



Islamabad POST

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Tony Blair condemns abandonment of Afghanistan by allies

Detailed News On Page-08

Pak committed to work with the US: Asad

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NAB has recovered Rs. 535 bln so far

Detailed News On Page-08



20 Afghans killed in airport chaos

The airport is filled with thousands trying to flee the Taliban, who swept into Kabul a week ago

Taliban blames US for airport chaos

AGENCIES

KABUL: The Taliban on Sunday blamed the United States for the chaotic evacuation of tens of thousands of Afghans and foreigners from Kabul, one week after the hardline Islamist group returned to power in a rapid victory that stunned the world. The United States has warned of security threats and the European Union admitted it was "impossible" to evacuate everyone at risk from the Taliban, who have vowed a softer version of their brutal rule from 1996 to 2001. But terrified Afghans continue to try to flee, deepening a tragedy at Kabul airport where the United States and its allies have been unable to cope with the huge numbers of people trying to get on evacuation flights. "America, with all its power and facilities... has failed to bring order to the airport. There is peace and calm all over the country, but there is chaos only at Kabul airport," Taliban official Amir Khan Mutaqi said. Britain's defence ministry said Sunday seven people had

NEWS DESK

KABUL: At least 20 Afghans have been killed near Kabul's international airport amid the chaos of those attempting to flee the Taliban takeover of the country, the British military has said. But the UK defence ministry did not elaborate when they were killed and if the latest death toll is on top of the four people reportedly crushed to death on Saturday. The airport is filled with thousands trying to flee the Taliban, who swept into Kabul a week ago. Shocking images of people clinging onto jets raised alarm over the slow evacuation process led by countries including the US and Britain. There have been stampedes and crushing injuries in the crowds over the past few days. The US embassy issued a new security warning, telling citizens not to travel to Kabul airport unless instructed by a US government representative. Meanwhile, President Joe Biden warned he could not predict the outcome of one of the "most difficult airlifts in history". "Conditions on the ground remain extremely challenging but we are doing everything we can to manage the situation as safely and securely as possible," the defence ministry said in a statement. Tens of thousands of Afghans are racing to flee their country as the

Ghani can return to Afghanistan

NEWS DESK

KABUL: The Afghan Taliban have extended their amnesty to deposed president and vice president Ashraf Ghani and Amrullah Saleh respectively, allowing the two to return to Afghanistan if they so wished. In an exclusive interview with a private TV channel senior Taliban leader Khalil ur Rahman Haqqani said "there is no enmity" between the group and Ashraf Ghani, Amrullah Saleh and former national security advisor, Hamdullah Mohib. "We forgive Ashraf Ghani, Amrullah Saleh and Hamdullah Mohib," said Haqqani, adding that enmity between the Taliban and the three was only on the basis of religion. "We forgive everyone from our end; from the general [who fought in the war against us] to the common man," he said. Haqqani urged people fleeing the country not to do so, adding that the "enemy" was spreading propaganda that the Taliban will exact revenge on them. "Tajiks, Balochs, Hazaras and Pash-tuns are all our brothers," he added.



KABUL: Pakistan's Ambassador to Afghanistan Mansoor Ahmed Khan called on former Prime Minister of Afghanistan and Hizb Islami Chief, Engineer Gulbadin Hikmatyar at his office and discussed ongoing talks between the Taliban and political groups for formation of new government in Afghanistan. - APP

Afghan people to decide their future: Hekmatyar

India should also play positive role for peace in Afghanistan

AGENCIES

ISLAMABAD: Head of Hizb-e-Islami Engineer Gulbadin Hikmatyar on Sunday said that India should also play positive role for peace in Afghanistan. New Delhi should focus on its internal issues instead of issuing statements regarding the future of Afghanistan, Hikmatyar said while talking to Pakistani media in Kabul. Former Prime Minister of Afghanistan said that the Indian government should not fight Kashmir war from Af-

Pak envoy calls on Hekmatyar

NEWS DESK

KABUL: Pakistan's Ambassador in Afghanistan Mansoor Ahmed Khan called on former Prime Minister of Afghanistan Engineer Gulbadin Hikmatyar at his office in Kabul on Sunday. During the meeting, issues pertaining to formation of new government in Afghanistan were discussed. Mansoor Ahmed reiterated that Pakistan will extend its cooperation for peace in Afghanistan. Hezb-e-Islami's head Gulbadin Hikmatyar stressed that for peace and formation of new government, all political parties should work together for finding the solution.

ghan soil. New Delhi should respect sovereignty of Afghanistan, he added. Hikmatyar was appreciative of the efforts of Prime Minister Imran Khan as well for his stance on a peaceful and negotiated settlement of Afghan issue. Meanwhile, Pakistan's Ambassador to Afghanistan Mansoor Ahmed Khan on Sunday called on Hizb-e-Islami chief Engineer Gulbadin Hikmatyar at his office in Kabul. They discussed ongoing talks between the Taliban and political groups for the formation of a new government in Afghanistan.

Briefs

PM Imran to visit Lahore Wednesday

ABID RAZA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan will get a briefing on assault and harassment against a female TikToker at Minar-e-Pakistan on Independence Day during his upcoming Lahore visit on Wednesday. According to sources privy to the schedule of the premier, Imran Khan is expected to reach Lahore on Wednesday where he would be briefed on various provincial affairs.

'FM Qureshi not to visit Kabul'

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office Spokesperson Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri on Sunday rejected as "baseless" the speculation about the visit of Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi to Kabul. "No visit by Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi to Kabul is scheduled. Any speculation in this regard is baseless," the Foreign Office Spokesperson said in response to media queries.

Maryam tests negative

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) VP Maryam Nawaz has tested negative for COVID-19, after nearly a month of getting infected. According to sources close to the PML-N leader, Maryam Nawaz has tested negative after her previous two tests have turned out to be positive.

Schools, colleges can open, says Taliban

Group commanders are set to meet former governors and bureaucrats in more than 20 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces over the next few days

DNA

KABUL: Schools and colleges across Afghanistan can open, a Taliban official said on Sunday. He added that the group commanders are set to meet former governors and bureaucrats in more than 20 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces over the next few days to ensure their safety and seek cooperation. "We are not forcing any former government official to join or prove their allegiance to us, they have a right to leave the country if they would like," the official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, told Reuters. The Taliban's swift takeover of Afghanistan has sparked fear of reprisals and a return to the harsh version of Islamic law the group exercised when it was in power two decades ago. Crowds have grown at the airport in the capital Kabul each day over the past week, hindering operations as the United States and other nations attempt to evacuate thousands of their diplomats and civilians as well as numerous Afghans. "We are seeking complete clarity on foreign forces' exit plan," the Taliban official added. "Managing chaos outside Kabul airport is a complex task."

Taliban fighters heading towards Panjsher valley

AGENCIES

DUBAI: The Taliban said on Sunday that "hundreds" of its fighters were heading to the Panjsher Valley, one of the few parts of Afghanistan not yet controlled by the group. "Hundreds of Mujahideen of the Islamic Emirate are heading towards the state of Panjshir to control it, after local state officials refused to hand it over peacefully," the group wrote on its Arabic Twitter account. Meanwhile Ahmad Massoud said Panjshir valley will not be handed over to the Taliban and resistance fighters will be ready to fight back if the extremist group tries to seize it, the son of one of the main leaders of Afghanistan's anti-Soviet resistance in the 1980s tells Al Arabiya.



China-Pak ties won't be affected by terrorist acts

Says Pakistan will continue to play its role for peace and stability in Afghanistan

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: China's Ambassador to Pakistan Nong Rong and diplomatic staff called on Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid and discussed the overall regional situation, besides bilateral ties, on Sunday. During the discussion, Rashid observed that Pakistan will not let bilateral cooperation between Pakistan and China and progress become hostage at the hands of terrorists. The minister observed that the region had gained more specific significance than before. He emphasised that lasting stability in Afghanistan was imperative for the region's progress and the world's security.



ISLAMABAD: Chinese Ambassador Nong Rong in a meeting with Sheikh Rashid Ahmed. - APP

The minister further stated that Pakistan will continue to play its role for peace and a stable government in the neighbouring country. The interior ministry, he maintained, has been providing full assistance to those evacuating Afghanistan.

Continued on Page 06

Iran condemns terrorist attack

DNA

TEHRAN: Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh strongly condemned the terrorist attack on Imam Hussain (AS) mourning parades in the Punjab province of Pakistan. He also expressed his deep condolences to the families of the victims of this terrorist act which happened on Thursday. Khatibzadeh stressed the need for fighting all forms of inhumane terrorist acts and called for the cooperation of all regional countries to punish the perpetrators, organizers, supporters and sponsors of such acts. A bomb blast in the eastern Pakistan province of Punjab killed at least three people and injured at least 50 others during a Shi'ite mourning ceremony.

Captain embraces martyrdom
Army Chief attends Namaz-e-Janaza of Capt Kashif



STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: The terrorists on Sunday targeted a security forces' vehicle in Toba, Gichik area of Balochistan through an improvised explosive device (IED) that martyred a Captain of Pakistan Army. The Security Forces vehicle struck an IED planted by terrorists in Toba, Gichik Balochistan, said an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) media release. The martyred officer was identified as Captain Kashif who embraced shahadat (martyrdom) while two soldiers got injured. The injured soldiers were evacuated to medical

facility at Khuzdar, it added. Meanwhile, General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) attended Namaz-e-Janaza of Captain Kashif shaheed at Rawalpindi. Capt Kashif embraced Shahadat last night when a security forces vehicle struck an IED planted by terrorists in Toba, Gichik Balochistan. Senior military officials, people from various walks of life and relatives of shaheed offered Namaz-e-Janaza. Shaheed was buried with full military honour.

Fawad condemns IED blast

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain on Sunday strongly condemned blast of an Improvised Explosive Device (IED) in Gichik, Balochistan. In a statement, the minister said that he was sad to hear about martyrdom of Captain Kashif in the terrorist incident. He said such cowardly acts could not dampen the spirits of the nation. The nation stood by the security forces in the war on terror, he said adding the sacrifices of the security forces would not go in vain.

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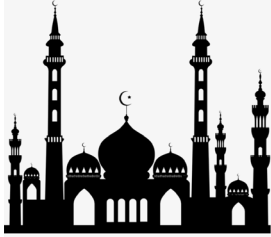
Finkle of Sarangi competes at Serena Hotel

CEO Minal hosts dinner for foreign envoy

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Zohr.....12:11 pm
Asr.....04:53 pm
Maghrib.....06:46 pm
Isha.....08:15 pm



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Marriott.....051- 2826121
Monal.....0334-5421812



Airlines

Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

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Wapda Islamabad.....9217579
Wapda Rawalpindi 111-309-309

Islamabad Metropolitan Corporation

Corporation.....9209224
Potohar Town.....9209224
RawalTown.....5773343

Wasa Water Tank

Rawalpindi.....0331-5022125

Commercialization a key developmental output of S&T

Shibli Faraz briefed about the potential of COMSTAS

ZUBAIR AHMED

ISLAMABAD: Gains from Science and Technology should grow exponentially to benefit nations, especially through commercialization of research. Pakistan and other developing countries need to make concerted efforts in this regard to aid their development process. Federal Minister for Science and Technology, Shibli Faraz, expressed his vision and advised on key matters relating to S&T-led national development during a visit to the Secretariat of Commission on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the South (COMSATS), Islamabad. Apart from the Federal Secretary MoST, Dr. Akhtar Nazir, who is also the incumbent Executive Director COMSATS, the Minister was accompanied by Additional Secretary MoST, Maj. Qaiser Majeed Malik. During the meeting, the officials of the Ministry received briefing on COMSATS and its functions and role as intergovernmental organization of the countries of the South. The presentation was given by senior officials of COMSATS Secretariat. The briefing



thoroughly introduced COMSATS as an international organization focused at S&T-led development. The high-level delegation was informed about COMSATS' mandate and mission; statutory bodies and forums; engagements of the Secretariat; flagship programs and activities; outreach mechanisms and publications. Post briefing discussions focused at bringing efficacy and efficiency in COMSATS' programs and operations. In this context, matters related to establishment, administration and finances received greater attention.

An overview of COMSATS' financial position was given by Director Finance who also made key recommendations to improve the current position of COMSATS. The case of COMSATS Internet Services (CIS), established in 1996, also came under microscopic view, and a strong need was felt by the

Ministry leadership to take radical measures to turnaround this pioneer internet service provider (ISP) of Pakistan. The recommendations made by the senior officers also addressed improving financial control mechanism at CIS. Pakistan, as a member state has been the biggest

beneficiary of COMSATS' programs and activities especially because the organization's Secretariat is based in the country. Moreover, it was hoped that scientific organizations under Ministry of ST will extend their support for COMSATS while also benefiting from its international linkages.

CCCP launches online documentary series "Tibet Story"



ISLAMABAD: China Cultural Center in Pakistan (CCCP) on Sunday launched online documentary series "Tibet Story". The third series of Tibet documentaries composed of four episodes, namely Highland Dancers, Watchmen in the Barley Field, the Mask God and Symphony of Heaven and Earth, said a press release. Through telling stories about intangible cultural heritage and how locals cultivate barley on fertile land along the Yarlung Zangbo River, the video exhibits the progress in Tibet's agricultural production and the efforts in the protection of traditional Tibetan cultural heritage as well as local people's lifestyles. - APP

Sehat Insaf Card: A blessing for millions

ISLAMABAD: The Sehat Sahulat programme or Sehat Insaf Card, one of the flagship projects of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has been proved no less than a blessing for millions of patients during testing times of their lives. The project has won the hearts and minds of the people as it facilitates critical patients with severe diseases. Besides, it is always difficult for people, especially those living below the poverty line to financially support critical patients and lethal diseases. The complicated diseases and critical nature of patients almost make it impossible even for the average-income families to bear the charges of laboratory tests, x-rays, CT scans, medicines and hospital etc. Other than financial burden, the family also carries the load of psychological tension and physical labor to run after the laboratory tests and arrange medicines from outside of hospitals. Looking into the sufferings of people, the incumbent government has decided to minimize the burden on the public in the health sector. Therefore, it has conceived a well-planned programme of Sehat Insaf Card

to address the financial problems of the patients in the approved list of public and private sector hospitals of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province. The annual health insurance covers Rs. 1 million for around six million families of the province thus enabling the whole population of 40 million people to avail free medical treatment in more than 250 public and private sector hospitals of the country. It is pertinent to mention that an agreement was signed between the KP government and State Life Insurance Corporation regarding distribution of the Sehat Insaf Card. Initially, the initiative of Sehat Sahulat programme was launched in KP in September 2016 to provide free healthcare to families living below the poverty line. But later the service was extended to all segments of the society. The successful trial of the project in KP would probably help the stakeholders to extend healthcare facility to maximum hospitals of the country. The people have also urged the government to extend the facility of Sehat Insaf Card to all federating units to financially support the patients. - APP



ISLAMABAD: A large number of devotees standing in front of the closed gates of Bari Imam Shrine as the government orders to close shrines to avoid further spread of COVID-19 outbreak. - DNA

BARI striving to increase olive production

RAWALPINDI: Barani Agriculture Research Institute (BARI) Chakwal is striving to increase olive production considerably and enhance employment opportunities in the region. According to spokesman of BARI, the institute mainly provides capacity building services to the stakeholders and technical advisory services to the farmers. He informed that BARI had provided nearly 1.3 million olive saplings to the farmers in the region while first Center of Excellence for Olive Research and Training (CEFORT) was established at BARI and the new research and innovation facility was increasing olive production and employment opportunities. CEFORT was supporting scientific and technical research and serving as a resource centre in the region. He informed that due to hectic efforts of the institute, over 800 farms had been established in Potohar region. BARI was making all-out efforts to enhance olive cultivation considerably in Potohar region which was declared an 'Olive Valley'.

LHC CJ to hear cases at Rawalpindi bench

RAWALPINDI: To provide speedy justice, the Lahore High Court (LHC) constituted one division bench (DB) and three single benches for the LHC Rawalpindi bench in the next week while the LHC Chief Justice Mr Justice Muhammad Ameer Bhatti will sit at the Rawalpindi Bench for hearing matters in single benches on Monday and Tuesday. According to schedule, the DB will comprise of Mr Justice Raja Shahid Mehmood Abbasi and Mr Justice Mirza Waqas Rauf while three single benches would be comprised of including the Chief Justice LHC Mr Justice Muhammad Ameer Bhatti and two Judges of the division bench. The benches will hear the murder cases and appeals of all kinds. - APP

Two-week kids' painting classes concluded

ISLAMABAD: A two-week long kids' painting classes concluded here at Hunerkada College of Visual and Performing Arts ensuring to showcase the hidden talent of children. Director Hunerkada Anna Shah told APP that every child is an artist and Hunerkada was making efforts to learn them the basics of creative artwork. She said a total of 40 students had taken part in a two-week long course. She said that high skilled professional artists had conducted these courses. She said that on completion, of course, certificates would be issued to the participants. Anna said that the course was focused on the basic principles of painting including composition, warm and cool colors. The participants would also impart training about different themes and materials, like how to paint with acrylic and watercolors. She said that these classes are specially designed for children to learn and explore creating art. - APP

PBM distributes 6,600 wheel chairs

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM) has distributed some 6,600 wheel chairs among the deserving persons in the last three years, said an official. Giving breakup, he said that type of wheel chairs included some 2,100 customized wheel chairs and 4,500 standard wheel chairs. Assistive devices including ordinary wheel chairs, customized wheel chairs, artificial limbs, artificial knee caps, hearing devices, etc were provided to the needy patients during last three years. A sum of Rs 10,000 was being paid to the family with one person with disabilities (PWD) and Rs 25,000 to the family with two or more PWDs. Some 12,783 PWDs have been provided financial assistance of Rs 151,900,712 in last three years under special friend project. - APP

"Rationally inclusive ovt in Afghanistan a must for peace, security"

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Experts from Pakistan, Turkey and Iran speaking a webinar have opined that only a rationally inclusive government in Kabul will lead to peace and stability in Afghanistan and the region. It is a good sign that Taliban are behaving more mature this time and talking to the neighbouring countries in their language. They have a more rational approach towards their own people from different segments of the society. They mentioned that Taliban's brisk takeover of the country without any strong resistance from the Afghan army has shown Taliban's wide acceptance in their country. Another opinion contrarily doubted the Taliban's smooth sailing through all the parts. Taliban's takeover could have been planned by some external forces to create chaos in the region against China's aggressive economic moves. However, the experts believed that only infrastructural and economic development in Afghanistan would lead to peace and prosperity in the region. All the neighbouring countries should support the

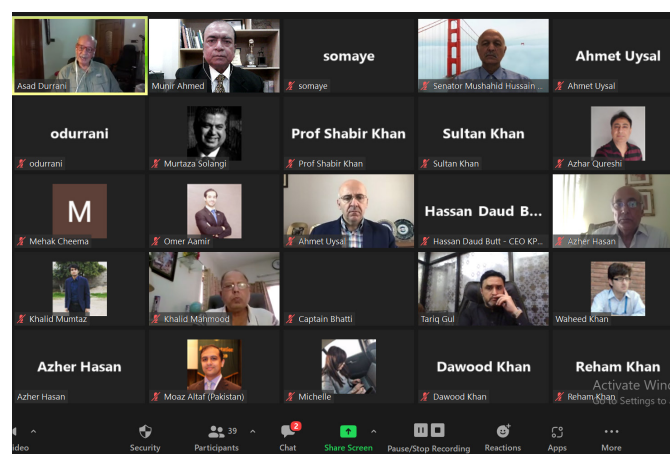
government in Afghanistan that is acceptable to the natives. Development Communications Network (Devcom Pakistan) and DTN organized the webinar on "Afghanistan: Post-Taliban Challenges for the Region" Saturday late with panelists from Pakistan, Turkey and Iran. The key experts included chairman Senate Standing Committee on Defense Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, geopolitical analyst former ISI chief Lt Gen rtd Asad Durrani, Director of Middle Eastern Studies Center (ORSAM) in Ankara and professor of Political Sociology in Istanbul University Prof. Dr. Ahmet Uysal, Director South Asian Studies at Tehran International Studies and Research Institute Dr. Somaye Morovati, and chief executive officer Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Investment and Trade (KP BIOT) Hassan Daud Butt. Devcom Pakistan Executive Director Munir Ahmed hosted and conducted the webinar. Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed said the US squandered \$ 6.4 trillion on 'war on terror' including \$ 2.2 trillion in Afghanistan, almost \$ 100 billion on 300,000-strong Afghan Army and Air Force, which roughly means spending \$ 100 billion every month on the Afghan

War for the last 20 years. Despite huge investments the US could not build a strong defense in Afghanistan that is a monumental failure of a super power. Senator Mushahid urged the countries in the region to forge a regional policy with China, Russia, Iran and Turkey at the core, plus Central Asian neighbors of Afghanistan including Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan. Call a conference of these countries inviting the USA too for a comprehensive plan for peace and stability in the region. Lt. General Retd Muhammad Asad Durrani said that spillover

of Taliban's takeover in Afghanistan is expected in Pakistan. The elements shall be taken to confidence and their concerns shall be addressed according to the state's interests. The Taliban's takeover is not unexpected. They had actually won the negotiations but were waiting for the moment. It seems that the US has intentionally provided the Taliban an opportunity to take over and lead to a civil war in Afghanistan. Taliban this time have shown maturity and he believed the consensus of the Afghan tribes would play a significant role for the future of the country.

Professor Dr. Ahmet Uysal said the main losers in Afghanistan are the USA in particular and the NATO countries while the West overall. That is because the USA and its allies invested in the Afghanistan invasion at the heart of Asia hoping to establish a unipolar Western hegemony along with the invasion in Iraq, but they failed miserably. The second loser is India that invaded the old corrupt Afghan government to contain Pakistan, and to reach Central Asian markets. They have had strategic, diplomatic and economic losses in Afghanistan. The third group of losers are the US allies such as Israel, some of the Gulf countries and a faction in Syria. Briefly, they all have witnessed that the US alliance was not dependable and the US could leave its ally alone anytime. Dr. Uysal termed Pakistan, China and Russia as winners, and Turkey and Iran to some extent. "Pakistan won because they supported the resistance against American invasion and secured its northern borders. Now the winners and others shall contribute to the stability and development in Afghanistan because the West will probably try to ignite

chaos in the region to mainly stop Chinese expansion. Turkey can help Afghanistan to gain legitimacy in the diplomatic field and tone down their discourse." Dr. Somaye Morovati opined that Taliban in 2021 are not the same as they were in the 1990s, and are more dangerous. Their influence would spillover to other countries in the region while future prospects of Afghanistan remain uncertain. It would have adverse consequences as the Taliban have declared the formation of "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan" on Thursday. The neighbouring countries shall find a way for coordinating closely to facilitate a smooth transition in Afghanistan for regional stability. Hassan Daud Butt said the peace in Afghanistan can be achieved through development where the Belt and Road Initiative can be instrumental. Pakistan and Afghanistan can leverage its natural endowment to attract investment in the mining, energy and agriculture sector. China was engaged in regional development and integration through BRI and supporting infrastructure development including hospitals, roads, bridges and railways while the US was engaged in war in Afghanistan.



Briefs

PR retrieves 442.90 acres precious land in 3 years

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Railways (PR) has retrieved an area of 442.90 acres of commercial and residential land in its anti-encroachment drive conducted during last three years across the country. Regular anti-encroachment operations are being carried out at all railway divisions with assistance of Railways Police and District Administrations, an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP on Sunday. Giving division wise details, he said Pakistan Railways had recovered commercial land 43,172 acres in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 140,343 acres in Punjab, 138,333 acres in Sindh and 7,6085 acres in Balochistan. He said Pakistan Railways also retrieved 45 acres residential land across the country. "Pakistan Railways has owned 167,690 acres of land across the country out of which Punjab has 90,326 acres, Sindh 39,428 acres, Balochistan 28,228 acres and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has 9,708 acres," he added. — APP

PHA to plant 200,000 saplings

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Over 31,000 saplings had planted during the monsoon season and around 200,000 saplings will be planted by the end of December this year.

This was stated by the Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) Director Sheikh Tariq Mahmood. He informed that the authority had planted 31,000 more than its target of 18,000 of saplings during the monsoon three plantation campaign.

The authority has further assigned a target of planting 200,000 saplings till the end of December this year which would be achieved before the given time he assured.

He informed that PHA also monitors saplings through Geo-tagging after planting as DG PHA Zaheer Anwar Rawalpindi had given clear instructions that saplings should be taken care of after planting.

Repeating a question he said that the authority was working beyond its jurisdiction and planting saplings in Cantt and Murree areas. During the current monsoon season PHA also provided 5,000 saplings to the education department, private educational institutions and District Council Rawalpindi to plant within the boundary walls of their premises, he added.

Director General PHA Sheikh Tariq said that all possible steps were being taken to make the city green as per the vision of the Prime Minister Imran Khan and the instructions of Advisor to the Chief Minister Punjab and Chairman PHA Rawalpindi, Asif Mehmood.

Registration started for graphic design short courses

ISLAMABAD: Hunerkada College of Visual and Performing Arts has started registration process for the graphic design three and six months courses.

According to Hunerkada, graphic design is a craft where professionals create visual content to communicate messages. The participants would be trained about the graphic design elements, principles of design, typography, logos, posters and brochures.

Head of Hunerkada Amna Shah said that highly professional designers would impart training to the participants. She said that graphic design classes would commence after completion of registration process. She said that common uses of graphic design include corporate design (logos and branding), editorial design (magazines, newspapers and books), way finding or environmental design, advertising, web design, communication design, product packaging and signage. She said that Hunerkada has scheduled a series art classes. — APP

Regional integration with CARs key for development: Envoy

The Kyrgyz ambassador said that Kyrgyzstan will hold a business forum in the coming months of September

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Designated Republic of Kyrgyzstan to Pakistan, Ulanbek Totuiev on Sunday said regional economic and trade integration through the connectivity with Central Asian Republics (CARs) is key to the development and prosperity in the region.

The Ambassador said that Peace and socio-political harmony in Afghanistan is significant for prosperity throughout the region, which Kyrgyzstan has also dreamed of, including all countries in the region. The Ambassador said this while talking to eminent businessmen, and former president of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and Chairman Pakistan Central Asia Friendship Association (PCAF) Zafar Bakhtawari and Ahsan Bakhtawari here in the embassy of Kyrgyzstan.

The Kyrgyz ambassador said that Kyrgyzstan will hold a business forum in the coming months of September in which a 20-member delegation of businessmen and investors from Kyrgyzstan will come to discuss business-to-business relations with the local business community.

It will also include heads of government institutions and people from various sectors, which will promote investment. He said that this forum is a milestone for the promotion of trade in the region. The current circumstances has raised hopes for an improvement in the situation in Afghanistan, which will



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador designate of kyrgyz Republic H.E Mr. Ulanbek Totuiev is meeting with Zafar Bakhtawari Chairman and Ahsan Bakhtawari from Pakistan Central Asia friendship Association at his embassy. — DNA

have a positive economic and political impact on the entire region, including Central Asian countries.

The current Kyrgyz government, in the leadership of President Sadye Japarov, wants to make a potential start in trade and economic relations with all countries in the region, including Pakistan. Under which cooperation between the two countries in all economic sectors will be enhanced, he said.

He said that Kyrgyzstan has vast opportunities for investment in energy, agriculture, mining and minerals. The Ambassador said that

Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan also have vast trade opportunities in various sectors, including agriculture, horticulture and honey.

Meanwhile, talking on the occasion, Zafar Bakhtawari suggested that direct air travel between Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan needs to be facilitated and flight operations need to be enhanced.

He said that two flights a week should be operated from three major cities of Pakistan, Karachi, Lahore

and Islamabad, to which the Kyrgyz ambassador agreed. On this occasion, Chairman Pakistan Central Asia Association, Zafar Bakhtawari assured all possible cooperation for the business forum to be organized by Kyrgyz embassy in Islamabad in the coming months of September.

He said that peace in Afghanistan would open new avenues of economic and trade cooperation for the countries of the region, including Central Asia, which

are rich in energy and other natural resources. On the occasion, prominent businessman and farmer Vice President ICCI, Ahsan Bakhtawari said that he would visit Kyrgyzstan coming months with a business delegation, which would open new avenues for cooperation between the two countries.

He said more efforts were needed from both sides to boost trade and economic ties between the two countries.



ISLAMABAD: Ladies posing for a picture during a reception hosted for the newly appointed High Commissioner of Pakistan to Canada. — DNA

Illegal smuggling mars Green Turtles' habitat along Daran

ISLAMABAD: The country's one of the biodiversity rich seashore is facing a serious risk of species loss as illegal oil smuggling being carried out through Daran Beach located in Jiwani, endangering existence of exotic species of Green Turtles, nesting on the coast. The Green turtles (Chelonia mydas) nest on beaches along the coast of Pakistan throughout the year, with the peak nesting season between September and October.

Daran supported the highest number of nesting sea turtles, Senior Technical Advisor to World Wildlife Fund for Nature Muhammad Moazzam Khan told APP while sharing facts of his study carried out

in this regard. Khan said, Daran due to its remote proximity is a favourable habitat for green turtles thriving in the region and the only threat it had faced was of predation by feral dogs, jackals, and foxes which dig up eggs, and gulls which prey on hatchlings crossing the beach to the water. Daran is close to the border between Pakistan and Iran. Because of the porous border, a number of commodities are being smuggled between the two countries.

Fish is the usual product smuggled from Pakistan to Iran, whereas petroleum products (mainly diesel, petrol, grease, and bitumen) are smuggled from Iran to Pakistan, he cited. — APP

Govt increased vaccination to cover maximum population

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Health Secretary Dr Nausheen Hamid Sunday said that around 30% of door-to-door corona vaccine inoculation was being increased in various parts of country to cover maximum target adult population till end of year 2021. Talking to PTV news channel, she said the vaccination targets set by the NCOC would be achieved soon and mobile teams on all union council level and district level were playing an active role for door-to-door vaccination drive.

Pakistan has successfully crossed an important landmark of 40 million total vac-

cine doses for eligible population, she added.

There has been no shortage of Covid vaccines and the government has been providing free supply of vaccines to public, she further added.

While describing the current Covid-19 situation, she said the virus in fourth wave had spread rapidly, with cases, positivity ratio and hospitalizations all witnessing a spike, adding, the government has reimplemented strict immigration measures and smart lockdown policy to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Replying to a Question, she said more dosages of Sinopharm and Sinovac vaccines have reached Pakistan which was being distributed to all provinces equally.



In line with the health ministry's plans as well as the objectives of the National COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign, she once again asked all the eligible population to get vaccinated and to encourage their family members, friends and colleagues to follow suit for their common good. The government has set a target to vaccinate its 80% of

population till end of December, she said, adding, in a bid to meet that goal, the vaccination program will be further expanded.

She also hailed the National Command and Operations Centre (NCOC) for playing a major role in identifying hot spot cities and coronavirus cases in various cities of the country, NCOC has increased 'testing, tracing, ventilators, oxygen beds numbers in hospitals to meet the challenges. She underlined vaccination is our national duty and moral obligation which is helping us for controlling the spread of the fourth wave of coronavirus. Citizens can protect themselves from corona by getting a vaccination, she added.

Lok Virsa's Mandwa Film Club to resume soon

ISLAMABAD: National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage (Lok Virsa) would resume its famous 'Mandwa Film Club' soon for the entertainment activities for common public, Executive Director Lok Virsa Talha Ali Khan Kushyaha said.

Talking to APP, Talha said the Club members and fans also demanded that National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage (NIFTH) should resume screening of national and international films. He said that more films from our glorious past which related to our folk culture and traditions are in the priority list of our film club. He said that Lok Virsa was also busy in documentary classes of film productions.

Former Mandwa Film Club Coordinator Aijaz Gul further told that over 150 classical national international films were screened at club since its inception.

The members of club, fans and visitors had earlier expressed displeasure over the closing of this popular programme.

Prof. Ch. Rasheed Sal said that film screening should be resumed at the club. He said that it was an amazing program to enjoy movies from the golden era.

Asmara fan of Mandwa Film Club said that a number of star actors and actresses had also been attended film screening at Mandwa film club including Sangeeta, Bahar Begum, legend musician Fazir Afzal, Adil Murad and filmmaker Syed Noor. She said that film club was a good initiative to promote film industry and highlight golden era films. — APP

Singers demand reopening of Lok Virsa

ISLAMABAD: Amateur artists on Sunday demanded reopening of Lok Virsa 'Open Mic' program, a popular platform for emerging singers.

Open Mic program was an initiative to discover melodious voices and used to be held on weekly basis audition. The Open Mic program was helping those who were eager to sing but they lack a proper or available platform to perform.

An emerging singer Uzma Nadeem said Open Mic was very popular music audition program which was started in 2017, she also participated in the first session of Open Mic.

Another amateur singer Nasir Jamal said that Open Mic was very productive platform he said that in Open Mic singers sang a number of songs which were judged by a panel of judges comprising of top professional singers.

Lok Virsa Executive Director Talha Ali said that many programs postponed due to COVID-19 pandemic adding he said that recently Lok Virsa had arranged an Open Mic program on test basis. He said that Lok Virsa would continue its efforts to provide opportunities to talented singers. — APP

144 more Covid positive cases reported in IIOJK

ISLAMABAD: In Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), almost 144 fresh cases of novel coronavirus were reported, while 126 others infected by virus, recovered during the last 24 hours.

According to Kashmir Media Service, health officials in IIOJK said that 97 new cases of coronavirus surfaced in Kashmir Valley while the remaining 47 were detected in the winter capital during the last 24 hours, taking the total number of people infected since the outbreak of pandemic last year in J&K to 324,095. Giving district-wise details, officials said, Srinagar reported 31, Baramulla 8, Budgam 3, Pulwama 2, Kupwara 9, Anantnag 19, Bandipora 11, Ganderbal 7, Kulgam 6, Shopian 1, Jammu 13, Rajouri 6, Doda 13, Kishtwar 10 and Poonch 1 new case of Covid-19. Five districts of Udhampur, Kathua, Samba, Ramban and Reasi reported no new case of coronavirus. The officials said that 126 more Covid-19 patients have recovered—43 from Jammu Division and 83 from the Valley. — APP

President rejects FBR pleas invoices scam

The FTO on taking suo moto notice of the matter had issued directions to the FBR to investigate and identify the officials involved in verification of the registered persons and initiate a disciplinary action

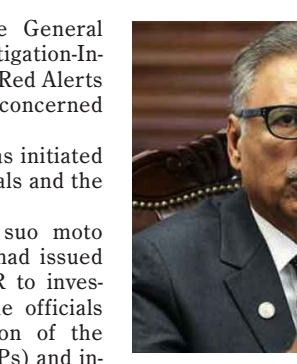
ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Sunday disposed of 42 representations of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) in cases of bogus sales tax invoices, worth over Rs 1.2 billion. The FBR had filed the representations with the President of Pakistan assailing the orders of the Federal Tax Ombudsman (FTO) passed in suo moto cases, in which bogus Sales Tax Refunds were reimbursed fully or partially by the delinquent officials of the FBR to the fake claimants.

The huge scam was unearthed

by FBR's Directorate General Intelligence & Investigation-Inland Revenue and the Red Alerts were issued to the concerned field formations.

However, no action was initiated against the FBR officials and the fake claimants.

The FTO on taking suo moto notice of the matter had issued directions to the FBR to investigate and identify the officials involved in verification of the registered persons (RPs) and initiate a disciplinary action. In pursuance of the FTO's recommendations and also the pre-



vious orders of the President of Pakistan passed in similar cases, the FBR constituted six

fact-finding inquiry committees to deal with 130 suo moto cases relating fake refund claims. The Terms of Reference (ToR) of the committees were meant to identify the wrong-doings and involvement of officials in each case, and fix responsibility. Also, these committees were tasked to prepare a draft charge sheet and statement of allegations with respect to each official and submit a report to the Board within 30 days.

President Alvi, in view of the findings of the committees, disposed of the representations of

the FBR pertaining to the cases in which full or partial refunds were paid fraudulently. He directed the FBR for submission of a monthly implementation report to the Federal Tax Ombudsman's Secretariat till the completion of the action on each case.

He also ordered to afford an opportunity of show-cause and hearing to the official in case of any departmental action proposed against him, to satisfy the requirement of due process and the principles of natural justice. — APP

Spoilers in Gwadar

THE threat from militants targeting the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor gets more pronounced by the day. The bomb targeting Chinese nationals in Gwadar on Friday could have been much more devastating had plainclothes soldiers not moved in at the right time. Having said that, the loss of the lives of two children is still very tragic. Another two children were injured alongside two others, one of them Chinese; this alone identifies the very limited capacity of militants to carry out attacks within Pakistan. A dampened ability to orchestrate terror incidents on our soil is both a source of hope and cause for concern. Direct actions by both the intelligence apparatus and security forces is leading to minimised loss of life and a scattered frequency of attacks. But given the nature of the fight we are in, eradicating all security threats is a near impossible task.

Another lesson to remember is how many militant groups such as the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) are patronised by India, in terms of funding, capacity building and training. This is an outfit that has been banned by Pakistan, the US and the UK, and is also identified in our list of outfits supported directly by India. The country's own newspapers have reported incidents of New Delhi funding and taking care of militants in India. India's support in trying to destabilise CPEC is getting more transparent. In the face of this damning evidence, it is hard for the international community to deny the facts and dismiss our narrative. Another diplomatic push to highlight the state-sponsored terrorism of the Modi government must be focused upon.

Alongside this, since Beijing is also being targeted alongside Islamabad, there must be greater interaction in how to fight this threat together. The Chinese embassy has also asked Pakistani authorities to catch the culprits as soon as possible. The objective here for India and its partners is twofold; derail Pakistan's efforts to get on the path to growth, and deny China access to the Indian Ocean. This requires a huddle together to work out the best defence—both diplomatic and economic solutions must be considered.

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The Taliban's promises

THE return of Taliban rule in Afghanistan naturally receives a lot of apprehension and fear from people inside Afghanistan as well as outside. Particularly anxious are its neighbours where any change in power results in a dynamic shift in the geopolitics of the region. Yet amidst the trepidation, there is some hope that the Taliban of today are different from the Taliban twenty years ago. In a wide-ranging speech at the Pakistan Military Academy (PMA) Kakul, Pakistan Army Chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa stated that Pakistan expects that the Taliban will fulfil promises made to the global community regarding women and human rights and will not allow Afghan land to be used against any other country.

These are two major promises on which peace in the community relies on. The Taliban's past records in these areas do not inspire confidence, and it is much too early to speculate definitively how the Taliban will go about these promises, although early reports do not look very positive. It is expected that there will be some issues around the Pakistan-Afghanistan borders—trouble started before the Taliban took over the country, when they seized the Spin Boldak border, demanding visa-free entry for Afghan citizens.

Pakistan has given enormous sacrifices in the war on terror, just by proximity to the region, and in its efforts to facilitate peace. Thus, we have further expectations, as well as concerns, from the Taliban; most importantly being the issue of the Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Pakistan on Friday said it would ask the incoming government in Afghanistan to act against the banned TTP. The suppression of the TTP is important for stability in Pakistan, as well as Afghanistan, so it is in both countries' interest to curtail the actions of the designated terrorist group. Terrorism in the area will lead to stricter borders, which is not what the Taliban want. A border that is constantly under threat will not help trade ties, and it will halt the movement of citizens to connect to their families.

Game Changer?

Fahd Husain



President Joe Biden is under fire both from Republicans and many Democrats while he grapples with what is being described as a full-blown foreign policy crisis that may overwhelm his domestic agenda. The two-decade-long debacle, the American fatigue from its 'forever wars' and the battering of its perception as a global leader that its allies could rely on — all these factors may lead to a shrinking American role in this region, and perhaps even beyond

THE Taliban have upended most calculations. Their lightning reconquest of Afghanistan has pushed the situation, and its stakeholders, into uncharted waters. The magnitude of change could surpass many estimates.

The United States of America is reeling from both the loss of war and loss of face. In the latest issue of the US magazine New Yorker, Robin Wright has penned an article titled 'Does the great retreat from Afghanistan mark the end of the American era?' In the piece, she writes: "It's not just an epic defeat for the United States. The fall of Kabul may serve as a bookend for the era of US global power."

The cost of the humiliating defeat in the two-decades-long 'war on terror' launched by president George Bush in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks — a war that for all practical purposes ended the day the Taliban took back control of Kabul and US personnel had to be evacuated from their embassy via helicopters — indeed the cost of this war is more steep than Bush and his successors could have imagined.

The New Yorker article explains: "For the United States, the costs do not end with its withdrawal from either Afghanistan or Iraq. It could cost another two trillion dollars just to pay for the healthcare and disability of veterans from those wars. And those costs may not peak until 2048. America's longest war will be a lot longer than anyone anticipated two decades ago."

Pakistan is in a delicately promising position after the relatively peaceful transition of power in Kabul.

President Joe Biden is under fire both from Republicans and many Democrats while he grapples with what is being described as a full-blown foreign policy crisis that may overwhelm his domestic agenda. The two-decade-long debacle, the American fatigue from its 'forever wars' and the battering of its perception as a global leader that its allies could rely on — all these factors may lead to a shrinking American role in this region, and perhaps even beyond. The question therefore is, will the defeat in

Afghanistan become a game changer for the United States?

Afghanistan is teetering on the edge, again, after the Taliban's takeover of Kabul and the rest of the country. A civil war has been averted but the shape of things to come remains unclear in the absence of a formal government in Kabul. The Taliban are a reality though that few can ignore. Most will not. The Taliban for their part have to be careful not to give the world a reason to isolate them diplomatically and cripple them financially. The worst-case scenario is a continuation of violence and instability that has ravaged Afghanistan for the last five decades. The best-case scenario however is also a possibility given how various factors appear to be gelling together.

In this scenario, the following could take place:

(1) Taliban form an inclusive government that includes leaders from the former Northern Alliance who may also have been part of the Ashraf Ghani regime, as well as representatives from all major ethnic groups; (2) this government is accorded recognition by the international community; (3) with all rivals joined in the government, fighting comes to an end and there is finally peace in the country after decades of conflict; (4) international pressure, and need for assistance, moderates the Taliban government to a degree of acceptable normalcy and the country begins to inch towards the global mainstream; (5) China and Russia as the two largest regional powers enhance their diplomatic and economic footprint inside Afghanistan, with investment leading to greater inter-regional trade and infrastructure connectivity. Prospects brighten for linkages between Central Asia, Afghanistan, Pakistan and Iran with the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative spinning off prosperity via Afghanistan.

The question therefore is, will the Taliban victory become a game changer for Afghanistan? Pakistan is in a delicately promising position after the relatively peaceful transition of power in Kabul. After two decades of turmoil across its western border that spilled over and cre-

ated havoc inside the country, Pakistan could possibly be looking at a vindication of sorts of its long-held policy about the Taliban. The general conclusion drawn by analysts and experts is that Pakistan, China and Russia have consolidated their positions in the region as a result of the latest developments in Afghanistan while the US and India have lost out.

The possible advantages that Pakistan is looking at are: (1) Kabul will not have a pro-India regime with an intelligence service like NDS actively promoting instability in Pakistan; (2) Peace in Afghanistan would mean reduced pressure of refugees coming into Pakistan, and possibly at a future date a return of some of the nearly four million Afghan refugees currently in Pakistan; (3) Pakistan could open up a land route to Central Asia and beyond and push forward its geo-economic agenda; (4) Pakistan could also try and settle its TTP problem once and for all if the Taliban regime is willing to cooperate in all aspects; (5) a peaceful western border would enable Pakistan to focus more on the continuing threat from the eastern border. There is of course a downside even to the upside. The fears of scapegoating by the US and other Western nations remains real even though it has not picked up momentum. However, handled deftly, and with greater support from China and Russia, Pakistan can push back if such a campaign is orchestrated. If the Taliban behave, and do the right things, the prospects of a Western blowback against Pakistan can diminish significantly.

The question therefore is, could the strategic change in Afghanistan become a game changer for Pakistan?

Exciting and uncertain times are upon us. With the two-decade-long chapter that started with the 9/11 attacks now closing, a new and promising one is opening up in our region. Are we positioned well to leverage the huge opportunities that may be on offer in the months and years to come?

Twitter: @fahdhusain

— Courtesy DAWN

Priorities for socio-economic development in Azerbaijan'

Khalid Taimur Akram



Azerbaijan has adopted a well-structured and cohesive policy framework. It can easily envisage that the country under the incumbent leadership will continue to pursue efficacious strategies for industrial development, technological transformation, environmental sustainability, and other national priority agenda

AZERBAIJAN has undergone significant economic transformation and development since the country's independence in 1991. The country has been implementing ambitious economic reforms due to startling policies adopted by His Excellency, President Ilham Aliyev. The structural reforms and open policy have paved the way for stable micro and macro-economic conditions, a drastic reduction of inflation and growth resumption. Moreover, rapid progress has lately been made in developing market-based mechanisms in significant areas of the economy. The rapid economic development is mainly attributed to the exploitation of hydrocarbon resources (through production sharing-agreements with foreign oil companies and foreign direct investment). In this aspect, substantial reforms intended to support a market-based economy have been instrumental in facilitating growth.

Moreover, Azerbaijan has signed multilateral regional integration and socio-economic development agreements with other countries to gain broader international support vis-vis its diplomatic narrative. Likewise, Azerbaijan's vision 2030 and adopted strategies under its grand vision are worth praising. This study essentially discusses the grand vision 2030 of Azerbaijan for socio-economic development and regional connectivity. The article also highlights the success stories of Azerbaijan under the visionary leadership of His Excellency, President Ilham Aliyev.

Grand Vision 2030 of Azerbaijan: February Decree Azerbaijan has adopted a well-structured and cohesive policy framework. It can easily envisage that the country under the incumbent leadership will continue to pursue efficacious strategies for industrial development, technological transformation, environmental sustainability, and other national priority agenda. While analyzing Azerbaijan's beneficial adapted strategies, it is highly significant to highlight the recent Decree signed by His Excellency, President, Ilham Aliyev on 2 February 2021.

As per the order, global economic realities and the goals set at the new stage of development require the determination of the long-term vector of the country's development. In this aspect, the main directions of socio-economic development and the corresponding national priorities are also pertinent to monitor. Thereby, a framework of relevant policy and reforms and "Nation-

al priorities for socio-economic development: Azerbaijan - 2030" have been approved to achieve the goals set in the new strategic period.

Under the auspice of the recent Decree, a progressive linkage between society, business, and the state will be strengthened for Azerbaijan's long-term sustainable and rapid socio-economic development. Moreover, the transformation would foster economic cooperation through market reforms, education reforms, strengthening private property institutions, business-friendly governance, institutional development, energy security, and further liberalization of trade regimes.

It will allow to expand exports to the international market. These major drivers would stimulate industrial innovation and give new impetus to economic growth. These national priorities are relevant to the fulfillment of the commitments arising from the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDG 2030). Under Vision 2030, Azerbaijan is determinant to implement major national priorities for socio-economic development. Out of many priorities, few key policy areas have been outlined below:

a. A society based on inclusive, dynamic and justice
b. Steadily growing competitive economy
c. Reconstruction and great return to liberated territories
d. Clean and green environment
e. Technological transformation, modern innovation and competent human resource development

Successful Policies of Visionary Leader President Ilham Aliyev:

The victory of Azerbaijan in the second Karabakh war and its triumph during the tenure of President Ilham Aliyev is the clear manifestation of startling policies and strategies. The visionary leader made sure that its rightful stance is duly propagated and disseminated to the world. The Second Karabakh War was the turning point and has changed the whole landscape of the Caucasus region. Azerbaijan liberated its towns and nearly 300 settlements from brutal Armenian occupation. The innovative leader President Ilham Aliyev, who guided his country into an exceptional path of prosperity with a firm resolve. His tenacity under such a complex situation helped him liberate the occupied territories and restore the original borders of Azerbaijan. This victory will present new opportunities in the coming

years alongside systematic and sustainable reforms. Under his guidance, Azerbaijan has always kept its allies-Pakistan, and Turkey, close to its heart.

In contemporary times, they have reached new heights of military, socio-economic and diplomatic cooperation. Pakistan has unconditionally supported Azerbaijan during the Second Karabakh war. As an expression of solidarity with Azerbaijan, Pakistan neither recognized Armenia nor established diplomatic relations with the country. Pakistan and Azerbaijan are supporting each other over the disputed territories on various international platforms.

It is clear that Pakistan will never jeopardize its cordial and brotherly relations with Azerbaijan. It will not back from its principal stance and will not accord recognition to Armenia. Both the countries had exceptional relationship in the past and it will grow with each day passing in the future.

Sustainable Development and Policy Coherence: A well-functioning modern infrastructure, is a central requirement for inclusive economic development and sustainable growth. Azerbaijan is a country that has been bestowed with abundant natural resources. Its oil and gas production facilities have bought huge sustenance to its economic structure over the past decades. Economic advantages have been gained, and socio-political & socio-economic foundations have been formed over many years. The great reforms have been reflected by a profound analysis of the February Decree. In this regard, the government of Azerbaijan and relevant agencies are well-coordinated with one another to execute the adopted programs.

Moreover, Azerbaijan's effective fight against the Coronavirus pandemic, coupled with its practice of solidarity for the collective good, has given a new impetus to profound large-scale reforms and the grand vision of 2030. Azerbaijan is a social state and always endorsed and encouraged Human-Civil rights and freedom. By the abovementioned in-depth analysis of Azerbaijan's vision 2030 and successful policies by the visionary leadership, it has been clear that these strategies will pave the way to attain national goals and enhance global outreach. The result-oriented policies and targets amid vision 2030 of Azerbaijan would ultimately prove to be a driving force for strengthening the nation and enhance regional cooperation.

Briefs

20 Afghans killed in airport chaos

FROM PAGE 01
US warns of security threats at Kabul airport and the EU says it is "impossible" to evacuate everyone at risk from the Taliban. Terrified Afghans are still trying to flee, deepening a tragedy at Kabul airport where the US and its allies have been unable to cope with the huge numbers of people trying to get on evacuation flights.

Taliban blames US for airport chaos

FROM PAGE 01
died in the crowds, without giving further details. A journalist, who was among a group of fleeing media workers and academics fortunate enough to reach the airport on Sunday, described desperate scenes of people surrounding their bus on the way in. "They were showing us their passports and shouting 'take us with you... please take us with you,'" the journalist told AFP. "The Taliban fighter in the truck ahead of us had to shoot in the air to make them go away." Britain's Sky News on Saturday aired footage of at least three bodies covered in white tarpaulin outside the airport. It was not clear how they had died. Other journalists at the scene have reported people being crushed, while others were dehydrated and terrified.

Ghani can return to Afghanistan

FROM PAGE 01
"All Afghans are our brothers and hence, they can return to the country," he said. "The sole reason for our enmity was driven by the ambition to change the system. The system has now changed," he added. Haqqani said the Taliban were not the ones who went to war against the US, adding that the group had decided to take up arms against the US after it invaded their homeland and fought against its culture, religion and country. "The Americans were using weapons against us, on our homeland," he said, adding that God gave the Taliban American weapons as the spoils of war. He said that the Taliban had achieved a huge victory over their enemies, adding that the Afghanistan Army consisted of 350,000 troops and was supported by the US, NATO and other countries.

China-Pak ties won't be affected by terrorist acts

FROM PAGE 01
"We are devising a joint strategy for the protection of the Chinese citizens," he added. Speaking on the occasion, Nong Rong observed that the Chinese companies were working on various projects in Pakistan. He asked for making the security protocols for the citizens and the companies more stringent. A day earlier, the Chinese embassy strongly condemned Friday's suicide attack on a motorcade of Chinese personnel in the port city of Gwadar and demanded of the Pakistani authorities to conduct a thorough investigation and "severely punish the perpetrators". The embassy statement urged the authorities at all levels to take effective measures to strengthen the security of the Chinese citizens in Pakistan and upgrade security cooperation mechanism to prevent a repeated occurrence of such incidents. On Friday, a suicide bomber targeted a motorcade carrying Chinese personnel at the Gwadar East Bay Expressway project in Balochistan, killing two local children and injuring several others. At least one Chinese national was among the injured, the embassy said.

Ugás beats Pacquiao by unanimous decision

"My best wasn't good enough tonight, no excuses. I wanted to fight for the title in the ring and tonight the champion is named Ugás," said Pacquiao

SPORTS DESK

LOS VEGAS: Yordenis Ugás beat Manny Pacquiao by unanimous decision to retain his WBA welterweight title in what some observers speculated could be the Philippine senator's final fight, ending a legendary boxing career. After an unimpressive performance in his return on Saturday night from the longest layoff of his quarter-century in professional boxing, Pacquiao said he has not decided whether he will fight again. He also would not confirm whether he will enter the Philippines' presidential race, as is widely expected. He intends to make an announcement next month. "That's boxing," a deflated Pacquiao said afterwards. "I had a hard time in the ring making adjustments. My legs were tight. I'm sorry I lost tonight, but I did my best." It was a sweet victory for Ugás, who had been awarded the WBA title after Pacquiao was stripped of the belt by the sanctioning body earlier this year for inactivity.



"My best wasn't good enough tonight, no excuses. I wanted to fight for the title in the ring and tonight the champion is named Ugás," said Pacquiao. "I've done a lot for boxing and boxing has done a lot for me. I look forward to spending time with my family and thinking about my future in boxing." Ugás (27-4) seized his opportunity as the late injury replacement for Errol Spence Jr, frustrating Pacquiao (67-8-2) throughout what might be the final fight of the 42-year-old Philippine senator's career. T-Mobile Arena appeared sold out and the crowd of 17,438 was vocally behind its Filipino hero. Even after a lengthy layoff in the last stages of his career, Pacquiao remains a surefire draw and a bankable star in a sport lacking both at its highest levels. The 35-year-old Ugás threw far fewer punches than Pacquiao, but his blows were more precise and more effective. Pacquiao struggled to get inside on Ugás' effective jab, while Ugás landed his right hand to increasing effect in the later rounds.

Turkey raises security measures along Iranian border

FOREIGN DESK

ANKARA: Turkey has raised security measures along its border with Iran through further reinforcements deployed in the region against irregular migration, said authorities on Saturday. Speaking to the reporters, Mehmet Emin Bilmez, the governor of the eastern Van province, said: "Since July 13, with reinforcements deployed from other provinces, security measures have been kept at a high level at the borderline." Examining the construction of a modular wall being built in eastern Van and Agri provinces to prevent the en-

trance of irregular migrants into Turkey through the Iranian border, Bilmez said: "In addition to the wall, the law enforcement officers keep the border under control day and night." After the latest developments, reinforcements from other provinces were sent to the region as part of support to the gendarmerie along the borderline, he noted. Also, the security general directorate provided support to the region with 50 armored vehicles and 35 personnel, the governor added. Our gendarmerie, police, and border units are working in harmony and making use of all sorts of technology, unmanned

aerial vehicles, and thermal cameras," Bilmez said. Meanwhile, Col. Ilker Ertugrul, the commander of the border brigade, said they are spending efforts to protect the 295-kilometer (183-mile) Iranian border with six battalions, three commando battalions, and armored vehicles. The infrastructure and superstructure works of 58 observation towers and 45 communication towers have been completed, Ertugrul added. The construction of modular wall work is being carried out in three phases in a 64-kilometer (39-mile) section of the region, he stressed, saying the construction of two additional

border police stations and electro-optic tower works in the region is underway. The work for the wall has been completed in the 6-km (3.7-mi) section of the second phase, while in the third phase, construction of around a length of 200 meters (656 feet) of the wall has started, he added. Also, Deputy Commander of the Provincial Gendarmerie Col. Osman Delen said: "We are resolutely implementing the measures we have taken to prevent irregular migration flows, together with 54 elements comprising security guards, commandos, and internal security teams just behind the border units."



Azizullah Fazli re-appointed as ACB chairman

KABUL: Former chairman of Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) has been re-appointed as the new chairman of the board. "Former ACB Chairman Azizullah-Fazli has been re-appointed ACB Chairman. He will oversee ACB's leadership and course of action for the upcoming competitions," ACB tweeted. He was leading the board during the World Cup in 2019 which was the worst tournament in the history of the Afghanistan National Cricket team. The team lost there all nine matches under the captaincy of Gulbadin Naib after which both the chairman and skipper were sacked. Azizullah Fazli occupies the chairmanship days after the Afghan National Cricket team is heading towards Sri Lanka to play a three-match series against Pakistan. There are fears about the tour being canceled as the flights from Hamid Karzai International Airport are nearly impossible to be operated owing to thousands of people waiting both in and outside the airport to fly out of Afghanistan. Earlier, the Taliban officials said that there will not be any problem and predicament to the national committee of the Olympic and Afghan Cricket board. The Taliban along with the former national player, Abdullah Mazari visited the board twice after they took over Kabul. They have also met with former captains, Nawroz Mangal and Asghar Afghan. - DNA

Security experts arrive in Lahore

LAHORE: Security experts have arrived in Pakistan to review arrangements ahead of New Zealand and England cricket teams tours, ARY Sports reported. The New Zealand and England boards have sent security experts to review the arrangements. Australian-based security expert Reg Dickinson has been hired by New Zealand Cricket (NZC) while England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) has sent David Sr. to Lahore. Security experts will begin their work tomorrow, during which security experts will also visit Gaddafi Stadium. - DNA

Pakistan's Imaad Ali wins World Youth Scrabble Cup

KARACHI: Pakistan's Syed Imaad Ali has won the World Youth Scrabble Championship, claiming the world title for the second time. Imaad previously won this championship in 2018 in Dubai. He became the first player in the world to win the World Youth Title twice. With this victory, he has become the most successful scrabble player in Pakistan. He has won three world titles so far. He won the Wespas Youth Cup twice and the Junior World Championship once He defeated his rival in nine of the 13 games



in the finals. Pakistan's Hisham Hadi Khan finished fourth after winning seven games, while the top ten players played 13 games in

the two-day finals. It must be noted that Pakistan hosted World Youth Cup for the second time and it was played online. - DNA



LIVERPOOL: Liverpool's Sadio Mane scores the second goal during the English Premier League match between Liverpool and Burnley at Anfield in Liverpool, Britain. - DNA

Over 350 people evacuated from Afghan capital reach Istanbul

Cemil Beyoglu, another passenger, said he was elated to be in Turkey

AGENCIES

ISTANBUL: Some 357 people, including 16 infants, evacuated from Afghanistan's capital Kabul arrived in Istanbul on Sunday. They were first taken to Pakistan on a Turkish Air Force transport plane and then brought to Istanbul on a Turkish Airlines flight. "There was complete chaos at the Kabul airport. We had a very difficult time getting out of there. I am just so glad to be in Turkey," Ersin Karaduman, owner of a construction firm in Afghanistan, told reporters in Istanbul. Humayun Hayri, an Afghan with Turkish citizenship, said he was intent on leaving Afghanistan after the Taliban took control of the country. Cemil Beyoglu, another passenger, said he was elated to be in Turkey and expressed gratitude to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan for the evacuation. On Saturday, 160 people, including Turkish citizens and foreign nationals, airlifted from Kabul had arrived in Istanbul. The unexpected power grab by the Taliban has triggered a rush to flee Afghanistan, including civilians who assisted foreign soldiers or groups and now fear retribution.

Bases in Spain to be used for refugees

WEB DESK

MADRID: US President Joe Biden and Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez agreed two military bases in southern Spain can be used to receive Afghans who have worked for the US government, the Spanish government said on Sunday. In a 25-minute telephone conversation on Saturday night, Biden and Sanchez agreed Moron de la Frontera near Seville and Rota near Cadiz can be used for refugees from Afghanistan until their travel to other countries is arranged. "Pedro Sanchez and Joe Biden agreed the use of the bases of Moron and Rota to host Afghans who worked with the US while in transit to other countries," the Spanish government said in a statement on Sunday. Sanchez tweeted on Saturday: "I have just had a meaningful conversation with President Joe Biden in which we have addressed several topics of common interest, particularly the situation in Afghanistan and the collaboration between our governments in the evacuation of citizens from that country." A plane carrying 110 Afghan refugees and their families arrived at a Spain-based European Union hub at a military base outside Madrid on Saturday night, including 36 people who had worked for the US administration in Afghanistan. The base is being used to host Afghan refugees who worked with the European Union and their families who will then move to other EU countries.

KSA's first girls' football center set to open

DNA

RIYADH: The first football training center for girls in Saudi Arabia is set to open in the capital city of Riyadh, according to local media reports. The Saudi Arabian Football Federation (SAFF) will open regional training centers for aspiring female players across the Kingdom on September 11, the Arriyadiyah sports newspaper said. The centers will have three categories available for young women, which include: Under 13, under 15, and under 17. Tryouts will be held for two-weeks to test the girls' abilities, according to the report. The facilities will provide a safe environment for girls in Saudi Arabia to practice football and are well-equipped to help discover their talents in an educational setting, Arriyadiyah cited the centers' management as saying. Women's football in the Kingdom has witnessed massive development in recent years and the latest program is in line with SAFF's initiative to encourage women to join the sport, the director of women's football at the SAFF, Lamia Bahian, told Arriyadiyah. In recent years, Saudi Arabia has made numerous changes to government policies and promoted the inclusion of women in sports in both professional and recreational capacities. Under the Vision 2030 plan - put forth by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman - women have been welcomed into sport stadiums and allowed to form national teams. From 2015 to 2020, women's participation in sports in Saudi Arabia rose by about 149 percent, the Sports Minister Abdulaziz bin Turki al-Faisal had said at an event last year.

Iran: Japanese FM discusses nuclear deal, Afghanistan

Representatives from Iran, China, Russia, France, Germany, United Kingdom, the European Union, and the US are soon expected to return to Vienna to continue talks on restoring the deal that were paused after six rounds in July to allow for the new administration in Tehran to take form

FOREIGN DESK

TEHRAN: Japanese Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi is in Tehran for a string of top-level meetings on a range of issues including Iran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers and the developing situation in Afghanistan. Motegi, who touched down in the Iranian capital late on Saturday as part of his tour of the Middle East, met with President Ebrahim Raisi, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, security chief Ali Shamkhani, and parliamentary speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf on Sunday. The newly elected president told him Iran remained committed to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA),

as the nuclear deal is known, which the United States unilaterally abandoned in 2018, imposing sanctions. "The Americans must answer to the world's public opinion why they did not implement their commitments under the JCPOA and exited this international accord," Raisi said, while also stressing Iran is not against negotiations. According to the president's website, Motegi reiterated Tokyo's support for the multilateral accord, saying "we believe restoring the JCPOA is beneficial to all and can help resolve issues through dialogue". Representatives from Iran, China, Russia, France, Germany, United Kingdom, the European Union, and the US are soon expected to return to Vienna to

continue talks on restoring the deal that were paused after six rounds in July to allow for the new administration in Tehran to take form. But key disagreements - among other things - over how and which US sanctions need to be lifted and how Iran can again scale back its nuclear programme have cast doubt over whether the deal can be restored. On Sunday, the Iranian president also told Motegi he welcomes efforts by Japan and neighbouring countries to help Afghanistan, which was recently seized by the Taliban in a matter of days after a withdrawal of US troops. Raisi reiterated his stance that Afghans must decide the direction for their own country, and said Americans have ad-

mitted by pulling out after 20 years in Afghanistan that their presence was a mistake. "Without a doubt we will also witness such confessions by other countries in the region and in the Persian Gulf area in the foreseeable future," he said, denouncing US "bullying" in the region. Motegi expressed concern over recent developments in Afghanistan, emphasizing the necessity to stop violence and safeguard the people. "Tokyo supports diplomatic efforts by the region's countries to achieve peace and stability in the region, and it is our fundamental stance that issues need to be resolved through dialogue," he was quoted as saying. The issue of a significant volume of Iranian assets that continue to be frozen in Japan because of

US sanctions, thought to total more than \$1.5bn, also came up during the meeting. "Delays in releasing Iranian assets in Japanese banks is not justifiable," the president said. The delegation led by Motegi earlier on Sunday met with outgoing foreign minister Zarif at the Iranian foreign ministry. Zarif said in a tweet the sides "discussed strengthening bilateral relations, how to resuscitate the JCPOA, and the catastrophic US-engineered situation in Afghanistan". The Twitter account of the Japanese embassy in Tehran also announced the two countries signed a customs agreement. "The goal of this agreement is to provide administrative support and joint cooperation in customs affairs," it said.

Briefs

Harris begins SE. Asia trip

MONITORING DESK

WASHINGTON: Kamala Harris, vice president of the United States, has arrived in Singapore at the start of a short tour to Southeast Asia on which she will offer reassurances of Washington's commitment to the region amid concerns over China's growing influence there. Reuters news agency quoted a US official saying that Harris's trip, which began on Sunday, will show Washington was in Southeast Asia "to stay" while AFP cited an official saying that the vice president "will make clear throughout the trip that we do have an enduring commitment to the region". Worries about the outcome in Afghanistan could muddy that message, however. Experts say Harris will have to contend with questions over US dependability following its chaotic pullout from Afghanistan and the Taliban's lightning takeover of the country. "What has happened in Afghanistan has been quite frustrating and upsetting for a lot of countries," said Yun Sun, co-director of the East Asia Program at the Stimson Center think tank. "The concern is one day when the United States determines you are no longer as important, they can just pack up and leave and there is nothing you can do about it," he told Reuters.

NZ reports 21 new local COVID-19 cases

AGENCIES

AUCKLAND: New Zealand recorded 21 new cases of COVID-19 on Sunday, as the current community outbreak of the highly transmissible Delta variant continues to grow, bringing infections associated with the outbreak to 72, health officials said. Of the 21 new cases, 20 are in Auckland, the largest city, and one is in the capital Wellington. Five people were in hospital, but no one was an intensive care unit. The Pacific nation of 5.1 million is under a strict lockdown until midnight on Tuesday as the outbreak has widened beyond the two key cities. COVID-19 Response Minister Chris Hipkins said that about a million people have been fully vaccinated in New Zealand, after more than 50,000 doses of the vaccine were given on Saturday. "We continue to deliver incredible numbers we can be proud of," he said. Until the current outbreak, however, New Zealand's vaccination pace was the slowest among the wealthy nations of the OECD grouping, with only a fifth of the population fully vaccinated. The country has recorded just 2,660 confirmed coronavirus cases since the start of the pandemic and 26 related deaths, according to the health ministry.

Qatar sets Oct 2 for first legislative elections

FOREIGN DESK

DOHA: Qatar's first legislative polls for two-thirds of the advisory Shura Council will be held on October 2, according to a decree issued by the ruling emir on Sunday. Qatar will elect 30 members of the 45-seat body while Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani will continue to appoint the remaining 15 members. The council will have legislative authority and approve general state policies and the budget. It will also exercise control over the executive, except for bodies setting defence, security, economic and investment policy. Prime Minister Sheikh Khalid bin Khalifa Bin Abdulaziz Al Thani called on citizens "to participate positively in the first elections to be held in the history of the State of Qatar to form the elected Shura Council", the state-run Qatar News Agency reported.



COLOMBO: The High Commissioner of Pakistan called on President of Sri Lanka with a donation of COVID19 medical equipment that included ventilators & C-PAP breathing aid machines. The President thanked the Govt. of Pakistan for support provided as part of SAARC's emergency relief to the region in the fight against the pandemic. - DNA

Pakistan's export of rice to China may cross 1mn tons

Last year our rice exports to China was 475,000 tons and in quantity wise we are the 3rd largest country while in amount of money wise we are the 4th largest rice exporter to China

AGENCIES

BEIJING: "Pakistani rice exports are likely to cross one million tons within two years with increased demand from the Chinese market," said Badar ul Zaman, Commercial Counselor of Pakistan Embassy in China. "Last year our rice exports to China was 475,000 tons and in quantity wise we are the 3rd largest country while in amount of money wise we are the 4th largest rice exporter to China," Badar told China Economic Net. Last year, Vietnam, Myanmar, and Thailand

were the top three rice exporters to China, amounting to 787,538 tons, 911,231 tons, and 324,642 tons respectively. "Rice is the 4th largest export item to China after copper, cotton yarn, and ores", he mentioned. China had appeared as one of the top destinations for importing Pakistani rice, as reflected in the 59% increase of broken rice in last year, while semi/wholly milled rice and IRRI-6 and IRRI-9 are the main top two rice varieties imported by China amounting to around \$259 million last year. Badar said the number of registered rice exporters has increased to 53 and within the last two years 18 new Pakistani rice companies

were registered by the General Administration of Customs P.R. China, which shows the huge demand for Pakistani rice in the Chinese market. These companies fully meet the Chinese standard. He further said that IRRI-6 and IRRI-9 types of rice have special Chinese consumer taste, while all commercial sections in China are trying B2B marketing to promote all kinds of Pakistani rice types, and also the products of quality are in demand here. Dr. Amjad Abbas Khan Magsi, Assistant Professor at Punjab University Pakistan, agricultural analyst, and the landlord, said that the area of hybrid rice increased due

to huge demand from China, and new hybrid rice varieties are being developed in Punjab and other parts of Pakistan, which would give maximum yield and low costs. "Hybrid rice gives more profit and easy techniques to cultivate that also helps to save more than 40% irrigation water, while rice crop cycle span is shorter than the major crops," he told CEN. Experts said that in the last few years, massive investment in the rice industry has been made and due to the popularity of hybrid rice, an enormous quantity of color sorter machines were imported from China to meet the Chinese standard and to capture the world's largest market.



KABUL: A widow, whom husband had died in an IED blast, is selling famous Afghan Nans at a roadside. Afghanistan remains "a very poor country suffering a complex set of humanitarian issues and challenges". - APP

Digital farming essential for smart agriculture revolution

BEIJING: China is willing to share its experience and help integrate information technology and agriculture to being about green revolution in Pakistan. Facing the common challenge of climate change, pandemic, and population growth, a smarter agriculture is the way forward for many countries including China. "The integration of information technology and agriculture will bring about the third green revolution: agricultural digital revolution," said Zhao Chunjiang from China's National Engineering Research Center for Information Technology in Agriculture. "By

2025, China's digital agro economy will exceed a USD 100 billion". In the past, farmers laboured for hours in the fields. But now farm work can be done with internet systems, said a staff member of the exhibitor, Ningxia Green Pioneer (Lvxianfeng) Agricultural Mechanical Services Company, which has transformed local farming model with drones, precision hole-sowing machine, driverless harvesters and plant protecting devices, remote surveillance equipment, etc. supported by the Internet of Things, cloud technology, big data, etc. - APP

Dark days for tourism in the City of Light

AGENCIES

PARIS: Few tourists are gazing at the Mona Lisa or wandering the streets of Paris this summer, dashing hopes that the top tourist destination would see brighter days after last year's pandemic-linked desertion. The City of Light has seen between 3.6 million and 4.7 million visitors between June and August, down from 10 million in 2019, before the coronavirus emerged and wrecked international travel, according to tourism office figures. Only 2.6 million tourists visited Paris last year. "With clients from afar not coming, the impact is considerable," Didier Arino, director of the travel

firm Protourisme, told AFP. France eased its travel rules ahead of the summer season, putting countries in a red, orange and green colour-coded system that determines if visitors need to take a Covid-19 test before arriving, have a compelling reason to visit or quarantine. Museums and other cultural venues reopened after long closures, though visitors have to show proof of vaccination or negative tests. But Paris visitor numbers still disappointed. Arino said occupancy rates at hotels in Paris were worse than elsewhere in France, with revenues down 60 percent. Romain Jouhaud, director general of 4 Roues Sous 1 Parapluie, a company that offers guided visits in a classic French car in the capital, said he only

had 120 customers this summer compared to 360 in 2019. Most of his clients are from the United States and Australia. "We're trying to get a bit more French clients but our problem is that our average price (150 euros) is a little high," he said, noting that the French usually spend less than foreigners. Tour guides have also suffered from the absence of tourists, with activity dropping by more than 80 percent in the Ile-de-France region, which includes Paris, according to the FNGIC association of guides. "Paris is a mirror of the great European capitals," Arino said. "They all have problems and the more they depend on foreign clients, the more difficult it is."

PSO clarifies news stories appearing on news channels

ISLAMABAD: With reference to the stories appearing on news channels and in publications, Pakistan State Oil (PSO) on Sunday clarified no cargo from long term supply contract in September has been dropped or cancelled as reported by certain media outlets. As per the Annual Delivery Plan (ADP) agreed with all stakeholders four cargoes were to be supplied under the long-term contract in the month of September and two spot deliveries were planned, said a statement issued by PSO. "PSO's long-term contract for 60 cargoes a year is not equally divided over 12 months. PSO prudently planned winter (Jan-Feb and Nov-Dec) in advance

when spot prices are usually higher, and arranged 28 cargoes instead of 20 under the long-term contracts- 2 cargoes from the existing long-term contract and 4 additional cargoes from the recently executed long-term contract commencing in January 2022 by exercising contractual rights. This has been planned to meet the ever-increasing gas demand in winter at the lowest possible rates," he further said. PSO has enabled considerable savings through effective planning and contract management by reducing the number of spot cargoes from 12 to 6 this year using contractual flexibilities available while maximizing long-term cargoes through contracts from 50-70. - APP

Afghans face 'impossible' race against time to flee Kabul

AGENCIES

KABUL: Tens of thousands of Afghans were racing Sunday to flee their country as the United States warned of security threats at Kabul's chaotic airport and the European Union said it was "impossible" to evacuate everyone at risk from the Taliban. In the week since the hard-line militants took back power in Afghanistan, the Taliban have vowed a softer version of their brutal rule from 1996-2001, and taken steps towards forming a government. But terrified Afghans continue to try to flee, deepening a tragedy at Kabul airport where the United States and its allies have been unable to cope with the huge numbers of people trying to get on

evacuation flights. A journalist, who was among a group of other media workers and academics lucky enough to get to the airport on Sunday for an evacuation flight, described desperate scenes of people surrounding their bus on the way in. "They were showing us they were desperate and shouting 'take us with you... please take us with you', the journalist told AFP. "The Taliban fighter in the truck ahead of us had to shoot in the air to make them go away." Britain's Sky News on Saturday aired footage of at least three bodies covered in white tarpaulin outside the airport. It was not clear how they had died. Sky reporter Stuart Ramsay, who was at the airport, called the deaths "inevitable



and said people were being "crushed", while others were "dehydrated and terrified". The footage was the latest image of utter despair, after video of a baby

being lifted over a wall at the airport and horror scenes of people hanging onto departing planes. The United States, which has thousands of troops

trying to secure the airport, has set a deadline to complete the evacuations by August 31. But there are up to 15,000 Americans and 50,000 to 60,000 Afghan

allies who need to be evacuated, according to the Biden administration. There are countless others who fear repression under the Taliban and are also trying to flee. US President Joe Biden has described the evacuation operations as "one of the largest, most difficult airlifts in history". The situation was further complicated on Saturday when the US government warned its citizens to stay away from the airport because of "security threats". No specific reason was given, but a White House official later said Biden had been briefed on "counterterrorism" threats, including the Islamic State group. European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell gave a bleak assessment of whether the airlifts would succeed.

Chinese students visit Pakistan embassy

BEIJING: As part of the 70th anniversary celebrations of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China, students from Beijing Chengyouxuan Culture Communication Co., Ltd visited the Embassy of Pakistan in Beijing. Deputy Head of Mission, Ahmed Farooq welcomed the students. He highlighted the deep-rooted bond of friendship between Pakistan and China and the mutual respect and trust that marked this relationship. He hoped that the children would play their active role to further strengthening Pakistan-China friendship and take it to new heights. During a question and answer session, the Embassy officers responded to interesting questions raised by the young Chinese students about the history and culture of Pakistan. The children took a brief tour of the Embassy and keenly observed the pictures of historic high-level visits between the two countries. - APP

Uzbekistan publishes Covid data for August 21

DNA

TASHKENT: The number of confirmed coronavirus cases for August 21 in Uzbekistan increased to 148,203, Trend reports with reference to the statistics of the Uzbek Ministry of Health. To date, 140,941 patients have fully recovered in the country, while 1015 have died. According to the Ministry of Health, the largest number of cases was revealed in Tashkent - 194 cases, in the Tashkent region - 92 cases, and in the Samarkand region - 89 cases. Service for Sanitary and Epidemiological Welfare and Public Health of Uzbekistan has introduced a system of mandatory testing for all persons entering Uzbekistan through border checkpoints using the polymerase chain reaction method. The Ministry of Health also clarified that within seven days after entering Uzbekistan, a repeated PCR test is required. According to the decision of the Special Republican Commission for combating coronavirus in Uzbekistan, starting from June 28 to July 12 restrictions are imposed on entry to Tashkent from neighboring regions by vehicles (cars and buses) in the absence of an urgent need. Also, all entertainment facilities throughout Uzbekistan (restaurants, night-clubs, etc.) will work on schedule from 8:00 to 20:00 (GMT+5). In addition, the Ministry of Health notes that the number of visitors in these establishments should not exceed 50 percent of the capacity. The first case of coronavirus infection in Uzbekistan was detected in the laboratory of the Research Institute of Virology. The outbreak in the Chinese Wuhan city - which is an international transport hub - began at a fishing market in late December 2019. The World Health Organization (WHO) on March 11 declared COVID-19 a pandemic. Some sources claim the coronavirus outbreak started as early as November 2019.

Briefs

NAB has recovered Rs. 535 bln so far

ZUBAIR AHMED

ISLAMABAD: Honorable Mr. Justice Javed Iqbal, Chairman NAB has said that NAB has chalked out an effective national anti-corruption strategy. He said that NAB's Effective Anti Corruption Strategy resulted in excellent performance and recovered Rs. 535 billion during the present management of NAB. He said that Gilani and Galup survey indicated that 59 percent people of Pakistan have shown trust upon NAB which is ample evidence of NAB's across the board accountability as per law. Due to NAB's proactive anti-corruption strategy, NAB's overall conviction ratio is about 66 percent which is a remarkable achievement in the investigation of White Collar Crimes in the world. The reputed national and International organizations like Transparency International Pakistan, World Economic Forum, Global Peace Canada, PILDAT and Mishal Pakistan have lauded NAB's efforts to eliminate corruption which is ample evidence of NAB's excellent performance in an atmosphere of renewed energy, commitment and devotion in conduct of inquiries and investigations against the untouchables/big fish in spite of criticism on NAB but NAB will continue its official duties caring any pressure, threat and criticism as per law. He said that NAB has geared up and rejuvenated to eradicate corruption within all its forms and manifestations. He said that the major focus of NAB is on corruption and corrupt practices, money laundering, cases of cheating the public at large, willful bank loan defaults, and misuse of authority and embezzlement of state funds.

Diamer Bhasha Dam to generate 4,500mw

ISLAMABAD: The installed capacity of Diamer Bhasha Dam will be 4,500 Mega Watt (MW), which will generate 18,100 Gigawatt hours (GWh) power annually. The gross storage capacity of the project will be 8.1 Million Acre Feet (MAF) with live storage capacity of 6.4 MAF. The official information revealed that Diamer Bhasha Dam project which is expected to be completed by April, 2029. Diamer Bhasha Dam is being constructed on River Indus - 40 kilometer downstream of Chilas town. The project is of paramount importance for water, food and energy security of the country. The total estimated cost of Diamer Bhasha Dam project is Rs.1406, 122 million which includes PCI (acquisition of land & resettlement Rs. 175,436 million, PCI (Dam Part Rs. 479,686 million while cost for PCI (Power Generation Facilities yet to be approved) is Rs. 751,000 million. - APP

102 migrants rescued in Channel

FOREIGN DESK

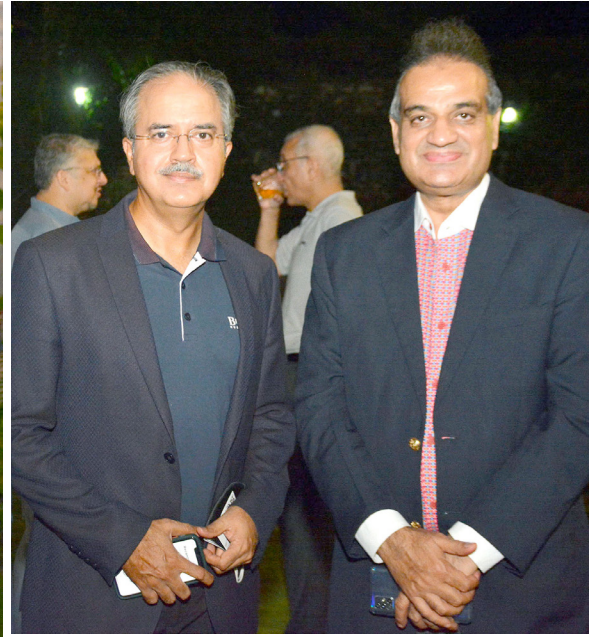
LILLE: Over 100 migrants were rescued in the Channel on Saturday as they tried to reach Britain on makeshift boats, the French maritime prefecture said. A first boat carrying 38 migrants was reported in difficulty off Boulogne, the authorities said. The migrants were rescued and returned to France before being handed over to border police, a statement said. A further 60 migrants were also rescued off Hadelot, including 58 through the intervention of a tug, and two others by a patrol vessel. Four further migrants were picked up by the same patrol boat. All the migrants were now safe, the statement added.

Well-attended reception for Pak Envoy-designate to Canada

Aftab Ahmed Chaudhy, Managing Director Moadaraba Al Mali hosts the reception for Ameer Khurram Rathore; leading figures were present on the occasion. Detailed coverage will appear in the coming issue of CENTRELINE magazine



ISLAMABAD: The High Commissioner designated to Canada Ameer Khurram Rathore, the Canadian High Commissioner in Pakistan Wendy Gilmour and host Aftab Ahmed (extreme right) posing to a picture. - DNA



ISLAMABAD: The newly appointed Spokesman of Ministry of Foreign Affairs Asim Iftikhar Ahmed and Editor Islamabad POST Ansar M Bhatti at the reception. - DNA



ISLAMABAD: Friends presenting flowers to Judat Ayaz on his birthday during the dinner reception. - DNA



ISLAMABAD: Senator Azam Tarar, Khurram Rathore and others at the reception. - DNA

Pakistan favours all-inclusive Afghan setup: FM Qureshi

The Foreign Minister shared Pakistan's perspective on the evolving situation in Afghanistan

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi had a telephone conversation with the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs & Security Policy/Vice President of the European Commission, Mr. Josep Borrell. The Foreign Minister shared Pakistan's perspective on the evolving situation in Afghanistan. The Foreign Minister stressed that a peaceful and stable Afghanistan was of critical importance for Pakistan and the region. Consistent with Pakistan's long-standing stance, the Foreign Minister underlined the importance of an inclusive political solution. He expressed the hope that the Afghan leaders would work together to achieve that end. For its part, the Foreign Minister reaffirmed, Pakistan will continue to support all efforts in this direction. The Foreign Minister underlined that the highest priorities remained ensuring safety and security as well as protection of the rights of all Afghans. Foreign Minister Qureshi added that the current situation in Afghanistan required sustained international engagement. At this critical juncture, it was vitally important to remain in solidarity with the people of



Afghanistan and extend support to them, both in the humanitarian arena and for economic sustenance. The Foreign Minister noted that Pakistan remained in close contact with regional and international partners. He briefed Mr. Borrell of his interactions with several counterparts from Europe. Underlining the importance of regional perspective, the Foreign Minister informed Mr. Josep Borrell about his upcoming visit to the neighbouring countries to coordinate on issues relating to the situation in Afghanistan. The Foreign Minister highlighted Pakistan's efforts to facilitate evacuation of diplomatic personnel and staff of international organizations and others from Afghanistan. The Foreign Minister assured full support of the Government of Pakistan to the EU in their evacuation efforts. It was agreed by both sides to remain in contact and to coordinate closely on the evolving situation.

firmly, Pakistan will continue to support all efforts in this direction. The Foreign Minister underlined that the highest priorities remained ensuring safety and security as well as protection of the rights of all Afghans. Foreign Minister Qureshi added that the current situation in Afghanistan required sustained international engagement. At this critical juncture, it was vitally important to remain in solidarity with the people of

Israel launches airstrikes in Gaza

Israeli jets struck Hamas sites in Gaza late following clashes between Palestinians and troops

MONITORING DESK

GAZA: The violence is one of the worst since the 11-day Israel-Hamas conflict in May. A 13-year-old Palestinian boy and an Israeli Border Police soldier were among those critically injured. Israeli fighter jets struck Hamas sites in Gaza late following clashes between Palestinians and border troops that left dozens wounded. A 13-year-old Palestinian boy and an Israeli Border Police soldier were among those critically injured in what was one of the worst flareups since the May 21 truce. Health authorities in Gaza said the boy was shot in the head. They described most of the other injuries as moderate, including gun shots to limbs, backs and abdomens. "Forty-one civilians were wounded with various injuries," Gaza Health Ministry said in a statement.

How did the latest clashes begin? Hundreds of Palestinians gathered near the Gaza Strip's heavily fortified border for a protest organized by the enclave's Islamist rulers Hamas and other factions. Hamas said the protest was called to mark the burning 52 years ago of Jerusalem's Al-Aqsa Mosque, the third-holiest site in Islam. "Al-Aqsa Mosque is a red line, and any attack on it will be met with valiant resistance from our people," Hamas said in a statement, adding that "thousands" of protesters had taken part. Crowds of young Palestinians hurled rocks and firebombs toward Israeli soldiers and set tires on fire. The protesters also tried to scale the Gaza border wall while some tried to wrest a rifle off a soldier. In response, the Israeli army fired volleys of tear gas toward the protesters.

Tony Blair condemns abandonment of Afghanistan

The abandonment of Afghanistan and its people is tragic, dangerous, unnecessary, not in their interests and not in ours

NEWS DESK

LONDON: Former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, who in 2001 took Britain into war in Afghanistan alongside the United States, condemned the "abandonment" of the country as "dangerous" and "unnecessary". In his first public comments on the crisis since the Afghan government collapsed last weekend, Blair criticised the US motives for the withdrawal as "imbecilic" and "driven not by grand strategy but by politics". "The abandonment of Afghanistan and its people is tragic, dangerous, unnecessary, not in their interests and not in ours," Blair wrote in a wide-ranging article published on his institute's website. "We didn't need to do it. We chose to do it. We did it in obedience to an imbecilic political slogan about ending 'the forever wars' - as if our engagement in 2021 was remotely comparable to our commit-



ment 20 or even 10 years ago." The comments will be widely seen as a direct attack on US President Joe Biden, who used the "forever wars" phrase repeatedly during campaigning last year. Blair, a controversial figure both in the UK and abroad over his strong support for US-led military action in both Afghanistan and then Iraq, argued the withdrawal left "every jihadist group round the world cheering".

"Russia, China and Iran will see and take advantage. Anyone given commitments by Western leaders will understandably regard them as unstable currency," he added. British Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab, who has faced sustained criticism for being on holiday when Kabul fell, conceded late on Saturday that Moscow and Beijing would now play a bigger role in Afghanistan. "We're going to have to bring in countries with a potentially moderating influence like Russia and China, however uncomfortable that is," he told the Sunday Telegraph. "It will give us a group to exercise greater influence and better convey our messages to the Taliban." One of Britain's longest-serving leaders, in power for a decade from 1997, Blair forged a close alliance with former US president George W Bush during the United States' "global war on terror", launched after the September 11, 2001 attacks.

Balkhi speaks about the future moves of Taliban

DOHA: Abdul Qahar Balkhi from the Taliban's Cultural Commission has spoken to Al Jazeera in the group's first official interview since the armed group took over Kabul a week ago. Balkhi revealed his face for the first time on Tuesday at the Taliban's first press conference, during which he translated for spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid. He remains without an official title, as his role is one of many still to be decided in the new government. The Taliban leader said the group wants to move forward and hopes stakeholders - both domestic and international - can cooperate on common interests. Abdul Qahar Balkhi: The consultations are ongoing, and of course it is going to be an inclusive system. We are in talks and we have a relationship, a working relationship, with the Americans about the security arrangement. The outside checkpoints are in our control, and inside is under the control of the US forces, and we are in constant contact with one another. It is very unfortunate for people to be rushing to the airport the way they are at the moment. Because we have announced a general amnesty for everyone in the security forces from the senior to the junior level... this fear, this hysteria that has taken place is unfounded. - News Desk



Iranian commander welcomes Pak counterpart

NEWS DESK

TEHRAN: Admiral Mohammad Amjad Khan Niazi arrived in Tehran on Saturday and was officially welcomed by his Iranian counterpart Shahram Irani. Admiral Niazi is in Tehran at the official invitation of Iranian Navy commander. The two commanders discussed expansion of military relations, deepening ties in the sea, protection of regional security, and using military experienced in undertaking missions and safeguarding the two neighboring country's national interests on the seas. On the side line of the meeting, Iranian and Pakistani navy commanders paid tribute to the anonymous martyrs of the eight-year Holy Defense against Saddam's army buried in the National Museum of the Islamic Revolution and Holy Defense and then made tour at the museum. Admiral Amjad Khan Niazi is to make a visit Iran's navy northern flotilla.

Merkel visits Ukraine before leaving office

AGENCIES

KIEV: German Chancellor Angela Merkel visits Ukraine on Sunday, an ally she has supported in its conflict with pro-Russia separatists but has disappointed with her appetite for Russian gas. She will meet with President Volodymyr Zelensky just two days after holding talks with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in Moscow ahead of her departure from office next month. In power for 16 years, the German leader has been a key ally of Kiev since 2014, when Moscow annexed Crimea and pro-Russia separatists broke away from Ukraine in the east. But she has also been unwavering in pushing across the finish line a controversial Russian gas pipeline to Europe despite fierce opposition from Ukraine, the United States and several European countries. "You can call it a pragmatic approach," Zelensky said this week in an interview with several media outlets, adding that Merkel was conducting a "very delicate balancing act". "In my opinion, this is too soft." Despite disagreements over the pipeline, Germany is a key mediator in attempts to resolve the protracted conflict in eastern Ukraine, which has claimed more than 13,000 lives. Since the fighting broke out, Merkel has been one of the loudest voices accusing the Kremlin of backing the separatists, which Moscow denies.



Man plotting President Saied murder arrested

NEWS DESK

TUNIS: Tunisian security forces arrested an individual in a coastal city accused of plotting the assassination of Tunisian president Kais Saied, local newspaper Al-Chourouk reported on Sunday. The individual, who was identified as a member of the "Lone Wolves" movement, was preparing to target the Tunisian president in a coastal city, a region the president planned on visiting soon. Saied in a speech on Friday said he does not fear any assassination attempts on his life. Investigations have launched into the arrest of the accused individual in the past few hours.