

# Independent

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif addresses the ceremony of Prime Minister's Initiatives on Women's Empowerment.

## President says: Pakistan offers huge potential for Gandhara tourism with Buddha's message of peace

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Tuesday said Pakistan offered the world a valuable window to Gandhara civilization with its unique blend of ancient history, and the Buddha's message of peace and compassion.

"In today's world where hatred is on the rise and increasing polarization is fueling conflicts, it's time to rediscover the role of cultural diplomacy to promote dialogue among civilizations," he said in his address here at the three-day Gandhara Symposium 2023.

The symposium titled 'Cultural Diplomacy: Reviving Gandhara Civilization and Buddhist Heritage in Pakistan' was organized by Prime Minister's Task Force on

Gandhara Tourism, Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), and the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The event gathered monks and inter-faith experts from Sri Lanka, Nepal, Thailand, China, Malaysia, South Korea and Vietnam with an objective to explore Pakistan's rich Buddhist legacy and create an enabling environment for Gandhara tourism.

President Alvi said Buddha's quest rekindles the spirit of inner reflection with a precept to abstain from taking lives of the living beings and caring for the environment.

He highlighted that the Gandhara civilization, which thrived in Pakistan centuries ago, could serve

as an informative place for the visitors from across the globe to explore exquisite Buddhist sites.

He urged collaborative efforts to raise awareness about the inclusive and multicultural nature of Gandhara civilization and help the society to absorb diversity of cultures.

The president welcomed the Buddhist monks in the country, hoping that their presence would relay a message of peace and cross-cultural harmony.

Minister of State, Chairman of the PM Task Force on Gandhara Tourism Ramesh Kumar Vankwani said the Gandhara civilization continued to mesmerize from all over the world and emphasized the need to preserve and revive the historic Buddhist relics.



ISLAMABAD: H.E. Nawaf bin Saeed Ahmad Al-Malkiy, Ambassador of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

## PM expresses deep gratitude KSA deposits 2 billion dollars in SBP: FM

ISLAMABAD (Online): Finance Minister (FM) Ishaq Dar has said Saudi Arabia has deposited 2 billion dollars in State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). FM said in a statement loan has come in SBP account. This has raised reserves of Pakistan. The friendly country had made a commitment in this regard in the recent past.

He said these deposits have enhanced the country's foreign exchange reserves from 9.67 billion dollars to 11.67 billion dollars.

On behalf of the people and government of Pakistan, the Finance Minister thanked the Saudi leadership especially King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud for always standing by Pakistan in difficult times. He said the Saudi leadership has always

proved to be true brothers of Pakistan.

APP adds: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday extended his "deep gratitude" to the leadership and brotherly people of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia for the US\$2 billion deposit with the State Bank of Pakistan.

"I would like to especially thank my brother Saudi Crown Prince and Prime Minister His Royal Highness Mohammed bin Salman for ensuring this financial support to Pakistan," he wrote on Twitter.

The primeminister hoped that the deposit would strengthen Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves and reflected the growing confidence of the brotherly countries and the international community in the country's economic turnaround.

## Marriyum inaugurates rehabilitation work of PBC Peshawar

PESHAWAR (APP): Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Tuesday inaugurated rehabilitation and renovation work of the building of Pakistan Broadcasting Corporation (PBC) Peshawar, including the Chagai Auditorium, which was ransacked during the May 9 vandalism, besides groundbreaking of a cinema.

Speaking on the occasion, she said as per the directives of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the PBC building's renovation work would be carried out on emergency basis as the government aimed to restore the infotainment and recreational facility for the people of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

The minister directed the PBC management to digitalize the archives, including musical record and sound tracks.

Earlier on her arrival along with Advisor to the Prime Minister Ameer Muqam at the PBC building, she was received by Secretary Information Sohail Ali Khan, PBC Director General Tahir Hassan, and employees of Radio Pakistan and Associated Press of Pakistan.

## If we have to eliminate begging bowl, we will have to stand on our own feet: PM

Stresses for creation of enabling equal opportunities for women empowerment

PESHAWAR (Online): Prime Minister (PM) Shehbaz Sharif has said if we have to eliminate begging bowl we will have to stand on our own feet.

"We have not accepted IMF program willingly. If we have to eliminate begging bowl then we will have to stand on our own feet, PM said this while inaugurating first phase of FATA University in Peshawar Tuesday.

"I and other dignitaries go abroad on visits. When we are received therein I see their faces. The faces of those who welcome us are saying we have come here to beg money from them, he remarked.

Despite all hardships we are distributing laptops among students, he said adding

In the coming few years

Pakistan will be prosperous and developed country in the region, he hoped.

We have evolved comprehensive plan for the development of agriculture, IT and minerals. Today our neighboring country has surpassed us. For this we are at fault.

Today we will have to look into our mistakes. We have to decide either we have to keep our hand lofty or we have to roam with begging bowl, he observed.

There was time when our cotton export was more than India. We have to learn a lesson from the past. Country never turned prosperous with wailing mindset, he said.

We have to bring revolution in agriculture and national industries, he stated.

The process of distribution of lap tops was started

from Nawaz Sharif era. We will too distribute one lakh lap tops. No lap top will be given under favoritism. Lap tops will be given on the norms of merit only, he announced.

The name of FATA university is not appropriate as this is name of past, he said adding new name will be allocated in consultation with the elders.

Favoritism and corruption is currency in vogue today and it will be eliminated at every cost, he vowed. Favoritism has destroyed Pakistan and the corruption has undermined the roots of Pakistan. We have to annihilate poverty and unemployment.

APP adds: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday stressed upon provision of equal opportunities to the

womenfolk as they consisted of half of the country's population and were playing varying roles at different strata of society.

He was addressing the launching ceremony of the 'Prime Minister's Initiative for Women Empowerment' which is being initiated at a total cost of Rs 10.4 billion.

The prime minister said that the country's womenfolk were an effective and energetic segment, playing effective roles in families and society as mothers, sisters, wives and daughters.

He observed that in the last 75 years, the required opportunities for the women empowerment were not sufficient and stressed upon making of further efforts for securing

women rights, including the inheritance rights and creation of opportunities in a conducive environment, so that they could contribute meaningfully and productively in society. "Look around the Muslims world and the West, the women have played their due role for the progress and prosperity of their respective nations," he added.

Lauding different prominent women personalities of the country, he said that they had served as great ambassadors of Pakistan in different capacities. The prime minister said that there was no dearth of talent in Pakistan as they were blessed with great minds, but there was a need to harness the true potential with creation of opportunities.

## Once desperate for cipher's investigation, PTI chief now opposing probe into his own cases: Marriyum

PESHAWAR (APP): Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Tuesday said once desperate

for probe into the purported cipher related to the regime change, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief was now vehemently opposing investigations into multiple cases, including the Toshakhana theft, foreign funding, and Al-Qadir Trust case. Addressing a news conference, the minister said the PTI chairman created a fake narrative by waving the so-called cipher during his last address to a public gathering in Islamabad as prime minister just to give an impression that he was ousted from power as the result of a regime change operation.

Ironically, he was the only prime minister in the country's history who was removed from his office through a no-confidence motion, she added.

She said he created hype of the so-called conspiracy, based on the cipher, and blamed the former army chief for that at first place and eventually shifted its to acting Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi. "Today, this person is pleading before the courts to halt the trial in the prohibited funding case and asserting that he did not know what was inside the closed envelop which had 190 million pounds and brought up before his cabinet for approval," she remarked.

The minister said the PTI chief was opposing investigations into the Toshakhana theft and wanted his military secretary at that time to answer before the court.



PESHAWAR: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Ms. Marriyum Aurangzeb inaugurating Rehabilitation of Radio Pakistan Peshawar building after the incident of 9th May.

## No decisions taken about seat adjustment, elections: Rana Sanaullah

ISLAMABAD (INP): Senior leader of Muslim League (N) and Federal Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah, while reacting to PDM chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman's reservations, said on Tuesday that no decision had been taken in Dubai. In a statement, Rana Sanaullah said that politicians discuss political situation together and no decisions were taken regarding seat adjustments or elections in Dubai.

There was no such scheduled meeting in Dubai, he elaborated. "Pakistan Muslim League-N has a

definite and clear stance on political issues," he said. The interior minister said the elections should be held under a caretaker setup.

"Elections to all four provincial assemblies and the National Assembly should be held simultaneously. Assemblies shall be dissolved on completion of their term," said Rana Sana. The PML-N leader said, "There is already a caretaker setup in place in two provinces. In the remaining two provinces, the caretaker setup will also be installed."

## ECP issues non-bailable arrest warrants for Imran, Fawad in contempt case

ISLAMABAD (INP): The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Tuesday issued non-bailable arrest warrants for PTI chief Imran Khan and information minister Fawad Chaudhry in a case pertaining to contempt of the electoral body and the chief election commissioner (CEC).

The order was passed by a four-member ECP bench headed by member

Nisar Durrani. Last year, the ECP had initiated contempt proceedings against the PTI chief, Asad Umar and Fawad for allegedly using "intemperate" language against the CEC and the electoral watchdog.

It had also asked them to appear in person or through their counsels before the commission to explain their position.



ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi addressing the International Gandhara Symposium 2023.

## Pakistan rejects Israel's remarks regarding adoption of Universal Periodic Report

ISLAMABAD (APP): Foreign Office Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch has categorically rejected Israel's statement regarding the adoption of Pakistan's Universal Periodic Report

Responding to media queries, she said the UN Human Rights Council on Tuesday adopted Pakistan's Universal Periodic Report unanimously and Israel's politically motivated statement is fundamentally at variance with the otherwise positive tone of the session and the statements made by a vast majority of the countries.

The Spokesperson said several states and civil society organizations commended Pakistan on the progress achieved in promoting human rights.

She said given Israel's long history of oppression of Palestinians, Pakistan can certainly do without its advice on protecting Human Rights.

## Sanjrani briefed on construction of 77km road from Dalbandin to Ziarat

ISLAMABAD (INP): Chairman Senate, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani was called on by Secretary Ministry of Communications/Chairman NHA and briefed him about the progress made on the construction of a 77 kilometer road from Dalbandin to Ziarat Balanosh, District Chagai, Balochistan.

During the meeting, the Federal Secretary provided an update on the project, highlighting that the tendering process is set to commence in the coming days. He further disclosed that the work on this vital infrastructure project is scheduled to begin in August, with Chairman Senate taking part in the groundbreaking ceremony.

Sadiq Sanjrani expressed his appreciation for the efforts made by the National Highway Authority (NHA) in fulfilling the longstanding demand of the local people for improved road connectivity in the Chagai district.

## Bilawal says World must stand united against hatred, discrimination, intolerance

ISLAMABAD (APP): Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Tuesday called upon the world to stand united against hatred, discrimination, intolerance, and promote mutual respect, understanding, and tolerance.

Virtually addressing a session of an urgent debate held by Human Rights Council on acts of religious hatred including the incident of the desecration of the Holy Quran, the foreign minister said unfortunately, the deliberate desecration of the Holy Quran has continued under government sanction and with the sense of impunity.

Increasingly, he said these acts were designed to maximize propagating hate. "We must see this incitement to hatred, discrimination and attempts to provoke violence. We must join hands in condemning it, we must isolate those who stroke hatred," he said.

He said three months ago the first international day to combat Islamophobia was observed where the first ever session was held to mark the occasion at the UN General Assembly.

The minister said the Holy Quran was a spiritual anchor for two billion Muslims. "It is important to understand the deep hurt that at public and premeditated act of Quran's desecration causes to Muslims," he remarked.

Termining the desecration of the Holy Quran as an attack on the Muslim's faith, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said the call in the draft text presented before this council for prevention and accountability was reasonable and necessary.

The minister said the hate speech and free speech must be segregated as the free speech was as indispensable as hate speech was indefensible.



BEIJING: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal met with Mr. Zheng Shanjie, Chairman, National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC). They reviewed progress on ongoing CPEC projects and exchanged views on its future direction in line with the important consensus between the leadership of the two brotherly countries.

## Pak, China agree to accelerate implementation on ML-I and SEZs

BEIJING (Online): Pakistan and China agreed to fast-track the implementation of ML-I and Special Economic Zones (SEZs) so that projects can be executed timely.

The agreement was reached between Federal Minister for Planning Development & Special Initiatives, Ahsan Iqbal and Chairman, National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), Mr. Zheng Shanjie during a meeting held in Beijing on Tuesday.

The Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal is on a four-day official visit to China over the 10-year celebrations of CPEC. During his visit, he

co-chaired a special Joint Cooperation Committee meetings (JCC) meeting with the Vice Chairman, National Development & Reform Commission (NDRC). Besides, several meetings were held with key Chinese officials which included Chairman NDRC and other key officials.

During one to one meeting with Chairman NDRC, Mr. Zheng Shanjie, the Planning Minister conveyed felicitations of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to Chairman Zheng on assuming his new role and assured him of full support in smooth implementation of CPEC projects.

## India-Israel nexus with PTI now stands exposed behind May 9 mayhem: Sherry

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination Senator Sherry Rehman on Tuesday strongly condemned the statement of Israel regarding Pakistan at the United Nations and alleged that the Israel-India support for the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and its chief had fully exposed the sinister nexus behind the May 9 mayhem.

Addressing a press conference flanked by Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Interior and Legal Affairs Attaullah Tarar, Sherry Rehman lambasted the PTI chairman for his reported venomous campaign against the state, who, she claimed, was ever ready to do anything to please Israel.



"He (Imran Khan) believes that Israel's violations in Palestine are fine. Today Israel also becomes an ambassador of human rights but in reality she is doing the opposite," the minister added.

She denounced the PTI chairman for criticising and opposing his arrest. "He asks why the government did this to

me? He says he was arrested in a disgraceful way, but he should know that no one is above the law," she added.

The minister there were some sinister designs behind the curtain. Today the PTI was the best friend of Israel and Indian Prime Minister Modi, and its leader was being "baptized" in the waters of Israel.

## Daily Voice of Masses Independent

### Aiding investment

The new Pakistan Investment Policy 2023 appears to have been driven by the government's short-to-medium-term objective of facilitating 'promised' investment from the Gulf countries, and the longer-term goal of improving the overall business environment at home to enhance investment-to-GDP ratio to 20pc.

The World Bank estimates that investment will plunge to 13.3pc as a ratio of GDP during the present financial year from 15pc in FY20. Designed in collaboration with multilateral financial institutions, the policy is expected to attract \$20-25bn in investment over the next few years.

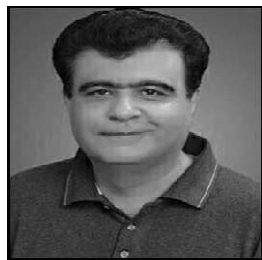
The government has indicated that the GCC nations are very interested in investing in different segments of Pakistan's economy to support development. The prime minister has already formed a Special Investment Facilitation Council to overcome any obstacles in the way of the project.

The policy will focus on reducing the cost and facilitating the ease of doing business, streamlining business processes and promoting the convergence of trade, industrial and monetary policies. It offers numerous incentives to foreign investors, including elimination of the minimum equity requirement and permission to invest in all sectors, barring a few.

The investors will be able to remit their entire profits back home in their own currencies and receive special protection. They will be also allowed to lease land without restriction, and transfer any land they hold without limitation. The policy lifts restrictions on foreign real estate developers. Foreign investors will be permitted to hold a 60pc stake in agricultural projects and 100pc equity in corporate farming.

Recent trends show that FDI flows are directed mostly towards politically and economically stable economies that have strong foundations for future growth and can access broader markets. Other factors that influence foreign investors' decisions include tax rates, regulatory transparency, policy consistency, technological infrastructure and a secure environment. Sadly, we lag far behind even regional countries on these counts. No wonder foreign firms are exiting our market. Even Chinese firms looking for relocation of their manufacturing facilities for export back home and elsewhere in the world are reluctant to invest here. Pakistan stands at a critical juncture in its history: it can turn its economic crisis into an opportunity by quickly implementing governance and structural reforms to attract investment or suffer on account of inaction. The new policy will likely woo official investment from friendly foreign governments. But private foreign investment flows will not materialise unless we fix all our systems that can affect an investor in any way.

## Breakaway states



Dr Niaz Murtaza

Most states today are either historical ones or were made by colonisers. Only a few broke away from larger states after World War II. Excluding non-UN member breakaway regions like Somaliland, this includes Singapore, Timor-Leste, Bangla-desh, Pakistan and Lebanon in Asia; Eritrea and South Sudan in Africa; six ex-Yugoslav states; Slovakia and 14 ex-USSR states (eight Christian-dominated ones in Europe and six Muslim-dominated ones in Asia). The ex-USSR states and Singapore were evicted; the rest pursued freedom.

Singapore, Croatia, Latvia, Slovenia, Lithuania and Estonia are doing very well politically and economically. Sixteen other states have political stability and moderate economic growth (including Ukraine until the Russian invasion). Conversely, South Sudan, Lebanon, Pakistan and Bosnia have weak economies, political instability and insecurity. Eritrea, the fond site of my PhD research where I spent months living in tiny villages studying how stable traditional human systems were undermined by external intrusion over 100 years, has become a totalitarian, reclusive, pariah state.

To explain this divergence, I look at three factors: their mode of freedom, homogeneity and prior existence as a free state or a regional unit with its own governance structure that could aid post-freedom governance. The seven

doing well are religiously and ethnically homogeneous — with at least 70 per cent of the people belonging to one identity group — and were at least regional units for long. Those doing moderately well are only slightly less homogeneous but were still at least regional governance units for long.

The last five are all diverse, with no ethnic group having even a 50pc majority. Pakistan, South Sudan and Lebanon had never existed as even distinct regional political units — Eritrea only for 90 years under Italian rule after 1890 that created some unity, and Bosnia rarely through history. South Sudan, Eritrea and Bosnia became free via civil war and Pakistan and Lebanon via colonial division. South Sudan and Eritrea had faced huge abuse for decades under Sudan and Ethiopia, creating unity. The Pakistani, Lebanese and Bosnian freedom drives were pre-emptive, driven by elite fears of future risks. Ours was led by elites that hardly belonged locally after 1947.

Thus, most of the problems of the five are embedded in their DNAs, which lacked both a natural nation (where most people belong to one social group) or historical state (even as a regional unit) strand. They faced the huge task of creating both a state and nation almost from scratch after freedom. States lacking both can progress via a cultivated nationhood, where diverse groups adopt a new national identity based on mutual benefits perceived from being part of a larger state. But cultivated nationhood requires devolved democracy, which we have struggled with.

This is all the more surprising as the demand for Pakistan was first made in March 1940 based on a charter that

embodied devolved democracy as its driving force, a novel, brilliant idea that was decades ahead as a governance model among decolonising regions then. It's a surprise that an elitist, drab outfit like the Muslim League gave it. It was only adopted under regional pressure and to get regions on board. But the League leadership took no steps to operationalise it before or after 1947. The Muslim elites who feared Hindu-majority democratic rule before 1947 feared even Muslim-majority democratic rule after independence. Thus, some say that while the Indian and Bangladeshi freedom drives were pursuing democracy, the Pakistani one was not.

The devolved democracy idea was dangled by the British in the Cabinet Mission plan, seen as an option against the majoritarian, centralised democracy Congress sold and the partition Muslim League wanted. Ironically, Muslim League accepted it while Congress didn't. Yet in their respective post-freedom turfs, Congress adopted it much more. Hence, today, we lack ancient statehood, natural nationhood and even cultivated nationhood. The first two cannot be created. But cultivated nationhood through devolved democracy is still possible.

Yet, our elite-dominated state structure supports patronage elite politics to crush grassroots, egalitarian politics and supports autocratic, extremist religious, populist and ethno-populist politics when even the elitist politician becomes too autonomous. In short, this review highlights a key fact: a thriving nation and state cannot be created easily based on real elite fears alone if there isn't an ancient state and a natural nation. -- Courtesy Dawn

## Idle & unemployed



Zofeen T. Ebrahim

Our chief census commissioner Naeemuz Zafar's words failed to cause a stir when he said recently that there were 249,566,743 of us in the country. That we are too many is stating the obvious. But maybe if he had said it, it may have sunk in. Or maybe if 'we are too many' becomes a mantra of sorts, and is repeated from different platforms, we may hear it. We need to hear it from the pulpit, on television and radio, social media, in the national and provincial assemblies and the Senate. We need to hear it in schools and universities. Maybe, Hasan Raheem could come up with a song, maybe Coke Studio could devote a whole season to the population explosion we just witnessed, and maybe then we will stop breeding like rabbits.

Pakistan's population has doubled twice since 1951, when the first census was held, and is estimated to double again within four years, ie, 2027, registering an eightfold increase since 1951, which is "unacceptably high" if you ask demographer Dr Farid Midhet.

For years, our leaders have been telling us that our youth bulge (currently 58.7 million) is our demographic boom. They are not telling the truth. The government needs to abandon spinning this tale about the population dividend. According to economist Dr Hafiz A. Pasha's calculations, 17m youth in Pakistan are either 'idle' or unemployed; of these almost 7m are young men. Does the government have a plan

for the uneducated, malnourished, stunted, unhealthy and unskilled cohort of this country? Because that is what Pakistan will eventually be left with.

The young educated, tired of wading through chest-deep corruption, is fleeing the country at the first opportunity. In 2022, more than 800,000 people left the country to work abroad. These are the recorded numbers; the real figures could be manifold. Many from the same educated fraternity, using both legal (on the pretext of pursuing a higher degree, never to return) and illegal (such as last month's Greek boat tragedy) channels, could be far more.

Then there is the frustrated brigade of graduates stuck in Pakistan but unable to find work matching their skillset and education. A 2022 Pakistan Institute of Development Economics study revealed that the unemployment rate among university graduates in Pakistan was over 31pc.

The government can continue building more schools, universities, hospitals, even dams to store water. It can plan youth development programmes too, but will these ever be enough?

Dr Midhet wants to set up a 'Population and Development Research Centre', a kind of a think tank, where new knowledge is generated around population, specially the youth bulge. This knowledge, he says, can then be shared with stakeholders to channel the unemployed (even uneducated) and idle towards more productive use. While there is some donor interest in establishing the centre, he says, it needs to be set up in a government academic institution.

At the same time, policymakers must now look at the 249m figure through the lens of fam-

ily planning. One does not have to be a demographer like Dr Midhet to understand that the country's total fertility rate — the average number of births a woman would have in her lifetime and which currently stands at 3.32 — is still quite high. Although India became the most populous country this year, its TFR stands at 2.0 (even below the replacement level of 2.1) and its use of family planning methods is 66.7pc. Pakistan's stands at 34pc. The Indian government has attributed the decline in its TFR to the increase in the use of contraceptives and rising education among girls.

It is time to stop exploiting the population issue for political onepmanship as this may only lead us down a rabbit hole. Dr Sabina Durrani, director general of the population programme wing at the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, finds such formulas rather skewed. Giving the example of each province using its population numbers to influence the NFC award, or to gain more seats in parliament or a larger share in the civil services quota, she asks that if population is given so much weightage why would provinces want to invest in reducing the size of their respective populations.

UNFPA's representative in Pakistan says population issues need to be tackled in novel ways to uproot current biases. One way could be to set up an agency like the National Command and Operation Centre (created during the Covid-19 pandemic) for population matters and to safeguard the health and rights of Pakistan's women and girls, which is the theme of this year's July 11 World Population Day. -- Courtesy Dawn

## Commerce News

### President for skill development, financial, digital inclusion of women

ISLAMABAD (APP): President Dr Arif Alvi on Tuesday underscored the need for skill development, digital inclusion, and financial inclusion of women in Pakistan in order to make them financially self-sufficient. He stated that women, who constituted almost 50 per cent of the country's population, needed to participate in all sectors of the economy for their economic empowerment.

Women's and girls' education is a vital component that contributed to gender equality as well as

to the socio-economic development of the country, he added. The president made these remarks during a meeting with the delegation of Women Business Network, led by Sam Ali Dada, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Women Business Network (WBN) is a global network of business professionals and corporate leaders that aims to uplift women for key leadership positions in the industry and create opportunities for their businesses.

During the meeting, the president urged the delegation to increase employ-

ment opportunities for women in the private sector, besides establishing linkages with skill development institutions, such as NAVTTC and TEVTA, to provide women with marketable skills sets.

He also emphasized the importance of skill and educational development of women and girls in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM).

The president highlighted the need for projecting the success stories of women to encourage and motivate other women to

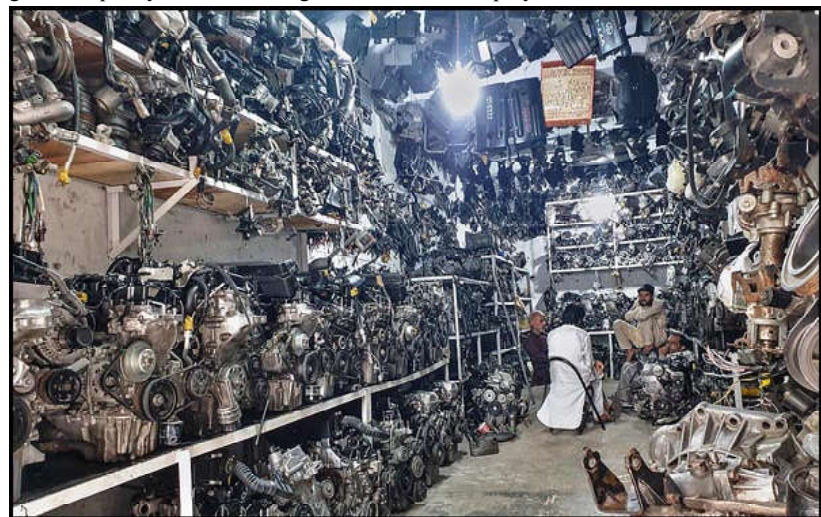
take part in business and economic activities.

He also called for taking practical and meaningful steps to address gender disparity. He stressed the need for integrating women into the mainstream of economic activities for their financial empowerment.

The delegation briefed the president about the steps being taken by WBN for the socio-economic empowerment of women. He commended the efforts of WBN in providing job opportunities to women and taking steps for their financial inclusion.



President Dr Arif Alvi in a meeting with a delegation of Women Business Network, led by Ms Sam Ali Dada, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, Islamabad.



RAWALPINDI: Vendors displaying old vehicles' engines to attract the customers in shop at Chah Sultan.

### Ahsan Iqbal briefs Chinese companies on govt latest steps to facilitate investment

BEIJING (APP): Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives, Prof Ahsan Iqbal briefed the Chinese companies on the latest steps taken by the Government of Pakistan to facilitate investment and stated that Phase II of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was increasing the bilateral cooperation in industrial, infrastructure and information technology sectors.

The minister hosted a dinner for the Chinese Companies working in Pakistan on CPEC-related

projects, in Beijing.

The dinner was organized as part of celebrations of the Decade of CPEC (2013-23) to acknowledge the contributions of Chinese enterprises and companies in Pakistan's development through CPEC-related projects.

Addressing the participants, he also emphasized on business-to-business collaboration would be the hallmark of this phase of CPEC.

The minister also highlighted that the Government of Pakistan had for-

mulated a Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) for the economic revival of the country.

The SIFC will be chaired by the Prime Minister of Pakistan, with the Chief of Army Staff and Federal Ministers as its members. This is in line with the Government of Pakistan's vision to promote investment and prioritize exports.

Prof Ahsan Iqbal encouraged Chinese enterprises and investors to explore more investment opportunities in Pakistan.

### PBF commends govt's endeavours of renewing agribusiness area

KARACHI (APP): Pakistan Business Forum (PBF) lauding Green Pakistan Initiative said that the country's second green revolution will pave the way for progress and prosperity besides attracting massive foreign direct investment.

Vice President PBF, Chaudhry Ahmad Jawad, in interaction with APP on Tuesday, said that the government's historic initiative and the Pakistan Army's special focus on revolutionising the agricul-

tural sector would make farming the significant driver of our monetary development and ensure food security as well.

He said that in Pakistan's agricultural sector, billion-dollar investments are anticipated within the next four to five years through the promotion of cutting-edge technology, collaboration between the public and private sectors, and dividends distributed to local farmers to alleviate poverty.

### UVAS holds stakeholder discussion on livestock development

LAHORE (APP): The University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences (UVAS) Lahore in collaboration with the Punjab Agriculture Research Board (PARB) arranged a discussion on livestock development and research at City Campus on Tuesday.

Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Nasim Ahmed and Chief Executive (PARB) Dr Abid Mehmood co-chaired the meeting and sought suggestions and technical inputs from stakeholders and identified priority researchable

areas for development of the livestock sector and enhancing profitability of poor livestock farming community in the country. Representatives of dairy industry, stakeholders from public and private organizations, researchers, faculty members from different education institutions and professionals were also present. Vice Chancellor Prof Dr Nasim Ahmed sought suggestions from participants on future necessities of research & development for the livestock sector.

### Pakistan eyes GCC's \$40 bln investment in agri sector in 5 yrs

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday said the government aimed to fetch investment of billions of dollars from the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries into the country's food and agriculture sector.

In a tweet, he said, the GCC countries import food items and agriculture products to the tune of \$40 billion annually.

Sharif said the step would be taken under the supervision of the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), for which

the ground has been prepared.

In the next four to five years, he said, there would be an investment of approximately \$40 billion in addition to the creation of four million new jobs.

The prime minister mentioned that at the national seminar on agriculture and food security held Monday, he stressed the importance of revitalizing agriculture as harbinger of the second Green Revolution.

"The second Green Revolution is about making agriculture the major driver

of our economic growth, leading to food security that reinforces our national security," he said.

He said the seminar was not a routine event meant for churning of rhetoric, but it represented the beginning of a long overdue national effort for the economic revival of the country owned by all stakeholders.

"The future holds the promise of departing from loans to building a resilient economy, which stands on its internal strengths," he said. "Together, we will make it happen."

### Rupee gains Rs 1.24 against US Dollar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Pakistani Rupee on Tuesday gained Rs 1.24 against the US Dollar (USD) in the interbank trading as it closed at Rs 278.56 against the previous day's closing of Rs 279.80. However, according to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of dollars in the open market stood at Rs 282 and Rs 284.5 respectively. The price of the Euro increased by 17 paise to close at Rs 306.75 against the last day's closing of Rs 306.58, according to the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

### Chinese, PCJCCI discuss low-cost energy projects

LAHORE (APP): A Chinese delegation from Huzhou visited Pakistan China Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCJCCI) to discuss the scope of investment in low-cost energy projects here at PCJCCI Secretariat on Tuesday. The delegation was headed by Gan Meilin, Chairman, Xiandeng, Hi-Tech Electric Co.

On this occasion, PCJCCI President Moazzam Ghurki said, "We are fully confident that the future of China-Pakistan relationship is broad and bright." He said

that low-priced energy was produced in China through incineration of waste materials. This model could prove to be a solution to energy crisis and environmental pollution in Pakistan. He also said that many Chinese companies were willing to invest in Municipal Solid Waste (MSW) incineration for power generation. Gan Meilin, Chairman, Xiandeng, Hi-Tech Electric Co said that in Pakistan about 3,000 MW electricity could be generated using agricultural residue and municipal solid waste.

## PM launches Laptop Scheme for KP students, inaugurates Fata University

PESHAWAR (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif here Tuesday launched the Prime Minister National Laptop Scheme for the talented students of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including merged areas enabling them to continue their studies and contemporary research.

The laptop distribution ceremony was held at Governor House and attended by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Governor Haji Ghulam Ali, Caretaker Chief Minister Muhammad Azam Khan, Federal Minister for Information Marriyur Aurangzeb, Deputy Speaker National Assembly Ziad Akram Durrani, Special Assistant for Youth Affairs Shaza Fatima, PM Adviser Engr Amir Muqam, Federal and Provincial Ministers, Chairman HEC and students in large number.

The prime minister distributed laptops among the position holder students of different universities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Speaking on the occasion, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said that the laptops scheme was launched for all the talented students of the country including KP that was being distributed strictly on merit. No favouritism or nepotism would be tolerated in its distribution, he added.

The prime minister said that 100,000 laptops would be distributed among students in the country this year. A total of one million laptops were distributed so far among students under the PM scheme in the country.



LAHORE: Punjab Governor Muhammad Baligh ur Rehman in a group photo with Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi along with his cabinet members after meeting.

## Dr Jamal expresses annoyance over SSH's poor management

RAWALPINDI (APP): Provincial Minister for Primary and Secondary Healthcare and Population Welfare Dr Jamal Nasir on Tuesday expressed annoyance over the poor management at the Social Security Hospital (SSH) Rawalpindi and apprised the Caretaker Chief Minister of Punjab Mohsin Naqvi of the situation.

During a visit to SSH, he directed the relevant officials to utilize the available resources judiciously as the patients were suffering and delayed in treatment due to mismanagement.

The minister warned the hospital's administration to improve the management of the hospital within a week or else strict action would be taken against them.

Dr Jamal Nasir took rounds of the emergency, OPD, laboratory, X-rays room and other parts of the hospital.

He interacted with the patients and asked about the treatment facilities and the doctor's and hospital staff's attitude.

## Meeting of District Peace Committee held in Sukkur

SUKKUR (APP): A meeting of the peace committee of Sukkur district was convened at Commissioner's office Sukkur on Tuesday and chaired by Deputy Commissioner Sukkur Dr Shahzad Thaheem.

The meeting was attended by SSP, Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC), Assistant Commissioners (ACs), commissioner, representatives from the district administration, peace committee members, and license holders of majalis and processions were also present. The objective of the meeting was to ensure public peace and security during Muharram.

The meeting underscored the necessity of implementing enhanced security measures at Imambargahs, including security checks, walk-through gates, metal detectors, and the installation of CCTV cameras.

The activation and involvement of peace committees were emphasized as crucial components in upholding peace and tranquillity.

## World Population day celebrated in Sukkur

SUKKUR (APP): World Population Day was observed in the district, like in other parts of the country on Tuesday. District Health Office Sukkur with USAID Global health supply chain observed the day. A walk was planned at District Health Office where people from various Walks of life including District Health Officer Sukkur, Agha Samiullah, Dr Javed Talpur, doctors, nurses, Lady Health Workers Lady Health Visitors and many other participated. Speakers highlighted that population is a great asset but at the same time if we don't utilize its potential it becomes a liability.

## HMC passes budget of Rs 4.0113 billion

HYDERABAD (APP): The maiden session of the newly elected members of the Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (HMC), was held in Mumtaz Mirza Auditorium instead of the HMC hall here on Tuesday and approved the budget of Rs 4.0113 billion.

The newly elected Mayor Kashif Ali Shoro presided over the session and presented the day's 5-point agenda.

The Deputy Mayor Sagheer Qureshi and Municipal Commissioner Anis Ahmed Dasti were also present on the occasion besides hundreds of elected and reserved seats local government representatives in the House of 240.

Speaking on the occasion, the Mayor condemned the desecration of the Holy Quran in Sweden and the May 9 attacks on military installations by supporters of a political party.

The 5-point agenda introduced by the mayor included the introduction of the members; approval for the fiscal budget 2023-24; forming the council's committees; desilting of the drains before rainfall; and presentation of 2 resolutions. The session also gave its nod to the budget 2022-23.

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## Awareness walk arranged on World Population Day

LARKANA (APP): An awareness walk was organized by the District Population Welfare Department Larkana to mark World Population Day on Tuesday. The walk was led by the District officer Population Welfare department Larkana Karim Bux Bhutto, Dr. Muhammad Ayub Bhutto, Dr. Jamila Qureshi, Saifdar Soomro, District Manager Mary Stopes Society Farman Ali Barro officials of the Population Welfare Department.

It was largely participated by doctors, notables, para-medical staff, lady health workers, female and male mobilizers, social workers, students, and others.

The walk started from the Dargah Qaim Shah Bukhari Larkana and marched all the important thoroughfares of the Larkana city and concluded in front of Larkana Press Club.

## Conference on foundational learning, early childhood care begins

KARACHI (APP): A two-day Conference on 'Foundation Learning and Early Childhood Care & Education in Emergencies' has commenced at a local hotel here on Tuesday.

The conference has been organized by the Sindh School Education and Literacy Department in collaboration with United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF).

Sindh Minister for Health Dr. Azra Fazal Pechuho, Sindh Education Minister Syed Ali Sardar Shah, Secretary Education Ghulam Akbar Laghari, Chief of Field Office UNICEF Sindh Prem Bahadur Chand, Dr. Junaid Samo Chief Program Manager RSU, Dr. Fauzia Khan and representatives from UNICEF, the World Bank, Save the Children, Idara Taleem-o-Agahi, AKU, and other national and international organizations attended the event the first day.

The conference is aimed at addressing the challenges faced by the education system in Sindh and Pakistan. The speakers on the occasion said that COVID-19, the devastating floods, which washed away whole villages across Sindh, Balochistan, KPK and some districts of Punjab, left more than 2 million children in Pakistan inaccessible to education and damaged nearly 27,000 schools in the country.

These emergencies emphasize the urgency to build more resilience and preparedness for such crises and to ensure growing investment and system strengthening to the continuum of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) and Foundation Learning in lower primary (up to grade 3).

They said that the growing investment in these two sub-sectors where a majority of the enrolled children are present will create sustainable lifelong learning possible. The Foundational Learning crisis in Pakistan has solid evidence.

Addressing the conference, the Provincial Health Minister, Dr. Azra Pechuho, said that numerous schools in the province were severely affected during the 2022 floods, resulting in extensive delays in their reconstruction.

Consequently, the education of children attending these schools has been disrupted for a period of 4 to 5 years, which are crucial years for their learning and development.

It is imperative for us to embrace e-learning and virtual education as we bring children back into the education system.

Bringing out-of-school children back into the learning environment is crucial. During the COVID-19 pandemic, children remained confined to their homes, and we made efforts to ensure their immunization.

Speaking at the conference, the Provincial Education Minister Syed Sardar Ali Shah emphasized the role of mothers as the first and best early childhood educators.

Early childhood education teachers play a vital role in guiding children towards proper education and the right path, just like mothers.

The minister expressed his disappointment at the fact that no philanthropist had come forward to help in constructing schools, unlike Mir Ghulam Muhammad Talpur, who built schools in Tando Bagho during the 1920s.



HYDERABAD: Women and children belong to Oadh tribe hold a protest against demolishing their makeshifts during an anti-encroachment drive on Autobahn road.

# International News

## Turkey gives green light to Swedish NATO membership bid

**Monitoring Desk**  
VILNIUS: Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan agreed to forward to parliament Sweden's bid to join the NATO military alliance, appearing to end months of drama over an issue that had strained the bloc as war has raged in Ukraine.

Sweden and Finland applied for NATO membership last year, abandoning their policies of military non-alignment that had lasted through the decades of the Cold War in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. While Finland's NATO membership was green-lighted in April, Turkey and Hungary have yet to clear Sweden's bid.

## Ukraine's Zelenskyy says lack of timeframe for membership 'absurd'

**Monitoring Desk**  
VILNIUS: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said it would be "absurd" if NATO leaders gathering for a summit on Tuesday did not offer his country a timeframe for membership, after the alliance head said it would send Kyiv a "positive message".

Kyiv is pushing to be swiftly allowed into the Western alliance, bound together by mutual security guarantees. But divisions among NATO's 31 members mean there will not be a date or straight-forward invitation for Ukraine to join.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said Kyiv would get more military aid and security guarantees, an easing of formal conditions to join, as well as a new format of cooperation with the alliance.

Stockholm has been working to join the bloc at the alliance's summit in the Lithuanian capital Vilnius, which begins on Tuesday.

"I'm glad to announce ... that President Erdogan has agreed to forward the accession protocol for Sweden to the grand national assembly as soon as possible, and work closely with the assembly to ensure ratification," NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg told a news conference, describing it as a "historic" step. He had convened Erdogan and Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson for several hours of talks on the eve of the summit as he sought to finally break the deadlock.



NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg, Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan and Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson react during a meeting, on the eve of a NATO summit, in Vilnius, Lithuania.

## South Korea, NATO to boost partnership on security, cyber threats

**Monitoring Desk**  
SEOUL: South Korea and NATO will expand cooperation on global security issues including Ukraine and North Korea their leaders said on Tuesday on the sidelines of NATO's annual meeting in Lithuania, the South Korean presidential office said.

President Yoon Suk Yeol arrived in Vilnius on Monday for the summit of NATO leaders, aiming to step up security ties in the

face of evolving nuclear threats from North Korea and tension over China.

Yoon said security in the Atlantic and Indo-Pacific regions were inseparable. "I came to institutionalise the cooperation framework by creating individually tailored partnership programmes, and to discuss cooperation on military intelligence and cyber areas," Yoon told NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg.

## Xi wants Russia, China to 'lead global governance reform'

**Monitoring Desk**  
BEIJING: China and Russia need to "lead the correct direction of global governance reform", according to Chinese President Xi Jinping, who hailed the two countries' partnership at a meeting with a top Russian politician in Beijing on Monday, state media reported.

Beijing and Moscow have ramped up economic cooperation and diplomatic contacts in recent years, with exchanges only growing closer since Russia's invasion of Ukraine last year.

On Monday, Xi met Valentina Matvienko, the speaker of the Federation Council — the Russian parliament's upper house — at the Great Hall of the People, state broadcaster CCTV reported.

Xi said the development of relations between the two countries was "a strategic choice made by both countries based on the fundamental interests of their respective countries and peoples", according to CCTV.

"Both sides also need to strengthen communication and collaboration within multilateral mechanisms such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the BRICS countries, lead the correct direction of global governance reform, and safeguard the common interests of emerging market countries and developing countries," the statement continued.

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Rep. Maria Elvira Salazar speaks during a press conference after the roundtable discussion between elected officials and Cuban activists about political prisoners at the Assault Brigade 2506 Museum.

## Indonesia seizes Iranian-flagged tanker suspected of illegal oil transshipment

**Monitoring Desk**  
JAKARTA: Indonesia's coast guard said on Tuesday it has seized an Iranian-flagged supertanker suspected of involvement in the illegal transshipment of crude oil and vowed to strengthen maritime patrols.

A "shadow" fleet of tankers carrying oil from sanctioned Iran, Russia and Venezuela are transferring their cargoes in the Singapore Strait to avoid detection, according to a Reuters analysis earlier this year.

The risk of oil spills and accidents is growing as hundreds of extra ships, some without insurance cover, have joined this opaque parallel trade over the past few years. The Very Large Crude Carrier (VLCC), MT Arman 114, was carrying 272,569 metric tons of light crude oil, valued at 4.6 trillion rupiah (\$304 million) and was suspected of transferring the oil to another vessel without a permit, Indonesia's Maritime Security Agency (Bakamla) said.

## France to send long-range missiles to Ukraine - Macron

**Monitoring Desk**  
VILNIUS: France will join Britain in supplying long-range SCALP missiles to Ukraine, a move that allows Ukrainian forces to hit Russian troops and supply dumps deep behind the front lines.

Speaking on arrival at a summit of the 31-member NATO alliance in Lithuania, French President Emmanuel Macron said he had decided to boost military aid to Ukraine to help its counteroffensive.

## Kremlin says Turkiye should have no illusions over its EU bid

**Monitoring Desk**  
MOSCOW: Turkiye should be under no illusion that it might one day be allowed to join the European Union, the Kremlin said on Tuesday, as Moscow stressed its desire for strong relations with Ankara despite disagreements, including over Nato enlargement.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov was responding to a question about Nato member Turkiye's decision to lift its

opposition to Sweden joining the alliance on the eve of a two-day Nato summit in Lithuania.

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan has sought to maintain cordialties with both Moscow and Kyiv during the 16-month war in Ukraine. He has refused to join Western sanctions against Russia over the invasion and has invited Russian President Vladimir Putin to visit Turkiye in August.

## Hungarian farm minister to visit Turkey for talks on Black Sea grain deal

**Monitoring Desk**  
BUDAPEST: Hungary's farm minister will go to Turkey on Tuesday for talks with his Turkish counterpart about extending the deal that allows Ukraine to export grain from its Black Sea ports, the minister said on Facebook. The deal is due to expire next week. Moscow has said it sees no grounds to extend it beyond July 17.

The United Nations and Turkey brokered the Black Sea deal between Russia and Ukraine in July 2022.

## Israel occupation makes Palestinian territories 'open-air prison' - UN expert

**Monitoring Desk**  
GENEVA: A United Nations expert on Tuesday said Israel had transformed the occupied Palestinian territories into an "open-air prison" through widespread detentions of Palestinians, an assertion swiftly dismissed by Israel.

Francesca Albanese, the U.N. Special Rapporteur on human rights in the occupied territories, told reporters in Geneva that Israel had carried out widespread, systematic and arbitrary detention of Palestinians since the 1967 Middle East war. "There is no other way to define the regime that Israel has imposed on the Palestinians - which is apartheid by default - other than an open-air prison," Albanese said at a briefing for journalists.

"By deeming all Palestinians as a potential security threat, Israel is blurring the line between its own security and the security of its annexation plan."

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"By deeming all Palestinians as a potential security threat, Israel is blurring the line between its own security and the security of its annexation plan."



ISLAMABAD: Pang Chunxue, The Chargé d'Affaires of the Chinese Embassy in Pakistan calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

## GCF approves US\$66 funding for WWF-Pakistan's flagship Recharge Pakistan project

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Green Climate Fund (GCF) has announced US\$ 66 million in funding to support the Government of Pakistan's efforts to reduce the twin climate impacts of flooding and drought.

The investment will improve the resilience of some of the country's most vulnerable communities affected by the impacts of climate change, including catastrophic flooding.

The new 7-year project, 'Recharge Pakistan: Building Pakistan's Resilience to Climate

Change through Ecosystem-Based Adaptation for Integrated Flood Risk Management', is the largest investment at the national level to date in an ecosystem-based approach to flood and water resources management, a news release said.

A collaboration between the Government of Pakistan's Ministry of Climate Change (MoCC), the Federal Flood Commission (FFC) under the Ministry of Water Resources, and WWF-Pakistan, the project will demonstrate the effectiveness of ecosystem-based adaptation and green infrastructure as an innovative addition to the nation's traditional grey infrastructure solutions to flood and drought.

This will be achieved through restoration and reforestation of forests and wetlands; rehabilitation of water flow paths and channels; development of recharge basins and retention areas; and strengthening the climate resilience of local businesses in the agriculture and forests sectors.

## Posters appear in IIOJK, urge people to observe shutdown on July 13

ISLAMABAD (APP): Posters have appeared, paying tributes to martyrs of July 13, 1931 and other martyrs in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

According to Kashmir media service, the Kashmir Martyrs' Day is observed on July 13 every year not only on both sides of the Line of Control but also all over the world by the Kashmiris to pay homage to 22 Kashmiris who were martyred by the forces of Dogra ruler in 1931.

They were demanding the freedom of Kashmir from the despotic Dogra rulers. The posters were displayed by All Parties Hurriyat Conference, Wareseen-e-Shuhada

Jammu and Kashmir Sadai Mazloom, Nawjawan-e-Hurriyat Jammu Kashmir, Political Resistance Movement (JKPRM), Jammu and Kashmir Justice League Forum (JKJLF), Democratic Youth Forum, Jammu Kashmir Democratic Movement, Jammu Kashmir Peoples Resistance Party, Kashmir Resistance Movement (KRM), Kashmir Hurriyat Forum (KHF), Youth Democratic Political Movement, Jammu and Kashmir Tehreek-e-Azadi, Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Alliance and several other freedom groups in several parts of Kashmir valley.

The posters also urged people to observe a strike on Thursday, July 13.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar chaired the meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC).

## FPCCI welcomes Pak, Kazakhstan direct air link

LAHORE: Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) Tuesday welcomed

deserved appreciation for playing an important role in the launch of a direct air link between the two brotherly countries. He said that



economic relations between the two countries would improve further with the start of direct flights. He said the business community of Pakistan considered that the step would positively impact trade relations with Kazakhstan and Central Asia.

Sheikh expressed his views by highlighting its positive impact on various aspects of the bilateral relationship between Kazakhstan and Pakistan. He emphasized that introducing a direct air flight between our two nations would bring about a transformative change, fostering increased trade, cultural exchange, and mutual understanding.

Irfan Iqbal said the Kazakhstan Ambassador to Pakistan Yerzan Kistafin



ISLAMABAD: Senator Syed Ali Zafar, Chairman Senate Standing Committee on Law and Justice presiding over a meeting of the committee at Parliament House.

## Pakistan, China always stand together, extend unflinching support: PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday said that as 'Iron Brothers' and old friends, Pakistan and China always stood together in difficult times and had extended unflinching support to each other on issues of mutual concern.

The prime minister expressed these views during a meeting with Charge d'Affaires of the People's Republic of China Pang Chunxue, who called on him.

The prime minister felicitated the Communist Party of China on its 102nd anniversary and thanked the CPC leadership for its firm support to Pakistan's sovereignty, integrity and economic development, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

Recalling his substantive interactions with President Xi Jinping and more recently with Premier Li Qiang, the prime minister appreciated the strong personal commitment of the Chinese leadership for strengthening bilateral ties between the two countries.

Noting the upward trajectory in Pakistan-China ties and deepening economic and financial relationship, the prime minister thanked China for its support for Pakistan's economic stability and expressed his firm commitment to further deepen development cooperation between the two countries under the rubric of Global Development Initiative and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

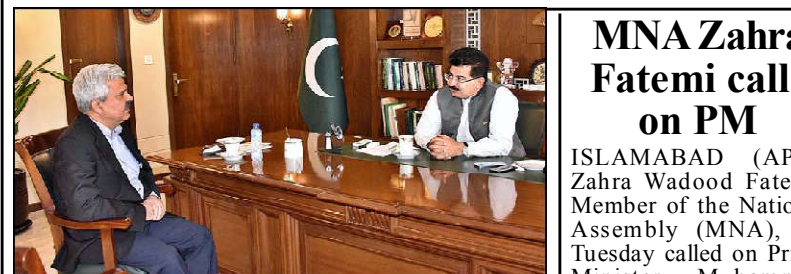
Conveying the best wishes and felicitations of the Chinese government for Pakistan, Pang underscored

that Pakistan was an all-weather strategic cooperative partner of China and a time-tested friend.

She highlighted that the Chinese government and the Communist Party of China accorded a special place to Pakistan in its neighborhood diplomacy and looked forward to further deepening relationship in all fields of bilateral cooperation.

Thanking the prime minister for his virtual participation in the first High-Level Forum on Global Development Initiative (GDI), Chinese Charge d'Affaires expressed China's resolve to implement GDI projects in Pakistan as envisaged by the leadership of two countries.

She further underscored that CPEC was a flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani in a meeting with Federal Secretary Ministry of Communications Chairman NHA CAPT (R) Muhammad Khurram Agha at Parliament House.

## Holds online Khuli Katcheri Police striving hard to redress public issues as early as possible: ICCPO

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCPO) Dr. Akbar Nasir

hold an online khuli katcheri to give the residents direct access to the police high ups, a police public relations officer said.

According to details on the vision of Prime Minister of Pakistan Mian Shahbaz Sharif and on the orders of Interior Minister Rana Sana Ullah Khan, the ICCPO holds an online khuli katcheri at the central police office. He said that the ICCPO Dr Akbar Nasir Khan responded to the public queries via phone calls from 102pm to 04pm. AIG

(Operations) Saud Khan also present on the occasion. ICCPO Dr Akbar Nasir Khan listened to the

problems of the callers and directed the concerned officers for their immediate solution.

Most of the problems that were mentioned were the policemen's personal and departmental problems, while citizens' problems were related to police stations.

## Ombudsman institutions functioning with full govt's support: Ejaz

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Ombudsman institutions are functioning in Pakistan with the full support of its citizenry and the incumbent government.

This was stated by Wafaqi Mohtasib (Federal Ombudsman) Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi while addressing an international seminar in Bangkok on the role of the Asian Ombudsman as a mechanism for promoting fair administration, good governance and the rule of law, a news release on Tuesday said.

The seminar was held as part of the Asian Regional Meeting 2023 hosted by the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI) which is a global ombudsman body with over 200 members from across the globe. In his address to the seminar, Qureshi emphasized that the institution of Wafaqi Mohtasib was playing its due role in the dispensation of administrative justice, thereby complementing the efforts of the supreme judiciary in providing justice to all citizens.

He said that the steps taken by the Wafaqi Mohtasib's institution to check against the maladministration and administrative excesses of government agencies.

## ICP organizes 1,757 road safety workshops during the ongoing year

ISLAMABAD: Following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer Dr Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police is striving to en-

sure traffic discipline and minimize the violation of rules through educating road users. He said that, in this regard the Islamabad capital police organized 1,757 road safety workshops through which 5,12,669 citizens were educated during the ongoing year.

These road safety workshops were arranged for driving license applicants, volunteers, students of educational institutions and staff of government and non-government organizations, a police public relations officer said.

He said that, the Islamabad capital police is arranging such workshops and creating awareness amongst people about consequences of traffic rules violations, including over speeding, one-wheeling, non-pattern and fancy number plates, juvenile driving, lane-line discipline and zebra crossing etc.

## PM Shehbaz Sharif spends busy day in Peshawar



## MNA Zahra Fatemi calls on PM

ISLAMABAD (APP): Zahra Wadood Fatemi, Member of the National Assembly (MNA), on Tuesday called on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

During the meeting, Zahra Faetmi lauded the prime minister for the launch of PM's Initiative for Women Empowerment and provision of laptops, scholarships, interest-free loans and the launch of entrepreneurship programmes for the talented youth of the country, the PM Office Media Wing said in a press release.

She also apprised the prime minister of the issues during the entry tests to medical colleges (MDCAT) to which the latter directed the relevant authorities to immediately resolve the students' issues in this regard.

## Envoys call for promoting tourism in South Asia

ISLAMABAD (APP): The envoys of Bangladesh and Nepal in Pakistan on Tuesday stressed the need for collective efforts to promote and develop the tourism sector of the South Asian region including Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal for sustainable growth of their respective economies.

They also lauded the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI) for organizing the International Tourism Summit 2023, which they said would also help in further promoting tourism in Northern areas of the country, said a press release.

The High Commissioner of Bangladesh in Pakistan Md. Ruhul Alam Siddique congratulated President ICCI for successfully organizing the "First ICCI Tourism Summit Skardu 2023".

He said that the initiative provided an opportunity to see the natural beauty of the northern regions, and it would have a positive impact on the tourism industry of Pakistan.

## Mazari moves IHC for removal of her name from ECL

ISLAMABAD (Online): Former federal minister Shireen Mazari has filed petition in Islamabad High Court for removal of her name from Exit Control List (ECL).

Shireen Mazari has made interior secretary and director FIA respondents in her petition.

She pleaded in the petition that placing name in interim no fly list is illegal.

## Asian Games: Tennis star Aisam will represent Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (Online): The squad of Pakistan Tennis team for Asian games has been finalized.

Tennis Star Aisam Ul Haq will represent Pakistan in Asian Games. The 19th Asian Games is to be played in China in September this year in which Pakistani squad has to participate in different games. Pakistan Tennis Federation has finalized the squad of National Tennis Team for Asian Games.