



# Islamabad POST

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**France calls off military cooperation with Niger: Macron**

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**Azeri victory, a chance for peace: Erdogan**

Detailed News On Page-07



**Hungary's Orban threatens to pull support for Kyiv**

Detailed News On Page-07



## Briefs

### US diplomat Rena Bitter arrives in Pakistan

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs Rena Bitter arrived in Islamabad on a diplomatic journey from September 25 to October 2, with stops in Islamabad, Karachi, and Dhaka. During her visit, Assistant Secretary Bitter will engage with embassy and consulate personnel, gaining firsthand insight into consular operations. Furthermore, she will hold meetings with host government officials to address critical consular matters. This mission underscores the enduring commitment of the United States to safeguarding the well-being of U.S. citizens abroad and facilitating legitimate travel and immigration to the United States.

### Imran Riaz 'recovered' after 4 months

DNA

SIALKOT: Anchorperson and You-Tuber Imran Riaz Khan was "recovered" Monday and reached his home safely, according to District Police Officer Sialkot Hassan Iqbal, after going missing for nearly five months. The journalist was arrested on May 11 from the Sialkot Airport under 3MPO after the May 9 protests that broke out throughout the country following PTI Chairman Imran Khan's arrest from Islamabad High Court. Riaz left in a private car after his release from the district jail on May 12. The Lahore High Court (LHC) was informed on May 15 that the anchorperson was released from jail after taking an undertaking in writing. After remaining missing for a considerable period of time, the Punjab police chief was given "a last opportunity" by the LHC on September 20 to recover Riaz by September 26. In a post on X - formerly called Twitter - the Sialkot police said: "Journalist/anchor Mr Imran Riaz Khan has been safely recovered. He is now with his family."

### Shujaat advises political unity

DNA

GUJRAT: Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid head Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain emphasises the importance of unity among politicians for nation's interest. "I've always been an advocate for open dialogue, and I've passed on the same message to my sons. I've advised Chaudhry Shafay and Chaudhry Salik to consistently stand by the oppressed and thwart the oppressor. It's in the broader interest of the country that all politicians resolve their differences," the senior politician said. The Q-League leader added, "The question of elections can be addressed later; first and foremost, we must address the nation's current predicament."



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Sadiq Sanjrani, Ambassador of Saudi Arabia Nawaf Saeed Al-Maliki and others cutting cake to celebrate the National Day of Saudi Arabia. - DNA

### Meets British investors

## PM assures Pak commitment to IMF programme

The interim PM also highlighted Pakistan's pro-investment efforts

CENTRELINE REPORT

LONDON: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar has assured British investors that Pakistan is committed to the \$3 billion International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme and will undertake reforms as per its commitment with the global lender. According to the PM Office on Monday, the premier made the assurance during his meeting with "senior leaders of London's capital and financial market" at the Pakistan House. The notable investment firms represented at this gathering included Fidelity International Limited (FIL), Wellington Management, Ashmore, Jefferies International, Redwheel Capital, Switex Industrial SA,

Continued on Page 06

### HRCP slams PM's statement on elections

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) on Monday took "strong exception" to caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar's remarks that "fair elections" were possible even without PTI Chairman Imran Khan and other jailed party workers. Imran, who was

Continued on Page 06

## Shift Imran to Adiala: IHC directs authorities

Justice Farooq maintained that Khan should receive the facilities he is entitled to

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) Monday directed authorities to shift Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan to Adiala jail from Attock prison. The order, issued during a hearing concerning the prison amenities granted to the PTI chief, was passed on the basis of a rule that trials of prisoners booked in Islamabad should be held in the relevant prison. Chief Justice Aamer Farooq of the IHC, who was hearing the PTI petition, remarked that Khan is an under-trial prisoner in the cipher case, which was registered in Islamabad.

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### PML-N mandates return of members from abroad

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has instructed all its members, including senators, former MNAs and MPAs, and ticket holders, to return back to Pakistan within three days, in view of the extensive preparations currently

Continued on Page 06

## 'No more case adjournments'

According to a report released by the apex court on August 31, 2023, the apex court has as many as 56,544 cases pending before it

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Qazi Faez Isa said on Monday that the trend of seeking another date for hearing will no longer be entertained by the Supreme Court (SC). A three-member bench led by the CJP was hearing a case pertaining to a land dispute during which one of the counsels requested the court to set another date for proceedings. At this, the CJP remarked that the lawyer should forget that seeking an adjournment could be an option. With SC facing a backlog of cases, the CJP said that, "This is also a message for everyone, the trend of seeking adjournments will no longer fly. The number of cases pending before the apex court is quite high". Notices should be issued during one hearing and arguments should be sought at the next, said CJP Isa. He further said that it may be so in other courts that adjournments are sought to present documents and

Continued on Page 06

### Bandial's move that irked Justice Masood

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Former chief justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Ata Bandial, before his retirement earlier this month, telephoned Supreme Court Justice Sardar Tariq Masood to discuss a matter of complaints against fellow judges of the apex court, media reported on Monday. It has been learnt that the day after the said call, Justice Masood wrote a letter to Justice Bandial - the chief justice at the time. Copies of the letter were also sent to members of the Supreme Judicial Council. The essence of the letter is Justice Masood disapproving of Justice Bandial calling him and asking him what to do with a complaint against Justice Masood. The letter stated

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### Pakistan's tax-to-GDP ratio stuck at 10.4%

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's economy faces a concerning challenge as its tax-to-GDP ratio stands at a mere 10.4%, according to a report released by the World Bank. The report, titled "Strengthening Government Revenues," highlights the significant gap between the country's tax collections and its tax capacity, which is estimated at over 22% of GDP. This decline in the tax-to-GDP ratio is attributed to rising tax expenditures, particularly at the federal level. In the fiscal year 2022, Pakistan's tax collections reached only 10.4% of GDP, a trend that has been steadily declining. The federal government's tax expenditures increased from 1.3% of GDP in FY16 to 2.7% of GDP in FY22, putting further strain on revenue generation efforts. The report also highlights that the majority of revenues in Pakistan are collected at the federal level, primarily through indirect taxes on consumption. These indirect taxes include sales tax, customs duties, and excises. In FY22, the federal government accounted for 91.2% of tax collection, partly due to increased taxation of services by provincial governments.

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## Army Chief for interfaith harmony

COAS Gen Munir stressed that "there is no space for such incidents of intolerance and extreme behaviour"

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir in a meeting with members of the Christian community at the General Headquarters (GHQ) Rawalpindi stressed the significance of promoting interfaith harmony in the society, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said on Monday. A 14-member Christian community delegation, led by Dr Azad Marshall - Moderator and President Bishops (Church of Pakistan and Bishop of Raiwind) - called on General Munir, the army's media wing said. During the meeting matters of mutual interest, religious and inter-faith harmony were discussed as the COAS lauded the contributions of the Christian community in national development, including the promotion of quality education, healthcare and philanthropic services and the outstanding role played by them for the defence of the motherland. Gen Munir expressed deep respect for the Christian community and stressed the need to promote greater interfaith harmony in the society to follow Quaid's true vision of a united and progressive Pakistan, the ISPR added. "Islam is a religion of peace and there is no space for intolerance and extremism in

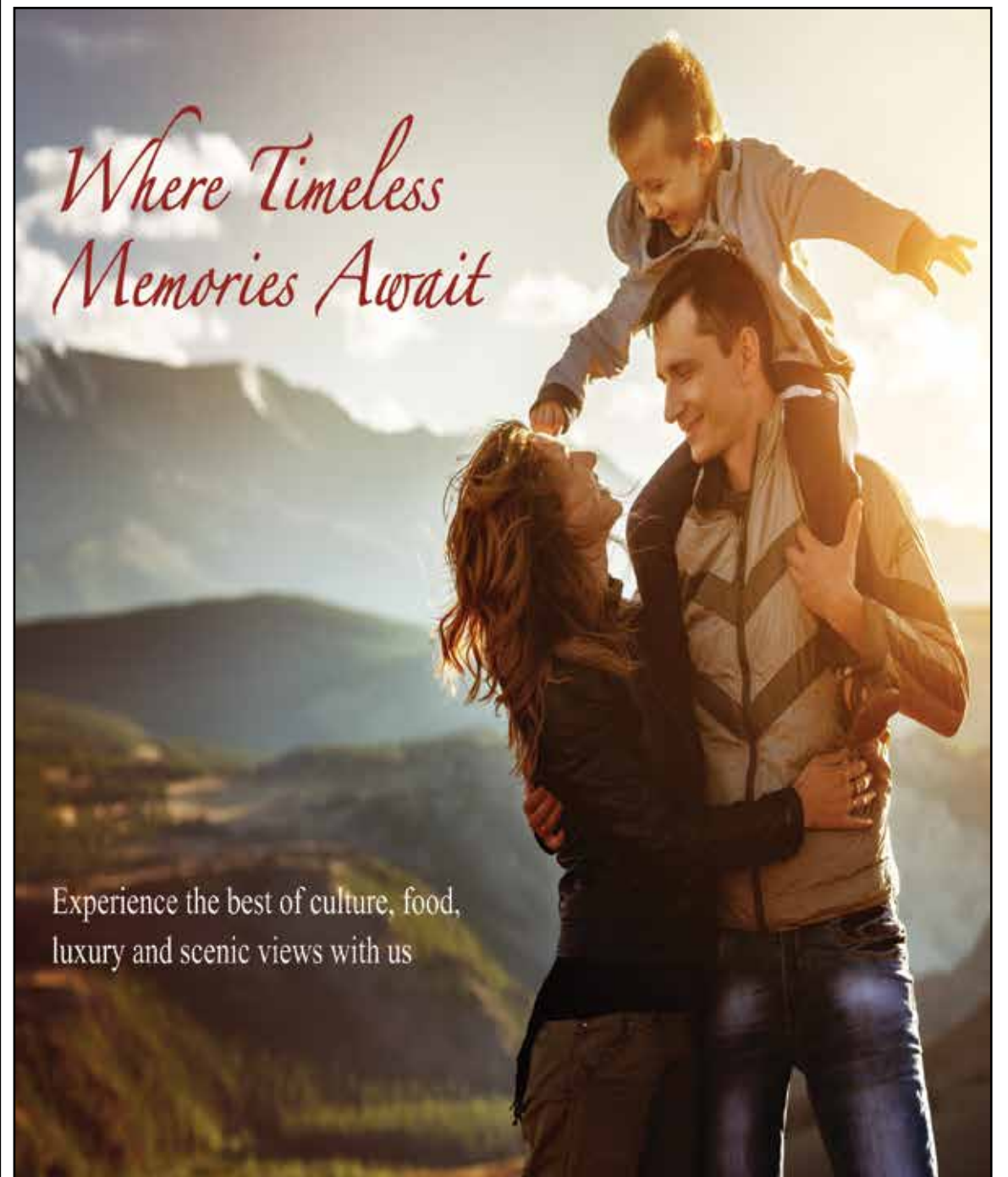
Continued on Page 06

### Pak condemns desecration of Quran in Hague

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan condemns in the strongest terms the latest senseless and deeply offensive act of desecration of the Holy Quran that took place in The Hague, the Netherlands in front of some embassies of OIC member countries including Pakistan. It is a deliberately provocative and Islamophobic act that has hurt the sentiments of Muslims around the world. Such acts cannot be condoned under the guise of freedom of expression, opinion and protest. Pakistan believes that freedom of expression comes with responsibilities. National governments should actively prevent racist and Islamophobic acts, which incite religious hatred. It is important for the international community to raise its voice

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## Briefs

## Body of teenage girl found from canal

DNA

FAISALABAD: A body of a teenage girl was fished out from the Jhang branch canal near Thikriwala on Monday. People of the area had spotted the body floating in the canal and informed the rescue office. A team of Rescue-1122 reached the site immediately and fished out the body. The identification is yet to be ascertained. The Rescue team shifted it to mortuary for autopsy.

## DC visits vegetable market

DNA

HYDERABAD: Deputy Commissioner Hyderabad Zahid Hussain Rind on Monday visited the vegetable Market in the early hours and reviewed the prices of vegetables. On the occasion, DC said that the availability of edible items at a reasonable rate for the general public is our top priority. He said that action would be initiated against overchargers. DC instructed officials of the Bureau of Supply to visit markets on a daily basis, and review the prices of consumer items, and take action against sellers if found involved in overcharging. Assistant Director Agriculture Muhammad Ramzan Channa, Assistant Director Bureau of Supply Nazhar Shar, Mukhtarkar Nadeem Rind, Shaheed Shah, and others were present on the occasion.

## Auction of defaulting PPP leader's property

LAHORE: Lahore Electric Supply Company (LESCO) with the support of Punjab government is vigorously continuing its operation against power thieves and defaulters. On the direction of LESCO Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Engineer Shah Haider, the LESCO team along with officers of the district government visited the Igra Cold Storage owned by PPP leader Aziz-ur-Rehman Chan, who is in default of Rs 612.6 million to LESCO, according to LESCO spokesman here Monday. He added that Rehman Steel Mill and Siddique Iron Industries owned by Aziz-ur-Rehman Chan, owed Rs 259.4 million and Rs 353.1 million to LESCO. The accused had closed down both his factories by showing defaults while not paying the dues of LESCO. Later on, Aziz-ur-Rehman Chan started a business in the name of Igra Cold Storage, on which he had got an electricity connection in the name of his relative but that electricity connection had been disconnected. On the other hand, it has also been decided to auction the property of the PPP leader Aziz-ur-Rehman Chan to recover the LESCO's outstanding dues. The LESCO Chief Engineer (Operations) Sarwar Mughal, Chief Engineer T&G Zafar Iqbal, SE Shalimar Umar Bilal, Public Relations Officer Rai Masood Kharal, and Assistant Commissioner Shalimar Town and Tehsildar Nauraz Humayun were also present. - DNA



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Aneeq Ahmed taking interest in Islamic Calligraphy during "Solo Calligraphy Exhibition" by Wasil Shahid in Federal Capital. - Online

## Pakistan, Azerbaijan discuss transport, trade cooperation

The ambassador during a meeting with the minister said the relationship between Pakistan and Azerbaijan is unparalleled in every aspect

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Communications for Railways Shahid Ashraf Tarar, and Azerbaijani Ambassador to Pakistan Khazar Farhadov discussed issues of mutual interests and strengthened bilateral ties. The ambassador during a meeting with the minister said the relationship between Pakistan and Azerbaijan is unparalleled in every aspect. The envoy said, following the commence-

ment of direct flights between Pakistan and Azerbaijan, both countries aim to connect through railways and road networks. The Ambassador said the primary goal is to boost economic cooperation and facilitate the movement of goods and people. "We are keen on promoting economic cooperation," Ambassador Farhadov said. He further said, "We envision Pakistan becoming a part of international transport networks, connecting with all regional countries." He also highlighted the potential for Pakistani trade to gain access to Europe and Russia through Azerbaijan.

The ambassador said, to achieve this, the private sector will play a crucial role in promoting trade and economic growth. Shahid Ashraf Tarar expressed his commitment to the idea, said, "I have instructed the Chairman of Railways to work on connecting rail routes with Azerbaijan. "It is time to transform our good relations into economic cooperation," the minister said. Both parties expressed the urgency of finalizing transit trade agreements between Pakistan and Azerbaijan, indicating

their willingness to promptly implement these proposals. "I hope that both countries will collaborate to implement these recommendations swiftly," the minister said. The meeting between Minister Shahid Ashraf Tarar and Ambassador Khazar Farhadov reflects the shared determination of Pakistan and Azerbaijan to strengthen their economic ties and facilitate cross-border trade and connectivity. As these discussions progress, the potential for increased economic cooperation between the two nations remains promising.

## Futuristic Shipping Policy being prepared

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Vice Admiral (R) Iftikhar Rao, Special Assistant to Prime Minister for Maritime, disclosed that the government is shaping a futuristic Shipping Policy keeping in view the new dynamics of the Maritime Sector. The Policy would address all aspects that would lead to a pragmatic outlook and enable all stakeholders to participate with more determination. He added that Maritime Economic Security is as crucial although it is different from Maritime Naval Security. Therefore, it is imperative that Maritime Economic

Security and Maritime Military Security given equal importance. He was presenting his keynote address as Chief Guest at the Maritime Conference hosted by Global Compact Network Pakistan and Maritime Anti-Corruption Network based in Denmark. Admiral Rao further stated that Pakistan pays over \$7 billion each year to foreign shipping lines and this is a huge burden on the country's foreign exchange reserves. He said that until 1960, Pakistan had no state-owned shipping company and now has only PNSC. He advised the private sector to enter the shipping sector since the future is very profitable in shipping. He also advised that the private sector should become major players in the Blue Economy. In his opinion, those who are in the Maritime Industry are very fortunate and progressive. He said that, unfortunately, information is lacking about Maritime and change are very slow and that is why private sector is not eager to invest. However, the good side is that the private sector is always pragmatic and practical and that is why he is very optimistic. Admiral Rao added that there would be a mega shortage of seafarers since demand for trained human resources would hugely increase.

## EU releases €1 mln aid to respond to monsoon floods

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: The European Union (EU) has released an additional €1 million in humanitarian aid to respond to the floods that have affected the country in the past weeks, according to an official statement issued here on Monday. It said that the funding would help to address the most "pressing needs of vulnerable people in the provinces of Balochistan, Sindh, Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (K-P)". It also added that around 0.9 million people had been affected by the recent floods across the country. Meanwhile, Commissioner for Crisis Management, Janez Lenarčič affirmed his support to help the most in need in the wake of climatic changes, affecting Pakistan the most. "One year after the tragic floods that caused tremendous suffering in Paki-

stan, the EU remains committed to helping those most in need. As a new rain season has again displaced thousands of people in parts of the country, this additional EU funding will help support vulnerable communities as they try to recover their former lives," he stated. Furthermore, this allocation would be used to provide multi-sectoral humanitarian assistance to those who remain displaced, as well as those who have returned to their place of origin, given the level of damage to houses and key basic services such as water and sanitation or health. It also pledged to continue with its support in the winter season as well. Moreover, "a multi-purpose cash assistance, shelter and [provision] of non-food items would also be prioritised for the affected", it shared the future prospects of injecting funds. The release also registered that this new funding was in addition to the

€16.5 million already earmarked in humanitarian assistance to Pakistan earlier this year. This, the union said, was in order to assist the most vulnerable population affected by conflict and climate-induced disasters. Recently, Sutlej River which experienced severe flooding resulted in the devastation of adjacent villages, leading to the migration of people from the affected areas while many others face the looming threat of being drowned out by the unspurring deluge. The flood water then reached 175,000 cucecs, breaching protective dykes, submerging numerous villages and disrupting transportation links. The flooding had also resulted in the inundation of hundreds of acres of farmland alongside submerged standing crops. Villages such as Shahoo Baloch, Baqarki, Mari Amb, Kot Bakhshia, Bhani Noor Jahanian, and others had remained under threat from the floods.

## Punjab health dept suspends 11 drug inspectors

LAHORE: The Punjab Health Department took swift action on Monday, suspending 11 drug inspectors over their alleged negligence in a case concerning Avastin injections linked to a significant loss of vision among patients in the province. Approximately 40 diabetic patients in Lahore reported a decline in eyesight after receiving substandard injections. Chaudhry Manzoor, a prominent Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader, revealed that his brother and a friend suffered vision problems following the administration of these injections directly into their eyes. Dr. Jamal Nasir, Punjab's Minister for Primary and Secondary Healthcare, confirmed the suspension of the 11 drug inspectors from various regions, including Multan, Sadiqabad, Khanewal, and Sahiwal. Further investigations are underway. Dr. Jamal Nasir also announced that the supply of Avastin injections would be reinstated after a thorough inspection by the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP). In related developments, Caretaker Health Minister Dr. Nadeem Jan disclosed on Sunday that the sale and distribution of Avastin injections had been halted. - DNA

## HESCO recovers Rs 1.68 bln from electricity thieves

DNA

HYDERABAD :The Hyderabad Electric Supply Company (HESCO) has claimed to have recovered Rs1.6842 billion and Rs1.588 billion since September 7 out of Rs169 billion in payable dues over the public and private sector consumers as well as in fines from the electricity thieves. The company's spokesman Sadiq Kubar informed here on Monday that Rs35.59 million out of Rs158.15 million fines imposed against the power theft till September 23 had also been collected during the ongoing crackdown against theft and for the recovery. He said the officials of HESCO had submitted 907 letters for registration of FIRs against the people involved in stealing electricity while 317 FIRs had been lodged so far besides the arrest of 31 persons. He said that the power supply from 777 pole-mounted transformers had been disconnected so far including the removal of 149 PMTs because of default in payment of bills and the theft. The spokesman said the highest recoveries of Rs318.28 million and Rs274.75 million were made on September 18 and September 15, respectively, from the defaulting consumers while the lowest recovery of Rs36.9 million was done on September 12.

## BISP begins quarterly benazir kafaalat disbursements

ISLAMABAD: The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) has started the disbursement of the quarterly tranche (July-September) of Benazir Kafaalat cash assistance to the beneficiaries across the country. According to the BISP, the process of disbursement of the quarterly tranche of Benazir Kafaalat has started to disburse Rs. 9000/- per household among around nine million registered beneficiary families. The beneficiaries, in case of any complaint, can approach the nearest BISP Tehsil Offices or call on toll-free helpline number 080026477 of the Benazir Income Support Program. The special Control Room has been activated in the BISP headquarters to address the complaints of the beneficiaries promptly. - Agencies

## IGP reaches China on official visit

Increase in bilateral cooperation, upgradation & capacity building of Punjab Police were decided in the meeting: IG Punjab

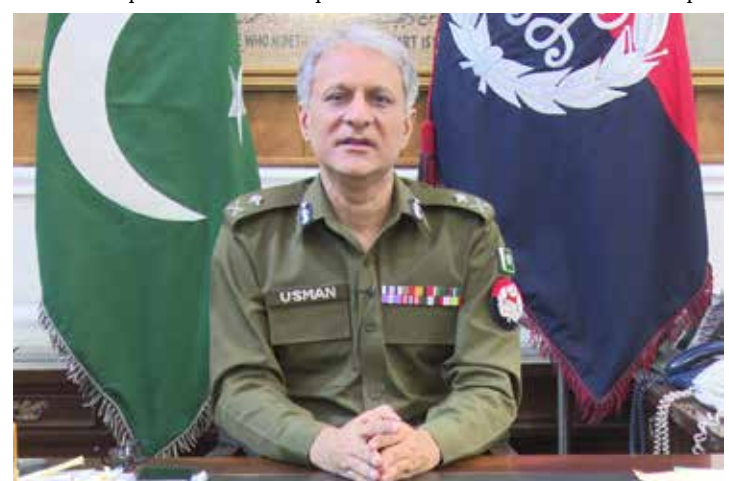
DNA

LAHORE: A delegation of senior officers of Punjab Police under the leadership of Inspector General Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar has reached China. The delegation led by IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar comprises on senior officers including DIG IT Ahsan Younas, DIG SPU Tayyab Hafeez Cheema, DIG Elite Sadiq Ali Dogar, DIG, RPO Gujranwala Dr Haider Ashraf and Additional Secretary Home Ayesha Mumtaz. Punjab Police's delegation hold an important meeting with the officials of the Jiangsu provincial department of public security China. Deputy Director General Jiangsu Provincial Department of Public Security headed the Chinese delegation for the meeting. Increase in bilateral cooperation, upgradation & capacity building of Punjab Po-

lice were decided in the meeting. IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar said that the policing standard in Punjab will be further improved with the experiences and cooperation of Chinese police. Mutual cooper-

ation will be increased to increase the efficiency of the Special Protection Unit, a dedicated force assigned to the security of foreign nationals in Pakistan. Dr. Usman Anwar said that with the cooper-






ation of the Chinese police, the Elite force (another unit of Punjab Police) will be upgraded by provision of modern resources and training facilities. IG Punjab said that to improve the general policing and crime control, the Chinese police will provide technical and human resource development support. In the meeting, it was also decided to provide cooperation and modern resources to the Punjab police in cyber security related matters. IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar said that with China's cooperation, more efficient use of information technology will be ensured for the eradication of crimes, the process of public service delivery will be made easier for the public by using the experiences of the Chinese police. During the meeting, the Chinese police officials agreed to provide all possible support to the Punjab Police in terms of resources, training,



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## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### September

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

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



Turkish Airlines.....8494949
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<b>Emergency</b>
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



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



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



<b>Departments</b>
CDA.....9221334-43
CDA.....9208301-04
Met Office.....9250360-6
RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

<b>Water Tank</b>
Islamabad.....0321-5744480

# ICCI urges CDA to focus on development of G-11 Markaz

Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President ICCI says that G-11 Markaz is one of the important commercial centers of the federal capital and called upon the CDA to focus on its better development that would facilitate the growth of trade activities

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) hosted a lunch in honor of the newly elected Office Bearers of Traders Welfare Association, G-11 Markaz, Islamabad. Naeem Akhtar Awan President, Farrukh Khan Secretary General, Nazim Ghori Senior Vice President, Ibrahim Noor & Qasim Shah Vice Presidents, Muhammad Shakeel Joint Secretary, Adnan Anwar Finance Secretary, Abid Hussain Press Secretary, Asim Abbasi Chairman, Chaudhry Aftab Gujjar Group Leaders and others attended the lunch. Speaking on the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President ICCI said that G-11 Markaz is one of the important commercial centers of the federal capital and called upon the CDA to focus on its better development that would facilitate the growth of trade activities. He said that ICCI is working actively with CDA to develop all markets on modern lines and assured that ICCI would work with CDA to develop G-11 Markaz as a model market. Naeem Akhtar Awan, President and Farrukh Khan, Secretary General, Traders Welfare Association G-11 Markaz, Islamabad said that due to the inattention of CDA and



MCI, their market is deprived of the basic facilities and traders are facing many problems. They pointed out that G-11 Markaz needs a parking facility, carpeting of roads, repair of footpaths, installation of a filtration plant and construction of public toilets to facilitate the traders and stressed that the CDA should address these issues without further delay. Khalid Iqbal Malik, Group Lead-

er ICCI said that all markets are playing a key role in generating economic activity and emphasized that CDA should develop them on modern lines that would help boost trade activities and strengthen the local economy. Zafar Bakhtawari, former President ICCI and Secretary General UBG Pakistan, said that the Office Bearers of Market Associations are playing an important

role in solving the problems of the traders by sacrificing their business and family responsibilities, which is laudable. He said that Ahsan Bakhtawari is working hard to solve the issues of traders and assured that he would also work for the welfare of the traders of G-11 Markaz. Ch. Aftab Gujjar, Group Leader G-11 Markaz thanked President ICCI for hosting a lunch in their hon-

or. He said that ICCI is a big brother to them and they would work with it to address the key issues of traders. Khalid Chaudhry, Ahmed Kamran Kamil, Imtiaz Abbasi, Ashfaq Chatta, Rao Faisal, Chaudhry Zafar Iqbal Gujjar, Irfan Chaudhry, Mian Ramzan, Nisar Mirza, Zulqarnain Abbasi, Sheikh Haroon, Amen Syal, Akmal Abbasi and others were also present on the occasion.

## SC dismisses bail pleas of 2 employees of education department

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court Monday dismissed the bail petition of two accused allegedly involved in a fraud case pertaining to stealing salary of a citizen. A two-member bench of the top court comprising Justice Sardar Tariq Masood and Justice Musarrat Hilali heard the bail case of two employees of education department of Punjab. The court terminated the petition of one

accused due to non pursuance while other's plea was dismissed after the arguments. During hearing, the court remarked that it was unjust with the citizen that his salary was embezzled by the accused and they demanded even more money from him. The lawyer of Punjab government informed the court that the accused managed to get a job of watchman for the concern

citizen and he had been transferring his salary in his account for one year. The accused with connivance of his partner also demand further Rs 70,000 for issuance of salary to citizen and the said watchman paid the amount after selling the jewelry of his wife. It may be mentioned here that Anti-Corruption Department of Punjab had registered a fraud case against the two accused.—APP

## 'Political stability must for economic stability'

On this occasion, he paid tribute to Kafeel Ahmad Nizami for his services to the area and party

ISLAMABAD: Jamiat Ulema Islam Fazl (JUI-F) Chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman has said that political stability is a must for economic stability in the country. He stated this during a meeting with his party leader Kafeel Ahmad Nizami held here at his former residence in Abdulkhel. Fazl said that his party always fought for the supremacy of Islam in the country. He said the enemies of Pakistan were hatching conspiracies to create divisions within the ranks of Muslims. However, he added, the JUI-F would make these conspiracies fail as always. The annual 'Mufti Mehmood Conference' scheduled to be held on October 14, 2023, in Peshawar would be proved as a milestone. On this occasion, Kafil Ahmad Nizami apprised the JUI-F chief about the preparations in Dera Ismail Khan regarding the 'Mufti Mehmood Conference'. He said that a huge rally under the leadership of JUI-F District Ameer Maulana Lutfur Rehman and District Senior Vice President Maulana Obaid Rehman would go to Peshawar to participate in 'Mufti Mehmood Conference' from Dera Ismail Khan. Fazl ur Rehman said that despite enjoying 9 years of governmental tenure in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) did nothing for public welfare in the province. The southern region of the province was deliberately kept backwards, he added. The JUI-F chief said all the mega projects in Dera Ismail Khan were completed during the tenure of his party. On this occasion, he paid tribute to Kafeel Ahmad Nizami for his services to the area and party.—DNA

## CPEC – a blessing and multipurpose umbrella



CHAUDHRY MUHAMMAD LATIF

Knowing the implications of friendship of China and Pakistan, the western powers including the USA had launched extensive publicity and propaganda against China on religious basis in fifties. Their purpose was to create distance between Pakistan and China, two neighboring countries, whose friendship had the potential to change their fate and future. Pakistan recognized China on January 4, 1950, and established diplomatic relations with her in 1951. In his tenure as Foreign Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto made admirable and formidable contribution to bring China and Pakistan

closer. As a consequence, the great leader of China, Mr. Zhou Enlie, as Prime Minister, visited Pakistan in 1964. In December, the same year, Pakistan's President General Muhammad Ayub Khan, embarked upon his visit to China. Mr. Z.A.Bhutto steered the mutual friendship on the basis of two friendly nations and not just two countries. He mostly wore a close neck coat which became very popular in Pakistan as a token of love and respect for Chinese leadership. In this bond of deep friendship, Zhou Enlie's visit to Pakistan stands as the most critical and important event which paved the way for further strengthening the relations. The Jet which was presented to Chinese Prime Minister, Zhou Enlie in 1964, stands with dignity in Chinese museum. The arch enemies of Pakistan were shocked when the cooperation between two countries was developed to these heights like CPEC. The cooperation between China and Pakistan ranges from economic to military levels. China has proved most reliable friend and has helped Pakistan at every difficult juncture, like 1965 war with India, in the East Pakistan tragedy 1971, at the time of nuclear explosion on May 28, 1998, in the calamity of earth-

quake 2005, in Corona epidemic 2019 they treated Pakistan as a part of China, and most recently in the financial crises threatening default. In July 2013, the Chinese celebrated leader, the President of China Mr. Xi Jin Ping, launched the vision of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is the outcome of the said vision. The BRI and CPEC have completed a decade in 2023. It remained ideal global cooperation platform and strategic vision of China for global development. It is interesting to note that BRI has extended its activities in our brother Muslim countries of Malaysia up to Malaka Strait and Indonesia. CPEC is most important for Pakistan and China as our friends and foes are generally common. The courageous initiative of CPEC was undertaken by great and popular leader of Pakistan, as Prime Minister of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, and Chinese President Mr. Xi Jin Ping in the year 2013. The objective was to shift the focus of cooperation from geo politics to geo economics. The BRI which aimed to revive the ancient Silk Road, is the central piece of Chinese foreign policy. CPEC is the principal component of BRI, intended to connect Pakistan's

Gawadar port city to China's Xin Jiong region through a network of roads, railways, and pipelines. To sum up Sino-Pakistan relation ship which essentially emanates from the national interest of both countries, attributed as "Community of Common Destiny". Friends are tested and tied in calamities. Pakistan remained unilaterally fast friend of the USA since its inception. It joined defense pacts with them and thereby earned displeasure of Russia and faced the negative vetoes on Kashmir issue. Unlike, the USA created a perception of a false friend because a friend in need is a friend indeed. In 1965 war, instead of helping Pakistan being its ally, they stopped the supply of PL-480 wheat. In 1971 tragedy, the then ambassador of USA, Mr. Farland issued a policy statement at crucial stage that East Pakistan would not and should not be a part of Pakistan, and also the 7th Fleet never reached Dacca. Pakistan was again penalized for atomic explosion in May 1998. Despite havoc of floods in Pakistan, the IMF imposed preconditions unjustified by a lender to a sovereign country. The IMF, no doubt, follow the policy of USA. In Afghan Jihad against Russia, the Taliban forces and volunteers from Pakistan were martyred together and Pakistan also host-

ed millions of refugees from Afghanistan. The result proved that the war was for the USA which became single super power. The USA supplied war equipment including stinger missiles. But the brunt and backlog had to be faced by Pakistan. It was shocking for Pakistan when USA suddenly decided to destroy the Taliban Afghanistan who had made sacrifices for the USA. Pakistan was forced to participate in the USA war in Afghanistan. As a result Pakistan lost his sincere friends in shape of Afghan Taliban and it provided a platform for our enemies to sponsor terrorism in Pakistan. The USA, despite our countless sacrifices during the war in Afghanistan, was always demanded to do more due to trust deficit. In this background the recent shift in our foreign policy to reconcile with Russia is justified to safeguard our national interest. At this juncture visit of Ukraine dignitary seems an attempt to sabotage the national policy towards Russia. Pakistan has been subjected to discrimination in economic relations with Iran. India is allowed to trade with Iran but Pakistan is tabooed. The writer is Retired Additional Chief Secretary of AJK and Advocate of Supreme Court of AJK.

## Dengue positive cases crosses 1,000 mark in Rawalpindi

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi's dengue total tally had reached 1,004 positive cases with the arrival of 39 more patients during the last 24 hours. Chief Executive Officer, of District Health Authority Dr. Ijaz Ahmad, said that 21 patients had arrived from the Potohar town urban area, eight from Municipal Corporation, four from Chaklala Cantonment, three from Taxila Cantonment and three from outside the district. He informed that 902 confirmed patients had been discharged after recovery while 129 patients were admitted to the district's health facilities of which 102 were positive cases. During the last 24 hours, Dr. Ijaz said that the district administration had registered 40 FIRs, issued tickets to five, sealed one premise, and a fine of Rs 114,000 was imposed against the violations of dengue SOPs. During indoor surveillance, in the last 24 hours, the teams checked 20,564 houses and larvae were found in 1,234 homes. Similarly, he added that while checking 7,639 places, the teams found larvae at 160 sites during outdoor surveillance. The CEO asked the residents to adopt precautionary measures as September and October were crucial for dengue spread. He also urged the residents to remove stagnant water, in outdoor and household settings to stop mosquitoes from breeding.—APP

## ACP, PTDC to organize sport climbing competitions

ISLAMABAD: The Adventure Club Pakistan (ACP) in collaboration with the Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) has organized 13th Sport Climbing Competitions on World Tourism Day at Ixex Club, Lake View Park here on Wednesday. All the necessary arrangements have been finalized to hold the sports event aimed to promote adventure and outdoor healthy activities in the country, said a news release. In previous years, the Adventure Club Pakistan had organized lectures and seminars for the promotion of Climbing besides conducting several training and practice sessions of students. The Club has searched and developed several new sites for climbing viz-a-viz organizing numerous competitions in collaboration with Ministry of Tourism, PTDC, Capital Development Authority (CDA), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Tourism, Foreign Missions and others. The club has already organized 17 climbing competitions on International Women Day and 12 climbing competitions on International Mountain Day. Also the Club had already produced some of the finest climbers to win national championships as well as to represent the country in international events.—APP

## Punjab Transport Minister visits 6th Road Metro Bus Station

RAWALPINDI: Provincial Transport Minister Punjab Ibrahim Murad along with Commissioner Rawalpindi Liaquat Ali Chatta here on Monday visited Sixth Road Metro Bus Station and inspected different parts of the station. Talking to media, the minister said that unfortunately, the public welfare projects were damaged during protests. More than 100,000 people benefit from the metro bus service daily, he said adding, the loss of the metro station is actually loss of people. The repair work would cost around Rs 150 million, he added. The repair work of the metro station would be completed soon, the Minister informed. The Sixth Road Metro Bus Station would be partially functional in a month, the Commissioner said.—APP

## Briefs

## Pakistan's tax system causing poverty

MEHTAB PIRZADA

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 Monday that Pakistan's tax system is very unfair and contradicts the ground realities, which are the basis of almost all problems. In Pakistan, 64% of taxes are collected in the form of sales tax, customs duty, and federal excise duty, while only 36% is collected in the form of direct tax, which is insufficient, he said. Mian Zahid Hussain said that due to the flawed tax system, the rich are getting richer and the poor are getting poorer, and 40 percent of people in Pakistan have gone below the poverty line. Speaking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that it is impossible to stabilize the country's economy without increasing the share of direct taxes in the tax system. He added that notice should be taken of the repeated demands of the IMF, the World Bank, and other international organizations to balance Pakistan's tax system. The business leader said that the main reason for the fiscal deficit, inflation, imbalance of payments, and lack of investment and savings is our faulty tax system, which is very cruel and all its focus is on squeezing the people. The tax system has been continuously harming the poor rather than benefiting them to such an extent that the head of the IMF has to issue statements in this regard.

## Railways upgrades over 173 un-manned crossings

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Railways has upgraded as many as 173 vulnerable un-manned level crossings to manned level crossings, out of 550 which are identified by the department over the entire railway network in over one year. "The relevant provincial government provided the finances to Pakistan Railways for the up-gradation of un-manned level crossings in the country," official sources in the Ministry of Railways told APP. They said the department was taking several steps including the up-gradation of un-manned and vulnerable railway level crossings across the country in collaboration with respective provincial governments. The sources said there were two types of level crossings over the Pakistan Railways network, un-manned and manned level crossings, adding that the un-manned level crossings were without gate leaves. "There are a total of 1,565 un-manned level crossings over the entire railway network and as per railway policy in vogue, the up-gradation of any un-manned or manned level crossing is the responsibility of road owning authority," they added. The sources said that a joint survey of Pakistan Railways.—APP

## Volunteers united for global peace event

Volunteer Teams of Airport Guide, Drivers, Interpreters, Media, Medical, Security and Installation Dedicated to the Safe and Successful International Event

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: A grand-scale peace event was held in South Korea from September 18 to 20 with stable operation and participants' satisfaction. Themed "Implementation of Multidimensional Strategies for Institutional Peace," the world peace event hosted by Heavenly Culture, World Peace, Restoration of Light (HWPL) with the contribution of 2,000 volunteers was set to welcome over 800 global leaders from 121 countries representing diverse sectors including politics, education, youth, women, media, and religion

Pink eye infection  
Expert advise public to follow all precautionary measures

The recovery period for viral conjunctivitis was approximately two weeks, however, expert added that it took more than three weeks for complete recovery in the case of allergic conjunctivitis

ISLAMABAD: Eye specialist Monday advised the citizens to follow precautionary measures amid rising cases of pink eye infection in the country and recommended people to seek medical attention promptly if they experience symptoms such as redness, itching, excessive tearing or a discharge from the eye, to prevent further spread of the infection. Talking to a private news channel, an ophthalmologist

Dr Faisal Ayaz said that the Punjab government has issued an advisory in the wake of the viral conjunctivitis outbreak, adding, that people exposed to sunlight and dust for longer periods are being affected by conjunctivitis.

The recovery period for viral conjunctivitis was approximately two weeks, however, expert added that it took more than three weeks for complete recovery

in the case of allergic conjunctivitis.

He further advised that public should avoid direct exposure to sunlight unless absolutely necessary, especially during peak hours of 10 am to 2 pm.

People should maintain good personal hygiene by frequently washing your hands, he said, adding, patients should not to rub your eyes, clean eyes with cold water on a regular basis

which will remove the dust particles and allergens that cause itching.

He stressed that people should not take over-the-counter eye medications as well consult an eye specialist in case people show symptoms of conjunctivitis. "For protection, it is advisable to wear black glasses, separate your bedding and utensils immediately, and exercise extreme caution to avoid further

transmission," he mentioned.

Replying a question, he said there are different types of conjunctivitis, seasonal which is related to weather, and vernal conjunctivitis which affects children between the age group of 5-15."

"Increased screen time also causes dryness of the eye as the rate of blinking decreases, he said, adding, however it is important to blink our eyes frequently.—Agencies



ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Interior Sarfraz Ahmad Bugti in a meeting with Former Governor Balochistan and Former Federal Minister Gen (R) Abdul Qadir Baloch.—DNA

## Cement exports surge by over 130% to \$39.6 million

ISLAMABAD: The cement exports from Pakistan surged by 130.24 per cent during the first two months of the current fiscal year as compared to the exports of the corresponding period of last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. Pakistan earned \$39.641 million by exporting cement during July-August (2023-24) as compared to its exports of \$17.217 million during July-August (2022-23), a growth of over 130 per cent, according to the latest PBS data. On a year-on-year basis, cement exports from the country witnessed an increase of 102.74 per

cent during August 2023 as compared to the same month last year. The cement exports in August 2023 were recorded at \$23.496 million, compared to the exports of \$11.589 million in August 2022. On a month-on-month basis, the cement exports from the country witnessed an increase of 45.53 per cent during August 2023 when compared to the exports of \$16.145 million in July 2023, PBS reported. It is pertinent to mention here that the country's overall trade deficit contracted by 40.29 per cent during the first two months of the current fiscal year compared

to the corresponding period of last year. The trade deficit during July-August (2023-24) was recorded at \$3.763 billion as against the deficit of \$6.302 billion in July-August (2022-23), showing negative growth of 40.29 per cent. During the period under review, the exports declined by 6.38 per cent to \$4.431 billion compared to the exports of \$4.733 billion during the corresponding period of last year. On the other hand, imports narrowed by 25.75 per cent and were recorded at \$8.194 billion compared to \$11.035 billion last year, according to PBS data.—DNA

## 30th Sept last date to avail 15pc rebate on payment of taxes

RAWALPINDI: September 30 would be last date to avail 15% rebate on payment of property tax, water and cleanliness bills, said Rawalpindi Cantonment Spokesman here on Monday. He informed that RCB had offered 15% rebate on payment of taxes before 30th September. The residents while paying the property tax and other bills before the deadline can avail the special concession. The citizens are informed that the Board is providing the rebate on payment of property tax, water and cleanliness bills of 2023-24 before Sept 30, he added. He informed that National Bank Rwp Cantt Board Branch would remain open on Saturday 30, Saturday to facilitate the tax payers. He urged the citizens to pay the bills in time and avail the concession. The spokesman said, action in accordance with the law would be taken against the defaulters who did not clear taxes despite various notices.—DNA

## ANF seizes 115 kg drugs in six operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting six operations across the country managed to recover over 115 kg of drugs and arrested seven accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Monday. He informed that in two ANF operations conducted near Motorway Toll Plaza Islamabad, a total of 64.8 kg hashish was recovered from two vehicles. The recovered drugs were concealed in the secret cavities of the vehicles. During the operations, four accused residents of Peshawar and Khyber were arrested. 20.4 kg opium, 14.4 kg hashish and 1 kg heroin were recovered from a vehicle stopped near Motorway Toll Plaza Sheikhupura. During the operation, two accused residents of Nowshera were arrested on the spot. 107 heroin-filled capsules were recovered from the possession of a Dubai-bound passenger, going on flight number GF-787. The accused resident of Khyber was netted at Bacha Khan International Airport. 15 kg of hashish was recovered during two operations in Zalkha Khel area of Khyber. Separate cases under the Anti-Narcotics Act were registered against the arrested accused while further investigations were under process.—APP

## OGRA for avoiding speculation on POL prices

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) on Monday underlined the need for avoiding speculations regarding the prices of petroleum products (POL) as these were primarily dependent on international market trends and the Rupee-dollar exchange rates.

"Petroleum product prices in our country are primarily dependent on international market prices and the exchange rate of the Dollar. In recent times, we have witnessed a surge in international petroleum prices, while the Dollar-to-Rupee exchange rate has shown improvement," OGRA Spokesman Imran Ghaznavi said in a press statement. He said it was essential to highlight that there was still one week remaining before the announcement of new prices. Therefore, any speculation about price increases or decreases during this period potentially disrupt the smooth functioning of the oil supply chain.

OGRA Spokesman Imran Ghaznavi said in a press statement. He said it was essential to highlight that there was still one week remaining before the announcement of new prices. Therefore, any speculation about price increases or decreases during this period potentially disrupt the smooth functioning of the oil supply chain.

## CPPA seeks Rs 1.82 per unit increase in tariff for August


ISLAMABAD: The Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPPA-G) has sought Rs 1.82 per unit increase in power tariff for August under monthly fuel cost adjustment (FCA) mechanism. In a petition submitted to National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) on behalf of XWAPDA power distribution companies (DISCOs), the CPPA-G maintained the actual cost of electricity remained Rs 8.4746 per unit against reference fuel charges of Rs 6.6457 per unit for the month of August. A total of 15,959 GWh electricity worth Rs 131,910 million was generated during the said period while net 15,472 GWh worth.—APP

## Conjunctivitis patients shouldn't rub their eyes


ISLAMABAD: Patients suffering from conjunctivitis should avoid rubbing their eyes, as it can worsen symptoms. Those who have conjunctivitis in one eye should avoid touching both eyes with the same cloth to reduce the risk of spreading the condition from one eye to the other, the Al-Shifa Trust said Monday. To relieve the discomfort associated with conjunctivitis, advice from an ophthalmologist is necessary, who may recommend applying either a warm or cold cloth or towel to closed eyelids three or four times a day. Patients should avoid eye makeup and the use of contact lenses until the condition has gone away, said Professor Dr. Inamul Haq Khan, Consultant Eye Surgeon at Al-Shifa Trust Eye Hospital. Talking to media men, he said that the infection spreads more by touching the eyes and is very easily spread to other people. Conjunctivitis is often spread by touching a contaminated surface, and then touching eyes and washing hands frequently can help avoid contracting or spreading it. Patients with anxiety need more caution than treatment, he said, adding that one of the reasons for the spread of this disease is more than usual rains. Dr. Inamul Haq Khan said that at present, many people are affected in Karachi and Lahore, while it is also becoming more common in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. Redness, tears, and itching in the eyes are symptoms of conjunctivitis. It is an infection and affects children more because they have low immunity, he informed. Since children are not careful, they quickly attract infection, which causes the eyes to swell, and affected people experience swelling in their eyes. There may be separate medicines for children and adults, but unnecessary use of antibiotic drops can damage the cornea, and recovery of the eye may take up to six months, he said. He underlined that antibiotic eye drops are harmful to the cornea. Eyes can be compressed through a piece of cloth to reduce pain but splashing water in eyes should be avoided while eye wash drops can also be used.—DNA

## Govt plans to preserve Pakistani cultural heritage

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for National Heritage and Culture Jamal Shah Monday said that the ministry was actively promoting preservation of Pakistani cultural heritage at the local, national, and international levels. "We are trying best to strengthen our creative economy, consolidating our cultural and heritage resources and mobilizing our communities", he said while talking to a Private News Channel. "Pakistani people are hospitable and we need to highlight the correct image of the country at global level", he added. Talking about 12th Conference of Culture Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, he said conference is focusing on cultural issues with a view to enhance joint cultural action in the areas of cultural planning and development indicators and addressing the illicit trafficking of cultural property. Replying a question, minister said that promotion of national heritage and culture among the people can only prevent the society from social ills hatred, intolerance and bring peace and stability. He added that that there is also need to inculcate the spirit of ownership and promotion of local languages among our coming generations.—APP



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## Summit views pacific island countries strategically

The US-Pacific Island Forum Summit US President Joe Biden is hosting in Washington on Monday and Tuesday is the second such gathering. It has apparently failed to fire the same enthusiasm among the Pacific island countries as the first. Not only have the leaders of two major countries in the region – Solomon Islands Prime Minister Manasseh Sogavare and Vanuatu Prime Minister Sato Kilman – skipped the summit, but even some of the other non-US participants seem lukewarm about the event. After the first summit, the White House said the United States would invest more than \$810 million in expanded programs to aid the Pacific islands. However, Congress has still to approve the funds. Yet what the Pacific island countries have received posthaste is diktats from the US, with visiting officials of the Biden administration telling them the dos and don'ts. White House "Indo-Pacific" coordinator Kurt Campbell and the State Department's top officials for Asia visited the Solomon Islands in April last year, urging it to reconsider the cooperation pact it had signed with China. They visited the country again in March this year for the same purpose. Last month, two Republicans from the US House of Representatives, one being a member of the select committee on strategic competition with China, met with opposition leaders in the Solomon Islands, seeking to cultivate pro-US proxies. That the high-level interagency mechanism the US Department of State has set up for the US' aid to the region mainly comprises officials of the National Security Council and the Department of Defense speaks volumes of the fact that infrastructure aid is only a cover for the US' true intention of excluding China from the region. For example, Kiribati, one of the most remote Pacific island states, 4,000 kilometers southwest of Hawaii, is still using an airstrip built during the World War II. But when it said this year it plans to upgrade it with Chinese assistance, the US tried to block the project. And when the Pacific island countries were in a dire need of essential medical supplies during the COVID-19 pandemic, the US was deaf and blind. Yet it is quick to respond whenever it sees China extending a helping hand to countries in the region or hears of it planning to do so. Nor should it be forgotten that the US has not yet fulfilled its responsibility to compensate the losses of the Marshall Islands caused by its hundreds of nuclear tests in the region in the 1940s and 1950s. That is in sharp contrast with the efficiency and zeal of Washington renewing agreements this year with Palau and Micronesia that give it exclusive military access to strategic parts of the Pacific. For the US, the Pacific island countries are simply pawns to be played in its geopolitical games. If the US truly cared about their development as Biden claims, it would not only honor the pledges of assistance it made at the first summit but also repay its historical debt.

## Sino-EU economic cooperation: A mutual win

The bilateral trade between China and the European Union now amounts to more than \$820 billion annually. China remains the EU's largest trading partner, while the EU is China's second-largest trading partner. That they see eye to eye with each other on such key issues as trade liberalization and share the goal of safeguarding the rules-based multilateral trading system with the World Trade Organization at its core makes them natural partners. Yet the development of this interdependent relationship has not been smooth-sailing in recent years, hampered by disputes over such issues as the huge trade surplus China now has with the EU and the level of China's market openness which the EU believes is still too low. The EU's new strategy to "de-risk" from the Chinese economy by reducing the bloc's dependence on the country for critical materials and commodities will bring more uncertainty to China-EU cooperation, to the detriment of both sides' interests. As will the protectionist tendency that the EU has been increasingly showing lately, evidenced by the anti-subsidy investigation it initiated targeting Chinese electric vehicle imports this month. Those in Europe who have long complained about what they see as the lack of a level playing field in China, should maybe look at what German enterprises are actually doing in China to gain a better knowledge about China's business environment. Despite the pledge to reduce dependency, 16.4 percent of German foreign direct investment went to China in the first half of 2023, a study by the German Institute for Economic Research found. That compared with 11.6 percent of total German FDI invested in China in 2022, which was already more than double the share in 2019. German chemical company BASF is among the enterprises that keep increasing their bet on the Chinese market. In addition to the existing multiple production facilities in the country, BASF plans to invest 10 billion euros (\$10.64 billion) in building a new production base in China. That the two sides have agreed to hold their first face-to-face exchange in three years points to the importance they both attach to their economic relations. The 10th China-EU High-level Economic and Trade Dialogue, which started in Beijing on Monday, offers a good opportunity for the two sides to manage their differences through frank discussions. And while pushing ahead their mutually beneficial cooperation projects, strengthening their strategic communication and coordination on macroeconomic policies amid the fast-changing international environment can generate some much-needed confidence that the global economy can be stabilized.

## Recognition of Israel on the Anvil

Qamar Bashir



These countries, unlike Pakistan, share borders with Israel and have direct interests and cultural, linguistic, and racial ties with both Israel and the Palestinian people. The shift towards pragmatism and positivity is driven by several factors, including the recognition of the futility of hostile relations and the economic and financial losses incurred due to Israel's strong relations with the USA and the Western world. These countries understand that they have the means to influence the policies and thinking of developed countries to safeguard their interests and undermine

The Crown Prince, Sulaiman Bin Salman of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, has expressed his intention to formally recognize Israel, recognizing the futility of the decades-old hostility over the Palestinian issue. Once Saudi Arabia recognizes Israel, it will put pressure on the Pakistan government to reevaluate its stance, as it will be increasingly isolated in its opposition to the growing trend of pragmatism in the Middle East and around the world. Many countries in the Middle East and beyond, which previously maintained staunch enmity towards Israel over the Palestinian question, have started to soften their positions. They are actively working towards normalizing their relations with Israel. These countries, unlike Pakistan, share borders with Israel and have direct interests and cultural, linguistic, and racial ties with both Israel and the Palestinian people. The shift towards pragmatism and positivity is driven by several factors, including the recognition of the futility of hostile relations and the economic and financial losses incurred due to Israel's strong relations with the USA and the Western world. These countries understand that they have the means to influence the policies and thinking of developed countries to safeguard their interests and undermine their adversaries. Many Muslim and Middle Eastern nations are increasingly prioritizing economic and financial development. They are focused on improving the quality of life for their citizens, enhancing their global standing, and asserting themselves on the international stage. They have come to realize that economic strength provides the resources needed to invest in their human capital, boost their national capabilities, and exert influence on global affairs, including advocating for the Palestinian cause.

The evolving diplomatic landscape in the Middle East and beyond, characterized by the recognition of Israel and the pursuit of economic and financial development, is reshaping the priorities of nations in the region. This shift is driven by a desire to improve their own standing in the world and, paradoxically, may better position them to advocate for the Palestinian cause on the global stage. Pakistan has had a long-standing position of staunch support for the Palestinian cause and a strong stance against Israel, even though it doesn't have a direct conflict with Palestine. This stance has been consistently maintained by successive governments, and their rhetoric in favor of Palestine and against Israel has shaped public opinion in Pakistan over the years. However, there may come a point where the government realizes the need to reconsider its position and prepare the public for the possibility of recognizing Israel, especially given the changing dynamics in the Middle East. While the public sentiment against Israel has been deeply ingrained due to years of government rhetoric, it's worth noting that Pakistan has had indirect engagements with Israel in the past.

During the era of President Pervez Musharraf, there was an attempt at diplomatic engagement between the two countries. I personally witnessed such an effort during my tenure as Deputy Director at PID (Press Information Department). In 2005, while covering President Musharraf's visit to Quetta, he made a surprising announcement during his address to tribal elders. He mentioned that the Paki-

stani Foreign Minister was engaged in talks with the Israeli Foreign Minister in Turkey at the same time.

As a young officer, I recognized the significance of this statement and attempted to inform my senior officials about it but couldn't reach them immediately. In response, I took the initiative to create a headline that read, 'Pakistan will not recognize Israel until the resolution of the Palestine issue,' and provided additional details in the ensuing paragraph. This headline served to manage public opinion and prevent an immediate reaction to the explosive statement. The point here is that even though there have been indirect engagements with Israel in the past, any move towards formal recognition would require a significant shift in Pakistan's foreign policy, as well as careful management of public sentiment to ensure a smooth transition. The government would need to employ effective communication strategies to explain the rationale behind such a decision and navigate any potential public resistance. Pakistan's stance against Israel appears to be self-contradictory when viewed in the context of its foreign policy. It's worth noting that there are indeed some notable paradoxes in Pakistan's approach to international relations. Ironically, the Palestinian issue bears a striking resemblance to the Kashmir issue; both involve the desire for self-determination. Palestinians seek emancipation from Israeli occupation, while Kashmiris aspire to freedom from India's rule. Yet, Pakistan maintains full diplomatic relations with India, engaging in both formal and informal channels of communication, even during challenging times, to advocate for its stated position on Kashmir. India and Israel have established a robust defense partnership, characterized by the supply of advanced military technology, including missile defense systems and surveillance equipment from Israel. This sensitive surveillance and antiterrorism technology acquired by India is blatantly used in Kashmir to maintain control over the region. This has raised concerns about its impact on the Kashmiri population and their aspirations for self-determination. Pakistan faces challenges in acquiring similar technology to effectively counter terrorism from its own soil and lacks the influence to prevent Israel from providing such technology to India for use in Kashmir. Interestingly, Pakistan has no direct border or conflict with Israel.

Its opposition to Israel primarily revolves around the Palestinian issue, making its stance seem disproportionate and lacking regional or international implications. In contrast, neighboring countries with Israel, despite facing complex issues such as territorial, religious, ethnic, water-related, and social and cultural conflicts, are either recognizing Israel willingly or succumbing to pressure from the United States and the Western world. Given these contradictions, Pakistan's approach to Israel should align more closely with its stance on India or even adopt a more pragmatic and balanced approach in the interest of regional stability and international diplomacy. In this backdrop, the policy statement by our caretaker foreign minister in the USA carries a much softer position. Instead of repeating the same senseless, public pressure driven statement, he said that the decision of Pakistan to recognize Israel will be based

upon the interests of the Pakistani and Palestinian people. The recognition of Israel is a complex and sensitive issue with both potential benefits and drawbacks. Such decisions in international relations are influenced by a multitude of factors, including political, economic, social, and strategic considerations. For Pakistan, there are compelling reasons to consider recognizing Israel due to the potential gains. Recognition of Israel could lead to enhanced diplomatic relations not only with Israel but also with countries that have already recognized Israel. This could open up new avenues for diplomacy and cooperation across various sectors. Israel's strong track record of innovation and entrepreneurship offers opportunities for collaboration in research and development, benefiting Pakistan's technology and innovation sectors and may attract Israeli investments in Pakistan, which could stimulate various industries and create jobs. Israel frequently engages in technology transfer agreements with other countries, allowing them to access Israeli innovations across sectors such as cybersecurity, agriculture, and biotechnology.

It participates in joint research projects with universities, research institutions, and companies worldwide, spanning fields from medical research to renewable energy and artificial intelligence. Its universities and research institutions host international students and researchers, facilitating academic exchange programs and knowledge sharing. It has established innovation hubs in various countries to promote collaboration, connecting Israeli startups and businesses with foreign partners and investors. Israel's highly skilled workforce in science and technology fields contributes to global R&D efforts through their involvement in international projects and breakthroughs. Israel, a global leader in cybersecurity, collaborates with other countries to enhance cybersecurity capabilities, sharing threat intelligence and best practices to bolster global cybersecurity efforts. Its expertise in agricultural technology, particularly in arid and desert farming, is shared with countries facing similar agricultural challenges, leading to the adoption of innovative practices. While there are numerous potential benefits, drawbacks may include public backlash due to the emotionally charged nature of the issue for many Pakistanis. Careful management of public sentiment, dialogue, and addressing religious and cultural sensitivities would be essential. The decision to recognize Israel is multifaceted and requires consideration of foreign policy objectives, regional dynamics, and domestic sentiments. Pakistan's government would need to engage in extensive diplomatic efforts and communication with its citizens to explain the rationale and potential benefits. With a growing trend toward recognizing Israel in the Muslim world, Pakistan should carefully assess the opportunities for tapping into Israeli potential and contributing to global research and development efforts while safeguarding its national interests and the well-being of its people.

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

## India's Global Sikh-Hunt must worry the World

Irfan Shahzad Takalvi



The aura of unease and uncomfortable interactions between the leaders of North American and South Asian nation were noticed by all those following the international events and developments. Yet, few would have expected it to unfold like it did in the week that followed. Justin Trudeau minced no words when he announced

It was in the air for quite some time. It became all the more evident with the body language and mutual gestures of Canadian PM and his Indian counterpart in the recently held G20 summit, in New Delhi. The aura of unease and uncomfortable interactions between the leaders of North American and South Asian nation were noticed by all those following the international events and developments. Yet, few would have expected it to unfold like it did in the week that followed. Justin Trudeau minced no words when he announced on September 18 that his country's intelligence had credible information of possible Indian involvement in the killing of Sikh activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar, in Canada, in June this year. Ottawa did not stop here. Canadian FM made the unpleasant announcement of expulsion of a top Indian diplomat from Canada, whom the Canadians labeled as head of Indian intelligence agency (RAW – Research and Analysis Wing), in their country. Tit-for-tat response came from New Delhi a day later, on September 19. Not only did India's Ministry of External Affairs registered its protest to the Candain High Commissioner, but also expelled a top diplomat to settle the score – as per the diplomatic norms. Tensions, since then, have blown into a full-scale diplomatic row and even the US has admitted that Canadian accusations are based on intelligence from the 'Five Eyes.'

Is it an ordinary diplomatic row? It is not. Nijjar was killed in suburbs of Vancouver outside a Sikh temple called Gurdwara in a locality where Sikhs of Indian origin live in sizeable numbers. Canada is home to one of the largest Sikh diasporas outside India. Sikhs – long calling for an independent homeland named Khalistan – have stepped up their demand for self-rule in recent years. Largely ceremonial referendums 'approving' independence from India have been held in a number of nations. Activists like Nijjar have been leading such moves, antagonizing India. Canada

is the nation where Sikh diaspora have also reached the high echelons of power, including a recent former Defense Minister. New Delhi has been trying to portray the renewed Sikh demands for freedom and a separate homeland – dubbed as Khalistan 2.0 by international observers – as a 'non-issue.' Events inside Indian Punjab and Haryana – the two Indian states with largest Sikh population – as well as across the globe wherever Sikhs live and work, suggest otherwise. Indian authorities and agents have targeted, and followed, Sikhs of significance stature both inside and outside Indian boundaries creating a lot of hue and cry, tensions and hostilities. On the other side of the planet, in Australia's Queensland, graffiti demonizing Indian prime minister Narendra Modi sprang up on the walls of a Hindu temple in March earlier this year. Modi's supporters were quick to blame it on Sikh activists of Australia – also leading 'Khalistan referendums' in some ways. Now, police documents suggest 'Hindu hand' – meaning Modi's supporters did it themselves to implicate rival Sikhs. That certainly is not ordinary, it is not normal. Groupings like Overseas Friends of BJP (Bhartia Janta Party that Modi leads) went to the extent of calling for boycott of Sikh businesses. Three other Australian temples have also been defaced – and a similar plot may not be ruled out. In 2019, Britain's first Sikh Member of Parliament (MP) Tanmanjeet Singh Dhese was also attacked by OFBJP – an event that shocked the entire United Kingdom, where the legislature is revered as the mother of democracy. OFBJP leaders boast being close to Modi.

Interestingly, rather ironically when British PM Rishi Sunak – himself a self-proclaimed 'proud' Hindu of Indian origin and having expressed warm feelings for Modi a number of times – when asked about Sikhs' calls for freedom in Britain, was quick to turn the topic towards what he labeled as Pro-Khalistan Extrem-

ism (PKE). Not hard to guess where his sympathies really lie.

Leaders and relevant institutions of countries such as Australia, the US and the UK have understandably come forward quickly to express their concerns on the worsening tensions between Canada and India. They have labeled Canadian accusations as very serious. They must surely be concerned as all of them host large Sikh populations and Hindu-Sikh equation is not all that comfortable in any of them. Peace and tranquility in their own homelands may be at the receiving end of this unfolding saga, they are well aware. Not something to ignore.

Yet, it is also a reality that AUKUS nations – in addition to their EU member partners and Japan – have been treating India leniently and specially in a number of cases. Examples include but are not limited to maltreatment of minorities in India at the hands of majority Hindus, nuclear proliferation, and conduct of business with countries under sanctions such as Iran and Russia. Would the AUKUS nations' strategic interests vis-à-vis India prevail over the right of people like Sikhs for self-expression and self-determination, remains an important question.

Modi and his BJP are already in the electioneering mood – where Indian PM is seeking a third term. In such a politically charged and delicate environment in India, fair or unfair moves that inflict damage to Sikhs (along with Kashmiris and others) would certainly win more votes. Yet, if the world – particularly, the US, the UK and EU nations – ignore India-backed world-wide campaign against Punjabi speaking Sikhs, the consequences could be quite damaging and destabilizing.

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## Briefs

## Army Chief for interfaith harmony

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Islam and society. No one can be allowed to take law into his own hands in a civilised society," the army chief said. Meanwhile, the Christian community members acknowledged the Pakistan Army's efforts in combatting terrorism and providing a secure environment for the minorities in the country. The delegation lauded the army chief's gesture as an inspiration for the Pakistani minorities to take a greater and more active part in nation-building and in restoring their faith in a cohesive and tolerant society. The meeting comes in the backdrop of the "Jaranwala incident" where a mob vandalised several churches and set scores of houses on fire after a few miscreants made announcements in mosques inciting the mob to attack under allegations of blasphemy in Jaranwala town, Faisalabad.

## Pakistan condemns desecration..

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against Islamophobia and work in concert to promote interfaith harmony. That was the spirit behind the resolution passed by the United Nations General Assembly in 2022 to mark 15 March as the International Day to Combat Islamophobia. Pakistan's concerns have been conveyed to the Dutch authorities. We urge them to be mindful of the sentiments of the people of Pakistan and Muslims around the world and take active steps to prevent such hateful and Islamophobic acts.

## Pakistan's tax-to-GDP ratio stuck...

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Direct taxes, collected by the federal government, make up only around 33% of total taxes collected. One of the key challenges noted in the report is the minimal revenue generated from agricultural income tax, with over 90% of farmers falling below the tax threshold. Additionally, total provincial revenue collection remains less than 1% of GDP. To address these challenges and enhance revenue generation, the World Bank has launched a new program titled "Reforms for a Brighter Future: Time to Decide."

## PM assures Pakistan...

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Oxford Frontier Capital, GuarantCo, JP Morgan, Kalrock Capital, and UBL UK. In their meeting, the British investors enquired about the continuity of the IMF programme in Pakistan and reform efforts from the short to medium term. "The prime minister assured them that Pakistan had expressed its commitment to the IMF programme by undertaking reforms committed with the IMF. The investors expressed their keen interest in exploring promising investment opportunities in the financial and capital market of Pakistan, reflecting a growing mutual interest in expanding economic collaboration," the statement said.

## Pakistani runners break records at Berlin Marathon

## SPORTS DESK

Berlin : In a historic feat, five Pakistani marathon runners broke records by finishing the race in less than three hours at the Berlin Marathon 2023, making the nation proud of their immense skills. The runners, namely Muhammad Sajjad (2:37:34), Amin Mukatay (2:46), Abdul Rehman (2:50), Sadiq Shah (2:52:16), and Faisal Shafi (2:58), have left an indelible mark on Pakistan's running history by their remarkable achievements on the international stage. Sadiq Shah, who had previously participated in the London Marathon earlier in April, accomplished an incredible feat by setting a new record at the Berlin Marathon. He completed the marathon in a remarkable 2 hours, 52 minutes, and 16 seconds. Notably, Sadiq Shah emerged as the fastest runner in his age group, further solidifying his status as an elite marathoner. This remarkable performance also earned him a qualification for the prestigious Boston Marathon, marking another sig-

nificant milestone in his running career. Muhammad Sajjad, hailing from Bahawalpur, achieved the distinction of being the fastest Pakistani marathon runner in any international marathon. He completed the Berlin Marathon in an astonishing 2 hours, 37 minutes, and 34 seconds. Muhammad Sajjad's outstanding performance not only earned him recognition as a top-tier marathon runner but also secured his position as a World Marathon Major participant. Adding to the list of remarkable achievements, Dr Rabia Naem, a senior paediatrician based in the United States, made history by becoming the first-ever Pakistani-origin female Abbott Six Star Finisher at the Berlin Marathon. She crossed the finish line in 3 hours and 54 minutes. All the participants from Pakistan successfully completed the marathon. Sarah Lodhi completed another swift marathon in 3 hours and 17 minutes. Hira Diwan achieved her fastest marathon time, clocking in at 3 hours, 30 minutes, and 10 seconds, securing a Boston qualifying time for her age group.



ISLAMABAD : Youngsters are in action during the session of Marital Arts at Academy in Sector G-8 in Federal Capital.—Online

## Pakistani athletes receive warm welcome in Hangzhou

The 19th Asian Games opened officially on September 23. Over 12,500 athletes from across Asia are competing in 481 events across 40 sports over the next two weeks

## OUR CORRESPONDENT

HANGZHOU: The Pakistani contingent received a rousing applause as they entered the Hangzhou Olympic Sports Centre Stadium for the opening ceremony of the 2023 Asian Games. The enthusiastic welcome was seen as a sign of friendship and respect for the Pakistani athletes, who have a long tradition of sporting excellence at the Asian Games, Gwadar Pro reported on Monday. Pakistan's ambassador to China, Moin ul Haque, noted the warm reception on the X platform (formerly known as Twitter), saying, "Pakistan Contingent to Asian Games in Hangzhou entering the stadium amidst big applause of Chinese spectators. Best wishes to our athletes." A contingent of 262 Pakistani athletes and officials, including 137 men and 53 women, will be competing in over 26 sports at the Games. The Pa-



kistan Swimming Team will be participating from September 24-29, the Hockey Team from September 24-October 7, and the Tennis Team from September 24-30. Shahid Afraz Khan, a Pakistani sports expert in Hangzhou for the Games, remarked that the host city has made superb arrangements for this major multi-sport competition. He added, "Fans are getting a chance to learn about each other's culture along with great competition during the Asian Games, which is definitely a bridge in promoting harmony." Khan expressed confidence that the Pakistani athletes will perform strongly at these Games, noting their warm reception here underscores the high expectations and support they enjoy. Their participation also highlights the close Pakistan-China ties, including in sports. Pakistani athletes credited the Chinese government's assistance in their preparations.

## Pakistan team finally issued visas for ODI World Cup

The Men in Green are scheduled to depart for Hyderabad, India, via Dubai on the morning of Wednesday

## DNA

LAHORE: Visas have finally been granted to Pakistan's cricket players, just in time for the upcoming ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023, set to kick off in India on October 5. The Men in Green are now set to depart for Hyderabad, India, via Dubai on Wednesday morning. Their first World Cup warm-up match is slated against New Zealand on Friday, September 29, in Hyderabad. However, it wasn't a smooth journey for Pakistan to secure these visas. The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) formally expressed their dissatisfaction with the International Cricket Council (ICC) earlier today due to the significant delay in obtaining Indian visas. In their written communication to the ICC, the PCB voiced their

concerns and pointed out the Host-Member agreement that governs international sporting events of this nature. The letter from PCB stated, "We have been discussing this issue for three years, but no one paid attention to our concerns. And now, the situation has escalated to the point where we are still awaiting visas. We are in a state of uncertainty due to the lack of response from the concerned authorities. Originally, we had planned to stay in Dubai for two days before proceeding to Hyderabad, but due to this visa issue, we had to cancel that trip. Whenever we reached out to the concerned authorities, we were assured that the visas would be issued within 24 hours. However, with each passing day, the uncertainty is growing, and it is causing anxiety among

everyone involved." As a result of these visa delays, Pakistan had to abandon their initial plan of a two-day trip to Dubai before heading to Hyderabad for the World Cup. Pakistan and India haven't played bilateral series in any format since 2012-13. Pakistan last toured India for ODI and T20I series. The two arch-rivals played a Test against each other back in 2007. Pakistan's schedule for World Cup October 10 - vs Sri Lanka in Hyderabad October 14 - vs India in Ahmedabad October 20 - vs Australia in Bengaluru October 23 - vs Afghanistan in Chennai October 27 - vs South Africa in Chennai October 31 - vs Bangladesh in Kolkata November 4 - vs New Zealand Bengaluru (Day

match) November 11 - vs England in Kolkata The day matches will start at 10am Pakistan Standard Time (PST) while all other matches will be day-night fixtures starting at 1:30pm (PST). If Pakistan qualify for the semi-finals, they will play in Kolkata. If India qualify for the semi-finals, they will play in Mumbai unless playing against Pakistan, in which case they will play in Kolkata. SQUAD: Babar Azam (c), Shadab Khan, Abdullah Shafiq, Fakhar Zaman, Haris Rauf, Hasan Ali, Iftikhar Ahmed, Imam-ul-Haq, Mohammad Nawaz, Mohammad Rizwan (wk), M Wasim Jnr, Saud Shakeel, Salman Ali Agha, Shaheen Shah Afridi, Usama Mir. Reserves: Mohammad Harris, Zaman Khan, Abrar Ahmed.

## Bryson edges Lahiri to capture LIV Golf Chicago title

CHICAGO : Bryson DeChambeau birdied three of his last five holes to win the LIV Golf Chicago title on Sunday when Anirban Lahiri missed an eight-foot par putt on the 18th hole. DeChambeau, who began the day eight adrift, fired an eight-under par 63 in the closing round at Rich Harvest Farms in suburban Chicago to finish 54 holes on 13-under 200. That was good enough to give the 30-year-old American a one-stroke triumph over Australian Marc Leishman and India's Lahiri, who led most of the last round and would have forced a play-off with a closing par. It made for a bittersweet victory for DeChambeau, captain of the triumphant Crushers team whose lineup includes Lahiri. "I wanted to be in a playoff with 'Ban,'" DeChambeau said. "He has worked his butt off all year. 'I couldn't be happier that I won but I feel so bad for 'Ban. I wanted to go into a playoff and battle it out with my brother. I love him to death. He's a grinder.'" DeChambeau made six birdies on his back nine and birdied the par-5 second, his penultimate hole, to grab a share of the lead on 13-under with Lahiri, who had stumbled with a bogey at the par-3 15th. At 18, Lahiri left a long birdie attempt short and sent his par putt left of the hole. "He had this won but I just luckily snuck in there and took it down," DeChambeau said. DeChambeau could capture the season title in the Saudi-backed series with a victory in a regular-season finale next month in Saudi Arabia. US Open 2020 champion DeChambeau, who won his first LIV title last month at Greenbrier thanks to a final-round 58, answered a bogey at nine with three consecutive birdies, the last a long effort over a ridge. "I just went on a roll from there," he said. "I would say (this is) the most consistently good golf of my life. I don't know if it's the top notch but definitely when I shot 58 that was the best golf I've ever played. — DNA

## HRCP slams PM's statement on elections

FROM PAGE 01  
originally jailed for "corrupt practices" in the Toshakhana case — although his conviction has since been suspended — is currently on judicial remand in the cipher case. In an interview with The Associated Press over the weekend, the prime minister had said that "fair" polls were possible without Imran and his party leaders, who were jailed as part of a state crackdown in the aftermath of violent riots across the country on May 9. PM Kakar had also stated that thousands of PTI members, who were not a part of "unlawful activities", "will be running the political process" and "participating in the elections".

## Shift Imran to Adiala...

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"Why is an under-trial prisoner kept in Attock jail instead of Adiala jail?" he asked. Ordering to shift the PTI chairman, the chief justice added, Khan was kept in custody at the Attock jail in the Toshakhana case, which was suspended. "If tomorrow, you transfer [him] to Rahim Yar Khan, would the trial be held there?" he questioned, seeking a response regarding the matter from Additional Attorney General Munawar Iqbal Dogar. During the hearing, Khan's lawyer Advocate Sher Afzal Marwat requested that his client be given the facility of an exercise machine. Justice Farooq said it was mentioned that now the A and C classes have been abolished in the jail.

## PML-N mandates...

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underway for the homecoming of the party supremo, Mian Nawaz Sharif, next month. The instructions, mandating the return of all party members from abroad, were communicated by Rana Sanaullah, the president of the PML-N Punjab chapter, according to a statement issued here Monday. Former prime minister Nawaz Sharif is scheduled to return to Pakistan on October 21 to spearhead the party's election campaign for the next general elections slated for the final week of January 2024.

## 'No more case adjournments'

FORM PAGE 01  
the next date for hearing is given. "[But] if a case is being brought before the Supreme Court, all documents should be complete." The court rejected the lawyer's plea. Justice Isa took oath as the 29th CJP on September 16. Among other changes, last week he constituted a committee of judges on case management to address the massive backlog of cases pending before the top court. The committee is also to determine the fate of complaints lodged against judges, which are pending before the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC). This case management policy, proposed by Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah and Justice Munib Akhtar, was pending approval in former CJP Umar Ata Bandial's chamber for over a year.

## Bandial's move that irked...

FROM PAGE 01  
that the phone call was not appropriate and it would have been in the fitness of things to refer the complaint to the Supreme Judicial Council since, otherwise, Justice Masood could face additional allegations of seeking favours from the then-CJ. The sources said that on the night of September 5, 2023, Justice Masood received a phone call from CJ Bandial. The two justices had a conversation that turned somewhat bitter, and the call eventually ended on that note.



BELARUS: Sajjad Haider Khan, Ambassador of Pakistan to Belarus participates in the 17th Golf Open, around 100 golfers also participated in the event. — DNA

## Briefs

## Russia puts ICC president on wanted list

MOSCOW: Russia said Monday it had placed Piotr Hofmanski, the president of the International Criminal Court, which is seeking the arrest of President Vladimir Putin, on its wanted list. "Hofmanski Piotr Jozef, Polish. Wanted under an article of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation," said a notice in the Russian interior ministry database. The ministry did not provide details of the allegations against Hofmanski. In March the Hague-based court announced an arrest warrant for Putin on the war crime accusation of unlawfully deporting Ukrainian children. The ICC also issued a warrant against Maria Lvova-Belova, Russia's presidential commissioner for children's rights, on similar charges. Russia has earlier issued arrest warrants for ICC prosecutor Karim Khan and several judges. Russia, which is not a member of the ICC, insists the warrant against Putin is "void". In September, the ICC opened a field office in Ukraine, as part of efforts to hold Russian forces accountable for Moscow's offensive in the Western-backed country.—APP

## Poland mulls tightening controls on border

WARSAW: Poland is considering tightening controls along its border with Slovakia, local media reported on Monday. The Polish Border Guard said that the border is porous and enables illegal migrants to reach Poland via the Balkan route. "For over a month we have been observing an increase in the inflow of illegal immigrants from Slovakia," broadcaster Polsat News quoted Anna Michalska, spokeswoman for the Border Guard, as saying. "We cannot in any way hinder these internal controls in the EU. The only thing we can do is check the legality of stay and checks on access roads to the border, and we are doing that. But these are just random checks," Michalska said. The Border Guard has detained 544 illegal immigrants on the border with the Czech Republic and Slovakia so far this year, compared to 122 in the same period of last year, she said.—APP

## Economic woes drive refugees back to Sudan

KHARTOUM: The outbreak of violence in Khartoum has forced Youssef Saeed, 41, to flee his home in the Sudanese capital to Al Jazirah state in central Sudan. But he was forced to return to the violence-ridden capital along with his family as they ran out of cash amid the raging conflict in the country. "We left our home in the first days of fighting," Saeed told Anadolu. "We thought that we would be able to return in a month after the end of the war, but the conflict continued to rage for a long time." "We had to return to our home after four months as we ran out of money," the Sudanese man said. The decision to return to the capital was shocking to Saeed's family. "We had to return back home despite the constant power and water outages," Saeed said. "At least we now live in our house without paying money for rent." Sudan has been wired by clashes between the army and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) paramilitary group since April in a conflict that killed thousands of people, according to local media. More than 5.25 million people have been displaced by the conflict, including 4.1 million within Sudan and 1.1 million in neighboring countries, according to UN figures. High rents The family of Afaf Mustafa sought safety in Egypt, but the high rents in the Egyptian capital have made it impossible for them to stay. "We stayed three months in Cairo, but we had to return to Khartoum due to our tough economic conditions," Mustafa told Anadolu. More than 310,000 Sudanese have crossed into Egypt since the start of violence in Sudan, according to UN refugee.—APP



LONDON: Senior leaders of London's capital and financial market call on the Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar.—DNA

## Azeri victory in Karabakh, a chance for peace: Erdogan

President Erdogan visited Azerbaijan's Nakhchivan on Monday where he was warmly welcomed by Ilham Aliyev, who led his country to a victory against the Armenian separatists of Karabakh last week

## NEWS DESK

BAKU: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan made a spontaneous visit on Monday to the Azerbaijani enclave of Nakhchivan. Announced one day before, the visit comes on the heels of Azerbaijan's successful counterterrorism operation in Karabakh, a region regained from Armenia which, last week, was cleared of Armenian separatists. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev welcomed Erdogan in an official ceremony before the two leaders headed for talks. The purpose of Erdogan's visit is the inauguration of a pipeline between Türkiye's Id r and Nakhchivan, and two leaders are also expected to attend the opening of a military complex in the enclave. Nakhchivan, which shares Azerbaijan's only land border with Türkiye, is surrounded by Armenian territories. So, Erdogan's visit was symbolic in the aftermath of the victory against Armenian separatists. Azerbaijan and Türkiye are the most intimate allies in the region, with their intertwined history as two Turkic nations. Erdogan further advanced ties thanks to his close friendship with Aliyev. Two leaders call each other "brothers," and Türkiye is the most outspoken advocate of Azerbaijan's rights over Karabakh, forcibly taken by Armenia after the

collapse of the USSR. Karabakh has been quiet after last week's operation, but Azerbaijan's Defense Ministry announced on Monday that two Azerbaijani soldiers were killed and another was injured when their military truck hit an antitank land mine planted by Armenian forces in the region. It was the deaths of

several Azerbaijani soldiers by a land mine that prompted Azerbaijan to launch a counterterrorism offensive against separatists. The Azerbaijan military truck struck the mine at 5.35 p.m. local time on Sunday, the ministry said in a statement. Two soldiers, Ekrem Shadmanov and Tural Seyidov, were

killed, and Elvin Aliyev was injured in the explosion of an antitank mine planted by Armenian forces on the route between Azerbaijani positions for terrorist purposes. Aliyev is not in critical condition, the statement added. Some social media posts show Shadmanov was promoted to staff colonel in the Azerbaijani

army before the incident. An investigation has been launched into the incident, and the general public has been warned not to enter liberated areas until the region has been cleared of mines. Mines planted by Armenian forces have killed several Azerbaijani civilians and soldiers in recent years.



## CBRT aims to boost lira demand

ANKARA: The Central Bank of the Republic of Türkiye (CBRT) is determined to increase domestic and international demand for lira assets, its Governor Hafize Gaye Erkan said Monday. In a speech, Erkan also said, "The preliminary indicators show the share of lira assets is starting to increase in domestic and foreign investor portfolios." The messages of the central bank governor delivered at the opening of the OIC-COMCEC Central Banks Forum Meeting, which was closed to the press, were shared on the official social media account of the bank on X, formerly Twitter. "We will continue to resolutely implement our road map to establish disinflation in 2024," Anadolu Agency (AA) cited Erkan as saying. Annual inflation rose to nearly 60% in August, with authorities acknowledging it is expected to increase further toward the end of the year. It had reached a 24-year high of 85.5% last October and stood at 47.83% this July after regressing to as low as 38.21% in June. The bank on Thursday raised its key interest rate by a lofty 500 basis points to 30%, marking a second month of aggressive tightening after President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan expressed his strongest pledge of support for the economy team's policy overhaul. Earlier on Monday, according to local media reports, the bank removed the minimum interest requirement for the Turkish lira conversion rate in FX-protected accounts. Hence, the central bank took additional steps to support lira deposits and continues its steps with determination to transform it to make it attractive. The bank in August began rolling back a government-backed scheme that safeguards Turkish lira deposits against foreign exchange depreciation, marking another move toward more orthodox policies following a shift toward interest rate hikes.—DNA

## 2nd round of negotiations on Ethiopia's mega-dam wrap up

## WEB DESK

ADDIS ABABA: The second round of trilateral negotiations surrounding the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD), which also holds immense significance for Egypt and Sudan, have ended on an inconclusive note, with Ethiopia pledging to continue talks "in good faith". The two-day talks, which brought together representatives from Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt to address contentious issues surrounding the GERD project on the Blue Nile, ended on Sunday in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa. Ambassador Seleshi Bekele, head of the Ethiopian negotiating team, said in a statement on Sunday: "[The parties] exchanged constructive ideas on various outstanding issues

... Ethiopia reiterates its commitment to continue negotiating in good faith." In a statement released by its Ministry of Water Resources and Irrigation on Sunday, Egypt said the latest round of discussions concerning the \$4.2bn dam concluded without making any significant progress. Ethiopia, the statement noted, still opposed compromise solutions or internationally agreed-upon technical arrangements that could address its specific interests related to the GERD without encroaching upon the rights and interests of the downstream nations. The statement added that the Egyptian negotiating team remains committed to constructive negotiations with clearly defined objectives. Protracted negotiations since 2011, which have tried to find

common ground on key issues such as the filling and operation of the dam as well as mechanisms for resolving any future disputes, have failed to bring about an agreement between Ethiopia and its downstream neighbours. The dam's potential effect on downstream water flow into Egypt and Sudan has been the most significant concern. After years at loggerheads, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi and Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed had agreed in July to finalise a deal on the dam within four months, resuming talks in August. Ethiopia has started generating power from \$5bn GERD project | Inside Story Earlier this month, Ethiopia announced it had completed the fourth filling of the dam, which it views as being central

to its development plans. In February 2022, Addis Ababa announced that the dam had begun generating electricity for the first time. At full capacity, the huge hydroelectric dam — 1.8km (1.1 miles) long and 145 metres (476 feet) high — could generate more than 5,000 megawatts. That would double Ethiopia's production of electricity, which only half the country's population of 120 million currently has. Egypt and Sudan, heavily reliant on the Nile's waters for agriculture, drinking water and overall livelihoods, have consistently emphasised the importance of finding a fair solution. The United Nations says Egypt could "run out of water by 2025" and parts of Sudan are increasingly vulnerable to drought as a result of climate change. Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry.

## TRNC urges greater int'l recognition

## NEWS DESK

ANKARA: The president of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) urged foreign governments to recognize his country. "Our state, which we established with our free will, needs to be recognized," Ersin Tatar said, speaking with Turkish Cypriots in New York, where he traveled to hold talks amid last week's UN General Assembly. According to a statement on Sunday by his presidential office, Tatar underlined that recognition of the TRNC and cooperation could bring stability to the entire region. He said Turkish Cypriots living



abroad were united and always connected to their homeland, highlighting the importance that future generations maintain their ties with the TRNC. Tatar also acknowledged the support that Ankara provides in this regard, pointing out Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's address to the assembly, where he expressed

the need to end injustices against Turkish Cypriots, end the ongoing embargo and isolation of the TRNC, and recognize its independence. This support is crucial for promoting and gaining recognition for their just cause worldwide, Tatar said. He also stressed the importance of efforts to enhance relationships with different countries, emphasizing that the TRNC was the homeland where Turkish Cypriots can live independently for the future. The East Mediterranean island of Cyprus has been mired in a decades-long dispute between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots, despite a series of diplomatic efforts to achieve a comprehensive settlement. Eth-

nic attacks starting in the early 1960s forced Turkish Cypriots to withdraw into enclaves for their safety. In 1974, a Greek Cypriot coup aimed at Greece's annexation of the island led to Türkiye's military intervention as a guarantor power to protect Turkish Cypriots from persecution and violence. TRNC was founded in 1983. It has seen an on-and-off peace process in recent years, including a failed 2017 initiative in Switzerland under the auspices of guarantor countries Türkiye, Greece, and the UK. The Greek Cypriot administration was admitted to the EU in 2004, the same year when Greek Cypriots thwarted a UN plan to end the longstanding dispute.

## Hungary's Orban threatens to pull support for Kyiv

BUDAPEST: Hungary will not support Ukraine in any issue in international affairs until the language rights of ethnic Hungarians there are restored, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban told parliament on Monday. Orban also said Hungary was in no rush to ratify Sweden's NATO accession, flagging a further delay in a process that has been stranded in parliament since last year. Sweden's membership bid is on hold pending approval from Hungary and Turkey. Hungary clashed with Ukraine over what it says are curbs on the rights of roughly 150,000 ethnic Hungarians to use their native tongue, especially in education, after Kyiv passed a law in 2017 restricting the use of minority languages in schools. "They want to transform (Hungarian schools) into Ukrainian schools and if that does not work they want to close them," nationalist premier Orban said in his speech, adding that his government would fight for the rights of ethnic Hungarians in western Ukraine. "We do not support Ukraine in any issue in the international scene until it restores the laws that guarantee the rights of Hungarians." —DNA

## 1st Saudi ambassador presents credentials to Palestinian President

RAMALLAH: The first Saudi ambassador to Palestine, Naif bin Bandar al-Sudairi, is set to present his credentials to President Mahmoud Abbas within days, a Palestinian official said. "We welcome His Excellency the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the State of Palestine, who will present his official credentials to His Excellency President Mahmoud Abbas within a few days," Hussein al-Sheikh, secretary of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)'s Executive Committee, said on X social media platform. On Aug. 13, the official Saudi Press Agency reported that al-Sudairi, who is also Saudi ambassador to Jordan, "formally presented a copy of his credentials as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Non-Resident Ambassador to the State of Palestine and Consul General in Jerusalem." Al-Sudairi is the first Saudi ambassador to Palestine. The Kingdom had a Consulate General in Jerusalem, but it was closed with Israel's occupation of the city in 1967, when the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, was under Jordanian administration at the time.—APP

## Ukraine attempted 8 drone attacks

## DNA

MOSCOW: Russia on Monday said it shot down eight Ukrainian drones in different parts of Russia last night. The Defense Ministry in a statement said Kyiv "tried to carry out terrorist attacks with plane-type drones" over the northwestern part of the Black Sea, Crimean Peninsula, Kursk and Bryansk regions. In a separate statement, Kursk region governor Roman Starovoi said the roof of an administrative building and several private houses were damaged in the drone attack. The ministry said it carried out strikes and destroyed control points from which Ukraine launched drone attacks. "The crews of the Su-34 multifunctional fighter-bombers of the Central Military District struck command and observation posts and control points of UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles), as well as armored combat vehicles of the armed forces of Ukraine in the Krasnolimansky direction of the 'special military operation' with guided aerial bombs," the ministry said. It added that "to destroy the targets, the pilots used guided munitions, which destroyed enemy fortified structures and equipment with high accuracy, planning from a great height."

## Jordan's archaeological discoveries registered sites

## DNA

JORDAN: Jordan's Minister of Tourism and Antiquities Makram Qeisi announced that the kingdom has uncovered a total of 100,000 archaeological sites, with 15,000 of them officially registered, Petra news agency reported on Sunday. The announcement was made during the inauguration of a workshop at the iHERITAGE exhibition for the ICT Mediterranean platform, which focused on UNESCO cultural heritage. The platform featured holographic representations of Petra, Jordanian folklore, and museums at the Petra visitor center. Jordan's tourism sector currently provides 55,000 employment opportunities and contributes 13 percent to the country's gross domestic product. Plans are underway to further expand and modernize this sector in line with the country's economic vision. The exhibition marked the official launch of the website for Petra and other tourist destinations. The website offers a 3D tourism experience.

Briefs

Khawar Maneka arrested in Lahore

DNA

LAHORE: The Punjab Anti-Corruption Establishment (ACE) on Monday arrested Khawar Farid Maneka, ex-husband of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan's wife Bushra Bibi, on illegal construction charges in Lahore on Monday. An ACE spokesperson confirmed the arrest of Maneka saying that he was apprehended on charges of illegally constructing a marriage hall on the cemetery land. The spokesperson said an inquiry into the illegal construction against Maneka was underway after the deputy commissioner filed a complaint against him. Sources told Geo News that Maneka was taken into custody from the airport after he attempted to "escape from the country". The Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) said in a statement that Maneka was barred from travelling to Dubai via private airline at Lahore airport as his name was placed on exit control list (ECL). Maneka has been handed over to ACE team, the statement added. Later in the day, Maneka was presented before a local court in Lahore.

ATC issues Robkar for release of PTI activists

DNA

LAHORE: Accepting the bail bonds deposited by nine PTI activists including Rubina Jameel and Sanam Javed, an Anti-Terrorism Court (ATC) in Lahore has issued the Robkar for their release. The ATC granted bail to PTI activist Sanam Javed Khan and others in the Jinnah House attack case on Saturday. Judge Arshad Javed pronounced the decision on the bail plea on the submission of surety bonds of Rs 100,000 each. On behalf of PTI activists including Sanam Javed, Rubina Jameel, Afshan Tariq, Asma Shuja, Shah Bano, Syed Faisal Akhtar, Qasim Ali Hasan, and Hussain Qadri, their family members and friends submitted the bail bounds. After collecting the bail bond, the court issued a warrant for the woman's release. The court ordered the superintendent of jail to release Sanam Javed and others. Meanwhile, the authorities have decided to challenge the post-arrest bail of nine PTI activists including Sanam Javed Khan in the Lahore High Court (LHC). The prosecution will file a petition in the high court against the decision of the anti-terrorism court after receiving a copy of the verdict. On May 9, protesting PTI workers and leaders vandalized the Lahore Corps Commander's residence, also known as Jinnah House, following the arrest of Imran Khan in a corruption case in May.

Taliban weighs using US mass surveillance plan

Taliban explore expansion of city surveillance with possible use of American plan and Huawei consultation

NEWS DESK

KABUL: The Taliban are creating a large-scale camera surveillance network for Afghan cities that could involve repurposing a plan crafted by the Americans before their 2021 pullout, an interior ministry spokesman told Reuters, as authorities seek to supplement thousands of cameras already across the capital, Kabul. The Taliban administration - which has publicly said it is focused on restoring security and clamping down on Da'ish, which has claimed many major attacks in Afghan cities - has also consulted with Chinese telecoms equipment maker Huawei about potential cooperation, the spokesman said. Preventing attacks by international militant groups - including prominent organizations such as Da'ish - is at the heart of the interaction between the Taliban and many foreign nations, including the US and China, according to readouts from those meetings. But some analysts question the cash-strapped regime's ability to fund the program, and rights groups have expressed concern that any resources will be used to crackdown on protesters. Details of how the Taliban intend to expand and manage mass surveillance, including obtaining the US plan, have not been previously reported. The mass camera rollout, which will involve a focus on "important points" in Ka-

bul and elsewhere, is part of a new security strategy that will take four years to be fully implemented, Ministry of Interior spokesman Abdul Mateen Qani told Reuters. "At the present we are working on a Kabul security map, which is (being completed) by security experts and (is taking) lots of time," he said. "We already have two maps, one which was made by USA for the previous government and second by Turkey." He did not detail when the Turkish plan was made. A US State Department spokesperson said Washington was not "partnering" with the Taliban and has "made clear to the Taliban that it is their responsibility to ensure that they give no safe haven to terrorists." A Turkish government spokesperson didn't return a request for comment. Qani said the Taliban had a "simple chat" about the potential network with Huawei [R:RIC:HWT:UL] in August, but no contracts or firm plans had been reached. Bloomberg News reported in August that Huawei had reached "verbal agreement" with the Taliban about a contract to install a surveillance system, citing a person familiar with the discussions. Huawei told Reuters in September that "no plan was discussed" during the meeting. A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman said she was not aware of specific discussions but added: "China has always supported the peace and reconstruction process in Afghanistan and supported Chinese

enterprises to carry out relevant practical cooperation." There are over 62,000 cameras in Kabul and other cities that are monitored from a central control room, according to the Taliban. The last major update to Kabul's camera system occurred in 2008, according to the former government, which relied heavily on Western-led international forces for security. When NATO-led international forces were gradually withdrawing in January 2021, then-vice president Amrullah Saleh said his government would roll out a huge upgrade of Kabul's camera surveillance system. He told reporters the \$100 million plan was backed by the NATO coalition. "The arrangement we had planned in early 2021 was different," Saleh told Reuters in September, adding that the "infrastructure" for the 2021 plan had been destroyed. It was not clear if the plan Saleh referenced was similar to the ones that the Taliban say they have obtained, nor if the administration would modify them. Jonathan Schroden, an expert on Afghanistan with the Center for Naval Analyses, said a surveillance system would be "useful for the Taliban as it seeks to prevent groups like the Da'ish ... from attacking Taliban members or government positions in Kabul." The Taliban already closely monitor urban centres with security force vehicles and regular checkpoints. Rights advocates and opponents of the regime are concerned enhanced surveillance might target civil so-

ciety members and protesters. Though the Taliban rarely confirm arrests, the Committee to Protect Journalists says at least 64 journalists have been detained since the takeover. Protests against restrictions on women in Kabul have been broken up forcefully by security forces, according to protesters, videos and Reuters witnesses. Implementing a mass surveillance system "under the guise of 'national security'" sets a template for the Taliban to continue its draconian policies that violate fundamental rights," said Matt Mahmoudi from Amnesty International. The Taliban strongly denies that an upgraded surveillance system would breach the rights of Afghans. Qani said the system was comparable with what other major cities utilize and that it would be operated in line with Islamic Sharia law, which prevents recording in private spaces. The plan faces practical challenges, security analysts say. Intermittent daily power cuts in Afghanistan mean cameras connected to the central grid are unlikely to provide consistent feeds. Only 40% of Afghans have access to electricity, according to the state-owned power provider. The Taliban also have to find funding after a massive economic contraction and the withdrawal of much aid following their takeover. The administration said in 2022 that it has an annual budget of over \$2 billion, of which defence spending is the largest component, according to the Taliban army chief.

Egypt to hold presidential polls Dec 10-12

DNA

CAIRO: Egypt will hold a presidential vote on Dec 10-12, the elections authority said on Monday, with President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi widely expected to win reelection despite an economic crisis including record inflation and chronic foreign currency shortages. El-Sisi, 68, can stand for a third term due to constitutional amendments in 2019 that also extended the length of presidential terms to six years from four, opening the way for him to stay in office until at least 2030. Election results are expected to be announced on Dec. 23 and, in the event of a run off round, final results should be announced on Jan. 16 at the latest, the election authority said.

Cuban embassy attacked with petrol bombs

DNA

HAVANA: Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodriguez has blamed US authorities for failing to act against groups hostile to his government following an alleged petrol bomb attack on the island nation's Washington embassy. On Sunday evening, "the Cuban embassy in the US was the target of a terrorist attack by an individual, who launched two Molotov cocktails," Rodriguez wrote on X (formerly Twitter) shortly after the claimed incident. None of the embassy workers were hurt, the minister said, adding that the details are currently still being established. "The anti-Cuban groups resort to terrorism when feeling they enjoy impunity, something that Cuba has repeatedly warned the US authorities about," he stated. The episode happened during a week when high-level leaders were visiting the UN General Assembly, including Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel. His arrival in New York was met with small-scale protests by Cuban immigrants, who marched through Manhattan, chanting "Freedom for Cuba" and "Down with Communism." Rodriguez recalled that the Cuban mission in Washington had been attacked previously in April 2020. A Cuban-born man suffering from mental health issues fired at the embassy using an AK-47 type rifle.



ISLAMABAD: US ambassador to Pakistan Donald Bloome called on the caretaker federal minister for planning development and special initiatives, Muhammad Sami Saeed. - DNA

PTI urges SC to ensure Imran's court appearance

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) spokesperson termed the ongoing efforts to deprive PTI Chairman Imran Khan of the right to appear before the courts under various pretext as a murder of justice and a shameful attempt to subject a political prisoner to worst political vendetta. PTI Spokesperson strongly reacted to the ongoing attempts to deny PTI Chairman the right to appearance in hearings in various cases against him in the courts under various excuses and said that it was murder of the justice, besides it was shameful attempt to make him a target of cruel political revenge as a political prisoner. He said that it was the fundamental legal right of the Chairman Imran Khan to pursue cases against him and attend courts' hearings regularly. "Before the arrest, Imran Khan was forced to appear in court in hundreds of frivolous, fabricated and politically motivated cases, despite the murderous attacks and serious security threats," he added. PTI spokesperson reminded that Chairman PTI's Lahore Zaman Park's residence was stormed by police on March 14 last year and operation and sieged continued for 24 hour under the guise to force Khan to appear before the court. - DNA

Mohsin Naqvi for tracing culprits of adulterated eye drug

LAHORE: Caretaker Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi on Monday said that the provincial government had withdrawn two batches of an allegedly adulterated eye drug - that resulted in the loss of eyesight for over a dozen diabetic patients, including a brother of senior PPP leader Chaudhry Manzoor Ahmed - and verification of the seized injection was under way to identify those responsible. Several diabetic patients in Lahore, Kasur and Jhang districts had been administered Avastin injections to address retinal damage, but the doses led to severe infections, ultimately resulting in the loss of their eyesight. The diabetic patients who were administered the drug developed a life-threatening disease, endophthalmitis, an inflammation of the inner coats of the eye, and the issue first surfaced when several cases of the drug's reaction were reported from the Kasur district. An investigation team of doctors have expressed fears of a surge in the number of affected patients after learning that the drug had been supplied to many trust hospitals, other health facilities and the local market. Speaking to reporters in Lahore today, CM Naqvi emphasised that decisive action could be taken once the report of the incident was available, which he said was expected in 10-12 days. He also stressed the need to determine whether the issue was related to the injection itself or the transportation process, adding that it was also important to maintain proper temperature for such medicines. Naqvi explained that the injections were manufactured in Lahore and dispatched to Sadiqabad, which made it essential to pinpoint where the problem occurred. The chief minister expressed concern about a lapse in government oversight, questioning how the drug inspector had allowed the sale to proceed. He also raised questions about the role of the healthcare commission in overseeing those activities in private hospitals, suggesting the need for self-accountability. - Agencies

Ogra advises against speculating petrol price

ISLAMABAD: The Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Ogra) Monday advised against speculating on the price of petroleum products after federal ministers claimed the POL rates would likely be reduced in the next fortnightly review. Caretaker Federal Commerce and Industries Minister Gohar Ejaz and Interim Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi said last week that POL prices would be reduced after the rupee gained ground against the dollar. In the last 14 days, the rupee has gained around Rs16 against the greenback, prompting the claims, as Pakistan, being an importer of POL, purchases the commodity in dollars. In the previous fortnightly review, the caretaker government had jacked up the petrol price by more than Rs26 and diesel by over Rs17 per litre to Rs331.38 and Rs329.18, respectively - the highest in history. In response to the ministers' claims, Ogra issued a statement saying: "[the authority] would like to emphasize the importance of avoiding speculations regarding the prices of petroleum products." The authority mentioned that petroleum product prices in Pakistan are primarily dependent on international market prices and the exchange rate of the Dollar. In recent times, it said, there has been a surge in international petroleum prices, while the dollar-to-rupee exchange rate has shown improvement. But, the authority said, it is essential to highlight that there is still one week remaining before the announcement of new prices. "Therefore, any speculation about price increases or decreases during this period is highly speculative and could potentially disrupt the smooth functioning of the oil supply chain." - DNA

France calls off military co-op with Niger

France will end its military presence in Niger by the end of 2023, Macron says

PARIS: France will end its military presence in Niger by the end of 2023, French President Emmanuel Macron said Sunday, marking the latest major development amid high tensions between the two countries since a military junta seized control of Niger in July. "We are putting an end to our military cooperation with the de facto authorities of Niger because they don't want to fight terrorism anymore," Macron said regarding the military leaders who took over rule of the north-west African country. France has not recognized Niger's military authorities and insists that ousted President Mohamed Bazoum, who was toppled in the coup, remains the country's only legitimate authority. The decision to end the "cooperation" is "because we are not there to deal with internal politics and be hostages of putschists," Macron said, referring to the military group. The withdrawal will be organized in the coming weeks, he said. "They will come back in an orderly manner in the weeks and months to come, and for that, we

will coordinate with the putschists because we want this to happen calmly," Macron said. Niger's ruling military power said it welcomes France's decision to pull its troops from the country, according to a statement posted to Niger's state television, Tele Sahel. "This Sunday, we celebrate another step towards Niger's sovereignty. French troops and the French ambassador will be leaving Niger by the end of the year," the statement said. "Imperialist and neo-colonialist forces are no longer welcome on our national territory." "Any person, institution or structure whose presence threatens the interests and outlook of our country will have to leave the land of our ancestors, whether they like it or not," it added. "Our resistance will be

unwavering, and will deal with any institution or structure attempting to challenge the higher interests of our nation." France had stationed military troops in the country, many of whom were there to assist with counterterrorism missions, on the basis that Niger was a relatively stable democracy in a region fraught with political upheaval, terrorism and Islamist insurgencies, CNN has reported. Responding to a question on the withdrawal's timeline, Macron said there will not be any French soldiers in Niger by the end of 2023. Earlier this month, two US officials also said the United States could begin withdrawing troops from Niger in the coming weeks, CNN has reported. As many as half of the roughly 1,100 US troops stationed in Niger

could be pulled from the country, the two officials said. The French president also said he has decided to bring back the country's ambassador to Niger, Sylvain Itte, to France. "France has decided to bring back its ambassador," Macron said. "In the coming hours, our ambassador along with several diplomats will return to France." That announcement comes just over a week after Macron said the ambassador was "literally being held hostage at the French embassy," and that "food was prevented from being delivered" to the embassy in Niamey, the capital. After their July coup, the military junta ordered Itte to leave the country, and it later revoked his visa and instructed police to expel him. But the diplomat remained in place, according to the French presidency, and French authorities reiterated they did not recognize the junta's authority. Itte was still working, French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna said earlier this month, adding he "will stay as long as we want him to stay" and that the official's return was Macron's decision. - Agencies



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