

Islamabad POST

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OIC chief calls for communal unity, religious harmony

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PSG's Mbappe contract row dampens start

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Briefs

Current NA 'worst in history'

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Former prime minister and senior leader of ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Shahid Khaqan Abbasi on Wednesday termed the current National Assembly "as the worst in the history of Pakistan", expressing his regret for being a part of it. "Today is a moment of joy, as the people of Pakistan have been salvaged from this assembly," he remarked while talking to the media outside the parliament house. "I seek forgiveness from the people for being a part of this assembly. We all played our part in constituting it," he added.

US watching Pak political unrest

DNA

WASHINGTON: The United States said on Wednesday it was watching with concern the prospect of election violence in Pakistan, which is set for polls from which former prime minister Imran Khan has been barred. "We're obviously concerned about any actions - particularly violent actions - that can contribute to instability in Pakistan or, frankly, any other country with whom we share a set of common interests when it comes to counterterrorism," said John Kirby, spokesman for the White House National Security Council.

Economy biggest challenge

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif has said economic stability will be the biggest challenge for the upcoming National Assembly. In his farewell speech on the floor of the National Assembly today, he called for collective efforts to put Pakistan on the path of economic stability by utilizing its own resources instead of relying on foreign loans. He said we must provide relief to the people of Pakistan from the soaring inflation in the country.

Shehbaz to continue till new PM

National Assembly dissolved

President signs the summary; If PM and the opposition do not agree on a name then the ECP shall decide about the caretaker prime minister



ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi signing the NA dissolution summary
ANSAR M BHATTI/DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday signed the summary seeking dissolution of the National Assembly. The President immediately signed the summary. The cabinet has also been dissolved however Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif shall continue till the time the new prime minister is elected. The process of appointment of the caretaker prime minister may take another couple of days. If the prime minister and the opposition do not agree on a name then the Election Commission shall decide about the caretaker prime minister within two days. As per the law, even if the President does not sign the summary that National Assembly stands dissolved after 48 hours. Earlier, addressing the farewell session of the lower house of parliament, the premier also thanked all parliamentarians for posing trust in him.

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Bilawal shares diplomatic feats

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari in a press conference on Wednesday counted diplomatic feats of Ministry of Foreign Ministry during his 15-month stint as Foreign Minister. Bilawal Bhutto said that Foreign Ministry was under pressure when he assumed power as Foreign Minister in 2022. Bilawal Bhutto said Pakistan-China relations were facing problems like FATF-grey list but FO countered by commitment and consistency. Bilawal Bhutto said that CPEC was restored 10-year celebrations were held recently in which China's deputy prime minister participated. Foreign Minister said that he was pleased to share that Pakistan and United States bilateral relations have now been restored. Ties with China, KSA and gulf countries Also, FO played a role in restoring relations with friendly and brotherly countries. He gave full credits to China, Saudi Arabia and UAE who showed full support in difficult times.

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IHC wants to know who kept Imran at Attock jail

"Everyone has rights. An appointment with lawyer cannot be refused"

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) Wednesday asked the authorities to apprise it who ordered to keep former premier Imran Khan at Attock jail instead of Adiala as directed by the sessions court. Chief Justice IHC Aamer Farooq also instructed the assistant advocate general to find out about the authority responsible for determining prisoner transfers and submit a report by August 11 (Friday) during the hearing of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman's plea seeking transfer from one prison to another following his arrest on August 5 in the Toshakhana case. The petition put forth by Khan seeks his relocation from the Attock jail to the Adiala jail and requests A-Class amenities, along with permission for a medical assessment from his personal physician, Dr Faisal Sultan. Khan has also appealed for the court's authorisation to meet with his legal team, family and senior party members. Chief Justice Aamer Farooq noted during the proceedings that due to the absence of a jail in Islamabad,

Continued on Page 06

Notices served in Khan's appeal

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday served notices to respondents in an appeal of chairman PTI Imran Khan against his conviction in Toshakhana criminal case. The court also sought the case record from the trial court and said that it would firstly, hear the stance of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) against the appeal. A two judge bench headed by Chief Justice Aamer Farooq and comprising Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri heard the case wherein the defence lawyers Khawaja Haris, Sardar Latif Khosa, Barrister Gohar Ali Khan and Baber Awan appeared before the court. At the outset of the hearing, Sardar Latif Khosa said that the trial court had awarded maximum sentence to former prime minister as per the charges in the case.

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TILLA: General Syed Asim Munir, COAS visited Tilla Field Firing Ranges near Jhelum and witnessed exercises. - DNA

India win 4-0 Pak out of Semi Final race
Green shirts failed to get the needed result

DNA

CHENNAI: Pakistan hockey team is out of the Asian Champions Trophy after losing 4-0 against arch-rivals India in Chennai, India. This was the first time Pakistan failed to finish in the top four since the introduction of the Asian Champions Trophy. Pakistan, Japan and Korea all had the same number of points but the latter teams made their way to the semifinals due to better goal difference. For India, Harmanpreet Singh scored two goals, while Akashdeep Singh and Jugraj Singh scored one each. Earlier this week, Pakistan hockey team had beaten China 2-1 in their fourth match of the Asian Champions Trophy in Chennai. In a must-win game, Pakistani boys showed great potential by tackling an early charge by China in first quarter which remained goalless.

Lauds 'battle worthiness' of troops

Ready to thwart 'nefarious designs' of adversaries

COAS appreciates high degree of professionalism displayed by troops

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Army Chief General Asim Munir vowed that Pakistan possesses the "wherewithal to thwart nefarious designs of its adversaries through the entire gamut of threat", said the military's media wing in a statement on Wednesday. The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said that the chief of army staff (COAS) passed the remark when he visited Tilla Field Firing Ranges near Jhelum in Punjab. During the visit, Gen Munir witnessed live fire and manoeuvres of the advanced VT-4 tanks, shoot and scoot capabilities of long-range SH-15 artillery guns and innovative equipment display. "The Pakistan Army is alive to the existing and emerging challenges and possessed the wherewithal to thwart nefarious designs of its adversaries through the entire gamut of threats," the army chief added. He also lauded the combat proficiency of the crews and their mastery over state-of-the-art weaponry. He also appreciated the

high degree of professionalism, battle worthiness and offensive spirit displayed by the troops of the strike corps.

When the army chief arrived in Jhelum he was received by Mangla corps commander and briefed on the operational readiness of the strike corps. Earlier this week, Gen Munir said the recent surge in terrorism was a "futile effort" by terrorists to resume talks and warned them to submit to the "writ of state of Pakistan before they are decimated". According to the ISPR, the army chief issued the warning when he met the tribal elders and notables from the newly merged districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The "interactive session" was held during the COAS's visit to Peshawar. "The surge in terrorism in recent past is a futile effort on the part of terrorists to get the talks re-initiated, however, there is no option for these terrorists except to submit to the writ of state of Pakistan before they are decimated, if they persist on

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Forty-one migrants die in shipwreck off Italy

Four managed to survive the shipwreck by floating on inner tubes

NEWS DESK

ROME: Forty-one migrants including three children are feared dead after a shipwreck last week in the Mediterranean. UN agencies said, citing four survivors brought to the Italian island of Lampedusa Wednesday. Their metal boat overturned during bad weather during the night of Thursday to Friday after setting off from the Tunisian port of Sfax, said a joint statement from the UN agencies for refugees, children and migration. The survivors - a 13-year-old boy on his own, a woman and two men - were rescued by a merchant ship and brought to Lampedusa by the Italian coastguard, they said. In a separate statement, the Italian Red Cross, which manages the migrant reception centre on the island, said the four were generally in good health. It confirmed the testimony that there had been 45 people on the boat when it went down, adding that none of those missing were related to the survivors. The four man-

aged to survive the shipwreck by floating on inner tubes, it said. The shipwreck is one of several deadly incidents reported in recent days after a period of bad weather. Officials on Monday had reported that 16 migrants died in shipwrecks off the coasts of Tunisia and Western Sahara. And on Sunday, the UN's migration agency, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), said at least 30 people were missing after two shipwrecks off Lampedusa. The tiny island, located just 90 miles (around 145 kilometres) from Tunisia, is the first port of call for many migrants heading from North Africa to Europe. But many of them do not survive, making the Central Mediterranean migrant crossing the world's deadliest. More than 1,800 people died attempting the route so far this year, according to IOM figures from Friday - the toll from the latest shipwrecks brings that to almost 1,900. This is more than double the same period last year, IOM spokesman Flavio di Giacomo said, adding that this was likely to be an underestimate.

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Six killed over land dispute in Shikarpur

DNA

SHIKARPUR: At least six people were killed in an armed clash between two groups over land dispute in Mirzapur, Shikarpur. According to details, an armed clash broke out between two groups of Junejo and Kalhora communities in Mirzapur, a katcha area in the Shikarpur district of Sindh. As a result of the fire, six people lost their lives on the spot, while two were injured. Getting the information of the incident, police rushed to the crime scene but due to fierce firing, the cops were unable to reach the area, while the area has been surrounded by the cops. Police added that the bodies of the dead were still lying at the crime scene as both groups continued fire with modern weapons, till the latest reports. SSP Amjad Sheikh said the majority of victims in the shooting were 'criminals' whose record is being checked. It is pertinent to mention here that incidents of violence over personal enmity have occurred previously in the province and in one such case, an anti-terrorism court (ATC) judge was killed along with three family members after unidentified men opened fire on his vehicle in Swabi district of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province.

Stable, consistent political environment crucial to ensure progress

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Water Resources Syed Khurshid Ahmed Shah on Wednesday underscored the need for a more stable and consistent political environment to ensure the progress of the nation. In his address during the farewell session of the National Assembly, he highlighted Pakistan's unique history of constitution-making and dissolution. He emphasized that the constitution of the country was not followed, fostering a sense of complexity in its governance. Minister Khurshid Shah drew attention to the period spanning from 1988 to 1997 when successive assemblies were elected and subsequently dissolved. He underscored the need for a more stable and consistent political environment to ensure the nation's progress. Shah paid tribute to the memory of the revered martyr, Benazir Bhutto, attributing her sacrifice to the preservation of the very house he was addressing. He revealed that, in pursuit of restoring the democratic system, the government had extended support even to individuals and groups they initially did not intend to support. Moreover, the Minister underscored the achievement of the present assembly in completing a full five-year term. He urged fellow legislators and citizens alike to introspect about the gains and losses experienced during this time, encouraging a collective understanding of the nation's trajectory. Shah stressed the urgency of developing comprehensive, long-term strategies to safeguard Pakistan's political system, democracy.—DNA

Netherlands wants to further bolster trade ties with Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: H.E. Mrs. Henny Fokel de Vries, Ambassador of Netherlands to Pakistan said that her country enjoys strong relations with Pakistan and wants to bolster bilateral trade and investment ties with it. She said this while talking to a delegation of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) that called on her, led by Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President. The Ambassador said that this year marks the 75 years of bilateral relations between Netherlands and Pakistan. She discussed areas of mutual cooperation between Pakistan and Netherlands, especially in agriculture, floriculture, dairy, livestock & water management and added that Pakistan can learn best practices from the Netherlands in these sectors to improve its economy. Speaking on the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry said that the



bilateral trade between Pakistan and Netherlands had crossed US\$ 2 Billion in 2022, with trade balance in favor of Pakistan, which was encouraging. He said that the Netherlands is the world's second largest exporter of agricultural products and it should share its technology, knowledge and exper-

tise with Pakistan for improving our agricultural productivity. He said that Dutch is very strong in cheese and dairy processing and it should cooperate with Pakistan in this sector so that Pakistani companies could diversify into cheese and dairy processing and production. Engr. Azhar ul Islam Zafar, Vice President ICCI highlighted the lucrative economic avenues present in Pakistan in which both countries can further deepen their economic relations. He also spoke about the possible avenues for mutual collaboration between the Dutch and Pakistani businesses. Zafar Bakhtawari, former President ICCI and Secretary General UBG lauded the progress achieved by the Netherlands, especially in the agriculture sector and invited the Dutch companies to visit Pakistan in order to explore investment opportunities in the areas of agriculture, horticulture, dairy, water management and renewable energy. He said that by investing in Pakistan, the Netherlands can increase its exports to many countries.

42 families evacuate near Mohmand Dam site

PESHAWAR: In a successful Jirga organized by the district administration of Mohmand and local leaders, 42 families from Patti Banda have voluntarily evacuated their homes situated at the Mohmand Dam site. The Jirga took place at the Lower Mohmand Yaka Ghund Rest House, where Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ehtishamul Haq commended the collaborative efforts of the district administration and local leaders that led to the families' relocation. Initially, 53 families resided in Pattibanda before dam construction commenced; some were displaced earlier, leaving 42 families. During the event, compensation cheques, tents, and essential non-food items were distributed to the evacuated families. Present at the Jirga were Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ehtishamul Haq, Additional Deputy Commissioner General Arshad Jameel, Assistant Commissioner Lower Mohmand Saddam Hussain Memon, former MPA Nisar Mohmand, and Patti Banda's families. The construction of the Mohmand Dam is progressing rapidly, with an anticipated completion date of January 2026.—APP

UBG advocates for concrete measures Addressing alarming issue of smuggling between Pakistan, Iran

DNA

KARACHI: Pakistan and Iran, two nations striving for enhanced bilateral trade and economic relations, find their efforts hampered by the rampant issue of smuggling. Renowned businessman Zubair Tufail, President of UBG and former President of FPCCI, shed light on the severity of this concern in a recent statement. According to the statement issued by the central spokesperson UBG Gulzar firoz, expressing his concerns, Zubair Tufail highlighted the unfortunate reality that despite mutual commitments to bolster trade ties, smuggling activities have cast a shadow over these efforts. Shockingly, the volume of smuggled goods from Iran has exceeded the legitimate trade figures. Of particular concern is the smuggling of Iranian petrol into Pakistan, which is readily available in major

cities across the nation. Tufail underscored the urgency of the situation, pointing out that effective measures have yet to be implemented by relevant ministries and departments to curb the escalating smuggling activities. He speculated that such extensive smuggling may even involve support from border customs and tax authorities. The economic repercussions of smuggling are staggering. Pakistan is facing substantial losses in terms of sales tax and income tax, as legitimate trade channels between the two countries are being compromised. A notable example is the smuggling of chemicals, including sulphonic acid, washing powder, ceramic tiles etc to from Iran. Moreover the detergent powder industry which is paying billions of rupees taxes will be ruined in few weeks if smuggling not stopped. These chemicals are finding their way

into Pakistani cities such as Multan, Faisalabad, and KPK, where they are used in textile and other industrial sectors. The illicit nature of these transactions allows manufacturers to evade sales tax, granting them an unfair advantage over legitimate businesses. Zubair Tufail also discussed the detrimental impact of Iranian fuel smuggling on Pakistan's already struggling industry. Citing a report from S&P Global Commodity Insights, he revealed that Iranian fuel is significantly cheaper than its official retail counterpart, contributing to a thriving black market. This price disparity has enabled private dealers to capitalize on the situation by selling Iranian diesel at rates lower than local dealers. The consequences of fuel smuggling are dire. According to the Oil & Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA), an estimated 4,000 tonnes of fuel per day are illicitly entering Paki-

stan, resulting in a staggering monthly revenue loss of around 10.2 billion rupees. The issue of smuggling has also aggravated food inflation in Pakistan, with consumers turning to cheaper, smuggled Iranian goods in the face of soaring prices. Food inflation has reached an alarming 42 percent, compelling consumers to seek alternatives like smuggled Iranian oil and cheese, which are reportedly available in major cities. In light of these circumstances, Zubair Tufail expressed skepticism about achieving the ambitious target of 9400 billion rupees in tax collection. He called for urgent and coordinated efforts from all stakeholders and address this critical issue, preserve legitimate trade, and safeguard Pakistan's economic interests. He added that FBR can stop this smuggling through Directorate of customs intelligence agencies.

Faculty members of GCU, FJMU, NUST win best university teacher award 2022

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Commission (HEC) organised on Wednesday a ceremony to confer the Best University Teacher Awards for the year 2022 upon the outstanding faculty members of Pakistani universities in three broad categories, viz. Life Sciences & Medicine; Physical Sciences & Engineering; and Social Sciences & Humanities. The annual Best University Teacher Award initiative of HEC aims to recognise exemplary university teachers and motivate the faculty to enhance their pedagogical and mentoring skills. Dr. Syeda Salma Hassan from Government College University, Lahore, Dr. Kamran Khalid from Fatimah Jinnah Medical University, Lahore and the third by Rafia Mumtaz from the National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) has won the Best University Teacher Awards 2022 in the categories of Social Sciences & Humanities; Life sciences and Medicine; and Physical Sciences and Engineering respectively. Chairman HEC Dr Mukhtar Ahmed presided over the ceremony, attended by Executive Director HEC Dr Shaista Sohail, Advisor Academics Engr. Muhammad Raza Chohan, Vice Chancellors of different universities, faculty members, and a large number of students. The conferment of the Best University Teacher Award was also marked by the distribution of cash prizes and certificates among the winners of the Inter-University Essay Writing Competition. Addressing the ceremony, Chairman HEC Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed termed teaching a prophetic profession and advertised the faculty and teachers to strive for doing justice to their duties and perform their responsibilities to the best of their capabilities. He emphasised the importance of training the youth alongside the provision of education to them. He expressed his pleasure that female faculty and students in a large number were among the participants and winners of the two HEC initiatives.—APP

TEVTA holds vocational course for street children

PESHAWAR: The Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA), has started free technical and vocational courses in order to make the street children skilled and educated here on Wednesday. Deputy Commissioner, Shah Fahad, during his visit to the center at University Town, said that the programme was aimed to educate the street children besides making them skilled so that they could easily get jobs or start their own trade. During the six-month-long courses, the street children including males and females aged between 11 to 15 would be trained in different professional courses besides learning traditional education.—APP

Almost every family in Pak affected by Hepatitis B, C

LAHORE: At least one person expected to be affected by the Hepatitis B and C virus in every family in the country which is needed certain measures to overcome this disease. These views were expressed by Post Graduate Medical Institute Principal Professor Al-Fareed Zafar during the awareness walk held at the Lahore General Hospital, here on Wednesday. He said that Hepatitis B and C are extremely deadly viruses that cause countless diseases and deaths worldwide. He said that majority of the Pakistani population do not get their medical checkup due to lack of awareness as well as economic and social problems. He stressed on providing more awareness to the new generation about hepatitis. The Principal PGMI suggested that apart from organizing special lectures in educational institutions, it is also important to add a chapter about Hepatitis B and C in the syllabus. He said that where people spend a lot of money on their food, they should also go for blood screening at least once a year to determine that they are not suffering from any kind of viral infection. He said that viral diseases could be controlled by providing timely treatment to the patient if any disease appears in blood screening result. Talking to the media, Prof. Al-Fareed Zafar said that there is a wrong impression among the public that Hepatitis B and C are spread through contaminated water and food items and clarified that the virus is not transmitted through water but through the blood and secretions of patients. He said that to prevent the transmission of this virus, the instruments used in the operation theater, barber shops and dentists' clinics should be sterilized, for which public awareness is important because quacks, barbers sitting on the side of the road and cleaning teeth and ears are the main cause of rapid spread of this virus. He said that 328 million people worldwide are currently suffering from various types of hepatitis while 17.5 million new cases of hepatitis C are coming every year, which is very alarming. He said that in 2015, 13.40 million deaths occurred due to hepatitis since 2000 and these figures must be taken seriously. The medical experts highlighted that according to the research report of Gastroenterology Organization, Pakistan is the third largest country affected by Hepatitis C in the world and more than 111 people died as a result of Hepatitis B and C every day. They said that the number of people suffering from both diseases in Pakistan is more than 1.5 million, of which the majority did not know about their disease. They said that deaths due to hepatitis, TB, dengue, malaria and AIDS are more than normal. They said that according to the World Health Organization, 71 million people in the world are suffering from hepatitis C epidemic, of which 10 percent or 71 million people.—APP

Pakistan Red Crescent Society and Telenor Microfinance Bank Join Hands for Cash Disbursement Services



DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a significant move to extend support to vulnerable communities across Pakistan, the Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) and Telenor Microfinance Bank Limited have inked a comprehensive framework agreement on Cash Disbursement Services (CDS).

A high-level delegation from Telenor Microfinance Bank Limited, led by Mr. Shahzad Khan, Group Head Corporate Business, met with Chairman Pakistan Red Crescent Society, Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari, at the PRCS national headquarters to formalize this vital partnership. The framework agreement, signed by Secretary General PRCS, Muhammad Abiudullah Khan, and Mr.

Omar Aijaz Khan, Head of Corporate Sales & Partnerships Telenor Microfinance Bank, outlines the collaborative effort in providing crucial payment and disbursement services to PRCS. Under this agreement, PRCS will facilitate payments through the bank to duly registered beneficiaries following the established Beneficiary Registration Procedure. Chairman PRCS, Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari, emphasized the critical juncture Pakistan faces due to climate-induced disasters and economic challenges, impacting livelihoods across the nation. The Cash Assistance program initiated by PRCS aims to provide vital support to the most deserving and vulnerable members of society, fostering a return to normalcy in their lives. "Our commitment to vulnerable communities is unwavering, and this new partnership underscores our dedication to delivering services to those in need with utmost enthusiasm," he remarked. The PRCS-Telenor Microfinance Bank partnership reflects a shared vision to address pressing challenges and contribute to the betterment of society.

Government of Pakistan
Ministry of Energy (Petroleum Division)
Directorate General of Petroleum Concessions

INVITATION TO BID FOR GRANT OF PETROLEUM EXPLORATION RIGHTS

Applications are invited for grant of petroleum exploration rights (Exploration License) over the following Blocks:-

S.No	Block	Zone	S.No	Block	Zone
1	KALAT NORTH (2966-4)	I (F)	6	MURRADI (2767-7)	III
2	RACHNA-II (3071-6)	II	7	SAWAN SOUTH (2668-26)	III
3	MALIR-II (2467-18)	II	8	MITHIANI (2667-17)	III
4	SARUNA WEST (2666-1)	II	9	GAMBAT-II (2668-25)	III
5	KOTRA EAST (2867-8)	III	10	ZAMZAMA WEST(2667-18)	III

- Bid Documents can be obtained from the office of Director General Petroleum Concessions (DGPC) 3rd Floor, Petroleum House, G-5/2, Islamabad on a written request and payment of non-refundable fee of US\$ 100 (or equivalent in Pak Rupees) in favour of DGPC through a bank draft. The Bid Documents can also be downloaded from the website www.ppionline.com by online payment of US\$ 100.
- Sealed applications are required to be submitted by the interested exploration and production companies to DGPC, 3rd Floor, Petroleum House, G-5/2, Islamabad, Pakistan by 10:00 a.m. (PST) on 15th November, 2023. Applications will be opened publicly by the Bid Opening Committee on the same day at 10:30 a.m. (PST) in DGPC office in the presence of the applicants or their representatives.
- Applicant shall also furnish bid bond with each application equivalent to 1% of the bid offered.
- Bids submitted by all applicants will be considered as irrevocable and unconditional. In case any applicant states otherwise, his bid will not be accepted and will be treated as "non responsive".
- The bidding process will be governed by and construed under the laws of Pakistan and any question or dispute regarding grant of Petroleum Right or any matter or thing connected therewith shall be resolved by arbitration in Pakistan and in accordance with laws of Pakistan as per applicable rules of Pakistan Onshore Petroleum (Exploration & Production) Rules, 2013.
- The successful applicant will be selected in accordance with the provisions of the Bidding documents. The Authority reserves the right to exercise the power to accept or reject any application. In the event of refusal to grant such petroleum right, the Authority shall as far as possible provide the reason thereof. The Authority also reserves the right to cancel or annul the bidding process without specifying any reason.
- Any bidder offering Work Units lower than the minimum threshold specified in the Policy or the bidding documents shall be treated as non-responsive and his bid would not be further evaluated.
- In the event, any of the bidder(s) attempts to influence the DGPC in any manner whatsoever, it shall result in the disqualification of such bidder(s).

(Kashif Ali)

Director General (Petroleum Concessions)
Tel: 092-051-9204176 Fax: 092-051-9213245
website: www.petroleum.gov.pk

National Days and Armed Forces Days

August

Aug 01/China
Armed Forces Day

Aug 01/Switzerland
National Day

Aug 01/Lebanon
Armed Forces Day

Aug 01/Syria
Armed Forces Day

Aug 4/Burkina Faso
National Day

Aug 09 /Singapore

Aug 15/DPR Korea
Independence Day

Aug 15/India
Independence Day

Aug 15/Poland
Armed Forces Day

Aug 17 /Indonesia
Independence Day

Aug 24/Ukraine
Independence Day

Aug 25/Uruguay
Independence Day

Aug 30 /Turkey
Armed Forces Day

Aug 31/Kyrgyz Republic
Independence Day

Aug 31/Malaysia
National Day

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Islamabad.....1122 & 16
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& Rescue Services.4451122
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Motorway Police.9270601-20
Women Police Stations
Islamabad.....9222596
Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



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Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange 9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi.5555489
CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

CMH.....5611111
MH.....5611116
Cantt Hospital...9270907-11
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RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666

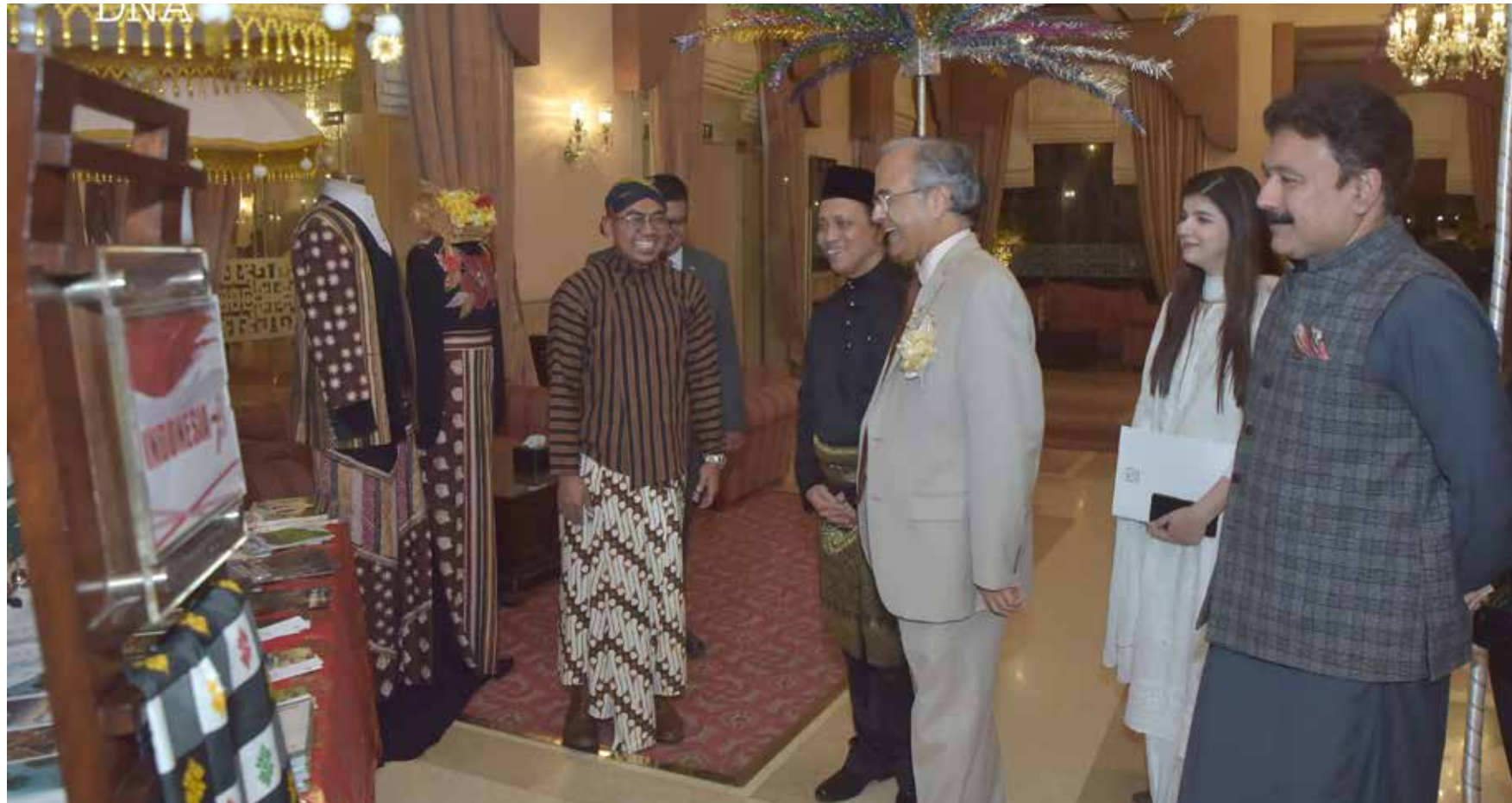


Departments

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Secretary Asad Majeed Khan visits stall of Indonesia on the occasion of ASEAN Day celebrations held at the Islamabad Serena Hotel.—DNA

Ahsan urges industrialists to benefit from R&D expertise

He urged Pakistanis to base their decisions on the realities of the physical world rather than succumbing to manipulation through data science and social media

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Professor Ahsan Iqbal on Wednesday urged the private sector to utilize the Research and Development (R&D) services and expertise of universities for their businesses' technological advancement to compete in international markets. "I urge the private sector to collaborate with universities in all technological advancements to get the benefit of their R&D labs to meet international standards and increase the country's exports," he said addressing the launching ceremony of the Venture Capital Fund (VCF). The minister said Rs 5 billion had been allocated under the initiative aimed at creating a conducive environment for the promotion of investment in digital technology. "Pakistan's future depends on matching the

pace of digital technology." The minister urged for establishing industry-academia linkages with private sector universities paving the way for development through applied research, adding development was not possible without increasing exports. Highlighting the importance of producing quality and skilled human resources in achieving national prosperity and development goals, the minister said the incumbent government increased the development budget of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) from Rs26 billion to Rs70 billion, which was almost 135 per cent unprecedented hike. Making a comparison, Ahsan Iqbal said the tertiary education rate in the world stood at around 40 per cent, India at 31 per cent, Bangladesh at 25 per cent and Pakistan, unfortunately, stand at 13 per cent only. "We have to impart higher education to our youth besides equipping them with technological advancements," he said

while declaring the country's 'youth a 'nuclear asset' in the economic field. The minister said the country had the potential to become one of the leading and fastest-growing economies in the world in 10-15 years by ensuring peace, stability, and continuity of policies. "No country in the world has attained success in development without a decade of stability." Recounting the government's initiatives to match the technological changes taking place in the world, he said it established national centres for artificial intelligence, cyber security, big data cloud computing, automation and robotics. Besides, the minister said, a national centre for quantum computing had been set up laying a 'future foundation' for information technology infrastructure to contest the development pace at the international level. Addressing the vital issue of population growth, Ahsan Iqbal cautioned against the dangers of resource depletion

and underscored the necessity of responsible development. He urged Pakistanis to base their decisions on the realities of the physical world rather than succumbing to manipulation through data science and social media. In closing remarks, the Planning minister encapsulated Pakistan's path to becoming an economic powerhouse. "Our journey to development is grounded in reality, not fiction. Each Pakistani must subscribe to the vision of an economically powerful Pakistan built upon genuine progress and purpose." In her address, Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Youth Affairs Shaza Fatima Khawaja acknowledged the visionary leadership of Minister Ahsan Iqbal, underscoring his unwavering dedication to the Planning Ministry's goals, especially the ambitious Vision2025. "In an extraordinarily short span of time, we have convened under the remarkable leadership of Ahsan

Sahib. His steadfast commitment to Vision-2025 has been nothing short of inspirational," the SAPM said. Commenting on the VCF, she said this approach entailed the creation of an "idea fund for funds," designed to incentivize both local and international private sector venture capital firms to invest in Pakistani start-ups. "The vision extends to attracting venture capital firms to establish offices and operations within Pakistan, leveraging public funds to catalyze startup investments." Shaza Fatima Khawaja extended a warm invitation to foreign investors interested in contributing to Pakistani start-ups or launching their own ventures. She urged all stakeholders to leverage their expertise and capacities to propel the program forward, expressing her unwavering confidence in their ability to navigate the journey and realize the ambitious goals set forth.

Pak rice export to China surpassed USD 455 mn

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's rice export to China in 2022 surpassed USD 455 million with a volume of more than one million tonnes, for the first time between China-Pakistan rice trade, said Ghulam Qadir Commercial Counsellor. "China's imports of Semi or wholly milled rice (Commodity Code: 10063020) from Pakistan touched USD 211.88 million, while two kinds of Broken rice (Commodity Code: 10064020, 10064080) reached USD 162.78 million and USD 80.74 million respectively." Pakistani rice is getting popular in the Chinese market, he emphasized according to a report published by Gwadar Pro on Wednesday. "As per estimated, Pakistan will produce some 9 million

metric tons of rice during the year and this will help to export more commodity," said Rafique Suleman, Convenor FPCCI Standing Committee on rice. We could expect the volume to reverse decline last year." Due to the flood-induced crop failure, in terms of volume rice export shrunk by 25 percent during the last fiscal year. Pakistan exported 3.717 million metric tons of rice including basmati and other varieties during July-June of FY23 as against 4.97 million metric ton in corresponding period of previous year. But an expected bumper crops this year will bring hope to the industry as a whole. The country's rice exports will not only be higher than previous year but likely to touch an all-time high level, Suleman said. Thanks to the expansion of planting area and the improvement

of technology, growers will be the direct beneficiaries of the export expansion. In addition, the ban on rice exports by India will also help to explore new export markets for Pakistani exports. Pakistan will earn USD 2.7 to USD 3 billion through export of rice during this fiscal as sufficient rice stocks will be available. And the global food shortage caused by various factors has further pushed up export prices. Quotations for Pakistani rice exports (25 percent broken) climbed to an average of USD 503 per metric ton in May, an increase of 11.0 percent month on month, to their highest level since August 2008. Further, by July 15, Pakistan rice prices rose to USD 600 per metric tons. "We started importing Pakistani rice in 2018, with the annual import volume has been stable at

more than 200,000 tons in recent years. Both basmati and non-basmati rice are within our scope. In China, basmati is used as a kind of high-end rice, mainly for Southeast Asia and South Asia restaurants. This long-grain rice, which has a chewier taste, requires less water when cooking. It is suitable for making baked rice and hand-picked rice," Ding Yong, East China Regional Manager, Shenzhen Vintop Import and Export Co., Ltd. told Gwadar Pro. "More Chinese should be promoted to learn about basmati rice, to my way of thinking, which will be of great help to stimulate the export of Pakistani rice. Basmati rice is a business card of Pakistan, thus more publicity on local customs will be of great benefit to expanding the domestic market," Ding added.

Sino-Pak feature film to strengthen bilateral cultural exchanges

ZHANG HEQING

ISLAMABAD: First Sino-Pak feature film premier held to strengthen bilateral cultural exchanges, said Zhang Heqing, the Cultural Counselor of the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan. The Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) recently hosted the premiere of "Ba'tie Girl," the inaugural Sino-Pak feature film, marking a decade of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) celebrations. Zafar Uddin Mahmood, Special Assistant to the Pakistani Prime Minister, honored the film with the Sino-Pak Friendship Award. He emphasized the film's role in celebrating the enduring bond between the two nations and expressed hope for deeper cultural ties and future collaborative film projects. Zhang Heqing, the Cultural Counselor of the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan, underscored the film's pivotal role in enhancing cultural dialogue between China and Pakistan. He also lauded CPEC projects for bolstering both economic and cultural connections, promoting greater interpersonal interactions between the two countries. Xie Peng, the executive producer of "Ba'tie Girl," shared with Gwadar Pro that this collaboration, the first of its kind since the two countries established diplomatic ties 72 years ago, is a significant milestone. He expressed gratitude for the comprehensive support from the Pakistani government, the heartfelt assistance of its people, the steadfast backing of the Chinese Embassy, and the invaluable aid from Chinese expatriates. Xie optimistically remarked, "Given the unwavering support from both Chinese and Pakistani governments towards cultural collaborations,

Residents demand action land grabbers

RAWALPINDI: Residents of Union Council 35 Rawalpindi city on Wednesday demanded of the Municipal Corporation Rawalpindi (MCR) to take action against grabbers of Pir Chua's graveyard land. Dilawar Khan, a resident of Iqbal Colony said that contrary to policy of the Punjab government, illegal construction was being carried out in Pir Chua graveyard adjacent to Masjid Faiz Ul Quran. He said that some land grabbers had constructed a building in the graveyard by erasing graves apparently in connivance with the concerned officials for which they have not any legal documents. Sheikh Hafeez another resident of the area said building inspector have turned a blind eye to the illegal activities taking place in the area, which were not possible without backing of the concerned staff. He said that they have complained to the Municipal administration several times but no action had been taken yet. The residents have demanded of the MCR to demolish the illegal construction and registered FIRs against those who have no legal position in this regard. When contacted, Chief Officer MCR Amjad Dhillon admitted that the matter was in his notice and the staff would look after all the matters related to illegal construction in the graveyard. He said that legal action would be taken against the alleged land grabbers.—DNA

Sheikh Abdul Aziz remembered in IIOJK

ISLAMABAD: The All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) and other pro-freedom organizations continued to pay rich tribute to prominent Kashmiri martyred leader, Shaikh Abdul Aziz, ahead of his 15th martyrdom anniversary falling on August 11. According to Kashmir Media Service (KMS), the APHC leader, Shaikh Abdul Aziz, was shot dead by Indian troops on 11th August 2008, while he was leading a mammoth march to Azad Kashmir against the economic blockade of the Kashmir Valley by Hindu extremists of Jammu. The leaders and organizations urged the people of IIOJK to express solidarity with all Kashmiri martyrs on Friday, August 11, and arrange special prayer meetings. They said the Kashmiris will accomplish the mission of their martyrs at all costs. Meanwhile, the posters displayed by APHC and other organizations in Srinagar described Sheikh Aziz as a bold, brave, and sincere leader and said that he preferred martyrdom but never bowed before oppressor India. They reiterated the Kashmiris' resolve to continue the ongoing freedom struggle till complete success.—APP

National Cultural Narrative 2023 held

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A momentous consultative workshop on the National Cultural Narrative 2023 was convened at the National Library of Pakistan, where eminent personalities from diverse sectors gathered to deliberate and share their insights. This collaborative event was jointly organized by the National Culture and Heritage Division, Hashoo Foundation, and Quaid-e-Azam University Islamabad. The purpose of the workshop was to seek inputs from all the relevant stakeholders and foster collaboration among professionals from various fields. The desired result is, a Cultural Policy Framework that the provinces can readily implement for their further development and social harmony. Attendees from across Pakistan, actively engaged in thought-provoking focal group discussions, examining the draft document jointly developed by the National Culture and Heritage Division, Hashoo Foundation, and Quaid-e-Azam University, Islamabad.

Importance of marriage certificate highlighted

ISLAMABAD: Prominent Women politicians and legal experts emphasized the need to spread awareness regarding marital rights and Nikahnama on electronic, print as well as digital and social media. This was expressed by them at a two-day study session titled "Diagnostic Study of Registered Nikahnamas in Punjab: A Review of Women's Marriage Rights" held here in a local hotel the other day. The study session was organized by Musawi in coordination with the Centre for Human Rights (CFHR) and National Commission for Human Rights here in a local hotel. The session was attended by Minister for Women Development Syeda Shehla Raza and other guest speakers, Parliamentary Secretary for Law and Justice and Convener Parliamentary Caucus on Child Rights Ms Mehnaz Aziz, Justice Dr Syed Anwar of Federal Shariat Court, Chairperson of National Commission for Human Rights Rabiya Javeria Agha and Senior lawyer Tahira Hassan etc. Speakers in their keynote speeches highlighted the importance of marriage certificates at the time of children's marriage and emphasized the need to spread awareness regarding marital rights and Nikahnama on social media. Parliamentary Secretary Ms Mehnaz Akbar said that our new generation should be well aware of the significance of the nikah document.—DNA



ISLAMABAD: Charge d'Affaires of the Chinese embassy Ms. Pang gives award to Editor Daily Islamabad POST Ansar Mahmood Bhatti.—DNA

Briefs

ANF recovers 32 kg drugs in six operations; arrests 7

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting six operations across the country managed to recover 32 kg of drugs and arrested seven accused including a woman, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Wednesday. He informed that in an operation, 300 grams of heroin concealed in beauty cream in the passenger's baggage was recovered at Islamabad Airport. The accused resident of Upper Dir was leaving for Jeddah on flight number QR-615. In another operation, a husband and wife, residents of Hangu, were arrested at Islamabad Airport. A total of 60 Ice-filled capsules were recovered from their possession. The accused were leaving for Qatar on flight number PK-287. 350 grams of ice was recovered from the possession of two bikers intercepted in PWD Town Islamabad. 297 grams of MDMA was recovered from a parcel confiscated from a courier office in Rawalpindi. The parcel was booked from the Netherlands to Karachi.—APP

CTO directs to remove encroachment

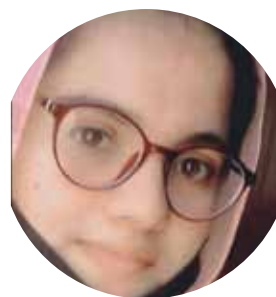
RAWALPINDI: Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Taimoor Khan has directed to wipe out encroachment without any discrimination. CTO was of the view that illegal encroachment was the main hurdle in the smooth flow of traffic. He expressed these views while addressing a meeting held on Tuesday at the Traffic Headquarters to improve traffic management. The meeting was attended by various sectors and circles in charge, including STO Rawalpindi, Munir Ahmed Hashmi. Taimoor Khan asserted that any circle in charge found negligent in performing their duties would be held accountable.—APP

PML-N to come up with people's expectations

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-N Senior leader Qaiser Ahmad Sheikh Wednesday said that top agenda of Pakistan Muslim League-N government was to serve the public, determined to steer the country out of the prevailing crises and would come up to people's expectations after winning elections 2023. "PML-N had track record of delivering to the nation", he said while talking to PTV news channel. He further lashed out that PTI chairman Imran Khan was failed to give any tangible policy whereas we have a number of development projects at our credit. PML-N constructed motorways, introduced development projects to facilitate the masses but Imran only claimed to offer 10 million jobs and 5 million houses.—APP

Pakistan's Diverse Educational Mosaic and Challenges

LAIQA GULSHER



Education is the cornerstone of any nation's progress and prosperity. In Pakistan, a country known for its rich cultural heritage and diverse landscapes, the educational landscape is equally varied and dynamic. As we delve into the intricate tapestry of Pakistan's educational mosaic, we must acknowledge the accomplishments, but also address the pressing challenges that lie ahead. Pakistan boasts a vast and multifaceted educational system, catering to a diverse population. The country's educational institutions range from traditional madrassas to modern universities, providing a wide



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Secretary Asad Majeed Khan posing for a picture the performers of the cultural show, on the occasion of ASEAN Day celebrations held at the Islamabad Serena Hotel. Heads of Missions of the ASEAN countries are also seen in the picture.—DNA

Agri financing hits record Rs 1.78 trillion in FY23:SBP

The unprecedented performance in fiscal year 2023 is owed to the collective efforts of the financial institutions and various initiatives taken in the backdrop of several challenges including the devastating floods of 2022, rising input costs and monetary tightening in recent years

ISLAMABAD: The financial institutions disbursed Rs1,776 billion under agriculture financing during fiscal year 2023 and achieved 97.6% of the agriculture credit target of Rs1,819 billion set by State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The credit disbursement recorded an impressive growth of over 25% compared to Rs 1,419 billion disbursed in same period of last financial year (2022), said a press release issued by the SBP on Wednesday. The outstanding portfolio of agriculture credit also registered a growth of 10% and reached Rs. 760 billion at the

end of June 2023 compared to Rs. 691 billion at end June 2022. The unprecedented performance in fiscal year 2023 is owed to the collective efforts of the financial institutions and various initiatives taken in the backdrop of several challenges including the devastating floods of 2022, rising input costs and monetary tightening in recent years. Among the various initiatives, SBP's Champion Bank Model and Agriculture Credit Scoring Model played a key role in supporting financial institutions in extending agriculture financing, particularly in the under

served areas where significant growth was registered during the period under review. In addition, the strategic guidance of Agricultural Credit Advisory Committee (ACAC) coupled with rigorous monitoring of financing by SBP provided further support in accelerating agriculture finance. The last ACAC meeting, held in December 2022, brought industry's focus to the potential of Islamic banking for meeting the needs of the farming community. As a result, Islamic agriculture financing also grew significantly during the year. SBP efforts were further

bolstered by the Prime Minister's Kissan Package, which provided stimulus to revive the flow of agriculture financing especially in the flood affected areas. Under the Kissan Package, various measures were implemented to strengthen the agriculture sector in flood-affected regions, which included waiver of markup on outstanding small loans, interest-free loans for small and marginalized farmers, and risk coverage for banks. A subsidized scheme for purchase of farm machinery was introduced to promote mechanization and ensure national food security. Moreover, agro-

based SMEs were included in SBP's Refinance Facility for Modernization of SMEs and Prime Minister's Youth Business and Agriculture Loan Scheme, which provided affordable loans to the agriculture sector. SBP has also released the annual ranking of banks under the Agriculture Credit Scoring Model to bring transparency and competition among the various agriculture credit providers. SBP's scoring model gauges the agriculture credit performance of banks against a multi-dimensional criterion with particular focus on regional and sectoral performance.

Country facing economic instability

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain said on Wednesday that the country is going through a difficult period of economic instability, a low growth rate, and unbearable inflation. Under these circumstances, full implementation of the IMF conditions is the only means of improving Pakistan's credit rating, through which more loans, rollover of old loans and the initiation of foreign investment are possible, he said.

Pakistan, China advancing collaboration in higher education

DNA



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and China are advancing collaboration in higher education. According to Prof. Dr. Iqbal Ahmad Khan, Vice Chancellor of University of Agriculture, Faisalabad (UAF), China's higher education has made great progress in recent years and the overall development momentum is very strong. Cooperation between China and Pakistan in higher education has been deepening, and the cooperation in technology transfer and transformation of technological achievements in universities needs to be strengthened for a closer shared future. Lauding China's higher education system, Dr. Iqbal said that China's commitment to education has been evident through its continuous investment in R&D, infrastructure and faculty development. "China's HR and infrastructure falls in the highest category glob-

ally. The best part now is its global outreach and diversity and its linkages with industry for problem solving and commercialization of knowledge which is worth learning." According to Gwadar Pro, at the World University Presidents Forum themed "an era of transformation and the mission of universities" hosted by Chinese Association of Higher Education, Peking University and Tsinghua University in Beijing last week, Prof. Dr. Iqbal Ahmad Khan noted that with 65 selected heads of univer-

sities sharing their views and 500 participants from 36 countries and regions, this was a unique opportunity to understand the current higher education landscape across the globe and emerging future. On the occasion, Ding Zhongli, vice chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, stressed China's willingness to exchange and share development experiences with universities around the world and contribute to the building of a community with a shared future for mankind. With a focus on innovation, quality and internationalization, China has been making significant strides in higher education development, attracting students and scholars from around the world. Prof Dr Iqbal said that the number of Pakistani students studying in China stood at 26,000 with over 1,000 postdocs and visiting scientists. Pak-China higher education

collaboration has brought mutual benefits in terms of bilateral relations, economic opportunities, knowledge exchange, human resource development, and education system improvement. By attracting Pakistani students in China, China can boost its soft power and influence in Pakistan. These students can act as cultural ambassadors, promoting language, culture and values of both countries, noted Prof Iqbal.


He added that "although there are continuous senior level Chinese experts and language teachers visiting Pakistan, the number of Chinese students studying in Pakistan is relatively small. Efforts are being made to increase the presence of Chinese students in Pakistani universities." Under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a flagship project of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), educational cooperation has emerged as a key area.

Pak rice exports likely to touch all-time high level


ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's rice exports will not only be higher than the previous year but are likely to touch an all-time high level this year as a result of the expansion of planting area and the improvement of technology. In addition, the ban on rice exports by India will also help to explore new export markets for Pakistani rice exports, Pakistan will earn US\$2.7 billion to US\$3 billion through the export of rice during this fiscal as sufficient rice stocks will be

available. And the global food shortage caused by various factors has further pushed up export prices. Quotations for Pakistani rice exports (25 percent broken) climbed to an average of US\$503 per metric ton in May, an increase of 11.0 percent month on month, to their highest level since August 2008. Further, by July 15, Pakistan rice prices rose to US\$ 600 per metric ton China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Wednesday. Pakistan's rice

export to China in 2022 surpassed US\$455 million with a volume of more than one million tonnes, for the first time in the China-Pakistan rice trade, said Ghulam Qadir Commercial Counsellor. China imports of semi or wholly-milled rice (Commodity Code: 10063020) from Pakistan touched US\$211.88 million, while two kinds of broken rice (Commodity Code: 10064020,10064080) reached US\$162.78 million and US\$80.74 million respectively.—APP



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Language apps

Among the evergreen jokes of the British comedy troupe Monty Python is a grammar gag in their 1979 film *Life of Brian*. Caught daubing graffiti on the walls of Pontius Pilate's palace by a Roman centurion, the hapless wannabe activist Brian is held at dagger-point, not for vandalism or insurrection but for getting the Latin for "Romans go home" wrong. Brian's punishment is to write the sentence out correctly 100 times before sunrise. The joke's appeal depends partly on its silly-ass slide from totalitarian horror into a fear of traditional language teaching, and partly on the communal sheepishness that so often accompanies Britons holidaying abroad as they try to navigate the local lingo. Decades on, extraordinarily, the skit has lost none of its touchstones. Learning by rote and punishment by writing lines have featured in Tory prescriptions for a cure to educational ills, while command of languages at school level has taken a triple hit: harder exams, a critical, resource-driven staffing crisis, and a reported post-Brexit reluctance among some students – and their parents – to commit time and effort to the languages of a Europe to which they no longer belong. Follow the money, follow the language app. In 2009, a US-based German-Guatemalan university professor and entrepreneur, Luis von Ahn, and his Swiss-born postgraduate student Severin Hacker launched Duolingo, a free app with a pesky green owl as its mascot. For all that its USP is a childish competitiveness, with league tables, incentivising caskets spilling cartoon jewels, and a twerking TikTok profile, it has soared ahead of its competitors. Duolingo now teaches more than 40 languages to more than 70 million students, 54% of whom are aged between 18 and 34. It has a paid-for version for those who want to avoid adverts. Though it has yet to turn a profit, in 2019 *Forbes Magazine* counted it among the 25 next billion-dollar startups. In February this year alone, it registered more than 13 million new downloads. It is an early adopter of the advanced artificial intelligence model GPT-4, and its offerings include look-at-me gimmicks such as courses in *Star Trek's Klingon* and *Game of Thrones' High Valyrian*, but also minority languages such as Xhosa and Navajo (though three Slavonic languages – Croatian, Slovak and Slovene – are oddly overlooked). The length it takes to complete a course varies, but the 216 units currently available in Spanish – its most popular language, with more than 30 million learners – would take several years of a 15-minute-a-day habit. Both are right. Languages are social constructs that exist to enable communication between people. While apps cannot replace interpersonal conversation or immersion in a culture, they can supplement it. Their success should serve as a wake-up call: a reminder that foreign languages have a valuable role to play in any fit-for-purpose education system, as much for personal enrichment as for career advantage in a networked world.



UK govt's 'silencing' exposes its weakness

There must have been some serious pushback from the United Kingdom government against the remarks made by HSBC's public affairs head Sherard Cowper-Coles at a closed-door event in London in June. Otherwise, Cowper-Coles, who is also chair of the China-Britain Business Council, would not have felt the need to issue a public statement via HSBC on Monday apologizing for his remarks. In it he said, "I was speaking at a private event under the Chatham House rule (under which those involved can use the information discussed but not specify the identity or affiliation of the speaker) and my personal comments don't reflect the views of HSBC or the China-Britain Business Council. I apologize for any offense caused." A spokesperson for HSBC has also stressed that Cowper-Coles was at a private roundtable discussion and sharing his personal views. His remarks that have caused such a stir: the UK government was "weak" and would often bow to the demands of Washington on its China policy, and in his opinion it shouldn't blindly follow the US but look after its own interests. The leaking of what he said to Bloomberg, which reported his criticism of the UK and the United States on Monday, has clearly been politically motivated. The Bloomberg report made this explicit by stating his remarks were released by "the people familiar with the matter, who asked not to be identified because the event was private". That Cowper-Coles felt the need to issue an apology for expressing his personal opinions at a private event serves to show the extent to which the UK is in thrall to Washington and the lengths the UK government will go to in its efforts to mute any voices critical of its subservience. In fact, the UK is using a double-barreled shotgun as it has attacked not only Cowper-Coles but also HSBC, which, although headquartered and listed in London, makes a large proportion of its profit in China. That, as CNN noted, makes it particularly vulnerable to the increasing geopolitical tension between Beijing and the West. The reason why the UK government tries to muffle any voices critical of its fawning to the US is because they go straight to the heart of the matter. As Cowper-Coles said in an interview with the Chinese media in May: "Some of the nonsense we hear talked in the US Congress, in the US media, and in parts of the parliament in London about China these days just shows how ignorant people are and how prejudiced. They need to come to China and see for themselves the realities." Only those standing against the UK exercising its strategic autonomy would feel offended or threatened by such advice and thus try to silence it.

Significance of the Sheibanid dynasty in formation of regional identity in Central Asia

Salikhbayev Anvar
Karimov Azizjon

The Sheibanids hosted receptions in the Bagh-i Nau palace complex, the former residence of the Temurids in Samarkand. In another garden of Temur's descendants, the suburban Kan-i Gil, Sheibani Khan built his residence. Sheibani Khan himself wrote poetry under the pseudonym "Shibani". The sofa of his poems, written in the Central Asian Turkic literary language, is currently stored in the Topkapi Manuscript Collection in Istanbul of 192 pages. In 1507, he wrote the essay

In recent years, the historical science in Uzbekistan has undergone significant changes. There was a rejection of outdated methods, new methodological approaches appeared, modern programs, textbooks and methodological manuals were created, as well as previously undeveloped topics entered the problematic field of historical science. However, until now the period of the coming to power of the Sheibanid dynasty in Transoxiana and its century-old rule remains an insufficiently studied topic and a thorough analysis is not presented. Most scientific publications do not provide detailed information about the contribution of the Uzbek dynasty to ensuring the independence of Transoxiana from Safavid Iran, about the development of science, culture, literature, education, architecture and handicrafts in the XVI century. The studies note the increased attention of the board to the rivalry of the outstanding representative of the dynasty – Muhammad Sheibani Khan with the Temurids for the Samarkand throne and the negative influence of the Sheibanids on the processes of inter-

regional wars of the Temurids. As a result, the reader has a biased idea of the role and significance of the Sheibanid dynasty period in Central Asia. Meanwhile, it should be noted that it was Muhammad Sheibani Khan who united numerous Turkic tribes, creating one of the most centralized states for that period. He managed not only to continue, but also to develop many traditions, elements of the foundation of state-building, which were laid by Amir Temur. As a sovereign, Sheibani Khan was a skilful ruler and diplomat. He sought to create, as some researchers believe, a kind of multicultural state. During his reign, intensive resettlement of various tribes and ethnic groups from the Volga region, Southern Siberia, Dashti Kipchak and other regions of Central Asia began. At the same time, Sheibani Khan allowed a certain independence of the ethnic groups that were under his patronage, and pursued a fairly flexible internal policy. This circumstance allowed him to more effectively resist external enemies and strengthen the international image of the state. He was distinguished by an astute mind, deep knowledge of religious sciences, and was known as a patron of culture, art and science. The emergence of such qualities in Sheibani Khan was facilitated by his proximity to the settled culture of Transoxiana, since he studied with Islamic scholars in Bukhara and Khorezm, where he became close to Sufi tariqas. The principles of Sheibani Khan's rule, as many scholars believe, were based not only on the nomadic traditions of the Turkic tribes, but also on the centuries-old experience of governing the state and the settled population of Transoxiana, which was based on Sharia. Appealing to the architectural tradition of the Timurid dynasty, Sheibani Khan was a tireless builder and initiator of the construction of monumental complexes that were not inferior to the Timurids in luxury. The customers were Sheibani Khan himself, members of his family, representatives of the secular authorities and the clergy. The Sheibanids hosted receptions in the Bagh-i Nau palace complex, the former residence of the Temurids in Samarkand. In another garden of Temur's descendants, the suburban Kan-i Gil, Sheibani Khan built his residence. Sheibani Khan himself wrote poetry under the pseudonym "Shibani". The sofa of his poems, written in the Central Asian Turkic literary language, is currently stored in the Topkapi Manuscript Collection in Istanbul of 192 pages. In 1507, he wrote the essay "Risale-yi maarifi Sheibani" in the Chagatay language. In 1507, it was dedicated to his son, Muhammad Timur. The essay talks about the need for knowledge of Sharia to the sovereign. It follows from the essay that Sheibani Khan was an adherent of the tariqa of Ahmad Yassavi. This manuscript is also kept in Istanbul. It is necessary to emphasize the regional aspects of the rule of Sheibani Khan, the role and importance of Sheibanids in the development of integration processes in Central Asia between various Turkic tribes and clans, the influence of these processes on the formation of modern national states

in the region and a unified cultural identity of Central Asia. Thus, the study of many historical sources indicates that the name of Sheibani Khan is associated with the formation of a new political unit – Central Asia, which outlined the borders of its state without expanding the territory outside the region. In a very short time, Sheibani Khan established control over Transoxiana (1499-1505), Khorezm (1505) and Khorasan (1506-1508). It is obvious that separate political tribal unions of that time were again united around the ancient capital – Samarkand. Another difference is that Sheibani Khan sought to create a national state, as well as to ensure the integration of settled and nomadic Turkic tribes. This once again emphasizes that the representative of the Sheibanid dynasty, first of all, sought to strengthen the political, cultural and ideological foundations of his own state. After the death of Sheibani Khan, the real power in the state remained in the hands of Ubaidullah Khan, who ruled in Bukhara, the son of Sheibani Khan's younger brother Mahmud Sultan. He received his name in honor of the leader of the Naqshbandi tariqa Ubaidullah Khoja Ahrar (1404-1489). In 1512, in the battle of Gijduvan, the Sheibanids of Transoxiana under the command of Ubaidullah Khan defeated the army of the Kyzylbash Safavid state, winning a decisive victory. He is considered to be the founder of the first real library in Bukhara, in the walls of which a style of miniature painting was created, subsequently improved under the heirs of Ubaidullah Khan and called the Bukhara School. Also, by order of the khan, as a gift to the outstanding Yemeni Sheikh Seyid Abdullah al-Yamani, who was his spiritual mentor, in 1530-1536, the Miri Arab madrasah was built in Bukhara. He was able to put an end to internal strife. It is noteworthy that in foreign policy, Ubaidullah Khan's priority was to get recognition by his neighbors of the Sheibanid state within its borders, which is similar to the aspirations of Sheibani Khan, while maintaining ties with the Ottoman Empire and China. Ubaidullah Khan was buried in one of the cells of the Mir Arab Madrasah in Bukhara, next to his mentor Abdullah al-Yamani. The Sheibanid state achieved significant success under Abdullah Khan II (1534-1598), who managed to further strengthen the power and authority of the dynasty in this region. By the end of the reign of Abdullah Khan II, the borders of the state stretched from the Caspian Sea in the West to Issyk-Kul in the East, from the Aral Sea in the North and to Herat and Mashhad in the South. In domestic and foreign policy, Abdullah Khan II largely adhered to the ideology and traditions of the founder of the dynasty, Muhammad Sheibani Khan. Abdullah Khan II, like his other predecessors, paid attention to science, literature, urban planning, including military affairs. Under him, Uzbek troops massively mastered firearms, and the quality of the guns of Uzbek gunsmiths was known throughout the East. In the economic field, Abdullah carried out an important reform – instead of silver coins, he introduced copper

coins into circulation, establishing control over their circulation and solvency with their help. He died and was buried at the mausoleum of Bahauddin Naqshband near Bukhara. Under the Sheibanids, historical science also develops, and many historical books appear. Kamaliddin Binoi, Mullah Shodi, Muhammad Salih, Fazlullah ibn Ruzbehani also wrote their works by order of Sheibani Khan. Abdullah ibn Muhammad ibn Ali Nasrullah wrote the historical work "Zubdat ul-ozor", the poet Tanysh Bukhari "Abdullah-name" ("Sharafnoma shohiy"), Zainiddin Vosifi "Badoe ul-wakoe" (Amazing events) in the madrasas of Samarkand and Bukhara under the Sheibanid dynasty in Transoxiana, scientists who continued the traditions of the Mirzo Ulugbek Academy, such as mudarris Kamaliddin Ibrahim, Mavlono Abdullahun Khoja Muhammad, astronomer Kiyamuddin Shaiddo, created their works. As a result, the term "Uzbek" is widely used in Central Asia. This period is of particular importance in the process of ethnogenesis of Uzbeks and other peoples of the region. In the middle and at the end of the X century, the creation of the Kazakh Khanate was marked, formed during the collapse of the Golden Horde in 1465 and the Uzbek Khanate in 1468 and the completion of the formation of the Kazakh ethnic group. Evidence of fraternal friendship and kinship ties of Uzbeks and Kazakhs is a monument to the founders of the Kazakh Khanate as well as the Sheibanids, direct descendants of Jochi Khan – Haji Gerei (1397-1466) and Zhanibek Khan (1428-1480), installed in the capital of Kazakhstan in Astana in 2010. Such closeness in the line of rulers who played a key role in shaping the national borders of Central Asia once again confirms the centuries-old nature of friendship and cultural and ethnic similarity of the Uzbek and Kazakh peoples, who today adhere to a single system of values and continue to develop positive multilateral political and economic relations with the Kyrgyz, Tajik and Turkmen peoples of our region. Thus, it should be noted that many system-forming events took place in Central Asia during the ruling Sheibanid dynasty. The main one was the formation of the current geographical contours of Central Asia. In this regard, deepening the historiography of the Sheibanid period becomes an urgent task, in the context of a positive reset of relations between the Central Asian countries, on the general cultural, humanitarian, political and economic landscape of the region. Salikhbayev Anvar, Senior Expert at the International Institute of Central Asia, Former Ambassador of Uzbekistan in Pakistan

– Salikhbayev Anvar,
Senior Expert at the International
Institute of Central Asia,
Former Ambassador of Uzbekistan in Pakistan
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of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Israeli-Lebanese border tensions raise fears of thinkable

Chris Doyle

The UN peacekeeping force in Lebanon, UNIFIL, accuses both Israel and the Lebanese militant group Hezbollah of violating international commitments across the border, the so-called blue line. UNIFIL is one of those interim bodies that in the Middle East lasts forever, but it does at least serve as a crucial warning system. Israeli military analysts believe that the chances of a conflict are higher than at any time since 2006. Israel has violated Lebanese airspace at will and all too regularly, as any Lebanese knows. UNIFIL reported 131 violations in just four months earlier this year, all, as it states, in breach of UN Security Council Resolution 1701. Back in March, Israel claimed a militant crossed the border and planted a roadside bomb near Megiddo. Then, in early April, the Israeli army accused Hamas of firing a salvo of 34 missiles into Israel. Israeli planes then struck three locations near the Palestine refugee camp of Rashidiya, south of Tyre. In May and then June, Hezbollah set up two tents 100 feet the other side of the blue line. The militant group's leader, Hassan Nasrallah, claimed that the tents were erected in protest at Israel cordoning off parts of Ghajar, a village located on the juncture between the Israeli, Lebanese and Syrian borders, and which the blue line splits in two. Israeli forces have never withdrawn from the northern part of the village they took in 2006 despite UNIFIL requesting that they leave. Israel has boosted its border infrastructure, but Hezbollah has also increased its presence. Israel and Hezbollah are in more direct confrontation within Syria. The former frequently bombs sites in Syria that it claims are involved with transferring high-tech weaponry to the Lebanese Shiite group from Iran. Hezbollah cannot be happy. But all parties have so much to lose. Can either Lebanon or Israel afford a war? Can Hezbollah, the Syrian regime or Iran? Both Israel and Lebanon face

widespread domestic political turmoil. Israel has endured mass protests for the past 31 weeks against the judicial reforms being pushed through by what is undeniably the most extreme, violent and anti-democratic coalition in its history. Israeli reservists, including pilots, are refusing to serve. Hezbollah and other groups would be unwise to consider Israel a soft target, but one fears some might feel tempted to exploit the chaos that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has visited once again on his country. Even Netanyahu might balk at a possible assault on Lebanon as a distraction given the risks. Gaza has always been a far less risky prospect for Israel on this front. As for Hezbollah, it is certainly paying close attention to events in Israel. Nasrallah was not shy in sharing his views, claiming Israel was "on the path to collapse, fragmentation and disappearance." Was Hezbollah testing Israeli resolve when it set up the tents? Lebanon has endured four years of a political, economic and social crisis. This was painfully highlighted last week by the third anniversary of the Beirut port explosion, a crime for which nobody has been held accountable. Since the end of October, Lebanon has had a presidential vacancy. Twelve times the parliament has failed to choose a successor. The country needs not only a proper government, but also bold, drastic, even painful reforms. The international community has been unable to find a path to assist Lebanon. The economic situation is beyond dire, with the government incapable of addressing the fundamental issues while eating into depleted currency reserves. Lebanese face soaring unemployment, acute shortages of food and medicine, and the usual power cuts. According to the World Food Programme, the country has the world's highest food price inflation rate of 350 percent. Other sources of instability include the future of the 1.5 million Syrian refugees in Lebanon. The Lebanese have demonstrated incredible generosity in hosting them for over a decade, but goodwill is drying up, with supporters of the Syrian regime in Lebanon only too keen to stoke anti-refugee bigotry. The fighting in the largest UN refugee camp for Palestinians in Ain Al-Hilweh – the current death toll stands at 13 – likewise shows that the Palestinian is-

sue remains potent in Lebanon. As ever, thousands have been displaced in the fighting, with no idea when they will go back. Palestinian groups can also engage in border hostilities, as the Hamas rocket attacks have shown. Another change that increases the stakes in the event of conflict is the vital maritime border deal Israel and Lebanon signed last year. Many on both sides were highly suspicious, but an agreement did get over the line. However, the upside is huge, as the major gas field could eventually help Lebanon exit the deep hole into which it has blindly plummeted. The climate in Lebanon is tense. Most Lebanese feel they have no control over events surrounding the border. "We are powerless. Our fate is in others' hands as ever," one Lebanese academic tells me. It is a common refrain. What would be the impact of an Israel-Hezbollah confrontation? Everything indicates the destruction and loss of life would be far, far worse than the 34-day July war in 2006 when more than 1,000 Lebanese and 159 Israelis lost their lives. Israeli leaders have consistently made it clear they will not hold back in any future war with Hezbollah. Israel may hit Lebanon much harder, as successive political and military leaders have threatened, but even Israeli officials acknowledge that Hezbollah's capabilities have made major strides. Israel calculates that the group possesses about 130,000 rockets, up from just 15,000 in 2006, and is capable of striking targets all across Israel. That said, Hezbollah's engagement in Syria on behalf of the Syrian and Iranian regimes has damaged its regional standing. In 2006, Hezbollah, to the consternation of its opponents, exited the conflict portrayed by too many as heroes. Today, the group is far more polarizing. Logic suggests there is an element of mutually assured loss involved and, therefore, a war should not be desired by any party. Even Iran will not want to risk losing its response capabilities via Hezbollah should Israel ever dare strike it. Quite how a military triumph could ever lead to a strategic political victory is simply not clear. Yet, whenever this border heats up, one fears for a war by accident. If wiser heads keep calm and maintain control then these tensions may peter out, but too many hotheads are more than capable of doing the unthinkable.

–Courtesy: Arab News

Briefs

PM says govt overcame all challenges

FROM PAGE 01
the incumbent prime minister added. Addressing the lower house, PM Shehbaz said he would meet Leader of the Opposition in NA Raja Riaz today (Thursday) to deliberate over the names of the caretaker premier. Sources privy to the matter said that the much-awaited meeting between the premier and the opposition leader was to be held today but it was postponed due to the latter's busy schedule, as he is unable to meet with the prime minister today.

Earlier, when asked if there was a deadlock between him and the premier, Riaz denied any such proposition. "There is time for three days, during which consultations will be done together," he said, adding that the names for interim premier will go to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) if there is no agreement on the three names.

Riaz insisted that he would ensure an agreement on one name with Premier Shehbaz. "All efforts will be made to finalise the name of the interim PM with the prime minister." Speaking on the floor of the house, PM Shehbaz expressed a firm commitment to make Pakistan an economically self-reliant and debt-free country through collective efforts. He said the coalition government successfully tackled the challenges on the economic front during the last sixteen months. The PM told the parliamentarians that they tactfully averted default, revived the IMF programme and extended all possible support to the flood-affected people. He said the government has given an economic revival vision, adding that under the Special Investment Facilitation Council, areas such as agriculture, information technology, mineral and exports have been targeted. The premier further said whoever forms the next government, should take forward this vision of economic revival. Strongly criticising the performance of the PTI government, he said their conduct damaged our relations with the United States, China and some other brotherly countries.

Bilawal shares...

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Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari said Pakistan would never tolerate the Quran desecrations incidents. Mr Bhutto already said that the desecration of the Holy Quran amounted to the incitement of religious hatred as the UN Human Rights Council debated a motion in the wake of a recent incident of the holy book's burning in Sweden. For his part, Bilawal said while referring to the Holy Quran's desecration, "We must see this clearly for what it is: incitement to religious hatred, discrimination and attempts to provoke violence." Bilawal said he raised voice against Indian Army atrocities against innocent Kashmiri of Occupied Valley. He said India has been committing heinous crimes against humanity in Held Valley. The PM said Islamophobia issued was raised at the global level. Bilawal Bhutto said the situation of the world has changed due to Russia-Ukraine war and as a foreign minister Ukraine and Belarus foreign ministers visited Pakistan. He thanked United Nations secretary general for International Conference on Climate Resilient Pakistan held 9th January this year at Palais des Nations, Geneva. He said Pakistan secured international support and forge long-term partnerships for building Pakistan's climate resilience and adaptation.

Ready to thwart 'nefarious...'

FROM PAGE 01
their wrong path," Gen Munir was quoted by the military's media wing. The army chief also reiterated the resolve of the Pakistan Army, Frontier Corps (FC) and other law enforcement agencies in their fight against terrorism. "He [Gen Munir] showed resolve to finish peril of Narco which is becoming a lifeline for these TTP khawaraj."



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning and Development GB, Fateh Ullah Khan presenting a certificate to Austrian mountain paraglider Lukas Woerle who aborted his Broad Peak summit to rescue a Pakistani porter Murtaza during his expedition. — Online

Mbappe contract dispute dampens Ligue 1 start

Mbappe has refused to sign an extension to his PSG deal, meaning he can leave for free next year, with Real Madrid long seen as his preferred destination

PARIS: Uncertainty over the future of Kylian Mbappe hangs over French football ahead of the new Ligue 1 season, which starts this weekend. The Paris Saint-Germain superstar has won France's player of the year award four times in a row and been Ligue 1's top scorer in five straight seasons, but his contract dispute with the champions has dominated headlines all summer. Mbappe has refused to sign an extension to his PSG deal, meaning he can leave for free next year, with Real Madrid long seen as his preferred destination. PSG want to sell him now and bring in a significant transfer fee for a player who cost 180 million euros (\$198m) from Monaco in 2017. A stand-off has ensued, and for now Mbappe remains in Paris but has been reduced to training apart from the first team. "We can't let the best player in the world today leave for free. It's impossible," said the Qatar-owned

club's president, Nasser al-Khelaifi, last month. The situation is hardly ideal for PSG's new coach, with Luis Enrique having been appointed to succeed Christophe Galtier. Regardless of what happens with Mbappe, PSG have a new look after limping to the title in the last campaign and failing to impress in Europe. Lionel Messi has gone, so has Sergio Ramos. They needed attacking reinforcements even if Mbappe stays, and Portugal striker Goncalo Ramos has joined from Benfica. The arrivals of Lucas Hernandez, Milan Skriniar, Manuel Ugarte, Lee Kang-in and Marco Asensio mean they look stronger across the pitch. "I could have stayed at Bayern Munich, but the interest PSG showed in me, their ambition and the project they are trying to put in place for the future convinced me to come," Hernandez told sports daily L'Equipe. PSG begin as overwhelming favourites to win a 10th title in 12 years, but their domestic ri-



vals might sense their chance if Mbappe moves on. The French football landscape is changing. Ligue 1 has been reduced to 18 clubs. The move, after over two decades with 20 teams in the top flight, has been made with the aim of helping French clubs become more competitive in Europe by having fewer league games. Despite that, and despite seeing Messi depart and Mbappe maybe follow, the French league is hoping an upcoming auction for the

next broadcast deal will allow it to make far more money than it does currently, especially for international rights. League executives want their competition to be able to rival those in England, Spain, Germany and Italy for international popularity, but the growing trend of multi-club ownership threatens to turn several French sides into feeder teams. Strasbourg have been taken over by BlueCo, the US-led consortium that owns Chelsea. "Although there was no financial urgency for us to do so, we were conscious that we had gone as far as we could with our existing model," said Strasbourg's president, Marc Keller. He refutes any suggestion that Strasbourg, French champions in 1979, will become a mere feeder team, and they have appointed former Crystal Palace manager Patrick Vieira as coach. Lorient are now 40 percent owned by Bill Foley, the American owner of Premier League club Bourn-

mouth. The Brittany side have made headlines by signing Benjamin Mendy following his acquittal in England of sex offences. Once the dominant French team, uncertainty surrounds Lyon's prospects in their first full campaign since American businessman John Textor bought the club. Textor also owns Brazilian side Botafogo and Belgian club Molenbeek, and holds a significant share in Crystal Palace. However, his failure to convince the DNCG, French football's financial watchdog, of the soundness of his spending plans means a cap has been imposed on their wage bill. They have not been able to significantly strengthen a squad that finished seventh last season, outside the European places. Last season's runners-up Lens have lost captain Seko Fofana to Saudi Arabia and top scorer Lois Openda to RB Leipzig but will hope to remain competitive even with the addition of Champions League football. — Agencies

Man City to go after West Ham's Lucas Paqueta

The English champions sold Riyad Mahrez to Saudi club Al-Ahli for a £30m fee last month and do not want to lose Bernardo as he is the first-choice right-winger for club

LONDON: Manchester City are eyeing West Ham United's midfielder Lucas Paqueta, reported ESPN on Wednesday. City have already made an initial approach to the London club but have not yet made a formal offer for the Brazilian. Paqueta, who joined the Hammers last summer on a £36.5 million deal from Lyon, is valued at around £70 million by the club which City are ready to pay to acquire the Brazilian's services as he is rated highly by head coach Pep Guardiola. However, despite an offer that may seem too good to refuse, West Ham may not let the midfielder leave as they have

already lost their captain Declan Rice to Arsenal for a £105m fee. Rice led his team to a European triumph as David Moyes' men won the UEFA Conference League last season. It is further reported that City's interest in Paqueta have nothing to do with the future of Bernardo Silva, who wants to take on a new challenge with FC Barcelona trying to get the Portuguese's signature. However, despite strong interest from Paris Saint Germain (PSG), Barca and the Saudi Pro League, Man City are confident that they will be able to keep the 28-year-old footballer as he is one of the most

important players for Guardiola. The English champions sold Riyad Mahrez to Saudi club Al-Ahli for a £30m fee last month and do not want to lose Bernardo as he is the first-choice right-winger for the club. It seems like Ilkay Gundogan's departure is becoming a headache for Guardiola as despite signing Mateo Kovacic from Chelsea, a player he wanted the most, the Croatian's signing may not be it as the Spaniard wants to further strengthen his midfield by signing Paqueta. It must be noted that City confirmed the signing of Josko Gvardiol from RB Leipzig on a five-year deal on Saturday (August 5). Gvardiol, 21, emerged as a top target for Guardiola last season. The English champions faced Leipzig in the Champions League last season during round of 16 where they beat the German club 8-1 on aggregate. — Agencies

Pakistan announce squads for Afghanistan ODIs, Asia Cup 2023

LAHOE: Inzamam-ul-Haq, the head of the national men's selection committee, today announced squads for the ACC Men's Asia Cup and the three-match One-Day International series against Afghanistan. An 18-player squad will take on Afghanistan in Sri Lanka from 22 till 26 August and it will be trimmed to 17 players for the Asia Cup, which begins from the Multan Cricket Stadium on 30 August when Pakistan play Nepal. Openers: Abdullah Shafique, Fakhar Zaman and Imam-ul-Haq Middle order: Babar Azam (captain), Salman Ali Agha, Iftikhar Ahmed, Tayyab Tahir, and Saud Shakeel (only for Afghanistan series). Wicketkeepers: Mohammad Rizwan and Mohammad Haris Spinners: Shadab Khan (vice-captain), Mohammad Nawaz and Usama Mir Pace all-rounder: Faheem Ashraf Pacers: Haris Rauf, Mohammad Wasim Jnr, Naseem Shah and Shaheen Afridi Shan Masood and Ihsanullah are the two players from the squad that played New Zealand in the five ODIs in April and May to miss out. Faheem returns to the side after two years and further adds to the balance of the side as a fast bowling all-rounder. His last outing in the format was during Pakistan's three-match away series against England in July 2021. This is Tayyab's second call-up in the ODI side. His maiden call-up came ahead of the three ODIs against New Zealand in January following a stellar show in the Pakistan Cup 2022-23 that saw him finish as the leading run-getter in the event. — DNA

Wozniacki wins Montreal Open

MONTREAL: Former world number one Caroline Wozniacki made a triumphant comeback in her return to competition after a layoff of more than three years at the WTA Montreal Open on Tuesday. The 33-year-old Danish star defeated 115th-ranked Australian qualifier Kimberly Birrell 6-2, 6-2 in her comeback match at the hard-court event, a tune-up for the US Open, which starts on August 28 in New York. "I'm happy," Wozniacki said. "A little tired. Just it was fun to be out there again playing on center court in front of a big crowd. I'm just thrilled that I could win my first match in 3 1/2 years." Her second-round opponent will be reigning Wimbledon champion Marketa Vondrousova, the Czech world number 10 who ousted Egypt's 33rd-ranked Mayar Sherif 6-4, 6-2. Wozniacki, the 2018 Aus-

tralian Open champion, retired after a third-round loss at the 2020 Australian Open. She gave birth to two children and became a television commentator, her WTA playing days seemingly complete. But Wozniacki announced in June she was making a comeback and received wildcard entries into Montreal and next week's Cincinnati tournament as stepping-stones to the US Open, where she was runner-up in 2009 and 2014. Before her retirement, Wozniacki won 30 titles and 635 career matches. She spent 71 weeks atop the rankings. Now she has her first match victory as a mother, having given birth to son James and daughter Olivia in the 1,293 days since being ousted by Ons Jabeur at Melbourne in 2020. "That's pretty crazy," she said. "I was just looking at the clock actually. My kids are napping right now

which is awesome. So I'm going to catch them after I do a little bit of treatment and food and stuff. "That's the good part of playing early. I still have the afternoon with them." Wozniacki dropped the opening game but rallied to capture the final four games of the opening set, the last on a Birrell double fault after 43 minutes. "I was definitely a little rusty," Wozniacki said. Wozniacki broke for a 4-2 edge in the second set, held for a 5-2 lead and broke again on a backhand winner to secure the victory after 97 minutes, raising her arms skyward with a smile of delight at her achievement. "I'm just excited to be back and competing, and I think for me it's so special having my family here," Wozniacki said. "As a 33-year-old that has played on tour for many years, and doing it with my kids that

now, especially the older one is starting to really understand and gets to really experience the world and different countries, I think it's so cool." Lifting her comeback from practice courts to matches was a major step for Wozniacki. "I didn't really know what to expect," Wozniacki said. "You have all these things in your head that this is how you're supposed to be playing and you're supposed to be doing this and that, but to be honest, I had no idea what I was going to come up with when I was out on court because I just haven't played a real match in so long. "It was all about not getting down on myself if I made a mistake and not get too excited when I hit a good shot. So it was just kind of evening out those emotions. I think everything taken into consideration, I'm very happy with how I played today and how I got through." — Agencies



IHC wants to know who kept Imran at Attock jail

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detainees are accommodated in Rawalpindi's Adiala jail. However, he inquired about the method of sending a prisoner to the jails. According to the conviction orders issued by Judge Humayun Dilwar, the PTI chief was supposed to be sent to the Adiala jail in Rawalpindi. However, the former prime minister, who was ousted from office following a no-confidence motion in April last year, was taken to Attock instead. Khan's lawyer, Advocate Sher Afzal Marwat, told the court that the government has the power to shift a prisoner to any jail in Punjab. "Nawaz Sharif's request for transfer to Kot Lakhpat jail was approved," Justice Farooq remarked. PTI chief's counsel said that Khan can get an A-Class facility as per jail rules, but since District Jail Attock is not A-Class, he is being kept there and that too in solitary confinement. "Chairman PTI has been kept in a cell instead of barracks," Advocate Marwat said, adding that the former prime minister also complained of rainwater seeping into his cell. Informing the court about the delay in scheduling the PTI chief's meeting with his lawyers, Advocate Marwat said Khan was not allowed to meet with his counsels despite a court order issued yesterday (Tuesday). "Did they give any reason for not [scheduling] the meeting?" the IHC chief justice asked the counsel. "Meeting time is till 6:00pm, while the order was issued late," the lawyer replied. He further complained that Khan's other lawyer, Naeem Haider Panjotra, was grilled by the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) for "nine hours" on Tuesday under the guise of an investigation. He also told the court that Khawaja Haris has also been summoned by the FIA. Marwat termed the detentions "illegal". The chief justice, after hearing the counsel's complaints, remarked that no one should be harassed in the name of investigation. He also said that a prisoner should be given the rights specified in the law. "Everyone has rights. An appointment with a lawyer cannot be refused," Justice Farooq remarked.

Notices served in Khan's appeal

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The trial court had announced the verdict despite the appeal of the defence side against abolishing of the right of defence was pending with IHC, he said, the session court should have waited for the verdict of high court. The lawyer alleged that the trial court had announced the verdict in haste and awarded three years jail term along Rs100,000 fine to the accused. He prayed the court to suspend the sentence of his client as it was considered a short term sentence. The chief justice remarked that firstly, the bench would hear the stance of ECP and then would decide the matter. Sardar Latif Khosa prayed the court to fix the case tomorrow again for further hearing. Khawaja Haris argued that the IHC had ordered the trial court to decide the matter pertaining maintainability of the case on daily basis but the trial court announced its verdict on the third day without hearing the defence counsel. He said that he had reached the trial court before the announcement of the verdict but it refused to hear him. The chief justice remarked that the court had served notices in the appeal and then would also view these points. Justice Farooq remarked that hearing on this appeal was not possible tomorrow as he would be on leave. He observed that the case wouldn't be prolonged till after the vacations as the appeal pertaining to the sentences and bails were being fixed early. After this, the court adjourned further hearing of the case. It may be mentioned here that a trial court had announced a three years imprisonment sentence along with Rs100,000 fine to Imran Khan in a criminal case lodged by the ECP. — APP

Briefs

Taiwan's
Mpox cases
climb to 266

TAIPEI: Taiwan on Tuesday confirmed seven new cases of Mpox, raising the overall count to 266. The Taiwan Centers for Disease Control (CDC) said all the recent cases involved male Taiwanese citizens aged 20 to those in their 40s. The patients began experiencing symptoms such as fever, swollen lymph nodes, and a rash with blisters between July 24 and Aug. 1. The CDC encouraged high-risk groups to get vaccinated. In July, it expanded the immunization campaign to include those with multiple recent sexual partners (including sex workers), people with sexually transmitted diseases, and their sexual partners. Two shots are advised for better protection, at an interval of at least 28 days. As of Monday, 25,803 people had received both doses of the vaccine, while 19,510 had received a single dose. Last year, the World Health Organization renamed Monkeypox to Mpox, saying the name of the disease had acted as "racist and stigmatizing language." In June, it declared Mpox was no longer a public health emergency of international concern.—DNA

Flashfloods
kill 7 in
southwestern
China

BEIJING: At least seven people died on Wednesday due to flashfloods in southwestern China, officials said. "Four (missing people) have been rescued, while seven have already been confirmed dead," broadcaster CGTN reported on the flashfloods that hit Ya'an city in Sichuan province. Search and rescue efforts are underway. Meanwhile, the death toll due to heavy rains and floods in the capital Beijing has climbed to 33, authorities announced. As it made landfall in China late last month, Typhoon Doksuri brought heavy winds and rains, triggering flooding in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region. Officials in Beijing said 18 people were missing as of Aug. 2 since the downpour began on July 29. The rains and floods have also caused heavy damage, with authorities releasing millions of dollars to mitigate the suffering. The Finance Ministry and Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs also allocated 732 million yuan (\$101.4 million) to local governments in Beijing, Tianjin, Hebei, Shanxi, Inner Mongolia, Jilin, and Heilongjiang in northern China, as well as coastal provinces Zhejiang and Fujian in the country's east for "urgent agricultural flood control and disaster relief work, and to support post-disaster agricultural production."—APP

Nigerian
doctors call
off nationwide
public protests

MAIDUGURI: Doctors in Nigeria called off nationwide public protests scheduled for Wednesday after the government agreed to their demands for pay raises and better working conditions. National Association of Resident Doctors (NARD) President Emeka Orji told Anadolu over the phone that the planned protest has been called off after the government agreed to their "immediate demands" at a meeting in the Presidential Villa in Abuja, the Nigerian capital, on Tuesday. "We decided to suspend the public protests originally scheduled for Wednesday after the government agreed to our immediate demands," Orji said. During the meeting, Senate President Godwill Akpabio and top officials asked the doctors to be patient and understand the government's constraints in dealing with economic issues and other healthcare-related affairs, the NARD president said. On July 26, doctors began an indefinite strike in hospitals to put pressure on the government to accept their demands, which includes immediate payment of the 2023 Medical Residency Training Fund, concrete steps toward the "upward review" of the Consolidated Medical Salary Structure.—APP

Indonesia nurtured habit
of dialogue among ASEAN

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prof. Dinna Prapto Raharja, a senior public policy advisor and Associate Professor in international relations at Bina Nusantara University, Indonesia, speaking at the 7th session of the OIP titled as "Indonesia and ASEAN" at the Bahria University, Islamabad, discussed the history and evolution of ASEAN and highlighted the objectives and scope of ASEAN partnerships that it maintains and promotes through various frameworks. "The Bangkok Declaration of 1967 focuses on economic growth, social progress, cultural development, and regional peace through equality and partnership", Dr. Dinna informed the participants. While sharing the economic profile of the member states, she mentioned that ASEAN remains a major recipient of foreign direct investment (FDI) in the developing world. The speaker said that ASEAN is the fastest-growing regional bloc globally, with members ranging from Island nation and trade hub of Singapore with population of 5.4 million to the World's largest archipelagic and a fast-growing trillion-dollar economy of Indonesia with 273 million population.

Discussing ASEAN-Pakistan relations, the speaker said that Pakistan has ASEAN Sectoral Dialogue Status since 1993, focusing on commerce, industry, investment, environment, science and technology, narcotics control, tourism, and human resource development. In 2004, Pakistan ratified the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation and became the 24th participant in the ASEAN Regional Forum, in 2005, Pakistan signed the Terrorism Declaration and conducted a Joint Feasibility Study for an ASEAN-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement, but the study was halted in 2011. The guest speaker from Indonesia explained that ASEAN's approach to partnerships is diverse, dynamic, and variable, with interests remaining central in engagements without fixed mechanisms for cooperation and problem resolution. She briefed the participants on ASEAN's policy and decision-making processes, stating that "as an inter-governmental organization founded on equality it prioritizes consensus building above majority vote". She stated that Indonesia has a history of significant contribution to ASEAN and is recognized for its inspirational ideas to build consensus to move forward. She



said that Indonesia developed the concept of an ASEAN Community not only to achieve economic growth but also to close gaps in economic development among the member countries. Similarly, the ASEAN Summit was also Indonesia's idea to engage top leadership at the highest-level regional meetings, she pointed out. Indonesia supports ASEAN engagement with major powers and encourages the members to bring their disagreements to the table, such as the COC Dialogue on the South China Sea issue at the ARF forum, the guest speaker highlighted. "Indonesia has always tried to nature the habit of dialogue among the member

countries and encourage them to engage with the major powers with confidence" the speaker explained. However, she said that ASEAN was not perfect and amid rising tension between China and US the big question was that how to maintain the peace and economic stability and build trust among the major powers so that there is no conflict in the region, the speaker shared her insight with the participants. Expressing her view the speaker said the question becomes even trickier especially when the Chinese economy was rising and the US economy declining. On the other hand, however, the US has been able to pursue other countries to support its stance

in the Russia-Ukraine conflict, leveraging its dollar, technology and defense industry, Dr. Dinna noted. In this scenario it is a key strategic question who are you with and what you should do to save your country in the event of the open conflict between US and China, she observed. "This question is haunting not only the ASEAN but the entire world because the world was more connected than before and taking side is not without political and economic implications" She emphasized. She said that Indonesia being an archipelagic country was very much concerned about its sea lines of communication such as the Strait of Malaka could be misused for transporting weapons. Dr. Dinna opined that countries should reduce their over dependence on certain countries to avoid choosing sides. The Online Internship Programs 2023 is a collaboration project between the Indonesian Embassy and Bahria University, Islamabad, to discuss contemporary issues in Indonesia that will be organized for 6 weeks. All experts who join the program to share their thoughts and observations come from various universities and think tanks in Indonesia.

OIC Chief
calls for
religious
harmony

RIYADH: The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) chief on Wednesday highlighted the significance of religious respect and communal unity during a gathering with diverse religious leaders in the Thai capital Bangkok. In an effort to promote understanding and unity among various religious and cultural groups, OIC Secretary General Houssein Ibrahim Taha convened a meeting with local Muslim, Buddhist, and Christian religious leaders as well as representatives from diverse communities in Bangkok. The gathering underscored the vital need for mutual respect among different faiths, according to a statement by the OIC. During the event, Taha stressed "the necessity of respecting all religions and the importance of establishing harmony among followers of different religions and communities in order to live together in peace to achieve security and community peace."—APP

EU chief
offers 400 mn
euros to help
Slovenia

LJUBLJANA: European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on Wednesday offered 400 million euros from the bloc's solidarity fund as part of a package to help flood-hit Slovenia. And she made it clear that, in her view, climate change had played a role in the disaster. Four Slovenians and two Dutch tourists died in last week's flooding, which also flooded tens of thousands of houses. "We will make accessible 400 million euros, 100 million of them still this year and 300 million euros next year" from the solidarity fund, von der Leyen told reporters after touring affected areas. "It was heart-breaking to see the devastation that the rain and the flooding and the mudslides have caused," von der Leyen said. Slovenia could also request 2.7 billion euros from the EU's "Next Generation" fund, she added. Von der Leyen was speaking at a joint news conference with Slovenian Prime Minister Robert Golob. "Several tens of thousands of houses have been flooded and several thousands of families are in despair today wondering how they will survive the next weeks and months," Golob said. He urged the EU Commission to release the funds as soon as possible.—APP

Mango festival held to celebrate
75 years of Pak Netherlands ties

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of Pakistan in the Netherlands organized a Pakistani Mango Festival in The Hague to celebrate 75 years of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and the Netherlands. The event was widely attended by ambassadors, members of the diplomatic community, Dutch officials, and members of the Dutch and Pakistani business communities, said a press release on Wednesday. Ambassador Karin Mossenlechner, Director of Asia and Oceania Department at the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs was a special guest from the Dutch side. Pakistan's Ambassador Suluk Mustansar Tarar welcomed the guests and highlighted 75 years of dynamic Pakistan-the Netherlands bilateral relations which cover politics, trade, education, water management, capacity development and many other facets. He elaborated the economic and trade content of the relations saying that bilateral trade between the two countries increased in the last few years to more than



US\$ 2 billion. The Dutch companies are among the key investors in Pakistan. He said that in the recently held Textile Exhibition (Texpo-23) in Karachi, more than 40 Dutch companies participated. In the forthcoming First International Food to be held from August 10-12 in Karachi more than 30 Dutch

companies have expressed interest to attend. Highlighting the uniqueness of Pakistani mangoes, Ambassador Tarar said that Pakistan was the 6th largest producer and the 4th largest exporter of mangoes in the world which are exported across the world and the Netherlands was an important growing

market. He informed that Pakistani experts through extensive Research & Development (R&D) had succeeded in making many improvements in the traditional Chaumsa and developed its commercial subtypes including Safaid chaumsa, Azeem chaumsa, black chaumsa and late chaumsa etc.—DNA

Pentagon eyes
missile testing
role for Australia

SYDNEY: Australia could be a testing ground for US hypersonic and other long-range precision weapons under the AUKUS pact, a top Pentagon official told AFP on Wednesday. US Secretary of the Army Christine Wormuth said Australia's contribution to the three-way AUKUS agreement, which includes Britain, "doesn't always have to be dollars". The pact was signed in late 2021 and is seen as a way of countering China's growing clout in the Asia-Pacific region. Work under AUKUS has so far focused on supplying Australia with nuclear-powered submarines, a fleet capable of travelling stealthily over vast distances and striking foes at long range. But the pact is increasingly focused on developing advanced capabilities such as long-range precision firing, artificial intelligence and hypersonic weapons. Wormuth said Australia could be a proving ground for these weapons. "One thing Australia has in spades is long distances and relatively unpopulated land," she told AFP in a telephone interview from Washington. "A challenge for us in the United States when it comes to hypersonics or even some of our things like the precision strike missile - which is not a hypersonic weapon but has very long ranges in some of its increments - for us to find open spaces in the United States where we can actually test these weapons, it's a challenge. "Australia obviously has a tremendous amount of territory where that testing is a little bit more doable - so I think that's a unique thing, as an example, that the Australians bring to the table." China has denounced the AUKUS pact as undermining peace in the region - a charge that Washington, Canberra and London reject. But critics have also asked whether it is truly cooperative, or whether the United States, because of its size and overwhelming military power, will dominate.—DNA

'Urban explorers'
drawn to Cyprus
and its haunted past

NICOSIA: Chained swings eerily creak in the breeze at the deserted Tivoli amusement park in Cyprus, a divided island that has caught the eye of the global "urban explorer" community. To enter the shuttered park, overgrown by nature, in the capital Nicosia, "urbex" enthusiasts Christos Zoumides hoists himself up a wall, climbs through rusted bars and walks across broken glass. "I have so many memories here," marvels the 40-year-old Cypriot scientist as he reaches an abandoned go-kart track where his family used to take him as a child. For the past eight years, he has embraced urbex, the underground pastime of exploring abandoned places - usually illegally and at the risk of accidents in badly dilapidated locations. Considered part of "dark tourism", it has drawn explorers to "lost places" everywhere, from abandoned Cold War bunkers to forgotten cinemas, factories and concert halls that appear frozen in time. The most popular sites tend to evoke historic disasters, tragedies and wars, said tourism specialist Katerina Antoniou, who added that this had made Cyprus a "unique" setting for many.—APP

UN says reached deal with
Syria over key aid crossing

UNITED NATIONS: The United Nations has said it reached agreement with the Syrian government on aid deliveries to rebel-held areas from Turkey, raising concern among relief groups who had wanted Damascus kept out. Under a 2014 deal, most international aid had passed through the Bab al-Hawa crossing from Turkey without the authorization of Damascus. But last month, the UN Security Council failed to reach consensus on extending the mechanism, and the UN said a subsequent Syrian offer to keep the crossing

open for another six months contained "unacceptable" conditions. Late Tuesday, a UN spokesperson said that "the secretary general welcomes the understanding reached yesterday (Monday) by the United Nations and the government of Syria on the continued use for the next six months of the Bab al-Hawa border crossing". The deal followed engagement between UN humanitarian affairs chief Martin Griffiths and Damascus for the UN and its partners to keep providing assistance

"at the necessary scale and in a principled manner that allows engagement with all parties... and that safeguards the UN's operational independence", the statement said. The Syrian government's previous conditions included that the UN cooperate with it fully and not communicate with "terrorist organizations" - a reference to Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, a jihadist group formerly affiliated with Al-Qaeda that controls the Syrian side of the Bab al-Hawa crossing. Several international organizations

had expressed fear that allowing Damascus control over the flow of aid to rebel-held areas could result in limiting access to those most in need. More than four million people live in rebel-held areas of northern and northwestern Syria, many of them in overcrowded, impoverished displacement camps. "The consent reaffirmed by Syria in recent days provides a basis for the UN and its partners to lawfully conduct cross-border humanitarian operations through Bab al-Hawa," the UN statement said.—APP

Record heat
warning in
Spain and
Portugal

MADRID: Temperatures are expected to hit 44 degrees Centigrade (111 Fahrenheit) in Spain and Portugal on Wednesday as the two countries boil under their third heatwave of the summer. With huge forest fires raging across southern Portugal for the fifth successive day, Spain's weather service warned that the average temperature across the country could hit a 70-year record. "This will probably be the hottest five August days in 73 years," said AEMET, the state meteorological agency, with almost the whole country under red weather alerts. Winds and extreme heat are also driving fires that have devastated 15,000 hectares of trees in neighbouring Portugal over the past few days. The biggest blazes are in the southern Odemira region, where more than 1,500 people have been evacuated with the fires reaching the Algarve, a hugely popular tourist destination. But firefighters tackling the wildfires said they were bringing them under control Wednesday, with a fall in temperatures and greater humidity at the coast helping stem the spread as hot air moves east. Experts say the recurring heatwaves, which have been getting longer and more intense, are a consequence of climate change. The Iberian Peninsula is bearing the brunt of climate change in Europe, with droughts and wildfires becoming more and more common. Spanish firefighters were using up to a dozen water bombers to slow the spread of the flames around Valencia de Alcantara in Extremadura close to the border with Portugal.—APP

Former Niger rebel launches anti-coup movement

NIAMEY: A former rebel leader and politician in Niger has launched a movement opposing the military government that took power in a July 26 coup, a first sign of internal resistance to army rule in the strategically important Sahel country. In a statement seen on Wednesday, Rhisaa Ag Boula said his new Council of Resistance for the Republic (CRR) aims to reinstate overthrown President Mohamed Bazoum who has been in detention at his residence since the takeover. "Niger is the victim of a tragedy orchestrated by people charged with protecting it," the statement said. The announcement comes as diplomatic efforts to reverse the coup have stalled after the military government rejected the latest diplomatic mission from the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Niger's coup leaders denied entry to African and United Nations envoys on Tuesday, resisting pressure to negotiate before a summit on Thursday at which heads of state from the ECOWAS will discuss the possible use of force. Ag Boula's statement said it supports ECOWAS and any other interna-

tional actors seeking to restore constitutional order in Niger, adding that it would make itself available to the bloc for any useful purpose. Another CRR member said several Nigerien political figures had joined the group but could not make their allegiance public for safety reasons. Ag Boula played a leading role in uprisings by Tuaregs, a nomadic ethnic group present in Niger's desert north, in the 1990s and 2000s. Like many former rebels, he was integrated into government under Bazoum and his predecessor Mahamadou Issoufou. While the extent of support for the CRR is unclear, Ag Boula's statement will worry the coup leaders given his influence among Tuaregs who control commerce and politics in much of the vast north. Support from Tuaregs would be key to securing the military government's control beyond Niamey's city limits. Democratic ECOWAS member states such as Nigeria want the reinstatement of the civilian government that had been relatively successful in containing a deadly campaign by armed groups linked to al-Qaeda and ISIL (ISIS) which has devastated the Sahel region. Mutinous soldiers

detained Bazoum and seized power on July 26, claiming they could do a better job at protecting the nation from the violence. The coup comes as a blow to many countries in the West, which saw Niger as one of the last democratic partners in the region against the expansionist threat of armed groups. Niger also matters to the global market on various fronts, including its 5 percent share of the global supply of uranium. The coup has already led to border and airspace closures that have cut off supplies of medicine and food, hampering humanitarian aid in one of the world's poorest countries. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said late on Tuesday that he had spoken to Bazoum to express continued efforts to find a peaceful resolution to the crisis. "The United States reiterates our call for the immediate release of him and his family," he posted on the social media platform X, formerly known as Twitter. Nigeria's President and ECOWAS chairman Bola Tinubu imposed more sanctions on Niger on Tuesday, aimed at squeezing entities and individuals involved in the takeover, and said all options were still on the table.—Agencies

Diplomacy
centre-stage on
eve of summit

NIAMEY: West African nations and the United States gave priority to diplomacy to end the crisis in coup-stricken Niger ahead of a regional summit on Thursday to consider options that include military intervention. The summit of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) takes place under the chairmanship of Nigeria, the regional superpower and advocate of a hard line. Struggling to stem a cascade of putsches among its members, the bloc gave Niger's military rulers until last Sunday to reinstate the elected president, Mohamed Bazoum, or face potential use of force. But the coup leaders remained defiant, and the ultimatum passed without action. On Tuesday, a bid to send a joint team of ECOWAS, UN and African Union (AU) representatives to the capital Niamey ran into the ground. The coup leaders said they could not guarantee the mission's "safety" in the light of what they said was public anger to sanctions imposed by ECOWAS. Despite the failure, ECOWAS and Nigeria said they would pursue all options to resolve the crisis, and the United States emphasised a "peaceful" outcome even though it too had been rebuffed. ECOWAS said it would "continue to deploy all measures in order to restore constitutional order" in Niger. Nigerian President Bola Tinubu said through his spokesman that "no options have been taken off of the table" but diplomacy was the "best way forward." The United States sent veteran envoy Victoria Nuland to Niamey on Monday, but she came away empty-handed, being unable to meet Bazoum or even the new strongman, General Abdourahmane Tiani.—Agencies

