



Potential to unlock new regional connectivity, opportunities and expressed optimism that exports will receive a significant boost through Gwadar Port, particularly as China relocates its industries to Pakistan

Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs
Kaiser Ahmed Sheikh

/asian_telegraph

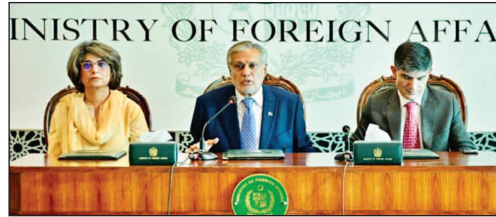
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Price Rs 8 | Pages 4

DPM Dar felicitates nation on successful conclusion of SCO CHG conference



ISLAMABAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar on Thursday felicitated the nation on the successful conclusion of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Council of Heads of Government (CHG) meeting held in Islamabad. "As our guests depart Islamabad after attending the 23rd Meeting of the SCO Council of the Heads of Government, I wish to congratulate the Pakistani nation on the successful conclusion of the Conference and thank all the Government departments/officials/bodies for their valuable contributions in making the event memorable," the Deputy PM wrote on his official X account. With the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the lead, he said ministers and officials from the ministries of interior and information, Capital Development Authority, and leadership of our security and law enforcement authorities, gave their best and fullest support. "Very proud of the entire Pakistan Team for making the event a great success, Alhamdulillah," he remarked. Meanwhile, in his address to the officers of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the occasion of the Foreign Service of Pakistan Day, the deputy prime minister applauded the dedication and commitment of the Foreign Service of Pakistan and the invaluable contributions of Pakistani diplomats. He particularly appreciated their role in successfully organizing the 23rd SCO Council of Heads of Government Meeting in Islamabad.

PNS ZULFIQUAR seizes 1.3 tons of narcotics during focused operation Himalayan Spirit



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Navy Ship (PNS) ZULFIQUAR, while participating in Focused Operation HIMALAYAN SPIRIT, successfully interdicted a vessel carrying 1.3 tons of Hashish in the North Arabian Sea.

Continued on Page 4

No non-Pakistani issued any CNIC or passport, stringent verification guards in place: Attaullah Tarar

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Attaullah Tarar on Thursday informed the lower house of the Parliament that stringent data verification guards were in place and no non-Pakistani had been issued any CNIC or passport. He was responding to the queries of Member National Assembly (MNA), Sehar Karman and MNA, Noor Alam Khan raising concerns over alleged illegal issuance of Pakistani CNICs and passports to Afghan nationals. Attaullah Tarar informed the House that there had been new scanners and latest machines installed at Passport offices across the country whereas the entire system was streamlined to ensure better and foolproof facilities. "Three-tier scrutiny of Afghan nationals' documents for passport that are mandatory for attestation from a gazetted officer, re-verification of the attestation issuing authority and before final issuance of the passport of CNIC, the data of the applicant is confirmed through the Family Registration Certificate (FRC) data of NADRA," he said.

He said that not only passports but also NADRA data computability were being appropriately checked. The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) is taking up proper investigations into the matters pertaining to issuance of CNICs to non-Pakistanis where if the movers have any information against private rackets it should be shared to the relevant forum for proper action, the Minister said. "Verification steps have been increased and every document is meticulously verified. The applicant has to provide proper proofs of residence. NADRA has one of the most technologically verified databases. Many departments are using NADRA data for face-verification and other data confirmations," Tarar said. The Speaker National Assembly pointed out that some NADRA officials were previously arrested for lapses and hoped that no such issue would recur. Speaker Ayaz Sadiq directed MNA Noor Alam to provide him the lists of the suspected individuals that would be shared with the Interior Ministry. APP



ISLAMABAD: The Prime Minister of Mongolia H. E. Luvsannamsrain Oyun-Erdene along with a delegation meets Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif.

PM reiterates Pakistan's commitment to promote SCO's development priorities

Pakistan, Mongolia agree to form JMC, inter-parliamentary union to boost cooperation

VOM Report

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday met SCO Secretary-General Zhang Ming wherein he reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to work wholeheartedly for promotion of the organization's development priorities for the benefit of all its member states and the wider region. In the meeting held on the sidelines of the 23rd meeting of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Council of Heads of Government (CHG), the prime minister stressed that Pakistan stood ready to work with SCO member states to make the organization more effective and stronger. Recalling Secretary-General Ming's earlier visit to Pakistan in July 2022, Prime Minister Shehbaz welcomed him in Islamabad and thanked him for the support extended by the SCO Secretariat to Pakistan in organization of the SCO CHG Meeting. He also thanked Zhang Ming for his dedication and outstanding services as the outgoing Secretary-General of SCO and wished him every success in his future endeavours. Zhang Ming warmly felicitated the prime minister on the successful organization of the SCO CHG Meeting and its positive outcome.



He appreciated Pakistan's constructive contributions to SCO's work and activities across all domains and expressed satisfaction over Pakistan's leadership role as SCO CHG Chair. Meanwhile, Pakistan and Mongolia on Thursday agreed to form a Joint Ministerial Commission to enhance cooperation in trade, tourism, agriculture and mining sectors, and an inter-parliamentary union to expand the bilateral parliamentary ties. The bilateral relations were discussed in a meeting between Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and his Mongolian counterpart Luvsannamsrain Oyun-Erdene here on the sidelines of the SCO Council of Heads of Government (CHG) Meeting, according to a PM Office press release. In the meeting, Prime Minister Shehbaz suggested that both sides should explore new

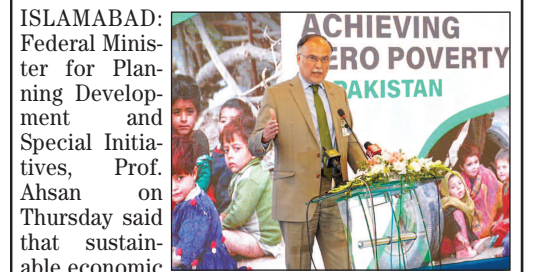
avenues of mutually advantageous cooperation with a particular focus on trade, investment, people-to-people contacts and connections.

He offered the Mongolian side to send civil servants to training institutions in Pakistan and also proposed to declare 2025 as the year of Pakistan-Mongolia Friendship to bolster the brotherly ties between the two countries.

Prime Minister Shehbaz warmly welcomed Prime Minister Oyun-Erdene and noted that his visit marked a new chapter in the history of the bilateral relationship, defined by mutual respect, goodwill and amity. Felicitating him on his re-election as the Prime Minister of Mongolia, Shehbaz Sharif stated he looked forward to working closely with Oyun-Erdene in the days ahead to further strengthen cooperation between the two countries.

Oyun-Erdene warmly felicitated the prime minister on the successful conduct of the SCO CHG Meeting and appreciated Pakistan's leadership role as SCO CHG Chair. He reciprocated that Mongolia shared Pakistan's desire to build stronger and closer bilateral relations through joint efforts and collaboration. The Mongolian prime minister also planted a sapling in the lawn of the Prime Minister's House.

Sustainable economic development must eradicate inequality, poverty: Ahsan Iqbal



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning Development and Special Initiatives, Prof. Ahsan Iqbal on Thursday said that sustainable economic development is essential for eradicating poverty and economic empowerment in the country. Wealth creation, equal distribution of wealth, and economic competitiveness in society are necessary to eradicate poverty and sustainable economic development in the country, the minister said.

The Federal Minister for Planning Development and Special Initiatives said this while chairing a roundtable consultation on Targeting Zero poverty, here in the auditorium of Planning Development and Special Initiatives.

The minister said that quality education, gender equality and maintaining peace and justice in the society must be for sustainable economic development and prosperity in the country.

Meanwhile, he announced a task force for sustainable economic development and to eradicate poverty to remove inequality in the country.

Ahsan Iqbal said that this is the era of economic ideologies and the world is now distributed in geo-economic blocks and technology and export-driven economies are performing in the modern world.

He said that data science and technology play a significant role in the economic development of modern states and countries to achieve sustainable development through competitiveness and productivity.

The planning minister said the government is committed to empowering the common man and removing poverty from society by following sustainable development goals. He said that eradication of poverty is the major agenda of the incumbent government to provide modern education and health facilities to the people to achieve the agenda of economic prosperity in the country. The Minister said that Public, and private sector collaboration must be for sustainable economic development in the country and to remove inequality.

Rajarasti to Umerkot road to be built on priority: Senate told

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Communication Abdul Aleem Khan on Thursday informed the Senate that it was the priority of the government to build financially viable road from Rajarasti to Umerkot.

Responding to a calling attention notice about inordinate delay in completion of road from Rajarasti to Umerkot raised by Senator Poonjo, the minister said that due to court case, the project was delayed. However, he assured that he would personally look into it and expedite the work.

He said no efforts would be spared for the construction of Sukkur-Hyderabad (M-6) Motorway. APP

Pakistan's hospitality wins hearts at SCO summit

ISLAMABAD: Spokesperson for Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ambassador Mumtaz Zahra Baloch Thursday expressed her delight over the successful SCO summit and praised the gracious manner in which it was conducted. In her exclusive talk with a private news channel, she noted that leaders of all SCO member states took to social media to express their gratitude and appreciation for Pakistan's traditional hospitality, showcasing the country's renowned warmth and welcoming nature.

She explained, "Pakistan has received widespread praise for hosting a successful Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit, which took place in Islamabad from October 15-16." The event brought together leaders from various member states, including China, India, Russia, and Uzbekistan, to discuss regional cooperation and security, she highlighted. According to Ambassador Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, the summit was a diplomatic triumph for Pakistan, showcasing the country's traditional hospitality and commitment to fostering strong regional ties. Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar also expressed gratitude to Pakistani Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar and the people of Pakistan for the warm welcome he received at the multilateral conference, she mentioned.

"This gesture acknowledges Pakistan's hospitality during the recent Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit in Islamabad," she added. DNA

Finance Minister briefs US Ambassador on key reforms

ISLAMABAD: Federal Finance and Revenue Minister Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb has reiterated the government's resolve to carry on with broad-based reforms on taxation, energy and SOE fronts. He said the government was committed to raising the country's tax to GDP ratio to 13.5 per cent by plugging leakages and bringing untaxed sectors in the net. He said the government under Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif had approved a comprehensive transformation plan for FBR and brought in experts on the Board of PRAL (IT arm of FBR). The Minister was talking to U.S. Ambassador Donald Blome who called on him at the Finance Division today. During the meeting, matters of mutual interest and bilateral cooperation were discussed. Senator Muhammad Aurangzeb called the macroeconomic reforms "work in progress" and pointed to more serious challenges of climate change and child stunting which threatened to perpetuate inequalities and disrupt the pace of economic growth and stability in



Pakistan over the medium to long term.

He said Pakistan looked forward to building climate resilience through adaptation reforms and averting malnutrition with the technical and financial support of development partners for ensuring holistic development goals. U.S. Ambassador Donald Blome appreciated Pakistan's efforts for improving macroeconomic stability and lauded the government for initiating challenging and bold reforms, particularly in the taxation and energy sectors. He reaffirmed his commitment to enhancing bilateral cooperation in technical and development initiatives, and promoting high-quality US investment for economic growth of Pakistan. DNA

Mohsin appreciates security agencies for ensuring security of SCO summit

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi publicly acknowledged the invaluable contributions of various security agencies for their role in ensuring the successful and secure conduct of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Summit in Islamabad on October 15-16.

The summit, which gathered leaders and representatives from several member states, was marked by high-profile discussions aimed at enhancing regional cooperation and addressing pressing global issues.

Recognizing the extensive efforts involved, Naqvi commended the Pak Army, Islamabad police, and the Civil Administration of Islamabad, along-



side the dedicated personnel of Sindh and Punjab Rangers, Punjab Police, Frontier Constabulary, and Sindh Police. In a press conference held shortly after the summit, Naqvi expressed,

"Your unwavering dedication and commitment to security have not only ensured the smooth conduct of this prestigious event but also showcased Pakistan's readiness to foster international cooperation and regional peace"

"Your unwavering dedication and commitment to security have not only ensured the smooth conduct of this prestigious event but also showcased Pakistan's readiness to foster international cooperation and regional peace."

The security operation for the SCO Summit was meticulously planned, involving thousands of personnel from multiple agencies who worked in tandem to create a secure environment for dignitaries and delegates. Enhanced surveillance, road closures,

and security checkpoints were part of the comprehensive strategy that led to the event's success, with no security incidents reported. Naqvi highlighted that the collaboration among the various security forces exemplifies a unified approach to national security, which is crucial for hosting international events.

He noted that such cooperation is essential for building trust and stability in the region, an objective that aligns with Pakistan's strategic goals. As the summit concluded, leaders expressed their appreciation for Pakistan's hospitality and organizational capabilities, further solidifying the country's role as a pivotal player in

regional diplomacy.

The Interior Minister's acknowledgment not only reflects the government's appreciation for the hard work of these agencies but also emphasizes Pakistan's commitment to maintaining a secure environment for future international engagements.

In the end, Naqvi reiterated, "Let us continue to work together to ensure that our nation remains a beacon of peace and cooperation on the global stage." The successful execution of the SCO summit stands as a testament to Pakistan's capabilities in managing high-stakes events while reinforcing the significance of security and collaboration among its various forces, he added. APP

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The media and the spectacle

HUSSAIN H ZAIDI

In the age of information, the media has emerged as one of the most powerful pillars of society. The media not only presents facts but also shapes the perspective from which the facts are seen and interpreted. At the other end of the scale, the way the media works is itself shaped by social norms and constrained or encouraged by political control or lack of it. Some of the distinct currents of thought in our society have shaped the workings of the media. The most obvious of these is the primary mode of thinking and analysis, which is unscientific. Science is a body of knowledge but more than that it's a way of thinking. The scientific mode of thinking has two key characteristics. First, don't accept a notion unless there is incontrovertible evidence in support of it – 'empiricism', as it's called. The only basis of a scientific statement is facts and not preconceived notions, prejudices or biases. A scientist is always prepared to have his/her theories tested. In case fresh evidence crops up, which can't be accounted for by the theory of the day, it's the theory and not the evidence that's set aside. Scientists are primarily interested in going back to the roots of the problem at hand, dissecting and understanding it – 'rationalism', as it's called. Apportioning blame or praise, declaring people wicked or pious, angels or demons is their least concern. This is logical because if we don't understand a problem, we can't legitimately hope to do anything about it. From the scientific standpoint, the only purpose of debate and discourse is to arrive at an enhanced understanding of the issues on hand; not to make a parade of our knowledge, piety, patriotism, or other such virtues, and demonstrate that the other side is totally bereft of these. A genuine thinker is always prepared to appreciate perspectives different from his/hers, knowing that in most cases the truth is too complex to be encompassed in simple, sweeping, eye-catching, headline-making statements. It follows that the participants in a dialogue needn't be considered adversaries. Even if they are poles apart, they are helping the audience or readers look at a matter from divergent angles. The dominant mode of thinking in our society leaves little room for painstaking research, making generalisations only on the basis of sufficient evidence, the ability to question our own assumptions in the face of facts, and a willingness to appreciate the other's viewpoint. Every dialogue is seen as a polemic, where one side must beat the other. Every debate is regarded as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to establish our moral and intellectual superiority over others. Every discourse is considered to be an exercise in painting the 'opponent' in the darkest of colours. Such characteristics were always present in our society. However, in recent years, which coincide with the expansion of electronic media, they were propped up immeasurably by the corruption narrative, which swept the society, particularly the young generation, off its feet. The narrative rigidly compartmentalised both society and politics into angels and demons, saints and sinners. As the virtuous see themselves as being a messianic mission to set up a heaven on earth by annihilating the wicked, a dialogue between the two isn't possible – nay it's a sin. 'Innocent unless proven guilty' is the fundamental legal norm in all civilised societies. However, this golden percept is turned on its head in a sanctimonious society, where 'others' are treated as guilty unless they prove themselves innocent to the satisfaction of the virtuous. In a civilised society, a distinction is made between an accused and a culprit. If you are charged with a crime, say theft, the prosecution has to establish beyond reasonable doubt the veracity of the charges against you. Only after you have been convicted in a fair trial done by a duly constituted court, are you declared a culprit. But in the eye of the self-righteous, mere allegations or perceptions are sufficient to make you an offender. These currents of thought have decidedly contributed to the emergence of anchorpersons as an elite on the national scene. Every late evening, these media persons hold their on-camera court. In many cases, armed with only a scrap of knowledge but an inflated ego and the ability to give anyone – with few typical exceptions of course – a rap on the knuckles, they relish delving into the most intricate matters and determining their legality, constitutionality, and consequentiality. It is in the talk shows that ministers and public officials are grilled – as if they were in the dock – and after a summary trial certificates of competence or incompetence, culpability or innocence, negligence or diligence are awarded; and a final verdict on the fate of democracy, economy, society and regional and global politics is handed down. If you fail to come clean before a self-styled truth-intoxicated anchor, you're presumed guilty of a grave act of omission or commission. Not surprisingly, the new elite are courted by politicians, businesspersons and bureaucrats, many of whom have a skeleton or two in the cupboard. No one wishes to land by a freak of fate on a well-known anchor's wrong side. Arguably, the most sought-after spectacle in a talk show is two politicians – typically one representing the government and the other the opposition – being at loggerheads. For each guest, the other is the villain of the piece. The anchor, with a supercilious smile playing on his/her lips, gives each the complete licence to wade into the character and antecedents of the other. After the audience has got a glimpse of the diabolical credentials of both guests and is convinced beyond a shadow of a doubt that each is an evil incarnate, the host winds up the programme with a split verdict, leaving it to a befuddled audience to make their own mind as to who's the lesser evil. But the average viewer is seldom interested in the truth. For them, the whole exercise, like a cockfight, performs primarily an entertaining function. The channel management knows this and so do the sparring politicians, who as soon as they are off camera, turn swords into ploughshares until they meet again.

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DR. MAJID RAFIZADEH

Syria at risk of being dragged into regional war

The ongoing Israeli war on Hezbollah in Lebanon poses a critical question: Will Syria be drawn into this conflict as it escalates? As the violence intensifies, the geographical proximity of Syria to Lebanon makes it almost inevitable that events in the latter will affect the former. Historically, Lebanon and Syria appear to have had intertwined fates, politically, economically and socially, due to their shared border and cultural ties. This raises concerns that the current conflict in Lebanon could spread across the border, especially given the complex alliances and rivalries in the region, which involve not just local actors but also global powers like Iran, the US and Russia. Conflicts in Syria and Lebanon have often spilled over from one to the other, especially during times of civil strife. The Syrian civil war, for instance, had devastating effects on Lebanon, causing severe economic strain and altering the social fabric. Over the past decade, Lebanon has absorbed nearly 1.5 million Syrian refugees, placing enormous strain on its infrastructure and public services. Now, as violence erupts in Lebanon, the reverse could happen, with refugees flooding into Syria, further destabilizing this already fragile country. The social, economic and political ramifications of this are vast and Syria is unlikely to escape the fallout if this conflict worsens. Israel's war against Hezbollah is already having a significant impact on Syria, though it has not yet drawn

the country into direct conflict. One of the first effects is an influx of refugees, with more than 250,000 Lebanese civilians reportedly fleeing to Syria. For a country still recovering from a brutal civil war, this influx exacerbates Syria's already dire humanitarian crisis. In addition to this, Israel has launched multiple airstrikes into Syrian territory, targeting locations said to be linked to Hezbollah and Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. So far, the Damascus government has limited its response to condemning these strikes verbally, avoiding military retaliation. However, continued Israeli military operations in Syrian airspace could eventually provoke a stronger reaction, pushing Syria closer to open involvement in the conflict. From the perspective of the Syrian leadership, directly entering the conflict in Lebanon would not serve its strategic interests. The Syrian state is still grappling with its own internal challenges, including the fact that its authority remains contested in some areas. The government appears to be focused on consolidating its power internally and engaging in a war with Israel could unravel the fragile gains it has made since the end of large-scale civil war. Furthermore, Syria is not yet fully stable, with much of the country still under reconstruction and grappling with international sanctions, making any involvement in a regional war a potentially catastrophic miscalculation. There are several other reasons why Syria is likely to avoid entering a direct military confrontation with Israel. From an economic perspective, Syria is struggling to rebuild after years of war and another mili-

tary conflict could crush what little recovery is underway. Militarily, Syria is no match for Israel's sophisticated and well-funded defense forces. While Syria does maintain a military presence and it has some alliances with Hezbollah and Iran, its capabilities are nowhere near those of Israel. Moreover, the Syrian government is aware that a war could lead to renewed insurgencies within its own borders. Some groups could use the chaos of war as an opportunity to regroup and challenge the government's rule once again, risking a return to civil war conditions. In addition, history has shown that Syria tends to avoid direct involvement in conflicts between Israel and Hezbollah. In the 2006 war between Hezbollah and Israel, Syria refrained from entering the fray, even though it supported Hezbollah diplomatically and logistically. This strategic neutrality allowed Syria to avoid the devastating consequences of direct warfare with Israel. It is likely that the same approach will be followed now. However, the influx of refugees from Lebanon is already taking a toll on Syria's fragile stability. With more than 250,000 Lebanese refugees entering Syrian territory, the already stretched resources of the country are being tested. In a country that has not yet fully recovered from its own refugee crisis during the civil war, this new wave of displaced people could further destabilize Syria's economy, weaken public services and strain social cohesion. The country's infrastructure is still fragile and the addition of a large refugee population could exacerbate existing vulnerabilities, potentially leading to

unrest. It is also important to point out that wars are inherently unpredictable and, while Syria may not be directly involved in the conflict with Israel at the moment, there is always the possibility that the war in Lebanon could fully spill over into Syrian territory. Moreover, Syria could become a battleground for proxy conflicts between Israel and Iran. Instead of engaging in direct warfare with Israel, Iran may opt to use Syrian territory as a staging ground for attacks against Israeli targets, further entangling Syria in the conflict. Such a scenario could inadvertently draw Damascus deeper into the war, even if the government tries to avoid it. In conclusion, while Israel's war on Hezbollah will most likely have a negative impact on Syria, it is expected to continue avoiding direct military involvement. Engaging in a war with Israel does not serve Syria's interests at this time. The country is still recovering from its civil war and its military and economic capabilities are too weak to handle a full-scale regional conflict. However, the ongoing war in Lebanon and the influx of refugees could create spillover effects that Syria cannot ignore, potentially drawing the country into a wider conflict against its will. The region remains volatile and the situation could rapidly change depending on how the war evolves and how external actors like Iran and Israel choose to maneuver within this complex geopolitical landscape.

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Disclaimer: Views expressed by writers in this section are their own and do not necessarily reflect The Asian Telegraph's point-of-view

Today in History

History of Pakistan



Nonetheless, the PML-N conceded, allowing Khan to seek a coalition and become prime minister. Under Khan, Pakistan saw significant developments in its foreign relations. Just weeks into his premiership, the United States decided to withhold \$300 million in promised military aid, saying that the country had not done enough to fight terrorism. Relations improved, however, and the aid was restored the following year, after Pakistan made successful efforts to pressure the Taliban in Afghanistan into peace talks. Afghanistan's central government initially thanked Pakistan for its efforts, but diplomatic relations soured after comments by Khan undermined the authority of the Afghan central government. Tensions with India over Kashmir came to a head in February 2019,

after a suicide bombing there resulted in the deaths of 40 Indian security personnel. When a militant group believed to operate illegally in Pakistan took credit for the attack, the Indian Air Force conducted air strikes in Pakistan for the first time in five decades. Though India claimed it had destroyed a large training camp belonging to the militant group, Pakistan denied that any such camp had existed and said that India had struck an empty field instead. The next day Pakistan shot down two fighter jets from India and captured a pilot, who was soon returned to India. Despite the skirmishes, the two countries seemed to avoid further escalating the situation. Pakistan, meanwhile, began a crackdown on militants, arresting suspected militants, shutting down a large number of religious schools, and announcing its intent to

update existing laws according to international standards. Meanwhile, Khan faced a looming debt crisis. Pakistan's debt commitments had ballooned over the years preceding his term in office, not least due to the CPEC project financed by loans from China; Pakistan's first repayments were due to begin in 2019. Khan had campaigned on promises of increased welfare and against seeking intervention from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), whose lending conditions often required austerity measures and whose previous dozen packages to Pakistan had failed to solve the country's macroeconomic problems. Indeed, he began his premiership seeking aid from allies rather than from the IMF. In October 2018, having failed to secure foreign aid from allies, Pakistan requested \$12 billion in emergency lending from

the IMF. Khan continued to seek foreign aid, however, and reached investment arrangements with China in December and with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates in January 2019. With the advent of the global COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, Khan was reluctant to implement a lockdown on the country's already ailing economy. In Sindh, the province most affected by the pandemic and the only province whose government was not led by either the PTI or an allied party, a strict lockdown was implemented on March 23. As the pandemic worsened across the country, a nationwide lockdown was eventually imposed at the beginning of April until early May, when restrictions began to be lifted in phases.

To be continued....

Showbiz

Keri Russell weighs in on being a Hollywood actress

Keri Russell opens up about the 'worst' part of working in entertainment industry as an actress

Keri Russell has recently weighed in on being a Hollywood actress after gaining fame in the mid 1990s. "I hate being watched," said The Diplomat star in a new interview with Variety. Keri told the outlet, "Oh my God, it's the worst." "I had to do two photo shoots last week, so I had to drink a beer. I'm like, 'Oh my God, they're gonna be watching me.' It's my nightmare," stated the Austenland actress. To note, Keri rose to fame for her role in Felicity, which was premiered in 1998 and ran for four seasons, and ended in 2002.



Back in 2013, the actress returned to TV as Elizabeth Jennings in The Americans series. Elsewhere in the interview, Keri disclosed that she felt "comfortable" on the set of Felicity despite being a "nervous performer." "A gift about that show, and a little bit 'The Diplomat' too, is I got to wear these big baggy sweaters, and I hardly wore any makeup," noted the actress. She explained, "Don't get me wrong, I love the beauty of women, too, and I like dressing up, and I like, you know, wearing makeup when I need to."

Tech

Nasa offers \$3m to anyone with practical solution to THIS space problem

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (Nasa) is offering \$3 million in cash prizes to anyone who can solve a space-related problem, amid a flurry of challenges currently faced by the agency in outer space. With a project that would see people on the moon once more, Nasa is pressing ahead as its first crew, in over 50 years, is set to land on its surface in September 2026, which will see the first woman and the first person of colour on the moon. Despite having worked out how to get people to the moon by now, the United States-based space agency needs help developing new ways to process different types of waste, including old clothing and food packaging, according to UNILAD. Amy Kaminski, program executive for Nasa's Prizes, Challenges, and Crowdsourcing program, said: "Operating sustainably is an important consideration for NASA as we make discoveries and conduct research both away from home and on Earth. "With this challenge, we are seeking the public's innovative approaches to waste manage-



ment on the Moon and aim to take lessons learned back to Earth for the benefit of all." Nasa hopes to combat their problem with the recently announced LunaRecycle Challenge, a two-phase competition people can enter to help the space agency be more sustainable when it comes to space missions. The challenge manager of the scheme and acting programme manager for NASA's Centennial Challenges, Kim Krome, added: "I am pleased that NASA's LunaRecycle Challenge will contribute to solutions pertaining to technological needs within advanced manufacturing and habitats."

Health

Less sodium in fast foods could cut heart disease risk for New Zealanders

New Zealand adults are eating, on average, far more salt daily than international recommendations; however, takeaways frequently do not display salt content. New Zealanders over 15 years consume around 3,000mg of sodium per day, compared with the World Health Organization's upper limit of 2,000mg (or one tsp of salt) per day. Under the Food Standards Code, it is mandatory to provide nutrition information for packaged foods, but there are no such regulations for fast food, say public health researchers at the University of Auckland, Waipapa Taumata Rau in a new study. Dietary sodium comes chiefly from salt. The researchers are calling for a national sodium-reduction strategy but say a key first step would be mandatory labeling of the sodium content in takeaway meals.

"A single serve of a burger or takeout sandwich with fries can easily provide more than the recommended daily upper limit for sodium [dietary salt] of 2,000mg," says Associate Professor Helen Eyles from the School of Population Health in Waipapa Taumata Rau, University of Auckland. In 2020, the average NZ household spent a third (29%) of its weekly food budget on restaurant meals and takeaways. Of 28 major fast-food chains, with more than 20 outlets, reviewed in 2020, ten did not provide information on the sodium content of their products. Of 5,246 products checked, only one-third provided sodium data for consumers, according to the research published in the Journal of Nutritional Science. This is despite salt being a significant contributor to heart disease. Excess sodium (salt) consumption leads to raised blood pressure, which in turn can

lead to stroke, heart attack, and other types of heart disease, the leading causes of preventable mortality in New Zealand and globally. New Zealand has committed to a 30% relative reduction in mean population sodium intake by 2025, as part of the WHO Global Action Plan for reducing non-communicable diseases, which it is unlikely to achieve. The countries that are doing the best in sodium reduction have a national sodium reduction strategy and a multipronged approach – it is not just about fast food but packaged food too, Eyles says. In addition to setting benchmarks for processed foods, a strategy would include a consumer awareness campaign, improved labeling of salt in foods, and monitoring of the food environment alongside population salt intake, says Shona Gomes, whose masters research on target development informed the new paper.



Ayaz congratulates KP Speaker, members on passage of Service Bill

ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq has extended his heartfelt congratulations to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provincial Assembly on the unanimous passage of the "Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provincial Assembly Secretariat Employees Terms and Conditions of Service Bill 2024."

The bill marked a significant milestone in the legislative history of the province, turning fifty years of parliamentary aspirations into reality.

In a letter addressed to the Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provincial Assembly Babar Saleem Swati, Ayaz Sadiq said, "It is indeed a red-letter day in the history of your esteemed Assembly, which turned the lofty dreams of parliamentary supremacy into beaming reality after fifty years and gave life to Article 127 (read with Article 87) of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan."

He also expressed his profound appreciation for the passage of the bill.

The National Assembly and its Secretariat appreciate recognition given to its role in the drafting and formulation of this pivotal legislation, he remarked.

Ayaz Sadiq emphasized that the mutual cooperation between the legislatures symbolizes the strength and unity of Pakistan's federation.

"Such cooperation and dedication are the cornerstones of our democratic values, and I assure the Provincial Assembly of our continued support in all future endeavors," he remarked.

Ayaz Sadiq also conveyed his sincere wishes to the members and officials of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Provincial Assembly, praying that the legislatures continue to serve their constituencies with dedication and devotion, in alignment with the principles laid out in the Constitution of Pakistan.

TIP Report 2023-24 indicates over 70% of total trafficked comprises women: Tarar

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Attaullah Tarar on Thursday apprised the lower house of the Parliament that as per the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report 2023-24 indicated that women comprised 70.6 per cent of the total trafficked individuals in the country.

The minister expressed these views while responding to the query of Member National Assembly (MNA), Shahida Rehmani pertaining to facts on human trafficking impacts on gender, their percentage, purpose of trafficking and its causes on behalf of the Minister for Interior.

Attaullah Tarar said men, women, and children were equally affected in human trafficking who have been made subject to bonded labour and other crimes.

Over 70 per cent women out of the total 34,000 victims as per TIP Report 2023-24 made it to 24,000 women victims, he said.

The Law existed, awareness campaigns were being run and the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) was fully active whereas amendments in the legislation from the mover would be welcomed if proposed to bring effective measures, he said. After 18th amendment, he said human trafficking was provincial matter under law and order category. APP



MUSCAT: H.E. Imran Ali Chaudhry, Ambassador of Pakistan to Oman is visiting the stall of a female Pakistani entrepreneur in Pak - Oman Expo and Business Conference held.

NA passes resolution for hosting successful SCO summit



ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly here on Thursday passed a resolution for the hosting of successful Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit.

The resolution was presented by Minister for Information and Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar.

The National Assembly extended its congratulations to the President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, the Government and the people of Pakistan on the successful hosting of the 23rd Council of Heads of Government of the SCO.

The House paid tribute to President Asif Ali Zardari, Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar, Speaker National Assembly Sardar Ayaz Sadiq and former Speakers including Asad Qaiser for their contributions towards promoting regional cooperation.

The National Assembly acknowledged and appreciated the Government of Pakistan's commitment to fully supporting the goals and objectives of the SCO. The House recognized that this was the first major international event in 27 years hosted by Pakistan, marking a significant

milestone. Hosting the SCO summit is a diplomatic victory for Pakistan, and the House commends the government for its achievements on the international front. The resolution said, the successful hosting of the SCO Summit has greatly enhanced Pakistan's positive image and it will further strengthen regional trade, peace and stability.

The House also acknowledged the important role of the SCO in addressing political, economic, defense and security issues in the region.

Recognizing Pakistan's strategic importance and active participation in the region, the House affirms that Pakistan's strong stance on key regional and security issues at the SCO conference represents the voice of the Pakistani people.

The House appreciated the crucial role played by the Government of Pakistan, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Interior, and law enforcement agencies, including the police, Rangers, and the Pakistan Army, in ensuring the success of the SCO Summit.

This National Assembly also praised the efforts of all government institutions for decorating the federal capital beautifully, warmly welcoming the guests, and enhancing Pakistan's stature during the SCO Summit.

The House extended appreciation on behalf of the entire nation to all officials and institutions involved, from the arrival of the distinguished guests to their departure, for their exemplary service during the summit. APP

Pakistan's total liquid foreign reserves rise to \$ 16.11 billion

KARACHI: The total liquid foreign reserves of Pakistan surged to US\$ 16,111.3 million as of October 11, 2024 while the forex reserves held by the State Bank of Pakistan increased to \$ 11,022 million.

The SBP reserves are at a 30-month high since the March 2022 when the central bank possessed liquid foreign reserves of \$ 11,425.1 billion. The total liquid foreign reserves of the country are also at 29-month high since April 2022 when volume of the total liquid reserves was accounted as \$16,406 million.

The State Bank of Pakistan, in a statement issued here on Thursday, informed that total liquid foreign reserves held by the central bank increased by \$ 215 million to \$ 11,022.7 million during the week ended on October 11, 2024. Meanwhile, net foreign reserves held by commercial banks were recorded as \$ 5,088.6 million during the week under review, it added.

Total liquid foreign reserves held by the country, in the previous week ended on October 04, 2024, were \$ 16,047 million. Among them foreign reserves held by the central bank were recorded as \$ 10,808 million while \$ 5,239 million were held by commercial banks.

Iranian ambassador lauds Pakistan for successfully hosting 23rd SCO summit

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan, Reza Amir Moghadam on Thursday extended his congratulations to the government and people of Pakistan for the successful hosting of the 23rd Meeting of the Council of Heads of Governments of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Islamabad.

In a statement issued on the occasion of Pakistan's Foreign Service Day, Ambassador Moghadam commended the well-organized event and the efforts of Pakistan's security personnel in ensuring its smooth execution. "Hosting this important event, with the participation of various countries during a critical period, plays a significant role in strengthening regional multilateralism," the Iranian envoy stated. "It prepares the ground for creative initiatives and fosters a positive, proactive role in navigating the evolving global and regional developments."

He emphasized the importance of the SCO in creating an atmosphere of peace, stability, development, and trust not only among its members but also between the SCO and other regional and global multilateral mechanisms. Ambassador Moghadam highlighted the vast opportunities for bilateral and multilateral cooperation between Iran and Pakistan, as well as other member states, across diverse fields, including economic, security, and political sectors. He expressed optimism that these multilateral initiatives would open new avenues for enhanced collaboration and mutual benefit. APP

Bilawal pays tributes to Karsaz martyrs on their martyrdom anniversary

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has paid tributes to the martyrs of the Karsaz tragedy on their 17th martyrdom anniversary, solemnly commemorating the horrific attack that occurred on October 18, 2007.

Reflecting on the tragic day when 180 brave party workers laid down their lives, he expressed profound sorrow and reaffirmed the PPP's unwavering commitment to the ideals of democracy, justice, and sacrifice in the service of the people.

In a press release issued by then party Media Cell, he said, "The Karsaz bombing was a calculated conspiracy where dictatorship and terrorists joined forces, targeting the truck carrying Shaheed Benazir Bhutto and the central leadership of PPP, amidst a sea of millions who had come to welcome her. Those who attempted to silence the voice of democracy with terror and violence have failed, and their efforts were in vain." He further remarked, "The Karsaz tragedy is a solemn reminder of the ultimate price paid by our brave party workers, who sacrificed their

lives for the noble cause of democracy. Their courage and selflessness remain etched in the history of our ongoing struggle for a peaceful, democratic Pakistan—a struggle led by Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto."

Bilawal Bhutto emphasized that the blood of the Karsaz martyrs continues to inspire the fight against extremism, injustice, and the few forces that have historically sought to suppress the rights of the people.

"Our commitment to the vision of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto remains steadfast. We will continue to defend the rights of every Pakistani and uphold the values of democracy."

He called upon the nation to honor the sacrifices of the Karsaz martyrs by continuing their legacy and reaffirming their dedication to a democratic and just Pakistan. "As we mark this solemn day, we renew our pledge to safeguard democracy, to combat extremism, and to ensure that no force can derail the progress of our beloved country," he added. INP

SCO summit boosts Gwadar port's regional significance: minister

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Qaiser Ahmed Sheikh Thursday praised SCO summit as a resounding success, highlighting its potential to unlock new regional connectivity, opportunities and expressed optimism that exports will receive a significant boost through Gwadar Port, particularly as China relocates its industries to Pakistan.

Federal Minister expressed optimism about Gwadar Port's potential to drive Pakistan's economic growth while speaking to PTV news channel.

He emphasized that the port's success is crucial for the country's economic progress, he added. China's decision to relocate its middle industries to Pakistan is expected to significantly boost the country's economy, he further mentioned.

This strategic move will not only improve economic growth but also create numerous job opportunities for the local workforce, ultimately enhancing the overall standard of living, he said.

Responding to a query, he said the SCO summit's successful conclusion has earned Pakistan widespread appreciation for its exceptional hospitality.

NDMA continues aid to conflict-hit Gaza, Lebanon



ISLAMABAD: National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) continues to provide humanitarian aid to the war-affected people of Gaza and Lebanon on the directives of the Prime Minister of Pakistan.

The second consignment of aid was dispatched on Thursday from Karachi to Lebanon. This aid shipment, sent by NDMA in collaboration with Al-Khidmat Foundation, comprises approximately 100 tons of supplies, including medicines, ready-to-eat meat, tents, tarpaulins, warm bedding, winter clothing, and powdered

milk. The aid was dispatched via flight from Jinnah International Airport, Karachi, to Beirut, Lebanon, a news release said.

The send off ceremony held at Jinnah International Airport was attended by the representatives from NDMA, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Al-Khidmat Foundation and local administration. During ceremony, the attendees emphasized the urgent need to provide relief to the war-torn populations of Palestine and Lebanon, considering the ongoing conflict and the needs of the affected communities.

They reaffirmed the Government of Pakistan's commitment to supporting their brothers and sisters in distress and stressed the importance of collaboration by welfare organizations and the Pakistani public in strengthening these efforts.

This is Pakistan's 12th aid shipment to Palestine and Lebanon. Prior to this, 10 aid consignments were sent to Palestine, and Thursday marked the second shipment to Lebanon. The Government of Pakistan continues to send relief supplies based on the needs of the war-affected populations of Lebanon and Palestine.

PNS ZULFIQUAR seizes 1.3 tons...

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The operation, aimed at disrupting illicit maritime activities, was conducted under the command of the Pakistan Navy, which is currently leading Combined Task Force (CTF) 150, a Pakistan Navy news release said.

PNS ZULFIQUAR and PMSS KOLACHI, along with US Navy and US Coast Guard ships, patrolled their assigned areas and conducted boarding operations on suspicious fishing boats. Surface assets involved in the focused operations were supported by aerial surveillance from Pakistan Navy aircraft and the USS ABRAHAM LINCOLN Carrier Strike Group (CSG) operating in the area. Information regarding suspicious boats was regularly exchanged among the participating units, leading to the interdiction of a vessel by PNS ZULFIQUAR, which was found carrying 1.3 tons of Hashish, valued at approximately 26 million US Dollars.

The Pakistan Navy-led CTF 150's Focused Operation HIMALAYAN SPIRIT was specifically aimed at deterring illicit activities, particularly narcotics smuggling, in the North Arabian Sea.

The success of Focused Operation HIMALAYAN SPIRIT is a testament to the Pakistan Navy's commitment to international efforts in ensuring peace and security at the world's critical maritime choke points. PR

IMF okays increase in BISP stipend amount

The BISP has a budget of Rs. 599 billion for the current financial year, accounting for 0.5% of Pakistan's GDP. This represents a 27% increase from the previous year

International Monetary Fund unveiled new loan conditions for Pakistan. The conditions were revealed by the International Monetary Fund in a detailed report of a new loan agreement with Pakistan. The IMF in its report has urged the Pakistan government to work to stabilize the macroeconomic situation in line with the loan agreement. Pakistan's government has been asked to ensure economic reforms and conducive conditions for the private sector to boost the economy. The international

lender has also urged Pakistan to increase its tax net and slash government spending and expedite reforms in the government-owned entities.

The report predicted Pakistan's GDP to remain between 4 to 4.5pc during FY2024-25 to 2029-30, while the inflation is predicted to remain between 6.6 to 9 per cent. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) Executive Board on September 25 approved Pakistan's 37-month Extended Fund Facility (EFF) arrangement of about US\$7 billion.

The 37-month Extended Fund Facility arrangement aims to support Pakistan's economic stability and growth, with key policy goals including sustainable public finances, reduced inflation, and strengthened external buffers. On September 27, Pakistan received the first tranche of the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) following the approval of the IMF Executive Board of a 37-month Extended Fund Facility amounting to US\$7 billion. INP

CDA Chairman lauds field workers for successful hosting of SCO Moot



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Capital Development Authority (CDA), Muhammad Ali Randhawa, on Thursday praised the dedication and hard work of all field workers and officers involved in the successful hosting of the 23rd meeting of the Council of Heads of Government (CHG) of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). Randhawa referred to the CDA's field workers as the "true heroes" for their tireless efforts in ensuring the event's success, which not only brought pride to Islamabad but also elevated the nation's reputation. He commended the exemplary coordination and collaboration between all CDA wings, which made it possible to smoothly host the prestigious

event. "The commitment and dedication with which all officers and field workers performed their duties are unparalleled," said Randhawa. In his remarks, the CDA chairman highlighted the sacrifices made to enhance the beauty and honor of Islamabad, saying, "We worked with body, mind, and soul for the city's prestige."

He further added that their collective efforts brought CDA to the forefront as a model institution, enhancing its reputation nationwide. "The exceptional work done has not only bolstered CDA's image in Islamabad but across the entire country," Randhawa noted, extending congratulations to all involved for their remarkable contributions. — *VM Report*