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TOP NEWS

MAJOR LEAGUE CRICKET: PAKISTAN STARS, EXPATS IN FOCUS, US SET FOR 1ST TASTE OF T20 REVOLUTION



Rana Sanaullah opens a women's police station

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ECONOMIC INDICATORS

Overview	LAST	PREV
GDP Annual Growth Rate	3.94	-0.47
Unemployment Rate	4.4	4.1
Inflation Rate	13.4	12.7
Interest Rate	13.75	12.25
Balance of Trade	-692526	-654396
Current Account	-4078	-5566
Current Account to GDP	-0.6	-1.7
Government Debt to GDP	87	86
Government Budget	-7.1	-8.1
Consumer Confidence	41.46	39.4
Corporate Tax Rate	29	35
Personal Income Tax Rate	35	35

GDP	LAST	PREV
GDP Annual Growth Rate	3.94	-0.47
GDP	264	278
GDP Constant Prices	41510838	38902034
Gross National Product	44442285	15202049
Gross Fixed Capital Formation	4915881	1910889
GDP per capita	1466	1487
GDP per capita PPP	4223	4060
GDP From Agriculture	8791447	2502181
GDP From Construction	992747	340146
GDP From Manufacturing	4817660	1667362
GDP From Mining	663084	309823
GDP From Services	22559924	804169
GDP From Transport	1588101	1648285

Prices	LAST	PREV
Inflation Rate	13.4	12.7
Consumer Price Index	164	162
CPI	9.1	8.9
Core Inflation Rate	161	346
GDP Deflator	208	201
Producer Prices	112	968
Export Prices	1918	1678
Import Prices	151	152
CPI Housing Utilities	182	181
CPI Transportation	1704	15.3
Food Inflation	1.61	0.79
Inflation Rate Mom	28.2	23.8
Producer Prices Change		

Trade	LAST	PREV
Balance of Trade	-692526	-654396
Current Account	-4078	-5566
Current Account to GDP	-0.6	-1.7
Exports	531692	499724
Imports	1224218	1154120
External Debt	129203	130622
Terms of Trade	61.6	57.7
Remittances	7144	7609
Gold Reserves	6465	6465
Capital Flows	1659	-2469
Crude Oil Production	85	85
Foreign Direct Investment	9018	110
Terrorism Index	754	789

Labour	LAST	PREV
Unemployment Rate	4.4	4.1
Employed Persons	6480	6170
Population	221	219



SLALKOT: An old person pushing his handcart loaded with vegetable during the heavy rain, here Thursday. - APP

Judicial Complex riots: ATC issues the bailable arrest warrants for the Chairman PTI, others

Monitoring Desk
ISLAMABAD: An Islamabad anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Thursday issued a bailable arrest warrant for the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman in connection with the Judicial Complex riots case.

The court issued the warrants against the former prime minister, PTI leaders Farrukh Habib, Shibli Faraz and Hassan Niazi in connection with two cases registered in Ramna police station and one in Golra police station.

During the hearing, the PTI chairman's lawyers, Sardar Masroof, Attique-ur-Rehman and Mirza Asim, filed a request for exemption from

attendance in both the cases registered in the Ramna police station, on which ATC Judge Abul Hasnat remarked that the former premier will have to appear in court.

The anti-terrorism court then summoned Imran Khan and other accused in personal capacity on July 19.

Earlier this year, intense clashes had broken out between the police and the activists belonging to the PTI chief's convoy after they reached the judicial complex ahead of his appearance before the district and sessions court in the Toshakhana case.

According to the contents

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Rupee gains massively as dollars flood into Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: As dollars began flooding into Pakistan, the emboldened local rupee bulldozed American currency in the interbank trading on Thursday, skyrocketing by massive three and a half rupees.

According to the data extracted from forex dealers, the US dollar has been plunged by Rs3.48 against the

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Awn Ch and Nauman Langrial 'quit' federal cabinet

LAHORE: Awn Chaudhry and Nauman Langrial on Thursday resigned as special assistant to PM Shehbaz Sharif on the orders of the party leadership.

Both leaders, recently joined Istekham-e-Pakistan Party (IPP). The resignations have been handed over to the party's Patron-in-Chief Jahangir Khan Tareen, the sources said.

It may be noted that Istekham-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) president Aleem Khan had directed party members Nauman Langrial and Awn Chaudhry to resign from cabinet.

Aleem Khan said the IPP had no relation with the PDM-led government, adding that Langrial and Chaudhry were independent members of the cabinet.

"The IPP will contest election separately," he added.

Recently, seasoned politician Jahangir Tareen officially launched the "Istekham-e-Pakistan" party.

While announcing the new political party "Istekham-e-Pakistan" Tareen said: "We all have one purpose which is to work for the development of Pakistan".

Tareen reiterated the need for leadership that can bring unity and end the divide in society amid the economic and political crisis. - NNI

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Haji Gulbar is elected Gilgit-Baltistan Chief Minister unopposed

Monitoring Desk
ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) forward bloc leader Haji Gulbar Khan was elected chief minister of Gilgit-Baltistan (G-B) on Thursday.

According to G-B Assembly Speaker Nazir Ahmed, Khan received 19 votes from provincial members of the assembly (MPAs).

Khan, who was elected on a PTI ticket in 2020 and has served as the health minister, hails from Diamer District.

The other three candidates running for CM, Raja Azam Khan, Javed Ali Manwa and Raja Muhammad Zakria Maqpoon boycotted the election. Elections were held as former

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Govt hints at resolving concerns of the PTI on electoral reforms' issue

ISLAMABAD: The coalition government of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Thursday gave a hint at resolving all the concerns of the opposition party--Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) over the issue of electoral reforms.

The third meeting of the Parliamentary Committee on Electoral Reforms was held in Islamabad on Thursday.

PTI Senator Ali Zafar participated in the meeting on a video link and discussed the issues of the electoral reforms included in the agenda.

After the meeting, Federal Minister for Law Azam Nazir Tarar talked to the media and informed them about the details of the discussion with the PTI representative.

The federal law minister said 99 per cent of work on election reforms has been completed and mostly the points that were not agreed upon by both sides have now been resolved.

Law Minister Azam Tarar also confirmed that in the meeting

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Foreign Office refuses to get drawn into PTI, Israel nexus debate

Monitoring Desk
ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office on Thursday refrained from indulging into controversy surrounding the alleged nexus between Israel and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) after Tel Aviv's unusual outburst against Pakistan at the UN Human Rights Council earlier this week.

The statement by Israel's Permanent Representative at the UN in Geneva questioning Pakistan's human rights record and recent crackdown against a political party drew a strong reaction from the ruling coalition.

The Foreign Office's reaction was diplomatic, but several ministers presented the Israeli envoy's remarks as proof of links between the Jewish state and

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Despite conspiracies, the coalition government brings the country out of deep crisis in the shortest period: Shehbaz; IMF deal self-evaluation moment to focus on self-reliance

I would hand over the reins of power to caretaker set up in August: Premier

President IDB assures PM of continued support to Pakistan; Premier asserts non-politicization of public welfare projects; Gets briefing on Nishtar-II hospital, commends CM & team

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday said despite challenges and conspiracies hatched by the political opponents, the coalition government had successfully managed to put the country in the right direction in the shortest period.

The prime minister, in his over 14-minute address to the nation, said the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme agreed by the previous government on the toughest conditions, was the biggest obstacle in the way of the country's economic revival.

The last regime had brought the country to the brink of default by deviating from that agreement, he added.

He said ironically, the political opponents remained busy in hatching conspiracies and creating hurdles while the coalition government was trying to resume the programme.

The incumbent government had to face the biggest challenges and conspiracies in Pakistan's democratic history in the shortest period, and steered it out of the deep crisis, he added.

Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said the coalition government was going to end in August on completing its tenure and would hand over the reins to the caretaker set up.

"During the short period of one and a quarter years, due to our collective wisdom and prudent policies, we cleared the debris and economic landmines laid by the previous government," he added.

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IMF transfers \$1.2 billion to Pakistan under SBA

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Thursday transferred US\$1.2 billion to State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) out of total \$3 billion under the Stand-By Agreement (SBA) that was approved by the IMF board the previous day.

Talking to media persons, Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar said that the balance amount of \$1.8 billion would be provided after two reviews that would be held in November 2023 and February 2024.

The finance minister said that the IMF funds would help improve foreign exchange reserves, adding that in total around \$4.2 billion were added to the country's reserves during the week.

These include \$2 billion from Saudi Arabia, \$1 billion from United Arab Emirates and \$1.2 billion from IMF.

The state bank would issue the exact figures on Friday he said adding that the reserves are expected to reach between \$13 to \$14 billion.

The minister thanked Prime Minister, Shehbaz Sharif and his economic team for their untiring efforts made during the past eight months in materializing the programme.

The minister said that the agreement was limited to 9 months to enable new elected government to take decisions for future.

He said, Pakistan was going forward in positive direction and highlighted that there was need to consolidate the gains and take the economy to growth trajectory.

It is pertinent to mention here that the IMF Executive Board had approved the Stand-By Agreement (SBA) for US\$ 3 billion for Pakistan.

The staff level agreement on SBA amounting Special Drawing Rights (SDR) 2,250 million (about \$3 billion or 111 percent of Pakistan's IMF quota) was reached during the last week of June after IMF staff team led by Nathan Porter

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Buy the rumour, sell the news; 248 points lost in profit-taking

KARACHI: Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) turned to profit-taking on Thursday after the benchmark index gained 4,062.27 points in the previous eight sessions, with the KSE-100 Index losing 247.99 points (-0.54 percent) to close at 45,266.96 points.

The stock market rode a wave of positivity owing to the approval of the 9-month standby agreement (SBA), worth \$3 billion, for Pakistan by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) executive board a day earlier.

Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said that the IMF has transferred \$1.2 billion to the central bank's account on Thursday. He said that the funds would shore up Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves, noting that this would also include the \$1bn transferred by the United Arab Emirates a day earlier and \$2bn transferred by Saudi Arabia a couple of days back. The minister said that there had been a \$4.2bn increase in the SBP's reserves during the week.

The market opened on a bullish note and the benchmark index neared the 46,000 points threshold, but investors preferred to cash in their gains, bringing down the indices. The benchmark index traded in a range of 715.41 points showing an intraday high of 45,970.99 points and an intraday low of 45,255.58 points.

Among other indices, the KSE All Share Index shed 89 points (-0.29 percent) to close at 30,360.75 points, while KMI All Share Islamic Index shed 43.35 points (-0.19 percent) to close at 22,315.46 points.

Total volumes traded for the KSE-100 Index increased by 18.51 million shares to 225.22 million shares against

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COMMODITIES			
	Price	%	Monthly
Crude Oil	76.089	0.45%	11.14%
USD/BIN			
Brent	80.627	0.63%	10.19%
USD/BIN			
Natural gas	2.5719	-2.28%	6.59%
USD/MMBtu			
Gold	1959.26	0.11%	0.83%
USD/Loz			
Silver	24.746	2.52%	3.38%
USD/Loz			
Copper	3.9272	2.03%	1.48%
USD/LB			
Steel	3707	0.65%	-1.80%
DNV7			

Open Market Currency Rates

	Bank Buying TT Clean	Bank Selling TT & OD
Australian Dollar	191	195
Canadian Dollar	214	216
China Yuan	38.7	39.1
Danish Krone	41.14	41.54
Euro	302	305
Hong Kong Dollar	35.72	36.07
Japanese Yen	1.91	1.98
Saudi Riyal	73.2	74
Singapore Dollar	205	207
Swedish Korona	25.91	26.21
Swiss Franc	315.27	317.77
Thai Bhat	7.96	8.11
U.A.E Dirham	76.4	77.2
UK Pound Sterling	355	361
US Dollar	278	281

Inter-Bank Currency Rates

	Bank Buying TT Clean	Bank Selling TT & OD
Australian Dollar	188.66	189.16
Canadian Dollar	209.53	210.03
China Yuan	38.5	38.6
Danish Krone	41.3	41.4
Euro	307.96	308.56
Hong Kong Dollar	35.24	35.34
Japanese Yen	1.97	2
Saudi Riyal	73.54	73.69
Singapore Dollar	207.99	208.49
Swedish Korona	26.61	26.71
Swiss Franc	315.39	315.89
Thai Bhat	7.96	8
U.A.E Dirham	75.12	75.27
UK Pound Sterling	359.9	360.55
US Dollar	275.96	276.46

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NAPA hails Sindh govt support for promotion of the performing arts in mainstream schools

KARACHI: Syed Jawaid Iqbal, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the National Academy of Performing Arts (NAPA), has applauded Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Foreign Minister of Pakistan and Chairman of the Pakistan People's Party, Syed Murad Ali Shah, Chief Minister of Sindh, and Syed Sardar Ali Shah, Minister for Education and Literacy, Culture, Heritage, and Antiquities Government of Sindh, for their dedicated efforts in promoting performing arts education in Sindh and integrating arts into mainstream school education, as promised, says a Press release.

This commendable initiative taken by them should serve as an inspiration for other provinces and the Federal Capital to follow suit and make music a mandatory subject in schools.

"The recognition of NAPA's diploma/certification in Music by the Government of Sindh is a testament to the hard work and dedication of our team at NAPA initiated by

the legendary Zia Mohyeddin. We are grateful to the School Education and Literacy Department for understanding the importance of music education in fostering creativity and holistic development among students. This step will undoubtedly strengthen the education system in Sindh," said Syed Jawaid Iqbal.

Jawaid further said that the significance of performing arts in education cannot be overstated. Research has demonstrated that individuals engaged in performing arts possess the ability to employ their minds, emotions, and bodies in a manner that allows them to effectively navigate real-life situations with empathy, understanding, emotional intelligence and confidence, while effectively communicating with diverse individuals and communities. Therefore, it is crucial to involve children in performing arts from an early stage in order to equip them with the essential skills to

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KARACHI: Rookhsana Rajpoot President Pakistan Wheelchair Cricket Council presents Memento of Asian Champion team to Kamran Tessori Governor Sindh at Governor House Karachi. MNA Kishwar Zehra is also seen in the picture.

Kashmir Martyrs Day marks heroic journey of Kashmiris' struggle for freedom: AJK PM

MIRPUR (AJK): Azad Jammu Kashmir (AJK) Prime Minister Chaudhry Anwar-ul-Haq reflects upon the significance of Kashmir Martyrs Day on Thursday, a day etched in the annals of history as a glorious chapter in the relentless struggle for the Kashmiri freedom movement.

In a resounding message issued regarding Martyrs' Day, PM Haq emphasized the profound historical significance of July 13, which witnessed the martyrdom of 22 courageous Kashmiri Muslims at the hands of the oppressive Dogra forces within the confines of the occupied Srinagar central jail.

With utmost reverence, the Prime Minister paid homage to these valiant Kashmiri martyrs, acknowledging the exceptional nature of the events that unfolded on that fateful day in 1931.

It was a moment unparalleled in Islamic history, where 22 Kashmiris, one after

another, fearlessly offered their lives in the pursuit of Azan (the call to prayer), he added. Remarkably, each martyr bore the indelible mark of a bullet on their chest, symbolizing their unwavering commitment, as none had been shot in the back.

Reflecting on the abhorrent policies of the Dogra Maharaja, PM Anwar Haq shed light on the tyrannical and anti-Muslim practices that plagued Kashmir during the early 1930s. Muslims were subjected to dehumanization, their worth undermined, while the desecration of mosques and the Holy Quran became a haunting norm. The government, on one hand, imposed a merciless tax regime, and on the other, stripped Kashmiri Muslims of their right to own land, he said.

"In the face of oppressive rulers, there was no room for dissent or the slightest protest against the cruelty and

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IPP decides to contest general elections on the symbol of 'Eagle'

LAHORE: Jahangir Khan Tareen-led Istehkam-e-Pakistan Party (IPP) had decided to contest general elections on the eagle's symbol, said party's secretary information Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan on Thursday.

In a statement, she said an application would be submitted to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for the registration of party symbol this week.

The electoral watchdog has already sought applications from the eligible politi-

cal parties to obtain election symbols for the elections of the national and provincial Assemblies.

According to the ECP spokesperson, the applications signed by the party chiefs could be submitted by July 19 for getting one of the allotted election symbols.

Former PTI leaders Jahangir Khan Tareen and Abdul Aleem Khan had formally launched the party on June 8 and later appointed several office-bearers. - NNI

Workshop addresses cervical cancer burden in Pakistan

KARACHI: The Aga Khan University in collaboration with the Centre for Women and Child Health at AKU and Liaquat University of Medical and Health Sciences (LUMHS) Hyderabad, held a workshop on the "Burden of Cervical Cancer" at Civil Hospital, Hyderabad. The aim was to raise awareness and promote prevention strategies for cervical cancer, says a Press release.

Cervical cancer is a significant concern globally, ranking as the fourth leading cause of cancer-related deaths among women. However, developing, and low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) including Pakistan, bear a disproportionately higher burden of cervical cancer cases and deaths.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), cervical cancer mortality in LMICs is 18 times higher than in high-income countries. A recent study by the CITRIC Health Data Science Centre at AKU found that the incidence rate of cervical cancer among women in Pakistan is 7.6 per 100,000. This rate is higher than WHO target rate of 4 per 100,000 for cervical cancer elimination. These statistics call for national-level policy implementation focused on prevention and elimination strategies.

The primary cause of cervical cancer is persistent infection with Human Papilloma Virus (HPV). Fortunately, HPV vaccines are available, making cervical cancer largely preventable. "Cervical cancer is the only gynaecological cancer that can be prevented by vaccination and can be treated in its pre-invasive stage through regular screening. Early detection preserves not only the uterus but also fertility," said Dr Uzma Chishti, Assistant Professor and Associate CMO, Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at the seminar.

HPV vaccines were first introduced in 2006. WHO now recommends the use of a single-dose HPV vaccine, which is as effective as the previously used two or three-dose regimens. While high-income countries have successfully integrated HPV vaccination into their health systems, low-middle-income countries like Pakistan lag far behind due to limited resources and insufficient data.

"To effectively target the elimination of cervical cancer-associated morbidity and mortality, gathering national-level data on incidence, prevalence, and mortality is imperative," said Dr Zainab Samad, Chair of the Department of Medicine and Director of CITRIC Health Data Science Centre, AKU. She reiterated the need for better data sharing and contribution from both the public and private sectors, along with consistent surveillance over time to track the burden for improvement.

To address this need, the National Cancer Registry of Pakistan was established, enabling comprehensive analysis of cancer data from multiple registries. Accurate and detailed national-level data will empower policymakers and healthcare professionals to focus their efforts on eliminating cervical cancer and its associated health consequences in Pakistan.

During his remarks, the Chief Guest Dr Muhammad Arif Khan, Deputy Director General of the Director's Office in Hyderabad, emphasized the alarming incidence of cervical cancer witnessed in Pakistan halfway through 2023. The workshop concluded with Dr Arshad Chandio, Immunization Lead Jhpiego, International Papillomavirus Society (IPVS) Ambassador for Pakistan, acknowledging the progress made in bringing the HPV vaccine to Pakistan and expressed optimism about its imminent introduction in the country.



KARACHI: (L-R) Dr Naveed Alam, Shahid Iqbal Executive Director FRDP, Mousad from UNDP and Raheema from Water Aid are busy in discussion. - Staff Photo

Need to integrate system and service delivery urged 45pc deaths in children are linked with the sanitation; 60mn drink arsenic water

KARACHI: The two-day event hosted by joint collaborative efforts of European Union, RSPN, Action Aid Plan, Sindh Government and SGDS support unit of UNDP for reduction of diseases, malnutrition, and stunting in Sindh province, concluded at a local hotel, Wednesday.

The WASH experts all over Pakistan are engaged in the dialogue to discuss clean water and Sanitation issues progress made towards (SGD 6).

Speaking in the Plenary session of second day Dr Shah Kamal Public Health expert from Ziauddin University revealed 60 million people of Pakistan are drinking arsenic water which contains carcinogens and 35 percent deaths are linked with poor

sanitation. He also highlighted the geo-political economy of food supply that 35 percent of wheat is produced by Ukraine and Russia which is disrupted after the war. He also discussed the Children stunting growth factors in Sindh is not only mal nutrition but mental health also.

Dr Naveed Bhutto, Nutrition Consultant of Government of Sindh emphasized on sanitation and clean water that open water sources in Sindh contains different species of Worms which consumes all the nutrients from Children gut area resulting sickness and weakness.

Dr Nabeela Shahid, Deputy Program Manager NRRSP and Meena Iqbal from PINS opined that new-born babies'

health is improved by 1000 days nutrition plan have the impact on whole life.

Provincial Head (Rural Area) Water Aid, Sohail Nazeer disclosed the highest percentage of Open suffocation found in Sindh province which causes water borne and other diseases. Government policy intervention and implementation is not seen to control such issues, while industrial hazardous untreated waste is also seen in the water samples.

The organizations that participated in this two-day activity included: Sindh Government, ACTED, BRAC International, Management and Development Foundation, FRDP-GIZ, GoVendi, HANDS, Hystra,

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Around 7.2 million families receive Benazir Kafaalat payments: Faisal Kundi

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, Faisal Karim Kundi Thursday said that around 7.2 million families received their quarterly payments under the Benazir Kafaalat programme till today.

Addressing a press conference, the SAPM said that the Benazir Education stipends were also being disbursed among the beneficiaries along with the Kafaalat payments.

He advised the beneficiaries of Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) to only follow the messages

which was sent through BISP official number 8171 and ignore the fake messages from other numbers.

The SAPM said that around 0.3 million cards of the beneficiaries, earlier blocked during the previous government tenure, had been reactivated to provide relief to the poor while the remaining cards would be reactivated soon after completing the necessary requirements.

To a question, Faisal Kundi said that beneficiaries of BISP would be able to open their accounts in any bank available near to them instead of only two

banks which were designated for this purpose in the past.

Expressing his concern over the Parachinar issue, Faisal Kundi urged the political parties and ulemas (Religious Scholars) from all school of thoughts to intervene for resolving the issue of Parachinar.

"There is need to resolve the issue immediately to ensure peace as Muharram is near", Faisal Kundi said. Land occupation was still a major issue in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf led

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Over 400,000 social media A/cs exposed for spreading blasphemy in country: FIA

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony on Thursday emphasized the urgent need for awareness among all sections of society, particularly religious scholars, professors, journalists, lawyers, traders, political and social leaders, and institutions in the country in an effort to prevent the misuse of social media platforms for spreading derogatory and inappropriate content.

It called upon them to play their responsible role in the campaign to curb offensive material and, in every circumstance, to utilize legal avenues to combat such content by reporting it to the relevant cyber crime authorities and the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA), it said.

According to details released by the Ministry, nefarious elements have been actively using social media to launch a well-organized campaign aimed at undermining the ethics, behavior, and beliefs of our youth for several years.

The negative and harmful effects of social media on society have become a matter of great concern. While indecency itself is intolerable, the situation has escalated to the point of blasphemy, which is an extremely grave offense.

As per the Ministry's statement, highly organized campaigns on social media platforms are being conducted to spread extremely blasphemous material against the most revered figures, including Allah Almighty (God), the Prophet Muhammad (SAAW), the Ahl al-Bayt, the Mothers of the Believers, the Companions of the Prophet, the Holy Quran, and the national flag. Such offensive content is being shared through images and videos on specific applications and groups.

The Cyber Crimes wing of the FIA has apprehended individuals involved in these crimes, including doctors, professors, engineers, chartered accountants, lawyers, and people from various

walks of life.

According to the Ministry, the report filed by the FIA Cyber Crime and the investigation conducted by the Legal Commission in the Rawalpindi Bench of the Lahore High Court revealed that more than four hundred thousand accounts in Pakistan are involved in disseminating such severe blasphemy. The proliferation of indecency through social media is promoting the degradation of our society and dragging the new generation into the quagmire of blasphemy. Currently, over 100 million people in the country use social media, which demonstrates the rapid spread of this evil.

In 2019, four individuals formed a blasphemous group, which was subsequently apprehended by the FIA Cyber Crime in 2022. However, by the time of their arrest, the number of members in this group had significantly increased, and this increase continues to this day.

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PYMA chief urges political stability, control on dollar

KARACHI: Qaisar Shams Ghucha, Chairman, Pakistan Yarn Merchants Association (PYMA), has emphasized the importance of political stability for economic growth. He stated that Pakistan should take measures to control fluctuations in the value of the dollar, and both exporters and industries should be granted subsidies in energy. Ghucha made these remarks during his visit to the central secretariat in Karachi, where he attended a meeting of the PYMA executive committee to discuss various significant issues faced by its members, says a Press release.

Sohail Nisar, Sr. Vice Chairman, Javed Khanani, Vice Chairman PYMA, M. Usman, Khurshid A. Shaikh, Saqib Goodluck, Salim Adaya, Junaid Teli, Khurram Bharara, Mumtaz ul Haq, Ashraf A. Sattar and Waheed also attended the meeting.

The PYMA chairman urged the need for government departments to take responsibility for implementing policy measures and initiatives for the general public, while also highlighting the need for improvement in their performance. "Ghucha suggested that the government should facilitate the



KARACHI: Sohail Nisar, Senior Vice Chairman PYMA, presenting crest to Qaisar Shams Ghucha, Chairman PYMA during his visit to the central secretariat in Karachi. Javed Khanani, Vice Chairman PYMA, M. Usman, Khurshid A. Shaikh, Saqib Goodluck, Salim Adaya, Junaid Teli, Khurram Bharara, Mumtaz ul Haq, Ashraf A. Sattar and Waheed Umer are also seen in the picture.

provision of solar panels under favorable conditions to meet the country's power demands, thereby stabilizing the agriculture sector."

He also urged the government to provide support and facilities to the small & medium enterprise (SMEs) sector and power looms. Ghucha expressed concern over the issuance of illegal notices by the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to industries, resulting in large-scale industry closures. He emphasized the urgent need for steps to improve the situation.

Furthermore, the PYMA Chairman commended the efforts made by Prime Minister Mian

Shehbaz Sharif and Chief of Army Staff Gen. Asim Munir to revive the economy, expressing his belief that these measures would lead to progress.

He predicted an increase in exports and foreign exchange deposits, which would have a positive impact on the general public.

Sohail Nisar, Senior Vice Chairman of PYMA, endorsed the views expressed by Qaisar Shams Ghucha, expressing pleasure at his presence and the anticipation of a stronger future for both regions of PYMA to better serve their members.

WB's \$100mn for Punjab to curtail population growth: Country Director

ISLAMABAD: World Bank (WB) Country Director for Pakistan Najy Benhassine on Thursday said the institution's approved assistance of \$100 million for the Punjab Family Planning Programme would help curtail population growth in the most populous province of the country.

The WB funds sanctioned for the province, which is the home to more than half of Pakistan's total population, "would ensure provision of quality family planning services free of charge," he remarked.

"This important program aims to achieve

universal access to reproductive healthcare and to raise the usage of family planning methods in Punjab to 60 percent by 2030," the WB Country Director said in a news release.

He termed the programme "critical" for Pakistan's development, as excessive population growth rates hampered development, slowed the accumulation of human capital, and contributed to keeping families in poverty.

He said it would also

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ISLAMABAD: Federal Insurance Ombudsman (FIO) Dr. Muhammad Khawar Jameel presenting the Annual Report 2022 of FIO to Minister for Law & Justice Senator Azam Nazir Tarar, here Thursday. - PID photo

Citizens, authorities upset to remain watchful amid new spell of rains: Sherry

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Climate Change and Environmental Coordination, Senator Sherry Rehman on Thursday urged the citizens and authorities concerned to remain watchful amid start of new spell of monsoon.

The federal minister took to Twitter to share the update as the new spell of monsoon season had commenced.

Senator Rehman said that rains with thundershowers were likely in different areas of Islamabad, Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir. "This new wave of monsoon is likely to continue till July 17. In the meantime, instructions have also been issued to all concerned institutions to

remain alert," she said.

The minister added that from July 13 to 17, Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Peshawar, Gujranwala and Lahore were expected to face flooding in low-lying areas due to heavy rain.

While there is a risk of landslides in the hilly areas of Murree, Guliyat, Kashmir, Gilgit-Baltistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, she said, adding, "Tourists in these areas are requested to be cautious to avoid any unpleasant situation during rains."

She added that wind, thunder and heavy rains could damage vulnerable infrastructure like electricity poles, solar panels, and mud houses. - APP

Calls for comprehensive marketing strategy to promote Pak IT services

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Rice Research and Development Board Punjab Shahzad Ali Malik on Thursday stressed the urgent need for developing a comprehensive marketing strategy to promote Pakistan as a preferred destination for IT services and solutions for capturing growing global markets.

Talking to a delegation of industrialists led by CEO IT Professionals Mian Faiz Bukhsh, the chairman said investment in improving the country's IT infrastructure, including high-speed internet connectivity, reliable power supply, and data centers would create a conducive environment for IT companies to operate and attract foreign investment, said a press release.

address the challenges of low adoption, enhance internet connectivity across the country, and priorities efforts to improve digital literacy among its population, he added.

He urged the government to introduce policies and regulations that promote ease of doing business for IT companies.

Shahzad said streamlining administrative procedures and tax incentives will definitely attract foreign direct investment (FDI) in the IT sector.

"Government also must encourage collaboration between the public and private sectors to jointly invest in the IT industry. This can involve partnerships in research and development, infrastructure development, skill development, and market access initiatives," he added.

He said government should also promote research and development by allocating resources and incentives for development activities in the IT sector.

He said it will foster innovation, leading to the development of cutting-edge technologies and solutions that

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Maulana Azad for promoting peace during Muharram

BAHAWALPUR: Chairman Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee Maulana Syed Abdul Khabeer Azad has said that maintaining peace during Muharram-ul-Haram was the collective responsibility of Ulema from all sects. He said that the promotion of Pakistan's ideology and Ittehad Bain-u-Muslimeen was the need of the hour.

The Ulema of Pakistan stand with Pakistan's Armed forces for the prosperity and peace of Pakistan, he said while addressing a gathering of Ulema from various schools of thoughts who visited Bahawalpur under the leadership of Maulana Abdul Khabeer Azad for promoting peace and harmony during Muharram-ul-Haram.

He said that Ulema should stick to their sect and avoid criticizing other sects. He said that Ulema strongly condemned the Israeli resolution against Pakistan in Geneva.

Commissioner Bahawalpur Division Dr. Ehtesham Anwar, Deputy Commissioner Bahawalpur Zaheer Anwar Jappa, Deputy Commissioner Rahim Yar Khan Shakeel Ahmed Bhatti, Assistant Commissioners, Police Officers, officers from Awqaf Department and other related departments attended the meeting.

Talking to the delegation, Commissioner Bahawalpur Dr. Ehtesham Anwar said that Bahawalpur Division is a peaceful region and the people of the region are peace-loving.

Maulana Pir Masood Qasmi, Sardar Muhammad Khan Laghari, Maulana Abdul Sattar Niazi, Maulana Bilal Naqshbandi, Maulana Qazi Abdul Ghafoor Qadri, Maulana Yasin Siddiqui, Maulana Faqir Habibur Rahman Akhtar, Allama Riaz Ahmad Owaissi, Sahibzada Abdul Basir Azad, Mian Ajmal Abbas, and other Ulema were part of the peace delegation. - APP

NAB Multan organizes ceremony to return recovered funds to relevant depts

ISLAMABAD: Under the leadership of Director General National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Multan, Engineer Masood Alam, a ceremony was held on Thursday at the regional NAB office in Multan to return recovered funds to various departments.

The event was attended by Captain (Retd) Saqib Zafar, Additional Chief Secretary (South Punjab), Syed Ali Haider Naqvi, Regional Business Manager Habib Bank Limited (Multan), and Engineer Shahid Hussain Ahmadi from the Punjab Public Works Department, District Muzaffargarh.

As part of ongoing investigations against officers and officials of the Punjab Food Department and Yugar, an amount of Rs. 3,549,037 was recovered and returned to the Chief Secretary Punjab on behalf of Captain (Retd) Saqib Zafar, Additional Chief Secretary (South Punjab).

Furthermore, NAB Multan Director General Chaudhry Niaz Hassan, handed over two Pay Orders to Habib Bank Limited (Multan) totaling Rs. 2,989,100/- in the name of former Branch Manager Malik Muhammad Bilal.

Another Pay Order, amounting to Rs. 871,990/-, was returned to the

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ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador-designate of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Pakistan, Dr. Reza Amiri Moghaddam, presenting his diplomatic credentials to President Dr. Arif Alvi, here at Aiwan-e-Sadr, Thursday. - PID photo

Pakistan desire to expand relations with Philippines, Iran, Rwanda: President

ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi on Thursday said that Pakistan wants to expand bilateral ties with the Philippines, Iran, and Rwanda in the fields of trade, economy, investment, culture, and people-to-people contacts.

The president made these remarks while talking to the Ambassadors-designates of the Republic of the Philippines and the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the non-resident High-Commissioner-designate of the Republic of Rwanda, who presented their diplomatic credentials to the President and made separate calls on him, here at Aiwan-e-Sadr.

Talking to the Ambassador-designate of the Philippines, Maria Agnes M. Cervantes, the president said that

Pakistan was keen to expand bilateral relations with the Philippines across all areas of cooperation and expressed the need to explore new avenues of cooperation to further diversify bilateral trade and economic cooperation.

Speaking to the Iranian Ambassador-designate to Pakistan, Dr. Reza Amiri Moghaddam, the president highlighted the need to promote economic engagement and mutually beneficial economic exchanges between the two countries through the established institutional mechanisms and private-sector collaborations. He called for further expanding economic ties by strengthening the existing institutional mechanisms, besides making the Border Sustenance Marketplaces functional.

Talking to the High Commissioner-designate of Rwanda to Pakistan, James Kimonyo, the president emphasized the need to further strengthen trade and economic relations, adding that the business communities of the two countries needed to exchange visits to boost bilateral trade.

He remarked that Rwandan businessmen should explore the Pakistani market, especially for the import of rice, textile products, pharmaceuticals, surgical instruments, and sports goods.

The president felicitated the envoys on their appointments and expressed the hope that they would play their role to further increase bilateral cooperation with Pakistan. - APP

Pakistan is hopeful to take CPEC into the next phase with greater vigor: Ahsan

BEIJING: Pakistan is looking forward to taking the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) into the next phase with greater vigor and hopes to see the fruits of the CPEC benefit not only China and Pakistan, but the whole region, said Ahsan Iqbal, the Minister of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives.

Ahsan Iqbal was talking to the Global Times in an interview after a meeting of the 12th Joint Cooperation Committee (JCC) of the CPEC in Beijing.

Iqbal, who has extensive experience and long-standing involvement in the CPEC, said he was overwhelmed at how much has been accomplished by the CPEC in just 10 years.

The beauty of the CPEC is that it is

a project between two countries that enjoy a very unique relationship, Iqbal said. "Normally, countries come close when they need to, and they get farther away when they don't need each other. But in the case of China and Pakistan, it has been always spring. There has never been autumn in this relationship."

This year marks a decade of the CPEC. The landmark project was formalized on July 5, 2013.

The CPEC has done a great service to Pakistan, helping it overcome the energy crisis, develop modern infrastructure and restore the country's image as an investment destination. Prior to the CPEC the world used to look at Pakistan as a very dangerous country, the minister said.

Pakistan would be facing an extreme energy crisis today without the projects launched under the CPEC, Iqbal emphasized.

Everyone in Pakistan has benefited from the great contribution that has been made by the CPEC, he added. If there was a lack of electricity, factories would be closed and workers would be laid off; patients in hospitals and students in educational institutions would also be stranded.

He mentioned the Thar region of Pakistan, which was once a backward area, saying the CPEC has transformed the region into a source of energy for the country. Local education, employment, hospitals and schools have also flourished.

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China is major export market for Pakistani products: Moin

BEIJING: Pakistan Ambassador to China, Moin ul Haque said that China is a major export market for Pakistani products and the government is working together to further enhance the access of Pakistani products to the untapped sector of the Chinese market.

"Our two countries have a robust trade and investment cooperation, which is very essential for Pakistan's economy."

As our largest trading partner, China is a major export market for Pakistani products, and we are working together to further enhance the access of Pakistani products to untapped sectors of the Chinese markets," he said while talking to two national dailies of Pakistan.

The ambassador said Pakistan takes

pride in its special friendship with China which is time-tested and timeless. "Our relations with China are based on strong political support, strategic trust and practical cooperation. A heart-to-heart relationship between our two peoples enjoying support across the political spectrum. No wonder, this friendship remains the cornerstone of our foreign policy."

Ambassador said that China has recently lifted its Covid-related travel restrictions and opened up international travel. This naturally has a positive impact on various sectors of the Chinese economy, including trade and tourism. The re-opening has resulted in enhanced bilateral interaction between our two countries. A Many high-level visits took place in the last

few months.

As China-Pakistan celebrate the Year of Tourism Exchanges this year, both countries are looking forward to enhancing cultural and people-to-people exchanges.

Talking about ML-1, he said, in line with the leadership consensus, the relevant institutions from both sides are making earnest efforts to finalize all arrangements and launch the project this year.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, China provided us critical support, especially in supplying over 160 million vaccine doses which were the mainstay of our inoculation drive. China was the top country in providing generous assistance after the

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Hathal and Bakhtawri open exhibition at the IIUI

ISLAMABAD: The Industrial Liaison Office of the Faculty of Engineering & Technology (FET) at the International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI) recently organized the TECHSPARK exhibition. This event showcased final year design projects (FYDP) of students from the Department of Mechanical Engineering (DME) and the Department of Electrical, Computer Engineering (DECE) and Department of Civil Engineering, says a Press release.

The exhibition aimed to provide a platform for students to demonstrate their innovative projects and foster their profes-

sional development. It also offered an opportunity for stakeholders from various industries, institutes, and community members to visit the Faculty of Engineering and Technology at IIUI.

The grand opening of the exhibition was graced by the Dr. Hathal Hamoud Alotaihi, President of IIUI and Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawri, President of the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce (ICCI) accompanied by a delegation from the Chamber. They inaugurated the event and visited the numerous stalls set up by the participating students.

Dr. Hathal and Bakhtawri keenly engaged with the stu-

dents and stakeholders, appreciating their work and discussing potential collaborations. The exhibition was also attended by Vice President, Engineer Azhar

ul Islam Zafar representatives from Pakistan Navy and Meer Masood Rashid, Advisor, Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC), Islamabad.

Both the IIU President and the President of ICCI praised the exceptional activities witnessed during their visit to the exhibition stalls. They particularly

commended the vital role played by the Industrial Liaison Office of FET in promoting industry-academia collaboration.

Visitors to the exhibition were also impressed by the outstanding final year projects presented by the students of the Department of Mechanical Engineering and the Department of Electrical Engineering. The innovative ideas and technical prowess displayed by the students garnered widespread appreciation.

On the occasion, Prof. Dr. Nadeem Ahmed Sheikh, the Dean of the Faculty of Engineering and Technology, congratulated the organizers for orchestrating such a remarkable

exhibition. He emphasized the significance of providing a platform for students to showcase their abilities and practical skills while offering industries an opportunity to discover and recruit exceptional talent.

The TECHSPARK exhibition concluded with a certificate distribution ceremony held at the Faculty Block's Auditorium. The ceremony was attended by a large number of engineering students as well as representatives from industries and various institutes. It served as a fitting end to a successful event, further highlighting the dedication and hard work of the students and organizers.

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World Population Day 2023

World Population Day raise awareness about global population challenges. It advocates for reproductive health, family planning, and sustainable development to unite for a balanced, equitable, and prosperous world. World Population Day 2023, observed on July 11th, aims to draw attention to global population trends and their implications. The day serves as a platform to promote sustainable development and address the challenges associated with population growth. It serves as a reminder of the urgent need for collaboration and action to ensure a prosperous future for humanity. Also, this year's emphasis on investing in gender equality today is an investment in our shared future. The United Nations Population Fund releases a statement every year on the occasion of World Population Day. The day was established by the United Nations in 1989, inspired by the significance of the world's population reaching five billion people on July 11, 1987. World Population Day serves as a reminder to governments, organizations, and individuals to prioritize population-related issues and work towards creating a sustainable future for all. It emphasizes the need for cooperation, awareness, and innovative strategies to address the challenges and opportunities presented by a growing global population.

In many developed states, such as Japan, South Korea and many European countries, populations are declining as people age and birth rates are low. This 'negative population growth' throws up its own set of challenges, as a day may come when there will not be

enough human resources to keep societies functioning efficiently, while pension bills shoot up. On the other hand, there are resource-strained developing states like Pakistan, where the population growth rate remains high, and feeding, educating and keeping such large masses healthy is a major challenge. The numbers of the recently concluded census suggest nearly 250 million people live in the country; the 2017 head count showed a population of around 208 million. The fertility rate is high, as are the number of unwanted pregnancies and abortions, estimated in the millions. Yet despite these frightening numbers, no one at the helm seems to have a strategy to ensure a more rational population growth rate.

The theme set this year for World Population Day 2023 highlights the need to advance gender equality to help realize the dreams of 8 billion. Gender inequality can be reduced by heeding and protecting the voices and rights of women and girls. The legislation, rules and policies in this context will help improve the participation of half of the world's population in decision making - not only regarding their health, reproductive lives and family size but it will also safeguard women and children from violence, harmful practices and preventable maternal death. Government of Sindh has enacted five historic laws in the last one decade: The Sindh Child Marriages Restraint Act, 2013, Sindh Rights of the Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2013, The Domestic Violence (Prevention and

Protection) Act, 2013, Sindh Women Agricultural Workers' Act 2019 and Reproductive Health Rights Act, 2019 (Amended 2022). These laws fortify the rights of women and girls and are instrumental in upholding gender equality. The FP-2030 and SDG-2030 Goals can only be achieved if women and girls' voice and rights are amplified. Sindh pursues FP-2030's targets to bring CPR to 47% by 2025 and 57% by 2030. Sindh envisions to reshape the lives of women, men, girls, youth and adolescent from villages to cities and from remotest rural terrain to urban and urban settings through rights-based approach for women empowerment, access to high quality modern contraceptives, relevant legislation, life skills, health and hygiene for the young and adolescents with interventions within health, population, education and social sectors. Thus, creating an enabling environment, so as to ensure the transformation of social and gender norms - hallmark of a progressive society. With an aim to broaden the focus, the Population Welfare Department Sindh has established a FP2030 Working Group.

Implementation Plan (CIP), strengthened the Supply Chain System, maintained Contraceptive Commodity Security, historically engaged private partners, shifted paper-based client data to electronic client recording and last but not least; shifted focus from rural to urban areas where CPR is reported to be low in PDHs 2017. Sindh FP2030 Working Group and Sindh Population Task force' meetings are attend-

ed by representatives of public and private sector stakeholders to discuss population issues for tangible results. Both departments, Health and Population, under one Minister are fostering functional integration. The Gynae Wards of Tertiary Care Hospitals are providing PFPF (Post Pregnancy Family Planning) and PAFP (Post Abortive Family Planning) with the support of the Population Welfare Department. These services will help in improving the health and overall well-being of women. This World Population Day gives us an opportunity to demonstrate our unwavering commitment to create a safe and healthy environment, where women and girls are empowered to choose if and when to build the families they want and where they have easy and affordable access to Family Planning and Reproductive Health Services.

Over the past year, the world population officially hit eight billion, and India surpassed China to become the world's most populous country. People across the globe observe July 11 as World Population Day - designated by the United Nations to focus attention on the urgency and importance of population issues, including their relations to the environment and human development. Over the past 12 months, the world saw two significant population milestones. First, in November 2022, the global population officially hit eight billion people. Second, in April this year, India surpassed China to become the world's most populous country, according to UN estimates.

Can IMF deal our balance of payments crisis?

Shazia Farooqi

June 29 was not just significant for the holy festival of Eid-ul-Azha, it also brought along for Pakistanis a splash of cool feel amid fierce summer in the shape of a fresh short-term financing from the IMF under its Stand-by Arrangement (SBA).

Now instead of the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) programme that Pakistan entered in 2019, it is the nine-month SBA in the amount of SDR2,250 million (about \$3 billion or 111 per cent of Pakistan's IMF quota), which the IMF termed as the SBA "builds on" efforts under the EFF. This means obviously the IMF expects Pakistan to use this short-term financing as a basis for the progress of the programme that was supposed to expire on June 30.

The SBA provides short-term financial assistance to countries facing balance-of-payments problems. Pakistan is no exception. In fact the nuclear-powered nation has a long history of balance-of-payments crisis.

According to 2019 ADB report, in Pakistan, the balance-of-payments constrained growth rate is estimated at 3.8% based on 1980-2017 data and using long-term estimates of import and export income elasticities. The result is lower than previous estimates of balance-of-payments constrained growth in the literature, indicating that lower export performance weighed more on gross domestic product growth in the recent period.

In a similar manner, the IMF's country wise data graph depicts alarming curves of Pakistan's CAD from 1976 to 2022.

The chronology of Pakistan's current account deficit (CAD) presents a depressing image of the country's economy. CAD clocked in at \$0.4 billion in December 2022, down massively from \$1.9 billion in the same month of the previous year, data released by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) shows. It soared from \$2.8 billion in FY2021 to \$17.3 billion. The SBP data also displays that Pakistan's CAD marooned at \$4,449 million during FY20, \$13,434 million during FY19, \$19,195 million during FY18, \$12,621 million during FY17 and \$4,867 million during FY16.

Though, this staff level agreement for short term financing has drawn an end to the monotonous verbiage about Pakistan's default, a great amount of despair is found in ordinary people who hardly understand the complexities of the IMF programme or the budgetary structure.

Around the world, inflation and its negativity has been a matter of great concern. So it has taken Pakistan with a spiralling wave. Every citizen generally hailing from the high to lowest income level is struggling to survive the financial stress in one way or other. There can never be such a strong unanimity among people other than agreeing to bring down the commodity prices.

In the context of an unparalleled economic crisis, how the finance minister would design the FY2024 budget was a matter of both curiosity and worry for mainstream opposition, economists, businessmen and analysts. But the common man remained almost oblivious other than listening to the experts detailing the for and againsts of the budget 2023-24 which is

stated to be the government's efforts to salvage of the ailing economy.

Therefore, having minimum or no knowledge about the budget structure, ordinary household remained struggling to cope with the high commodity prices with meagre and static income. But now that both budget and the IMF episode has been settled, there is not much in it to make them feel better in terms of their livelihood and cost of running kitchen.

In this string of events, it is crystal clear that Pakistan has lost the comfort zone of having macroeconomic stability from strong growth and the benefit of somehow low international prices. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Finance Minister Ishaq Dar must have juggled a lot with many alien things around to get a better matrix of loss and gain and incomedependiture to get the short-term financing under the SBA. But what is so good about it? Will this loan facility bring solvency to those household who have been conventionally reliant on daily wages and ever growing inflation?

According to a recent UN report released in early January this year, Pakistan remains a lower-middle income country and will continue to be vulnerable to fluctuating energy prices.

However, slower pace of economic growth and high commodity prices have spiralled ordinary citizen's cost of living unthinkably, putting them in extreme financial constraint.

Piecing together Pakistan's inflation situation over the decade, snapshot studies based on daily needs present an overall gloomy financial condition of people from lower income group. When the prices of essential food commodities soar,

there is hardly any reason for them to rejoice any political or crucial events like an IMF arrangement. I would like to sketch to model cases from a week of snapshot study in just a brief note. One, before returning to homes, for years, daily wagers used to buy one kilogram vegetables comprising few carrots, an eggplant, couple of potatoes and a pinch of greens as they cannot afford buying every commodity separately. Now the prices discourage them from buying a whole kilogram of the vegetable mix. Now they ask for half a kilogram instead, a vegetable vendor summarised his 35 years of experience.

Second, in a similar experience, a poultry shop owner says that earlier people from low income group used to buy one kilogram chicken at least in a week. But the prices have jumped well above their reach. They now ask for only half a kilogram of the bird meat and that too after at least 10-15 days or more.

Now in this new economic scene, with the IMF's rigid conditionality synchronised with upcoming election manifestos, it is an infrequent responsibility of the incumbent government to oxygenate the suffocating people.

I wish this time around Shehbaz Sharif and Ishaq Dar stick to their resolve to give the poor relief. They take measures to bring down commodity prices and save the least privileged Pakistanis from starvation. -*Courtesy: The Express Tribune*

The writer is a part of The Express Tribune editorial team.

Emerging climate risks & IMF

Ali Tauqeer Sheikh

There is no bigger threat to Pakistan's macroeconomic and financial stability than climate shocks. Around this time last year, we were hit by floods costing \$30 billion that have derailed economic growth and development. This sad fact was not lost on the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

It has now integrated climate risks as a touchstone in all its lending operations. The staff-level Stand-by Agreement (SBA) with Pakistan is no exception, even if it is not always publicly recognised.

The key conditions of SBA include doing away with heavy subsidies on energy, strengthening public debt sustainability, implementing a market-based exchange rate system, increasing tax revenue, improving governance and reducing corruption, reforms in the energy sector and, finally, climate resilience.

The last one of these commitments seems innocuous, perhaps out of place. In reality, this will potentially pose a very serious threat to the compliance and adherence of other areas of action. The dark clouds of the monsoons have already begun to gather on the horizon.

Climate change was, however, discussed during the 2021 Article IV Consultation with Pakistan whereby, for the first time, climate change was identified as a priority area for IMF's surveillance activities.

While the IMF and World Bank, two Bretton Woods institutions, are under increasing heat to reform and respond to the climate crisis, the IMF has moved rather quickly. Upon assuming office in October 2019, Kristalina Georgieva acknowledged the centrality of climate change for the Fund's work: "The criticality

of addressing climate change for financial stability, for making sure that we can have sustainable growth, is so very clear and proven today, that no institution, no individual can step away from the responsibility to act." Soon thereafter, the Resilience and Sustainability Trust was established in April 2022, as a pillar of the IMF's lending toolkit. RST provides longer-term concessional financing to vulnerable middle-income countries like Pakistan to address longer-term climate and other risks. It was probably through this window that IMF fast-tracked the release of \$1 billion following the monstrous floods last year.

The IMF has steadily taken up climate risks as an integral part of its lending considerations.

While the recipient countries like Pakistan may have been slow to embed climate change in their policies, the IMF has steadily taken up climate risks as an integral part of its lending considerations. For IMF, climate risks have become macro-critical that undermine macroeconomic and financial stability.

By integrating climate risks into its lending frameworks, it has begun to systematically address the risk in vulnerable countries and economies. IMF is now hardly constrained by its mandate to address climate risks.

For Pakistan, and several other countries, it is poised to become a significant institution in the fight against climatic changes, particularly since IMF has recast all three major pillars of its mandate.

First, Article IV Consultations by IMF is a regular feature of country-level assessments. In the past, it only covered fiscal, monetary, and exchange rate policies but now it has developed tools to assess the macro-fiscal risks of climate shocks and the climate implications for macroeconomic stability.

The following three climate risks are reportedly covered: i) physical risks such as climate-triggered disasters and their impact on infrastructure, ii) transition risks, such as mitigation-and adaptation-related policy changes that could affect economic sectors particularly fossil fuel industries, renewables, and transportation, and iii) financial risks such as the exposure of financial institutions and investors to climate-related risks.

Concurrently, IMF has begun to take a closer interest in carbon trading and carbon pricing for debt swaps for climate. IMF also proposes an international carbon price floor arrangement to complement the Paris Agreement.

Second, Financial Sector Assessment helps the IMF identify potential vulnerabilities and risks and make informed policy decisions. It has been a tool jointly used with the World Bank since 1999 for assessment of the stability and soundness of a country's financial sector.

USA now integrates climate-related financial stability challenges. In order to further strengthen its policy interventions, the IMF is now more active than ever before in the Network for Greening the Financial System, a network of 114 central banks that aims to accelerate the scaling up of green finance.

It develops recommendations for a climate-smart role for central banks. The State Bank of Pakistan is also a member, and in recent years, it has moved to promote green banking and align its policies with global sustainable finance policies.

Since climate risks vary from country to country based on the specific country context, it is imperative for Pakistan to begin to engage with IMF at the staff levels to avoid any arbitrariness and help them make informed policy decisions.

Third, since the IMF is a data-driven organisation like no other,

it has begun to collect its own datasets for IMF's flagship Climate Change Indicators Dashboard, bringing together climate-related data needed for macroeconomic and financial policy analysis.

The IMF uses climate-related datasets to help its members address the climate challenges for which fiscal and macroeconomic policies are an important component of the appropriate policy response. The datasets are also used to manage climate risks by integrating its macro data on growth, employment, inflation, balance-of-payments, and fiscal deficit with carbon intensity and vulnerability to climate shocks. Carbon intensity is a measure of the amount of CO2 emissions associated with particular activities or products, including the carbon footprint of its loans, carbon taxes, emissions-trading systems, or fuel excise taxes. It has thus become important for policymakers in Pakistan to clearly communicate the rationale for reform to IMF on an ongoing basis.

In all, climate resilience and economic stability are strongly linked. Clearly, the countries that are more resilient to the impacts of climate change are more likely to have stable economies.

Pakistan needs to aim for several climate resilience measures that will also contribute to economic stability. The IMF has implemented several policies to link macroeconomic stability with climate change in its lending but, the critics have argued, it still has to learn to tailor policy advice to national contexts, and respond at scale in climatic catastrophes. After all, debt and climate have become intertwined. -*Courtesy: Dawn*

The writer is an expert on climate change and development.

Home sweet home? Expat life and the fear of going back

Emma Leaning

I'm heading home to Manchester for the first time in almost five years. I'm writing to you from the airplane with a gin and tonic in hand and another six hours to go of a 14-hour flight from Shanghai to London. As I prepare to reunite with my family, anticipation is tinged with a bittersweet blend of excitement and anxiety.

I'm desperate to touch my mom's skin and melt into my dad's arms. But the passing of time has not been kind. The question playing on my mind is whether our relationship can withstand the weight of everything endured over our forced separation. They say time's a healer, but is that always true? Or can time apart drive an irreversible wedge between us and those we love most?

Perhaps we should count time not in minutes, months and years but rather in the lived experiences within them. In the time apart from my family, there have been missed anniversaries, birthdays and personal achievements. Unseen battles, job losses and personal adversities.

And in the span of half a decade we have evolved as individuals, shaped by the constantly changing nature of life.

The last time my family saw me I was a bride, full of optimism and Champagne. After our honeymoon in Scotland, parents waved us off at the airport as we made our way back to China. I'm not the same woman I was. I have moved to a new city, changed careers and been diagnosed with a serious mental health condition. What more, since our farewell, the pandemic hit, which impacted the whole world in ways we never expected and left scars on the hearts of all.

Everyone has their own story to tell of that time, and no one account is more significant than the next. Mine involves catching COVID in March of 2022 and everything that went with it. Shanghai then went into lockdown, and I endured a social media trolling that near killed me. You don't go through those things and come out the other side unchanged. Will my parents recognize this new version of their daughter? I worry that this new her will be too alien to accept.

I think at the core of my fear is the need for connection. As expatriates, we walk a tightrope between the foreign and the familiar. We personify two lives lived in one body. We exist between places wherever we are, and part of us is always left behind, meaning we are never fully home and

never wholly ourselves. Living in the international community means immersing yourself in a different culture, language and way of life. Going home means slipping back into a life once lived but since left behind, and a version of ourselves that's familiar to others but not ourselves.

The difference between our adopted country and place of birth can be hard for others to grasp. People in England rarely ask about my life in China. I don't think it's because they don't care, they just don't know where to begin. And without a shared frame of reference, it can be difficult to engage in a meaningful conversation. That isolation is anxiety-inducing. And the aeroplane I'm on is packed with people who feel the same.

"I morph into a completely different person when I'm back," Mark tells me. Whereas John suffered reverse culture shock. For Matt, going home feels like returning to an old partner or job he no longer understands, and Rob has concerns about whether his Asian partner will suffer racism. Ruth feels less confident in her native country, and Coleen finds it sad to feel removed from everything that once felt familiar. It's tiring living between two worlds.

Maybe my expectations are high and my nerves unwar-

ranted. A few friends have told me to accept that people cannot fully appreciate our lives abroad. And I guess the same must be said in reverse. I know some aspects of my parents' lives, but I do not know all of it. Can a relationship be real when it's lived in the shells of who we once were?

I have four weeks in England to find out. The closer I get to Manchester, the less anxious I am. That could be the gin and tonic, but I think it's the unmovable truth that when I hold my family, they are mine and I am theirs. Maybe it comes down to learning to live within the set back between us. We should tend to it like a garden, then out deck chairs and build a bonfire. There, nestled together, we'll listen to one another with empathy and a willingness to learn. By doing so, we can foster a deeper understanding of each other and sew together holes formed by years apart. How nice!

It's that, or we could just go to the pub. -*Shine.cn*

Reach Emma at emma.leaning@shanghaidaily.com or follow her on Facebook (EmmaLeaning) and Twitter (@LeaningEmma).

Chip wars: How 'chiplets' are emerging as a core part of China's tech strategy

BEIJING: The sale of struggling Silicon Valley startup zGlu's patents in 2021 was unremarkable except for one detail: The technology it owned, designed to cut the time and cost for making chips, showed up 13 months later in the patent portfolio of Chipuller, a startup in China's southern tech hub Shenzhen.

Chipuller purchased what is referred to as chiplet technology, a cost efficient way to package groups of small semiconductors to form one powerful brain capable of powering everything from data centers to gadgets at home.

The previously unreported technology transfer coincides with a push for chiplet technology in China that started about two years ago, according to a Reuters analysis of hundreds of patents in the U.S. and China and dozens of Chinese government procurement documents, research papers and grants, local and central government policy documents and interviews with Chinese chip executives.

Industry experts say chiplet technology has become even more important to China since the U.S. barred it from accessing advanced machines and materials needed to make today's most cutting edge chips, and now largely underpins the country's plans for self-reliance in semiconductor manufacturing.

"U.S.-China competition is on the same starting line," Chipuller chairman Yang Meng said about chiplet technology in an interview with Reuters. "In other (chip technologies) there is a sizeable gap between China and the United States, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan."

Barely mentioned before 2021, Chinese authorities have highlighted chiplets more frequently in recent years, according to a Reuters review. At least 20 policy documents from local to central governments referred to it as part of a broader strategy to increase China's capabilities in "key and cutting-edge technologies".

"Chiplets have a very special meaning for

China given the restrictions on wafer fabrication equipment," said Charles Shi, a chip analyst for brokerage Needham. "They can still develop 3D stacking or other chiplet technology to work around those restrictions. That's the grand strategy, and I think it might even work."

Beijing is rapidly exploiting chiplet technology in applications as diverse as artificial intelligence to self-driving cars, with entries from tech giant Huawei Technologies to military institutions exploring its use.

More major investments in the area are on the way, according to a review of corporate announcements.

CHINA'S CHIPLET ADVANTAGE

Chiplets, or small chips, can be the size of a grain of sand or bigger than a thumbnail and are brought together in a process called advanced packaging.

It is a technology the global chip industry has increasingly embraced in recent years as chip manufacturing costs soar in the race to make transistors so small they are now

measured in the number of atoms.

Bonding chiplets tightly together can help make more powerful systems without shrinking the transistor size as the multiple chips can work like one brain.

Apple's high-end computer lines use chiplet technology, as do Intel and AMD's more powerful chips.

About a quarter of the global chip packaging and testing market sits in China, according to Dongguan Securities.

While some say this gives China an advantage in leveraging chiplet technology, Chipuller chairman Yang cautioned the proportion of China's packaging industry that could be considered advanced was "not very big".

Under the right conditions, chiplets that are personalised according to the needs of the customer can be completed quickly, in "three to four months, this is the unique advantage China holds," according to Yang.

Needham's Shi said according to import data published by China's customs agency,

China's purchase of chip packaging equipment soared to \$3.3 billion in 2021 from its previous high of \$1.7 billion in 2018, although last year it fell to \$2.3 billion with the chip market downturn.

Since early 2021 research papers on chiplets started surfacing by researchers of the Chinese military People's Liberation Army and universities it runs, and state-run and PLA-affiliated laboratories are looking to use chips made using domestic chiplet technology according to six tenders published over the past three years.

Public documents by the government also show millions of dollars worth of grants to researchers specializing in chiplet technology, while dozens of smaller companies have sprouted throughout China in recent years to meet domestic demand for advanced packaging solutions like chiplets.

CHIPLETS ON THE TABLE

Against the backdrop of escalating U.S.-China tension, Chinese company Chipuller acquired 28 patents either owned by zGlu

or invented by people whose names are on zGlu's patents, according to an analysis using IP management technology firm Anaqua's Acclaim IP database.

The acquisition was through a two-step transfer, first through British Virgin Islands-registered North Sea Investment Co Ltd, according to documents seen by Reuters and confirmed by Yang.

The Committee on Foreign Investment in the United States (CFIUS), a powerful Treasury-led committee that reviews transactions for potential threats to U.S. security, did not respond to a Reuters request for comment about whether such sales would require their approval.

CFIUS lawyers Laura Black at Akin's Trade Group, Melissa Mannino at BakerHostetler and Perry Beckly at Belfrier Corcoran & Rowe say patent sales alone would not necessarily give CFIUS authority over the deal, as it depends whether the assets purchased constitute a U.S. business.

Hollywood actors poised to strike and join writers on picket lines

LOS ANGELES: Negotiators for Hollywood's actors union unanimously recommended a strike after talks with studios broke down, setting the stage for performers to join writers on picket lines as early as Thursday and disrupt scores of shows and movies.

The SAG-AFTRA union said its national board would vote on a strike order on Thursday morning. If approved, Hollywood studios would face their first dual work stoppage in 63 years and be forced to shut down productions across the United States.

Both SAG-AFTRA - Hollywood's largest union with 160,000 members - and the Writers Guild of America (WGA) are demanding increases in base pay and residuals in the streaming TV era plus assurances that their work will not be replaced by artificial intelligence (AI).

Fran Drescher, former star of "The Nanny" and the president of SAG-AFTRA, said studios' responses to the actors' concerns had been "insulting and disrespectful."

"The companies have refused to meaningfully engage on some topics and on others completely stonewalled us," she said in a statement after a deadline for actors to agree a new contract expired at midnight on Wednesday.

"Until they do negotiate in good faith, we cannot begin to reach a deal," she added.

The Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP), which negotiates on behalf of Netflix Inc (NFLX.O), Walt Disney Co (DIS.N) and other companies, said it was "deeply disappointed that SAG-AFTRA has decided to walk away from negotiations."

The group said it had offered "historic pay and residual increases" and "a groundbreaking AI proposal that protects actors' digital likenesses." Actors are worried that their digital images will be used without their permission or proper compensation.

"Rather than continuing to negotiate, SAG-AFTRA has put us on a course that will deepen the financial hardship for thousands who depend on the industry for their livelihoods," the AMPTP said.

ECONOMIC DAMAGE

The strike by roughly 11,500 writers has sent late-night television talk shows into endless reruns, disrupted most production for the fall TV season and halted work on big-budget movies.

A walkout by SAG-AFTRA would shut down the studios' remaining U.S.-based productions and put more pressure on media companies to find a resolution.

Hollywood has not faced two strikes at once since 1960, when members of the WGA and the Screen Actors Guild both walked off the job in a fight over residuals from films sold to TV networks.

Today, the unions are battling over base pay and residuals from streaming services.

"You have to make \$26,000 a year to qualify for your health insurance and there are a lot of people who get across that threshold through their residual payments," actor Matt Damon said at a promotional event held for the film "Oppenheimer" on Wednesday.

"There's money being made and it needs to be allocated in a way that takes care of people who are on the margins," Damon added.

Many streaming services, however, have yet to turn a profit after companies spent billions of dollars on programming to try and attract customers.

Disney, Comcast Corp's (CMCSA.O) NBCUniversal and Paramount Global (PARA.O) each lost hundreds of millions of dollars from streaming in the most recent quarter. At the same time, the rise of online video has eroded television ad revenue as traditional TV audiences shrink.

The WGA's work stoppage has rippled throughout California and beyond, hitting caterers, prop suppliers and others who rely on Hollywood production for business. Economic damage is expected to spread if actors also strike.

Broadcast networks have already announced fall schedules heavy with reality shows, which are not affected by the current labor tensions. Independent productions not covered by union contracts also can continue.

Fragile UK economy set to dodge recession for now

LONDON: Britain's economy shrank by less than expected in May despite a bank holiday to mark King Charles' coronation and strikes, suggesting a widely forecast recession caused by high inflation and surging interest rates was not already under way.

Economic output fell 0.1% in May from April, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said, after growth of 0.2% in the previous month. A Reuters poll of economists had pointed to a contraction of 0.3% in May.

All sectors of the economy contracted with the exception of services, which showed no growth. The pound rose modestly against the dollar on the back of the data.

Business groups said the big picture of a tepid economy remained, albeit one with stubborn inflationary pressures that means the Bank of England is likely to raise interest rates further in early August.

Britain's economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic has lagged most of its peers among major advanced economies, with only recession-hit Germany having fared as badly as of the first quarter of this year.

"Our sense is that underlying activity is still growing, albeit at a snail's pace," Paul Dales, chief UK economist with Capital Economics, said.

The economy was on track to expand by around 0.1% in the second quarter, a touch stronger than the BoE's forecast of no change but it was likely to suffer a mild recession later in the year, Dales said.

Next Wednesday's inflation release would probably determine whether the BoE raises rates by another half percentage point or slows down the pace to a quarter-point hike, Dales added.

Finance minister Jeremy Hunt said high inflation continued to hamper the economy and he called for patience in bringing it down. "Our plan will work, but we must stick to it," he said.

Some companies in the arts, entertainment and recreation sector said they had benefited from the extra bank holiday, as well as hotels and restaurants, the ONS said.

But there were signs that strikes in the health, rail and education sectors had dragged on output.

The ONS said anything better than a 0.1% drop in economic output for June would put the economy on track to avoid a contraction for the second quarter as a whole.

Britain's economy often shows some rebound in subsequent months when output is temporarily dented by extra bank holidays.

Separate ONS data showed Britain's trade-in-goods deficit widened by more than expected to 18.7 billion pounds in May, with exports to the European Union falling to their lowest level since January 2022.

Russian general says top military brass betrayed soldiers fighting in Ukraine

MOSCOW: A Russian general said he had been dismissed as a commander after telling the military leadership about the dire situation at the front in Ukraine, where he said Russian soldiers had been stabbed in the back by the failings of the top military brass.

After the June 24 mutiny by Wagner mercenaries, the biggest domestic challenge to the Russian state in decades, President Vladimir Putin has so far kept Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu and Chief of the General Staff Valery Gerasimov in their jobs.

Major General Ivan Popov, who commanded the 58th Combined Arms Army, said in a voice message published by Russian lawmaker Andrei Guryulov that he had been dismissed after telling the truth to the top brass about the situation at the front.

"The Ukrainian army could not break through our ranks at the front but our senior chief hit us from the rear, viciously beheading the army at the most difficult and intense moment," Popov said.

Popov, whose military call sign was "Spartacus" and who commanded Russian units in southern Ukraine, explicitly raised the deaths of Russian soldiers from Ukrainian artillery and said the army lacked proper counter artillery systems and reconnaissance of enemy artillery.

There was no immediate comment from the defence ministry and Reuters was unable to independently verify the authenticity of the voice message. Lawmaker Guryulov is a hardline former army commander who regularly appears on state television.

It was unclear when the message was recorded and Popov's current whereabouts were not known. The defence ministry has not said anything about his dismissal.

Such public criticism of Russia's military leadership from a battle-hardened general less than three weeks since the Wagner mutiny, if authentic, would indicate continued discontent within the Russian army as it fights the biggest land war in Europe since World War Two.

RUSSIAN ARMY

Putin, Russia's paramount leader since 1999, has said the mutiny risked tipping Russia into civil war and has compared it to the revolutionary turmoil of 1917.

The Kremlin has sought to project calm, but Russian officials and diplomats have told Reuters that the full consequences of

the mutiny - which Wagner leader Yevgeny Prigozhin said was aimed only at settling scores with Shoigu and Gerasimov - have yet to play out.

Neither Prigozhin nor General Sergei Surovinkin, a deputy commander of Russia's military operations in Ukraine, have been seen in public since the day of the mutiny.

Prigozhin had for months been openly insulting Putin's most senior military men, using a variety of crude epithets and prison slang that shocked Russian officials but that were left unanswered in public by Putin, Shoigu or Gerasimov.

Popov, 48, said he had faced a watershed moment when he told the military chiefs the truth.

"There was a tough situation with the senior bosses in which it was necessary either to keep quiet and be a coward or to say it the way it is," Popov said. He did not say when he raised the complaints.

"I had no right to lie in the name of you, in the name of my fallen comrades in arms, so I outlined all the problems which exist."

MILITARY REBEL?

In 2017, the official newspaper of Russia's armed forces published a profile of Popov. It said he had previously served in Russia's war against separatists in Chechnya and in the 2008 war in Georgia.

A Telegram channel linked to Wagner mercenaries said that Popov had raised the need to rotate exhausted troops from the front line with Gerasimov. Reuters could not verify that report.

Russia's main state television channels did not report the remarks by Popov on their main news programmes on Thursday, though Kommersant, a respected Russian newspaper, did report them.

War bloggers in Russia were split between those who said Popov's remarks were open defiance and those who said Popov was not a mutineer but simply a well-respected general who had fallen out with the top brass.

"This is a dangerous precedent," said Igor Girkin, a former Federal Security Service (FSB) officer who helped Russia annex Crimea in 2014 and then organise pro-Russian militias in eastern Ukraine.

Popov said his future was now uncertain. "The senior chiefs apparently sensed some kind of danger from me and quickly concocted an order from the defence minister in just one day and got rid of me," he said. "I await my fate."

How aspartame made the agenda of the WHO's cancer research arm

LONDON: The imminent move to label aspartame as a possible carcinogen comes after years of advocacy from a leading consumer group in the United States and a handful of cancer scientists hoping to settle a decades-long debate over the sweetener's safety.

Reuters reported last month that the cancer research arm of the World Health Organization (WHO), known as the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), was set to make that declaration on July 14, according to two sources with knowledge of the process.

The designation as "possibly carcinogenic to humans" will provide an incentive to fund more rigorous research into the safety question, toxicology and cancer experts say.

"I don't see how, without better-designed studies, we can make any conclusions on this," said Andy Smith, a professor with the MRC Toxicology Unit at the University of Cambridge.

Smith said regulators worldwide may also reconsider the data in the wake of the IARC declaration and an upcoming review by another WHO committee.

Aspartame is one of the world's most widely used sweeteners, appearing in products from Coca-Cola's Diet Coke to Mars' Extra sugar-free chewing gum, but questions have been raised about its safety since not long after U.S. health regulators first approved its use four decades ago. Regulators worldwide have ruled that aspartame is safe to consume within set limits.

"Since 1981, when the product got formal approvals, there has been ongoing controversy," said Peter Lurie, president of the U.S.-based Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI). "We have been pushing for an IARC review for many years now."

IARC, a semi-autonomous arm of the WHO, rules whether a substance is potentially carcinogenic based on all the published scientific evidence, but does not take into account how much a person would have to consume for it to be risky.

The "possible carcinogen" classification also reflects the limited evidence suggesting a link, and puts aspartame in the same category as whole-leaf extract alone vera and some pickled vegetables.

A separate recommendation on safe consumption levels is also expected on Friday from the Joint Food and Agriculture Organization/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA).

NEW EVIDENCE

The IARC first said aspartame was a "medium priority" for review in 2008. It was nominated again in 2014 by the CSPI, Lurie said, with the sup-

port of former top IARC official James Huff and consultant Ron Melnick, both cancer experts who used to work at the U.S. National Institutes of Health.

After the 2014 nomination, aspartame was listed as "high priority" by the IARC "because of its widespread use, lingering concern over its carcinogenic potential, and recent reports of positive findings in studies of carcinogenicity in animals", according to documents published at the time by the agency.

But no action was taken until 2022, after aspartame was again nominated for review by CSPI and Melnick in 2019.

"There's been a huge number of studies performed on aspartame, which overwhelmingly show that it's very safe, and has no carcinogenic potency," said Dr Samuel Cohen, a professor of oncology at the University of Nebraska Medical Center who has studied sweeteners for decades, served on a number of expert panels and consulted for industry.

Industry bodies said the JECFA review was a more important moment and IARC's review could "mislead consumers".

The IARC declined to comment on the lack of action on aspartame for over a decade. The agency updates its priority list every five years, and usually deliberates on many - but not all - of the substances in each period. Some items are reconsidered: coffee, for example, was listed as a possible carcinogen in the 1990s, but taken off the list in 2016.

The research body has said "new evidence" prompted its aspartame review, without giving any details. Experts point to studies since 2000 that signal a potential risk in animals and humans as the likely triggers for the IARC. However, none are definitive in showing a link.

The most recent study came out in March 2022. It was an observational study from France among 100,000 adults and showed that people who consumed larger amounts of artificial sweeteners, including aspartame, had a slightly higher risk of some cancers.

However, the NutriNet-Sante study led by researchers at the University of Paris does not show that the risk was caused by aspartame and critics say its design, based on people self-reporting their real-world consumption of sweeteners, is a limitation. Erik Millstone, a professor of science policy at Britain's University of Sussex, said the French finding, while not authoritative, was likely to have been a factor in the IARC discussion. The French researchers declined to comment.

"That's important - there are new data from new studies," Millstone said. "Plus, aspartame is just about the most widely used additive on the planet."

Tesla looking to make about half million EVs annually in India

BENGALURU: Tesla (TSLA.O) is discussing an investment proposal with the Indian government to set up a factory with an annual capacity to produce about half a million electric vehicles, the Times of India reported on Thursday, citing government sources.

The company, led by billionaire Elon Musk, is also looking at using India as an export base to ship cars to countries in the Indo-Pacific region, the report said.

The starting price for the vehicles will be 2 million rupees (\$24,400.66), the report added, which is more than double of India's cheapest EV, MG Comet, and half a million costlier than Tata Nexon EV, the top-selling electric car in the country.

Last year, Tesla's India entry plans were stalled after the country's government refused to lower import taxes on its cars. The country levies as much as 100% import tax on electric vehicles.

India was keen for Tesla to manufacture

vehicles locally, but the company said it wanted to export its cars first to the country so that it could test the strength of demand.

In renewed efforts to enter the domestic market with a change of stance, Tesla held discussions in May with officials about incentives being offered by the government for its cars and battery manufacturing, Reuters had reported.

The Indian commerce and industry ministry is leading the talks this time and hopes to put together a "good deal", while maintaining a level-playing field as talks now involve both local manufacturing and exports, the local media report added.

In a meeting with Musk last month, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi pushed the car maker to make a "significant investment" in the country.

The commerce and industry ministry, Tesla and Musk did not immediately respond to Reuters' requests for comments.

KSE100

45,266.96 -247.99 (-0.54%)

HIGH	LOW	VOLUME
45,970.99	45,255.58	225,216,885

ALLSHR

30,360.75 -89.00 (-0.29%)

HIGH	LOW	VOLUME
30,757.35	30,357.56	489,082,319

Indices

Index	High	Low	Current	Change	% Change
KSE100	45,970.99	45,255.58	45,266.96	-247.99	-0.54%
ALLSHR	30,757.35	30,357.56	30,360.75	-89.00	-0.29%
KSE30	16,103.66	16,091.50	16,103.66	-99.38	-0.61%
BKTI	10,340.36	10,490.95	10,503.81	-109.49	-1.03%
KMI30	11,595.48	11,343.98	11,355.38	-26.33	-0.23%
KMIALLSHR	22,639.18	22,310.96	22,315.46	-43.35	-0.19%
PSDXV20	16,441.59	16,112.59	16,148.75	-119.56	-0.73%
UP99	12,545.85	12,082.89	12,082.89	-132.49	-1.06%
NIFT50	10,628.90	10,443.64	10,453.15	-71.81	-0.68%
NIFT100	12,247.48	12,155.44	12,163.80	-67.57	-0.55%
NIFT200	8,988.83	8,732.83	8,743.52	-46.06	-0.47%
NIFT500	10,013.30	9,855.84	9,873.58	-16.47	-0.17%
NIFT1000	8,194.54	8,024.84	8,032.34	-50.15	-0.62%

BOARD MEETINGS

Symbol	A/C Period	Date
FABL	Other Matters	Jul 17th, 2023 11:00 AM
BLHL	Other Matters	Jul 17th, 2023 11:00 AM
SEARL	Other Matters	Jul 17th, 2023 12:00 PM
KUCL	Other Matters	Jul 17th, 2023 03:00 PM
UBEL	Other Matters	Jul 18th, 2023 02:00 PM
UBEL	Half Year	Jul 19th, 2023 10:00 AM
FCCL	Half Year	Jul 19th, 2023 02:00 PM
FCCL	Other Matters	Jul 26th, 2023 10:00 AM
MCBAH	Annual	Jul 26th, 2023 03:00 PM

Market Performers

TOP ACTIVE STOCKS

SYMBOL	PRICE	CHANGE	VOLUME
WTL	1.29	0.00 (0.00%)	55,536,051
TPLP	14.28	0.18 (1.28%)	42,173,934
KEL	20.46	0.15 (0.70%)	30,446,983
UNITY	23.31	0.81 (3.60%)	21,230,363
PRL	17.21	0.06 (0.35%)	16,554,956
PBTL	4.64	0.03 (0.65%)	14,923,500
CENERGY	3.25	0.01 (0.31%)	12,184,192
DOP	3.79	0.16 (4.23%)	11,694,500
HUBC	79.53	-0.38 (-0.48%)	11,192,977
OGDC	86.68	-0.42 (-0.48%)	10,861,164

KSE30

16,103.66 -99.38 (-0.61%)

HIGH	LOW	VOLUME
16,360.20	16,091.50	168,934,018

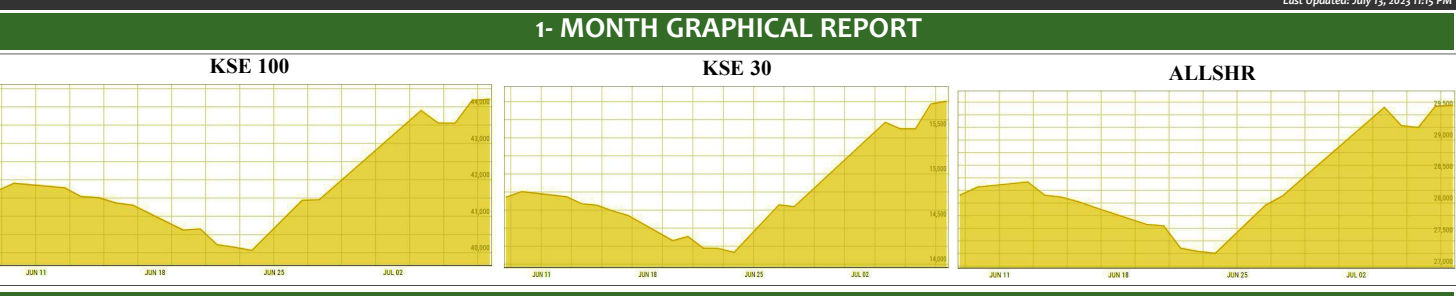
KMI30

77,042.06 -479.52 (-0.62%)

HIGH	LOW	VOLUME
78,214.19	76,997.38	165,546,204

KSE100 Constituents

SYMBOL	LDCP	CURRENT	CHANGE	CHANGE (%)	IDX WGT (%)	IDX POINT	VOLUME	FREEFLOAT (M)	MARKET CAP (M)
UNITY	1.9	2.05	0.15	7.90%	0.35%	11.62	30,446,983	2,762	5,661
CENERGY	4.61	4.64	0.03	0.65%	0.23%	0.68	14,923,500	8,4	3,729
DOP	3.24	3.25	0.01	0.31%	0.32%	0.45	12,184,192	5,099	5,197
HUBC	79.53	79.53	0.05	1.24%	3.00%	1.76	11,694,500	1,256	4,760
HUBC	79.53	79.53	-0.38	-0.48%	4.80%	-10.37	11,192,977	973	77,372
OGDC	87.1	86.68	-0.42	-0.48%	3.47%	-7.6	10,861,164	645	55,921
PPL	69.49	69.57	0.08	0.11%	2.88%	1.5	10,306,114	668	46,461
SEARL	42.71	45.91	3.2	7.49%	0.50%	15.76	9,200,589	176	6,059
MLCF	32.12	31.38	-0.74	-2.30%	0.94%	-10.03	5,945,614	483	15,157
SNPG	44.27	43.86	-0.41	-0.93%	0.78%	-3.28	5,695,850	285	12,518
TRG	104.26	104.17	-0.09	-0.08%	0.69%	-2.04	5,290,032	382	39,769
HBL	79.41	79.41	-0.49	-0.61%	3.61%	-10.08	4,784,952	733	58,241
DGKC	57.99	57.29	-0.7	-1.21%	0.78%	-4.3	4,766,966	219	12,550
FCCL	12.82	12.75	-0.07	-0.55%	0.68%	-1.69	4,515,500	858	10,946
PAEL	11.77	11.54	-0.23	-1.95%	0.31%	-2.77	4,412,799	428	4,939
AIRLINK	27.86	27.53	-0.33	-1.18%	0.17%	-0.92	4,180,905	99	2,720
AVN	53.65	53.46	-0.19	-0.35%	0.37%	-0.6	3,664,536	113	6,035
ADP	44.9	44.9	-1.17	-2.54%	0.89%	-10.44	3,218,318	318	11,133
MEBL	110.47	109.42	-1.05	-0.95%	3.03%	-13.18	3,276,575	447	48,955
NRL	216.04	220.62	4.58	2.12%	0.36%	3.37	3,005,735	26	5,786
PSO	124.22	123.63	-0.59	-0.47%	1.62%	-3.5	2,938,904	211	26,118
BAFL	34.88	34.88	-0.39	-1.11%	0.36%	-6.9	2,672,252	631	22,005
ATRL	210.41	210.45	0.04	0.02%	0.56%	0.05	2,638,894	43	8,975
PTC	6.42	6.39	-0.03	-0.47%	0.23%	-0.5	2,308,000	592	3,784



MARKET SUMMARY

AUTOMOBILE ASSEMBLER

SCRIP	LDCP	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CURRENT	CHANGE	VOLUME
Al Chaudhri	284.5	285.9	289.99	286.1	284.5	-1.67	3,500
Alfa Honda Ltd	26	26	26	26	26	0	3,200
Chowhan Motors	12.3	11.9	12.5	11.66	12.2	0.46	6,086,901
Chandhara Automobile	41.9	41	41.9	39.95	41.9	2.87	336,862
Chandhara Ind.	95.6	89.99	95.6	89	95.6	6.67	704,335
Hiroopak Motor	201.09	200.99	215	200	202.4	1.4	4,400
Honda Atlas Cars	107.8	108.55	107.8	100.8	107.8	7.54	73,660
Indus Motor Co	98.04	95	99	95	98.04	3.04	1,905
Miller Tractors	398.84	400	409.01	397.7	399.95	-0.94	83,023
Pak Suzuki	113.75	105	113.75	113.75	7.94	141.87	79,500
Suzger Eng	59.31	59.74	59.31	55.6	59.31	6.14	1,096,940

FOOD & PERSONAL CARE PRODUCTS

SCRIP	LDCP	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CURRENT	CHANGE	VOLUME
Al-Sharh Corp	8.8	8.05	9	8.05	8.2	0.89	1,958,804
Al-Fahur Ltd	18.4	17.5	18.49	17.5	18.49	0.89	399,500
Bunyas Limited	17.2	17.5	17.5	17.2	17.2	0	11,000
Chowhan Pakistan	13.8	13.1	14.88	13.1	13.9	0.8	65,000
Faif Foods Ltd	6.3	6.18	6.41	6.18	6.3	0.35	4,659,891
Friedland Foods	66.02	66	67.5	65.75	66.5	0.38	33,711
Gulzar Pak	162.1	164	165.95	161	168	6.8	1,000
Materco Foods Ltd	28.41	28.68	28.68	28.31	28.4	0.6	1,000
Mitchcheff Ltd	84.61	84	87.55	84	84.61	0.61	397,260,000
Moon Brewery	28.51	28.5	28.5	28.5	28.5	0	1,000
National Foods	109.34	109.64	109.6	107.6	110	1.99	750,000
Nestle Pakistan	6,675,000	6,636,000	6,660	6,636,000	6,660	220.0	80
Quat Food	3.85	3.7	3.85	3.7	3.85	0.15	20,000
Ruthan Inds	83,000	82.9	82.9	82.9	82.9	65.0	80
Shayan Inter.	10	10	10	10	10	0	1,000
Shahid Corp	300.03	300.03	300.03	300.03	300.03	0.37	100,000
The Organic Meat	22.1	22.08	22.1	21.6	22.08	0.48	1,099,200
Treat Corp	19.49	18.5	19.49	18.5	19.49	1.99	5,065,719
Unity Foods Ltd	20.08	19.95	20.55	19.95	20.4	1.66	20,659,220

POWER GENERATION & DISTRIBUTION

SCRIP	LDCP	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CURRENT	CHANGE	VOLUME
Altem Energy	15.89	15.5	15.9	15.5	15.89	0.43	4,000
Engro Powergen	24.9	24.8	25	24.8	24.9	-0.03	25,500
Hub Power Co	27.7	27.74	28.25	27.44	27.5	-0.04	1,850,414
K Electric Ltd	1.87	1.94	1.94	1.86	1.88	-0.03	3,788,250
Kohinoor Energy	31.04	31.45	33.5	31.45	33.00	0.99	164,000
Kohinoor Power	3.41	3.4	3.41	2.9	3.41	-0.11	17,200
Kot Adda Power	23.79	23.49	23.8	23.4	23.84	0.35	1,32,700
Lahore Power	17.37	17	17.48	17	17.31	0.3	739,500
Nishat ChurnPwr	18.4	18.55	18.6	18.33	18.43	0.03	67,500
Nishat Power	84.4	84.6	84.6	84.2	84.6	0.02	8,950,217
Pakistan Power	41.5	41.51	42.44	41.5	41.5	0	3,500
Pak Gen	5.91	5.91	5.91	5.91	5.91	0.04	0.04
Saff Power Ltd.	20.11	20.1	20.1	20.1	20.1	-0.22	279,000
Tristar Power	9.34	9.5	9.69	9.01	9.34	-0.12	1,160,000

CEMENT

SCRIP	LDCP	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CURRENT	CHANGE	VOLUME
Attock Cement	99.97	93.45	96	93	96	3.99	146,803
Bestway Cement	19	19	19	19	19	0	5,000
Cherat Cement	118.2	117.25	119.9	117	119.1	0.08	499,906
D.G.K.Cement	56.08	56.1	56.7	55.4	55.8	0.24	4,793,612
Dandot Cement	11.1	11.2	11.1	10.69	11.1	0.99	14,500
Delta Cement	4.6	4.5	4.7	4.48	4.53	0.05	4,200,000
Faif Cement	12.58	12.56	12.74	12.51	12.74	0.08	6,400,000
Fecto Cement	20.4	20	21.24	19.81	20.49	0.49	10,000
Flying Cement	6.49	6	6.27	6	6.23	0.25	16,700
Charcoal Cement	16.89	16.75	17	16.4	16.89	0.19	10,000
Indus Cement	18.59	18.2	18.53	17	18.5	0.37	1,000
KCI Cement	557.29	557	554.99	557.1	557.1	0.18	390,488
Maple Leaf	110.09	109.35	110.3	108.7	110.3	0.03	4,605,668
Pioneer Cement	87.56	86.99	89.44	86.5	87.6	0.2	1,068,200
Power Cement	4.21	4.21	4.21	4.21	4.21	0.01	490,000
Thal Cement	11.96	11.9	11.99	11.75	11.99	0.24	6,000

INSURANCE

SCRIP	LDCP	OPEN	HIGH	LOW	CURRENT	CHANGE	VOLUME
Admanjiv Ins	23.32	23.15	23.84	23.15	23.63	-0.15	74,500
Al-Farooq Life As	14.85	14.01	14.85	14.01	14.85	0.84	1,000
Asif Life Ins							

No #1 Continued from page 2

navigate through life successfully. "NAPA will continue providing quality education in the field of performing arts and will continue to collaborate closely with the Government of Sindh to implement its vision of integrating performing arts into mainstream school curricula," he added.

No #2 Continued from page 2

tyamji," lamented the Prime Minister. PM Anwar Hq also acknowledged the pivotal role played by Abdul Qader Khan in stirring a revolt that shook the very foundations of the Maharaja's regime. On June 25, during a gathering of the Young Muslim Association at Khanqah Moala in Srinagar, Abdul Qader Khan delivered a stirring speech, passionately urging the Kashmiri people to rise against the Maharaja's brutal regime, he added.

Although he was apprehended on the same day, his arrest and subsequent trial served as a catalyst for a massive revolution against the oppressive Dogra regime in the region. The Prime Minister proudly stated that the courageous people of Kashmir, undeterred by the horrors inflicted upon them, have written a new chapter in the annals of resistance. Whether it be their struggle against the despotic Maharaja or their unwavering resistance against India's illegal occupation of the majority of the Jammu and Kashmir State, the resilient Kashmiris have demonstrated indomitable spirit and unwavering courage, he added.

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IRC, WMI, Mercy Corps, NRSP, Muslim Hands, Pathfinder, Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources, Research and Development Foundation, SAFWCO, Shifa Foundation, Sindh Irrigation and Drainage Authority, SRSC, SRSD, Thr Foundation, UNDP, UNICEF, WASSA, World Health Organization, Zaiduddin University of Health and others.

Keynote speakers on Day One were: Dr. Shahid Iqbal, Regional Researcher Water Management; Dr. Masud Rival, WASH Coordinator, Solidaritas Internasional Pakistan; Aftab Gohar Memon, Additional Secretary, PHED, Govt of Sindh; Rida Anjum, Communication Officer UNDP.

Panelists/speakers on Day Two were: Kamran Naem, Behnu Lal, Raheema Panwar, Abdul Fateh, Shehzar Amir, Bilal Chaudhry, Dr. Nabeela Shahid, Akhtar Ahmad Almani, Shahid Iqbal, Mudassar Ahmad.

Keynote speakers on Day Two were: Recam Day One Session - Mudassar Ahmed, Sohail Nazzer, WASH Expert Hassan, and Zillur Rehman, BRAC International.

Panelists/speakers on Day Two were: Rajia Mansoor Haid, Dr. Naveed Bhattu, Dr. Shah Kamal, Meena Iqbal, and Rabia Baloch.

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government did nothing for resolving such issues, he said. Criticizing the attack on the military installations on May 09 by rioters, Faizal Kundu said those involved in the incident must be punished.

"What happened on May 9 was an insult to our martyrs whose families proudly say that our sons died for the sake of our country," he said. The minister also criticized International Monetary Fund delegation's visit to meet a person in Zaman Park who was wanted by the state in different cases and urged the relevant authorities to convey a strong message on it. - APP

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The primary objective of this alarming trend is to create chaos in Pakistan, destabilize peace and security, and sow seeds of hatred among different religious communities and sects. The act of blasphemy is being orchestrated through conspiratorial means, using accounts with names that appear to belong to a particular religion or sect to defame and insult opposing religions or sects.

The Ministry urges parents, who bear the greatest responsibility in current circumstances, to be mindful of the content their children are exposed to on mobile phones, laptops, and the internet. They should ensure that their children do not inadvertently stumble upon indecent material and end up on the path of immorality, eventually leading to obscene videos and, most egregiously, blasphemous acts. - APP

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institutional quality of care across the family planning services delivery system." "It will support public information and advocacy campaigns so that more families are made aware of the benefits of family planning."

The WB official said the programme would scale up innovations, such as clinical franchising, voucher schemes, and family planning counseling through community leaders, piloted in different districts of Punjab and had shown improvements in family planning outcomes.

Through an extensive network of Lady Health Workers, Family Welfare Workers and Community Health Workers that are linked to health facilities, family health clinics and family welfare centers, Nayyabehussain said the programme would reach areas and communities that had limited or no access to family planning services.

He said the programme would scale up the voucher incentive scheme, social marketing, male and community leaders' engagement and youth platforms for increasing utilization of family planning services, adding it would also improve the interpersonal communication skills of family planning service providers.

"Family planning enables couples to make informed choices about the number of children they want to have and when they want to have them," said Manu Bhatnagar, Team Leader for the programme.

"Enabling individuals to plan their families helps prevent unplanned or unintended pregnancies, ultimately leading to a decrease in overall fertility rates," he added.

The programme would be implemented in all districts of the province through the service delivery networks of the Population Welfare Department and the Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department, the two project implementing agencies. - APP

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can be exported to international markets. He underlined the need to address the small size and financial limitations of local IT firms, the low domestic demand for IT services, and the lack of exploration of non-traditional markets.

Shaheed Ali Malik said setting up more technological parks and Incubators is one of the hour where IT companies can operate and collaborate. He said these dedicated spaces can provide infrastructure, mentorship, and networking opportunities, enabling startups and small businesses to thrive and scale their operations.

He said government should also fully support the growth of the digital freelancing industry in Pakistan which could be done by providing training programs, creating freelancing hubs, facilitating secure online payment systems, and promoting the availability of a skilled workforce for international clients. - APP

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Executive Engineer, Pakistan Public Works Department, on behalf of Engineer Shahid Hussain Alamdri from the Public Works Department, District Murzarafgarh.

At the conclusion of the ceremony, Director General NAB Mullan expressed gratitude to the attendees and reaffirmed NAB Mullan's commitment to continue its relentless efforts in accordance with the law against corrupt elements. - APP

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The projects also empower local women in the region, Iqbal noted. "You will be amazed to see that local women are driving the heavy trucks, which take coal out of the mines." In total, the CPEC projects have created about 200,000 job opportunities.

Iqbal said Pakistan now has a lot more vigor to move forward on the CPEC, adding that many projects that were delayed in previous years were completed in the last year. He said that Pakistan is looking forward to taking the CPEC into the next phase with greater vigor. "I hope that the next phase will bring many dividends for the wider region beyond Pakistan and China. We hope one day the whole of South Asia, Central Asia and the Middle East will benefit from the CPEC."

When talking about the mega projects within the second phase of the CPEC, Iqbal expressed his hope to see the start of major upgrades to the Main Line 1 railway between Karachi and Peshawar with China's help as soon as possible in 2023. Modernization and upgrades are urgently needed for this aging railway line, especially as it was badly damaged by the floods last year.

This \$10-billion project was supposed to be done in the first phase, but it got delayed in the last four years, Iqbal said.

Iqbal refuted claims in the Western media that the CPEC has not lived up to expectations and has become a "debt trap," saying that instead it has "outperformed the expectations. The propaganda [from the West] that the CPEC is a debt trap is all false. All the negative propaganda against the CPEC has a political element. It has no reality," he told the Global Times.

Infrastructure was the priority of the first-phase of the CPEC, and the second phase will focus on industrial cooperation and business linkage through increasing investment in sectors such as energy, agriculture, information technology and mining, according to Iqbal. - APP

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unprecedented floods of last year. Talking about Pakistan students, he said, China is a popular and the largest destination for Pakistani students. The pre-Covid figure stands at 28,000 students enrolled all across China in various disciplines, including medicine, engineering, IT, science, humanities, and modern arts, among others.

After the lifting of Covid-related travel restrictions, students already enrolled in different disciplines have started coming back to resume on-campus classes along with new entrants.

Talking about his professional career, he said, "I have had a career spanning more than three and a half decades in the foreign service of Pakistan. During this time, I had a number of assignments at the headquarters and at the Missions abroad. Before my appointment to China in August 2020, I was serving as Pakistan's Ambassador to Africa. When I landed here, face-to-face interactions with the community was a bit difficult because of Covid.

However, this did not stop us for keeping regular engagement with them through online meetings and launching various initiatives for the commu-

ty. The first priority was to begin the repatriation of Pakistani students to China, who had been stranded because of the closing of borders and the across-the-board restrictions on the traveling of international students back to China. Pakistan was among the first few countries whose students returned to China after Covid, he said.

Another key objective was to ensure community's enhanced access to the embassy, for which we introduced a digital registration system. - APP

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Meanwhile, President, Islamabad chamber of commerce and industry, Ahsan Zaifur Babkhanji along with a team from the chamber called on President, International Islamic University, Islamabad (IIU), Dr. Hathal Hamoud Alotabi.

During the meeting, matters pertaining to mutual cooperation and initiatives for academia industry linkages were discussed. On the occasion, the President of IIU lauded the TECHSAPKPK exhibition of final year projects at the faculty of Engineering and technology of university adding that the students had prepared the projects according to the needs of society.

He assured that ICCI will be eager to introduce the students to the concerned industrialists so that their projects may serve the society with proper attribution. He also offered that the ICCI will be providing opportunities of internships to the university students. He also appreciated the role of the SIDA Government in promotion of industry and education.

The President IIIU, on the occasion said universities must address the requirements of the society and IIUI is focusing on the research in the light of contemporary trends. He said exhibitions such as TECHSAPKPK provide opportunities to students to get introduced to industry.

Talking about the university progress, he said the newly prepared strategic plan has set the varsity on the track of success and progress. He said that the university shall be focusing on initiating joint ventures with ICCI to build a strong bond between academia and industry.

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of a report, 47 officers and officials of the Islamabad Police were injured during the riots and 54 of them were brought to the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences (PIMS) Hospital.

In addition to this, three injured FC personnel were also brought to the PIMS Hospital. Most of the injured suffered injuries from sticks on their limbs while some were affected by tear gas.

Islamabad Police SSP Operations Malik Jamil was also among the injured and his health is being monitored to ensure there are no complications by the PTI workers. The SSP Operations was also shifted to PIMS Hospital.

The report also stated that party workers also damaged vehicles and government property.

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G-B chief minister Khalid Khurshid was disqualified earlier this month after Pakistan People's Party (PPP) MPA Ghulam Shahzad Agha challenged his degree in court.

On July 4, Khurshid was disqualified for obtaining a license from the bar council on the basis of a fake degree.

It is pertinent to note that Khurshid is also a PTI leader and the party's regional president.

After the former CM's disqualification, the strength of the G-B Assembly fell to 32 parliamentarians.

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concerns were expressed by PTI on a couple of issues. He said that they will reach a solution together on the concerns expressed by the PTI in the meeting as these issues are not so sensitive that they cannot be resolved.

On a query about imposing a ban on a political party, the federal law minister said that the issue of a ban on political parties was removed from the agenda. - NNI

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former Prime Minister Imran Khan. At a weekly news briefing, the Foreign Office spokesperson was asked to explain as to what prompted Israel to launch a broadside against Pakistan.

She was particularly referring to statements given by ministers alleging the nexus between Israel and the PTI.

"I do not have any way to suggest what prompts another government to undertake a particular position. I can only comment on how Pakistan sees the negative statement made in Geneva," spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said.

"I would not like to respond to a political question. Our reaction to the statement made by the Israeli Permanent Representative in Geneva has been clearly articulated," she replied when pressed if the Israeli move had any link with the current political situation or party.

Instead she stuck to the statement issued earlier by the Foreign Office. "We have noted Israel's statement at the UN Human Rights Council during Pakistan's UPR review session was politically motivated," Mumtaz said.

"It was at variance with the otherwise positive tone of the session. We believe that instead of giving unolicited advice, Israel should reflect on its own role in the occupation and suppression of Palestinian people in occupied Palestinian territories and do course correction," she further said.

On Thursday, Imran too took to Twitter and strongly denounced Israel for criticising Pakistan. However, he blamed the current government for its failure. According to the PTI chairman, the "corrupt and fascist" government destroyed Pakistan internally and externally.

She was responding to the question on the latest statement by an Afghan Taliban spokesperson that TTP was Pakistan's problem, the spokesperson said it was clear that the responsibility of ensuring that the soil of Afghanistan is not used for terrorism against Pakistan lies with the Afghan authorities.

"It is their responsibility and they have accepted this responsibility on various occasions. We are not going to comment on the statement issued by the Foreign Minister of China and the Acting Foreign Minister of Afghanistan visited Islamabad in May."

"They have assured Pakistan that the Afghan soil will not be used for terrorism directed against Pakistan. We expect them to fulfill those promises," she said.

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Pakistan rupee and was currently being traded at Rs274. On Wednesday, the Pakistani rupee had strengthened further against the US dollar, appreciating by 0.39% in the interbank market. At close, the currency had settled at 277.48, an increase of Rs1.09.

The rise in the value of Pakistani rupee came after massive injections of dollars by Saudi Arabia, UAE and the approval of much-needed loan deals by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Wednesday approved a 9-month Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) for Pakistan for an amount of \$3 billion days after reaching a staff-level agreement with the country.

Today, the Executive Board of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has approved a 9-month Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) for Pakistan for an amount of \$DR2.25 billion (about \$3 billion, or 111 percent of quota) to support the authorities' economic stabilization program," the global lender said in a statement.

Taking to Twitter, Prime Minister Shehbaz termed the approval of IMF's SBA a major step forward in the government's efforts to stabilize the economy and achieve macroeconomic stability. "It bolsters Pakistan's economic position to overcome immediate- to medium-term economic challenges, giving next government the fiscal space to chart the way forward," he added.

Hours before IMF board's decision, Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Ishaq Dar had confirmed that Pakistan had received one billion dollars from United Arab Emirates (UAE). He said the UAE had transferred one billion dollars to the account of the State Bank of Pakistan.

He said on behalf of the Prime Minister and the Army Chief, he was grateful to the UAE leadership for depositing one billion dollars to the State Bank of Pakistan's account.

Finance Minister Ishaq Dar said after receiving the amount from the UAE and Saudi Arabia, Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves have increased by 3 billion dollars in just two days.

The federal finance minister also confirmed that yesterday, two billion dollars were received from Saudi Arabia which supported the Pakistan economy. - NNI

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(29th of Zilhaj). Ashura, the tenth day of Muharram, is predicted to fall on Friday, July 28. In an official statement, the PM mentioned that the birth of the moon is scheduled for July 17 at 11:32pm. However, meteorological experts anticipate that a significant portion of the country may be covered with clouds during this time, which could hinder the visibility of the moon.

The sunset on July 18 is expected to occur at 7:24pm, and there is a possibility of the moon rising at 8pm on the same day. Nevertheless, the experts caution that many cities across the country might be shrouded in clouds, which could potentially affect the moon sighting.

To facilitate the moon sighting process, the Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee has scheduled a meeting in Quetta. The committee will be chaired by Maulana Abul Khabir Azad, who will lead the discussions and deliberations to determine the official sighting of the moon.

The sighting of the moon holds great importance for the Muslim community as it marks the beginning of the holy month of Muharram. This month is observed with reverence as Muslims commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Hussain (AS), the grandson of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (SAAW), during the Battle of Karbala.

The announcement by the PMD provides an initial prediction for the sighting of the moon, and the final decision will be made by the Central Ruet-e-Hilal Committee after the actual sighting is reported. The committee will rely on authentic reports and credible witnesses from various parts of the country to confirm the appearance of the new moon.

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He said the period of his government was a journey of moving from the destruction towards construction, economic stability, helping the flood affected people, providing maximum employment to the jobless and relief to the people hit by inflation, and revival of freedom of speech, media freedom and national integration.

He said the coalition parties sacrificed their policies for saving the country from default by taking the toughest decisions. "We always remained worried about increasing the foreign exchange reserves instead of thinking about our vote banks."

The prime minister said despite anti-state conspiracies, the government did not lose its heart and succeeded to reach a staff level agreement with the IMF.

"Today on behalf of the whole nation, I sincerely thank friendly and brotherly countries China, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE, which once again supported Pakistan with sincerity under very difficult situation and that can never be

forgotten," he added.

He said the way, Chinese President Xi Jinping, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and UAE President Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan played their role in bringing Pakistan out of the crisis was praiseworthy.

He said the way, Chinese President Xi Jinping, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and UAE President Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan played their role in bringing Pakistan out of the crisis was praiseworthy. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on the diplomatic front. Similarly, he also appreciated Finance Minister Ishaq Dar and Chief of the Army Staff General Syed Asim Munir for their untiring efforts to help stabilize the economy.

Now, he said, the time had come to regain the country's lost glory by moving forward with development and struggle. For that purpose, he added, a comprehensive national plan of economic revival had been finalized. The Special Investment Facilitation Council had been set up, which had initiated its work and was paving the way for big investments from the Gulf countries in various fields including agriculture, industry, energy, IT, defence production and minerals, he said.

He said the government assured the nation that on this national agenda, the federal government, all the provincial governments, and the armed forces were adopting the whole of the government approach to make it a success.

Expressing satisfaction over the overall economic situation, the prime minister said the trust of the business and investment communities was also reviving while the international rating agency Fitch had also improved Pakistan's rating to triple C.

Similarly, he said, the United Nations Human Rights Council had also testified the improving situation of human rights in Pakistan whereas the country had also showed improvement by seven points in the International Financial Review.

Shehbaz Sharif said when the staff level agreement with the IMF was announced on June 30, the investors expressed their full satisfaction through the Stock Exchange Market as the KSE-100 index jumped by record 2446 points in a single day.

Now the Stock Exchange had crossed the 45,000 points level which was the highest since 2010, he said adding that the value of Pakistani Rupee was also improving.

The prime minister said the Rs 1,150 billion historical development budget, Rs 2,000 billion agriculture development fund Kissan Package, conversion of agriculture tube wells to solar energy, Rs 80 billion Prime Minister Youth Programme, interest-free concessional loans in agriculture industry, IT and other sectors, provision of laptops to the talented students, educational scholarships, women empowerment, special scholarships to families of martyrs, and timely completion of infrastructural projects were few of the achievements of the incumbent government.

Resolving to break the country's dependence on loans and foreign grants, he said in his address at the PM Youth Loan and Laptop Scheme event here at the Bahaudin Zakariya University.

The IMF's executive board on Wednesday approved the \$US3 billion stand-by agreement for Pakistan to help overcome its current financial challenges.

The prime minister said though the country had averted the dangers of default, however, consistent efforts were required to stabilize the economy from external shocks.

He emphasized a united approach by all segments of the country including the government, the State institutions, and the nation to lead the country towards financial self-reliance.

"A nation, which learn from its mistakes and takes corrective measures, attain the goals of prosperity," he said.

Termining wish the future of Pakistan, he said the development policies must ensure their inclusion in national mainstream.

The government, he said, was pursuing the vision of encouraging the youth in educational and professional fields.

He appreciated the brilliant students who were focusing their energies on education with dedication and hard work.

He recalled establishing several Danish schools across Punjab and south Punjab for underprivileged students to help them excel.

The prime minister said contrary to nepotism, merit could help drive the students belonging to underprivileged backgrounds to achieve success in their fields.

He mentioned that due to the restraint of resources, only 100,000 laptops were being distributed under the programme and stressed the need for expanding the project to benefit a larger number of students.

PM Sharif pointed out that during the tenure of the previous government, the country's gross growth rate on a meager four percent mark which incurred big losses to economy.

He announced to increase in the number of laptops for students up to five million and set up a Medical City in Multan if their party came to power in the next general election.

He also announced the construction of a flyover at Shujaabad to facilitate the people of the area.

The prime minister on the occasion distributed laptops among the talented university students on merit and also gave away cheques of entrepreneurship loans to youth.

Governor Punjab Balighur Rehman, Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi, Information Minister Murrizy Aurangzeb, Special Assistant to PM Atta Tarar, Vice Chancellor Bahaudin Zakariya University Dr Asif Ali, and provincial government officials were present.

Meanwhile, President Islamic Development Bank (IDB) Dr. Sulaiman Al Jasser on Thursday assured Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to continue extending financial support to Pakistan.

He said Islamic Development Bank was an important partner of Pakistan, which helped it in difficult times.

The prime minister recalled his meeting with Sulaiman Jasser in France, and said Pakistan was keen to further strengthen its partnership with IDB.

He apprised the IDB president of the recently established Special Investment Facilitation Council for the promotion of investment in the country.

The body has been set up to increase investment in various sectors of the country.

The prime minister invited Dr. Sulaiman Al Jasser to visit Pakistan. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday directed completion of public welfare projects on priority basis and stressed that such programmes should be the best interest of people.

Speaking during his visit to the under-construction 500-bed Nishtar Hospital II, he said the public welfare projects suffered a major setback during the tenure of previous government.

The prime minister expressed satisfaction over the ongoing pace of construction work at the hospital, however regretted that the work on phase II of Nishtar Hospital was stopped during the government of Imran Khan.

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DIG (Op) Quetta Capt (Retd) Ghulam Azfar Mahesar hailed for excellent security of Quetta National Games



Khurram Jaffrani

KARACHI: President of Pakistan Olympic Association (POA), Lt. Gen. (R) Syed Arif Hasan, HI (M) awarded the Letter of Appreciation to the Deputy Inspector General (Operations) Quetta, Capt. (R) Ghulam Azfar Mahesar, PSP, for the successful conduct of 34th National Games 2023 at Quetta.

Appreciating DIG Ghulam Azfar

Mahesar for providing excellent security arrangements for the National Games, President POA, Lt. Gen. (R) Syed Arif Hasan said that the National Games were held in Quetta after 19 years in a conducive environment. Credit goes to DIG (Operations) Quetta, Capt. (R) Ghulam Azfar Mahesar, and his team who provided such a pleasant atmosphere with flawless security for the teams to perform their maximum without any fear or concern and a large number of people enjoyed the national games after so many years.

Commenting on this great achievement, the Deputy Inspector General (Operations) Quetta, Capt. (R) Ghulam Azfar Mahesar, PSP said, "I dedicate this achievement to the people of Quetta Police. I feel that it was impossible to organize this event without the support of the Chief Minister of Balochistan, Chief

Secretary, Inspector General of Police, Secretary of Sports, FC (North), and Commander 12 Corps. The grand event portrayed a soft image of Pakistan, and motivated the youth of Balochistan, to participate in sports instead of getting involved in negative activities. The event has changed the negative image of Pakistan in the regional and global community, showing the real face of Balochistan."

At least 87, including women and children, buried in Sudan mass grave: United Nations

Monitoring Desk
ISLAMABAD: The UN human rights office said on Thursday at least 87 people including women and children had been buried in a mass grave in Sudan's West Darfur, saying it had credible information they were killed by the country's Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

RSF officials denied any involvement, saying the paramilitary group was not a party to the conflict in West Darfur. Ethnically motivated bloodshed has escalated in recent weeks in step with fighting between rival military factions that erupted in April and has brought the country to the brink of civil war. In El Geneina, witnessed waves of attacks by the RSF and Arab militias against the non-Arab Masalit people, including shootings at close range.

"According to credible information gathered by the Office, those buried in the mass grave were killed by RSF and their allied militia around 13-21 June..." the UN statement said. Local people were forced to dispose of the bodies including those of women and children in the shallow grave in an open area near the city between June 20-21, it added. Some of the people had died from untreated injuries, it said. "I condemn in the strongest terms the killing of civilians and hors de combat individuals, and I am further appalled by the callous and disrespectful way the dead, along with their families and communities, were treated," said UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker

WTI nears \$76 on supply cuts, lower US inflation

ISLAMABAD: Crude oil prices continued to rise for a third session in a row on Thursday, fueled by planned supply cuts from major oil producers and lower-than-expected inflation data from the United States.

As of 1200 hours GMT, Brent, the international benchmark for two-thirds of the world's oil, gained \$0.31 (+0.39 percent) to reach \$80.42 a barrel. The West Texas Intermediate (WTI), the main oil benchmark for North America, went up by \$0.23 (+0.3 percent) to \$75.98 a barrel.

Similarly, the price of Russian Sokol increased by \$0.66 (+0.94 percent) to \$70.86. Arab

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BNP also not 'happy' over Dubai huddle

LAHORE: After Maulana Fazlur Rehman, another ally of the incumbent government, the Balochistan National Party-Mengal (BNP-M) has also raised 'objection' over the Dubai meeting between Pakistan People's Party and the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz Leadership.

In his exclusive interview with a private television channel Thursday, Balochistan National Party leader and State Minister Hashim Notezai said Maulana Fazlur Rehman's objection over the Dubai meeting between two big political parties was right, coalition partners should have been taken into confidence before the meeting. Hashim Notezai said

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UN experts slam Israel for forcibly evicting families in east Jerusalem

UNITED NATIONS: The forced eviction and displacement of the Ghaith-Sub Laban family and many other Palestinian families in east Jerusalem by Israel may amount to a war crime of forcible transfer and must be immediately reversed, UN experts have said.

In a statement issued Wednesday by the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR), the experts said it was "deeply shocking and heart-breaking" to see an elderly Palestinian couple, Nora Ghaith and Mustafa Sub Laban, evicted from their family home where they lived all their lives and raised their children.

"As we have repeatedly said, forced evictions of Palestinians in east Jerusalem are part of Israel's apartheid machinery at work, designed to consolidate Jewish ownership of Jerusalem and racially dominate the city's population," the experts, including

Francesca Albanese, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, said.

According to the news release, Israeli police evicted Nora Ghaith and Mustafa Sub Laban from their home in the Old City of Jerusalem in the early hours of 11 July.

The Ghaith-Sub Laban family, who had a protected

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Gold gains traction, rises by Rs4,000 per tola

ISLAMABAD: Gold prices in the local market gained traction on Thursday due to an overnight surge in prices in global markets, with the price of one tola of 24-karat gold rising to Rs208,000.

Gold prices picked an upward trajectory in Pakistan, a day after dropping in the local market. Gold prices in global markets rose around one percent a day earlier due to lower than expected inflation figures in the United States. As the local market was closed at that time due to

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Lahore court acquits 12 TLP workers arrested for arson and vandalism

LAHORE: An anti-terrorism court (ATC) in Lahore on Thursday acquitted 12 workers of Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) in the case of arson and vandalism.

"The prosecution could not prove the charges against the accused," the court stated.

TLP Northern Punjab Nazim-e-A'ala Usman Muzaffar and others including Allama Sagheer Ahmed, Salman Jameel, Timur Khan, Majid Ali, Muhammad Nadeem, Muhammad Afzal, Muhammad Hanif and Muhammad Arshad

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Couple shot dead within Lahore court premises

Monitoring Desk
ISLAMABAD: A man and a woman were shot dead allegedly by the opposing party as they appeared before a local court in Lahore on Thursday.

The victims were identified by authorities as Sughra Bibi and Muhammad Amin. They had appeared in the Lahore session court today ahead of a hearing when armed men opened fire at them. The motive of the fatal shooting is yet to be determined.

Notably, both victims were in court due to an ongoing case where three members of their family had been killed allegedly over a property dispute.

Last year, a two-month-old girl was strangled to death and her father and mother were slaugh-

tered in the washroom of their residence with their hands cuffed behind their backs in Lahore by unidentified suspects.

According to police officials, 33-year-old advocate Amanat Ali and his family were murdered in their own home in a private housing society within the limits of Chung police station.

However, the elderly mother of Amanat, who was also present in the house at the time of the incident, was not hurt by the unidentified assailants.

Police officials had also been taking into account the alleged involvement of Amanat's brother Ameen, one of the victims of today's shooting, in the gruesome triple murder case. Ameen had failed to show up at the

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Pakistan's Shaheens to face Nepal today

ISLAMABAD: Defending champions Pakistan Shaheens would all set to open their campaign in the ACC Men's Emerging Teams Asia Cup when they take on Nepal at the Colombo Cricket Club Ground in Sri Lanka on Friday.

The eight teams in the 50-over tournament are divided into two pools. Afghanistan A, Bangladesh A, Oman A and Sri Lanka A are a part of Group A, while Pakistan Shaheens along with India A, Nepal and UAE A are in Group B.

After taking on Nepal, Mohammad Harris-led Shaheens

would take on UAE A on July 17 at the P Saravanamuttu Stadium, while their last group match will be against India A on July 19 at the R Premadasa International Cricket Stadium. Top two teams from each group will qualify for the semi-finals which will be played on July 21. The final of the tournament will take place on July 23.

Before arriving in Colombo on Tuesday night, Shaheens were involved in a six-day training camp at Lahore's National Cricket Academy. They also underwent two-day

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Manzar Naqvi



4th and the last day at Tehran

The Central Library and Documentation Center of the University of Tehran

On the 4th day in Tehran our first rather all visits were exciting throughout the day. The first visit was to Tehran University fulfilling my cherished desire to see this place as the Islamic Revolution of Iran started from there. We reached the University with our Protocol Officer Ali Fatmi. At UT, Yazdan Yar Protocol Officer International Affairs received and welcomed us and took us to The Central Library and Documentation Center of the University of Tehran. We were shown to the offices of President of the Library Fatemeh Saghaifi where she along with Dr Ali Shahidi Advisor for International Affairs and Prof. Nadir Naqshineh Head of Digital Restoration briefed us about the library which is a prominent and comprehensive resource hub for students, researchers, and scholars.

It serves as the main library for the University and plays a vital role in supporting academic pursuits and promoting knowledge dissemination. They informed us in the briefing that the library has over 1.5 million books including from 6th Hijrah in original shape, 17000 hand written Quran, over 700 books related to Pakistan and

sections are active. Dr Saghaifi informed us that before the Islamic revolution the library used by an average of 4,000 persons but after the revolution now it is being used by 70,000 persons.

Dr Saghaifi after the briefing took us on the round of different sections including Allama Iqbal sections. After the visit Dr Saghaifi presented us a book "Bagh-e-Danish" about the Tehran University. The Central Library is a spacious and modern facility equipped with extensive collections of books, journals, research papers, and other academic resources. It houses a vast array of materials across various disciplines, catering to the diverse academic needs of the



University's faculty and students. I will share our detailed experience of this library later. It's a daily diary that cannot cover the details.

After the visit of TU Library, Dr Ali Shahidi along with Yazdan took us to the Literature and Humanities Department of the University where along with Dr Ali Shahidi he gave us a detailed presentation accompanied by eight Deans of different Departments.

They informed us that the University of Tehran, located in Tehran, Iran, is one of the oldest and most prestigious institutions of higher education in the country. Established in 1934, it has a rich history of academic excellence and has played a pivotal role in shaping Iran's intellectual landscape. The university is known for its comprehensive range of disciplines, offering a wide array of undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral programs. It encompasses 45 faculties, including Humanities, Science, Engineering, Social Sciences, and Medicine, among oth-



ers. With over 70,000 students enrolled, the University of Tehran provides a vibrant and diverse academic community, and over 8000 are foreign student. It has over 3000 faculty members. The faculty members at the University of Tehran are highly accomplished scholars, renowned for their contributions to research and innovation. The University boasts state-of-the-art research facilities and laboratories, fostering an environment conducive to groundbreaking discoveries and advancements across various fields. We will share briefing details in our forthcoming columns in detail. After the briefing, Dr Shahidi took us to Firdousi Auditorium where Rustum and Sohrab paintings are fixed on the wall and it was discovered by Dr Ali Shahidi that father of Sohrab, Rustam was from Sindh province. After the visit at the outside of this Department a big stone statue of Firdousi was inducted which was presented to the University by an Indian from Parsi Religion?

The Iqtidar Museum

After the Tehran University, we came back to the hotel for lunch while Ali Fatmi joined protocol duties for another delegation from Kyrgyzstan and Muhammad Reza who is bank of information of all places in Iran took us to more exciting visit to the Iqtidar Museum which is a prominent cultural institution in Iran that showcases the rich history and heritage of the country. Established in 1977, the museum is dedicated to preserving and exhibiting a diverse collection of artifacts, artworks, and historical objects spanning several millennia.

We saw the defence portion of this biggest museum where different missiles, aircraft, drones, helicopters, tanks and various defence related original productions of Iran were placed. It was amazing that Iranian scientists made these all after under continuous US sanctions. What an achievement of Iranian especially in science, technology and defence productions.

DIARY FROM IRAN

Iran Mall: A Window into Luxury and Entertainment in Tehran

After the visit of Iqtidar, we headed to yet another most exciting place for the day's visit. It was Iran Mall where Morteza Ghoghroui Director PR along with other members of the management received, briefed and entertained us and then took us to this amazing Mall of Iran which indicates that now Iran is emerging as a big economy and is far ahead in science, technology and education etc. as compared to many nations.

Iran Mall is the largest shopping mall in Iran and one of the largest in the world. Its grand architecture combines traditional Persian elements with modern aesthetics, creating a visually stunning environment. Covering over 1.4 million square meters, the mall offers a world-class shopping experience with high-end international and domestic brands.

Beyond shopping, Iran Mall provides diverse entertainment options. It features a state-of-the-art cineplex, an amusement park with thrilling rides, and hosts cultural exhibitions and events. Visitors can indulge in gastronomic delights at the mall's restaurants, cafes, and food courts, offering both local and international cuisines.

The mall also caters to wellness needs with fitness centers, spas, and wellness facilities. It fosters a community atmosphere with beautifully landscaped gardens, outdoor seating areas, and play zones for families to enjoy.

Iran Mall is a symbol of Iran's aspirations for modernity and luxury. It attracts both local residents and international visitors, leaving them with lasting memories of grandeur and sophistication.

