

Sharif, Maryam will return to Pak within 10 dys to appeal against court verdict

LAHORE, JULY 8 /-/- Pakistan's deposed Premier Nawaz Sharif's daughter Maryam on Saturday said she and her father would return to Pakistan before the expiry of the 10-day deadline given by an anti-graft court to file an appeal against their sentence in a corruption case. The Islamabad Accountability Court on Friday sentenced 68-year-old Sharif to 10 years in jail for owning assets beyond income and one year for not cooperating with the anti-corruption authority, the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) in one of the three corruption cases against him in the Panama Papers scandal. Maryam, considered to be Sharif's political heir, was given seven years for abetment, and one year for non-cooperation with the NAB. When reporters in London on Friday asked Maryam whether she had been informed by her lawyers that they need to surrender themselves within 10 days to get any sort of relief, she said: "We will go back before that anyway." She was talking to reporters regarding the Sharif's conviction in the Avenfield properties case. She also claimed that the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) is aware that the Avenfield properties cannot be confiscated since no law had been broken in Britain, the Dawn reported. She said that even though the authorities in Britain are moved, it would work in the Sharif's favour as investigations would make things clear. Sharif had already said that he would return to Pakistan once his wife, Begum Khusroo, who is on a ventilator in a London hospital regains consciousness. Sharif said that he has been sent to jail because he tried to free the people of Pakistan from the slavery imposed on them by some generals and judges and vowed to continue his political struggle from behind the bars. Meanwhile, the PML-N fielded Malik Irfan Shahi Khokhar in PP-173 and Ali Pervaiz from NA-127 to contest the 128th elections in place of Maryam after her conviction led to her disqualification. Ali is a son of PML-N Lahore president and former MNA, Pervaiz Malik. Ali had filed nomination papers in this constituency as a covering candidate and had not withdrawn these. A senior PML-N leader said that since the court had barred Maryam from contesting election for 10 years the party had to award tickets to other candidates on her constituencies.

"Maryam can only contest the election if high court suspends the accountability verdict. She can file an appeal in the high court within 10 days after the verdict. So we have to field Maryam's replacement as legal procedure for the appeal may take quite some time," he said. Most Pakistani media groups remain critical over the conviction of Sharif and Maryam, saying the extremist and sectarian religious parties that are rapidly mainstreaming with official encouragement may benefit from this judgement. "The wild cards and possible beneficiaries of the verdict could be the slew of extremist and sectarian religious parties (a reference to emerging Tarek Labbaik Pakistan and Hafiz Saeed's Milli Muslim League) that are rapidly mainstreaming with official encouragement. They are not about to gain power, but they are shifting the body politic even further to the right and eroding the politics of conservative moderation as exemplified by the PML-N," The Express Tribune said in its editorial.

The Dawn said, "For Pakistan, there is a double disappointment. Notwithstanding all the dubious legal maneuvers against Sharif, his family and the PML-N in recent times, the Sharif family ought to have explained in a forthright and credible way the source of the family's vast wealth. Such an explanation may not have changed the course of the law against the Sharifs, but it could have set a welcome and much-needed political precedent of transparency and self-accountability." The NAB had filed the case, along with two others, on the Supreme Court's directives in the landmark Panama Papers case verdict last year which disqualified Sharif, the three-time prime minister. Meanwhile Pakistan's Supreme Court today banned former President and Pakistan People's Party (PPP) co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari and his sister Faryal Talpur from travelling abroad in the wake of the recent revelations in a fake bank accounts case, a media report said. Chief Justice Saqib Nisar ordered the names of 20 people, including Zardari and Talpur, be placed on the Exit Control List. Geo TV reported. Those persons on the list are prohibited from leaving Pakistan. The order came as Chief Justice Nisar took notice of the slow pace of inquiry into a fake bank accounts case. The Apex Court has summoned the seven fake bank account holders and 13 beneficiaries on July 12. Zardari, Talpur, Tariq Sultan,

Erum Aqeel, Muhammad Ashraf and Muhammad Iqbal Arain are among those who have been issued notices to appear before the top court on the given date. The top court also directed the Sindh Inspector General of Police to ensure that all persons that have been summoned appear before the court. Nasir Abdullah, Ansari Sugar Mills, Omani Polymer Packages, Pak Ethanol Private Limited, Chambar Sugar Mills, Agro Farm Thatta, Zardari Group, Parthenon Private Limited, A One International, Lucky International, Logistic Trading, Royal International and Ameer Associate are among the beneficiaries named in the fake bank accounts case. On Friday, the Federal Investigation Agency detained Central Depository Company (CDC) chairman and Summit Bank vice chairman Hussain Lohani, a close aide of Zardari, in Karachi. Lohani and his associates are accused of opening 29 fake accounts in the Summit Bank and United Bank of Pakistan Limited.

According to the FIA sources, 29 accounts were opened in the name of seven people, including a woman. They said that 18 to 19 of the 'fake' accounts were opened in the Summit Bank alone. FIA sources said that these accounts were used for money laundering with the notices mainly being operated by a businessman, Anwar Majeed who is said to be very close to Zardari and his business partner. According to the FIR registered against Lohani, billions of rupees were deposited into the said fake accounts and subsequently transferred to different accounts, including that of Zardari and his sister Talpur's company - Zardari Group - which is shown to have received Rs 15 million. As per the contents of the report, the biggest transfer made out of the alleged fake accounts was to an Arab national, Nasser Abdullah Hussain Lohani, who is the chairman of the Summit Bank's board of directors. Furthermore, it alleged that a sum of Rs 4.5 billion was credited and routed through the accounts during a span of 10 months. The FIA identified Bahria Town Karachi and Omni Pvt Ltd among the 15 parties that had made deposits totaling Rs 2.85 billion into the aforesaid accounts. The FIR said that the beneficiaries into whose accounts the monies were routed have been issued summons. Lohani, however, maintained his innocence after the court turned down an appeal from his

lawyer to not allow his physical remand on account of his frail medical condition. "There is nothing to do with this case. Nothing has been recovered from me. This case is about money laundering; those who did this [money laundering] are abroad, and I have been accused," Lohani said. The senior banker has served as chairman of the Central Depository Company (CDC) besides holding positions of President and CEO of MCB bank. When asked if he had been arrested due to his rumoured friendship with Zardari, Lohani said: "I do not know if I have been arrested because of Asif Ali Zardari or something else. Only time will tell why I am being targeted." Zardari, 62, is contesting for a National Assembly seat from his native town Nawabshah in the upcoming general elections in a span of 10 months. Zardari is a Member of National Assembly from Karachi's area of Lyari in 1990 and from Nawabshah in 1993. Zardari served as the 11th President of Pakistan from 2008 to 2013. He rose to prominence after his marriage to Benazir Bhutto in 1987. After Bhutto's assassination in December 2007, Zardari led PPP to victory in the 2008 general elections. (PTI)

Wishnu idol worth crores of rupees recovered in B'desh

DHAKA, JULY 8 /-/- A 70-kg touchstone idol of Hindu god Vishnu worth crores of rupees, had been recovered in northern Bangladesh, a media report said today. The idol was recovered last night from a house at Paschim Haghuria village in Natore district, 203-km from the capital, the Dhaka Tribune reported, citing officials. A team of Natore district administration raided the house following a tip-off. NDC Anindya Kumar said. The idol weighed about 70-kg and was worth several crores of Bangladeshi takas, the official added. Natore Deputy Commissioner Shahina Khatun said the idol would be handed over to the treasury. (PTI)

Two Indian teenagers arrested in Nepal

KATHMANDU, JULY 8 /-/- Two Indian teenagers have been arrested in Nepal for forming a gang to carry out thefts, a media report said today. Karan Podhar, 19, of Motihari and Suraj Podhar, 17, of Mahadilgarthana Samastipur, were arrested by Metropolitan Crime division here. The two, according to Myer News newspaper, used to work as rag pickers. According to SP Narendra Upreti, they were arrested with NRS 70,000, USD 1135, 65 Canadian dollar, two diamond rings, three gold ornaments, three stone necklaces and some drugs. They had plans to carry out thefts by breaking windows of the houses which they had shortlisted while collecting garbage. Upreti said. (PTI)



Participants take a bath in barrels filled with chilli peppers during the Spicy Barrel Challenge contest inside a water park in Chongqing, China - REUTERS

Four TN fishermen held by Lanka Navy

RAMESWARAM, JULY 8 /-/- Four Tamil Nadu fishermen were arrested by the Sri Lankan Navy today for allegedly poaching fish in the island nation's waters, a state fisheries department official said here. The fishermen from Mandapam near here were arrested for poaching in Lanka's territorial waters, a media report said. According to the official, the fishermen were using fishing nets, fisheries assistant director Gopinath said. They were taken to Kangesanthurai along with the boat and lodged at the naval base there, he added. Meanwhile, Lankan Navy personnel in four boats chased away Tamil Nadu fishermen in 200 boats when they were fishing near Katchatheevu in the Palk Straits, he said. The fishermen had to return without a catch. Lankan Navy personnel had on July 5 arrested 12 Tamil Nadu fishermen for allegedly fishing near Karainagar in their territorial waters. (PTI)

Five Rohingya infiltrators detained at B'desh border

DHAKA, JULY 8 /-/- Five Rohingya youths have been detained at a Bangladesh border checkpoint after allegedly trying to enter India with fake passports, a media report said. According to immigration police, the youths were detained on Friday at the Darshana border check post in Damurhuda region of Choudhagar district, 206-km from here, the Dhaka Tribune reported. Officials found discrepancies in their words and papers. They were handed over to Damurhuda police when they admitted to being Rohingyas during preliminary questioning, immigration police officials said. The five have been identified as Aiyaz Ali, 20; Sadek Ali, 20; Saker Ali, 24; Hares Ali, 24; and Amin Uddin, 21. They are refugees of various camps in Cox's Bazar. The youths were trying to go to India with fake Bangladesh passports and visas. They had collected the passports from Comilla city and the visas from Chittagong, said Sukumar Biswas, the officer-in-charge of Damurhuda police station. The fake Bangladesh passports have been seized, the OC said, adding that legal measures would be taken. (PTI)

How Africa has become a major buyer of Chinese weapons

BEIJING, JULY 8 /-/- At a time when the African continent as a whole reduced its imports of arms and ammunition from foreign countries, China has emerged as a major player - increasing its weapons exports to the continent by 5% between 2013 and 2017 as compared to the previous five years. A report published by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) has highlighted that while Africa's arms imports fell 22% in the last five years, the share of weapons imported from China grew exponentially. Previously, Russia was the largest supplier of arms from where African countries purchased arms, but the imports fell 32% in the last five years - paving the way for the Chinese to step in and make big bucks. The United States accounts for 11% of all arms and ammunition sold here. Security analysts believe that the surge in arms exports from where Africa is largely due to Beijing's push to make the country a major weapons manufacturing hub. This has helped President Xi Jinping not just modernise China's military but create a surplus which is exported in the international market including Africa. According to a report published in South China Morning Post, some of the high-profile weapons that China sells to African nations are: "Battle tanks and armoured vehicles - Tanzania, Chad, Ghana, Namibia, Rwanda, Gabon, Mozambique and Burundi are some of the major buyers." Combat aircraft and drones - Nigeria, Tanzania, Zambia, Namibia and Zimbabwe are some of the countries that have purchased combat aircrafts from China. US restrictions on selling drones has made China's path easier. "Missile systems: Morocco, Sudan and Yemen are some of the key buyers." Artillery systems: Congo, Ghana, Sudan, Cameroon, Tanzania, Niger and Rwanda are some of the countries to have purchased artillery systems made in China. Reports suggest that China's participation in peace-keeping operations in Africa is also well as setting up a military base in Djibouti has further helped the country gain a strong foothold in the continent. With expansion and modernisation of its military being carried out rapidly back home, China's exports are likely to only increase in the times to come.

S-E Asians descend from four ancient populations

LONDON, JULY 8 /-/- Southeast Asians derive ancestry from at least four different ancient populations, say scientists who analysed DNA extracted from 8,000-year-old skeletons and debunked two existing theories about the origin of humans in the area. The study, published in the journal Science, found that the most genetically diverse regions in the world, but for more than 100 years scientists have disagreed about which theory of the origins of the population of the area was correct. One theory believed the indigenous Hoabinhian hunter-gatherers who populated Southeast Asia from 44,000 years ago adopted agricultural practices independently, without the input from early farmers from East Asia. Another theory, referred to as the 'two-layer model' favours the view that migrating rice farmers from what is now China replaced the indigenous Hoabinhian hunter-gatherers. A study, published in the journal Science, shows that neither theory is completely accurate. Researchers discovered that present-day Southeast Asian populations derive ancestry from at least four ancient populations. DNA from human skeletal remains from Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, Vietnam, Indonesia, Laos and Japan dating back as far as 8,000 years ago was extracted for the study. Scientists had previously only been successful in sequencing 4,000-year-old samples from the region. The samples also included DNA from Hoabinhian hunter-gatherers and a Jomon from Japan - a scientific first, revealing a long suspected genetic link between the two populations. In total, 26 ancient human gene sequences were studied by the group and they were compared with modern DNA samples from people living in Southeast Asia today. "We put a huge amount of effort into retrieving ancient DNA from tropical Southeast Asia that could shed new light on this area of rich human genetics," said Eske Willerslev, who holds positions University of Cambridge in the UK and the University of Copenhagen in Denmark. "The fact that we were able to obtain 26 human genomes and shed light on the incredible genetic richness of the groups in the region today is astonishing," said Willerslev, who led the study. "The human occupation history of Southeast Asia remains heavily debated. Our research spanned from the Hoabinhian to the Iron Age and found that present-day Southeast Asian populations derive ancestry from at least four ancient populations. This is a far more complex model than previously thought," said Fernando Racimo, senior research assistant professor at University of Copenhagen. (PTI)

Pak religious parties field record candidates on NA seats

LAHORE, JULY 8 /-/- Religious parties in Pakistan, including the banned Jamaat-ud-Dawa's political wing, have fielded more than 460 candidates on the National Assembly (NA) seats for the July 25 general elections, breaking all previous records, a media report said today. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has issued the final list of candidates, according to which, 3,458 candidates will contest in 272 general seats of the National Assembly. Although Jamaat-e-Islami had come up with a long list of candidates in 1970 against the then nominees of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Awami League in East (Bangladesh) and West Pakistan, and Muttahida Majlis-e-Amal (MMA) had also fielded candidates across the country in 2002, the number stands the highest this time, The Nation reported. Over 460 aspirants have been fielded separately by MMA, Tehreek-e-

Labbaik Pakistan, Hafiz Saeed-led Jud's political wing Milli Muslim League-backed Allah-o-Akbar Tehreek and other small entities, the paper said. These candidates might play a decisive role in the victory and defeat of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and PPP candidates on a number of seats. The results would show total religious vote bank in Pakistan besides clearly narrating the number of well-wishers of each party, defining its political weight and putting it at a bargaining position with mainstream political parties in future elections, the paper said. The MMA, an alliance of five parties - Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-F (JUI-F), Jamaat-e-Islami (JI), Jamiat Ulema-e-Pakistan (JUP), Islami Tehreek and Markazi Jamiat Ahle-Hadith - representing all schools of thought (Barelvi, Deobandi, Shia and Ahle-Hadith), has come up with a list of some 132 plus candidates on NA seats, mainly focusing on

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) and Balochistan, the paper said. The MMA has not introduced any candidate on 65 seats of Punjab's total 141 and seven of total 61 of Sindh for different reasons. "We will not only form government in KP but also emerge powerful parties in Balochistan, Sindh and the Punjab. People will elect clean leadership on July 25," said Amirul Azeem, JI's central leader and MMA candidate in Lahore. The Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan, a political wing of Tehreek-i-Labbaik Ya Rasool Allah, came up with a list of 178 candidates across the country. Led by firebrand cleric Chaudhri Hussain Rizvi, the party gained popularity on the issue of Khatm-e-Nabuwat and showed surprising results in by-polls held in Punjab and KP a few months before the end of the PML-N ministry's tenure. The TLP representing Barelvi school of thought, mainly focused on Punjab, but fielded 16 candidates in KP, 32 in Sindh and six

in Balochistan, the paper said. TLP leader Pir Ijaz Ashrafi said the people across the country would vote for those who stood firm to protect the finality of prophethood (Khatm-e-Nabuwat). An amendment had changed the wordings of a clause relating to a candidate's belief in the finality of the prophethood of Prophet Muhammad, which is submitted at the time of election by candidates, turning it into a declaration form instead of an affidavit, which puts a candidate under oath. The then law minister Zahid Hamid resigned after violent clashes broke out between the TLP supporters and security forces which had led several people dead and hundreds injured in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Mumbai terror attack mastermind Hafiz Saeed's Milli Muslim League (MML) mainly focused on Punjab, although it did not field candidates in important districts of central and southern Punjab. As MML has failed to get reg-

istered as a political party with the Election Commission of Pakistan, its candidates are contesting on the platform of Allah-o-Akbar Tehreek (AAT). Saeed's son, son-in-law and 13 women are among 265 JUD candidates contesting on AAT platform in general elections on national and provincial assemblies seats across Pakistan. Saeed, who also carries a USD 10 million American bounty on his head for his role in terror activities, is not contesting the election. MML Spokesperson Nadeem Awam said his party was promoting the Pakistan Ideology and believed in pious politics. He claimed the MML backed candidates will give surprise at many seats. Maulana Samiul Haq's Jamiat Ulema-i-Islami, Sahibzada Hamid Raza's Sunni Tehreek, Shia group Majlis Wahdati Muslimin besides some other small religious entities also fielded more than a dozen candidates in different areas of the country. (PTI)