



Islamabad POST

Thursday, September 14, 2023

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 25

Xi says 'upgrading' Venezuela ties after meeting Maduro

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Baku ready to allow aid access to Karabakh

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Naseem Shah ruled out of Asia Cup

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President suggests CEC

Polls should be held by November 6

President recalled in the letter that "in an endeavour to fulfil the constitutional obligations, CEC was invited for a meeting to devise the modalities of implementing the constitutional intent

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Wednesday wrote a letter to Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja and proposed that elections be held by November 6. The letter comes against the backdrop of reports that the president would unilaterally announce a date for the elections. But contrary to the said reports, the missive is a mere suggestion, rather than a declaration of the election date, analysts said. In the letter, the president said he had dissolved the National Assembly on the prime minister's advice on August 9. The president cited Article 48(5) of the Constitution, which he said "empowers and mandates the president 'to appoint a date not later than 90 days from the date of the dissolution, for the holding of a general election to the Assembly'". Hence, "in terms of Article 48(5), the general election to the National Assembly should be held by the 89th day of the date of dissolution of the National Assembly, i.e. Monday, 6th day of November 2023", the letter read. The president recalled in the letter that "in an endeavour to fulfil the constitutional obligations, the chief election commissioner was invited for a meeting to devise the modalities of implementing the constitutional intent and mandate". But in his reply, the CEC "took a contrary view that as per the scheme of the Constitution and framework of electoral laws, it was the domain of the election commission, and following the publication of last preceding census on August 7, duly notified delimitation of constituencies was in progress, a mandatory requirement stipulated by Article 51(5) of the Constitution and

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Inclusive' polls crucial for Pakistan

MAHNOOR ANSAR



ISLAMABAD: British High Commissioner to Pakistan Jane Marriott Wednesday stressed free, credible, transparent and inclusive elections in Pakistan in a meeting with Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja in Islamabad. The British envoy shared on her account on X, formerly Twitter, about the meeting with the CEC at the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) office in the federal capital. "Important introductory meeting with Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja at ECP today," Marriot wrote in her post. The diplomat added that she and the CEC agreed that it is crucial for Pakistan to witness "free, credible, transparent and inclusive elections in line with the law". The meeting between the UK envoy and CEC Raja comes at a time when the country is awaiting the announcement

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GILGIT: Caretaker PM Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar inaugurates Cardiac Hospital in Gilgit. - DNA

Elections Law ministers for smooth conduct of polls

FAISAL SHIEKH

ISLAMABAD: The federal and provincial law ministers on Wednesday during a meeting underscored the importance of upholding the principles of democracy and ensuring the smooth conduct of elections. Caretaker Minister for Law and Justice, Ahmad Irfan Aslam convened a meeting with provincial law ministers including Kanwar Dilshad (Punjab), Muhammad Omer Soomro (Sindh), Arshad Hussain Shah (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) and Amanullah Kanrani (Balochistan). The meeting was held to discuss matters pertaining to the upcoming general elections to the National and Provincial Assemblies, said a press release. During the meeting, all Law Ministers underscored the importance of upholding the principles of democracy and ensuring the smooth conduct of elections. It was unanimously agreed that the Constitution must be read as a whole and no provision of the Constitution be read in isolation from other relevant provisions. As per the Constitution,

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'One nation, one law to be ensured, says PM Kakar

He said every effort would be made to resolve the problems of the people of GB and provide them with an honourable life

BUREAU REPORT

GILGIT: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar on Wednesday said the problems of Gilgit Baltistan would be addressed through constitutional means, and no 'hostage group' would be allowed to enforce its agenda. "The rule of One Nation and One Law will be implemented and there should be no doubt about it," he told journalists at the opening of the outpatient department at the cardiology hospital in Gilgit. The prime minister said it was the responsibility of the State to ensure the rights of the people. He said every effort would be made to resolve the problems of the people of GB and provide them with an honourable life. He vowed to focus on tapping the economic potential of GB through its tourism and energy production sectors. Kakar said the road infrastructure of GB would be improved to enhance its connectivity with

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Judicial remand of Imran, Qureshi extended

QAZI SHOAIB

ATTOCK: A special court established under the Official Secrets Act extended Wednesday Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan and party's Vice Chairman Shah Mahmood Qureshi's judicial remand till September 26 in the cipher case. Khan has been imprisoned in jail since his conviction in the Toshakhana case on August 5 for failing to properly declare gifts he received while in office. While the Islamabad High Court (IHC) had

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Briefs

Only a 'certain party' knows polls date

STAFF REPORT

MUZAFFARGARH: In an apparent jibe at former coalition partner PML-N, PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari said on Wednesday that no one knows when the general elections are supposed to be held but a "certain party" already has this information. The statement came in the wake of divided opinions about the date for the polls among the stakeholders, raising concerns of another constitutional crisis in the country. Amid this confusion, President Dr Arif Alvi, earlier today, proposed November 6 as the date for the country's next general elections in a letter written to CEC Sikandar Sultan Raja.

No possibility of PMLN-PPP alliance

ABBAS HASHMI

LAHORE: Former interior minister Rana Sanaullah has ruled out the possibility of an alliance between the PPP and the PML-N in the upcoming general elections. Interacting with a group of reporters here Wednesday, the PML-N leader hinted the two parties might agree to a seat adjustment formula on a limited level, but even such an electoral adjustment was highly unlikely. Sanaullah, to a query about the relationship between the PML-N and the PPP, said it was the PPP's right to critique his party which, according to him, was a calculated move and was in line with their electoral strategy.

COAS meets Erdogan Calls for promoting defence ties with Turkiye

Army Chief General Asim Munir was also conferred with the Legion of Merit by the Minister of Defense and Commander Turkish Land Forces

DNA

RAWALPINDI: General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), COAS is on an official visit to the Republic of Türkiye. The visit is part of the high level mutual visits by both the brotherly countries to enhance the historic diplomatic and military ties. During the visit COAS called on H.E Recep Tayyip Erdogan, President of Republic of Türkiye, Foreign and Defense Ministers, Commander of Turkish General Staff and Commanders of Turkish Land and Air forces. During the meetings, COAS emphasized on enhancing defence collaboration and training cooperation. COAS appreciated Turkish Military's efforts for maintaining peace and stability in the region and also praised the standards of operational readiness of Turkish Armed Forces. Turkish leaders acknowledged the efforts extended by Pakistan Army Engineers who worked along NDMA Teams during the unfortunate earthquake that hit Türkiye in February this year. COAS



visited the Mausoleum of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in Ankara to pay homage to the great leader and laid floral wreath in his honour. COAS later visited the Turkish Land Forces Headquarters, where on his arrival he was given a warm welcome and was presented with the Guard of Honour.

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Putin to visit Pakistan soon, says the Russian ambassador

Danila Ganich calls for independent mode of payment between Pakistan, Russia to bolster trade activities

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Russian Federation, Danila Ganich on Wednesday wished for an independent mode of payment between Pakistan and Russia in an attempt to bolster trade activities, which presently was around \$700 million. Addressing a seminar titled "Pakistan-Russia Relations and the Way Ahead", organized by the Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) at the forum titled, 'Diplomatic Reflections', the Russian Ambassador shed light on different topics pertaining to Ukraine-Russia War, Pak-Russia bilateral ties and regional issues. About bilateral relations with Pakistan, the Ambassador said that there were excellent contacts at all levels and the understandings on the political, military and commerce sides were growing. The Ambassador said that Pakistanis as a whole was supportive of Russia and even during the war in Afghanistan by the erstwhile Soviet Union, there were pockets of support inside Pakistan. He particularly mentioned the Russian largesse in supporting Pakistan's stance against Islamophobia and observed that all religions should be respected. He castigated the West for irrationally advocating freedom

of speech and that too when it entails polarizing the society. Ganich said, "We support counter-terrorism measures along with Pakistan, as we understand that your country has paid a great price in the form of 80,000 casualties during the war on terrorism." He said military drills between the two countries, known as 'Friendship', will continue, and an episode has been planned for next year. Commenting on the Ukraine-Russia War, Ambassador Ganich said that his country would end the war in Ukraine on its own terms, and added that Kyiv had no possibility to win it at any cost. He was of the view that Pakistan-Russia relations were gathering momentum, and there was much that could be done to uplift trade and commercial activities. He made it a point to say that LGBT madness has divided the world into traditional and non-traditional societies. He opined that Russia is close to traditionalism and hence has natural affinity to Pakistan. Ganich said that the possibility of using nukes in the ongoing war in Ukraine is remote, as the military strategists are saner people.

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TURKISH AIRLINES advertisement with text: BEST PART OF THE JOURNEY Stopover IN ISTANBUL. Includes logos for Economy, Business, and Easy Visa.

Booming cultural industry accelerates Beijing's urban development

By Wang Haonan, Zhang Shuaizhen, Yang Yanfan, People's Daily

Beijing, the capital of China, is witnessing expanding scenarios and business forms of the cultural industry. It has enriched residents' spiritual life and empowered the city's development. For instance, Jixiang Theater, a time-honored Peking Opera theater in Beijing, has taken on a new look after renovation. It is serving coffee named after famous opera stories, offering visitors an experience that blends the East and the West. The 798 Art Zone, which is built upon a complex of 50-year-old factory buildings, houses a thriving artistic community and presents various master art shows to visitors.

There's even a virtual show presenting the Beijing Central Axis, the backbone of old Beijing stretching 7.8 kilometers from south to north, where people can immerse themselves in the magnificence and evolution of the Chinese capital. Culture is the soul of a city. The preservation and inheritance of the city's soul can be found in every corner of the capital.

The Zhengyici Peking Opera Theater is a two-storey wood structure now located in Beijing's Xicheng district. With a history of over 300 years, it is hailed as a "living fossil of Chinese theater." The ancient theater has gone through several ups and downs. It was once used as a warehouse in wartime, and also served as a coal shop, a school building and a hotel. Though it was restored afterward, it barely attracted theater-goer. "After we took it over in 2019, we carried out a comprehensive restoration in accordance with its original historical appearance," said Sun Minglei from the Northern Kunqu Opera Theater.

The Zhengyici Peking Opera Theater became popular after reopening. In April this year, it launched a month-long performance series to mark the anniversary of its reopening.



Photo shows the Zhengyici Peking Opera Theater, a wood structure in Beijing's Xicheng district with a history of over 300 years. (Photo from the official WeChat account of the media center of Beijing's Xicheng district)

"For four of the ten performances, the ticket price could be as high as 1,280 yuan (\$178.13). Tickets were always in high demand," Sun told People's Daily.

Besides, various activities have been held at the Zhengyici Peking Opera Theater, including lectures by famous artists, the filming of an 8K documentary and exhibitions of intangible cultural heritages. According to general manager Zhang Peng, the theater is currently planning to host featured activities about the Kunqu Opera.

"With the ancient theater and creative ideas, we'll build new scenarios of cultural consumption," Zhang said. Beijing has become the first super-large city in China that has

achieved growth with reduced input. Many old industrial parks in the city have chosen to transform themselves into creative cultural parks. The 798 Art Zone in Beijing's Chaoyang district is one of the first to benefit from the transformation. The former factory complex is currently home to more than 400 enterprises engaged in art, creative designing and cultural technology, said Yang Jinwei, who's in charge of the art zone. According to Yang, the art hotspot has been visited by more than 100 heads of state and political dignitaries. Besides, it hosts nearly 4,000 art activities and receives 10 million visits each year. About 30 percent of its visitors are from overseas.

The 798 Art Zone, by connecting the production and consumption of the cultural sector, has fostered a new business model that integrates sightseeing, art appreciation, entertainment and shopping.

Yang told People's Daily that a massive renovation project was launched last year at the art hotspot, which aimed at maintaining its original appearance and creating more space for cultural creation. The pedestrian areas in the art zone were expanded to nearly 100,000 square meters. "An oracle bone script-themed cultural festival is being hosted, which not only presents traditional Chinese culture to visitors, but also vitalizes the night economy in surrounding communities," Yang said, adding that nighttime foot traffic at the art zone has surged 65.38 percent during the cultural festival.

It is reported that over 70 percent of the cultural parks above the municipal level in Beijing were transformed from old factory buildings, including the Shougang Park, the Langyuan Station Cultural Center and a cultural park at the Longfusi Temple. These facilities both meet people's new demands for a better life and contribute to the city's urban renewal. Thanks to the wide application of digital technologies in the cultural industry, which drives profound reforms of the supply and consumption sides, a batch of new business forms are emerging in the industry. As China's cultural center and an international hub for sci-tech innovation, Beijing enjoys unique advantages in promoting the integrated development of culture and technology. Artificial intelligence, 5G, big data and other frontier technologies are accelerating the upgrading of Beijing's cultural industry. According to statistics, the total revenue of Beijing's cultural enterprises above the designated size reached 766.53 billion yuan between January and May this year, up 15.3 percent year-on-year.

Breathing new life into Beijing Central Axis with digital tools

By SHI FANG, PEOPLE'S DAILY

In Beijing, there is a north-south axis known as the Beijing Central Axis, or Zhongzhoushan, running through the city. First created in the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), the 7.8-kilometer central axis serves the function of a "book spine", forming a unique Beijing city pattern of bilateral symmetry and solemnity. It stretches from the Yongding Gate in the south of the city and the Drum Tower and Bell Tower in the north, crossing the Wanning Bridge, the Jingshan Mountain, the Palace Museum, the Duanmen Gate, the Tian'anmen Square and its adjacent areas, the Zhengyang Gate, and the street remains of the southern section of the central axis. The Imperial Ancestral Temple, the Altar of Land and Grain, the Temple of Heaven, and the Temple of Agriculture sit symmetrically in the west and east wings of the central axis. As the existing longest urban central axis in the world, it contains the essence of ancient architecture of Beijing, carries on the memorable moments of the Chinese civilization.

It connects many historical sites, including 3 World Heritage Sites and 11 major historical and cultural sites protected at the national level, which embody the great creativity and outstanding talent of the Chinese nation in urban planning and construction. Today, with the rapid development of science and technology, the ancient central axis is better protected and inherited, blossoming with dazzling brilliance. As night fell, in front of the Yongding Gate, a vehicle equipped with a laser modeling system slowly drove by, meticulously measuring and recording details about the Beijing Central Axis roadway and neighboring structures.

At daybreak, surveying and mapping engineers had already positioned equipment before a hall of the Temple of Agriculture, collecting statistics and portraying each facet. The greatest feature of the Beijing Central Axis is that it has an undulating layout and maintains mirror symmetry on its east and west sides, said Tao Yingchun, director of the big data center of the Beijing Institute of Surveying and Mapping, adding that it is impossible for a visitor to get an overview of the entire central axis at any one heritage site. However, digital products can break through the limitations of time and space, allowing people to appreciate the unique charm of the central axis, Tao noted. In 2020, the Beijing Institute of Surveying and Mapping established a technical team of nearly 200 members to carry out ultra-fine surveying and 3D modeling for heritage elements along the central axis. For the first time, the central axis was digitally duplicated with digital twin technology.

The team has collected over 1TB of

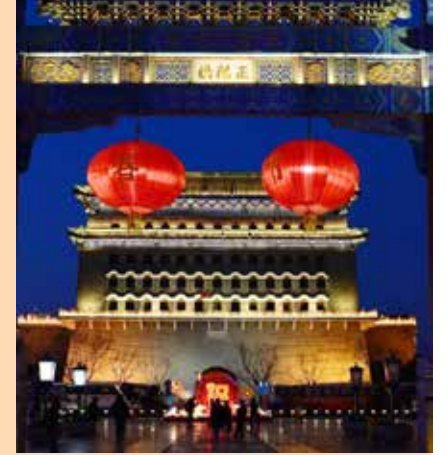


Photo shows a night view of the Zhengyang Gate in Beijing. (Photo by Zhang Jun/People's Daily Online)

data, including information about the main roads within the heritage area, the Tian'anmen Square and its adjacent areas, the Yongding Gate, the Drum Tower and Bell Tower, and the Temple of Agriculture. So far, the first phase of the digital twin project has been completed. The final digital twin of the central axis will provide a complete spatial database for monitoring, managing, protecting and utilizing the central axis heritage.

"From paper maps to digital maps and real-scene 3D products, our surveying and mapping of the central axis is becoming more and more refined. Overlaying historical and present images through modern technologies, we can see that the central axis has been 'growing' all along," said Tao.

As the sunshade curtains lowered and the lights dimmed, the first-floor central archway of the Drum Tower was turned into an "immersive theater," where visitors could experience the changes of the central axis through shifts in light and shadow.

This was a digital light show that utilized projection distortion correction technology and spatial sound zoning to combine music, drum beats, and images with the majestic architectural space, fully demonstrating the architectural beauty of the Drum Tower and presenting cultural relics and historical sites in a brand new way. "The history of Drum Tower and Bell Tower is an epitome of Beijing's urban history. It carries warm and intimate memories for urban residents," said He Yan, leader of an exhibition team for the Beijing Central Axis. The team collected over 300 old photos of the Drum Tower and Bell Tower from different periods of time, along with various sounds related to the central axis, to evoke citizens' cherished memories of old Beijing.



A visitor uses a digital device at the Beijing Xuannan Cultural Museum. (Photo by Du Jianpo/People's Daily Online)



Photo shows a beautiful view of the Shougang Park, a steel mill-turned cultural and sports complex in Shijingshan district, Beijing. (Photo by He Luqi/People's Daily Online)



A child experiences virtual drumming at an exhibition held at the Drum Tower in Beijing. (Photo by Du Jianpo/People's Daily Online)

Beijing E-Town highlighted by innovative development

By Yuan Xinwen, Du Shangze, Yu Jinxing, People's Daily

The Beijing Economic-Technological Development Area, or Beijing E-Town, located in Yizhuang, the southeast suburb of Beijing, has become a major force of the Chinese

capital's high-tech industry. With just 0.35 percent of Beijing's land, Beijing E-Town generates nearly 30 percent of the city's industrial added value. It is home to four booming hundred-billion-yuan (\$13.72 billion) industrial clusters in new-generation information technology, high-end automobiles, industrial internet, and biomedicine.

Driverless cars, modular vertical factories, naked-eye 3D displays, and 24/7 unattended production lines are common there. The area also boasts excellent livability - over 94 percent of it is within a 500-meter service radius of a park or green space and all sewage there is collected and recycled. It has grown from a small industrial park that covered 3.83 square kilometers some 30 years ago to a 225-square kilometer economic-technological development area. Its share in Beijing's total industrial output once stood at just 0.1 percent, but today it is the largest contributor in this regard.

Beijing E-Town is impressive for its futurism and imagination. The Tongming Lake National Information Technology Application Innovation Park located in Beijing E-Town, which is also known as the national information technology application innovation base, is a hub for high-end, frontier and high-value information enterprises. According to a management executive of the park, the park is home to nearly 250 enterprises engaged in chip development, supercomputing, databases, sensors and more, and over 90 percent of China's top IT firms have set up offices there. In a warehouse spanning tens of thousands of square meters owned by Chinese e-commerce giant JD.com in Beijing E-Town, no human worker was in sight. The only things moving were a group of red robots climbing up and down the shelves. "We are enabled by AI to accurately predict sales in certain areas, so we can better prepare our stock. The accuracy is about 92 percent and the forecasting tech is fully self-developed," said Wu Meng, vice president of JD.com. "A lipid spheres looks like a 200-nanometer ball

under an electron microscope. The drug features targeted delivery technology that can transport the lipid spheres to blood vessel lesions for precise treatment," said Zhao Yanping, vice president of Beijing Tide Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd., showing the company's achievements in pharmaceutical technology. At the general assembly plant of Beijing Benz, a joint venture between the Mercedes-Benz and BAIC Group, multiple models of vehicles were being manufactured by flexible production lines, on which a vehicle was rolled off every 45 seconds.

According to Sun Hui, chairman of Beijing Benz's labor union, the plant is able to produce front-, rear- and electric-drive models, as well as engines and power batteries. "We are also exporting core engine components and whole engines," Sun added. Director of the Beijing Economic-Technological Development Area Management Committee Kong Lei noted that as Beijing's only economic and technological development zone at national level, the area is actively bettering its layout in cutting-edge industries and spearheading technological innovations. The area aims to build itself into a new hub of high-quality growth, Kong added. Beijing E-Town focuses on both manufacturing and high-tech industries. "We are engaged in the high-tech sector. Firms settling here must fit our positioning," Kong noted. According to him, Beijing E-Town's per-unit industrial output has kept rising, reaching around 31 billion yuan per square kilometer. From high-end medical equipment makers setting up global innovation centers there, to breakthroughs in domestic production and mass application of ultra HD and flexible displays, Beijing E-Town is growing into a platform for aggregating innovative

resources and a pivot for transforming outcomes into realization. To optimize the business environment, Beijing E-Town is accelerating the transition of approval process from "streamlining" to "maximum simplification." It is comprehensively advancing reforms to make the business environment market-oriented, law-based, internationalized and convenient.

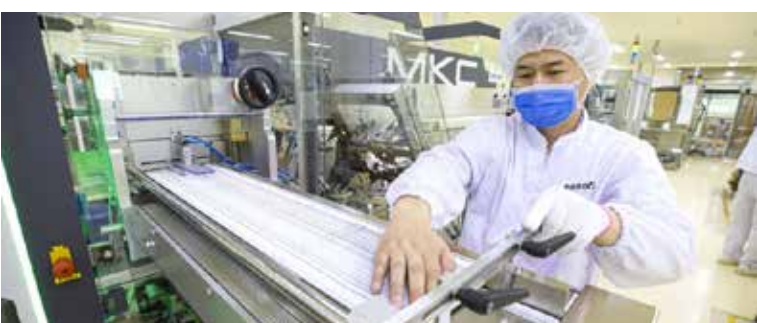
Tu Ruimin, who works at the administration service center of Beijing E-Town, told People's Daily that it used to take four trips to two offices over 17 workdays for a foreigner to get work permit, and now it can be done in a week through a one-stop service counter. Since its founding, Beijing E-Town has attracted 1,043 foreign-invested

firms with nearly \$11 billion in utilized foreign investment. This shows the confidence of foreign investors in the business environment of Beijing E-Town. The first million-square meter international talent community recently broke ground in Beijing E-town, with an aim to attract more talents from across the world.

It will feature a 40,000-square-meter park, ancillary facilities blending diverse cultures, and fully intelligent and eco-friendly community scenarios. It is learned that the total talent pool of Beijing E-Town currently reaches 349,200 people, and the number of invention patents per 10,000 people stands at 839, more than three times the average level of Beijing.



Unmanned delivery vehicles run in Beijing E-town. (Photo by He Guanxin)



Sanofi Beijing Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd., located in Beijing E-town, has become the largest production base of insulin injection of Sanofi in the Asia-Pacific. Photo shows a production line of the pharmaceutical company. (Photo by Zhang Lei)



Photo shows Beijing E-town. (Photo by Zhang Lei)



Photo shows a production line of Beijing Benz. (Photo from Beijing Benz)

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

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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



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WASA Rawalpindi.5555489
CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

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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

Dr. Iqbal addresses UN General Assembly's Summit

The Coordinator General pointed out that the UN Secretary-General's report from May 2023 highlighted impediments in achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, especially for the Global South. He emphasized the need for transformative changes to shift the world toward sustainability

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The Coordinator General of COMSTECH, the Ministerial Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation for the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary addressed the inaugural session of the United Nations General Assembly's Science Summit on Tuesday. The summit was organized by ISC Intelligence in Science, a significant platform for global science collaboration during the UN General Assemblies.

In his address, the Coordinator General expressed gratitude to Mr. Declan Kirrane, Managing Director of ISC Intelligence in Science, for his pivotal role in

promoting global science collaboration and hosting the Science Summits during the UN General Assemblies. The Coordinator General highlighted the multiple challenges faced by OIC countries, including food insecurity, poverty, youth unemployment, female illiteracy, and water scarcity. These nations are also among the most vulnerable to climate stress. Additionally, they confront perceptual issues like Islamophobia and distrust. He said that COMSTECH's primary focus is on assisting the Least Developed Member States. Their initiatives in Africa involve promoting climate-resilient agriculture, the Health Africa program in ophthalmology and neurology, establishing laboratories and institutions, offering numerous

Scholarships and Fellowships, and engaging in country-specific science programs. The Coordinator General pointed out that the UN Secretary-General's report from May 2023 highlighted impediments in achieving the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030, especially for the Global South. He emphasized the need for transformative changes to shift the world toward sustainability. To achieve the SDGs effectively, he proposed a four-fold approach. Firstly, there is a need to remove disparities in international funding to foster genuine engagement of researchers in international collaborations; secondly, OIC-COMSTECH endorses the idea of establishing a new SDGs goal of the "global research cooperation". This

cross cutting goal will help to integrate scientific research into the sustainable development agenda; thirdly, research collaboration and knowledge sharing are crucial for fostering innovation, leveraging expertise, and maximizing the impact of R&D investments; and fourthly, scientific communities need urgent preparation to make post-2030 Agenda more science-based, addressing the shortcoming of SDGs. Thus, there is need to co-create a framework for a science-based post-2030 Agenda by combining lessons from SDGs, and state-of-the-art science.

Prof. Choudhary concluded his speech by proposing setting up a Forum to discuss and identify challenges and mechanisms to strengthen scientific and technological capacity, pertaining

to implementation of SDGs. He offered that OIC-COMSTECH will be happy to serve as its secretariat for the global south. He further said that COMSTECH is willing to play a central role in engaging the science community of the Muslim world in research towards solving global challenges. In closing, the Coordinator General expressed his gratitude to Mr. Kirrane for the opportunity to speak at this prestigious science forum. He highlighted how this invitation has connected the largely disconnected Muslim world to the global science community, emphasizing their shared future. The Coordinator General's address was met with appreciation and applause from the audience, marking a significant moment in global science collaboration.



RAWALPINDI: Minister for Defence, Lt.Gen Anwar Ali Hyder (Retd) presenting a souvenir to H.E. Wada Mitsuhiro, Ambassador of Japan, in Ministry of Defence. —APP

Reports of another interest rate hike are concerning

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain said on Wednesday that reports of a further increase in interest rates by State Bank are worrying. Interest rates are already so high that any further increase would prove disastrous for the economy, he said. Mian Zahid Hussain said that before making a decision, its implications should be considered by policymakers. Talking to the business community, the veteran

business leader said that the central bank is considering increasing the interest rate from one hundred to one hundred and fifty basis points as it thinks it will help reduce inflation while also stabilising foreign exchange reserves. However, the central bankers should also consider that the interest rate was raised to 22 percent in April and was not cut last month, which disappointed the business community, he said. The business leader said that a further increase of one or one and a half percent will make it impossible to do business for many, which will close many businesses and increase unemployment. The move will also increase the burden of interest on

the government, which is already 7200 billion rupees annually. In the current situation of the country, it would be more beneficial to reduce interest rates than to raise them, as businesses are in a bad state, unemployment is high, and bank defaults are also increasing rapidly, he noted. Mian Zahid Hussain said that new trade agreements are being made between international powers in our neighbourhood. Western nations and Arab countries are increasing trade by ignoring the open violation of human rights in India, while Pakistan is playing the role of a silent spectator instead of being a part of this whole issue, which is a sign of poor management. The G20 meeting

in India has proved that the world is more interested in trade than ethics, and if we want to be valued and heard, sloganeering will no longer work, but trade will. He said that concrete measures will have to be taken to increase the exports of the country, without which the economy cannot become stable. No one in the world cares about a bankrupt country, no matter how big the consumer market is or whether it is armed with nuclear weapons. Mian Zahid Hussain further said that in these circumstances, the establishment of SIFC is a ray of hope, and it is necessary to enhance the role of the private sector in order to achieve its goals.

PCI announces photography competition

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In order to capture the essence of progress, change, and hope brought by the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) projects, the Pakistan-China Institute (PCI) is holding a nationwide photography competition. The "Nationwide Best BRI Projects Photography Competition-2023" central theme revolves around the CPEC projects in Pakistan, focusing on their profound impact on the economy, infrastructure and environment. The contest is open to both amateur and professional photographers of all ages residing in Pakistan, Gwadar Pro reported on Wednesday. Celebrating the 10th anniversary of CPEC, which has acted as a bridge of friendship between Pakistan and China, this competition would not only bring awareness among the participants about CPEC development projects but will also showcase the progress of these projects. Participants are encouraged to share their insights and intellectual perceptions on the subject of BRI and CPEC, including its contribution to the public sphere, its role in modern skills enhancement and job creation. The merits and demerits of its impact on the wellbeing of the common man, youth and women's empowerment, and other unexplored areas that may help incentivize growth and development in the new era are also encouraged.

Wife, paramour arrested in blind murder case

RAWALPINDI: Police have solved the mystery of blind murder occurred 02 weeks ago in the jurisdiction of the Ganjmandi police station and arrested two accused. Addressing a press conference at police line headquarter here Wednesday, SSP Operations Faisal Saleem said that the victim's wife told that some unknown persons entered here house from the rooftop and shot her husband dead. After committing the crime, they fled away from the scene. Police have registered a case on the complaint of the victim's brother. SSP

Operations revealed that police conducted an efficient investigation. During the investigation, the wife of the victim and her paramour turned out to be the killers. Irum Shahzadi, the victim's wife, paramour Younis Moqim, shot and killed her husband Muhammad Noor. SSP Operations Faisal Saleem, while congratulating police for tracing the blind murder, said that the arrested accused would be brought to justice with solid evidence. No matter, how cruel the accused are, they cannot escape from the grips of the law, he added. —APP

Dentist cautions against extended use of medicated pastes

ISLAMABAD: Dental Surgeon Dr. Noman Saleem has advised against using medicated tooth pastes for over two months and mouthwashes for more than six weeks continuously, which may lead to tooth staining. Talking to APP here on Wednesday, Dr. Noman said that it is recommended that one should brush teeth twice a day, floss once a day, and get their scales once a year to maintain lasting oral health. He explained that there is a common misconception that scaling causes sensitivity, while in fact it is recommended once a year for every adult. He clarified that sensitivity is caused by nerve trauma from consuming very cold, hot foods and drinks too rapidly. Elaborating on proper toothbrush selection, Dr. Noman advised that soft-bristled toothbrushes do not clean plaque effectively, while hard-bristled brushes can damage teeth over time. "Toothbrushes with medium-soft bristles are recommended to avoid potential tooth damage during brushing", he added. He cautioned that smokers should also avoid hard bristled toothbrushes and abrasive toothpastes which can wear down tooth enamel over time. He reassured that any toothpaste approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is sufficient for cleaning, and even traditional options like Miswak sticks and solo brushes can be effective. Describing proper brushing technique, Dr. Noman recommended using a gentle circular motion to clean all surfaces of teeth thoroughly. He noted electric toothbrushes are ideal since they have built-in pressure sensors to protect against excessive abrasion while brushing. On whitening treatments, he said that many patients desire whiter teeth, but gradual yellowing is a natural aging process. "For those seeking whitening, professional bleaching is effective for 1.5 years typically", he added. —APP

KS relief distributes 12,000 food packages

ISLAMABAD: King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre (KSrelief), in collaboration with the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), has distributed 12,000 food packages to assist individuals affected by the floods in the Lower and Upper Chitral, as well as Dir districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. According to details, this package is a part of the second phase of the Food Security Support Project in Pakistan for the year 2023-24, according to a Saudi Embassy's statement on Wednesday. During this second phase, KSrelief is also distributing 4,400 food packages to flood victims in Punjab's Muzaffargarh and Bahawalnagar districts, 5,000 food packages in Sajawal and Dadu districts of Sindh, and 11,000 food packages in Kharan, Sahabatpur, and Washuk in Balochistan. In total, this initiative aims to benefit 226,800 people through the distribution of 32,400 food packages across Pakistan. —APP

CDA demolishes over 7k illegal structures

"Any type of water pipeline and provision of electricity in Margalla Hills National Park is prohibited to avoid any hazard to wildlife except notified villages," they added

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Directorate of Enforcement, Capital Development Authority (CDA) has demolished over 7,000 illegal structures in the markets, roads, green belts, and sidewalk tracks in the federal capital during the last year. "During the operation, around 12,137 items of encroachers have also been confiscated, subsequently these articles are auctioned. Besides, fines worth Rs. 4.876 million has also been recovered from trespassers as a penalty," sources in the CDA told APP. They said, "Directorate of Enforcement has launched as many as 1,363 anti-encroachment operations carried out across the board in the Islamabad

Capital Territory (ICT) during the last year." The sources said, "Directorate was vigorously undertaking anti-encroachment operations on a regular basis throughout Islamabad in order to curb the illegal constructions in the ICT." They said the continuous operations were being carried out on a day-to-day basis 24/7 for retrieval of state land from land grabbers and encroachers. The matter was being dealt with by the Directorate of Municipal Administration working under the administrative control of the Municipal Corporation, Islamabad (MCI), they added. About the steps taken for the protection of citizens, provision of emergency medical assistance, and water facility on hiking tracks, they said, "The forest guards keep

patrolling throughout the day in all the trails and hiking tracks of Margalla Hills, National Park." Morever, they said the forest guards were equipped with wireless sets which were connected to the centralized control room of the Environment Wing, CDA Whenever any medical emergency or any untoward situation arises at any trail or hiking track; these forest guards directly communicate with centralized control room system, where control room further call to rescue teams to attend medical emergency. "Any type of water pipeline and provision of electricity in Margalla Hills National Park is prohibited to avoid any hazard to wildlife except notified villages," they added.

RASTA to Host the 3rd PIDE-RASTA Conference

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Research for Social Transformation and Advancement (RASTA) Competitive Grants Programme for Policy-oriented Research is proud to announce the upcoming 3rd PIDE-RASTA Conference, set to take place on Thursday, 14th, and Friday, 15th September 2023 at the prestigious Gun & Country Club in Islamabad. RASTA, Pakistan's largest economics and public policy research network comprising academia and think tanks, has been at the forefront of promoting policy debate and research culture in the country. With a commitment to producing high-quality evidence-based research that informs public policy, RASTA has expanded its influence and now boasts a network of over 60 local universities, more than 10 foreign institutes, and an impressive roster of approximately 2300 researchers, academics, practitioners, and professionals. The program is guided by a distinguished 26-member Research Advisory Committee, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor of PIDE, Islamabad. The 3rd PIDE-RASTA Conference will be a highlight in RASTA's calendar, featuring an impressive lineup of sessions and research showcases. A total of 20 papers will be presented across 8 engaging sessions, providing a platform for the exchange of ideas and insights from experts in the field.

Gung Mandi police arrest two thieves

RAWALPINDI: In an operation against criminal elements, Rawalpindi Police have arrested two thieves besides recovering Rs 13.2 million and other items from their possession. According to a police spokesman, Gung Mandi Police arrested two accused namely Ghufuran and Saifullah, who were accused of stealing cash and valuables from a shop. He informed that the police team constituted under the supervision of SHO Gung Mandi Police Station on the directives of SP Rawal, Faisal Saleem conducted a raid and managed to net the criminals who were record holders. Police working on scientific lines managed to net the accused, he added. —APP

Quality research witnesses substantial increase

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Higher Education Commission (HEC) Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed has said that the number of universities as well as the quality of research has witnessed a substantial increase in the last two decades. Talking to APP, he highlighted a substantial transformation in the realm of research with the current year boasting 28,967 publications in Impact Factor Journals. He said that owing to these factors and many other initiatives a number of Pakistani universities are now featured in World and Asian rankings. The chairman of HEC also shed light on the remarkable evolution of universities in the country over the past two decades. Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed said that HEC's efforts are underway for improvement in gender parity in higher education institutions, growth in PhD faculty and establishment of Centres of Excellence in emerging disciplines such as Nanoscience and Nanotechnology, Quantum Computing, etc. The Chairman underscored the revamping of research promotion and commercialisation initiatives and briefed the minister about the establishment of the Office of Research, Innovation and Commercialisation (ORIC) and Business Incubation Centre (BIC) in universities across the country as well as the launch of Research for Innovation (RFI) portal for better coordination among all the stakeholders. —APP

Briefs

13 drug peddlers netted with 19 kg charras

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi police in an action against suspected drug peddlers conducted raids in different areas and rounded up 13 accused on recovery of over 19 kg charras and 1200 grams heroin. According to a police spokesman, Dharmal police held Zulfiqar for having 1200 grams of heroin, a female drug smuggler with 2060 grams of charras and Dolat Khan for carrying 1760 grams of charras. Saddar Baroni police rounded up Anil with 2100 grams of charras and Ibrar for possessing 2740 grams of charras. City Police in their operation netted Sikander for having 1680 grams of charras while New Town police nabbed an accused namely Shehzad for having 1440 grams of charras. Pirwadhai police arrested Yasir and recovered 1080 grams of charras and R.A. Bazar police held Umar on recovery of 1425 grams of charras. He further informed that Westridge, Taxila, Saddar Wah and Wah Cantt police arrested Mehboob, Akpal Khan, Kamran and Shehbaz on recovery of 1200, 1480, 1440 and 1160 grams of charras respectively. Separate cases have been registered against all accused while further investigations are underway. City Police Officer, Rawalpindi had directed the police officers to accelerate ongoing operations against drug peddlers, bootleggers and other lawbreakers, he added.—APP

IRSA releases 259000 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: The Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 259000 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 213400 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1545.1 feet and was 147.1 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 115700 cusecs and 130000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1237.50 feet, 187.5 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water were recorded as 13700 cusecs and 45000 cusecs respectively.—APP

Over 63 vehicles challaned for wrong parking

RAWALPINDI: City Traffic Police (CTP) Rawalpindi has fined over 63 vehicles and motorcycles for wrong parking and double parking. According to CTP spokesman on Wednesday, special squads were formed to take strict action against wrong parking, following CTO directions to ensure smooth flow of traffic in the city. He said encroachments and wrong parking cause traffic jams and create problems for road users, adding senior traffic officer was tasked to inspect Raja Bazaar to remove encroachments on right of way. The education wing, he said was also mobilized regarding the awareness campaign against encroachment and wrong parking.—APP

Two robbers nabbed

RAWALPINDI: Police arrested two members of a notorious gang involved in the robbery and recovered the stolen amount of Rs 13.2 million from their possession here on Wednesday. According to a police spokesman, the two-member gang conducted a robbery in a shop located in Ganjmandi by breaking the locks and taking away Rs 13.2 million. The alleged gang members were identified as Gul and Saifullah. Police traced and arrested the accused with the help of human intelligence and CCTV footage. The accused have been wanted in the incidents of robbery. SSP Operations Faisal Saleem while congratulating the police team said that the accused who attacked the life and property of the citizens.—APP

Need stressed to adopt Islamic financial system

Raza said that despite prevailing challenges, establishing Islamic finance is certainly feasible in Pakistan. The Islamic finance industry can achieve tremendous development; for that, obstacles must be overcome with dedication, coordinated efforts, and a clear plan, he added

FAIAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan can develop and reshape its economy and financial system based on Islamic principles, provided the state and all stakeholders demonstrate absolute acceptance and support for the purpose. The executive, legislature, judiciary, policymakers, regulators, media, clergy, political parties and market players should demonstrate the willingness, take responsibility to adopt Islamic financial system. This was emphasized by Farrukh Raza, Group CEO at UK-based Islamic Finance Advisory and Assurance Services (IFAAS) and co-founder IFN Services, during a detailed presentation on 'Road Map for Conversion Towards Islamic Financial System in Pakistan: Enabling Mindset and Strategies', held at Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) as part of a project on mapping the Islamization of Pakistan's economy. Raza emphasized the need for govern-

ment policies and legislation to transform the finance industry in line with Islamic principles, urging federal and provincial governments to create policies and enact laws reshaping the legal framework. To maintain the integrity of Islamic finance practices, robust regulatory supervision, corporate and Shariah governance laws, capacity-building initiatives targeting stakeholders, and raising public awareness are crucial for promoting a comprehensive understanding of Islamic finance, he added. The transformation journey involves exploring sovereign funding tools like Sukuk, adjusting financial institutions to align with Islamic principles, and integrating Islamic funds with the economic development needs of the country, he stated. Raza said that despite prevailing challenges, establishing Islamic finance is certainly feasible in Pakistan. The Islamic finance industry can achieve tremendous development; for that, obstacles must be

overcome with dedication, coordinated efforts, and a clear plan, he added. Commenting on the crucial role played by stakeholders in the successful implementation of an interest-free system, he referred to the case of Malaysia. He stated that the unanimous acceptance of Islamic finance principles by stakeholders, particularly religious scholars, has been a key factor in developing the Islamic finance industry and attaining financial inclusion in Malaysia. In 2015, Raza informed, he and his team provided Indonesia with a national master plan for conversion, outlining targets, action plans, timelines, ownership, oversight, and testing protocols to strengthen Islamic Finance presence. This plan received the approval from the Indonesian parliament, and, through a presidential decree, concrete actions were set in motion. Five years later, the share of Islamic Finance doubled, with hopes of further increasing from 10 to 20 per cent in the com-

ing years. Notably, it is imperative to highlight that the Indonesian president himself took a keen interest in the plan, personally overseeing its progress, ultimately contributing to the master plan's success. He further mentioned that Pakistan needs the unequivocal willingness and cooperation of stakeholders, including government institutions, industry players, media, religious scholars, and regulators, to create an environment conducive to developing an Islamic economy and financial inclusion. Islamic banks have a responsibility to create mass awareness and dispel public doubts about Islamic banking practices from the minds of the public, a task not achievable by the clergy or government alone, Raza stressed. The Islamic banks and other financial institutions in Pakistan should form a consortium that allocates funds through their marketing and CSR budgets for public education on Islamic economic

system and financial practices, addresses collective mistrust, and advances Islamic social finance capacity to address economic needs, Raza demanded. He lamented that the industry is not doing enough to create mass awareness and sensitize the policy circles on the issue. On the recent advancements in the modes of Islamic social finance for poverty alleviation in the Muslim world, Raza lamented the regressive attitude of the traditional clergy in Pakistan that lacks the motivation for jithad to address the needs of the society in the changing times. There is a need for programs that involve Ulama in interactions with countries excelling in this area, initiating awareness and capacity building campaigns. These programs should also facilitate discussions on various Fatawa concerning Islamic financial products in different countries, ultimately benefiting from their practices.

Abdul Qadir Junejo remembered

ISLAMABAD: Renowned dramatist, story writer and literary figure Abdul Qadir Junejo was remembered on his birth anniversary on Wednesday. He was born on September 13, 1945, in Tharparkar. Junejo was not only known for an impeccable command of story and column writing but he was an incredibly talented drama writer of his time as well. During his career, he wrote several Sindhi and Urdu soaps, dramas, stories, and many literary books. His notable works were published in English, Urdu, and Sindhi languages and he wrote dramas and serials that aired on PTV and other television channels. He gained popularity through various works, such as Parenda, Dewareen, Choti Si Dunya, and Dhool. The playwright wrote six Sindhi and 13 Urdu drama serials. He remained director of the Institute of Sindiology at the University of Sindh, Jamshoro. He also remained the chairperson of the Sindhi Language Authority at the provincial government's Culture Tourism and Antiquities Department from 2005 to 2008. The government of Pakistan awarded him Pride of Performance in 2008 while the Sindh government honoured him with Latif Award in 2016.—APP

Pakistan, Iran explore cultural collaborations

ISLAMABAD: Jamal Shah, the Caretaker Federal Minister for National Heritage & Culture Division, and Ehsan Khazaei, the Cultural Counsellor at the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, discussed the cultural ties between Pakistan and Iran, as well as recent developments like cultural agreements between the two nations. In their meeting, the two parties explored the cultural connections between Pakistan and Iran, along with recent advancements in these relations, which encompassed cultural agreements between the two friendly nations. Additionally, they deliberated on collaborating to arrange diverse cultural events, such as an Iranian film week and other cultural exchanges. The minister expressed Pakistan's desire to enhance cultural connections with Iran, encompassing areas such as arts, cinema, handicrafts, literature, heritage, and culture. Ehsan Khazaei, the Cultural Counsellor at the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, noted the numerous cultural and historical similarities shared by Pakistan and Iran. They also conversed about a collaborative film production between the two nations and agreed to convene a delegation-level meeting to delve deeper into this matter.—APP

Motorbikes, three-wheelers sale drops 18.56%

ISLAMABAD: The sale of motorbikes and three-wheelers in the country has witnessed a decrease of 18.56 per cent during the first two months of the current fiscal year (2023-24) as compared to sales of the corresponding months of the last year. During the months under review, as many as 161,906 motorbikes and three-wheelers were sold against the sale of 198,824 units in July-August (2022-23), according to the Pakistan Automobile Manufacturing Association (PAMA). The sale of Honda motorcycles dipped by 16.96 per cent from 165,090 units to 137,083 units whereas the sale of Suzuki motorcycles witnessed a decrease of 61.54 per cent from 6,967 units to 2,679 units during the months under review. Similarly, the sale of Yamaha motorbikes also went down from 2,501 units to 1,625 units witnessing a decline of 35.02 per cent while the sale of Road Prince motorbikes witnessed a sharp decline of 55.80 per cent from 6,105 units to 2,698 units. The sales of United Auto motorcycles witnessed a nominal decline of 2.83 per cent from 15,264 units to 14,832 units. Meanwhile, the sale of United Auto three-wheelers dipped from 460 units to 85 units while the sale of Qingqi three-wheelers however witnessed an increase of 3.36 per cent from 891 units to 921 units.—APP

Pakistan welcomes China's lead in digital investment

DNA

ISLAMABAD: "China has emerged as a key investor in Pakistan's digital sector, with numerous successful collaborations and partnerships contributing to the country's digital growth. We look forward to China taking the lead in digital investments in Pakistan." This was stated by Zulfiqar Ali, Director General of Pakistan Regulatory Moderation Initiative, Board of Investment (BOI). On a panel discussion session of the UN Asia-Pacific Innovation Forum during the 23rd China International Fair for Investment and Trade (CIFIT) held this week, Zulfiqar Ali outlined Pakistan's national strategies for digital development and highlighted the critical role of foreign direct investment (FDI) in the country's digital transformation. China Economic Net (CEN) reported on Wednesday. As the world embraces the digital age, Pakistan is actively pursuing the path of digitalization and making substantial efforts to transform its economy and society. Recognizing the importance of digital development, Pakistan has formulated comprehensive strategies and policies to harness the potential of technology. These efforts



encompass various sectors, including infrastructure, education, governance and entrepreneurship, with the aim of leveraging technology to drive economic growth and improve the quality of life for its people. The director general noted that Pakistan has launched the Digital Economy Enhancement Project worth \$78 million, aiming at enhancing the government's capacity for digitally-enabled public services delivery for citizens and businesses. One of the key components of the initiative is the Pakistan Business Portal, which is a one-stop shop for businesses to digitally execute all their functions in Pakistan without having to

visit any office. Zulfiqar Ali expects this single window platform to be implemented next year when the digital investment environment in Pakistan will be upgraded. In an interview with CEN, the Director General emphasized the key factors that have made Pakistan an attractive destination for Chinese direct investment in the digital sector, which includes "Pakistan's strategic location as a gateway to regional markets, the availability of a skilled workforce, and the government's commitment to creating an enabling environment for foreign investors." The success of joint ventures and collaborations between Pakistani and Chinese com-

panies in the digital sector has led to the development of cutting-edge technologies, innovative solutions and the expansion of digital services across Pakistan, he added. Chinese investment brings not only capital but also expertise, knowledge transfer and access to international markets. Regarding the future of Chinese direct investment in digital innovation in Pakistan, the DG expressed optimism over the ongoing collaboration between the two countries and the potential for further investment in emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, e-commerce, fintech and smart cities.

Third PIDE-RASTA Conference on Thursday

ISLAMABAD: The Research for Social Transformation and Advancement (RASTA) is all set to host the third two-day PIDE-RASTA Conference from Thursday, September 14. This event marks a significant milestone in RASTA's annual calendar, featuring an impressive lineup of sessions and research showcases, according to a press statement issued by the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE). A total of 20 papers would be presented across 8 engaging sessions, providing a platform for the exchange of ideas and insights from experts in the field. RASTA is the country's largest economic and public policy research network

comprising academia and think tanks. It has been at the forefront of promoting policy debate and research culture in the country, the statement added. With a commitment to producing high-quality evidence-based research that informs public policy, RASTA has expanded its influence and now boasts a network of over 60 local universities, more than 10 foreign institutes, and an impressive roster of approximately 2300 researchers, academics, practitioners, and professionals. The program is guided by a distinguished 26-member Research Advisory Committee, chaired by the Vice-Chancellor of PIDE, Islamabad.—APP

Alvi implementation of job quota for disabled persons

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr. Arif Alvi on Wednesday underscored the need for implementation of job quota for persons with disabilities (PWDs) by the public and private sectors. The president, during a follow-up meeting on the framework for the classification of disabilities, held at Aiwan-e-Sadr, said that 10 to 12 per cent population of the country was facing various forms of disabilities. He said that it was the responsibility of the government and private sector to employ PWDs, as per their skills and qualifications to empower them financially. The meeting was attended by senior officials from the Ministry of Human Rights, Council on Rights

of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), NADRA, NAVT-TC, representatives from the four provincial governments, Gilgit-Baltistan, AJK and a representative from the World Health Organization (WHO). The Ministry of Human Rights briefed the meeting on the progress made so far with regard to the implementation of disability employment quota. It was informed that the ministry was actively pursuing with the government organizations to implement job quota for persons with disabilities in letter and spirit. The ministry highlighted that 98 differently-abled persons (DAPs) had been provided jobs by the government organizations since March 2023. The ministry further informed that a master list of potential employers was being prepared to seek their support in providing

jobs to PWDs. The NAVT-TC apprised the meeting that 1500 PWDs had been trained for job placement. The meeting was apprised that presently, the DAPs availed the job quota only from BPS 1-15 while no specific quota had been reserved for them against the gazetted positions. President Alvi stressed the importance of amending the existing recruitment rules to reserve quota for PWDs in gazetted jobs. He underlined the need for imparting skill-based education to PWDs to enhance their employability and ensure their active participation in mainstream economic activities. The president also highlighted the importance of close coordination among the stakeholders to address issues related to the registration of PWDs at federal and provincial levels.

Household registration campaign in full swing

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police have launched the 'Knock the Door' campaign, intensifying efforts to register both employees as well as tenants and maintain high vigilance in the city. This initiative is currently in full operation, a police spokesman said adding that multiple teams from the Islamabad Capital Police are actively visiting neighborhoods and conducting door-to-door registrations. Their mission extends beyond registration, as they also seek to address any concerns or issues faced by the citizens. Notably, the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) Islamabad has successfully recorded data for 164 domestic workers across 519 residences within the jurisdiction of Sumbal Police Station during the last 24 hours. The primary objective of this campaign is to enhance public safety and maintain law and order in the federal capital. Registering tenants and domestic workers not only enables close monitoring of individuals but also serves as a preventative measure against suspicious activities. Citizens are urged to exercise caution when individuals in civilian attire visit their homes for data collection purposes. Requesting proper identification is encouraged to ensure authenticity. The Islamabad Capital Police is committed to creating a secure environment for the residents.—APP

26 drug peddlers held, narcotics recovered

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Police have apprehended 26 drug peddlers from different areas of the city including those involved in supplying drugs at educational institutions and recovered 8,550 gram hashish and 4,983 gram heroin from their possession during the last 48 hours. Following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, a police spokesperson said that Islamabad Police have intensified the crackdown against the drug peddlers involved in supplying drugs at educational institutions to eliminate this menace from the city. During this crackdown, the Margalla police team arrested two accused namely Hanook Tanveer and Asif Khan and recovered a total of 980 gram heroin from their possession. Karachi Company police team arrested an accused namely Nabeel Masih and recovered 637 gram heroin from him. Shalimar police team arrested two accused namely Azhar and Shan and recovered 560 gram hashish and 215 gram heroin from their possession respectively. Likewise, the Ramna police team arrested Sajjad and recovered 510 gram heroin from his possession. Golra police team arrested two accused namely Asif Khan and Afzal and recovered a total of 1021 gram heroin from their possession. Sumbal police team arrested an accused namely Shafi and recovered 1246 gram hashish from his possession. The Industrial Area police team arrested I Salamat Masih and recovered 550 gram heroin from him. Tarnol police arrested Ameer and recovered 225 gram hashish from his possession. Sangiani police arrested Kashmir Khan and recovered 680 gram hashish from his possession. Sabzi Mandi police team arrested two accused namely Hassan Raza and Sher Ahmed and recovered 1773 gram hashish from their possession. Moreover, the Koral police team arrested Umer and Ubaid for having 398 gram heroin while Kirpa police arrested Sagheer and recovered 1100 gram hashish from his possession. Sihala police team arrested two accused namely Mehtab Rafique and Iftikhar and recovered 435 gram heroin from their possession. Lohi Bher police team arrested an accused namely Ehsan Danish and recovered 237 gram heroin from him. Phulgar police team arrested three accused namely Hassan Mir, Nadeem and Bilal and recovered 1036 gram hashish from their possession. Nilore police team arrested two accused namely Tanveer and Nabi and recovered 1410 gram hashish from their possession. Shahzad Town police team arrested two Faraed and Abdul Rehman and recovered 685 gram heroin and 540 gram hashish from their possession, respectively. Islamabad Capital City Police officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan has directed all senior officials for effective crackdown against the accused involved in drug peddling activities. He emphasized that Islamabad Capital Police will not leave any stone unturned to curb the menace of drugs. "No one would be allowed to play with the precious lives of our young generation" he added.—DNA

PTCL achieves seamless go-live of SAP

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Telecommunication Company Ltd (PTCL) has successfully implemented SAP RISE with SAP S/4HANA, marking an innovative digital transformation within the telecom sector. This strategic move is poised to modernize PTCL Group's corporate operations, fostering efficiency, effectiveness, and a culture of digitalization said a news release. The official go-live ceremony took place at PTCL HQ in Islamabad, graced by the presence of senior management from PTCL & Ufone 4G, as well as distinguished figures from SAP, IBM, and Amazon Web Services (AWS). The ceremony also included appreciation certificates for team members involved in this transformation. PTCL & Ufone 4G, pioneers in Pakistan's telecom sector, became the first to leverage a blend of top-notch SAP ERP solutions, facilitated by the SAP S/4HANA Private Cloud. This collaboration is a monumental transformation that will optimize resource allocation, real-time data insights, streamlining business processes, and bridging organizational information silos. This is so far the largest customer go-live on SAP Rise with SAP S/4HANA in Pakistan, with IBM as their implementation partner and AWS as their hosting partner. While appreciating teams successfully implementing the transformation process, Jafar Khalid, Group Chief Technology Officer, PTCL & Ufone 4G, said, "We are immensely proud to have guided PTCL Group on its operational journey, leading the way in this initiative within the region. This journey is set to establish a new standard and drive Pakistan's telecommunications sector towards improved operations and advancement. All our partners have played a significant role in successfully executing this monumental task. Transitioning to these newly transformed systems is essential to enhance the customer experience. Furthermore, he underscored his vision and strategy for migration and the adoption of Cloud technology, marking this project as a pivotal initial stride towards Cloud integration." Sharing his thoughts, Saquib Ahmad, Managing Director, SAP Pakistan, Iraq, and Afghanistan, said, "Pakistan is rapidly becoming a thriving market for SAP's enterprise and corporate solutions, with the telecommunications sector leading the charge in adopting innovative ERP systems and embracing digital advancements facilitated by the Cloud.—APP

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 04 Issue: 342

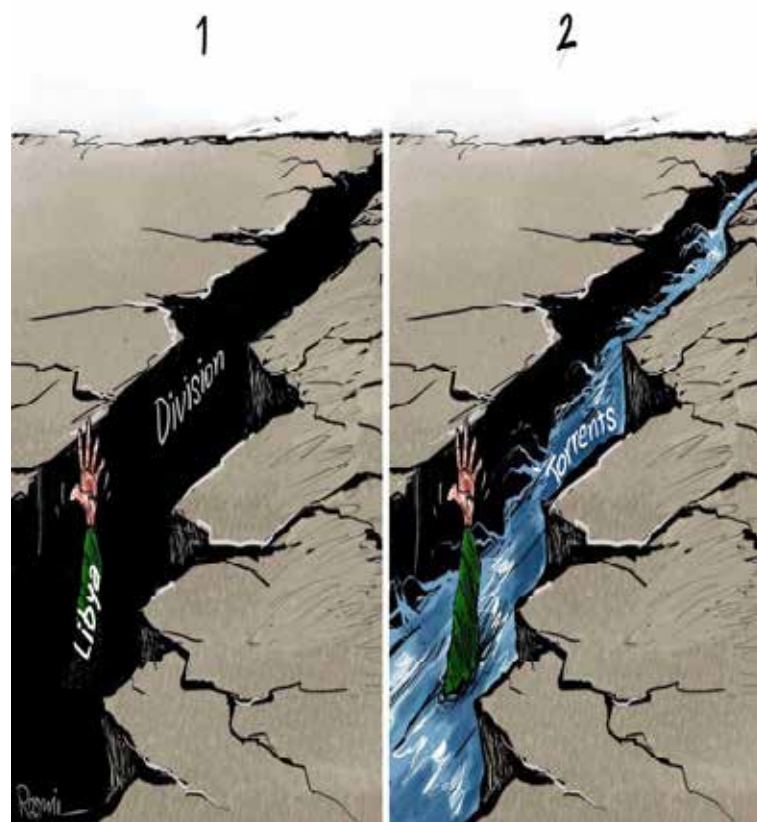
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President Alvi proposes Nov 6 elections

PRESIDENT Dr. Arif Alvi has proposed to hold general elections on November 6, 2023. In the letter to the Chief Election Commissioner, he said that the President has the power to fix the date for the general elections within 90 days. The President of the State in his letter said that he dissolved the National Assembly on the advice of the Prime Minister on August 9. Under Article 48(5) of the Constitution, the President has the authority to hold general elections in the Assembly within 90 days from the date of dissolution. According to Article 48(5), the General Elections for the National Assembly should be held on the 89th day after the date of dissolution of the National Assembly i.e. Monday 6th November 2023. Arif Alvi said in a letter to Chief Election Commissioner Sikandar Sultan Raja that the Chief Election Commissioner was invited for a meeting in order to fulfill the constitutional responsibility, so that the method of implementation of the constitution and its orders can be devised. In response, the Election Commissioner took the opposite position that it is the Election Commission's authority. He said that after the publication of the census in August, the process of constituencies is still going on and it is a mandatory condition under Article 51(5) of the Constitution and Section 17 of the Election Act. Pakistan has the same opinion. Arif Alvi said that in order to strengthen the federation, it is agreed that the general elections of the National Assembly and Provincial Assemblies should be held on the same day. The Election Commission should follow the constitutional and legal measures to hold free and fair elections. The President dissolved the National Assembly on the advice of the Prime Minister. The letter further stated that the Election Commission is responsible to observe all the constitutional and legal measures stipulated under As we know the President, in the case of the Punjab and the KP assemblies had also proposed a date for the election but elections in these provinces could not take place. The matter then landed in the Supreme Court, which ruled that the Election Commission must hold elections within 90 days, the apex court verdict was not honored and thus literally the Constitution was violated. Even now, the President advice may not be heeded to. The matter therefore is likely to again land in the apex court. This is very unfortunate that the Constitutional provisions are disregarded with such an ease. If Pakistan and its people are reeling under duress and economic crises, it is because of the pick-and-choose policy.



Integrated development answer to Taiwan question

Integrating the development of Taiwan with that of the Chinese mainland will not only help promote the island's economic development, it will also help people on the island to know that the mainland authorities are sincere in their endeavors to realize the peaceful reunification of the island with the motherland. A circular jointly released by the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council on Tuesday explicitly stated that East China's Fujian province will be developed into a demonstration zone for integrated development across the Taiwan Strait. This sends a strong message that the mainland will never give up its efforts to realize the peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question. What makes the latest circular particularly noteworthy is that it outlines an all-inclusive range of policies for Fujian province, and the island, which is just across the Strait from the province, to realize integrated development. Policies and measures will enable Taiwan residents to do business or stay in Fujian enjoying the same treatment as their local counterparts. Taiwan compatriots who have never been to the mainland are welcome to visit Fujian, students are welcome to study in the province and those wanting work are encouraged to find jobs in Fujian. Enterprises, especially Taiwan enterprises based in Fujian, are urged to hire more Taiwan employees, and Taiwan-based physicians are allowed to practice in Fujian. Taiwan compatriots are also encouraged to take part in social welfare programs. They will no longer need to register for temporary residence in Fujian, and they can settle in Fujian if they are willing to. Institutions of higher learning and those engaged in scientific research are encouraged to enroll students and researchers from Taiwan. If implemented well such moves will greatly promote exchanges and understanding between people across the Strait. The circular reinforces the importance of exchanges by requiring Fujian to strengthen institutional support for Taiwan compatriots in Fujian in terms of employment, health services, housing, elderly care services and social assistance. It also states that there will be support for efforts to explore a model for the joint development of Xiamen-Kinmen infrastructure so as to facilitate supplies of electricity and gas and improve connectivity with the construction of bridges from Xiamen to Kinmen, and supporting Kinmen using Xiamen's new airport. As such integrated development is consolidated, it will extend beyond Fujian to other parts of the country, and there will be more opportunities for people on the two sides of the Taiwan Strait to know more about each other. The Taiwan question will not be left hanging indefinitely. The circular shows that Beijing has the answer, which is the island's peaceful reunification with the motherland.

Terrorism from Afghan Soil

Qamar Bashir



He provided insights, with a particular focus on Pakistan's stance on Tehrik-e-Taliban and the challenges posed by illegal Afghan immigrants. The Prime Minister's candid discussion on the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) issue was both enlightening and pragmatic. He refrained from making any rash decisions regarding pursuing TTP terrorists into Afghan territory but affirmed Pakistan's unwavering commitment to defending its own territory. To understand this nuanced approach, we must acknowledge the deep-rooted historical and cultural ties that TTP has with its Afghan

In a recent national TV interview, Pakistan's Prime Minister showcased a remarkable blend of clarity and professionalism while addressing a host of critical issues facing the nation. His articulate and persuasive style left no room for ambiguity, shedding light on the complexities of Pakistan's evolving relationship with its neighbor, Afghanistan. He provided insights, with a particular focus on Pakistan's stance on Tehrik-e-Taliban and the challenges posed by illegal Afghan immigrants. The Prime Minister's candid discussion on the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) issue was both enlightening and pragmatic. He refrained from making any rash decisions regarding pursuing TTP terrorists into Afghan territory but affirmed Pakistan's unwavering commitment to defending its own territory. To understand this nuanced approach, we must acknowledge the deep-rooted historical and cultural ties that TTP has with its Afghan counterparts. TTP and Afghan Taliban share a common history, having fought together against the Russian invasion and later against Allied forces. TTP and similar groups adhere to an extremist interpretation of Islam and seek to establish a strict Islamic state, often using violence to achieve these goals. Their shared philosophy, ethnicity, language, and cultural bonds have forged a strong connection. Recognizing these intricacies is crucial when developing a response to either the TTP or the Afghan Government in light of the Doha Agreement. Pakistan rightly demands that Afghanistan adheres to its commitment to prevent terrorists from using Afghan soil to attack other countries. The Prime Minister astutely pointed out that the Afghan government remains in an interim and arguably illegitimate state, with rudimentary governance structures and communication mechanisms. This informality in governance has led to various local commanders and tribal chieftains exercising significant autonomy, sometimes sheltering TTP terrorists and aiding their nefarious activities within Pakistan. Pakistan's response to these challenges requires careful consideration of these factors. The Prime Minister himself, being of Pathan heritage, possesses an innate understanding of the Afghan, TTP, and similar groups. He is well aware of their attitudinal, psychological makeup, and their unwavering commitment to certain ideologies. Pathans, when committed to an idea or philosophy, are notoriously difficult to dissuade by kinetic force. Their resilience, adaptability, and determination make them formidable adversaries. Moreover, Pathans can endure the harshest conditions with minimal resources, rendering them highly resilient. The adherents of the TTP, typically impoverished, have little to lose, which makes them more willing to engage in violence. They possess a deep-seated commitment to their cause, making it challenging to disassociate them through force. Adding to the complexity, the TTP now possesses state-of-the-art weaponry left behind by the departing Allied forces in Afghanistan. The United States, during its 2021 withdrawal, left approximately \$7 billion worth of military equipment and weapons, including firearms, communications gear, and armored vehicles. The Taliban seized this arsenal after the fall of the Western-backed Afghan government, significantly bolstering their military capabilities. Regrettably, some of this American military gear and weaponry have

found their way into neighboring Pakistan, where they are utilized by armed groups, including the TTP. This influx of U.S. weapons has enhanced the TTP's capacity and emboldened ethnic Baluch separatist groups in Pakistan, leading to a surge in violence. The United States Institute of Peace has noted a "robust and growing black market" for U.S. weapons in Pakistan, with armed groups obtaining advanced U.S. weaponry and equipment like M16 machine guns, M4 assault rifles, night-vision goggles, and military communication gear. These sophisticated weapons have had a "terrifying" impact, especially on the under-equipped Pakistani police force. The wake of acquiring advanced weaponry, TTP's attacks in Pakistan have escalated since the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan. According to the Pakistan Institute of Peace Studies (PIPS), terrorist attacks in Pakistan increased by 27 percent last year compared to 2021. These attacks claimed the lives of at least 419 people and left 734 injured in 262 incidents. TTP's use of sniper rifles with thermal scopes has given them a distinct advantage, enabling pinpoint accuracy even in the dark. These enhanced night vision goggles and weaponry have enabled the militants to carry out sophisticated attacks, particularly on security checkpoints along Pakistan's western border with Afghanistan. The situation poses a serious threat, especially in areas that were previously relatively peaceful and less prone to violence. The Pentagon has conveyed to the U.S. government that retrieving the material left in Afghanistan is currently unrealistic, given that the United States does not recognize the Taliban as a legitimate government. The Taliban, however, denies supplying U.S. weapons to TTP fighters and instead blames former members of Afghanistan's security forces for selling arms on the black market after the fall of the internationally recognized government in Kabul. In Pakistan, the black market has become inundated with U.S. weapons since the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan. These weapons are known for their excellent quality and lethality, attracting buyers from various quarters. A U.S.-made M4 assault rifle in good condition can be purchased for approximately \$1,400, while military communication gear like Harris Engineering Falcon Three Radios is available for around \$3,500. Some of these weapons have also fallen into the hands of criminals, giving them an edge over civilian law enforcement agencies, which are equipped with outdated and less lethal weaponry. This influx of advanced weaponry into Pakistan has made the TTP a formidable adversary, one that follows no rules, respects no territorial boundaries, and is completely committed to a toxic ideology. They now possess lethal weapons and are well-equipped to carry out their activities with deadly precision. On the other hand, Pakistan's security agencies operate within the constraints of local, national, and international laws, respecting the territorial boundaries of neighboring Afghanistan. Given these challenges, Pakistan has adopted a cautious and prudent approach. It has employed economic measures to encourage the Afghan Interim Government to act responsibly and honor its commitments under various bilateral and international agreements. Pakistan has wisely closed smuggling

routes and border crossings, with the closure of the Torkham border crossing being particularly significant. Pakistan is likely to extend this embargo until Afghanistan takes concrete steps to rein in the TTP. The Prime Minister's caution regarding illegal Afghan immigrants on Pakistani soil is well-founded. There are over 50 million Afghans in Pakistan, with only 2.8 million of them registered. This massive undocumented population poses significant challenges to national security and resources. The Prime Minister has categorically stated that all illegal Afghan immigrants in Pakistan will be identified and repatriated through due legal processes. Addressing the acts of terrorism by the Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) from Afghanistan into Pakistan requires a comprehensive understanding of the complex web of historical, geopolitical, and socio-economic factors. Furthermore, Pakistan should exercise caution and not be ensnared by the Afghan Government's proposals. The Afghan Government has persistently suggested that since they lack authority over the TTP, Pakistan should engage in direct negotiations with the Taliban. Pakistan, in a gesture of goodwill, previously acceded to this suggestion, allowing TTP fighters and committed adherents to relocate to various regions within Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) provinces and Northern areas. However, this move inadvertently provided the TTP with an opportunity to regroup and activate their sleeper cells, leading to an escalation of their nefarious activities across the country. Simultaneously, the government should address this issue with the U.S. government and its allies, stressing the need to provide compensation to Pakistan and its security agencies for the loss of lives, damage to property, and the economic losses incurred as a result of the conflict. Pakistan has borne the brunt of the war waged on its soil by weapons left behind. It is imperative that the international community supports Pakistan by enhancing the capabilities of its security forces with improved weaponry and providing essential training to effectively counter attacks launched by the TTP and other criminal elements armed with such advanced weaponry. In conclusion, Pakistan's approach reflects a commitment to safeguard its national interests while seeking peaceful resolutions to complex challenges. In a rapidly evolving regional landscape, Pakistan's clarity and pragmatism are key to ensuring stability and prosperity for its people and the broader region. Addressing these root causes requires a comprehensive and multi-pronged approach, including efforts to improve governance, economic development, education, and security in the affected regions. Diplomatic initiatives that aim to reduce the conflict in Afghanistan and enhance cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan are also crucial. Additionally, international collaboration to disrupt external support for militant groups and strengthen border security measures is essential to mitigate the threat posed by TTP and similar organizations.

—The writer is the Former Press Secretary to the President Former Press Minister to the Embassy of Pakistan to France Former MD, SRBC

Sham trial by Indian Supreme Court

Khalid Iqbal (Retd)

A National Conference leader Muhammad Akbar Khan, who is a petitioner, was asked to "file an affidavit swearing allegiance to the Constitution of India and accepting the country's sovereignty unconditionally". Constitution of India, minus Articles 370 and 35A, declares IIOJK as an integral part of India and under its application entirely. The petitions state that IIOJK has a special political status, whereby complete constitution of India is not applicable

On 5th August, 2019, the Indian government revoked Articles 370 and 35A of the constitution of India's. These articles pertained to the special privileges given to Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). Over thirty petitions were filed in the Supreme Court of India, challenging the government's actions. Hearing of these petitions was held in abeyance for over four years. To give electoral benefit to the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government, a Constitution Bench headed by the Chief Justice of India (CJI) D Y Chandrachud did the fastest hearing of these 35 petitions just in 16 days; and on 5th September, this Kangaroo Court reserved its judgment on these petitions. Out of 16 days of court proceedings, most of the time was consumed by the defendants, and the petitioners remained under judicial harassment. A National Conference leader Muhammad Akbar Khan, who is a petitioner, was asked to "file an affidavit swearing allegiance to the Constitution of India and accepting the country's sovereignty unconditionally". Constitution of India, minus Articles 370 and 35A, declares IIOJK as an integral part of India and under its application entirely. The petitions state that IIOJK has a special political status, whereby complete constitution of India is not applicable to IIOJK. Indeed, Indian Supreme Court is well on its way to complete a sham trial, and is expected to give a verdict much like Babri Masjid ruling. Some of coercive actions observed during the trial remind of Nuremberg trials. Article 370 of the Indian Constitution gave special status to IIOJK that embodied six special provisions: It exempted the State from the complete applicability of the Constitution of India. The IIOJK was conferred the power to have its own constitution and central legislative powers over the state were limited to three subjects of defence, foreign affairs and communications. Additional constitutional powers of the Central Government could be made applicable to the state only with the concurrence of the State Government. However, once the State Constituent Assembly finalised the scheme of powers and dispersed, no further extension of powers was possible; Article 370 could be abrogated or amended only upon the recommendation of the

State's Constituent Assembly. Article 370 conferred on the State of Jammu and Kashmir to have a separate constitution, a state flag, and autonomy of internal administration. Article 35A of Indian Constitution had empowered the state legislature to define who were permanent residents of IIOJK, and their privileges. As per this article, a permanent resident was anyone who was a state subject on 14 May 1954 or who has been a resident of the state for 10 years and had "lawfully acquired immovable property in the state". In addition, it also clearly defined which privileges could not be granted to non-permanent residents; a non-permanent resident could not: own property; obtain a state government job; and join any educational institute run by the state of IIOJK. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the Supreme Court of India (SCI) are hand-in-glove in instituting Kashmir gimmicks. Throughout the proceedings, the CJI was, proverbially, holding the hands of the Attorney General and the Solicitor General and providing them the leads. It appears that the constitutional bench would strike down the abrogation of Article 370 and uphold the abrogation of Article 35A. To pave the way for this, the CJI, on 29th August, opened a line of argument for the Centre that Jammu and Kashmir had been converted into a Union Territory for a "stipulated period", maybe for the sake of "national security", and pushed the Indian government for an answer on when it would revert to a full-fledged State. The Union government informed the Supreme Court on 31st August that the current status of Jammu and Kashmir as a Union Territory was not permanent, and minus Laddakh, its statehood would be restored, but has declined to give any timeframe. Article 370 has political connotations while Article 35 has economic implications for the people of IIOJK. CJI is well on the track of delivering a whitewash verdict in line with the wishes of his RSS-BJP string pullers. The mind-set of CJI is to undo Indian government's revocation of Article 370 while allowing time to hold elections leading to a BJP government, and declare Article 35A, which is actually an empowering Article, against basic rights. The restoration of Article 370, sans Article 35A, would mean all privileges

of IIOJK's citizen would be snatched and only a notional statehood would be promulgated. On the diplomatic front, India is portraying a return of normalcy in IIOJK. After holding the events of G-20 in IIOJK that resulted in boycott of the proceedings by five countries, the Indian government has decided to hold the Miss World beauty contest in Srinagar to divert the attention of the international community from the human rights violations. Women from 140 out of 182 countries are participating and its final round will be in IIOJK. However, India's facade of the normalcy in IIOJK is challenged by the harsh reality that IIOJK remains one of the most militarized zones in the world with extreme curbs on freedom of expression and peaceful assembly of the people. India finds itself in a tight corner when it comes to human rights assessment in IIOJK. All credible HR watchdogs have repeatedly pointed fingers towards government sponsored atrocities against the people of IIOJK. Lately, European Commission has conveyed it in unequivocal terms that HR violations in IIOJK are rampant, and the tide has seen a rise since August 5, 2019. And that "systemic and intolerable suppression" of Kashmiris' basic freedoms and fundamental rights, with loss of innocent lives, is becoming a new normal. The IIOJK has been the subject of a dispute between India and Pakistan since 1947. Pakistan has always shown openness for dialogue provided New Delhi creates an environment for it. The responsibility for resolving the Kashmir conflict also lies with the international community, particularly the important capitals. Moreover, the UN needs to make a bold course correction by playing effective role towards resolution of one of the oldest disputes on its agenda, in a responsible manner. The starting point could be the appointment of UN Secretary General's Special Representative on Kashmir for implementing the UNSC resolutions.

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Briefs

Polls should be held by November 6

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section 17 of the Elections Act, 2017", the letter said. Moreover, the law ministry also had the same view on the matter, it said, adding that all four provincial governments were of the opinion that the announcement of the election date was the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) mandate. "Further, there is a consensus that to strengthen the federation and to promote unity and harmony amongst provinces and to avoid incurring unnecessary expenses, general elections to the National Assembly and the provincial assemblies must be held on the same day," it further stated.

Inclusive polls crucial for Pakistan

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for the next general polls which, at the moment, remain in limbo owing to the matter of delimitation of constituencies following the digital census held earlier this year. This is not the first time that a foreign envoy has met the ECP chief and commented on the conduct of general polls in the country. Last month, United States' Ambassador Donald Blome also met CEC Raja to reaffirm his country's support for "free and fair elections", adding that it would work to strengthen the US-Pakistan relationship with "whomever the Pakistani people choose". "The United States remains committed to working to broaden and deepen the US-Pakistan relationship with whomever the Pakistani people choose," a statement from the US embassy's spokesperson read.

Calls for promoting defence...

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COAS was also conferred with the Legion of Merit by the Minister of Defence and Commander Turkish Land Forces in recognition of his services towards promoting defence relations between two countries. During the ceremony COAS highlighted that, "Pakistan and Türkiye have strong brotherly relations which have always stood the test of times. Pakistan Army is always willing to extend full support to the Turkish Land Forces in multiple domains. Pakistan has always stood with their Turkish brothers in times of calamity and moments of triumph and shall continue to strengthen the fraternal ties amongst the two nations."

Putin to visit Pakistan soon, says...

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However, he pointed out that Russia has a stated policy on the use of nuclear weapons, and in case of an existential threat, it will do it. He was quick to add, nonetheless, that Ukraine is no threat to its military might, and he does not see a possibility of trigger-happiness. The Russian envoy was, however, confident that "it is a matter of time, and Russia will win the war." He said, "I hope some common sense prevails, and both the parties soon arrive at a rapprochement." About the recognition of Taliban government in Kabul, Ganich said it should be a collective international decision, and observed that his government is dealing with the dispensation along with other regional states in a coordinated manner. To a question about 'Grain Deal', he said that Moscow is willing and committed to do "its part," but added that the onus of breaking the promises is on other parties. "We are ready to resume the deal, and will see that it is implemented. But no one can coerce us into it."

State of the Union speech
Europe must answer the call of history: EU chief

Lawmakers gave a standing ovation after von der Leyen recounted the fate of Victoria Amelina, a Ukrainian writer and activist who was killed in a Russian attack

NEWS DESK

BRUSSELS: In her last State of the Union speech before European Parliament elections next June, she said the Commission was proposing to extend special protections granted to Ukrainian citizens who fled to the EU to escape Russia's war. She also restated the EU's commitment to long-term support for Kyiv, praising the "great strides" it had made towards joining the EU but saying hard work still lay ahead.

"Our support to Ukraine will endure," she said. Lawmakers gave a standing ovation after von der Leyen recounted the fate of Victoria Amelina, a Ukrainian writer and activist who was killed in a Russian attack on Ukraine. MEPs applauded as Héctor Abad Faciolince, a Colombian writer who was wounded in

the same attack, showed a photograph of Amelina to the chamber. An upcoming package to support Europe's wind industry would be aimed at helping the sector as renewable energy companies struggle with steep inflation, von der Leyen said. "We will fast-track permitting even more. We will improve the auction systems across the EU. We will focus on skills, access to finance and stable supply chains," she said, adding: "The future of our clean tech industry has to be made in Europe," she said. Looking back at her track record, she told the EU assembly: "When I stood in front of you in 2019 with my programme for a green, digital and geopolitical Europe, I know that some had doubts... But look at where Europe is today."

"We have seen the birth of a geopolitical Union — supporting Ukraine, standing



up to Russia's aggression, responding to an assertive China and investing in partnerships," she said, also touting policies to promote green energy. Von der Leyen also said the wealthy bloc must engage more with African countries and

accused Russia of stirring chaos in the Sahel region of the continent. "We need to show the same unity of purpose towards Africa as we have shown for Ukraine. We need to focus on co-operation with legitimate governments and regional

organisations," she said.

In what was arguably the most eye-catching, did-she-really-say-that moment of the whole speech, Ursula von der Leyen announced an official anti-subsidy investigation into the low-cost electric cars coming from China into the bloc. The flow of these products has been incredibly rapid: Brussels estimates Chinese brands of electric vehicles enjoy a 20% price difference compared to European brands and have amassed an 8% share of the European market, which could jump to 15% by 2025. "Competition is only true as long as it is fair," von der Leyen said. "Too often, our companies are excluded from foreign markets or are victims of predatory practices. They are often undercut by competitors benefitting from huge state subsidies." The president, who has employed the

strategy of "de-risking" to deal with Beijing, reminded MEPs of how Europe's solar industry went from global leader to second-rate due to the pressure exerted by its "heavily subsidised Chinese competitors." The same fate, she warned, could befall Europe's car industry as the market becomes "flooded" with China-made electric cars whose "price is kept artificially low." "And as we do not accept this from the inside, we do not accept this from the outside," von der Leyen said, prompting applause from lawmakers. "Europe is open to competition but not for a race to the bottom. We must defend ourselves against unfair practices." The investigation could lead to the imposition of tariffs to offset the effects of the Chinese subsidies, which take the form of grants, preferential taxes and low taxation.

'One nation, one law to...

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the rest of the country. He mentioned holding detailed meetings with local stakeholders and highlighted the importance of removing mutual misunderstandings. About financial problems faced by Gilgit Baltistan University, he said following his discussion with the vice-chancellor, the finance division had been directed to step in. As an inclusive approach, the prime minister said he had directed the caretaker information minister to telecast air talk shows on Pakistan Television in Gilgiti and Shina languages twice a week. Earlier, PM Kakar took a round of various departments of the hospital where he was briefed about the medical facilities. The 50-bed hospital contains emergency care, an intensive care unit, children's ward, cardiac surgery, and treatment sections. It was told that the hospital will become fully functional by June 2024.

Judicial remand...

FORM PAGE 01

overturned a lower court's decision to jail him for three years with a Rs100,000 fine — a judgment that kept him from contesting upcoming elections, he remains behind bars due to his arrest in the cipher case. The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) officially arrested the former prime minister and the former foreign minister in the cipher case last month after booking them under the Official Secrets Act. During the hearing today, Judge Zulqarnain directed the FIA to submit a challan on September 26 in the cipher case, said the sources. Qureshi was taken into custody from his residence in Islamabad in the same case on August 19 while Khan was arrested in the cipher case while he was serving the sentence in Attock jail.

Law ministers for smooth...

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the conduct of general elections and announcement of election dates is the sole competence of the Election Commission of Pakistan. The Provincial Law Ministers emphasized that in order to strengthen the Federation, ensure harmony amongst all federating units and avoid unnecessary financial burden on the national exchequer incurred owing to the provision of security arrangements on different election dates, the general elections to the National and the four Provincial Assemblies must be held on the same day. The Election Commission of Pakistan is an independent constitutional body. It is the responsibility of all organs of the State to respect the autonomy of the Election Commission and its authority in carrying out the delimitation of constituencies and determining the election schedule.

Pakistan's 262-member will be part in Asian Games: Arif Hasan

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Olympic Association (POA) President Lt. Gen. (r) Syed Arif Hasan conforms that 262-member contingent to represent Pakistan in 24 sports discipline will participate in the 19th Asian Games to be held in Hangzhou, China. Talking to the media along with POA Secretary General Khalid Mehmood at Olympic House, Arif Hasan provided the details of the contingent, which includes personnel supported by the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB), National Federations (NFs) and POA. Responding to questions about allegations of excluding athletes and officials from Athletics, President POA clarified that POA had not excluded anyone, if received within the timelines. Instead, PSB received and forwarded the names of athletes and officials for



accreditation much after the given timelines set by the Organizing Committee which was 20th May, 2023. Similar complications arose in the sport of Hockey due to late changes in team composition which were not processed. POA has informed the Pakistan Hockey Federation that processing new accreditations beyond the established deadlines was not possible. President POA emphasized the importance of adhering to timelines and assured that

any accreditation request received within the stipulated time frame had been processed. He also mentioned that the matter regarding allegations of exclusion of athletes and coaches is now before the honorable court, and we will also submit the facts before the court. President POA strongly denied that POA has prevented any sponsorship contract for Arshad Nadeem. "This is very unfortunate as no one contacted us (POA) about such sponsorship

agreement", Arif Hasan said, adding that it is not our domain to decide on athlete's sponsorship contracts rather we can just assist them by sharing the necessary guidelines. We welcome anyone who has an interest in supporting athletes, NFs and event organization. POA recently had a very productive partnership with the DHA Lahore who have contributed a lot by extending support to POA and are now also facilitating National Sports Federations for organization of events. Addressing questions about the performance of athletes and officials, President POA stated that in the absence of a support structure for elite athletes in Pakistan, high expectations from the athletes would be unjustified. The Government of Pakistan has committed to improving national sports standards by establishing elite sports training facilities across Pakistan.

Naseem ruled out of Asia Cup 2023

Naseem has been ruled out of the ongoing Asia Cup 2023 on Wednesday, and has been replaced by backup pace bowler Zaman ahead of Pakistan's final Super 4 match

SPORTS DESK

COLOMBO: Fast bowler Naseem Shah has been ruled out of the ongoing Asia Cup 2023 on Wednesday, and has been replaced by backup pace bowler Zaman Khan ahead of Pakistan's final Super 4 match against Sri Lanka tomorrow. Naseem Shah injured his right shoulder during the match against India. He continues to be monitored by the team's medical panel that is taking all necessary precautions keeping in mind the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023. Haris Rauf, who did not bowl on the reserve day of the PAK vs IND contest as a precautionary measure, continues to recover well after he felt discomfort in his right flank on the first day of the match. Team doctor Sohail Saleem: "These two fast bowlers [Naseem Shah and Haris Rauf] are our assets and the team's medical panel will provide them the best possible care ahead of the all-important World Cup." Zaman Khan joined the team in Colombo today and will train with the squad at the RPKIS in the evening, while Shah Nawaz Dahani will join the team on Thursday morning. Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) announced Zaman Khan and Shah Nawaz Dahani as backup pacers on Monday after the conclusion of the game against India.

Pakistan defeat Kyrgyzstan in Volleyball C'ship

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Women's Beach Volleyball Team made history as they defeated Kyrgyzstan 2-1 in their inaugural match of the Central Asian Beach Volleyball Championship at the iconic Cox's Bazar Beach on the southeast coast of Bangladesh on Wednesday. According to information made available here by the Pakistan Volleyball Federation (PVF), Pakistan women powered past their opponents 11-21, 21-14 and 15-13 to emerge victorious. Teams from hosts Bangladesh, Pakistan, Bhutan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, India, and Maldives are participating in the three-day-long competition. "This is a historical moment for us because the Pakistan Women's Volleyball Team is participating in an international event for the first time and they launched their campaign on a winning note against a strong team." "Pakistan's Azra Ferooz and Muqaddas Bukhari played a crucial role in the win," the PVF said in a statement. — DNA

Bellingham shines as England inflict more pain on Scotland

GLASGOW: Jude Bellingham stole the show with a goal and assist as England extended their 24-year unbeaten run against Scotland in a 3-1 friendly win to mark the 150th anniversary of the first meeting between the nations. Phil Foden and Harry Kane were also on target as the Three Lions tamed the roar of Hampden Park and Scotland's five-game winning streak on Tuesday. The hosts had high hopes of a famous victory in football's oldest international fixture after impressive wins over Spain and Erling Haaland's Norway in recent months to close in on qualifying for Euro 2024. But Scotland suffered a sobering evening as England proved a class apart. Bellingham was the pick of Gareth Southgate's stars as the Real Ma-

drid midfielder revelled in the number 10 role he has shone in for the Spanish giants in the early weeks of the season. "It's just a freedom role really," said Bellingham. "I know it depends on the system we play and we've got so many amazing players to accommodate. "The team comes first always. I really enjoyed playing in that position today." Southgate hailed the 116th clash between the sides as the renewal of a "great sporting rivalry" on the eve of the game. However, the ugly side of the animosity between the two sets of supporters was on show even before a ball was kicked. After the English national anthem was drowned out by a chorus of booing, a minute's silence for former Scotland manager Craig Brown was

disrupted by the away fans. Once the action got underway Scotland were second best, even if it took England over half an hour to make their dominance show in the scoreline. "We knew playing against England was going to be difficult but if you want to learn as a team, you have to play against the best teams," said Scotland boss Steve Clarke. "We didn't want to lose to our old enemy, but sometimes in football you have to take your medicine." Southgate questioned in his pre-match comments whether Foden has a future in central midfield. But he ghosted in to a central position from his starting role out on the right to score just his fourth international goal to break the deadlock. — Agencies

Pak, Iran explore cultural collaborations

The two parties explored the cultural connections between Pakistan and Iran, along with recent advancements in these relations, which encompassed cultural agreements between the two friendly nations



OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Jamal Shah, the Caretaker Federal Minister for National Heritage & Culture Division, and Ehsan Khazaei, the Cultural Counsellor at the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, discussed the cultural ties between Pakistan and Iran, as well as recent developments like cultural agreements between the two nations. In their meeting, the two parties explored the cultural connections between Pakistan and Iran, along with recent advancements in these relations, which encompassed cultural agreements between the two friendly nations. Additionally, they deliberated on collaborating to arrange diverse cultural events, such as an Iranian film week and other cultural exchanges. The minister expressed Pakistan's desire to enhance cultural connections with Iran, encompassing areas such as arts, cinema, handicrafts, literature, heritage, and culture. Ehsan Khazaei, the Cultural Counsellor at the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, noted the numerous cultural and historical similarities shared by Pakistan and Iran. They also conversed about a collaborative film production between the two nations and agreed to convene a delegation-level meeting to delve deeper into this matter.

Rawalpindi Medical University

INVITATION FOR BIDS FOR PROCUREMENT OF FURNITURE

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Bidders are required to submit the documents along with following information:

- The bidder should be registered with FBR.
- Income tax/ sales tax certificate (professional tax certificate/Punjab only) from relevant department.
- List of relevant major supplies.
- Evidence for supporting financial soundness.
- Estimated amount of each item is mentioned in bidding documents.
- 2% Bid security in shape of CDR/Bank Guarantee/Pay Order/ Demand Draft of each item is mentioned in bidding documents must be attached with technical bid.

Conditional, optional, incomplete and bid not meeting the evaluation criteria shall be considered as Non-Responsive.

The complete Bidding Documents may be purchased by the interested bidders on the submission of a written application to the address below upon payment of a non-refundable fee of Pak. Rs. 2000/- before 4-10-2023, 10 office hours from Purchase Office, New Teaching Block Rawalpindi Medical University Inside Holy Family Hospital Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

Bidding documents containing evaluation criteria, specifications and other terms & conditions can be downloaded from www.rmuh.gov.pk and www.rmuh.edu.pk

Prospective bidders are requested to drop their sealed bids on / before 5-10-2023 till 10:30 a.m. in the Purchase Office, New Teaching Block Rawalpindi Medical University Inside Holy Family Hospital Rawalpindi, Pakistan

Technical bids will be opened on the same date at 11:00 a.m. in the presence of bidders who intend to witness the proceedings. In case of official holiday on the day of submission, next day will be treated as closing date.

RMU may reject all the bids subject to relevant provision of Punjab Procurement Rules 2014

Vice Chancellor
Rawalpindi Medical University
New Teaching Block
Rawalpindi
Phone No. 051-5251517

IPL 7512

Briefs

Baku ready to allow aid access to Nagorno-Karabakh

GENEVA: Azerbaijan said Wednesday it was prepared to allow the Red Cross to bring humanitarian aid into the breakaway region of Nagorno-Karabakh on a "regular basis," accusing Armenian separatists of blocking access. Tensions over Nagorno-Karabakh have flared in recent months, as Armenia accuses Azerbaijan of obstructing traffic on the Lachin corridor — the sole road linking Armenia to the Armenian-populated breakaway region. Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov stressed his government's "commitment and our readiness to provide access." Speaking to reporters with the United Nations correspondent's association in Geneva, he said he had met with the head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in the Swiss city and had "reconfirmed our commitment to cooperation." "ICRC is ready. The government of Azerbaijan is ready" for aid to be brought in, he said. "It can be conducted on a regular basis," he said, adding that "the only missing point at the moment... is still the blocking (by) the local Armenians." His comments came after Russian humanitarian aid arrived Tuesday in Nagorno-Karabakh via territory controlled by Azerbaijan, according to separatist authorities in the Armenian-populated area. The Lachin corridor is policed by Russian peacekeepers as part of a cease-fire agreement brokered between the ex-Soviet Caucasus nations in 2020. Baku has rejected Armenia's claim, saying Nagorno-Karabakh could receive supplies via Azerbaijani-controlled territory. On September 1, Azerbaijan agreed to simultaneously reopen, for humanitarian supplies, both the Lachin corridor and the Aghdam road linking Nagorno-Karabakh with the rest of Azerbaijan. Bayramov said Wednesday that the "ICRC is ready to organize everything," adding the organization had two convoys ready to go "in a matter of hours."—APP

46 terrorists neutralized in clashes in Mali

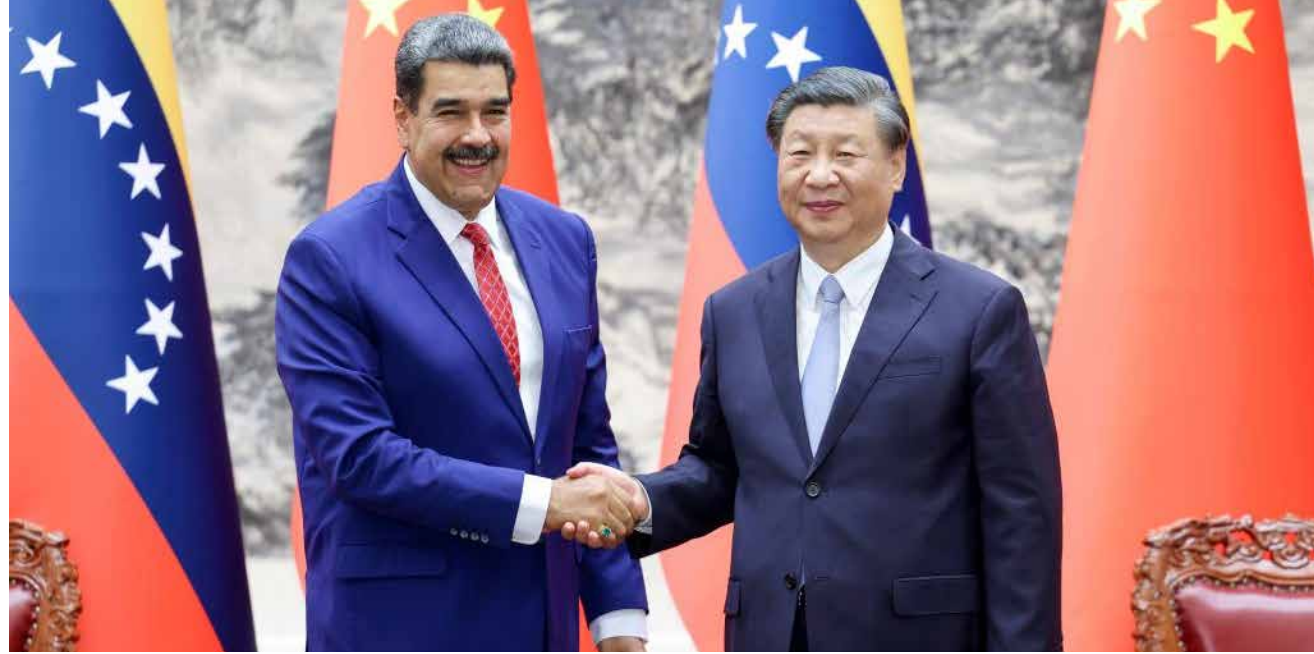
MALI: The armed forces of Mali announced the death of 10 soldiers in clashes with terrorists in the country's southeast. The armed forces "repelled a complex attack using a car bomb by terrorists on vehicles and motorbikes in the town of Bourem," a statement said. The surviving terrorists fled to northern parts of the region, Agamor and Amoustarat, and the situation is under control, it added. The Malian military announced the deaths of 10 soldiers, adding that 13 others were injured. The armed forces neutralized 46 terrorists and destroyed 20 of their vehicles, the statement said. Last week at least 49 civilians and 15 soldiers were killed in two separate terrorist attacks in the West African country, authorities said. According to a government statement, on Sept. 7 a passenger boat along the Niger River was attacked around midday, followed by a second attack on an army position in the northeastern Gao region. Fifty attackers were also "neutralized" in clashes with the army.—APP

Xi says 'upgrading' Venezuela ties after meeting Maduro

President of China Xi Jinping said. Xi said China stands ready to work with Venezuela to firmly support each other in exploring a development path suited to their national conditions and strengthen Party and national governance exchanges

NEWS DESK

BEIJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping held talks with his Venezuelan counterpart, Nicolás Maduro Moros, who is on a state visit to China, at the Great Hall of the People on Wednesday. The two presidents announced the elevation of the China-Venezuela relationship to an all-weather strategic partnership. "The establishment of an all-weather strategic partnership between China and Venezuela meets the common expectations of the two peoples and conforms to the general trend of historical development," Xi said, calling on the two sides to push for more fruitful China-Venezuela strategic cooperation, bring more benefits to the two peoples and inject more positive energy into world peace and development. Xi spoke about China's reform and opening up, especially the development of special economic zones, and noted that reform and opening up is an important instrument for China to catch up with the times in great strides and a crucial move in making China what it is today. "China cherishes the valuable experience gained in this process and will continue to push forward reform and opening up. No force can stop China's development and progress," Xi said. Xi said China stands ready to work with Venezuela to firmly support each other in exploring a development path suited to their national conditions and



strengthen Party and national governance exchanges. He said China supports Venezuela in setting up special economic zones and will share relevant experience to help its national development. Maduro said Venezuela's national development and Venezuela-China relations are at a significant stage. "The establishment of an all-weather strategic partnership is of historic significance and will surely usher

in a new era of bilateral relations." He said Venezuela is willing to learn from China's experience in building special economic zones and deepen practical cooperation in agriculture, investment, education, and tourism. Maduro said Venezuela supports the joint construction of the Belt and Road. The Venezuelan side also supports the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative and the

Global Civilization Initiative proposed by Xi. Venezuela stands ready to strengthen communication and cooperation with China within multilateral frameworks such as the United Nations and the BRICS mechanism, safeguard multilateralism and the legitimate interests of developing countries, and promote building a community with a shared future for humanity, according to the Venezuelan president.

Aid tents offer hope to Morocco quake survivors

WEB DESK

AMIZMIZ :Survivors of Morocco's earthquake were packed in a football-field length queue to get stands in for the homes they had lost. They received yellow tents with no floors, in a symbol of the uncertainty ahead. Yet even this step marked progress for people like Fatima Oumaloul — her face still bloody from when her home collapsed on her three days prior. She won't spend another night unsheltered on the ground. "I just want a home, one fit for a human," the 59-year-old said as soldiers handed out the tents in Amizmiz, a town south of Marrakesh that has become an aid hub for shattered Atlas mountain villages. The shelters popping up in tent cities and beside destroyed or dan-

gerously damaged homes show that aid is starting to flow, but also leave survivors unsure how long these temporary structures will be home. The quake that struck Marrakesh and the regions to its south on Friday killed more than 2,900 people, according to the latest toll. But the disaster also left a vast number of homes uninhabitable in rural areas where locals don't have the money to quickly, or maybe even ever, rebuild without help. Yet those questions were secondary to not dying in a building that was known to already have been damaged by the quake. Oumaloul knows the dangers well. She was trapped under the debris of her collapsed home until a neighbour who came to check on her ended up stepping on the spot where she was buried.

A village vanishes in Morocco's quake

TIKHT: It was delicate work for the searchers to remove the woman's body from the rubble of a village that effectively ceased to exist in Morocco's deadliest earthquake in over six decades. Her 25-year-old fiancé Omar Ait Mbarek watched the digging Sunday with his eyes red and full of tears just kilometres from the quake epicentre in the Atlas Mountains. He was on the phone with her when the shaking started late Friday and he heard kitchen utensils crash to the floor before the line cut out. He knew she was gone. "What do you want me to say? I'm wounded," he told AFP after Mina Ait Bihi, weeks from becoming his wife, was carried away in blankets to a makeshift cemetery that already held 68 others. The men who had carefully used their hands to scoop away the dirt that covered her also found her phone and handed it over to the grieving man. All around him the village of Tikht, previously home to at least 100 families, was a tangle of timbers, chunks of masonry as well as broken plates, shoes and the occasional intricately patterned rug. "Life is finished here," said Mohssin Aksum, 33, who had family living in the tiny settlement. "The village is dead."— Agencies

TRNC President slams UN double standard on island

FOREIGN DESK

ANKARA: The Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC), which fights for international recognition, finds itself more restricted, as a recent road expansion project showed. United Nations peacekeeping forces in the divided island openly confronted TRNC crews trying to expand a road connecting a village in the buffer zone to the Turkish Cypriot part of the island. TRNC President Ersin Tatar says that the U.N. maintains "double standards" against his country. "They have different attitudes toward Greek Cypriots and Turks. We are as sovereign on the island as the Greeks. But the U.N. resorts to double standards," he said on Wednesday. United Nations Peacekeeping Forces in Cyprus on Tuesday attempted to attack the Security Forces Command (GKK) soldiers on territory belonging to TRNC bordering the Green Line in Lefkoşa (Nicosia). U.N. peacekeepers entered the Turkish Cypriot side while GKK soldiers were working to clear weeds with machines on Burhan Tan Street, local media reported. One GKK soldier was battered in the ensuing skirmish.

TRNC Foreign Minister Tahsin Ertu rulo lu earlier accused the U.N. peace force of "failing to digest what happened regarding the Pile-Yi itler road" and turning "aggressive because of it." "What the U.N. peacekeeping forces did is unacceptable. We will be giving the necessary response. Rest assured, they will not get away with this," Ertu rulo lu told an Anadolu Agency (AA) reporter in Lefkoşa. "All U.N. peacekeepers are required to abide by the highest

standards of conduct and are always held accountable for their actions. We will not hesitate to take appropriate action following a thorough investigation," the world body's Cyprus office said on X, formerly Twitter. The island's division returned to the fore last month when a group of U.N. peacekeepers obstructed Turkish Cypriot crews working on a road that would connect Pile, a village inside the U.N.-controlled buffer zone, to Yi itler (Asos) village in the island's north. An altercation between U.N. peacekeepers and Turkish Cypriot crews received international condemnation. The U.N. Security Council, in a statement, underscored "the need to avoid any further unilateral or escalatory actions by either party that could raise tensions on the island and harm prospects for a settlement." The U.N. has been accused of bias over the humanitarian road construction, where it has allowed several similar Greek Cypriot administration construction projects without contention, according to the TRNC and Türkiye. Türkiye has called for "impartiality."

The road expansion is strategically important for residents as it will give them more options to reach Pile, where Turkish and Greek Cypriots live together. Residents of Pile will be able to travel shorter distances and will not have to pass through British bases when crossing to the Turkish side when the 11.6-kilometer (7.2-mile) construction and repair work ends. The first 7.5 kilometers of the road will pass through the village of Yi itler, and the second 4.1 kilometers will pass through Pile.

Human rights in Afghanistan 'in a state of collapse': UN

NEWS DESK

UNITED NATIONS: The "shocking" and "cruel" oppression of Afghan women and girls by the Taliban against the backdrop of a severe humanitarian crisis has put the country's future in jeopardy, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk warned Tuesday. "Human rights in Afghanistan are in a state of collapse," he told the Geneva-based Human Rights Council, before sounding the alarm over ongoing reports of extrajudicial killings, torture and ill-treatment, and arbitrary arrests and detentions, as well as serious violations against former government officials, as documented in a new human rights office (OHCHR) report. "Compounding all of this is a deeply troubling lack of accountability for perpetrators of human rights violations," he said. Turk highlighted the "devastating precedent" set by Afghanistan as the only country in the world where women

and girls are denied access to secondary and higher education. He underscored the "long list of misogynistic restrictions" confining the country's women "to the four walls of their homes", before asking: "What can possibly come next?" The High Commissioner insisted that any prospect of a stable, prosperous Afghanistan rested on the participation of men and women. "Denying women and girls' rights to participate in daily and public life not only denies them their human rights, it denies Afghanistan the benefit of the contributions they have to offer," he said. Turk said that the suspension of the Afghan constitution and of laws protecting women from violence or guaranteeing media freedom, as well as the dissolution of the country's Independent Human Rights Commission, were elements of the "systematic erosion of the institutions that once provided some protection for human rights". The High Commissioner called on the de facto authorities to "change course" and

bring Afghanistan back to the international fold with full respect for its international human rights obligations. He insisted that the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) would continue to monitor and report on the situation, as well as "raise individual cases and urge compliance with international law by the de facto authorities" to the greatest extent possible. Turk paid tribute to the work of his human rights colleagues on the ground, especially Afghan female staff. He also exhorted the international community not to "turn its back on Afghanistan" at a time when rights were being eroded and two-thirds of the population were in need of aid, while humanitarian operations were hindered by the ban on women working for the UN and NGOs. Turk comments came a day after the Special Rapporteur on Afghanistan, Richard Bennett, delivered a sombre update to the Council. Many Afghans living abroad "say they feel 'betrayed' by the international community",

the Special Rapporteur explained. They are calling for concrete action and some have even started a hunger strike "calling for recognition of gender apartheid". In June, Bennett had said that since systematic and institutionalized discrimination against women and girls was at the heart of Taliban ideology and rule, Afghanistan's de facto authorities "may be responsible for gender apartheid" which, although "not yet an explicit international crime", required "further study in our view". Bennett also briefed the Council on Monday on the "collapse of civic space" and "absence of rule of law" since the Taliban takeover, the long-term impacts on children's development and mental health, and the repression and lack of representation of minorities such as Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks and Turkmen. "I'm concerned about the effect [that the] strong sense of discrimination and exclusion held by large parts of the population may have on the stability of Afghanistan," he said.

Sudan army chief headed to Turkiye abroad

WAD MADANI: Sudan's army chief was headed to Turkiye Wednesday on his fifth foreign visit since late August as he vies for legitimacy in a devastating power struggle with his former deputy. General Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan, who has been de facto head of state since he led a 2021 coup, will hold talks with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on "bilateral relations and ways to strengthen them," said the Sudanese leader's office. Until late last month, Burhan had been holed up under siege in army headquarters in Khartoum ever since fighting erupted on April 15 between his loyalists and fighters of the paramilitary Rapid Military Support Forces (RSF) led by his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo. From his new base in the Red Sea coastal city of Port Sudan, he has since visited Egypt, South Sudan, Qatar and Eritrea in what analysts say is a diplomatic push to burnish his credentials in the event of negotiations to end the conflict. The fighting, which has already killed nearly 7,500 people, according to a conservative estimate from the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, showed no sign of any letup Wednesday, particularly in the key battlegrounds of Khartoum and the Darfur region.—APP

Lithuanian school bans mobile phones

ATHENS: A school in Lithuania's northern city of Akmena banned mobile phones over psychological and educational concerns, local media reported on Tuesday. Ventos Gymnasium in the city became the first school in the country to introduce a ban on phone use by students who are now required to put their phones in lockers when they come to school and cannot retrieve them until they go home, LRT noted. Commenting on the issue, Daiva Grienciene, the school's headmistress, said: "There is a big problem of students getting addicted to phones in class." Also remarking, Augustas Kiudulas, a student at the school, stressed that the ban made students communicate with each other more. Against this backdrop, experts warn that more and more pupils are becoming emotionally dependent on their smartphones and the situation has worsened since the COVID-19 pandemic.—APP

Japan's premier replaces foreign, defense ministers

Fumio Kishida also includes 5 women as ministers in his Cabinet

TOKYO: Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on Wednesday reshuffled his Cabinet, replacing the foreign minister and defense minister. Kishida also included five women as ministers in his Cabinet, Tokyo-based Kyodo News reported. Former Justice Minister Yoko Kamikawa has been appointed as the new foreign minister while Minoru Kihara, who served as a special advisor to former Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, has been appointed as defense minister. Out of 19 ministers, he selected 11 new faces while Finance Minister Shunichi Suzuki, Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno, and Industry Minister Yasutoshi Nishimura retained their positions. In August last year, Kishida had also revamped his Cabinet following the declining government rating in surveys. Meanwhile, South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol nominated a ruling party lawmaker and former three-star general for defense minister on Wednesday in a partial Cabinet shakeup that also affected the culture and gender equality ministers. Shin Won-sik of the ruling People Power Party (PPP) was picked to replace Defense Minister Lee Jong-sup, while Yoo In-chon, special presidential adviser for culture and sports, was named the new culture minister, and Kim Haing, a former PPP interim leadership member, was tapped for the new minister of gender equality and family, presidential chief of staff Kim Dae-ki said during a press briefing. The outgoing defense minister reportedly expressed his intention to resign amid the main opposition party's push to impeach him over his handling of a military investigation into a young Marine's death.—DNA

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Briefs

Sara murder case: Wanted trio on way to UK

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The British-Pakistani father of a 10-year-old girl found dead at her home in England last month was on a plane back to the United Kingdom with his partner and brother, Pakistan police said on Wednesday, after the trio went on the run for weeks. Rawalpindi Regional Police Officer Syed Khurram Ali confirmed the development to Dawn.com. "We can confirm the three suspects in the case boarded a flight earlier and are on their way to the UK," police spokesman Mudassar Khan told AFP, adding that they had voluntarily gone with the knowledge of authorities. "I confirm that they have not been arrested but they left voluntarily," Raja Haq Nawaz, a lawyer for Urfan Sharif's father Mohammad Sharif in Pakistan, also told AFP. He said the three were on a flight that left from the Punjabi city of Sialkot. Sara Sharif was found dead in the southern UK town of Woking on August 10 and a post-mortem test revealed she had suffered "multiple and extensive injuries" over a sustained period, British police said last month. British police had previously said that Sara's father Urfan Sharif, 41, his partner Beina Batool, 29, and his brother Faisal Malik, 28, fled to Pakistan to take refuge with relatives before the girl's body was found, sparking an international manhunt. The trio, along with five children, flew from the UK to Pakistan a day after Sara died. Police believed the trio left the country on Aug 9, a day before Sara's body was discovered, and that they spent up to 5,000 pounds on one-way tickets to Pakistan for three adults and five children.

PIA on verge of collapse

DNA

KARACHI: Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) is on the verge of collapse as a top official of the national flag carrier has warned that flight operations are feared to be suspended by September 15 if emergency funds are not provided, a private news channel reported. Speaking to channel on Wednesday, a senior director of the national flag carrier said the number of operational planes had been reduced to 16 from 23 which led to the cancellation of several flights. The official said aircraft manufacturers - Boeing and Airbus - have also suspended spare parts supplies to the PIA over non-payment and the national airline was incurring losses worth millions of rupees daily due to limited flight operations. The official also revealed that a PIA plane was stopped at Dammam airport while another four at Dubai airport over failure to pay for fuel. The planes were allowed to leave on written assurance of the PIA, the official said, adding that the IATA restored PIA services after an emergency payment of \$3.5 million was made.

CAS for enhancing military cooperation with Azerbaijan

Emphasizing the historical friendship between the two nations, the Air Chief stated, "The relationship between Pakistan and Azerbaijan has a myriad of reasons, deeply rooted in mutual experiences, enduring religious, cultural and historical bonds, all underpinned by a shared commitment to regional peace, security and stability"

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan, H.E Mr. KhazarFarhadov, called on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force in his office today. The meeting covered a wide array of topics, including matters of mutual interest, regional developments and the evolving geopolitical landscape. Amidst the discussions, Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force, shared his strategic vision for Pakistan Air Force and reiterated his unwavering commitment to modernize its capabilities across the realms of air, space, cyber and electronic warfare. The discussion primarily focused on the areas of joint operational training and comprehensive cooperation in cross-domain, multi-spectrum operations. Emphasizing the historical friendship between the two nations, the Air Chief stated, "The relationship between Pakistan and Azerbaijan has a myriad of reasons, deeply rooted in mutual experiences, enduring religious, cultural and historical bonds, all underpinned by a shared commitment to regional peace, security and stability." Chief of the Air Staff reaffirmed his steadfast determination to further enhance the existing inter-military cooperation between the two sides, particularly in the fields of training and defence aviation. In the backdrop of upcoming major air exercise being held at Air Power Centre of Excellence, the Air Chief emphasized the pivotal role of joint aerial



drills between the respective air forces to foster mutual learning and effectively address common security challenges. Chief of the Air Staff offered his full cooperation for comprehensive training programs, starting from the basic level and progressing to tactical training of Azerbaijan Air Force air and ground crew in order to strengthen their technical skills and foster greater interoperability between the two air forces.

The Ambassador of the Republic of Azerbaijan and his team expressed great interest in the upcoming multi-national aerial exercise that would incorporate all domains of airpower. He lauded the historic and exemplary professionalism displayed by PAF personnel in times of both conflict and peace. He also expressed admiration for PAF's notable achievements in nurturing a vibrant and progressive domestic aviation industry. The vis-

iting dignitary reaffirmed that Pakistan and Azerbaijan, with their strong diplomatic and defence ties, are poised for an even stronger alliance in future. He also praised the visionary leadership of the Air Chief, particularly commending the success of 'National Aerospace Science and Technology Park' and expressed keen interest in this state-of-the-art project, highlighting its significance in advancing the domestic aerospace industry.

56 dead in Hanoi apartment blaze

DNA

HANOI: At least 56 people are known to have died and dozens were injured in a huge fire in an apartment block in Vietnam's capital Hanoi. Some 37 people were injured in the fire, police said, adding that 39 victims have been identified. The fire, which broke out during the night, has been extinguished but rescue operations are continuing. Authorities in fast-growing Hanoi say many newly-built apartments do not meet fire safety regulations. The city's population has quadrupled to 5.25 million in the past 20 years. The cause of the fire is being investigated but witnesses said it started in the parking floor of the building, which was packed with motorbikes. Residents described hearing a loud bang at around 23:00 local time on Tuesday (16:00 GMT), and then seeing black smoke rising through the building. One family said they had to escape by smashing the metal railings blocking their window, and putting a ladder across to a neighbouring building. "I heard a lot of shouts for help. We could not help them much," Hoa, a woman who lives nearby, told the AFP news agency. "The apartment is so closed with no escape route, impossible for the victims to get out."

Pak-Australia long-term relationship is based on strong foundations

LAHORE: High Commissioner of Australia to Pakistan Neil Hawkins called on PML-N senior vice president Mar-

yam Nawaz in Raiwind on Wednesday. Matters of mutual interest were discussed in the meeting. Speaking on

the occasion, Maryam Nawaz said that positive, constructive and close friendly relations between Pakistan and Australia are welcome. She said that the government and people of Australia have sincerely supported Pakistan during natural disasters and every difficulty. "Pakistanis living in Australia are playing an important role in strengthening the friendship between the two countries. The long-term relationship between Pakistan and Australia is built on strong foundations," she added. She said that Pakistan wants to further enhance relations with Australia in various fields, including trade, investment and education. Maryam Nawaz thanked the Australian government for providing facilities to Pakistani students studying in Australia. The Australian high commissioner thanked Maryam Nawaz and expressed best wishes to the party leadership.



Law ministers for smooth conduct of general elections

ISLAMABAD: The federal and provincial law ministers on Wednesday during a meeting underscored the importance of upholding the principles of democracy and ensuring the smooth conduct of elections. Caretaker Minister for Law and Justice, Ahmad Irfan Aslam convened a meeting with provincial law ministers including Kanwar Dilshad (Punjab), Muhammad Omer Soomro (Sindh), Arshad Hussain Shah (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) and Amanullah Kanrani (Balochistan). The meeting was held to discuss matters pertaining to the upcoming general elections to the National and Provincial Assemblies, said a press release. During the meeting, all Law Ministers underscored the importance of upholding the principles of democracy and ensuring the smooth conduct of elections.

It was unanimously agreed that the Constitution must be read as a whole and no provision of the Constitution be read in isolation from other relevant provisions. As per the Constitution, the conduct of general elections and announcement of election dates is the sole competence of the Election Commission of Pakistan. The Provincial Law Ministers emphasized that in order to strengthen the Federation, ensure harmony amongst all federating units and avoid unnecessary financial burden on the national exchequer incurred owing to the provision of security arrangements on different election dates, the general elections to the National and the four Provincial Assemblies must be held on the same day. The Election Commission of Pakistan is an independent constitutional body. It is the responsibility of all organs of the State to respect the autonomy of the Election Commission and its authority in carrying out the delimitation of constituencies and determining the election schedule. The discussion highlighted the government's commitment to ensuring free, fair, and transparent elections in Pakistan, adhering to the principles of democratic governance, the statement mentioned. The Federal and Provincial Governments remain dedicated to promoting a democratic and inclusive electoral environment, it added. - APP

China becomes first to name new Afghan ambassador under Taliban

China's previous ambassador to Afghanistan, Wang Yu, took up the role in 2019 and finished his tenure last month

KABUL: China became the first country on Wednesday to formally name a new ambassador to Afghanistan since the Taliban takeover, after its envoy presented credentials at a ceremony in Kabul. The Taliban have not been officially recognised by any foreign government, and Beijing did not indicate whether Wednesday's appointment signalled any wider steps towards formal recognition of the Taliban. "This is the normal rotation of China's ambassador to Afghanistan, and is intended to continue advancing dialogue and cooperation between China and Afghanistan," China's foreign ministry said in a statement. "China's policy towards Afghanistan is clear and

consistent." A Taliban administration foreign ministry spokesman told Reuters new envoy Zhao Xing was the first ambassador from any country to take up the post since August 2021, when the Taliban took over as U.S.-led foreign forces withdrew after 20 years. Mohammad Hassan Akhund, acting prime minister in the Taliban administration, had accepted the new envoy's credentials in a ceremony, the Taliban administration's deputy spokesman, Bilal Karimi, said in a statement. The Taliban administration spokesperson's office published photos of a ceremony at Afghanistan's presidential palace on Wednesday at which the ambassador was received by officials, including

Akhund and the acting foreign minister, Amir Khan Muttaqi. China's previous ambassador to Afghanistan, Wang Yu, took up the role in 2019 and finished his tenure last month. There are other diplomats in Kabul with the title of ambassador, but all of them took up their posts before the Taliban takeover. Other nations and international delegations, such as Pakistan and the European Union, have sent senior diplomats to lead diplomatic missions in Kabul but they have taken on a 'charge d'affaires' title, usually meaning they are responsible for ambassadorial duties but do not formally hold the role of ambassador. Some ambassadors appointed during the previous foreign-backed Afghan government have also stayed in Kabul with the same title. The Taliban entered the capital on Aug 15, 2021, as the Afghan security forces, set up with years of Western support, disintegrated and US-backed President Ashraf Ghani fled. - Agencies

OIC Chief lauds Pakistan's role

JEDDAH: Pakistan has maintained a firm position and traditionally played an active role in steering Organization of Islamic Cooperation's response to all important issues. This was stated by Pakistan's Permanent Representative to OIC Ambassador Syed Mohammad Fawad Sher during a meeting with Organization's Secretary-General Husein-Brahim Taha in Jeddah. On the occasion, a wide range of issues facing Muslim world including Islamophobia were also discussed. Ambassador Syed Mohammad Fawad Sher thanked Secretary General's unwavering support to Kashmir cause and urged for complete implementation of OIC Plan of Action on Jammu and Kashmir adopted by 48th Session of Council of Foreign Ministers in Islamabad. On repeated incidents of desecration of Holy Quran, he reiterated Pakistan's strong condemnation of these despicable incidents. The Secretary General appreciated Pakistan's robust engagement with OIC and its effective participation in addressing challenges confronting Muslim world. -Agencies

Death toll in Libya floods passes 5,100

DERNA: Search teams combed streets, wrecked buildings and even the sea for bodies in a devastated eastern Libyan city on Wednesday, where authorities said massive flooding had killed at least 5,100 people, with the toll expected to rise further. Authorities were still struggling to get aid to the Mediterranean coastal city of Derna after Sunday night's deluge washed away most access roads. Aid workers who managed to reach the city described devastation in its center, with thousands still missing and tens of thousands left homeless. "Bodies are everywhere, inside houses, in the streets, at sea. Wherever you go, you find dead men, women, and children," Emad Al-Falah, an aid worker from Benghazi, said over the phone from Derna. "Entire families were lost." Mediterranean storm Daniel caused deadly flooding in many towns of eastern Libya on Sunday, but the worst-hit was Derna. Two dams outside in the mountains above the city collapsed, sending floodwaters washing down the Wadi Derna river and through the city center, sweeping away entire city

UN allocates \$10m aid

LONDON: Martin Griffiths, UN under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator, announced on Tuesday the allocation of \$10 million to support victims of floods that have devastated eastern Libya. Mediterranean storm Daniel caused deadly flooding in many eastern towns, but the worst hit was the city Derna. "Storm Daniel has claimed thousands of lives, causing widespread damage and wiping out livelihoods in eastern Libya," Griffiths wrote on X, the social media platform formerly known as Twitter, adding: "We stand with the people of Libya at this difficult time." Rescuers have found over 2,000 bodies as of Wednesday in the wreckage where flood waters broke dams and washed away neighborhoods. Meanwhile, officials fear the death toll could exceed 5,000 people. - Agencies

help, help," he said over the phone from a field hospital in Derna. "It was like a Hollywood horror movie." Derna lies on a narrow coastal plain on the Mediterranean Sea, under steep mountains running along the coast. Only two roads from the south remain usable, and they involve a long, winding route through the mountains. Aid teams with some supplies managed to get in that way, while authorities in eastern Libya worked Wednesday to repair the faster coastal access routes. -Agencies

SEPTEMBER 2023
Pakistan's Premier News & Diplomatic Affairs Magazine

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