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Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

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Erdogan says, he talked about F-16s with Joe Biden

Detailed News On Page-07

Ukraine war could have only 30 days left

Detailed News On Page-08



Coco Gauff wins US Open crown

Detailed News On Page-06



Report submitted to PM

Terrorists using money generated from smuggling

The report also addressed the issue of Hundi-Hawala (illegal money trade and smuggling) accentuating that 722 currency dealers are involved in illegal forex activity

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: A report submitted to the Prime Minister's House (PMO) revealed that terrorists are using revenue generated from petrol smuggling as a key source of financing. The report, incriminating politicians and government officials revealed that 2.8 billion litres of petrol is smuggled annually to Pakistan from Iran. The petrol smuggling costs Rs60 billion to Pakistan each year, it added. "A total of 995 petrol pumps across the country are involved in the illegal sale of Iranian petrol. Around 90 government officials and 29 politicians are involved in the smuggling of petrol." However, a startling revelation made by the report is that Pakistan State Oil's (PSO) vehicles are involved in the transportation of Iranian petrol. The report also addressed the issue of Hundi-Hawala (illegal money trade and smuggling) accentuating that 722 currency dealers are involved in the illegal forex activity. In Punjab 205 currency dealers – the highest among all the provinces – are involved in the illegal activity followed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) with 183 dealers. Meanwhile, Sindh, Balochistan, and Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) have 179, 104 and 37 such dealers, respectively. In Islamabad, 17 dealers are involved in the Hawala-hundi business. The development comes as earlier this week, Caretaker Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar issued directives to implement strict measures to curb smuggling at border crossings. The premier instructed the officials concerned to improve surveillance and establish a comprehensive monitoring mechanism at irregular border crossings to prevent smuggling in the country. Also, the interim government on Friday, directed the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) to exercise its authority and take necessary measures to

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Task force to determine sizes of federal, provincial govts: PM Kakar

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar Sunday said a task force headed by the finance minister would determine the sizes of federal and provincial governments, look at options to better manage pension funds, besides making efforts to rationalize public expenditure and increase revenue. In an interview with a private television, he said, "We are convinced that there is a need to rationalise expenditure and increase the revenue of the government to create a viable state and lessen existential threats due to economic vulnerability." He said the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) was attempting to help achieve appropriate governance and address the reasons for ill governance in the past. The civil institutions were lax in their working in the past but now the army leadership with its organizational strength had increased the level of confidence of civil service which had renewed energy to implement policies

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COLOMBO: Shaheen Shah Afridi along with Shadab and Babar Azam celebrating wicket against India during Asia Cup match. – DNA

Asia Cup Pak-India match to resume today

SPORTS DESK

COLOMBO: Amid incessant rain, umpires on Sunday decided to call off the Asia Cup 2023 Super 4 clash between arch-rivals Pakistan and India and the game will continue from the same point from today (Monday) with no overs lost. Pakistan won the toss and decided to bowl first against India in the high-voltage clash. When the match was stopped due to rain, India were 147/2 in 24.1 overs. At one stage it seemed that a 34-over match would be possible but rain once again returned to dash the hopes of cricket fans. According to the playing conditions, the game will continue from this point tomorrow with no overs lost. Pakistan have fielded an unchanged playing XI for this high-voltage clash.

Solidarity with Azerbaijan Pakistan condemns so-called elections in Karabakh region

Pakistan considers Karabakh as sovereign territory of Azerbaijan, says Foreign Office spokesperson

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Sunday categorically condemned the polls conducted in the Nagorno-Karabakh region terming them as a violation of the United Nations (UN) Charter and the established principles of international law, a statement issued by the Foreign Office (FO) said. The FO also accentuated that Pakistan considers Karabakh as the sovereign territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan and that attempts to hold elections by the illegally installed regime are "legally and morally reprehensible".

Pak-Kyrgyzstan agree to cement ties

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Dr Zhumaliyev, Member Kyrgyz Republic Parliament and leader of the delegation currently visiting Pakistan on Sunday said that his visit signified demonstrating the highest degree of mutual interest between both countries in further strengthening bilateral trade relations, particularly in

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Briefs

Allies want to 'run away' from elections

NAZIR SIYAL

HYDERABAD: Amid an ongoing "split" over the issue of timely polls with his father, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Sunday said that from the leadership to the workers, all are bound by the decisions of the party. "We will make collective decisions, carry everyone along and as you have never disappointed me, I will never disappoint you," he said while addressing the party workers in Hyderabad. Delay in the general elections date laid bare the apparent simmering political differences within PPP after Bilawal asserted that his allegiance to his father.

MBS visit in limbo Pakistan addresses Riyadh's concerns

KSA alone is interested in investments to the tune of \$25-30 billion for the aforementioned projects

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan will need to address three major concerns of Riyadh to materialise the multibillion-dollar investments in viable copper, mineral, refinery, and solar projects, a newspaper reported Sunday. The much-hyped Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), jointly supervised and operated by the military establishment and civilian authorities, has been playing its role in removing stumbling blocks hindering investment attraction. KSA alone is interested in investments to the tune of \$25-30 billion for the aforementioned projects. Firstly, KSA has expressed interest in constructing a refinery in Hub or Gwadar with an estimated investment of \$10-\$12 billion. It has been discussing this since 2019, but it has not materialized yet. One of the major concerns expressed by KSA was providing incentives through the long-delayed Petroleum Investment Policy, mainly due to the 18th Constitutional Amendment, as provinces were

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Govt mulls ordinance to digitise economy

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: In an effort to digitise the economy, the interim government is planning to bring legislative and administrative changes, besides empowering the Ministry of Information Technology to play the role of a data-gathering agency to broaden a narrow tax base of 4.2 million filers. A newspaper claims that various proposals to increase the number of income tax return filers were discussed during the week – first with Caretaker Prime Minister Anwarul Haq Kakar, and then in the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC).

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'No action against politicians'

BUREAU REPORT

KARACHI: Caretaker Sindh Home Minister Brigadier (ret'd) Haris Nawaz Sunday denied allegations of political victimisation in the province, asserting that no action is being taken against any political leader. The minister's statement comes amidst heightened political tensions in the province after a series of alleged reports began surfacing regarding politicians, particularly from the Pakistan People's Party, being placed on a stop list and their homes being raided in a bid to uncover corrupt practices.

Durrani terms Alvi meeting 'productive'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former federal minister for information and broadcasting Muhammad Ali Durrani has said that his recent meeting with President Dr Arif Alvi was "productive" and helped reduce political temperatures, a Pakistani newspaper reported Sunday. Speaking during an interview with a newspaper, Durrani said he had a long-standing relationship with Dr Alvi. "His thinking was positive. That's why my meeting was meaningful and pleasant," he said. Earlier this week – on the eve of the completion of the president's constitutional term on September 08.

Biden admin not meddling in Pak politics: US senator

The senator's statement comes as Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan is being investigated regarding a diplomatic cipher that the party chief claimed contained the evidence of alleged US involvement in his ouster from power in April last year through a no-confidence vote



DNA

WASHINGTON: US Senator Chris Van Hollen Sunday said the US President Joe Biden-led administration has no intentions of interfering in the internal politics of Pakistan and denied all allegations of political engineering. "I have been in contact with the Biden administration for a long time and can confidently say that there was no attempt made to engineer anything related to Pakistani politics," the senator said while speaking with Pakistan journalists during the annual meeting and gala dinner of the DC, Maryland,

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EASY VISA PERMITTED AIRBORNE ALLIANCE MEMBER SEPTEMBER PASSENGERS

Deputy Commissioner assures normalcy in Chitral

PESHAWAR :Deputy Commissioner Lower Chitral, Muhammad Ali Khan, stated on Friday that the law and order situation is normal in the district, and tourists can visit any tourist destination without any fear. In a video message from his office, along with DPO Ikramullah Khan, he mentioned that additional reinforcements of FC, police, and Levies personnel have been deployed in the border area with Afghanistan, where terrorists attacked an FC checkpoint. He further stated that our security forces successfully repulsed the attack, resulting in the death of a large number of terrorists. The deputy commissioner emphasized that life is normal in the Chitral district, with all business centers, schools, universities, and hospitals functioning as usual. He said that the people are standing shoulder to shoulder with the police and Levies force, offering their support to the security forces.—APP

Big surge in malaria, dengue cases in Sindh

KARACHI : The malaria and dengue cases are rapidly increasing in Sindh and as many as 296,210 cases of malaria were reported from 30 districts of the province while 1,071 cases of dengue were reported during current year. Reportedly, more than 2,100 malaria cases were reported only in Karachi during the current year. According to data collected from different hospitals of Sindh this year, 10,491 cases of malaria were reported from Shaheed Benazirabad, 72,431 cases reported from Mirpur Khas Division, 53,435 cases in Larkana division, 12,412 cases from Sukkur division and 145,341 malaria cases were reported from Hyderabad division. As far as the dengue cases are concerned, about 1,071 dengue cases were reported in Sindh during one month after during 16 new cases of dengue. As many as 875 patients of dengue were reported in Karachi, 120 patients in Hyderabad division, 36 in Mirpur Khas, 17 in Larkana, 18 in Sukkur, and 5 in Benazirabad.—APP

Dozens arrested for cheating in MDCAT

LAHORE : Dozens of candidates have been arrested on charges of cheating during the medical and dental college admission test (MDCAT) conducted Sunday by the University of Health Sciences (UHS), according to a senior official of the Higher Education Department (HED). The HED secretary said these candidates were using Bluetooth devices for cheating. He said the department had been warned about a certain group trying to leak the test using the Bluetooth technology. The official further said they had been tipped off that the same group would try to help candidates cheat.—APP

BMP urges structural reforms for sustainable growth

Mian Anjum Nisar says growing budget deficit entangling economy in vicious cycle of debt

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry's Businessmen Panel (BMP) has stressed the need for implementing structural reforms for good governance, curbing unproductive state expenditures, expanding the tax base, fostering public-private partnerships, and reallocating resources to critical sectors to stimulate sustainable growth, as the country is facing with daunting economic challenges, posing a serious threat to the viability of the industry. The FPCCI former president and Businessmen Panel (BMP) Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar observed that it is imperative to understand that fiscal discipline cannot be achieved and sustained without initiating structural reforms. In the 2023 budget, the government extended substantial subsidies and grants to loss-making entities, which,



ISLAMABAD:A view of Afghan refugees installed solar panel system outside their tent house on a green belt outside Press Club in Federal Capital.—ONLINE

Cut in taxes on real estate sector to attract US\$ 5-6b foreign investment

ICCI President has called upon the government to reduce heavy taxes on the real estate and construction sector that would bring US\$ 5-6 billion foreign investment within a short time and help revive the economy

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) has called upon the government to reduce heavy taxes on the real estate and construction sector that would bring US\$ 5-6 billion foreign investment within a short time and help revive the economy. He said that the business activities of around 70 allied industries are dependent on the

real estate and construction sector, so its better growth would boost of the business activities of all allied industries and stimulate the economic growth of the country. He said this while addressing as chief guest at a reception hosted in his honor by the prominent real estate developer Sial Sarfarz. The balloting of plots of his housing project was held and birthday cake of Ahsan Bakhtawari was also cut on the occasion.

Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari said that the real estate sector is

the major source of attracting remittances and foreign investment, however, the imposition of heavy taxes has caused significant decline in foreign remittances and the gap is increasing. He said that this situation has stagnated the business activities in the real estate and construction sector due to which unemployment is rising. He said that cutting taxes on this sector can immediately attract billions of dollars to the country and revive the economy. He urged that the government should rationalize

taxes on this sector, withdraw tax on deemed income on immovable property and create a conducive environment for this sector to spur the economic development of the country. Speaking on the occasion, Sarfraz Sial said that the overseas Pakistanis are interested in investing in the real estate sector, but heavy taxes are discouraging them. He emphasized that the government should reconsider taxes on this sector and offer more attractive incentives that would boost foreign investment

in the country and provide crucial support to the fragile economy. He said that the government can take the country's economy from recession to sustainable development by focusing on the real estate and construction sector. Zafar Bakhtawari former President ICCI and Secretary General UBG Pakistan, Tahir Abbasi, Khalid Chaudhry, Raja Imtiaz, Nasir Chaudhry and a large number of the business community were present in the reception. A Mehfil-e-Qawwali was also held on the occasion.

PIAF urges to promote technical education

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: The Pakistan Industrial & Traders Associations Front (PIAF) Chairman Fahimur Rahman Saigol has called for formulating an effective policy for the promotion of demand-driven technical education and vocational training in Punjab, as the present setup of technical training is not addressing the requirements of modern industrialization. These views were expressed by him along with Vice Chairman PIAF Tahir Manzoor Chaudhary and PIAF EC members on the occasion of Defense Day ceremony at Government College of Commerce Iqbal Tan. He distributed prizes among the successful students in speech and national anthem competition. College Principal Yaqub Elahi Sheikh, Senior Professors, Faculty Members including Professor Arif Iqbal, Sahibzada Azhar, Irfan Afridi, Mukhtar Hussain Bhatti, Ziaul Haq and others organized the programme. Earlier, the delegation was warmly welcomed and a bouquet was presented to the PIAF



officials. The PIAF Chairman observed that promotion of technical education is vital and much-needed for economic growth. He said that the collaboration between the industry and academia will ultimately bridge the skill gap, leading to a quantum jump in the country's exports. Fahimur Rahman said that the young generation should pay full attention to their studies because they have to take care of the country's future. Vice Chairman Tahir Manzoor Chaudhary assured of his practical cooperation to solve the problems of the college at the level of PIAF as well as at Lahore Cham-

ber. The EC members PIAF Naeem Hanif, Zeeshan Sohail Malik, Shaban Akhtar, Tariq Sulaiman, Amir Ali, Omar Abdullah, Muhammad Abubakar Nadeem, Secretary PIAF Abda Lasboor Sheikh and others were also present in the event. The speakers on this occasion said that the aggressive economic measures, high borrowing rates, inflation, oppressive taxation and unstable currency have been negatively affecting the trade and industry. PIAF Chairman Fahimur Rahman Saigol observed that the ever-increasing cost of production in the country is the real threat to both large-scale

manufacturing and small-scale businesses, as frequent upward revisions in policy rate and continuous fluctuations in rupee against dollar are posing further challenges. They said that the government does not have any pragmatic plan to address this liability, apart from asking for more loans to repay existing debt. Likewise, the target for current financial year's exports is too low to meet the country's revenue. According to the data, the pace of growth in LSM industries is suffering because of restrictions imposed on imports that have caused a shortage of imported raw material.

7mn fine charged against electricity stealers: PESCO

PESHAWAR :Peshawar Electricity Supply Company (PESCO) has so far removed over 500 direct hooks during ongoing operations against electricity stealers in the province. "More than 500 direct hooks have been removed so far while fines for more than 7 million have been charged against electricity theft," spokesman of PESCO told APP on Sunday. As per the Govt directives, he said the anti electricity theft operations continued in the province on war footings basis and more than 250 requests to lodge FIR have been submitted. Meanwhile, 10 superintendent engineers of PESCO were assigned the duties of focal persons with a direction to make contact with provincial task force and divisional commissioners to curb electricity theft and provide relief to all those consumers who pay electricity bills. The Provincial Task Force with an assistance of police, district administration and other relevant departments were directed to remove direct electricity hooks and make recovery from defaulters on priority basis. In this regard, the deputy commissioners would led the task force at their respective districts and report regarding removal of direct hooks and recovery of outstanding dues would be submitted to the caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on daily basis. Directives were issued to the relevant authorities to take stern action against owners of hotels, traders, shopkeepers and vendors involved in taking illegal connections from the government departments, schools, hospitals, railways patta and others. The district administration and police were mobilized to assist PESCO field staff in removal of direct hooks and recovery of outstanding dues against domestic, agricultural and industrial consumers. Strict disciplinary action were being taken against all those staff of PESCO involved in power stealing.—DNA

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

September

Sept01/Libya Revolution Day
Sept01/Tanzania
Defence day
Sept01/Uzbekistan
Independence Day
Sept07/Brazil
Independence Day
Sept09/DPR Korea National Day
Sept09/Tajikistan Independence Day
Sept16/Malaysia Armed Forces Day
Sept16/Mexico National Day
Sept16/Papua New Guinea
Independence Day
Sept18/Chile National Day
Sept21/Malta
Independence Day
Sept23/Saudi Arabia National Day

Hotels & Restaurants



Serena Hotel.....111 133 133
Marriott.....051- 2826121
Monal.....0334-5421812



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

Rescue (Police).....15
Bomb Disposal.....15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance.....1122 & Rescue Services.4451122
Motorway Police...9266044
Motorway Police.9270601-20
Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596
Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115
PIA Flight Info.....114
PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi.5555489
CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

CMH.....5611111
MH.....5611116
Cantt Hospital...9270907-11
DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666



Departments

CDA.....9221334-43
CDA.....9208301-04
Met Office.....9250360-6
RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Portugal Ambassador opens arts, crafts bazaar at ISH

Serena Hotels and Nomad Art Gallery hosted Crats Bazaar and screening of Androon Lahore and Posheeda Qadam

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Serena Hotels, in collaboration with Nomad Art Gallery, hosted a captivating cultural event that left audiences both inspired and enlightened. This event combined the vibrancy of a crafts bazaar with the profundity of two enlightening film screenings. The Ambassador of Portugal to Pakistan Frederico Silva inaugurated the event and emphasized on the importance of promoting art as means of attaining peace and tolerance. The bazaar featured a curated selection of exquisite handmade crafts from talented artisans, showcasing the rich cultural heritage and traditions of the region. This unique exhibition provided attendees with an opportunity to appreciate and purchase exceptional artworks, textiles, jewelry, and more, directly from the artisans. The exhibition reflects Nomad Art Gallery partners from all over Pakistan; community based artisans, young graduates and entrepreneurs. Rich hues of textiles from Sindh including silk and cotton Ajrak, block printed textiles, totes, home accessories, Kashmiri embroidery and shawls, trendy ensemble, handmade toys by Granmani, exquisite silver jewelry by Amna Sharif and SS collection. Pottery by Shazia Zuberi, hand-painted wooden cabinets, bowls and engraved slate items. Rakaposhi Naturals



health foods, bright woven bags, cushions, accessories by Kimmy. Tribal Truck art products and furniture for gifts and self indulgence. The first film screening of the evening, "Androon Lahore," is a powerful documentary that delves into the history of Lahore as seen through the lens of

artist Nageen Hyat. The film captures the essence of Lahore's walled city, revealing its historical richness and the lives of its inhabitants both before and after its restoration. "Androon Lahore" offers a compelling look at the city's vibrant past and its continued relevance in

contemporary times. The second film, "Posheeda Qadam," is a bold exploration of the pervasive issue of violence against women and youth, as well as discriminatory laws in South Asia. This thought-provoking film, directed by shines a spotlight on the patriarchal narrative that has long dominated

the region. "Posheeda Qadam" fearlessly examines draconian laws such as the Law of Evidence and the Hudood Ordinance, which violate fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution. The film also addresses the effects of cyberbullying and harassment, as well as the distressing statistics of

violence against women. This event aims to not only showcase the beauty of indigenous crafts but also to stimulate meaningful discussions on crucial societal issues. Serena Hotels is committed to provide a platform for art, culture, and dialogue that can lead to positive change.

ANF recovers 10 kg drugs in five operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting five operations across the country managed to recover 10 kg drugs and arrested two accused including a woman. According to an ANF Headquarters spokesman, 60 grams of weed was recovered from two parcels confiscated from a courier office in Rawalpindi. Both the parcels were booked from the UK for Azad Kashmir. In another operation, Ice drug was recovered from a parcel booked for Australia at a courier office in Gulbarg, Lahore. 1550 grams of Ice drug was concealed in sheets, bags and other items. A woman resident of Lahore and a Nigerian national who booked the parcel were arrested. In the fourth operation, 1 kg hashish was recovered from a parcel booked for Karachi at Lahore Airport.—APP

Motorway Police recovers stolen car from Swabi

ISLAMABAD: National Highways and Motorway Police (NH&MP) on Friday recovered a car stolen from Rawalpindi near Swabi. According to the details, a white Corolla was stolen from Rawalpindi Area Police Station Saddar and the information was given to the Motorway Police which started the search for it. Meanwhile, a vehicle was found abandoned near Karnel Sher Khan Interchange on Peshawar-Islamabad Motorway. After investigation, it was found that it was the same vehicle that was stolen from Rawalpindi and a fake number plate was installed on the vehicle. The vehicle was taken into possession and the search for the accused was started.—APP

Income tax should be universal, not segmented

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) Macro Policy Lab recently hosted the "Fixing Fiscal Policy" Round Table Conference in Islamabad. The event addressed the persistent challenge of fiscal indiscipline in Pakistan and sought to chart a visionary path for the nation's fiscal policy. In his introductory remarks, Dr. Nasir Iqbal, Associate Prof. and Chief of Macro-Policy Lab, PIDE said that the Round Table Conference, "Fixing Fiscal Policy," aims to unite policymakers and thought leaders to foster collaboration and develop local solutions in the fiscal framework of Pakistan. By bringing together academia and policymakers, we seek to chart a visionary path of fiscal policy in Pakistan for the future, transcending from short-term approaches and firefighting. In his opening remarks speaking at the occasion Dr. Nadeem ul Haque, VC PIDE said that three things need to be focused on for the fixation of fiscal policy. Firstly, the role of the government is crucial in ensuring effective fiscal management. Secondly, taxation and expenditure must be carried

out in a transparent manner with accountability. This includes how to collect taxes, how to spend them, and where to allocate funds. Lastly, debt management is also an important aspect that requires attention. Dr. Ashfaq Hasan Khan, Principal of the School of Social Sciences & Humanities, NUST while speaking at the roundtable meeting said that to address economic challenges, it is important to immediately reset the role of the government from being an active player to a facilitator. This would involve eliminating the current regulation-based regime and transitioning towards a rule-based economy. The use of a regulatory guillotine would help in the elimination of unnecessary No Objection Certificates (NOCs). A rule-based approach, coupled with monitoring and evaluation, would ensure a more efficient and effective economic system. Distinguished participants included senior economists, researchers, and fiscal experts from various institutions across the country, such as the Ministry of Planning, Development & Special Initiatives, P&D Baluchistan, QAU, SZABIST, the US Embassy, ADTMA, P&D Punjab, IIUI, NUST, and COMSATS. In the first session

titled "Role of Government and Economic Stagnation" while presenting the detailed presentation Muhammad Shaaf Najib, Research Fellow, PIDE said that Interest Payments account for a significant portion of the targeted tax revenue, amounting to 77.5%. The total federal liabilities, including Interest Payments, Pensions, and Grants to provinces, stand at PKR 9512 billion. These liabilities exceed the targeted tax revenue, indicating a lack of a sufficient revenue base to support the functioning of the civil government, subsidies, and development spending. As a result, all development expenditure is entirely financed through debt. The remuneration of civil servants involves a basic salary and significant monetary and non-monetary benefits. The total reward is significantly higher than the base reward stated in the contract. However, the cost to the government for senior civil servants is much higher than the benefits they provide. In his detailed comments, Dr Ashfaq Hasan Khan made a comment on the presentation and stated that "Within the constitutional limits, without improving the NFC Award, we cannot adequately address our fiscal issues

RDA lodges FIR against owners of 'Ruden Enclave'

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) has lodged a FIR in Saddar Baroni police station against the owners of an illegal housing scheme namely 'Ruden Enclave'. According to a RDA spokesman, Metropolitan Planning and Traffic Engineering Directorate (MP&TE), RDA on the directives of the Director General Muhammad Saif Anwar Jappa lodged FIR No. 1260/2023 in Saddar Baroni police station against the owners namely Rahimuddin and Usman Shahid. He informed that the sponsors were also warned to immediately stop marketing of illegal housing scheme. The owners of the illegal housing were illegally advertising the project which was not approved. The housing society was also running a social media campaign for publicity of the project, using pictures of a meeting with Commissioner Rawalpindi Division, he said adding, the RDA enforcement squad was sent for an operation against the housing scheme but, the representatives of the illegal housing scheme presented a stay order. He said that the illegal housing scheme was misleading the general public as it's not an approval project. The spokesman said that the RDA on the special instructions of the DG had advised the citizens not to invest in illegal and unauthorized housing schemes. The citizens should check status of the housing projects at RDA's official website www.rda.gov.pk, he added. He said that the owners and sponsors of illegal housing schemes were misleading the public through advertisements. The Planning Wing of RDA had also requested the Cyber Crime Wing of FIA to take legal action against the illegal and misleading advertisements of the illegal housing schemes.—DNA

INVITATION FOR BIDS

DEVELOPMENT OF 600 MWp SOLAR PV PROJECT AT KOT ADDU/MUZAFFARGARH

To achieve its policy objectives of affordability of electricity, energy security, environmental protection and sustainable development, Government of Pakistan (GOP) has approved "Framework Guidelines for Fast Track Solar PV Initiatives 2022" that envisions development of large utility scale solar PV projects on fast-track basis through private sector investment to substitute expensive imported fossil fuels being used for power generation in Pakistan. The Framework Guidelines are available at PPIB's website www.ppiib.gov.pk.

Pursuant to the Framework Guidelines, Private Power & Infrastructure Board (PPIB), a one window facilitator of the GOP for the development of Power & Infrastructure Projects, hereby invites bids/proposals from the private sector investors / entrepreneurs for the development of 600 MWp capacity solar PV project to be located at District Kot Addu / Muzaffargarh, Punjab, Pakistan, on Build, Own, Operate and Transfer (BOOT) basis (the "Project") for a concession term of 25 years.

Bidders will be required to submit bid/proposal in accordance with the Request for Proposal (RFP) approved by NEPRA vide its order dated September 06, 2023. A single stage, two-envelope bidding process shall be adopted. The contents for each envelope and the basis for evaluation of the Bids are detailed in the RFP. The Bidder offering the lowest Bid Tariff shall be declared as Successful Bidder who will be required to achieve Financial Closing (FC) and Commercial Operations Date (COD) in accordance with the terms and conditions of the RFP and Project Agreements.

RFP document can be obtained either from PPIB office or through online upon payment of US\$ 200 as registration fee and US\$ 2500 for RFP document, prior to **Bid submission deadline i.e., October 30, 2023**. Payments can be made in US\$ or equivalent Pakistani Rupees directly in PPIB Bank accounts (Details are available at PPIB's website) or by way of a demand draft or pay order in the name of Alternative Energy Fund. Further details of the Project are available at PPIB's website.

The interested parties shall submit complete Bids in all respect in accordance with the RFP along with the Bid Bond and Bid Processing Fee. Only the Bidders who have been registered and purchased RFP from PPIB shall be entitled to submit bid/proposal for the Project.

Last date for receiving of bids/proposals at PPIB's office is October 30, 2023, 1500 hrs PST, which will be opened same day at 1545 hrs in the presence of representative of bidders who opt to attend. Bids/proposals submitted electronically will not be entertained. Any changes, clarifications or amendments subsequent to this advertisement including but not limited to the bidding schedule, shall be placed at PPIB's website. Interested bidders are requested to frequently visit PPIB's website for such updates.

PPIB reserves the right to reject any or all the bids/proposals at any time without assigning any reason. The advertisement is also available at PPIB's and Public Procurement Regulatory Authority's website www.ppra.org.pk.

PPIB 1585-23



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Briefs

4 monkeypox suspects escape

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Four suspected monkeypox patients who were being shifted from Islamabad International Airport to PIMS Hospital have escaped on Saturday. Due to the negligence of the Border Health Services staff, the monkeypox suspects who were deported from Libya disappeared from the ambulance which was transporting them to the hospital. The sources said that the suspected Pakistani patients were sent back to their country in a special flight which landed at the Islamabad Airport on the night of September 8. Medical staff traced monkeypox systems in the four Pakistanis during the screening and they were separated from other passengers. The four suspects were identified as Rehman Tariq, Ali Hamza, Zulqarnain and Naem. They disappeared from the ambulance along with their medical files prepared by the staff at the airport.

Mehfil-e-Mushaira held at PAC

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Punjab Arts Council in collaboration with Shahbaz-e-Adab Pakistan organized a Mehfil-e-Mushaira in connection with Pakistan Defence Day. Mehfil-e-mushaira was presided over by famous poet and critic Dr. Waheed Ahmad, while Rehan Abbasi and Habiba Rathor was the host of the Event. Akhtar Usman, Ahmed Atta Allah, Shakeel Jazeb participated in the Mushaira as guests of honor. The organizers of the Mushaira included Nawai Sarosh Ahmed, Muhammad Munir Qasim, Anjam Salimi and Nasir Ali Nasir. Dr. Waheed Ahmad in his presidential address said that the mention of Pakistan Defence Day warms hearts, raises enthusiasm and refreshes faith. We salute the martyrs who laid down their lives for the defense of the motherland. The brave sons of the country fought fearlessly against the enemy and created a bright chapter in history. In the war of 1965, the people fought alongside the Pakistan Army, we will not hesitate to make any sacrifice to defend our beloved motherland, to maintain its freedom and independence. In the end, Dr. Waheed Ahmad saluted the martyrs through his poetry. Mehboob Khan, Saeed Raja, Afzal Khan, Dr. Sajid Rahim, Javed Jadoon, Nargis Jahanzeb, Fareeha Naqvi, Ayesha Shafaq, Waqasullah Waqas, Dr. Mehboob Kashmiri, Ijaz Naumani, Faza Batul, Mahosh Ahsan, Fida Shirazi, Dr. Faisal Shahzad, Maryam Safa, Zeeshan Murtaza, Shahzad Nayer, Wajahat Baki, Khalid Mustafa, Shakir Kundan, Nasir Abbas Chaudhry, Nisar Mahmood Taseer, Ahmed Naseer, Fayaz Hussain Shah, Musoor Abbas, Musab Saud, Shafaq Hayat, Atif Mirza, Lareeb Kazmi, Dr. Akhlaq Awan, Itfaq Butt and other poets Ikram paid tribute to the martyrs in poetic style.

HEC invites applications scholarship programme

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has invited applications for the London Commonwealth Scholarship Programme, in Masters and PhD disciplines. The HEC's local chapter sources told APP on Sunday that the Commonwealth Scholarships are funded by the Commonwealth and Development Office in London. Out of 30,000 scholarships, 26 programmes are available for Masters and 30 programmes for PhD. Application deadline for the current HEC Commonwealth Masters and PhD scholarships is October 17, and applications must be submitted on both the HEC and Commonwealth portals. Moreover, the Government of Switzerland, in collaboration with the HEC, has also announced an 'Excellence Scholarship Programme' for Pakistani students.—APP

Pak leaders grieved over loss of lives in Morocco earthquake

In their separate messages, the Pakistan leadership including President Dr Arif Alvi, Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar, former premier Shehbaz Sharif and former foreign minister and PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari have expressed their grief over the loss of precious lives and damages caused to infrastructure after a strong earthquake hit central Morocco

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani top leadership on Saturday expressed the grief over loss of lives and property in a severe earthquake that jolted Morocco. Earlier on Friday night, a powerful 6.8 magnitude earthquake struck Morocco, leaving nearly 632 people dead and 239 injured, the country's interior ministry said in an updated toll on Saturday. Of those injured, 51 were in a critical condition, the ministry said. Several buildings were destroyed during the earthquake, sending residents of major cities rushing from their homes. Moreover, a local official said most deaths were in mountain areas that were hard to reach. In their separate messages, the Pakistan leadership including President Dr Arif Alvi, Caretaker Prime Minister

Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar, former premier Shehbaz Sharif and former foreign minister and PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari have expressed their grief over the loss of precious lives and damages caused to infrastructure after a strong earthquake hit central Morocco. In his statement, President Dr Arif Alvi on Saturday expressed his grief over the loss of precious lives and damages caused to infrastructure after a strong earthquake hit central Morocco. Extending condolences to the bereaved families, the president expressed solidarity with the government and the people of Morocco, President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release. He said that in this difficult time, their sympathies went to the affected people. President Alvi also prayed for the early recovery of the injured. Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar has expressed condolences with the government and

the people of Morocco, PM Office Media Wing said in a press release on Saturday. Kakar expressed solidarity with the government and the people of Morocco in the difficult time and extended all possible support to the quake stricken people. The prime minister also condoled with the bereaved families. Separately, on his X handle, PM Kakar posted, "Our hearts ache for those affected by the severe earthquake in Morocco. Pakistan extends its hand in unity and support to Morocco in this trying time." The PML-N President and former prime minister Shehbaz Sharif has also expressed condolences over scores of people killed in the deadly Moroccan earthquake. In a post uploaded on X Saturday, Shehbaz Sharif said "It has pained me to know about hundreds of casualties due to a terrifying earthquake in Morocco. In these trying times, we stand in solidarity with the people

of Morocco. Special prayers for the bereaved families and those injured and trapped under the rubble. Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and former president Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has expressed grief and sorrow over the loss of precious lives and property caused by the devastating earthquake in Morocco. According to the press release issued by media cell Bilawal House, the PPP chairman, who is also a former foreign minister of Pakistan, has said in his message to the government and people of Morocco that he is saddened and shocked by the situation caused by the natural disaster there. He said that his party, PPP, and the people of Pakistan are standing with the people of brotherly Islamic country in these difficult times. Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has extended his condolences to the families who lost their loved ones in the earthquake and prayed for

the speedy recovery of the injured. As per reports the death toll from a strong earthquake that struck Morocco has risen to 632, said the country's Interior Ministry on Saturday. The earthquake has so far injured 329 others, including 51 in critical condition, according to the latest update of the ministry. A 6.8-magnitude earthquake hit Morocco Friday at 11:11 p.m. local time (2211 GMT) at a depth of 18.5 km some 70 km southwest of Marrakesh, said the U.S. Geological Survey. US Geological Survey (USGS) said that "the population in this region lives in structures that are highly vulnerable to earthquake shaking." USGS said: "The epicenter of the earthquake was at a relatively shallow depth of 18.5 km (11.5 miles) and occurred about 72 km (44 miles) southwest of Marrakesh and 56 km west of the Atlas Mountain town of Oukaimeden at just after 11pm local time (2200 GMT)."



ISLAMABAD: Women taking interest in handicrafts during Arts and Crafts Bazaar held at Islamabad Serena Hotel. The Bazaar was jointly organized by Nomad and ISH.—DNA

Minister urges companies to invest in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information Technology Umar Saif has urged the companies to invest in startups in Pakistan. Addressing the event Saturday, he said the government was initiating a whole series of interventions to support them and lower their risk. "Pakistan has a convenient time zone and world-class IT professionals," adding that the caretaker government was taking measures for digitisation and training of 200,000 IT professionals across the country. Umar Saif said Pakistani youth are the second largest online workforce in the world and we are working to make it easy for them to get paid. There will be no restriction on the IT industry pertaining to dollar transactions, he said, adding that the interim government is removing all barriers to make it possible. Stressing the significance of Pakistani youth, IT Minister Saif said they are the second largest online workforce in the world and the government was working to make it easy for them to get paid. Earlier, Caretaker IT Minister Dr Umar Saif confirmed the federal government's plan to bring PayPal, Stripe to Pakistan besides establishing co-working spaces for freelancers. The IT Minister Dr Umar Saif made the statement after holding a meeting with Caretaker Prime Minister (PM) Anwaarul Haq Kakar. During the meeting, a comprehensive project was approved by PM Kakar for promoting the IT industry. Dr Saif said that the IT exports could be enhanced to \$10 billion if hurdles are removed. The premier directed finance, commerce, energy, State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) and Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to hold consultations.—DNA

IESCO assures to resolve electricity related issues

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) said that open and hanging electric wires in the markets always pose great danger to the shopkeepers, while fire incidents due to short circuit of electricity cause loss of millions of rupees to the plaza owners as well as the shopkeepers. Therefore, IESCO should address this issue on priority to save the traders from further losses. He said that ICCI will nominate market-wise committees for F-6, F-7 and Blue Area to liaison with his office and he should fully cooperate with them for timely solution of the electricity problems of the traders in their respective areas. Faad Waheed, Senior Vice President ICCI highlighted the issues of MDI meters and net metering faced by the business community and proposed their better solution. He said that the cabinet doors of some transformers are left open which leads to short circuits so IESCO should take steps to address this problem. He said that deep freezers, refrigerators and other appliances of traders often get burnt due to fluctuation in electricity voltage, so IESCO should

look into this issue for redress. Abdul Rasheed Sarki, XEN, ISCO's F-6ix Division, speaking on the occasion, said that every possible effort would be made to solve the issues highlighted by the business community. He said that if any person visits markets or shops for inspection, he should be handed over to the police as ISCO has not assigned this responsibility to anyone. He welcomed the proposal of ICCI for nomination of market-wise committees to liaison with his office and assured that he will cooperate with the committee members for the early solution of the electricity-related issues of their respective markets. Former President ICCI and Secretary General UBG Pakistan Zafar Bakhtawari said that last year the total revenue of Pakistan was PKR 7500 billion while the total revenue of the electricity companies was PKR 12000 billion but still many electricity companies are incurring losses, which should be a cause of concern to the government. He said that IESCO should solve the electricity problems of its customers, including the business community, on a priority basis.

up for it and repair of burnt transformer takes many days. Due to this situation, the perishable items get spoiled causing losses to the traders. He stressed that IESCO should come up with a better solution to this problem to save the traders from further losses. He said that the repair charges of commercial transformers are too high and should be reviewed. He said that ICCI will nominate market-wise committees for F-6, F-7 and Blue Area to liaison with his office and he should fully cooperate with them for timely solution of the electricity problems of the traders in their respective areas. Faad Waheed, Senior Vice President ICCI highlighted the issues of MDI meters and net metering faced by the business community and proposed their better solution. He said that the cabinet doors of some transformers are left open which leads to short circuits so IESCO should take steps to address this problem. He said that deep freezers, refrigerators and other appliances of traders often get burnt due to fluctuation in electricity voltage, so IESCO should

'Afghanistan should be asked to start importing through Iran'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Murtaza Mughal, President of Pakistan Economy Watch (PEW) said on Sunday that Pakistan's economy cannot be stable in the presence of currency exchange companies and Afghan transit trade. Many currency dealers provide all kinds of services to the corrupt elements and send the capital collected through plunder out of the country. This sector has become a hotbed for money laundering, he added. Dr. Murtaza Mughal said in a statement issued here today that the freedom given to exchange companies in Pakistan does not exist anywhere on earth. The developed countries do not dare adopt such a system that a debtor country like ours has adopted, which has shaken the foundations of the country. He said that goods worth billions of dollars are being smuggled through the Afghan transit trade that has no consumption in Afghanistan. Hundreds of containers destined for Afghanistan are being emptied in Karachi and other cities, thereby depriving the local industry of its fair share.

Prof. Iqbal invited to address inaugural session

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, the Director of ICBS and Coordinator General of COMSTech, has been invited to address the inaugural session of the 78th United Nations General Assembly Science Summit. This esteemed global event, set to take place in New York from September 12 to 29, 2023, will host an impressive lineup of 1,450 speakers from across the world, making it a momentous occasion in the realm of science and diplomacy. Dr. Declan Kirrane, Managing Director, Science Summit at the United Nations General Assembly has invited Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, to address the inaugural session this year. Prof. Choudhary will address the opening session of the Science Summit on 12th September, 2023 as among the first speakers of the 1,450 speakers taking part in UNGA78 session. The Science Summit at the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly will take place in New York from 12-29 September 2023. Prof. Choudhary is a world-renowned medicinal chemist. He has published 1,175 research papers in the fields of organic and bioorganic chemistry in international journals. 76 books and 40 chapters in books published by major US and European press. He has secured 40 US patents so far. Prof. Choudhary's work has been cited by the researchers from around the world by 36,000 times his h-index is 80. By now, 102 national and international scholars have completed their PhD degrees under his supervision. He is D.Sc., Ph.D., and C. Chem. He has been awarded by different governments of Pakistan with Hilal-e-Imtiaz, Sitara-e-Imtiaz, and Tamgha-e-Imtiaz. He has also been honored by Mustafa (pubh) Prize, ECO Award, Khawarzimi Award, COMSTech Award, TWAS Award and Prof. Abdus Salam Prize.

Standardizations key to enhance Pak agri exports to China

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's agriculture sector is poised for a boost in exports to China, through a renewed focus on standardization and quality control. After fulfilling China's required standardization on meat, chili, and other commodities, Pakistan signed MoUs with China to export these products from Pakistan to China, said Ghulam Qadir, Commercial Counselor, the Embassy of Pakistan, according to a report published by Gwadar Pro on Saturday. Speaking with a forum titled "International Forum on Standardization Development of Agricultural Products", at the China International Fair for Trade in Services (CIFTIS), Ghulam Qadir said that China is helping Pakistan develop their standards for various crops, such as wheat, rice, cotton, and maize. This will involve defining parameters for crop quality, including size, weight, moisture content, and pesticide residue levels, among others. "Both countries are working together to promote sustainable agricultural practices, emphasizing soil health, water management, and reduced carbon emissions. These standards aim to protect the environment while ensuring long-term food security. China is also helping Pakistan with the use of fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides, with a focus on minimizing the presence of harmful residues in food items," he added. He further said that over the past few years, Pakistan has made substantial strides in improving its agricultural production, with a particular emphasis on quality control and meeting international standards. These efforts are now paying off as the country aims to capture a more substantial share of China's burgeoning agricultural market. He added that "we would get more support from China to ensure the standardization of the products if we want to improve our exports to China". "Pakistan's agricultural exports to China have historically been limited to a few commodities, such as rice, sesame seed, and cotton. However, the landscape is evolving rapidly, as Pakistan diversifies its exports to include fruits, vegetables, and processed products. This transformation has been driven by a combination of factors, including increased investment in agriculture, improved infrastructure, and most crucially, adherence to international standards", he added. Qadir told the audience that Pakistani agricultural products now meet the stringent requirements of the Chinese market, ensuring food safety, quality, and traceability.

China, Pak to collaborate promoting earth sciences

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The China-Pakistan Joint Research Centre on Earth Sciences (CPJRC), China and the Ghulam Ishaq Khan Institute (GIKI) of Engineering Sciences and Technology signed an MoU to enhance collaborative efforts in earth and engineering sciences. The agreement was executed by Dr. CUI Peng, Director CPJRC, and Dr. Fazal Ahmad Khalid, Rector GIKI, during an event held at the GIKI Institute, Gwadar Pro reported. CPJRC, which operates under the China Academy of Science (CAS)'s Institute of Mountain Hazards and Environment, is dedicated to fostering cooperation in earth sciences. GIKI is a prestigious engineering institution in Swabi district of KP province. The Rector GIKI said that the MoU provides a framework for both institutions to engage in joint research endeavours; secure research funding, and co-organize technical training programs, academic symposia, and international conferences. Dr. CUI Peng underscored that this cooperative endeavour will centre its efforts on critical areas such as disaster prevention and mitigation, ecological economy with an emphasis on low carbon development, assessing resource and environment carrying capacity for regional sustainable development.

The Inflation Conundrum in Pakistan

ZAHRA ALI



Pakistan currently finds itself at a crucial crossroads, grappling with the pervasive impact of inflation. This economic challenge carries far-reaching consequences, shaping not only the nation's present but also its future trajectory. This economic challenge has significant con-

sequences, not only for the present but also for the future trajectory of the nation. The country has been grappling with the persistent increase in consumer prices, which has resulted in a decline in the purchasing power of its citizens. The rising costs of essential goods and services have had a profound effect on the livelihoods of ordinary Pakistanis. Inflation tends to disproportionately affect low-income and marginalized populations, exacerbating income inequality and social disparities. As a result, the gap between the rich and poor widens, giving rise to social and political challenges. High inflation rates create economic uncertainty, making it challenging for businesses to plan and invest. This uncertainty can deter both domestic and foreign investment,

hindering economic growth. The key to future economic growth is through prioritizing investments in education and vocational training programs to enhance the employability of Pakistan's workforce. Implementing a comprehensive strategy to control inflation. This includes prudent monetary policies, targeted subsidies for essential goods, and measures to curb speculative practices that contribute to price hikes. Strengthening social safety nets to protect vulnerable populations from the adverse effects of inflation. These programs can provide relief to those most affected while fostering social stability. Developing responsible fiscal policies that strike a balance between managing deficits and investing in critical sectors such as infrastructure, healthcare, and education. Pro-

moting trade and foreign investment to diversify the economy and reduce reliance on domestic consumption. Attracting foreign investors can help stabilize the economy and create job opportunities. Addressing energy shortages and inefficiencies in the energy sector. A reliable and affordable energy supply is essential for economic stability and growth. Moreover, pursue policies that foster inclusive economic growth, ensuring that all segments of society benefit from development. This includes addressing income inequality and creating opportunities for marginalized communities. Embrace digitalization to enhance productivity and competitiveness. Invest in digital infrastructure and promote e-commerce to unlock new economic opportunities. Inflation's ripple effect on Paki-

stan's destiny is a multifaceted challenge. However, it is also an opportunity for transformation and growth. The path forward requires a combination of prudent policies, investments in human capital and technology, and a commitment to inclusive and sustainable development. By addressing inflation and its consequences while fostering innovation and social cohesion, Pakistan can shape a brighter economic destiny and create a more prosperous and stable future for its citizens. Building resilience in the face of inflation is a journey fraught with challenges, but it is one that Pakistan is fully capable of undertaking to secure a better destiny for all.

—The writer is M.Phil Scholar in Psychology and a regular contributor towards SDGs.

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G20 summit looks set to achieve little else

What is the point of the G20, the group of 19 countries plus the EU, whose annual summit is being held in Delhi? It's a question that gets harder to answer with each passing year. As ever, there was no shortage of global problems to discuss: food security, debt relief, the climate crisis, disease, banking reforms and digital infrastructure, to name a few. The difficulty was the apparent chronic lack of agreed, substantive and credible action to tackle them. One explanation is that the G20 is a disparate group whose membership is based on relative economic heft rather than, say, shared ideas, beliefs or experience. When discussing endemic hunger, for example, it's possible Ethiopia (not a member) has a deeper understanding of the issues than Canada (a member). A lack of tangible outcomes and follow-through is linked to the fact the G20 has no permanent secretariat. It is, in effect, the sum of its summits, which too often turn into interesting but ineffectual talking shops. Summit hosts tend to hijack these one-off occasions to showcase their countries and impress domestic audiences. Narendra Modi, India's prime minister, is no exception. He has used the event to advertise what he sees as India's leadership role as the "voice of the global south". The world, Modi warned, was suffering a "crisis of trust". His blatant use of the summit to boost his personal image and his chances in next year's Indian elections showed how sadly true that is. Modi was adamant that geopolitical issues, meaning Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine, should not be allowed to distract attention from the wider G20 agenda. He refused to invite Ukraine to attend. Yet this approach was never going to work, given that key global south issues, such as the price and availability of grain, are directly and negatively affected by the war. Russia's attacks on Ukraine's ports, and its refusal to renew a UN-brokered export pact, most hurt the countries Modi most wants to help. But as expected, the summit's "consensus" declaration failed to condemn Russia's invasion or its war crimes. Modi's efforts to concentrate on developing world problems was further undermined by a summit boycott by China's president, Xi Jinping. It appears Xi had no desire to meet Modi or the US president, Joe Biden, both of whom he considers geopolitical rivals and potential foes. Biden used his absence to further strengthen US-India defence ties in talks with Modi. Xi's snub was irresponsible and self-defeating, given China's economic might and its huge overseas lending. By insisting on making Ukraine a priority in his summit talks, Rishi Sunak exploited another absence – that of Russia's president, Vladimir Putin. But the prime minister's political focus swiftly shifted to a free trade deal with India. Modi reportedly wants a "quickie" pre-election agreement. Sunak needs a deal, too, so he can pretend Brexit is working. But the terms and scope will require a lot more work if, as with other trade deals, Britain is not to be sold short again. Like Biden, Sunak also faces renewed questions about his courting of an authoritarian leader whose attachment to open government and key principles such as free speech and a free press appears shaky at best. Modi's "strongman" style, Hindu majoritarian bias and disregard for human rights in Kashmir and Manipur are an embarrassment for any democratic country that wants to do business with India.



It's time Canberra took back strategic autonomy

That Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese chose to confirm his visit to China almost two months in advance after his "frank and constructive" meeting with Chinese Premier Li Qiang on the sidelines of the East Asia Summit in Jakarta last week shows his earnestness to further improve Sino-Australian relations. Albanese told the media after his talks with Li: "I look forward to visiting China later this year to mark the 50th anniversary of prime minister (Gough) Whitlam's historic visit." The first Australian prime minister to set foot in China, Whitlam paid a historic visit to the country from Oct 30 to Nov 4, 1973, one year after the two countries established diplomatic relations. The development of Sino-Australian relations since then shows they are based on shared interests and mutual respect. For most of the past 50 years, the two sides have set a good example of working together for common good, continuously expanding their common interests and properly handling their differences. "A stable and constructive relationship where we can realize the potential of our comprehensive strategic partnership is an interest that we both share," Albanese said. "The progress we've made in resuming unimpeded trade is good for both countries and we want to see that progress continued." That's a clear sign, along with the timing of the visit, that both Canberra and Beijing want Albanese's visit, the first by an Australian prime minister since 2016, to normalize the sizable economic and trade cooperation and explore collaboration potential in new areas such as fighting climate change, and promoting science and technology. To some extent, it is the United States' "de-risking strategy" that has served to accelerate the normalization of Sino-Australian relations. The fact that China is Australia's largest trading partner in goods and services, accounting for about 32.2 percent of the latter's total foreign trade, has also played a role in normalizing bilateral ties. Albanese's predecessor's blind following of the US' China policy made the Australian people realize that Washington can coerce their country to "decouple" from China. But it cannot help Australia find a market as large as China. The mutually beneficial nature of Sino-Australian relations has shown other countries that blindly following the US to check China's rise will not help them either economically or diplomatically. Instead, upholding their strategic autonomy will serve their national interests best. That's why it is important that the development of Sino-Australian relations should be free of external influences, and the two sides should focus on deepening mutual trust. As such, the two sides have no reason not to work together to maintain peace and stability in the region, and prevent it from being hijacked by other countries.

Taiwan: Beijing's pressure and Washington's support

Dr. Muhammad AkramZaheer



Taiwan's rules recognize China, Mongolia, Taiwan, Tibet, and the South China Sea as part of Taiwan. The people in the main political group, KMT, don't want Taiwan to be separate from China. They want to have good relations with China forever. But some leaders in KMT have been talking about changing their ideas from the 1992 deal. The other big political group

Taiwan is an island that sits apart from China, with the Taiwan Strait between them. China thinks of Taiwan as a new part of their land and wants to bring Taiwan and China together. But Taiwan has its own elected government and about two million people living there. The leaders in politics have different thoughts about how Taiwan should be related to China. The situation has gotten more tense since Tsai Ing-wen became Taiwan's President. She doesn't agree with the ideas of the previous leader, Ma Ying-jeou, on how Taiwan and China should cooperate. China has been more aggressive, even sending fighter planes close to Taiwan. Some experts worry that if China attacks Taiwan, the United States might get involved. China says there is only one China and that Taiwan belongs to it. China sees itself as the main government of China, and they want Taiwan to be a part of that. China believes in this idea called the One China principle. They also say Taiwan agreed to a deal in 1992, but Taiwan doesn't agree on what that deal really means. The two sides don't agree about whether Taiwan is its own country or not. This deal was never meant to solve the question of what Taiwan's status is. China says the deal means both sides should work together as part of one China. Taiwan's side thinks it means "One China, Different Ideas." Taiwan's rules recognize China, Mongolia, Taiwan, Tibet, and the South China Sea as part of Taiwan. The people in the main political group, KMT, don't want Taiwan to be separate from China. They want to have good relations with China forever. But some leaders in KMT have been talking about changing their ideas from the 1992 deal. The other big political group, DPP, doesn't like the 1992 deal from the start. Tsai Ing-wen, who is the President and leads DPP, really doesn't like that deal. She's been trying to find a way that both Taiwan and China can agree on. In 2016, she said she's the President because of Taiwan's own rules, which talk about one China. She also said she will follow Taiwan's rules when it comes to dealing with China. But China didn't like this and stopped official relations with Taiwan. China's leader, Xi, said in 2019 that he wants Taiwan to be part of China, using a plan called 'one country, two systems.'

This plan was also used for Hong Kong, where they kept their own rules and had some freedom. But people in Taiwan don't like this idea. China's actions in Hong Kong made Taiwan's leaders say no to that plan. China doesn't want Taiwan to join big groups like the UN. Taiwan complains about this. The US supports Taiwan in these groups. The US also sells weapons to Taiwan and lets its officials meet with Taiwan's officials. Even the President of Taiwan was invited to a special event by the US President. The US also trains and talks about the military with Taiwan. Taiwan has lots of support in the US Congress. They want Taiwan to be part of the world and have a good relationship with the US. China's military is getting ready to bring Taiwan under its control, even if other countries try to help. But experts don't agree on when this might happen. Some think 2049 could be a key year, as China's leader Xi says he really wants Taiwan back by then. China tries to attack Taiwan's computer systems every day. This has been happening more in recent years. In 2020, Taiwan said China tried to get into its government data and personal info. China has also done things to make life harder for Taiwan, like stopping official talks in 2016 and reducing tourism. China has threatened other countries that have connections with Taiwan. For instance, in 2021, China stopped trading with Lithuania because they opened an office representing Taiwan in their capital. China has also tried to influence Taiwan's elections by spreading false information on social media and controlling Taiwanese media more. Even with these threats from China, Taiwan has managed to keep its democratic way of governing. In 2020, a group called the Economist Democracy Index said Taiwan was a "full democracy" for the first time. In 2021, Taiwan was ranked the eighth most democratic country in the world. This was higher than its Asian neighbors South Korea and Japan, and even higher than the United States. Most people in Taiwan want things to stay the same, and only a few want Taiwan to be independent right away or join with China. But the way they trade and do business together has been having problems recently. Part of the reason is that China is putting pressure on Taiwan, and Taiwan's leaders are worried about relying too much on trading with China. From 2008 to 2016, the

president at the time, President Ma, made it easier to trade between Taiwan and China. They even opened direct paths for ships, airplanes, and mail to go back and forth between the two places. They also allowed banks, insurance companies, and other financial businesses to work in each other's countries. But when President Tsai took over, she and her Democratic Progressive Party tried to make deals with more countries, not just China. They had some success. Their plan to focus more on countries in Southeast Asia and the Indo-Pacific helped Taiwan trade more with eighteen places. Over five years, they traded over \$50 billion, and Taiwan invested more money in these countries too. In 2021, Taiwan sold a lot of things to China, even though China tried to stop other countries from making trade agreements with Taiwan. Some countries, like New Zealand and Singapore, still made those agreements. China also tried to keep Taiwan out of big trade groups like the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. But Taiwan isn't part of the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework led by the Biden administration either. Taiwan is really good at making computer chips. These chips are super important for lots of electronic things like phones, computers, cars, and even smart weapons. In 2020, companies in Taiwan made more than 60% of the money that all the world's chip makers earned. One of the biggest reasons for this success is a company called Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. They make more chips than anyone else and give them to big companies like Apple in the U.S. There are only two companies in the world that can make the most advanced, tiny chips, and Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Co. is one of them. They make over 90% of these chips. Some experts think that the U.S. wants to protect Taiwan from China because it needs these chips so much. President Biden wants to make the chip industry in the U.S. stronger. In 2022, the people in charge passed a law that gives \$280 billion to help with this. China also needs Taiwan's chips, but not as much as the United States does.

Malnutrition awareness empower community for better health

Seerat Fatima



Carbohydrates are essential for providing an energy boost, and sources such as fruits, vegetables, and sugary items are good sources of carbohydrates. Excessive carbohydrate intake can lead to high blood sugar levels, obesity, and cardiovascular diseases. Consuming excessive fats, especially saturated fats from animal sources, can cause high blood cholesterol levels

Alternatively, malnutrition may be defined as "poor or inadequate nutrition." Malnutrition refers to a condition in which the body lacks essential nutrients and calories. It occurs as a result of insufficient intake of carbohydrates, protein, minerals, and vitamins. People need to consume all essential nutrients in adequate quantities; adverse effects occur when these essential nutrients are consumed in either too small or excessively high quantities. All nutrients are necessary for the growth, maintenance, and proper functioning of the body. When the body's requirements for both micronutrients and macronutrients are not met, it can lead to severe malnutrition. Malnutrition does not simply refer to low body nutrients and lower body weight; it can also occur when nutrient levels and weight exceed the required levels. Overnourished individuals consume more macronutrients and micronutrients than required in their diets, leading to adverse effects on their health. Carbohydrates are essential for providing an energy boost, and sources such as fruits, vegetables, and sugary items are good sources of carbohydrates. Excessive carbohydrate intake can lead to high blood sugar levels, obesity, and cardiovascular diseases. Consuming excessive fats, especially saturated fats from animal sources, can cause high blood cholesterol levels, high blood pressure, and heart diseases. Protein is crucial for body growth and development, but excessive protein consumption can lead to health risks such as kidney and liver issues and dehydration. Just as excess macronutrients pose health risks, excessive or suboptimal consumption of micronutrients can lead to disorders. For instance, high calcium consumption can cause kidney stones, excessive sodium can lead to high blood pressure, iron excess can cause liver and kidney problems, magnesium excess can result in diarrhea and stomach cramps, and potassium excess can cause improper heart rhythms and kidney problems. Vitamins must be consumed in appropriate quantities; otherwise, they can lead to disturbances, such as excessive vitamin D intake causing hypercalcemia, excessive vitamin C causing diarrhea, and excessive vitamin B causing nerve damage. This condition is more common in industrialized or developed countries where people have easy access to food but may overconsume it, often coupled with a lack of physical activity due to less education and awareness. Undernourished people lack a proper diet for extended periods, resulting in a deficiency of essential protein and calorie intake required for proper nourishment. As a result, they suffer from major health issues. Mostly, people in underdeveloped countries face health hazards due to financial crises, as they cannot afford a healthy diet. Food is inaccessible for nearly 800 million people worldwide, with the majority being

children and the elderly. About 30% of children worldwide are underweight due to inadequate nourishment. A diet low in carbohydrates can lead to insufficient body weight and appetite. Conditions like Kwashiorkor and Marasmus are the result of a lack of body protein. Inadequate fat intake results in an energy deficit and can lead to a deficiency of fat-soluble vitamins (A, D, E, K). All vitamins play essential roles in body functioning, and a deficiency in any vitamin can lead to health hazards. For example, a deficiency of vitamin C causes scurvy, vitamin D causes rickets, vitamin B12 causes anemia, and vitamin A causes night blindness. Minerals are essential for various biological processes, and their deficiency can have adverse effects. For instance, iron deficiency causes anemia, calcium deficiency weakens bones, potassium deficiency causes muscle weakness, and iodine deficiency leads to goiter. Starvation refers to an extreme and prolonged lack of food, resulting in suffering and death. Poverty, economic crises, low income, government instability, war, forced migration, droughts, and natural disasters are all factors contributing to starvation. Starvation is a major cause of malnutrition, and the inability to access food leads to unhealthy lives and loss of life. Most child deaths worldwide are due to malnutrition. According to the Global Hunger Index 2022, Yemen is the most affected country by hunger and malnutrition, with conflict, economic crises, political instability, poverty, and corruption being major reasons behind food insecurity. Unemployment increases with higher illiteracy rates and lack of education. Agricultural production is a significant source of income for people in Yemen, and various social, economic, and political disturbances contribute to this dire situation. The Central African Republic is the second most affected country by malnutrition in Africa, with a rapidly increasing rate of stunted children. Less education, unemployment, overpopulation, climate change, war, political conflicts, and economic crises are all issues affecting food resources in Africa. In Pakistan, children under the age of 5 experience extremely poor growth. Pregnant and lactating mothers also suffer from malnourishment, increasing the risk of its spread. Micronutrient deficiencies, such as iron, vitamin D, and A deficiencies, are widespread among children in Pakistan, with iron deficiency leading to alarming rates of anemia. Medical consultation and aid are required to combat malnutrition. Punjab is the largest province in Pakistan, with a population of over 100 million people, but approximately 49% of them suffer from malnutrition. Nearly 10 million of these people are children under the age of 4, and they represent the most malnourished group in Pakistan. Maternal health plays a crucial role in this context, as many women in Punjab suffer from anemia due to insufficient iron intake. While breastfeeding is essential for providing various nutrients and boosting a child's immunity, many children suf-

fer due to their mothers' poor health. Raising awareness and providing proper education are necessary to empower women to take better care of their health. Sindh has a population of nearly 54 million people, with a surprisingly high malnutrition rate of 36%. The poorest districts in Sindh, including Badin, Umerkot, Tando Muhammad Khan, and Tharparkar, are the most affected by malnutrition. Almost 37% of Sindh's rural population lives below the poverty line, and it's worth noting that nearly half of Sindh's population resides in rural areas. The poverty in Sindh is a major cause of malnutrition and requires urgent attention. There are various reasons for the body's inability to access essential nutrients, leading to malnutrition. Loss of appetite due to medications and improper diet consumption is one primary cause. Chewing and swallowing problems can hinder proper food intake. Our sense of smell and taste enables the body to produce digestive secretions, aiding digestion. Weakened smell or less active taste buds can contribute to improper food intake or indigestion. Digestive disorders or disturbances can cause slow or improper digestion. Improper functioning of digestive organs due to aging and certain medications can result in poor food absorption in the digestive tract. Malnutrition is associated with several other diseases, such as cancer, diabetes, heart diseases, chronic pain, GI diseases, Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's disease, and dementia. Individuals over the age of 65 are more vulnerable to malnutrition. With aging, immunity decreases, leading to muscle and bone weakness, fractures, disabilities, protein deficiency, and other health issues that contribute to malnutrition. Illnesses can reduce appetite and lower immunity, especially in those undergoing treatment for other diseases. Hospitalized patients, particularly those undergoing surgery, often require longer hospital stays, which can increase the risk of malnutrition due to weakness or medication side effects. Surgical patients should thank full to SirDr. Muhammad AkramZaheer for his invaluable assistance in helping me write an article. His expertise, guidance, and unwavering support throughout the entire process have been instrumental in shaping the article into its final form. His deep knowledge and insightful feedback not only enriched the content but also improved my overall understanding of the subject matter. I am truly thankful for his generosity in sharing his time and expertise, which has undoubtedly contributed to the success of this endeavor. Dr. Muhammad AkramZaheer's mentorship has been a significant factor in my growth as a writer, and I am deeply appreciative of his assistance.

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Briefs

Terrorists using money generated...

FROM PAGE 01
curb the smuggling of sugar and US dollars in the country. The FIA will tackle activities pertaining to the smuggling of sugar, fertilisers, petroleum products, US dollars and other foreign currencies. The investigative agency will be able to exercise its authority and take necessary measures at all entry and exit points of foreign currencies. Furthermore, FIA's zonal directors have been instructed to report to the agency's headquarters on a day-to-day basis via relevant channels.

Task force to determine...

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and achieve goals, he added. The prime minister said the government was optimistic about investment from Saudi Arabia in the backdrop of talks between Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia Mohammed Bin Salman and Pakistan's chief of army staff. The government was planning for a visit of the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, adding the visit would be aimed at fully exploiting economic opportunities in the country.

Govt mulls ordinance...

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During a briefing to the prime minister, the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) suggested a way forward. Separately, the Ministry of Information Technology on Saturday presented proposals to the SIFC with regard to having a central role in the data depository exercise to broaden the tax base. Approving the proposals, the SIFC decided that the Ministry of Information Technology would take a lead role in the data collection exercise from the four provinces for the purpose of broadening the tax base, according to the participants of the meeting. The data about various transactions carried out by non-filers will be received from the provinces and federal departments by the ministry and will be shared with the FBR for registration of new taxpayers, according to the plan. Minister for Information Technology Umar Saif said that work on two major issues for the purpose of digitisation of the economy and taxation system were pending.

Pakistan condemns...

FROM PAGE 01
It is pertinent to know that on Saturday, Azerbaijan's separatist Armenian-populated region of Nagorno-Karabakh elected a new president as tensions spiralled between arch-rivals Azerbaijan and Armenia over the breakaway enclave. With 22 votes to one, lawmakers in Nagorno-Karabakh's parliament elected the head of the security council in the rebel government, Samvel Shahramanyan, 45, to succeed the outgoing leader Arayik Harutyunyan who stepped down on September 1, according to the AFP. Reacting to the development, the FO said: "Such an attempt is also a grave violation of the UN Charter and principles of established international law." Azerbaijan also called the election "yet another extremely provocative step" and "a clear violation of Azerbaijan's sovereignty and territorial integrity."

Pakistan-Kyrgyzstan..

FROM PAGE 01
the healthcare sector. Speaking at a reception hosted in his honour by Chairman Kyrgyzstan Trade House Meher Kashif Younis, he said the promotion of trade and industry between the two countries holds significant potential, said a news release issued here. "By identifying areas of common interest and fostering partnerships, we can pave the way for increased economic cooperation and growth", he added. He said it was a significant and promising development in the realm of bilateral relations between Pakistan and Kyrgyzstan.

Malaysian High Commission organises Merdeka Islamabad fun ride

Malaysia successfully organized the Merdeka Islamabad Fun Ride 2023. The event was held to commemorate Malaysia's 66th Independence Day

SPORTS DESK

ISLAMABAD: the High Commission of Malaysia in Islamabad, under its Sports and Recreation Club (Kelab STMI) in cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ladies Association, Malaysia in Islamabad (PERWAKILAN Islamabad), organized the first-ever Merdeka Islamabad Fun Ride 2023. The event was part of a month's long celebrations to commemorate Malaysia's 66th Independence Day on 31 August 2023. Forty (40) participants which include His Excellency Ambassador Mohammad Azhar Mazlan, High Commissioner of Malaysia, officials and staff as well as family members of the High Commission participated in the event. Officials from the Defense Office of Indonesian Embassy also took part. The event started at 0800hrs with Madam Amelia Amani Lee, President of PERWAKILAN Islamabad did the flag-off at the Chancery Building of the Malaysian High Commission. Participants cycled from the High Commission to Faisal Mosque. Total distance covered was 14 kilometres. In his remarks at the end of the event, Ambassador Azhar commended the efforts of the members of the Kelab STMI in successfully organising the event. The Ambassador emphasized on the importance of such an event to instill a sense of belonging and community-driven program among the Malaysian community in Pakistan. He highlighted that the Merdeka Fun Ride 2023 was one of several special events planned for the Malaysia MADANI Independence Month Celebrations in Pakistan.



Apart from nurturing the spirit of patriotism among Malaysians in Pakistan, particularly to the younger generations, the event also strengthened further the bond and unity among Malaysian and Pakistani staff members of the High Commission.

The inaugural event was a success as evinced among the participants with their impromptu cheers of joy and pride. A special

thank goes to the Superintendent Police Team for providing security and traffic coverage during the event.

DNA

Diamonds, girlfriends, illicit lobbying...

FROM PAGE 01
with Olson as "salacious gossip," adding, "I'm sick and tired of it." She asked for a list of questions in writing but did not respond to them. Olson reported his relationship with Habib to the CIA's station chief at the U.S. Embassy in Islamabad but "did not report his contact with Habib in any other way," according to notes from a 2019 FBI interview with the ambassador. According to the State Department's Foreign Affairs Manual, diplomats with high-level security clearances are required to report any "intimate/sexual contact" with foreign citizens to diplomatic security officials for counterintelligence purposes. Olson's attorney did not respond to questions from The Washington Post about whether he had properly reported his relationship with Habib or how many other women he dated while in Pakistan. Jennifer McKewan, a State Department spokesperson, declined to comment on Olson's case. While Olson was ambassador to Pakistan, he was also fending off a State Department investigation about a different matter. In 2014, someone tipped off the State Department's inspector general that 11 years earlier, while Olson was serving as the head of the U.S. Consulate in Dubai, the emir of the Persian Gulf city-state had delivered a velvet box to his office, records show. Inside were four diamonds and a set of earrings - a pendant, a ring and a set of earrings - that federal officials later valued at \$60,000, according to court documents. They do not name the emir; Dubai has had two different two

emirs since 2003. Under the standards of the Foreign Gifts and Decoration Act in effect at the time, U.S. officials were required to report gifts with worth more than \$285 and could not keep them unless they reimbursed the federal government for the fair-market value. Olson did neither. He told State Department investigators that the emir had given the diamonds not to him but to his mother-in-law, who was living with him in Dubai, according to correspondence from State Department officials and other documents submitted to the court by his lawyers. He said the emir wanted to express gratitude to his mother-in-law for coming to Dubai to help care for the ambassador's two children. Olson's then-wife, Deborah Jones, was based in Washington at the time as a senior State Department official, overseeing the Office of Arabian Peninsula Affairs. The department also placed Jones under investigation because she supervised U.S. policy in the region and had formerly served as the deputy chief of mission in the United Arab Emirates, records show. Former U.S. ambassador Deborah Jones testifies at a Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearing on Libya in 2017. (Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images) In an interview with The Post, Jones defended the jewels as a legitimate gift to her mother and said neither she nor Olson did anything wrong by failing to report it. She recalled that State Department officials confronted her about the diamonds while she was serving as ambassador to Libya in 2014, and called the investigation "very offensive" and "very unpleasant." She said her mother

considered the diamonds to be a genuine personal gift from the emir, adding, "I find it incredibly sexist that I was somehow pulled into this by virtue of being her daughter." The State Department closed the investigation without taking personnel action against Jones or Olson after they successfully argued that Jones's mother was not their dependent for tax purposes and therefore not covered by the gift rules, records show. Even so, in a September 2016 letter, State Department lawyers asked the couple to voluntarily relinquish the diamonds, saying it was "extremely disappointing that you were not sufficiently concerned with the gift to seek guidance from the ethics office." In a November 2016 letter, Olson told the State Department that he couldn't force his mother-in-law to hand over the diamonds, "which I think she would regard as robbery," Jones told The Post that she also tried but failed to persuade her mother to part with the jewels. "I said, 'Mom, look, these are really causing a problem, and they're causing a problem to me.' But she said they were hers." Jones said that her mother died in December and that she's not sure what happened to the diamonds. She and Olson filed for divorce in 2018, though she said they have a cordial relationship. Around the same time, Olson rekindled his romance with Habib, who by then had completed her studies at Columbia University's journalism school, according to documents filed by his attorneys. They married in June 2019 and now live in New Mexico.

- Courtesy Washington Post

SL slashes AC ticket prices to fill stadiums

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka Cricket slashed ticket prices for the Asia Cup by up to 95 per cent on Sunday after costs were hiked 40-fold and matches were played in near-empty stadiums. Tickets for one-day internationals in crisis-hit Sri Lanka have generally cost around 250 rupees (\$0.78) previously. That was hiked to 10,000 rupees for the Asia Cup, which is being organised by the Pakistan Cricket Board despite largely taking place in Sri Lanka, and fans in the cricket-mad island country have stayed away in droves. Barely 7,000 home supporters turned out for Sri Lanka's Super Four clash against Bangladesh on Saturday at the 35,000-capacity R. Premadasa Stadium in Colombo, leaving the hosts facing the embarrassing sight of ranks of empty seats. In an attempt to lure them, back Sri Lanka Cricket announced a price cut of up to 95 percent Sunday for all remaining Super Four games, including the day's marquee clash between arch-rivals India and Pakistan, with tickets now costing as little as 500 rupees. The stratospheric price hikes had infuriated fans. Sri Lanka endured months of food, fuel and medicine shortages last year after a foreign exchange crunch, which sparked widespread protests culminating in the ouster of its president. The 50-over Asia Cup is a precursor to the upcoming ODI World Cup, and most of the matches were moved to Sri Lanka after India refused to tour Pakistan due to political tensions. "Pakistan have kept the ticket pricing too high and that has kept fans away from the stadiums," a local Sri Lankan official told AFP on condition of anonymity. "Ticket costs... are way beyond the reach of a common man," he added. "This is bizarre. We tried to reason with the PCB but they had their reasons as they have lost out on money, maybe." The PCB did not immediately respond to requests for comment by media. - Agencies

Biden admin not meddling...

FROM PAGE 01
Virginia (DMV) chapter of the Association of Pakistani Physicians of North America. The senator's statement comes as Pakistani Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan is being investigated regarding a diplomatic cipher that the party chief claimed contained the evidence of alleged US involvement in his ouster from power in April last year through a no-confidence vote. Senator Hollen was the guest of honor at the ceremony, which was also attended by Pakistan's Ambassador to the US Masood Khan. The event, meanwhile, became a platform for the American politician to address critical issues related to US-Pakistan relations and the role of the Biden administration in Pakistani politics. He iterated that it is up to the people of Pakistan to decide their leaders and further expressed the need to ensure that the will of the Pakistani people is heard and reflected, advocating for free and fair elections. Highlighting the global importance of transparent elections, the US senator said: "The US, other democracies, and the people of Pakistan have an interest in ensuring that elections are free and fair." Commenting on bilateral relations between the two countries, the senator affirmed the Biden administration's desire for a strong partnership with Pakistan.

Pakistan addresses...

FROM PAGE 01
also involved. Secondly, the incentives offered were below the desired level. This concern has caused delays in materialising the refinery project. The concerns were related to coordinating policies between the Centre and the provinces and ensuring smooth remittance of dollars earned in profits and dividends without interruptions. Now, officials involved in negotiations with KSA claim that much-awaited progress has been made by addressing their concerns, as KSA-specific assurances have been provided. Both sides are now waiting for a significant event to sign and commence work on the construction of the long-awaited refinery, probably in Hub, which will attract an investment of \$10 to \$12 billion. However, no formal date has been confirmed yet. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has also expressed interest in investing in the Reko Diq project to secure 10% to 20% of its shares. Barrick Gold Corporation and Pakistan's state-owned enterprises (SOEs), as well as the Balochistan government, will each own 50% shares in the Reko Diq project. There will be a total investment of \$4 billion in Phase 1 and \$3 billion in Phase 2.

Japan beat World Cup debutants Chile 42-12

PARIS: Chile impressed on their World Cup bow but Japan pulled away to comfortably win their Pool D opener in Toulouse. Chile led early on with a Rodrigo Fernandez try but Japan soon seized control to go 21-7 ahead by half-time. Amato Pakatava's two scores sandwiched Jone Naikabula's effort for Japan, who face England next on 17 September. Alfonso Escobar reduced Chile's deficit but Michael Leitch secured Japan's bonus point, before Ryoto Nakamura and Warner Dearnis completed the scoring. How Doncaster helped Chile captain prepare for World Cup Rugby World Cup fixtures, pools and BBC coverage Chile are the 26th nation to play at a Rugby World Cup and the South American side made a dream start with the opening try inside six minutes. It had appeared a swift break on their right touchline had broken down, but the loose ball landed at the feet of fly-half Fernandez and he kicked through to score. Their willingness to move the ball through hands was a pleasing feature of their attacking play and they defended resolutely for long spells, although ill-discipline cost them as two of Japan's first-half tries came while they were reduced to 14 men. - Agencies

Italy, Eng and Belg on track for Euro 2024

BERLIN: Defending European champions Italy drew 1-1 with North Macedonia in a Euro 2024 qualifier to suffer a blow in their hopes of making it to next year's finals from Group C where leaders England took a valuable point in a 1-1 away draw against Ukraine. England lead the Group C of Euro 2024 qualifiers with 13 points with Ukraine on seven. Italy and North Macedonia both have four points. Italy next face a crucial Euro 2024 qualifying test against Ukraine on Tuesday. Luciano Spalletti took charge of Italy for the first time following Roberto Mancini's shock resignation but his team flopped against the side which dumped them out of the last World Cup in the play-offs. Ciro Immobile put Italy ahead but Enis Bardhi smashed in a free-kick for the hosts with nine minutes remaining in Skopje. Ukraine hosted England in Poland and marched out onto the pitch in Wroclow with national flags draped

over their shoulders in front of around 40,000 of their own fans. "Very tough place to come. You could feel the atmosphere, a unique occasion," said England manager Gareth Southgate after his team's run of four consecutive wins in the group came to an end. Oleksandr Zinchenko put Ukraine in front with a thundering shot after a sweeping drive through midfield on 26 minutes. England, however, hit back in the 41st minute when Harry Kane played a ball over the top and Kyle Walker slipped the ball home for his first international goal on his 77th appearance. Belgium went joint top of Group F with a 1-0 away win at Azerbaijan, lifting them level on 10 points with Austria. Yannick Carrasco scored the only goal in Baku as new manager Domenico Tedesco extended his run to five games without defeat. Sweden are third in the group on six points after they thumped Estonia 5-0. - Agencies

Coco Gauff wins US Open crown crushing Sabalenka

Coco Gauff produced a gutsy performance on the Arthur Ashe Stadium court to win 2-6, 6-3, 6-2 in 2hr 6min to complete a fairytale transformation in her season's fortunes

OUR CORRESPONDENTS

NEW YORK: American teenager Coco Gauff came from behind to win the US Open on clinching her first Grand Slam title with a battling win over Aryna Sabalenka of Belarus. Coco Gauff produced a gutsy performance on the Arthur Ashe Stadium court to win 2-6, 6-3, 6-2 in 2hr 6min to complete a fairytale transformation in her season's fortunes. The sixth seed from Florida had gone into the final as the underdog against the hard-hitting second seed Sabalenka, who will become world number one in next week's rankings. But with both players making a slew of mistakes throughout an error-strewn final watched by a record crowd of 28,143 it was Gauff who held her nerve when it mattered to seal a deserved victory. The win completed a remarkable turnaround

for the 19-year-old, who was left distraught after a first-round exit at Wimbledon in July. However, she bounced back to win titles in Washington and Cincinnati and has now landed the biggest win of her career, after a shattering loss at the French Open last year. "It means so much to me," an elated Gauff said afterwards. "I feel like I'm a little bit in shock in this moment. That French Open loss [last year] was a heartbreak for me. That makes this moment even sweeter than I could imagine." Gauff, the third American teenager to win the US Open after Tracy Austin and Serena Williams, also used her victory speech to thank those who doubted her talent. "Honestly thank you to the people who didn't believe in me," she joked. "To those who thought they were putting water on my fire, they were putting gas on my fire and I'm burning so bright right now." Aryna Sabalenka breaking



her Gauff was in trouble in the opening game, Sabalenka breaking her straight away with a rasping backhand that drew a roar of "Come On!" from the Belarusian. She held easily to take a 2-0 lead but Gauff then took advantage of a shaky service game from Sabalenka to break at 2.2 in the fourth. The Belarusian double-faulted twice to allow Gauff to get back

on level terms. But that hard-won parity was surrendered in the next game as Sabalenka broke back to go 3-2 ahead. Sabalenka then wobbled on her own serve once more as Gauff eked out two break points in the sixth game. But Sabalenka got it back to deuce with an ace and then took a 4-2 lead with an emphatic smash. Coco Gauff's problems on serve continued and Sabalenka broke for the third time to race 5-2 ahead, and she duly wrapped up the set by holding in the next game. Yet with the match threatening to become a rout, Gauff finally clicked into gear in the second set, making fewer unforced errors and ironing out the kinks in her serve. Instead, it was Aryna Sabalenka who began to show signs of brittleness as the tension mounted. She double-faulted to hand Gauff the only break of the set and a 3-1 lead. Gauff fended off a break point in the next game

to hold for 4-1 and went on to hold for the remainder of the set to level the match when Sabalenka smashed a forehand long. The momentum remained firmly with Gauff in the final set and she secured another crucial break in the opening game when she put away an under-hit Sabalenka lob with a smash. Gauff then held easily for a 2-0 lead as Sabalenka struggled to regain any semblance of composure. She coughed up four unforced errors to gift Gauff a break and a 3-0 lead, and the American then held with ease to go 4-0 up. Sabalenka stopped the rot by holding serve in the fifth game, before taking a medical timeout to receive treatment on her left thigh. Coco Gauff was in no mood to let her grip on the match slip though. Although Aryana Sabalenka held and broke Gauff to cut the lead to 4-2, Gauff hit back when Sabalenka double-faulted to present a breakpoint.

Briefs

Isolating
Russia in
grain
deal doomed

ANKARA : President Recep Tayyip Erdogan called on Sunday for Russia not to be "marginalized" in talks aimed at reviving a key deal to export Ukrainian grain through the Black Sea. Erdogan said the issue of unblocking the Black Sea Grain Initiative was discussed in great detail at this weekend's G-20 summit but any initiative that isolates Russia is unlikely to be sustainable. "No process that marginalizes Russia on the Black Sea Grain Initiative will be viable," the president said in a press briefing after the conclusion of the meeting in New Delhi. Erdogan announced a forthcoming meeting on the issue between representatives from Russia, Ukraine and the United Nations, without specifying a precise date or location. The U.N. and Türkiye-brokered grain deal, which aimed to ensure safe navigation for civilian ships through the Black Sea, collapsed after Russia pulled out in July. Moscow has since repeatedly attacked Ukraine's port infrastructure, in what Kyiv says is a cynical attempt to damage its exports and undermine global food security.—DNA

Air raids
killed 40
people in
Sudan

WAD MADANI : At least 40 people were killed and dozens injured Sunday in air strikes in the south of Sudan's capital Khartoum, local activists said, as the war nears the end of its fifth month. The revised toll means the Sunday morning raid was one of the deadliest single attacks in the war that erupted in April between army chief Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan and his former deputy, Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who commands the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces. "At about 7:15 am (0515 GMT), military aircraft bombed the Qouro market area," said the local resistance committee, one of many groups that used to organize pro-democracy protests and now provides assistance during the war. "The number of victims of the Qouro market massacre" had risen to 40 by the afternoon, the committee said, revising its previous toll of 30 killed. The committee said more deaths were expected, as casualties continued to pour into the nearby Bashair hospital. The hospital had issued an "urgent appeal" for all medical professionals in the area to come and help treat the "increasing number of injured people arriving." Nearly 7,500 people have been killed in the war that erupted on April 15, according to a conservative estimate from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project. The real death toll is presumed to be much higher, with many of those wounded and killed never reaching hospitals or morgues. Access to many areas has been cut off completely and the warring sides have not declared their losses. Nearly five months in, neither side has been able to seize a decisive advantage. The armed forces control the skies over Khartoum, while RSF fighters continue to dominate the city's streets. The army has been accused of repeated indiscriminate shelling of the residential areas where the paramilitaries have embedded themselves, including by evicting families and taking over homes. Over 2.8 million people have fled the Sudanese capital, whose pre-war population was around five million. Those who cannot or refuse to leave Khartoum remain trapped by air strikes, artillery fire and street battles, forced to ration precious water and electricity. In addition to the capital, the fighting has been mainly concentrated in the western region of Darfur, where violence linked to the RSF and its allies has prompted the International Criminal Court to open a new investigation into alleged war crimes. A total of over five million people have been forced to flee their homes, according to the United Nations, one million of them across borders.—Agencies

World leaders offer solidarity after deadly Morocco quake

UN humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths said he was "deeply saddened by news of the quake, saying "our thoughts are with the thousands of families affected. We stand ready to support

DNA
MARRAKESH : Leaders and diplomats the world over expressed condolences and offered their support for Morocco Saturday after a devastating earthquake struck the mountains southwest of Marrakesh. The 6.8-magnitude earthquake that hit late Friday killed more than 1,000 people and injured more than 1,000 more, many of them critically, according to Moroccan authorities. Support has poured in from leaders across the world. Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, of Morocco's cross-strait neighbour Spain, expressed his "solidarity and support to the people of Morocco in the wake of this terrible earthquake... Spain is with the victims of this tragedy".

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said "our thoughts are with the victims of this devastating earthquake. Our sympathy goes out to all those affected". French President Emmanuel Macron said he was "devastated" and said that "France stands ready to help with first aid". The pope expressed his "profound solidarity" with Morocco after the quake, according to the Vatican. Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said she "learned with grief of the tragic toll" from the quake, stressing "Italy's willingness to support Morocco in this emergency". European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen expressed sympathy "with the Moroccan people in the face of the terrible earthquake", while top EU diplomat Josep

Borrell said the bloc was ready to provide Morocco "the assistance it wishes". The leaders of both Russia and Ukraine also offered their sympathies. Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy expressed his "deepest condolences to HM King Mohammed VI and all Moroccans for the lives lost in the horrible earthquake". "Ukraine stands in solidarity with Morocco during this tragic time," he said on social media. Russian President Vladimir Putin expressed similar sentiments and said, in a message to Morocco's king, "we share the pain and the mourning of the friendly Moroccan people". Algeria, which broke off diplomatic relations with Morocco in August 2021 at the height of the crisis between the two countries, offered "its sincere condolences to the

brotherly Moroccan people for the victims of the earthquake", said its foreign ministry. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu "instructed all government bodies and forces to provide any necessary assistance to the people of Morocco, including the preparations for sending an aid delegation to the area", his office said. It is the latest show of support in the wake of the 2020 Abraham Accords that saw Israel normalise ties with a number of Arab countries, including Morocco. The president of the United Arab Emirates, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, said he "stand with the Kingdom of Morocco during this difficult time and wish a speedy recovery ahead to all those affected". He also ordered an "air bridge to deliver critical relief" to the country, state

news agency WAM reported. Iran expressed its condolences for the "terrible earthquake". Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani said he was "ready to provide any form of assistance to deal with the repercussions of the devastating earthquake". King of Jordan Abdullah II urged his government to provide all possible assistance to Morocco. Nigerian President Bola Tinubu extended his heartfelt condolences to King Mohammed VI of Morocco: "In the face of this adversity, Nigeria will continue to stand in solidarity with Morocco as they recover, rebuild and come out stronger than ever from this unfortunate event." The head of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, expressed his "sincere condolences" to the king,

the Moroccan people and the families of the victims. The secretary-general of the Jeddah-based Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, Hissein Ibrahim Taha, prayed for "mercy on the victims and a speedy recovery for the injured". World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus described the quake as "heartbreaking", adding: "We stand ready to support the immediate health needs." UN humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths said he was "deeply saddened by news of the quake, saying "our thoughts are with the thousands of families affected. We stand ready to support." The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) said the response to the devastating quake could take years.

Myanmar received Su-30 fighter jets from Russia

NAYPYIDAW : Myanmar has received the first shipment of two Russian Su-30 fighter jets, Charlie Than, Myanmar's trade minister, told the Russian RIA state news agency in remarks published on Sunday. "Two aircraft have already been delivered," Than told RIA on the sidelines of the Eastern Economic Forum, Russia's annual forum aimed at developing economic cooperation in the region and encouraging foreign investment, which starts on Sunday in the port of Vladivostok. Russia and Myanmar signed a contract in September 2022 for the delivery of six Su-30SME fighter jets, RIA said. The Sukhoi Su-30SME multi-role fighter jet is designed for enemy's aerial targets engagement, aerial reconnaissance, combat employment and pilot training, according to Rosobornexport, Russia's state-controlled arms exporter. Separately, Than told the Russian TASS state news agency that a number of bilateral agreements will be signed at the East Economic Forum, including on developing tourism between the two countries. The Russian defense ministry did not immediately respond to request for comment. The United States has warned that Russia's backing for Myanmar's military rulers is unacceptable and destabilising, with its supply of weapons helping to fuel a conflict that has become a catastrophe for the country. Russia's defense minister and top diplomat have visited Myanmar, while junta chief Min Aung Hlaing has been to Russia several times since 2021 and was given an honorary doctorate.—DNA

SA issues over 36k certificates of origin

DNA
RIYADH: In a move to bolster the export sector, Saudi Arabia's Ministry of Industry and Mineral Resources issued 36,293 certificates of origin in the month of August, up from 34,926 in July, according to the ministry's monthly bulletin. The initiative is seen as a part of the ministry's efforts to boost exports across various sectors. Certificates of origin serve as a pivotal document in international trade, validating that the exported goods are of a national origin or have met the criteria to be deemed so. The latest data reveals this service is not limited to large corporations or industrial conglomerates but encompasses a broad array of economic actors, including but not limited to farmers, fishermen, individual entrepreneurs, and local craftsmen.

Inflation rises to 39.7% in Egypt

CAIRO : The rise in food prices pushed Egypt's annual headline inflation to an all-time high of 39.7 percent in August, in line with analysts' expectations, data from the country's statistics agency CAPMAS revealed. This increase far exceeds the headline inflation rate of 38.2 percent reported in July and marks a significant surge from 15.3 percent recorded in August 2022. Food and beverage prices in the country in August rose 71.9 percent compared to the same month last year, reported CAPMAS.—APP

Daniel charged over Wandsworth prison escape

BRUSSELS : Daniel Khalife has been charged with escaping from Wandsworth prison, after his arrest on following a four-day manhunt. The 21-year-old former soldier is due to appear in Westminster Magistrates' Court on Monday. He was held on a towpath in Northolt after being pulled off a bicycle by a plain-clothed police officer. Mr Khalife escaped from the prison on Wednesday morning by hiding under a food delivery lorry. The Met Police said he had been charged with escaping on September 6 while on remand at HMP Wandsworth Prison awaiting trial at the Old Bailey, contrary to common law. He was being held on remand at the prison in south-west London after previously being charged with under the Official Secrets Act and the Terrorism Act. About 40 inmates moved from prison after escape How police closed in on Daniel Khalife - in maps Mr Khalife is accused of trying to spy for an enemy state, understood to be Iran, and obtaining information likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism. He is also charged with plotting a fake bomb hoax. He denies the charges against him. His escape prompted questions about security at Wandsworth prison, with Justice Secretary Alex Chalk telling the BBC he has launched investigations into the incident. Mr Chalk says preliminary inquiries into the get away have determined that correct security protocols and staffing levels were in place at the time. But speaking to the BBC's Sunday with Laura Kuenssberg, he said.—Agencies



ISLAMABAD: A view of deserted Aabpara Sunday weekly bazaar in Federal Capital, due to Asia Cup 2023 super four one-day international (ODI) cricket match between India and Pakistan.— Online

Khalistan leaders accuse India of Nijjar's murder

VANCOUVER : Pro-Khalistan Sikh community leaders firmly believe that India cannot stifle their voices, noting an exceptional tenfold increase in the community's dedication to freedom, particularly among the youth, following Hardeep Singh Nijjar's assassination here three months ago by the suspected Indian agents. Sikhs For Justice (SFJ), which is running the Khalistan Referendum voting campaign worldwide, decided to hold the voting for Sunday 10 September at Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara-Surrey Delta where Nijjar was assassinated and he was also President of the same Gurdwara. He was on India's "most wanted" list and the Indian govt had seized his assets back home and registered dozens of false cases against him. Dr. Bakhshish Singh Sandhu, President of the Council of Khalistan, and Bhopinder Singh Hothi, Secretary-General of Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara-Surrey Delta, anticipated a substantial Sikh community turnout for the rights of Sikhs. Dr. Sandhu, President of the Council of Khalistan, highlighted that the Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara is a special place for the Khalistan referendum, as it was the site where Hardeep Singh Nijjar, leader of the Canadian Chapter of Khalistan Referendum, assassinated by Indian agencies on June 18, 2023. Dr. Sandhu accused the Indian government of involvement in the assassination of Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a prominent Khalistani activist who was Khalistan Referendum's Canada President and also local leader of SFJ. Nijjar, aged 46, was tragically killed outside a gurdwara in Surrey, Canada. Notably, a reward of Rs 10 lakh was placed on his head, as declared by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) earlier this year. The NIA had leveled charges against him for his involvement in terrorism-related activities and his alleged role in waging war against India. Dr. Sandhu welcomed the decision of Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to initiate public investigations into foreign interference, including those linked to India, expressing his satisfaction.—Agencies

French president set to visit Bangladesh

DHAKA : French President Emmanuel Macron will visit Bangladesh on Sunday. It will be the first visit from a French president to the South Asian nation in 33 years. Previously, former French President Mitterrand visited Bangladesh in 1990. Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who left New Delhi for Dhaka after attending the G-20



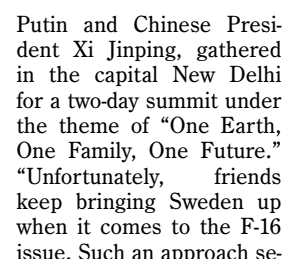
leaders' summit as a guest country at the invitation of

her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi, is scheduled to receive Macron at the airport, according to the Bangladeshi Foreign Ministry. They will hold a bilateral meeting, sign bilateral agreements and hold a joint news conference. "We are thrilled to see a growing interest from both sides to enhance business, in particular to build on French technolo-

gy and know-how in order to support the move from Digital Bangladesh to Smart Bangladesh," the French Embassy in Dhaka said ahead of the visit. "It will also be an opportunity to deepen our bilateral relations with a country that is experiencing rapid economic growth and seeking to diversify its partnerships," the embassy said.—Agencies

Erdogan says he talked about F-16s with Biden

NEW DELHI : Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Sunday said he talked about F-16 fighter jets during a brief conversation with his US counterpart Joe Biden on the sidelines of the G-20 leaders' summit. "We had a quick word with Biden. We also discussed the F-16 issue," Erdogan said at a news conference after the G-20 summit in India. The G-20 leaders, in the absence of Russian President Vladimir



Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping, gathered in the capital New Delhi for a two-day summit under the theme of "One Earth, One Family, One Future."



point where I can decide on my own. It must be passed by the parliament. Sweden must fulfill its duties," he said. Türkiye stresses Swe-

den's NATO bid and Türkiye's F-16 purchase from the US are not linked to each other. Ankara requested F-16 fighter jets and modernization kits in October 2021. The \$6-billion deal would include the sale of 40 jets as well as modernization kits for 79 warplanes already in the Turkish Air Force's inventory. The State Department has informally notified Congress of the potential sale.—DNA

US, EU, Mid East Counter China's trade dominance

FOREIGN DESK

BEIJING : Broad alliance of states on unveiled a vast multinational rail and ports deal linking the Middle East and South Asia, boosting trade ties with potentially wide-ranging geopolitical implications. The United States, the European Union, India, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and others launched the initiative to link railways, ports, electricity and data networks and hydrogen pipelines on the sidelines of the Group of 20 (G-20) summit in New Delhi. The pact comes at a critical time as U.S. President Joe Biden seeks to counter China's Belt and Road push on global infrastructure by pitching Washington as an alternative partner and investor for developing countries at the G-20 grouping. Although heavily trade-focused, the scheme could have wide-ranging implications

including developing contacts between long-time foes Israel and Saudi Arabia. Signatories hope it can help integrate India's vast market of 1.4 billion people with countries to the west, offer a counterbalance to lavish Chinese infrastructure spending, boost Middle Eastern economies and help normalize relations between Israel and Gulf Arab states. "This

is a real big deal," said U.S. President Joe Biden at the launch event, calling the plan "historic." Biden said it would bridge ports across two continents and lead to a "more stable, more prosperous and integrated Middle East." He said it would unlock "endless opportunities" for clean energy, clean electricity, and laying cable to connect communities. Europe-

an Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said the so-called India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor, or IMEC, was "much more than 'just' a railway or a cable." "It is a green and digital bridge across continents and civilizations," she said. Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "Today, as we embark upon such a big connectivity initiative, we

are sowing the seeds for future generations to dream bigger." The deal will benefit low and middle-income countries in the region and enable a critical role for the Middle East in global commerce, Jon Finer, the U.S. deputy national security adviser, told reporters at the G-20 summit. It aims to link Middle Eastern countries by railway and connect them to India by port, helping the flow of energy and trade from the Gulf to Europe, U.S. officials have said, by cutting shipping times, costs and fuel use. A memorandum of understanding (MoU) on the IMEC was signed by the European Union, India, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the U.S. and other G-20 partners. IMEC is envisioned to consist of two separate corridors, with an east corridor connecting India to the Arabian Gulf and a northern corridor connecting the Arabian Gulf with Europe, according to the MoU.



Briefs

China spy claims as Parliament researcher arrested

DNA

LONDON: A researcher at the UK Parliament has been arrested under the Official Secrets Act, amid claims he was spying for China. Police have confirmed two men, one in his 20s and another in his 30s, were arrested under the act in March. Sources have told the BBC one of them was a parliamentary researcher involved in international affairs issues. As first reported in the Sunday Times, it is understood the researcher had links to several Conservative MPs. On Sunday morning, No 10 said Rishi Sunak had expressed concerns about Chinese interference to a senior official from China. A spokesperson said the prime minister had met Chinese Premier Li Qiang during the G20 summit in India, and "conveyed his significant concerns about Chinese interference about Chinese interference the UK's parliamentary democracy". Chinese President Xi Jinping is not attending the summit. The Sunday Times reported the researcher had links to security minister Tom Tugendhat and foreign affairs committee chairwoman Alicia Kearns, among others. Several government sources declined to comment on security matters. The Metropolitan Police said: "A man in his 30s was arrested at an address in Oxfordshire and a man in his 20s was arrested at an address in Edinburgh."

Gaza exports to Israel resume

GAZA CITY: Gaza Strip exports to Israel resumed Sunday as Israel reopened a trade crossing, days after shutting it over an alleged attempt to smuggle explosives from the Palestinian enclave. The Kerem Shalom crossing, the only point of entry for goods between Gaza and Israel, was closed last week after the Israeli army said it found explosives hidden in a clothing delivery carried in three trucks. Israeli army chief of staff Herzi Halevi last Monday ordered an immediate halt of all commercial deliveries from Gaza to Israel following the alleged attempt to "smuggle high-quality explosives". Impoverished Gaza, home to around 2.3 million Palestinians, is under a tight land, air and sea blockade imposed by Israel, whose defence ministry controls all crossings except Rafah which is controlled by Egypt. On Sunday morning the Kerem Shalom gateway was reopened, said Raed Fattouh, head of the Presidential Committee for the Coordination of Goods, which is affiliated to Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas's Fatah party. - APP

Diamonds, girlfriends, illicit lobbying: The fall of a former ambassador

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: When Richard G. Olson Jr. retired from the State Department in 2016, he was lauded by colleagues for an illustrious, 34-year career that included high-profile postings as the U.S. ambassador to Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates, as well as risky assignments in Iraq and Afghanistan. "Rick is quite simply one of our most distinguished diplomats," then-Secretary of State John F. Kerry effused in a statement. But in the years since, Olson has come under federal investigation for a pattern of conduct atypical of the upright, protocol-observant world of international diplomacy. Previously undisclosed records filed in court reveal that the State Department's inspector general investigated Olson for failing to report a \$60,000 gift of diamond jewelry to his mother-in-law from the emir of Dubai. As part of a broader investigation, the FBI also questioned him about his extramarital affair with a journalist working in Pakistan while he was serving as the U.S. ambassador in Islamabad, according to the documents. The FBI learned that Olson had arranged for a Pakistani American businessman — who is now serving a 12-year federal prison sentence for illegal campaign donations and tax crimes — to pay \$25,000 in tuition bills that enabled the ambassador's girlfriend to move to New York and attend the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. Records show that Olson led a complicated love life that could have left him vulnerable to blackmail. While stationed in Pakistan from 2012 to 2015, he dated multiple women even though he was married to another U.S. diplomat, who was serving at the time as the ambassador to Libya, court documents filed by his attorneys show. Olson told the FBI that he had confided in the CIA's Islamabad station chief about his dating habits, but court records indicate that he did not report his liaisons to U.S. diplomatic security officials in accordance with State Department counter-intelligence rules. Olson, 63, is scheduled to be sentenced in U.S. District Court in Washington



on Tuesday after pleading guilty last year to two misdemeanors. On the first charge, Olson admitted that when he was the ambassador to Pakistan he failed to disclose that he received an \$18,000 first-class ticket to fly to London for a job interview with a Persian Gulf investment firm. On the second charge, he acknowledged that he illicitly lobbied U.S. officials on behalf of the government of Qatar in 2017, violating a federal "cooling-off" law that prohibited him from doing so for a year after his retirement from the State Department. He was not charged with wrongdoing related to the diamonds or his girlfriend's tuition, but the Justice Department has argued in connection with his sentencing that the episodes show a pattern of unethical behavior. In court filings, prosecutors called the emir's jewelry "an exorbitant and obviously inappropriate gift" and accused Olson of lying to avoid accountability. After being nominated as ambassador to Pakistan, Olson testifies at his confirmation hearing in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee in July 2012. (Win McNamee/Getty Images) Under federal sentencing guidelines, Olson could receive up to six months in prison, though his attorneys have said

he should not have to serve any time behind bars. "His career and service to his country has been nothing but honorable," J. Michael Hannon, one of his lawyers, wrote in a memo to the court, arguing that his client had been unfairly targeted by overzealous prosecutors. Hannon declined to be interviewed for the record and did not respond to a list of written questions. In recent years, the Justice Department has stepped up its enforcement of foreign-influence laws. Members of Congress have also sought to clamp down on the secretive practice of retired U.S. military personnel working as consultants or contractors for foreign powers. Olson's legal and romantic problems began after he reported to Islamabad as the U.S. ambassador in 2012. U.S.-Pakistani relations were in tatters because of the daring U.S. military raid on the country a year earlier to kill al-Qaeda founder Osama bin Laden. Pakistan had also shut down U.S. ground supply routes for the war in Afghanistan in retaliation for a NATO airstrike that killed two dozen Pakistani soldiers. While Olson's primary task was to soothe tensions with Pakistan's powerful military and spy chiefs, he also began seeing Muna Habib, a young television reporter working in the country,

court records show. They dated for two years but broke up in late 2014 after Habib, who is a British citizen, discovered that the ambassador had been cheating on both her and his wife, Olson's lawyers acknowledged in court documents. "Ms. Habib believed that they were dating exclusively, while Amb. Olson was not under that same impression," the lawyers wrote. They resumed contact a few months later. Habib was admitted to the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism in 2015 but couldn't afford the \$93,000 she needed to attend. Olson agreed to help by introducing her to Imaad Zuberi, a Pakistani American dealmaker with high-level business and political contacts in Pakistan, China and the Middle East, according to court records. Zuberi had never heard of Habib before, the records show, but within days he offered to pay \$25,000 to offset her tuition expenses and arrange a \$50,000 loan. Records show that he sent a \$20,000 check to Columbia University and \$5,000 to Habib but never made good on his promise of a loan. Zuberi was sentenced in 2021 to a 12-year prison term in a separate case after he pleaded guilty to tax evasion, campaign finance violations and other charges. An attorney for Zuberi did not respond to a request for comment. In court filings, Olson's attorneys said that he "merely made an introduction, a very common practice for a diplomat" and that there was nothing improper about the tuition payment because he was not dating Habib at that point. But emails submitted to the court indicate that the ambassador and the journalist still had feelings for each other. "Our break up has been one of the most difficult periods of my life," Habib wrote on June 16, 2015, while the tuition deal was being sorted out. "I knew how you had behaved in all your previous relationships and I continued to see you. It didn't matter to me because of how you made me feel loved, special, something that I had never experienced before." "Glad we're still friends," Olson replied. "I care deeply about you too." In a brief phone interview, Habib dismissed questions about her relationship

Continued on Page 06

Morocco earthquake Country in mourning for over 2,000 killed

NEWS DESK

RABAT: The Moroccan government has declared three days of national mourning. The Interior Ministry says 2,012 people have been killed and 2,059 injured in Friday's devastating tremor, with 1,404 in critical condition. Survivors of Morocco's deadliest earthquake in more than six decades struggled to find food and water on Sunday as the search for the missing continued in hard-to-reach villages and the death toll of more than 2,000 seemed likely to rise further. Many people spent a second night in the open after the 6.8 magnitude quake hit late on Friday. Relief workers face the challenge of reaching the worst-affected villages in the High Atlas, a rugged mountain range where settlements are often remote and where many houses crumbled. Moroccan media reported the collapse of a historically important 12th century mosque, underlining

damage to the country's cultural heritage. The quake also damaged parts of Marrakech old city, a UNESCO World Heritage site. In Moulay Brahim, a village near the epicentre 40km south of Marrakech, residents described how they had dug the dead from the rubble using their bare hands. "We lost our houses and we lost people also and we are sleeping like two days outside," said 36-year-old Yassin Noumghar, a Moulay Brahim resident. Complaining of shortages of water, food and power, Noumghar said he had received little government aid so far. "We want just for our government to help us," he said, expressing a frustration voiced by others. Later, sacks of food were unloaded from a truck which local official Mouhammad al-Hayyan said had been organised by the government and civil society organisations. Twenty-five bodies had been brought to Moulay Brahim's small medical clinic, according to staff there who warned they were starting to face a shortage of some first aid supplies.

US mobilizes \$44 mln in US-Pak diaspora investment

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The United States announced the mobilization of more than \$40 million in new U.S.-Pakistani diaspora investment at the USAID 'Invest in Pakistan' conference today in Islamabad. Four diaspora partners concluded four new Memoranda of Understanding with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) valued at \$44 million — increasing total diaspora commitments to nearly \$200 million. **New investment commitments include:**

- **SERVINZ Limited: \$5 million for restoring livelihoods in flood-affected areas;**
- **Pakfoods LLC Group & NUST - \$9 million for technology;**
- **Jaxeri Investment Corporation - \$25 million for electric vehicle local manufacturing; and,**

• **Global Semiconductors Group - \$5 million for training youth in semiconductor and chip design technology.** Addressing the participants at the closing ceremony, U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Donald Blome highlighted the valuable contributions of the U.S.-Pakistani diaspora. "I want to congratulate our four diaspora partners, SERVINZ Limited, Pakfoods LLC Group, Jaxeri Investment Corporation, and Global Semiconductors Group, for signing these MOUs. You are helping unlock Pakistan's investment potential. I look forward to seeing the benefits these partnerships will bring to the Pakistani economy and the Pakistani people," the Ambassador said. "The three hemes discussed at the conference today — Artificial Intelligence, electric vehicles, and semiconductor technology investments — are key to Pakistan's economic growth and future prosperity," he added.

Biden wants greater co-op with Vietnam

HANOI: Talks are likely to focus on semiconductors and critical minerals amid a revelation that Vietnam was in talks with Russia over a new arms supply deal that could trigger US sanctions. Received in Hanoi with a warm welcome on Sunday, Joe Biden has predicted "the beginning of an era of even greater cooperation" with Vietnam. "Vietnam and the United States are essential partners" at an "extremely important" moment for the world, the US president declared at the start of a meeting with the general secretary of the ruling Communist Party, Nguyen Phu Trong. Soldiers in full uniform joined school children waving small flags from the two Vietnam and the US welcomed Biden, as he arrived hot on the heels of the G20 summit in New Delhi. The aim of the visit is to assert American power in Asia at the gates of China. Biden is set to sign an "extended strategic partnership" which reflects the highest possible degree of diplomatic proximity to another nation. It's something that Vietnam has only previously done with Russia, India, South Korea and China. While taking care not to be perceived as siding with Washington or Beijing, Hanoi wants to strengthen its position against China, against a backdrop of maritime and territorial rivalries. The country, though, is not only relying on American support. The New York Times reported that Vietnam was secretly negotiating a new arms deal with Russia — despite international sanctions. - Agencies

Security forces kill seven terrorists in Chitral

RAWALPINDI: At least seven terrorists were killed during an exchange of fire with the security forces in the Ursoon area of Chitral district of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province, the military said in a statement on Sunday. According to Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), another six terrorists were critically injured during the intense exchange of fire. It said that the sanitisation of the area is being carried out to eliminate any other terrorists found in the area. "Locals of the area appreciated the operation by the security forces and expressed their full support to eliminate the menace of terrorism from the country," the statement further said. The incident came days after the Pakistan Army said it repelled a cross-border raid from Afghanistan by a large group of terrorists equipped with the latest weapons targeting the two military posts located in the general area of Kalash in the Chitral district. During an exchange of fire, at least 12 terrorists were killed while four Pakistani soldiers embraced martyrdom, according to the military's media wing. The ISPR said owing to the heightened threat environment, security was already on high alert. "The valiant soldiers fought bravely and repulsed the attacks inflicting heavy casualties to the terrorists. During the fire exchange, twelve terrorists were sent to hell, while a large number has been critically injured." However, during the intense exchange of fire, four brave soldiers, having fought gallantly, embraced Shahadat. Terrorists' movement and concentration in Gawardesh, Pitigal, Barg-e-Matel and Batash areas of Nuristan and Kunar provinces of Afghanistan had already been picked up and were timely shared with the Interim Afghan government. -Agencies

Crackdown underway to combat power theft, smuggling

ISLAMABAD: A country-wide massive crackdown by the Caretaker Government to combat the alarming surge in power theft continues across the country. The Islamabad Electric Supply Company drive against power pilferage in Rawalpindi-Attock-Jhelum and Chakwal circles and imposed fine of Rs 7.567 million in various areas. Lahore Electric Supply Company has taken strict action against eight officers; five Executive Engineers two Sub-Divisional Officers and a Line Superintendent for conniving in electricity theft and giving new power connection to a dead defaulter. The Faisalabad Electric Supply Company has also nabbed 87 people on the charge of power pilferage in different parts of its region during past 24 hours. The Peshawar Electricity Supply Company has so far removed over 500 direct hooks during ongoing operation spokesman PESCO said that FIRs have been registered against those stealing electricity. - APP

Ukraine offensive could have only 30 days left

LONDON: Ukraine has little more than 30 days left of fighting before the weather hinders its counter-offensive, the top-ranking US military officer says. Speaking to British media, Gen Mark Milley said colder conditions would make it much harder for Ukraine to manoeuvre. He admitted the offensive had gone more slowly than expected. But he said: "There's still heavy fighting going on. The Ukrainians are still plugging away with steady progress." Gen Milley said it was too early to say whether the counter-offensive had failed, but said Ukraine was "progressing at a very steady pace through the Russian front lines". "There's still a reasonable amount of time, probably about 30 to 45 days' worth of fighting weather left, so the Ukrainians aren't done. There's battles not done... they haven't finished the fighting part of what they're trying to accomplish." Kyiv's counter-offensive, which was launched in the summer and aims to liberate Russian-occupied territory in Ukraine, has so far seen only small gains. But Ukrainian generals claim they have breached Russia's formidable first line of defences in the south. "I said at the very beginning of this [war] that this was going to be long, slow, hard, and high-casualty-producing, and that's exactly what it is," Gen Milley said. In the same interview, Adm Sir Tony

Radakin, the UK chief of defence staff, said "Ukraine is winning and Russia is losing". "That is because the aim of Russia was to subjugate Ukraine and to put it under Russia's control", he said. "That has not happened and it never will happen, and that's why Ukraine is winning." He added that Ukraine was making progress in its battle to regain its territory, having recovered 50% of the ground Russia seized. Ukraine's progress was also down to the international community "applying economic pressure and diplomatic pressure, and Russia is suffering because of that", he said. Last year, Ukraine's armed forces retook Kherson on 11 November, while during the generally mild winter fighting continued to rage around Bakhmut. Autumn rains and winter cold do have an impact on the nature of the fighting, but the slowdown in Ukraine's offensive operations last year was more about equipment and ammunition. Asked about the weather's impact, the head of Ukraine's military intelligence, Lt Gen Kyrylo Budanov, said on Saturday that "the fighting will continue one way or another". He acknowledged it was harder to fight in cold, wet weather, but said it was a question of adjustment, not calling a halt. Wheeled vehicles, he said, are more problematic in wet weather than tracked vehicles like tanks. - Agencies

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