the judicial system but to eviscerate it." For Netanyahu, who has been a political player since the mid-1990s, the main objective is to save his career and himself. He faces a number of serious charges, including bribery and corruption. The judicial overhaul amendments would neutralize the judiciary and provide him with a way out – but at what price? Pundits believe that Netanyahu has become a hostage to his coalition partners. No one knows what Israel would become if the far-right, ultrareligious, ultra-

nationalist alliance fully sidelined the Supreme Court. Trying to understand what the religious far right wants is tricky. The secularists warn that liberal democracy is in danger. The Haredi influence on Israeli politics has become substantial. Moreover, Israel is a political mosaic, with 12 political parties represented in the Knesset and more than 100 out there in total. The fall of the Soviet Union, leading to the immigration of tens of thousands of Jews to Israel, altered the demographic map of the country. The most crucial test of Israel's unity is taking place as we speak. The far right wants to change the nature of the country – from a liberal, secular and openly democratic state to a religious entity that is no different from what Daesh wanted to create. It will be a homophobic, misogynistic, ultranationalist society.

This is not what Netanyahu really wanted. But he is being held hostage by a coalition that has an extremist agenda. That includes annexing the West Bank and creating an Eretz Israel, with which Netanyahu agrees. But the price he has to pay for colluding with the extremists may be too high. The impact of Monday's events will go viral. There will be mass demonstrations and hundreds, if not more, army and air force reservists will stay at home. There is a consensus among the security and senior army cadres that Israel will suffer and that the military establishment may even crumble; something that has never happened before in the history of the state. The Histadrut, the largest labor union, may soon declare a nationwide strike. Israel is at a juncture. The myth of a liberal democracy is at an inflection point and moving forward will expose the country for what it is – an apartheid state that is normalizing an isolationist, fascist and ultrareligious system.

– Courtesy: Arab News

## Briefs

## Caretakers get more powers

FROM PAGE 01

Parliamentary Committee on Electoral Reforms meeting, held with PML-N's Sardar Ayaz Sadiq in the chair, where Article 230 – which relates to the functions of a caretaker government – came under discussion.

Under the proposed bill, the caretaker government was given "unbridled powers", which the allied parties, as well as the opposition Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), opposed and the legislation was deferred in the joint session a day earlier.

Before the electoral reforms bill was laid in the house, PTI Senator Ali Zafar reiterated his demand that the house reject the said clause as it was unsustainable. "If you do not reject it, then the Supreme Court will reject it," PTI's Zafar told the parliament.

The PTI leader said the "dilution" made to the bill was not enough as it was "unconstitutional and illegal".

When the session resumed today, Law Minister Azam Nazeer Tarar said the government had prepared a new draft of the said amendment after concerns were raised by the allies and opposition members. "Apart from Section 230, there was 100 per cent consensus on all the other amendments," he said. Tarar clarified that while it was being said that the amendment to Section 230 was made a day earlier, "the truth is that the changes were proposed five days back via WhatsApp and email" to members of the Parliamentary Committee on Electoral Reforms.

"But the committee was called again today and examined the amendment to Section 230 again," he said, adding that the members of the committee deemed the changes "unnecessary".

## SC rejects Imran petition...

FROM PAGE 01

A trial court then, in May this year, rejected his petition challenging the maintainability of the reference. Not only that, but the court also indicted the PTI chief, who denied all the allegations of misdeclaration of gifts. This was when the PTI chief challenged the trial court's decision before the IHC, which sent the case back to the trial court for re-examination within a span of seven days.

On July 8, the trial court concluded that the ECP's petition is maintainable and proceeded further against the former premier who then approached the apex court for relief. During today's hearing, Justice Yahya Afridi of the two-member SC bench remarked that the apex court will not interfere in the trial court's matters in the Tashakhana case.

PTI chief's lawyer Khawaja Haris informed the court that there are multiple petitions – related to the jurisdiction of the trial court and transfer of the Tashakhana case – pending in the high court. At this, Justice Afridi directed the IHC to hear Khan's pending petitions together. He said that it was not the SC's jurisdiction to hear the petition when there are related petitions sub-judice in the IHC.

## PTI chief grieved over martyrdom of Adnan

FROM PAGE 01

agencies to dismantle PTI rather than keeping it's citizens and LEA's safe. PTI Chairman said: "Additional SHO Adnan Afridi embraced shahadat in an attempt to foil a terrorist attack. He prayed: "My prayers go out to his family. May Allah give them the patience to bear the loss." Meanwhile, PTI Chairman lashed out the government for its failure to rein in the rising tide of terrorist incidents and said that it was shameful how this government of crooks and money launderers was using the police and intelligence agencies to dismantle PTI rather than keeping it's citizens and LEA's safe.

However, he said that the cable of crooks were exercising all brutal tactics to dismantle PTI but they remained unsuccessful.



ISLAMABAD: Children are climbing on the fighter jet model of Pak Air Force at green belt along the 9th avenue. – Online

# Abdullah, Salman star as Pak take control of match

## The visitors have a lead of 397 runs against Sri Lanka

DNA

COLOMBO: Pakistan reached 563-5 at stumps on day three of the second Test against Sri Lanka in Colombo on Wednesday. The visitors lead by 397 runs after dismissing Sri Lanka for 166 in the first innings. Opener Abdullah Shafique scored a brilliant double-century to keep Pakistan in control of the Test match. The right-hander scored 201 runs with the help of 19 fours and four sixes. Abdullah (23y 246d) also became the third-youngest Pakistani play-

er to score a Test double ton after Javed Miandad (19y 140d), and Hanif Mohammad (23y 27d). Agha Salman also looked in great touch as he scored an unbeaten 132 runs in 148 balls, which included 15 fours and a six.

Saud Shakeel was dismissed after scoring 57 runs, meanwhile, Sarfaraz Ahmed was retired hurt after a blow to the head, during the second session. The right-hander, who was unbeaten on 14, was struck on the helmet on the first ball he faced. Sarfaraz was then replaced by Mohammad Rizwan, who is unbeaten on 37,

as a concussion substitute. After scoring a fifty in the first innings of the ongoing second Test, Shakeel became the first-ever batter in history to score a half-century in each of the first seven Tests of their career.

Previously, India's Sunil Gavaskar, Pakistan's Saeed Ahmed, West Indies' Basil Butcher and New Zealand's Bert Sutcliffe scored half-centuries in each of the first six Tests of their career.

The only wicket to fall in the morning session was that of Pakistan captain Babar Azam, who was trapped in front of the stumps by

spinner Prabhath Jayasuriya for 39. Pakistan had resumed their innings on day three at 178-2 with a lead of 12 runs. Only 10 overs of play was possible on the second day due to heavy downpour. Pakistan dismissed the hosts in two sessions for only 166 at the Sinhalese Sports Club Ground on Monday. Sri Lanka didn't impress with the bat after captain Dimuth Karunaratne won the toss and decided to bat first.

Naseem Shah (3-41) and Shaheen Afridi (1-44) dented Sri Lanka's top-order as the home side slipped to 36-4. Dhananjaya de Silva was

the top scorer for Sri Lanka with 57 but only two other teammates managed double digits.

Pakistan continued to do well in the field as Shan Masood ran out opener Nishan Madushka and tailender Prabhath Jayasuriya with direct throws. Pakistan scored at a quick rate when they came out to bat. Opener Imam-ul-Haq scored six before being caught at gully but Shafique added brisk 108-run partnership with Masood (51) to keep the visitors in control. Asitha Fernando claimed his second wicket when Masood miscued a pull shot.

## Cabinet approves E-Safety, Personal...

FROM PAGE 01

and companies and prohibit sharing of the user's information/data with any company, individual, or government organization without their permission. Under the law, the National Commission for Personal Data Protection (NCPDP) will be established which will act as a civil court to protect the private documents/data of the users and redress the grievances of the complainants. The federal cabinet also gave assent to the draft amendment bill of the Investment Board Ordinance 2001 for the promotion of foreign investment in Pakistan.

The amendment will empower the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) as well as lay down its basic structure, working procedures, and cooperation mechanisms with various ministries and provincial governments. After the law is passed, the SIFC will ensure the speedy implementation of foreign investment projects in the country. PM Shehbaz said the government was implementing the Whole of the Government Policy to promote Foreign Direct Investment in the country.

The policy would help expedite the implementation process of the projects under foreign investment.

The prime minister appreciated Minister of State for Petroleum Dr Musadik Malik for his successful efforts in finalizing the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) agreement with Azerbaijan.

## More laptops if given...

FROM PAGE 01

keeping the excellence and enrollment in public sector universities as the only merit. He said through hand-holding, the talented youths could bring in billions of dollars to the country within a short span of time which other industries could not do. The prime minister also thanked the commercial banks for distributing Rs 30 billion among youth within a few months in the form of business loans.

Calling the existing volume of loans insufficient, he called for formulating a policy to make it mandatory for the banks to extend loan facilities to youth, farmers, and small shopkeepers. He said the previous government gave away \$3 billion in loans to business tycoons without thinking of the youngsters.

Prime Minister Shehbaz also called for national unity and concerted efforts to rid the country of poverty as a robust mechanism in the form of a Special Investment Facilitation Council had already been established with a view to putting the country on the course towards economic restructuring and reforms.

## Pak, Russia discuss variety

FORM PAGE 01

The Foreign Minister also renewed the invitation to Foreign Minister Lavrov to visit Pakistan.

The two Foreign Ministers also discussed the Black Sea Grain Initiative (BSGI).

Recognizing the importance of this initiative and its potential impact on disruption of global food supply chains causing food inflation and food-security-related challenges, Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari underscored the need for concerted efforts to find viable solutions that would in particular benefit developing countries already under economic strain.

He expressed the hope that all parties involved in the BSGI would engage in constructive dialogue to revive the Initiative. In this regard, the Foreign Minister reiterated Pakistan's support for international efforts for restoring the deal by addressing the concerns of all sides.

The Foreign Minister informed his Russian counterpart on his discussions on BSGI with the Foreign Ministers of Ukraine and Turkey, the US Secretary of State and the EU High Representative. Foreign Minister Lavrov shared Russia's perspective on the issue. The two Foreign Ministers agreed to remain in close contact on the matter.

# Messi runs riot in first Inter Miami start



WEB DESK

MIAMI: Lionel Messi scored two goals and provided an assist in his first start for the MLS club Inter Miami against Atlanta United in a League Cup match on Tuesday (July 26) at the DRV PNK Stadium, Florida. It did not take the Argentine long to leave his mark in American football. Miami had just won once in their last ten matches and it all seemed like a dead-end for the MLS club but Messi's arrival brought a change in fortunes for them as they thrashed Atlanta by four goals. Messi, 36, gave his team an early breakthrough by scoring a goal in just the eighth minute after a

fantastic lobbed pass from his teammate Sergio Busquets. That was not it for the seven-time Ballon d'Or winner, he completed his brace in just the 22nd minute after scoring with another brilliant finish with his weak foot on Robert Taylor's assist. As if that was not enough, the 2022 World Cup winner also registered his first assist with Miami. Messi ran half of the pitch with the ball at his feet on the counter and assisted Taylor who also scored his brace with the Argentine's assist.

Before Leo's arrival, Miami had never won a game by a four-goal lead in their history but it seems like Messi is there to do what he usually does, creating history.

# Pak-GCC partnership has new momentum

FROM PAGE 01

taking office in April last year, inheriting a country on the verge of financial default. Dealing with the subsequent political turmoil, a renewed wave of terrorism and a serious deterioration in Pakistan's relations with major powers and trusted allies was also a daunting task. But he has been able to successfully navigate this complex landscape by engaging coalition leaders, the security establishment and key foreign partners. As a result, Pakistan is now stable enough to transition smoothly toward a caretaker setup, which will hold the next general election. Political turmoil has receded since the appointment of Gen. Asim Munir as the chief of the army staff in November. A new staff-level agreement with the International Monetary Fund, worth \$3 billion for a period of nine months, was concluded in June. Although terrorism has seen a resurgence, enhanced security structures are now in place to combat this threat. And the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor stands revived, while relations with the US are also back on track. Most notably, the civil-military collaboration has expanded to the economic sphere, giving renewed momentum to Pakistan's economic partnership with the leading GCC economies. Since 2019, Saudi Arabia, China and the UAE have offered concessional loans worth several billion dollars to shore up Pakistan's foreign reserves. These loans have subsequently been rolled over to meet the IMF demand. The latest IMF deal became possible after Saudi Arabia deposited an additional loan of \$2 bil-

lion in the State Bank of Pakistan. The Kingdom has always stood by Pakistan through thick and thin. But Pakistan must stand on its own two feet. The Special Investment Facilitation Council offers a viable pathway in this respect. Its establishment indicates that Pakistan's civilian and military leaders understand the risk of dependency on foreign loans. And they are preparing to lay down a solid economic base through attracting investment from friendly countries. Thus far, Pakistan's inability to provide a swift, one-window operation to foreign investors is the key reason for the extremely low levels of investment inflows. There are unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles and regulatory requirements, which discourage investors and disrupt the initiation of new projects and the completion of existing ones. Political instability results in frequent changes of government and the consequent lack of continuity in economic policies.

These issues have plagued major investment commitments by Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Qatar in the recent past. While visiting Islamabad in 2019, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman pledged \$20 billion of investment in the energy, minerals and mining sectors. Likewise, the UAE and Qatar have committed \$9 billion. But these pledges are yet to materialize due to cumbersome procedures and structural impediments. Foreign investors need a guaranteed return on their investments. The Special Investment Facilitation Council is envisaged to offer one-window services through technocratic consultation and institutional facilitation. The inclusion of the army

chief in its apex committee, and of top military officials in the executive and implementation committees, is important for guaranteeing continuity, transparency and accountability. The Pakistan Sovereign Wealth Fund is also envisioned to be free from bureaucratic and regulatory hassles. For now, at least seven state assets worth 2.3 trillion rupees (\$8 billion) are being transferred into this fund and are expected to expand through the sale of shares and the use of their earnings for capital investments. The government also plans to undertake joint ventures with GCC companies, while privatizing and leasing out the loss-making public sector enterprises.

Tangible progress in this investment drive will help Pakistan to increase investment inflows from the GCC, China and other countries. But its aspiration to become a \$1 trillion economy by 2035 will depend on it taking solid steps that boost the dismal level of bilateral trade, which is currently worth \$3 billion annually with the Gulf states. Islamabad must also increase the number of Pakistani workers and the diversity of the jobs they do in the GCC region. They number about 4 million at present. Going forward, the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement with the UAE needs to be emulated in Pakistan's trade links with Saudi Arabia and the other GCC members. Pakistan's skilled manpower in the IT and services sectors is a perfect match for the economic transformations taking place in the Gulf, particularly Saudi Arabia. Let me conclude by saying that Sharif has done well to raise the prospects of economic recovery in Pakistan. One hopes that its future political leadership will sustain the current momentum in economic policies, especially with respect to the rapidly evolving partnership with the GCC economies.

– Arab News

# Pakistan to host Int'l Women's Volleyball C'ship

The purpose to host the international event is to provide the opportunity to women players to improve their game as it will be first time in the history of Pakistan that teams from USA and Europe will be taking part in the women's volleyball competitions: Malika Junaid

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Volleyball Federation (PVF) in partnership with Empower Sports Academy is planning to host the first ever international women's volleyball invitational championship to increase the playing standard and develop interest of young girls in the country. According to Pakistan Volleyball Federation women's wing Chairperson Malika Junaid, with the collaboration of Empower Sports Academy and Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) PVF are also focusing to encourage girls to play Volleyball. The purpose to host the international event is to provide the opportunity to women players to improve their game as it will be first time in the history of Pakistan that teams from USA and Europe will be taking part in the women's volleyball competitions, said PVF women's wing chairperson Malika Junaid. She said that we are also planning to send



the Pakistan women's team for a training tour to Turkey this year as well aims to promote and inspire the young girls to showcase their talent and to excel in the game of volleyball. PVF Women's wing chairperson said that Islamabad will be host city for the international championship which is planned to be held in the first week of January next year as we are expecting five international teams to visit Pakistan for this historic event.

On the other hand Founder of Empower Sports Academy Alisha Junaid is also busy coordinating with the foreign teams to finalise all other arrangements as Empower Sports Academy advisor Tim Kelly visited Pakistan to witness the preparations and training camp of the national women's volleyball team. Tim Kelly, who is also based in the USA spared the time for Pakistan from his busy schedule to review the venue and locations where Empower Sports Academy will host their very first international volleyball tournament in collaboration with the Pakistan Volleyball Federation.

## Briefs

## EU mulls subsidies for transport of Ukraine grain

## NEWS DESK

BRUSSELS: The EU agriculture commissioner said Tuesday the bloc can help Ukraine export the bulk of its grain through overland routes and could subsidise the cost of transport, after Russia tore up a Black Sea deal. Fears over getting Ukraine's vitally needed supplies to consumers worldwide have spiked since Russia last week withdrew from the United Nations-brokered agreement to allow exports by sea. The EU set up so-called "solidarity lanes" last year for Ukrainian produce — mainly through Romania and Poland — to help boost alternative routes to global markets after Moscow's invasion. Commissioner Janusz Wojciechowski said after talks with EU agriculture ministers in Brussels that the bloc was "ready to export by the solidarity lanes almost everything." Wojciechowski said he would put forward a proposal to use EU funds to "support the transport costs" of moving the Ukrainian produce via rail and road through the bloc to keep prices down. "Because there is a risk that Russia will be the beneficiary of the situation because it would be cheaper to buy grain from Russia than to pay for the grain from Ukraine," he said. Ukraine is a major global grain producer. —APP

## China's Qin Gang scrubbed from ministry website

BEIJING: China offered no explanation for the sacking of foreign minister Qin Gang on Wednesday while scrubbing mentions of him from a government website. Qin — who has not been seen in public for over a month — was removed from office by Beijing's top law-making body on Tuesday after just 207 days in the job. That followed weeks of speculation that the former Chinese ambassador to the United States and one-time confidant of President Xi Jinping had suddenly fallen out of favour. As of Wednesday morning, any reference to the 57-year-old had been removed from the website of China's foreign ministry. A search for his name yielded no results and previous articles about his diplomatic appearances showed a message saying the page "does not exist or has been deleted". But his name did appear on other Chinese government websites, including of the State Council, the Ministry of Commerce and state media outlets. The foreign ministry had for weeks refused to give any updates on Qin despite repeated questioning, after previously saying "health reasons" were to blame for his absence. —DNA

## Ship carrying 3,000 cars burns off Dutch coast

AMSTERDAM: A fire blazed on a ship off the Dutch coast with nearly 3,000 vehicles on board on Wednesday, killing one person and injuring several others, the coastguard said. The fire began on Tuesday night on the 199-metre Panama-registered Fremantle Highway, which was en route from Germany to Egypt, forcing several crew members to jump overboard. Rescue ships sprayed water onto the burning boat to cool it down, but using too much water risked its sinking, the Dutch coastguard said. A salvage vessel hooked on to stop it drifting. "The fire is most definitely still not controlled. It's a very hard fire to extinguish, possibly because of the cargo the ship was transporting," said Edwin Versteeg, a spokesperson for the Dutch Department of Waterways and Public Works. The coastguard said on its website that the cause of the fire was unknown, but a coastguard spokesperson had earlier told a news agency it began near an electric car. — Agencies

## Mediterranean nations fight heat, deadly fires

Thousands of people have evacuated in the region this week as fires also flared in Croatia and Italy, and flames killed 34 in Algeria in extreme heat that has left landscapes tinder dry

## NEWS DESK

RHODES: Greece sweltered in intense heat Wednesday while crews scrambled to douse deadly wildfires that have also struck nations around the Mediterranean and killed dozens. Thousands of people have evacuated in the region this week as fires also flared in Croatia and Italy, and flames killed 34 in Algeria in extreme heat that has left landscapes tinder dry. "Back home, there is nothing left and not even a sheep survived," Taous Timizar, a survivor of the blaze in northeast Algeria, told AFP. Witnesses described fleeing walls of

flames that raged "like a blowtorch," and TV footage showed charred cars, burnt-out shops and smoldering scrubland. Scientists from the World Weather Attribution group said this week the heatwaves that have hit parts of Europe and North America this month would have been almost impossible without human-caused climate change. The European Union's climate observatory Copernicus on Wednesday said smoke emissions from wildfires in Greece have been the highest for this period of time in the last 21 years. Greece has battled over 600 fires in the past 12 days, the government said Wednesday. Temperatures were expect-

ed to hit between 43-46 degrees Celsius (109-115 degrees Fahrenheit) in central and southern Greece, according to the national meteorological service. "Today is the most difficult day in terms of the heat, complicating the fight against existing fires and making more likely," fire department spokesman Ioannis Artopios told Skai radio. Storms are forecast for Thursday. Greece is used to summer heatwaves, but is experiencing one of the longest ones in recent years, according to experts. The civil protection ministry has warned of an extreme danger of fire in six of the country's

13 regions on Wednesday. Wildfires, which have been burning in several parts of the country for more than 10 days, were ravaging the tourist islands of Rhodes, Corfu and Evia. The EU crisis management commissioner's office on Wednesday said over 490 firefighters and seven planes had been deployed to different areas in Greece under the bloc's civil protection mechanism. At least 100 firefighters were working to contain the flames on Evia, where on Tuesday two pilots were killed when their water bomber aircraft crashed. The body of a third victim was also found on Evia.

Authorities have evacuated tens of thousands of people from fire areas in Greece, including many tourists. The severe heatwave in Greece has also been reflected across much of southern Europe and northern Africa. In Italy, firefighters spent the night battling wildfires in Sicily, one of which approached so close to Palermo airport that it shut down for several hours Tuesday morning. Italy's civil protection department on Tuesday reported "extensive fires" across the south. In the north, a 16-year-old girl on a camping trip was among two people killed by falling trees during violent storms.

Dozens of firefighters were battling a wildfire near Croatia's picturesque southern city of Dubrovnik, authorities said Wednesday, with water-bombing planes dispatched to help contain the blaze. Around 130 firefighters were working to contain the flames that had been spread by strong winds on Tuesday. Local media reported the fire also triggered land mines to explode in the area. During the bloody break-up of Yugoslavia in the 1990s, Dubrovnik was besieged and shelled by Serb forces, leading several areas in the city to be damaged while swaths of its outskirts are still contaminated by land mines.



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Ambassador-designate to the Republic of Tunisia, Mr Javed Ahmed Umrani, called on President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.—DNA

## Blinken visits tiny Tonga as US continues diplomacy in Pacific

WELLINGTON: Secretary of State Antony Blinken visited the tiny kingdom of Tonga on Wednesday, as the United States continues to increase its diplomatic efforts in the Pacific while China's influence in the region grows. Home to just over 100,000 people, Tonga last year was the site of a massive volcanic eruption that created a tsunami, killed four people in Tonga and sent millions of tons of water vapor into the atmosphere. Blinken dedicated a new US Embassy in Tonga, which opened two months ago, and praised the return of Peace Corps volunteers following the end of the COVID-19 pandemic. Blinken told reporters he had concerns about China's actions in the region including some "predatory" economic activities, its assertion of "unlawful" maritime claims and an increased focus on militarization. "As China's engagement in the region has grown, there has been some, from our perspective, increasingly problematic behavior," Blinken said. Tongan Prime Minister Siaosi Sovaleni said he was not concerned about the large amount of money his country had borrowed from China, and in fact this year had started to pay back the debt. Blinken met with Sovaleni and other officials to discuss the bilateral relationship as well as regional and global issues, said State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller. "Secretary Blinken outlined how the United States is following through on commitments made by President Biden at last year's historic summit with Pacific Islands leaders to elevate our diplomatic and development presence and engagement in the region," Miller said in a statement.

## Govt sees fiscal deficit narrowing in FY24

ISLAMABAD: The fiscal deficit is expected to narrow in the fiscal year 2024 from the previous year's 7.9 per cent of gross domestic product, the federal government said in an economic report on Wednesday. The government also said the current account deficit would remain within a sustainable limit and that Pakistan was gearing towards achieving "higher growth" of 3.5pc in FY24. The government had earlier estimated the 2024 fiscal deficit at 6.54pc in its annual budget presented in June, which according to Finance Minister Ishaq Dar could further improve after new taxation of Rs215 billion, ahead of the country clinching a \$3bn IMF deal. Wednesday's report said annual inflation had declined to 29.4pc in June down from 38pc recorded in May. The IMF deal helped avert a near-default by Pakistan on its foreign debt due to an acute balance of payment crisis.—DNA

## Body of missing Indian woman found in GB

GILGIT: The body of a 28-year-old woman, who had gone missing in the Indian-controlled area of Kargil, was found in Gilgit-Baltistan's Kharmang district on Wednesday, according to Deputy Commissioner (DC) Muhammad Jaffar. DC Jaffar told media that the woman's body was retrieved from the Kargil river today and buried in Kharmang. He said the body could be returned to India — after contact between the foreign ministries of the countries — once the woman's identity was confirmed through DNA testing. Meanwhile, Qasim, a resident of Kharmang, said the funeral prayer of the woman had been offered and the burial was performed according to Islamic rituals. Earlier, a pamphlet featuring the image of the woman was circulated by the Kargil police station from the Indian side. The pamphlet was also sent to the GB administration for the recovery of the body. The pamphlet stated that the woman, identified as Belqees Bano, was five feet tall and clad in green clothes along with a red sweater. It added that she went missing from her home in Akchamal on July 15.—Agencies

## PTCL implements robotic process

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL), the leading ICT services provider in Pakistan, has announced the implementation of Robotic Process Automation (RPA) in its Customer Care operations as a vital part of its digital transformation strategy. The aim is to improve overall customer experience across all touch points. The initiative will help PTCL align with the highest global standards in digitalization and automation, reinforcing its position as the industry leader, said a news release issued here Wednesday. Commenting on the initiative, Ahmad Kamal, Group Chief Customer Care Officer at PTCL and Ufone 4G, said, "We are delighted to announce the implementation of Robotic Process Automation (RPA), a significant milestone in our ongoing efforts to enhance the customer journey. This cutting-edge technology empowers us to deliver the best customer experience by automating a wide range of activities, including data transfers, customer profile updates, data entry, inventory management, and even complex tasks, all with a remarkable accuracy rate of 100 percent. The latest initiative positions us to enhance our capacity and efficiency, ultimately delivering an unparalleled experience to our customers." The implementation of RPA is a clear testament to PTCL's unwavering commitment to make digital innovations and contributing to Digital Pakistan by delivering an unparalleled user experience to its valued customers.—APP

## Saudi Cabinet renews condemnation of Qur'an burnings

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's Council of Ministers held its weekly session, chaired by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, on Tuesday, renewing the Kingdom's condemnation of attacks on Islamic sanctities in Sweden and Denmark. The Cabinet reiterated Saudi Arabia's strong condemnation of the burnings of copies of the Qur'an in Sweden and Denmark, describing them as a flagrant violation of all laws and customs and in direct contradiction with international efforts seeking to spread the values of tolerance and moderation. During the meeting, the Cabinet also reviewed the Kingdom's participation in Italy's international conference on migration held on Sunday to discuss the migration crises and Riyadh's support in joint UN efforts to address security challenges, calling on the international community to stand in solidarity and cooperation. Attending the conference on behalf of the crown prince in Rome was Saudi Arabia's Minister of Interior Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud bin Naif. The Cabinet also commended the results of the 18th Gulf Cooperation Council and Central Asian countries summit hosted in Jeddah, which resulted in the strengthening of joint Gulf action on regional and international security efforts facing global concern. The Council of Ministers also commended the Kingdom's active international participation in combating the effects of climate change through various efforts to reduce emissions including diversifying the energy mix use and promoting the use of clean technologies. Saudi Arabia recently participated in the UN High-level Political Forum 2023 held from July 10-19 in New York in an effort to achieve sustainable development goals. During the meeting, the Kingdom highlighted Vision 2030 initiatives under the framework of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals including in areas of human development, healthcare, and diversification of the economy.—APP

## Iran tops list of countries with Internet curbs

## DNA

LONDON: Iran has imposed the tightest Internet restrictions in the world during the first six months of 2023, a recent study shows. Figures released on Tuesday by cybersecurity company Surfshark showed that Iran has outpaced other countries in tightening Internet restrictions, introducing 14 new restrictions. Following closely behind is India, which imposed nine new restrictions, while Pakistan implemented three. The continuing protests in Iran, which erupted in Sept. 2022 following the death of Mahsa Amini and the Zahedan massacre, have been found to be the main reason for the surge in censorship. Surfshark spokesperson, Gabriele Racaityte-Krauskus, expressed deep concern over the increase in online controls, namely in the aftermath of Mahsa Amini's death and the Zahedan massacre. Al-Monitor reported.

## Turkey concerned over Israel settler attacks

## WEB DESK

ANKARA: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has expressed concern about Israeli settler violence against Palestinians in a meeting with his Palestinian counterpart Mahmoud Abbas. "As Turkey, we continue to support the Palestinian cause in the strongest way possible. We are deeply concerned about the violence of illegal settlers," Erdogan said after the meeting in the Turkish capital, Ankara, on Tuesday. Violence has rocked the occupied West Bank in recent months as Israeli forces ramp up their raids. Ensnared clashes have resulted in Israeli settlers scaling attacks on Palestinian villages. Erdogan also addressed the issue of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, where some headline Israeli Jewish settlers are promoting its destruction and the construc-

tion of a third Jewish temple in its place. "We cannot tolerate any acts attempting to change the historical status quo of holy places, particularly the al-Aqsa Mosque. The unity and reconciliation of the Palestinians are key elements in this process," the Turkish leader said. The only way to a just and lasting peace in the region is to support a two-state solution between Israel and Palestine, Erdogan added. Erdogan later held a behind closed doors meeting with Abbas and Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh. Hamas defeated Abbas' Fatah and took control of the blockaded Gaza Strip in 2007, and the two parties have been unable to repair the rift since, with Fatah dominant in the occupied West Bank. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was also set to visit Turkey later this week, but the trip was postponed

after he had unscheduled surgery on Sunday. Abbas' visit comes as Palestinians grow increasingly frustrated with the body that exercises control over some parts of the West Bank. The PA was criticised by Palestinians after the biggest Israeli raid on the Jenin refugee camp in nearly 20 years earlier this month. His senior officials were driven away from a funeral procession by large crowds angry at the PA's response to the attack. During the Jenin raid, nearly 3,000 people fled their homes while dozens of houses were shelled. The attack caused widespread destruction to roads and other infrastructure. For the past two years, Israeli forces have conducted multiple deadly raids on the camp as well as other areas in the occupied territory while settler attacks have increased.

## Oil pumped out of Red Sea 'time bomb' tanker

"I hope it will be the beginning of the peace process," said Fathi Fahem, the Yemeni business leader who proposed a replacement vessel for the Safer two years ago

JEDDAH: UN engineers on Tuesday began pumping more than a million barrels of oil out of a rusting and decaying storage vessel in the Red Sea, ending an eight-year standoff with the Houthi militia in Yemen. The war in Yemen led to the suspension in 2015 of maintenance operations on the FSO Safer, which has been moored off the country's coast for more than 30 years. The three-week \$143 million operation to pump out the oil will "defuse what might be the world's largest ticking time bomb," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said. It was a "critical next step in avoiding an environmental and humanitarian catastrophe on a colossal scale." Saudi Arabia welcomed the start of the operation in a statement issued Wednesday morning. UN officials have warned for years that the Red Sea and Yemen's coastline were at risk from the Safer. It could leak four times as much oil as the 1989 Exxon Valdez disaster off Alaska, and a spill would cost \$20 billion to clean up. UN Development Programme spokesperson Sarah

Bel warned that any spilled oil could reach the African coast, damaging fish stocks for the next 25 years and destroying 200,000 jobs. It would also close ports that bring food and supplies to Yemen, where about 17 million people rely on humanitarian aid. Because of the Safer's position in the Red Sea, a spill would also cost billions of dollars a day in shipping disruptions through the Bab al-Mandab strait to the Suez Canal, while devastating ecosystems, coastal fishing communities and lifeline ports. Meanwhile the UN engineers are crossing their fingers — scorching summer temperatures, ageing pipes and sea mines lurking in surrounding waters all pose threats to the operation. "Because it is the start of the emergency phase of the project to remove the oil, we need to be very cautious," Bel said. Even if the transfer succeeds, the Safer "will pose a residual environmental threat, holding viscous oil residue and remaining at risk of breaking apart," the UN said. Disputes are also expected over ownership of the oil and the Nau-

tica, the replacement vessel into which the oil is being pumped, pitting the Houthis against the legitimate government in Aden.

But most people see progress on the Safer issue as a positive sign. "I hope it will be the beginning of the peace process," said Fathi

Fahem, the Yemeni business leader who proposed a replacement vessel for the Safer two years ago. —Agencies



## Briefs

### Pak, China to strengthen strategic coordination

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Speaker of National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf says Pakistan firmly supports China's core interests and stands ready to work with Beijing to strengthen the construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and jointly build the Belt and Road. He was talking to the chairman of the Standing Committee of China's National People's Congress Zhao Leji on video link. He said National Assembly of Pakistan is willing to strengthen exchanges and mutual learning with the NPC of China and play a positive role in promoting cooperation in various fields. Zhao Leji said that China is ready to work with Pakistan to implement the important consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries, deepen exchanges and cooperation in various fields.

### Sindh MP's brother, nephew shot dead

DNA

KARACHI: Sindh MPA Aslam Abro's brother and nephew were gunned down by unidentified assailants in a "targeted attack" in Karachi's Defence Housing Society (DHA) Phase VII near Ayesha Mosque on Wednesday. SSP South Asad Raza confirmed that the lawmaker's brother Akram Abro, his son Shahryar Abro and another person named Irshad were killed while another man sustained bullet injuries when unidentified armed men riding on motorcycles and a vehicle targeted them earlier today. The police officer also said that they recovered a licenced pistol from the victims, adding that no bullet was fired from inside the vehicle. It seemed that the attack was carried out after the victims' recce, he added. The SSP investigation revealed that two types of weapons were used in the attack. The police found spent shell casings of 9mm pistols and heavy weapons from the crime scene, he added. He said that the assailants opened fire on the vehicle from all four sides. The victims, he added, were heading to DHA Phase VII from Khayaban-e-Shamshere. After being informed the police and rescue officials rushed to the scene and shifted the bodies and the injured to the Jinnah Post Graduate Medical Centre (JPMC).

### Gold price suffer losses as rupee gains

DNA

KARACHI: Gold price in Pakistan fell by more than Rs2,000 per tola as the local currency appreciated against the US dollar in the interbank market. According to data issued by All-Pakistan Sarafa Gems and Jewellers Association (APSGJA) on Wednesday, the price of gold (24 carats) declined by Rs2,400 per tola and Rs2,058 per 10 grams to settle at Rs222,100 and Rs190,415, respectively. Meanwhile, the price of the yellow metal increased by \$12 to settle at \$1,972 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 remained unchanged at Rs2,750 per tola and Rs2,357.68 per 10 grams, respectively. Meanwhile, the local currency gained Rs1.48 or 0.52% against the US dollar in the interbank market today, according to the data shared by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The rupee closed at Rs287.04 against the dollar.



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

# UN adopts Pakistan-backed draft against Islamophobia

Swedish FM says govt working to ensure disrespect of Holy Quran not repeated

UNITED NATIONS: The United Nations, with Pakistan as a co-sponsor, adopted a resolution titled "promoting interreligious and intercultural dialogue and tolerance in countering hate speech" on Tuesday. The resolution has urged the global community to counter all forms and dimensions of hate speech. It was adopted by consensus at the UN headquarters in New York, with 44 nations in favour, 62 against and 24 absent during voting. "It also recognises with deep concern the overall rise in instances of discrimination, intolerance and violence, regardless of the actors, including cases motivated by Islamophobia in PP18, a proposal put forward by Pakistan, later joined by Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia," read a statement by the Permanent Mission of Pakistan Mission to the UN. Pakistan, it added, also led efforts

along with Malaysia and Egypt on behalf of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) countries to include language in the text, by the terms of which the Assembly strongly deplored all acts of violence against persons on the basis of their religion or belief, as well as any such acts directed against their religious symbols, holy books, places of worship, religious sites and shrines in violation of international law, making the first resolution adopted by the General Assembly to strongly deplore all acts of violence against religious symbols and Holy books. Meanwhile, Sweden's foreign minister has said that his government was trying to change the law to prevent future attacks on the Holy Quran, describing them as "despicable". Tobias Billstrom spoke by phone with his Algerian counterpart Ahmed Attaf, accord-

ing to Algeria's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During their conversation, Billstrom pointed to constitutional restrictions that limit the ability of his government to prevent such behaviour while expressing deep regret over such actions. Pakistan Mission Counsellor Bilal Chaudhry, on behalf of the mission, expressed profound satisfaction with the resolution's adoption. He said that the text adopted resonates with a resolution on religious hatred, adopted recently at the Human Rights Council in Geneva, which was presented by Pakistan on behalf of the OIC group. That landmark resolution in the Human Rights Council condemned "all advocacy and manifestations of religious hatred, including recent public and premeditated acts that have desecrated the Koran" and called for countries to adopt laws enabling

them to bring to justice those responsible for such acts," the counsellor added. Chaudhry said Islamophobia is on the rise with repeated incidents of desecration of the Holy Quran. "These acts are not just a provocation to the feelings of more than two billion Muslims in the world, but a step to sabotage interfaith harmony and peace," he maintained. He said such incidents are also a manifestation of racial hatred and xenophobia, and the absence of preventive legal deterrence, inaction, and shying away from speaking out encourages further incitement to hatred and violence. The counsellor also noted that the text adopted by the UN "does not seek to curtail the right to free speech" but tries to underline the "special duties and responsibilities" of the international community to safeguard interfaith peace and harmony". – Agencies

## Coalition seeks new foreign secretary before departure

Dr Cyrus Qazi front runner to succeed Asad Majeed

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The government is likely to appoint a new foreign secretary before completing its term in the second week of August, official sources said on Tuesday. Incumbent Foreign Secretary, Asad Majeed Khan, is set to retire on August 17, just days after the tenure of the current National Assembly ends. Since the foreign secretary is a key position and cannot be left vacant; therefore, the government has decided to appoint a new foreign secretary before it leaves the office. If sources are to be believed Dr Cyrus Qazi, special secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, will be appointed as the new foreign secretary. Cyrus is the frontrunner and has been waiting for the top slot since Asad Majeed was appointed as foreign secretary in December last year. Asad would serve foreign secretary for eight months. He was the Pakistani ambassador in Washington, who sent the cipher in March 2022 after meeting a senior US official. The cipher was used by the then prime minister Imran Khan as evidence to propagate his "foreign conspiracy" theory, seeking the ouster of his government. The secret diplomatic cable suggested that the US administration was not happy with the government of prime minister Imran Khan and wanted his removal through the vote of no confidence. Washington has repeatedly denied the charges.

# India's Modi to face no-trust vote over Manipur violence

NEWS DESK

NEW DELHI: India's parliament has authorised a no-confidence vote against Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government by an alliance of opposition parties, to force the Hindu nationalist leader to address in detail concerns about ethnic clashes in a northeastern state. Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has a clear majority of 301 members in the 542-seat lower house of parliament, so the no-confidence vote will not affect its stability. The opposition instead wants to trigger a debate about the violence in remote, BJP-ruled Manipur state, in which more than 130 people have been killed and 60,000 displaced since it be-

gan in early May. Approving the opposition motion, lower house speaker Om Birla on Wednesday said he would soon decide when the debate and vote would take place. A no-confidence motion is submitted in the Lok Sabha, as the parliament's lower house is known, if at least 50 members support it. Raghav Chadha of the Aam Aadmi Party, one of the members of the opposition coalition, said: "In India's parliamentary history, critical instruments of debate, dialogue and discussion within parliament are exercised... regardless of the outcome". [They] are exercised with the sole objective of a long-duration discussion on an important issue and to compel the prime minister of India to come to parliament and respond to the issues raised by the people and the

members," he said, according to a statement shared by his party on Twitter. Kodikunnil Suresh, a Congress legislator, said Modi is ignoring the opposition's longstanding demand of an appearance in parliament. "The prime minister is not ready to make a statement. The prime minister has to come to the parliament and make the statement. Manipur is burning," he told reporters. The ethnic tensions in the small state of 3.2 million people are seen as a security and political failure by Modi's government, which will face a national election by May 2024. Modi had not commented in public about the violence until last week, when videos showing two women being paraded naked and assaulted by a mob in Manipur surfaced, sparking national outrage.

## Copies of Qur'an burnt again in Denmark

WEB DESK

COPENHAGEN: A small group of anti-Islam activists set fire to Qur'ans in front of the Egyptian and Turkish embassies in Copenhagen on Tuesday after similar protests in Denmark and Sweden over recent weeks that have enraged Muslims. Denmark and Sweden have said they deplore the burning of the Islam's holy book but cannot prevent it under rules protecting free speech. Last week, protesters in Iraq set the Swedish embassy in Baghdad ablaze. Tuesday's demonstration in Copenhagen by a group called "Dan-

ish Patriots" followed Qur'an burnings the group staged on Monday and last week in front of the Iraqi embassy. Two such incidents have taken place in Sweden over the past month. Egypt summoned Sweden's chargé d'affaires to condemn the Qur'an burning incidents, the foreign ministry's spokesperson said on Tuesday afternoon. Cairo informed the chargé d'affaires of its "strong condemnation and complete rejection ... of the unfortunate and repeated incidents of burning and abuse of copies of the Holy Qur'an," the statement added. Bahrain summoned Sweden's chargé d'affaires to condemn the burning of the holy book in Stockholm, the country's foreign ministry said. Iraq's foreign ministry on Monday called on authorities of EU countries to "quickly reconsider so-called freedom of expression and the right to demonstrate" in light of the Qur'an burnings. Türkiye on Monday said it strongly condemned what it called a "despicable attack" on the Qur'an and called on Denmark to take necessary measures to prevent this "hate crime" against Islam. Denmark has condemned the burnings as "provocative and shameful acts" but says it does not have the power to block non-violent demonstrators.

# OIP discusses Indonesia's resilient recovery

ISLAMABAD: Session III of the Online Internship Program (OIP) organized by the Indonesian Embassy and Bahria University, discussed Indonesia's economic successes in reversing the upheavals and its rise as an emerging global economy. Dr. Muhammad Faisal, Executive Director of Center of Reform on Economics (CORE) Indonesia in his lecture while outlining the main features of the Indonesian economy mentioned that Indonesia is a top 15 global economy, part of the G-20 group and is expected to be one of the top 10 by 2050. He highlighted that Indonesia is a major producer of palm oil, natural rubber, oil & gas, coal and minerals but has also developed a manufacturing and processing industry, with its main industries ranging from labor-intensive to hi-tech. "Indonesia's as a Middle power is considered an economic giant at ASEAN level, with a GDP over one trillion USD and has successfully reduced poverty rates since 1998" he added. Dr. Muhammad Faisal, highlighted Indonesia is classified as an upper middle income economy and has reduced its poverty rate since 1998. However, he reminded that these achievements were made possible only after the country through its resilience recovered from the several political economic crises. "The 1960 domestic severe political and economic crisis which led to hyperinflation, extreme poverty and currency redenomination. The repercussions were political turmoil that eventually led to regime change in the country", Dr Faisal recalled. According to the speaker, President Soeharto government from 1966-1996 brought decades of stability and high economic growth to Indonesia, attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) in natural resources extraction and manufacturing sectors. Yet, he said, the



1997-1998 economic crisis hard hit Indonesia and led to high inflation again and a crisis that engulfed countries in Asia. "1997-1998 economic crisis again led to political turmoil and regime change, with an IMF intervention of USD 110 billion" Dr. Faisal explained. The speaker further highlighted that the Reform Era that followed was marked by political reforms and stronger corruption eradication measures. He stated that during this period, the GDP grew at a lower rate until 2007 but sound economic policies reduced vulnerabilities and strengthened external balances leading to increased forex reserves, FDI, tourism and exports. "The IMF loan was fully repaid, and the Indonesian economy demonstrated resilience during the 2008-2009 global

financial crisis" he added. He further elaborated that, since coming into power in 2014, President Joko Widodo has prioritized infrastructure development and connectivity of the Archipelago. To this end, he said, President Joko Widodo is massively spending on infrastructure development such as airports, toll roads, high-speed train network, seaports, tourism infrastructure and development of the new capital of Indonesia in East Kalimantan. The speaker made special reference to development strategies pursued under the leadership of President Joko Widodo aimed at promoting downstream industry development, banning raw material exports and encouraging value-added products like EV nonrenewable energy sectors. He also acquainted the participants about Indonesia's rapid growth of the digital economy and country's four global unicorn with worth above one billion USD. In the Q&A session regarding IMF role and intervention, the speaker replied that in 1998 IMF intervention helped but forced liberalization flooded resulted in Chinese products flooding Indonesian market. On the other hand, he said, the forced political reforms which followed massive decentralization still face policy issues. To another question regarding Indonesian strategy to maintain a balance when it comes to relations with US and China, the speaker said that Indonesia's strategy to maintain balance with the US and China is based on an independent and active foreign policy. "Economic relations ultimately influence political relations but as a natural leader in ASEAN Indonesia must maintain neutrality and centrality of ASEAN", he concluded. – DNA

## EU watchdog probes Frontex's action in boat tragedy

WEB DESK

BRUSSELS: The European Union watchdog has announced a probe into the bloc's border patrol agency, Frontex, over its actions during a deadly shipwreck off Greece. The investigation is "aimed at clarifying Frontex's role in search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean sea following the drowning of hundreds of people off the coast of Greece on 14 June", Ombudsman Emily O'Reilly said in a statement on Wednesday. The independent probe by the European Ombudsman, which looks into suspected cases of poor administration by EU bodies, was launched on O'Reilly's initiative. It adds to two investigations Greece says it has started: a criminal one into alleged smugglers it blames for the tragedy, and another into the actions of its coast-guard. The boat that sank, an overcrowded fishing trawler, was carrying up to 750 people picked up in Libya who sought to cross the Mediterranean to irregularly enter Europe. About 100 of them were saved, but it is thought that some 600 drowned, according to Greek figures relayed by EU Commissioner Ylva Johansson to the European Parliament in early July.

## Outcry over 'repeat offender' Asif's remarks in NA

DNA

KARACHI: PML-N leader Khawaja Asif is once again in hot water for using sexist and derogatory language while referring to women from the opposition PTI. During Tuesday's joint sitting of parliament, responding to criticism from parliamentarians over the handling of legislation and the "bulldozing" of bills, the defence minister made a reference to former prime minister Imran Khan's tenure, recalling past instances of bills being pushed through the legislature. "Depraved women should not lecture on chastity," he went on to say. The livestream of NA proceedings captured the outburst, which also prompted a swift reaction from women members present in the house. But an undeterred Mr Asif only escalated the situation further by stating that if he were to say anything else, the opposition would try to play the "woman card". He also denigrated the women parliamentarians from the PTI, referring to them as the "remains" and "ruins" of Mr Khan. He then pointed towards the PTI benches, declaring, "This is the garbage left behind by the PTI chief, which has to be cleaned." At the time, PTI senators Zar-qa Taimur, Saniya Nishtar, Falak Naz Chitrali, and Fawzia Arshad were present in the house.

## Russian defense minister in North Korea

PYONGYANG: A Russian delegation led by Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu has arrived in North Korea, to be joined by a Chinese delegation later on Wednesday. They will attend Pyongyang's celebrations of the 70th anniversary of the end of the Korean War, marked typically by massive military parades. The visits are the first of their kind to the North since it shut its borders to try to keep out the pandemic. It is unclear if this signals a change in Pyongyang's border policies. Reclusive North Korea had sealed itself off from all trade and diplomatic ties in early 2020, even with Russia and China, its main economic and political partners. They even cut off imports of essential goods like food and medicine. North Korea has been facing food shortages, which have been made worse by its border closure and strict international sanctions that have been imposed because of its nuclear programme. – Agencies