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Pakistan floods a 'litmus test' for climate justice

Detailed News On Page-08

Ukraine gradually gaining ground, says NATO Chief

Detailed News On Page-08

Arbaz shines as Pak hockey team beat Uzbekistan

Detailed News On Page-06



'Why is everyone so scared?' CJP Isa furious after multiple requests to withdraw review

CJP Isa raised questions as to why the court verdict on Faizabad sit-in was not implemented; hearing adjourned till November 01; SC seeks written replies

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa has expressed annoyance over the non-implementation of the Supreme Courts 2019 verdict against the Faizabad sit-in. During the hearing of the case on Thursday, CJP Isa raised questions as to why the court verdict on Faizabad sit-in was not implemented. Why everyone is so scared, the CJP remarked. A three-member bench led by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa and comprising Justice Athar Minallah and Justice Aminuddin Khan heard the pleas challenging the verdict on the Faizabad sit-in staged by the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) in 2017 against the then Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government and adjourned the hearing till November 1. Earlier today, the federal government filed an application in the Supreme Court to withdraw its plea against the verdict. Attorney General for Pakistan (AGP) Mansoor Usman Awan told Geo News that the federal government, which had filed the plea through the Ministry of Defence, has decided to withdraw its petition. Earlier this week, the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (Pemra) and Intelligence Bureau (IB) also filed similar applications, seeking the withdrawal of their petitions. Last week, the apex court in response to a series of review petitions submitted against its previous ruling said that it would revisit the Faizabad sit-in case on September 28 (today). The review petitions were filed by the Ministry of Defence, the IB, the PTI,

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Rana demands accountability of former generals

DNA

LAHORE: As the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has adopted an aggressive narrative — demanding the accountability of former generals and judges ahead of the upcoming general elections — the party's senior leader Rana Sanaullah on Thursday asked if they should not even take the names of those who pushed the country into crisis. The former interior minister last week, held ex-army chief Gen (ret'd) Qamar Javed Bajwa and former Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) chief Lt Gen (ret'd) Faiz Hamid responsible for prevailing political and economic crises in the country. Addressing a PML-N consultative meeting in Gujranwala, Sanaullah said: "Pakistan was heading towards prosperity when it was pushed into crisis for the third time." In 2017, the Supreme Court

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MADINAH: Interim Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar paid his respects and offered Nawafil at the Roza-e-Rasool (Peace be Upon Him) in Madinah. — DNA

'No change in position on Israel-Palestine conflict'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Caretaker Foreign Minister Jilani Abbas Jilani affirmed on Thursday that the Palestine issue should be resolved according to the wishes of the Palestinians, clarifying that Pakistan's position regarding the Israel-Palestine conflict remains unchanged from the past. Speaking at a press conference held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Jilani expressed concern about the serious human rights violations occurring in Palestine, and underscored that Al-Quds should be recognised as the capital of Palestine. Jilani mentioned that

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West overly obsessed about containing China

"It's not a Cold War. There is no Iron Curtain here. It's not that opaque. Everybody sees what is happening

NEWS DESK

LONDON: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar has said that Pakistan was focusing on its own interests without choosing sides in the great power competition, and the West was "over-obsessed" with efforts to contain China. The prime minister, in an interview with the American newspaper during his visit to New York to attend the 78th United Nations General Assembly session published on Wednesday, said Pakistan intended to stay "neutral" on Russia's war with Ukraine and saw China as its "all-weather friend" and "strategic partner". "It's not a Cold War. There is no Iron Curtain here. It's not that opaque. Everybody sees what is happening," the prime minister said. He said the West was "over-obsessed" with efforts to contain China. He told the interviewer that

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Bloomberg praises PKR progress

PKR on track to become top-performing currency this month

DNA

LONDON: The Pakistani rupee is on track to become the top performer globally in September as the caretaker government continues its crackdown on illegal dollar trade, Bloomberg reported Thursday. The local currency rose around 6% this month against the dollar — an amazing feat despite the Thai baht and South Korean

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Briefs

Nawaz ready to 'forgive'

DNA

LAHORE: PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif's persistent efforts to convince his elder brother, former prime minister Nawaz Sharif, to reconsider his demand for holding former military officials accountable for their "unconstitutional actions" seem to have borne fruit. A well-informed source within the party claims that the three-time former prime minister is now inclined towards adopting a more conciliatory stance. He intends to prioritize the country's economic stability and uphold constitutional principles.

Permanent arrest warrant for Swati

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Special Judge Central Islamabad has issued a permanent arrest warrant for Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Azam Swati in the controversial tweet case. Islamabad's Special Judge Central Shah Rukh Arjumand issued a permanent warrant against Azam Swati for his continued skipping court appearances despite initiating the process to declare Azam Swati as a proclaimed offender. Earlier, the Special Judge Central had initiated proceeding to declare Azam Swati as a proclaimed offender (PO). The court has ordered the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) to arrest Senator Azam Swati wherever he is seen.

Afghan Taliban arrested 200 TTP militants: report

The report said the Afghan rulers have also implemented other "concrete steps" to "neutralise" the terrorist activity

FASIAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad's efforts to counter cross-border attacks have borne fruits as interim Afghan rulers arrested 200 suspected militants involved in attacks against Pakistan, Voice of America (VOA) reported, citing Pakistani officials privy to the development. The report said the Afghan rulers have also implemented other "concrete steps" to "neutralise" the terrorist activity. The details of the crackdown on the outlawed Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) were shared in bilateral talks they hosted last week in Kabul with a high-level delegation from Islamabad. The talks took place after four soldiers embraced martyrdom while repulsing terrorist attacks on two Pakistan Army check posts located near the Afghanistan border in the general area Kalash, District Chitral, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said on September 6. "On 6 September 2023, a large group of terrorists equipped with the

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Pak welcomes peace efforts for Yemen

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan welcomes positive outcome of the dialogue, held in Riyadh from 14 to 18 September 2023, between the officials of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Yemen and the Sultanate of Oman, aimed at achieving a road map for the peace process in Yemen. Pakistan also lauds the Saudi initiative of dialogue between the Saudi Defense Minister and the Sana'a delegation. It reflects the positive intent of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, under the sagacious stewardship of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques

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Pakistan condemns attack on Bahraini Forces

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan condemns the terrorist attack on Bahrain Defense Force position on the southern border of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia which resulted in the martyrdom of two Bahraini personnel and injured others. We extend deepest condolences to the Kingdom of Bahrain, its brotherly people and families of the martyrs. We pray for full recovery of the injured members of the Bahrain Defense Force.

COAS Asim vows to ramp up crackdown on illegal activities

STAFF REPORT

LAHORE: General Syed Asim Muneer, NI (M), Chief of Army Staff (COAS) visited Lahore today and attended meeting of the Provincial Apex Committee along with Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab, Mohsin Raza Naqvi. During the Apex Committee meeting, COAS was briefed about overall security situation, including Law Enforcement Actions against electricity and

gas theft, hoarding and foreign currency smuggling. Forum was also briefed on measures taken for protection of minorities and progress of operations in Kacha area. The forum also reviewed repatriation of illegal foreign nationals. COAS emphasised "Law Enforcement Actions against spectrum of illegal activities will continue with full force in collaboration with the LEAs and the concerned government departments to rid Pakistan from the substantial economic losses it continues to suf-

fer due to pilferage done by different methods". Forum was also apprised on progress on SIFC and Green Punjab initiatives. COAS underscored the need for synergy among all relevant departments for gainful effects of the landmark initiatives. The participants affirmed that state institutions, government departments and people are united for progress and prosperity of the province. Earlier, upon arrival, COAS was received by Commander Lahore Corps.



British MPs call on FM Jilani

The foreign minister appreciated the visiting British MPs for raising their voice in support of the oppressed Kashmiri people

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD : A delegation of the British Members of Parliament called on the Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani here on Thursday. The delegation included Chairman Labour Friends of Kashmir, UK, MP Andrew Gwynne, Vice Chairperson, Labour Friends of Kashmir UK MP Naz Shah, and Vice Chairman, All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Kashmir MP Sam Tarry. The foreign minister appreciated the visiting British MPs for raising their voice in support of the oppressed

Kashmiri people. He urged the delegation to gear up efforts to enhance global awareness about the ongoing human rights violations in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). He emphasized the urgent need to end the human rights violations in IIOJK and for the release of all political prisoners. He stressed that India should implement the UN Security Council Resolutions on Jammu and Kashmir so that the Kashmiri people may realize their inherent right to self-determination. Foreign Minister Jilani stated that Pakistan was willing to resolve all disputes with

India through dialogue. However, India would have to create a conducive environment for dialogue by reversing its illegal and unilateral actions of August 5, 2019 in IIOJK. The Foreign Minister also lauded the role of the visiting MPs in strengthening the bonds of friendship between Pakistan and the United Kingdom. The members of the delegation expressed concern over the human rights violations in IIOJK. They maintained that all other human rights flowed from the right to self-determination. Therefore, the Kashmiri people should not be deprived of this inalienable right.

AIOU works to include out-of-school children

ISLAMABAD: Vice Chancellor, of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood Thursday said that the university has started a campaign to bring out-of-school children into the education net through expanding its educational network in the remote and relatively low literacy areas of the country. The VC announced that the

regional offices and model study centers of AIOU will be established in every part of the country that lacks the basic facilities necessary for education. The VC AIOU was presiding over the Regional Directors meeting at the Faisalabad Regional Campus, said a news release. Regional directors of Sahiwal, Sargodha, Jhang, Kasur,

and Gujranwala participated in the meeting. Regional Director, Faisalabad, Dr. Bashir Ahmad Samim hosted the meeting. The Vice-Chancellor directed the regional heads to identify areas where AIOU can provide educational facilities. Dr. Nasir said that our goal is to increase the facilities as much as possible. Dr. Malik Tauqir

Ahmed Khan briefed the Vice Chancellor about the Regional Offices and model study centers of AIOU in Punjab. All the regional heads assured the Vice Chancellor to pay special attention to student facilitation. Dr. Bashir Ahmad Samim gave a detailed briefing to the Vice Chancellor on the services of his region.

Rs 253m fine imposed on 2,017 power pilferers

FAISALABAD: The Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO) caught 2,017 power pilferers during the last 22 days and imposed over Rs 253 million fine for stealing electricity in various areas of the company during the ongoing special anti-power theft drive. Spokesman Tahir Sheikh said here on Thursday that over 5.811 million detection units were charged. A sum of over Rs.97.6 million was also recovered from the defaulters. He said that 1852 cases were registered against power theft in various police stations whereas the police also arrested 679 pilferers so far. He further said that the FESCO teams detected electricity theft at 737 points in Faisalabad district and imposed a fine of Rs.89 million on them under the head of 1.974 million detection units. In Jhang district, the FESCO teams caught 182 electricity thieves and imposed a fine of Rs.32.7 million under 700,000 detection units. Similarly, 209 cases of electricity theft were detected in Bhakkar district and the company handed down the power pilferers with a fine of Rs.27.1 million under 831,000 detection units. He further said that 228 electricity thieves were caught from Chinot district and they were imposed a fine of Rs.24.3 million under 663,000 detection units. In Khushab district, 57 consumers were found involved in electricity theft and they were handed down with a fine of Rs.8.4 million for 158,000 detection units. The FESCO teams also caught 210 power pilferers from Mianwali and they were fined with Rs.23.2 million for 432,000 detection units. In Sargodha district, 226 cases of electricity theft were detected. Hence, a fine of Rs.27.4 million was imposed on the electricity thieves under 569,000 detection units. The FESCO teams also caught 148 electricity thieves from Toba Tek Singh district. Therefore, the company imposed a fine of Rs.19.5 million for 388,000 detection units, spokesman added.—APP

TDEA-FAFEN hosts seminar on election integrity technology

DNA

ISLAMABAD : Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) on Thursday urged the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to initiate a wide-ranging dialogue on the need to introduce election results audit as well as regulate the election-related use of social media for the upcoming general elections. FAFEN believed that the Elections Act, 2017 provides adequate legal space for the Commission to introduce these measures employing its powers under Section 4(3) to be read with Section 239. FAFEN proposed a detailed methodology for the election results audit based on the provisions of the Elections Act, 2017, and Election Rules, 2017, which will be made public on October 9, 2023. The proposed audit encompasses a method-

ical scrutiny of election results forms for enhancing election integrity and legitimacy. These forms are prepared by the federal, provincial, and judicial officials deployed as election officials and are officialised sans scrutiny by the ECP. The members of civil society and technology experts reinforced the need for such measures during a seminar on 'Technology for Election Integrity'. Organized by the Trust for Democratic Education and Accountability - Free and Fair Election Network (TDEA-FAFEN), the seminar emphasized the cautious approach towards employing appropriate technology in election operations and administration to improve transparency, efficiency, and strict compliance with the electoral laws, rules, and procedures. The seminar included panel discussions on the impacts

of technology in elections, management and transparency of election results, and election-related use of social media. The sessions were addressed by FAFEN's Executive Council Member Nasrullah Khan, Zafarullah Khan, Taha Ali, Azhar Zia ur Rahman, Saleem Rafique, Idrees Khwaja, Asim Ghaffar, Shaji Ahmed, Amber Rahim Shamsi, Asad Baig, Mukhtar Ahmed Ali and TDEA-FAFEN staff. During the seminar, it was emphasized that Pakistan's elections should embrace the Information Age, starting with a comprehensive overhaul of the quality and quantity of information shared through the ECP. To ensure a seamless transition, the speakers urged that any new technology additions to election operations and administration should undergo rigorous piloting during a series of electoral exercises.

Rangers arrest facilitators of robbers

KARACHI :The Pakistan Rangers Sindh and Police in a joint intelligence based operation arrested three alleged facilitators of criminals and robbers of riverside areas of Khairpur and Ghotki. According to spokesman for Rangers on Thursday, the arrested were identified as Noor Al

Shahani alias Nooro, Ali Gohar Chachar and Akbar Ali Chachar were facilitators of criminals and robbers of the riverine areas and were involved in the delivery of illegal arms and ammunition. The Rangers recovered 2 pistols, 2 SMGs, 1 M16A1 gun, 13 magazines, 766 different types of am-

munition, a dagger, a car, a jeep, 9 mobiles, police uniform and cash amounting to Rs.561,400/- from the possession of the accused. The arrested accused along with the arms, ammunition and stolen goods have been handed over to the police for further legal proceedings.—APP



ISLAMABAD : The Caretaker Federal Minister of Finance, Revenue and Economic Affairs Division, Dr Shamshad Akhtar chaired the Cabinet Committee on State-owned Enterprises (CCOSOE) at the Finance Division.—APP

World Tourism Day celebrated in Chitral

Deputy Commissioner Chitral Muhammad Ali and DPO Chitral Ikramullah Khan were the special guests of the World Tourism Day program

CHITRAL : On the occasion of World Tourism Day, wonderful programs were conducted in Chitral, with the day being celebrated with great enthusiasm, and a walk was organized on this occasion in which a large number of people related to tourism participated. Students from schools and government officials representing civil society participated in the walk. The participants carried placards inscribed with promoting tourism and maintaining peace in the beautiful valley of Chi-

tral. Deputy Commissioner Chitral Muhammad Ali and DPO Chitral Ikramullah Khan were the special guests of the World Tourism Day program. This program was organized with the financial support of the Aga Khan Rural Support Program, managed by the Chitral Tourism Association. Paragliding was performed in the program, and hundreds of people watched this spectacular performance at Chitral Polo Ground and gave cheering responses to

the paragliders. After Azan, a conference was organized in a local hotel wherein all stakeholders related to the tourism sector presented their recommendations regarding security issues, poor roads, unorganized tourism, and solving many problems that hinder the development of tourism in Chitral. They urged the government and tourism department to take practical steps by seriously dealing with the tourism sector. They said that there is more potential for de-

veloping tourism sectors and promoting tourism in Lower and Upper Chitral. Chitrali products and traditional foods were exhibited by women on this occasion, in which tourists and local people showed great interest. Chitral Tourism Association President Syed Harir Shah, Prince Siraj Mulk, Mehrban Khan, Assistant Commissioner Chitral Atif Jalib, Additional Deputy Commissioner Finance, and SIF Coordinator Shahzad participated as panelists. Deputy Commissioner Chitral Mu-



ISLAMABAD : Ambassador of the Republic of Uzbekistan to Pakistan H.E Oybek Arif Usmanov called on Jamal Shah, Interim Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture at his office.—DNA

IGP visits police smart centre

DNA

LAHORE : Inspector General Police Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar is busy in official meeting and visits during his visit to China, in continuation of which the IG Punjab visited the smart center of the Chinese police.

A diligent squad of Chinese police welcomed the Punjab Police and presented salutations. Led by IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar Punjab Police delegation reviewed the emergency response mechanism of Chinese police special forces and also inspected the Chinese command and control center equipped with modern technology. Punjab Police delegation was briefed about modern monitoring and communication equipment, drone technology, raid response facilities.

Officers of the Punjab police delegation carefully reviewed the latest weapons, IT-based logistics and analytical technology used by the Chinese police. IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar said that the working of the Punjab police will be upgraded gradually by the excellent policing mechanism and technology of the Chinese police. The Chinese police have decided to provide training and technical facilities including modern weapons to the Punjab police. On this occasion, the provision of weapons used by the Chinese special police forces to the Special Forces of Punjab Police including Elite Force and Special Protection Unit of the Punjab Police was also discussed. IG Punjab further said that the operational and crime control strategy, monitoring and surveillance system of Punjab Police is being further improved with the cooperation of Chinese police. At the end of the meeting, IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar was also presented with a souvenir by the Chinese police.

World Rabies Day

Karachi Mayor opens dog sterilization centers

NAZIR SAYAL

KARACHI : Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab has said that dog sterilization centers had been opened in three KMC hospitals because Rabies problems can be solved by sterilizing dogs. He said this while talking to media at his participation as chief guest in the awareness walk organized jointly by KMC, Indus Hospital, Infectious Disease Society Pakistan, Dow University of Health Sciences, CDR Health Department Government of Sindh at People's Square on the occasion of World Rabies Day on Thursday. The Mayor Karachi said that anti-rabies injection should be done immediately instead of home remedies for dog bites. Municipal Commis-

sioner Syed Afzal Zaidi, Mayor Karachi's Representative for Political Affairs Karamullah Waqasi, from Indus Hospital Dr. Naseem Salahuddin, Aftab Gohar, Dr. Talat Rumi and Dr. Saqib Ali Sheikh were also present while doctors, experts, teachers with large number of students and citizens participated in the walk. Barrister Murtaza Wahab said that on the occasion of International Rabies Day, we decided to organize an awareness walk in Karachi. He said that the sensitivity of this problem felt on watching a video of a child in Hyderabad who was in a lot of pain and could not be rescued. We want such an incident not to happen to anyone else. If such an incident happens to anyone, immediately go to the nearest hospital and get vaccinated, he added. He

said that the government of Sindh was taking measures to prevent dog bites under the rabies control program. It is possible to prevent the disease caused by the rabies virus as this disease causes brain inflammation when the virus in the saliva of rabies infected dogs is transmitted to an infected person through a bite, he said. He said that studies had shown that not every dog was infected with rabies, however, it was a life-threatening disease and prompt diagnosis was essential for prompt treatment. He said that public awareness of this disease was necessary, therefore, in the light of the experiences at the global level, the breeding of dogs must be controlled on a scientific basis, the scope of the dog bite control program will be expanded.

CM stresses following Holy Prophet's teachings

LAHORE : Caretaker Chief Minister Punjab Mohsin Naqvi extended warm greetings on the auspicious occasion of Eid Milad-un-Nabi, emphasizing the universal mercy that the Holy Prophet (PBUH) bestowed upon humanity. Describing Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) as the epitome of virtuous qualities and lofty values, he highlighted how his arrival brought illumination to the world's darkness, offering solace to the vulnerable. In a brief span, Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) established an exampla-

ry social and economic framework that continues to illuminate the path for the entire world even today. CM Mohsin Naqvi emphasized in his Eid Milad-un-Nabi message that true devotion to Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH) entails following his life and teachings. He pointed out that solution to the challenges being faced by the Islamic world lies within the Prophet's biography. The Prophet (PBUH) imparted teachings of peace, brotherhood, respect for humanity, equality, forgiveness, and justice. The CM reflected on the regrettable decline of our

society, attributing it to our collective neglect of the cherished teachings of the beloved Prophet (PBUH). To reclaim our standing among the comity of nations, he urged a genuine adherence to the noble example set by Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). He emphasized that by embracing the teachings of the Holy Prophet (PBUH), we can uproot oppression, maltreatment, injustice, and unrest from society. Celebrating Eid Milad-un-Nabi necessitates living our individual and collective lives in accordance with the Prophet's teachings, he added.

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

September

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

Hotels & Restaurants



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



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

Rescue (Police).....15
Bomb Disposal.....15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/
Islamabad.....1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance.1122
& Rescue Services.4451122
Motorway Police...9266044
Motorway Police.9270601-20
Women Police Stations
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Edhi Ambulance.....115
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Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi.5555489
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MH.....5611116
Cantt Hospital...9270907-11
DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
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CDA.....9221334-43
CDA.....9208301-04
Met Office.....9250360-6
RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: Spouse of the Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan Naoko Wada presenting souvenir to the participants of program "Let's Explore Colours" in Federal Capital.—Online

Pak too vulnerable to disastrous issue of water shortage

The trees get the nutrients from the compost with the help of mycorrhiza or root fungi. The trees cannot live without the help of these microscopic creatures, and the microbes cannot live without decomposing the fallen leaves

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has become too vulnerable to the disastrous issue of water shortage due to tree loss resulting in declined rainfall as the Forest Department in the north of the country is rapidly removing snags under the garb of dead, infected and dried up trees. Senior biodiversity expert and Chairman Scientific Committee of the Islamabad Wildlife Management Board, Prof. Dr. Z.B. Mirza told APP that the Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Forest Department was removing snags from the forests, under a false excuse of removing the diseased dead and dried up forest trees (3-Ds). The fact is that often the tallest trees, such as Silver Fir and Deodar in a forest are killed by lightning of storm clouds. "It is not understandable, how can one tallest single tree in a dense forest can suddenly die due to a disease? A dead tree is called a 'Snag' in language of

forestry. As a snag stands for years and it rots very slowly by the microbes and insects. The dead tree loses its dense canopy of leaves and the dried branches remain. The sunlight reaches the ground. This gives the opportunity to the seeds of surrounding flora to germinate around it, covering the soil," Prof Mirza said. Mostly, the moist Temperate forests of the Himalayan slopes have snags. These stand along with live trees to protect the precious top soil of the forest from erosion. Heavy rainfall, even cloud burst, cannot erode the soil, for the simple reason that close-pack tree trunks, undergrowth of shrubs, bushes, herbs and densely growing long grasses do not let the rain water flow fast, at least at the floor of the forest to wash down the soil. Water may come down the slopes rushing and gushing, but it is above the slow-moving water close to the ground forest. Why call forest topsoil, precious? Simply, because forests cannot grow

again on eroded slopes of the mountains. Soil can be formed again, with the rubbing and crushing action of nature. It may take thousands and millions of years to cover the rocks with soil. Try making a tea spoon full of soil by rubbing two stones and then imagine how much time nature might have taken to form billions and trillions of tons of soil on the rocky slopes of mountains. He said topsoil covered with flora is fertile, because the dead leaves that form the covering layer, function as an insulating layer, that retains moisture. The moisture favours the growth of Microbes (bacteria and fungi). The moist dead leaves below the dried upper insulating layer, get rotten by the soil microbes, which also need solar energy trapped in the biomass of dead leaves. This activity forms the compost for the trees. The trees get the nutrients from the compost with the help of mycorrhiza or root fungi. The trees cannot live without the help of these microscopic creatures, and

the microbes cannot live without decomposing the fallen leaves. "We all know that during timber harvesting, the roots of the trees are also removed as fuelwood. Uprooting loosens the forest's fertile soil, which is eroded from the slopes of the mountains, during the first rainfall. With that, the soil biodiversity is also lost. The soil biodiversity includes microbes, macroinvertebrates and vertebrates. Not only do these creatures create nutrients from the dead organic matter of the fallen leaves, but also their mobility increases the porosity of the soil. This enhances the rainwater absorption capacity of that soil. The subsoil aquifers are replenished and the springs flow in the valleys, even in the dry season," Dr Mirza said. Woodpeckers make holes in the snags to eat wood borers and to make nests. A snag has many such cavities, which are occupied by several cavity-nesting birds during breeding season. These holes are also

niches of invertebrates, small reptiles and small mammals. Under the wildlife protection Ordinances and Acts of the provinces, it is illegal to destroy the breeding places of wildlife. In spring and early summer, the insect infestation of forests takes place. The larval stage of insects is harmful to the foliage of the forests. The breeding season of the cavity-nesting birds coincides with insect infestation. Insectivorous birds and some grainivorous birds as well, feed their nestlings on insect larvae, which constitute a high protein diet for faster growth of the nestlings and fledglings. The stress of the forest is reduced with the reduction of insect larvae, which are voracious eaters of soft leaves and buds of the forest flora. Therefore, the ecological role of the snags is vital for forest health. Forests cause rain in the monsoon period. Thermal air currents rise along the southern slopes of the mountains.

9 drug peddlers, bootleggers, illegal weapon holders netted

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi police in an action against suspected drug peddlers, bootleggers, illegal weapon holders and other lawbreakers here on Thursday arrested 19 accused besides recovering over 10 kg charas, five liters liquor, six 30 bore pistols, ammunition and other items from their possession.

A police spokesperson said that Rattaamral, Sadiqabad, Airport, Chakri, Gujran Khan, Taxila, Naseerabad and Bani police held Khurram, Jahangir, Arslan, Razaq, Khurram, Sanaulah, Shahid, and others on recovery of over 10 kg charas. Similarly, New Town, Sadiqabad, Race Course, Saddar Wah, Kalar Syedan and City police conducted raids in their respective jurisdiction and rounded up Owais, Majid, Akram, Babar, Sajid and others and recovered five liters liquor, six 30 bore pistols, ammunition and other items from their possession. Separate cases have been registered against all accused while further investigations are underway. City Police Officer, Rawalpindi had directed the police officers to accelerate ongoing operations against drug peddlers, bootleggers and other lawbreakers, he added.—APP

Police devised foolproof security plan for Eid Milad-un-Nabi

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi District Police on Thursday devised a comprehensive plan to ensure security on Eid Milad-un-Nabi (PBUH) to be celebrated on Sept 29, Friday. The police have issued a foolproof security plan for Eid-Milad-un-Nabi (PBUH), a police spokesman said. He informed that under the security plan, more than 6000 cops and police officers would be deployed to ensure the security of Eid Milad-un-Nabi processions. He said that City Police Officer, Rawalpindi Syed Khalid Hamdani had directed the police officers and SHOs to ensure law and order in their respective areas and make all-out efforts to provide security cover to the processions to be taken out at the local level. A total of 137 Eid Milad-un-Nabi processions would be taken out in Rawalpindi district on 12 Rabi-ul-Awal, he said adding, Police would utilize all available resources to provide foolproof security to the processions. Police officials would also be assisted by traffic wardens, Muhafiz Force, Punjab Constabulary, Elite Force, Special Branch, ladies police and volunteers to ensure security. Main Milad procession of Rawalpindi city would be provided foolproof security cover while over 3000 cops would be deployed on the route of the procession. Walk-through gates would be installed at entry points of the main procession while body search.—APP

Mobilink Bank and UN Women Join Forces

DNA

ISLAMABAD : Mobilink Bank and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, Pakistan (UN Women Pakistan) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to ignite a transformative wave across Pakistan's socio-economic landscape, with a steadfast commitment to advancing gender empowerment and revolutionizing the financial ecosystem. Through this partnership, Mobilink Bank endeavours to address the unmet financial needs of half of Pakistan's population – women – to create equal opportunities, enable access to essential financial services and promote women empowerment to drive nationwide economic development. Mobilink Bank is part of the VEON group, a global digital operator that provides converged connectivity and online services across seven countries. As part of its digital operator strategy, VEON is transforming people's lives by creating opportunities for increased digital inclusion and by driving economic growth across countries that are home to more than 8% of the world's population. The collaboration between Mobilink Bank and UN Women, effective immediately and extendable for one year, marks the beginning of a unified mission. This venture is dedicated to bolstering financial services for women while nurturing inclusivity in the financial landscape. The core objective of this collaborative effort is to uplift women-led small and nano enterprises through tailored capacity-building initiatives. In this joint effort, Mobilink Bank and UN Women will launch economic empowerment programs, aligned with their respective mandates with a special focus on building an enabling environment tailored to address the financial challenges faced by female entrepreneurs. With a gender-responsive strategy at its core, Mobilink Bank will strive to ensure that all its products and services champion inclusivity.

Pak-Iran Committee discuss bilateral trade, border related issues

ISLAMABAD: The Pak-Iran Joint Border Trade Committee discussed border issues, expansion of bilateral trade, and enhancement of immigration process and transport during a daylong meeting held in the Iranian border town of Mirjaveh, adjacent to Taftan in Chagai district. The joint border committee meeting has also discussed the movement of people at the Pak-Iran border, transportation of goods, bilateral trade, eradication of smuggling, and other issues relating to the border between the two countries, said a news release received here on Thursday. The delegation between the two countries has forwarded various proposals about boosting railway, banking, transportation, bilateral trade between Pakistan and Iran, and the way forward. The delegation expressed hope that the meeting will be very useful for the region and especially for the businessmen of both sides and that business problems will also be resolved.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, Mohammad Jehanzeb Khan, chairing a progress review meeting on the SDGs. The meeting, held on Thursday at Ministry of Planning Development & Special Initiatives.—DNA

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Briefs

RSA releases
167,700
cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 167,700 cusecs of water from various rim stations with inflow of 118,900 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1543.98 feet and was 145.98 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 63,700 cusecs and 90,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1228.10 feet, which was 178.10 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 15,700 cusecs and 38,000 cusecs respectively. —APP

ANF seizes
over 3.5 kg
drugs in two
operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting two operations managed to recover over 3.5 kg of drugs, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Thursday. He informed that in an operation at Bacha Khan International Airport, 2220 grams of Ice drug was recovered from the possession of a Bahrain-bound passenger resident of Kohistan, going on flight number GF-785. The drug was tactfully concealed in the bottom of the passenger's bag. He informed me that the drug recovery was managed with the help of ANF's sniffer dog. In another operation, 1590 grams of heroin was recovered from a parcel recovered at a courier office in Dina. —APP

Need urged
for exploiting
potential
of biogas
production

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Hitech Hybrid Seed Association (PHHSA) Shahzad Ali Malik Thursday stressed the need to exploit the potential of biogas to overcome energy issues and enhance dependency on environmental fuel production in the country. Talking to a delegation of industrialists he said that the use of biogas offers a multitude of economic benefits, including cost savings and enhanced energy security, said a press release. —DNA

Pak boosts pharmaceutical ties with SCO members

SCO member states aim to promote mutual benefits, strengthen regulatory frameworks, encourage research and development collaboration, and expand market access

DNA

ISLAMABAD, Sept 28 (): "The 2nd SCO Pharmaceutical Cooperation Development Conference has demonstrated the commitment of member states to foster international cooperation in the pharmaceutical industry. Through this platform, SCO member states aim to promote mutual benefits, strengthen regulatory frameworks, encourage research and development collaboration, and expand market access," said Asim Rauf, CEO of Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP). He attended the conference in Suzhou as a Chief guest, delivered the keynote address highlighting Pakistan's commitment to promoting pharmaceutical development and regulation, according to China Economic Net (CEN). In his address, he stressed the significance of cooperation among SCO member states in ensuring drug safety and advancing research and development in the pharmaceutical sector. With the world facing unprecedented challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for collaboration and partnership in the pharmaceutical sector has become even more critical. Pakistan and other SCO members are committed to working together to ensure the availability of essential medicines, strengthen health systems and improve the overall well-being of their populations.



The CEO took the opportunity to share Pakistan's achievements in pharmaceutical regulation, highlighting the steps taken by DRAP to streamline the drug approval process, enhance quality control measures and promote transparency in the pharmaceutical industry. "Pakistan has developed very rapidly in the field of regulation and the acceptance of its drugs is also increasing in the world. Especially during the pandemic, we have done a lot of work, including independent trials, starting the digitization process, introducing the CTD format, automating, etc.," the CEO added that "recently, we have noted the surge in Pakistan's pharmaceutical exports as a result of these advances. We are ready to share the steps and experiences we have taken with other SCO member states." In an interview with CEN, Asim Rauf touched on many potential areas of collaboration and partnership between Pakistan and other SCO member states in the pharma sector, most important of which is clinical trials at pres-

ent. Pakistan has various products from China including manufactured goods, high-tech products, cancer medicines, active pharmaceutical ingredients and medical devices. The CEO said there were many pending applications for clinical trials of Chinese medicines in Pakistan. He added that "we have generated a conducive environment where we have specifically invited Chinese companies to bring their products to Pakistan and import them." In addition to attending the conference, Asim Rauf held bilat-

eral meetings with representatives from other SCO member states to explore opportunities for collaboration in the pharmaceutical sector. He noted that "the conference provided a platform where we can individually sign bilateral MoUs and agreements with all other member countries, so that we can bind each other and share knowledge on those global issues that may affect public safety and people's health." These meetings aimed to foster closer ties and facilitate the exchange of knowledge and expertise in areas such as drug regulation, quality control, and capacity building. The conference provided a platform for participants to exchange best practices, discuss regulatory challenges and explore avenues for future collaboration. Experts from SCO member countries shared their experiences and insights on topics such as drug registration, pharmacovigilance and pharmaceutical research and development. The conference concluded with the Suzhou Initiative, injecting new and strong impetus into the building of an even closer SCO community of shared future. The health and pharmaceutical regulatory authorities, relevant institutions and industries of the participating countries attach great importance to cooperation in the field of medicine and health among the SCO member states, observer states and dialogue partners, and will actively play the role of the SCO mechanism as a platform.

Health expert
stresses
lifestyle
changes to
prevent risk
of CVD

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Health expert on Thursday stressed changes in lifestyles to control the risk of cardiovascular diseases (CVD) which is a leading cause of death globally where more than one billion people die each year from the disease.

Renowned Cardiologist Dr. Abdul Samar Afreen talking to a Private news channel said that heart disease was a leading cause of death, and CVDs were amongst the greatest public health challenges around the world. Ahead of World Heart Day, he cautioned that poor lifestyle choices including unhealthy diet, smoking, and a lack of exercise and sleep have seen an increasing number of patients under 50 complain of heart ailments. He suggested that every person should make walking a routine in their daily life and have a balanced diet. Replying to a question, expert said that heart treatment is very expensive, and in order to prevent it, it is necessary to give up habits that cause heart disease. He added that early diagnosis and appropriate care are pivotal in achieving long-term and sustained health and recovery.

To another question, he said every country can stop these preventable deaths by passing a best-practice policy now, adding, in 2023, WHO recommends that countries focus on these four areas: adopting best-practice policy, monitoring and surveillance, healthy oil replacements and advocacy. He highlighted that recently a researcher found that, men were about twice as likely as women to have a heart attack, adding, that higher risk persisted even after they accounted for traditional risk factors for heart disease, including high cholesterol, high blood pressure, diabetes, body mass index, and physical activity.

Eid Miladun Nabi to be celebrated
with splendor in federal capital

ISLAMABAD: As the month of Rabi-ul-Awwal dawned, Pakistan has come alive with vibrant celebrations in honor of Eid Miladun Nabi, the birthday of the Holy Prophet Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him, slated for September 29. The devout across the country have embarked on adorning mosques, homes, and businesses with resplendent lights, creating a captivating atmosphere. In the bustling Industrial Area, Sector 19, industrialists have not only adorned their business establishments but also illuminated the roadsides with an array of colorful lights, lending a picturesque charm to the surroundings. Government buildings, following an annual tradition, have been aglow with radiant lights in preparation for the 12th Rabi-ul-Awwal, the date observed for this revered occasion. In recognition of the significance of Eid Miladun Nabi, both the federal and provincial governments have officially declared September 29 as a public holiday,

marking it as a day of traditional and religious reverence. In anticipation of the festivities, the Islamabad Capital Territory administration, Islamabad Police, and Islamabad Traffic Police have devised stringent security and traffic plans to ensure the smooth progress of rallies in the federal capital and its adjacent areas during the celebration of Eid Miladun Nabi. This proactive approach would maintain peace and security throughout the commemorations. Speaking to APP, Muhammad Amir Attari, a Public Relations Officer of Dawate-Islami in Islamabad, shared details of the grand celebrations planned for this auspicious occasion. He disclosed that numerous rallies would be organized, commencing from various sectors and suburban areas of the federal capital, as a tribute to the Holy Prophet Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him. The main march, orchestrated by Dawate-Islami in the federal capital, would commence from Jamea Masjid Faizan-e-Madina, Sector G-11 Markaz, following

Friday Prayer. It would culminate at the same venue with Magrib Prayer, accompanied by supplications for Pakistan's peace, progress, prosperity, security, and sovereignty. Amir Attari emphasized that these rallies, in commemoration of Eid Miladun Nabi, would not be confined to Pakistan alone but would resonate across the world, demonstrating heartfelt reverence for the Holy Prophet Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him under the banner of Dawate-Islami. He also noted the substantial investment in the decoration of Faizan-e-Madina, Islamabad, with captivating lights. Furthermore, he highlighted that Mehfil-e-Milad (gatherings to celebrate the birth of the Prophet) and Seerat Conferences were being held nationwide to shed light on the exemplary life of the Holy Prophet Peace Be Upon Him and to inspire believers to follow His noble path, ultimately contributing. —DNA

Railways all set to lay fibre optics
cable along railway tracks

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Railways is all set to lay fibre optics cables along the entire railway tracks across the country, in a joint venture with private sector investors to generate more revenue for the organization. "Pakistan Railways has around 7,791 kilometres railway network across the country which will not only help the department to improve its financial condition but also attract investors' attention," the official sources in the Ministry told APP. They said the matter also came under discussion during a meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC), in which the Ministry of Railways pointed out that the department was offering an excellent opportunity for laying fibre optics cables along its track for digital connectivity across the country. During the meeting, they said Pakistan Railways informed that it has a network of 7,791 km, which passes through high-density population areas and connects major cities in the four provinces. They said with the average assets and hefty pension bills, Pakistan Railways contended, but its financial health was deteriorating, and unless new revenue sources were identified, the reliance on government subsidy would keep on growing. —APP

PRCS organizes Mehfil-e-Milad
to Celebrate Eid Milad un Nabi

The poetic beauty of Qaseedah Burda Sharif was also recited, adding to the spiritual fervor of the event



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) proudly hosted a splendid Mehfil-e-Milad to commemorate Eid Milad-un-Nabi (S.A.W) at the National Headquarters on Thursday. Speaking on this occasion, Chairman PRCS Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari said that Eid Milad un Nabi is a day of profound renewal of allegiance with the Rehmatul-lil-Alameen Hazrat Muhammad (Peace Be

Upon Him). It serves as an opportunity for the faithful to recommit themselves to living in accordance with the Sunnah (the way of life of the Prophet) and the divine commands. "Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) led humanity on the path to his Creator and his life was the embodiment of all the qualities of the preceding prophets and messengers of Allah", he added. He went on to express a heartfelt prayer, saying, "May Allah grant us the courage and strength to

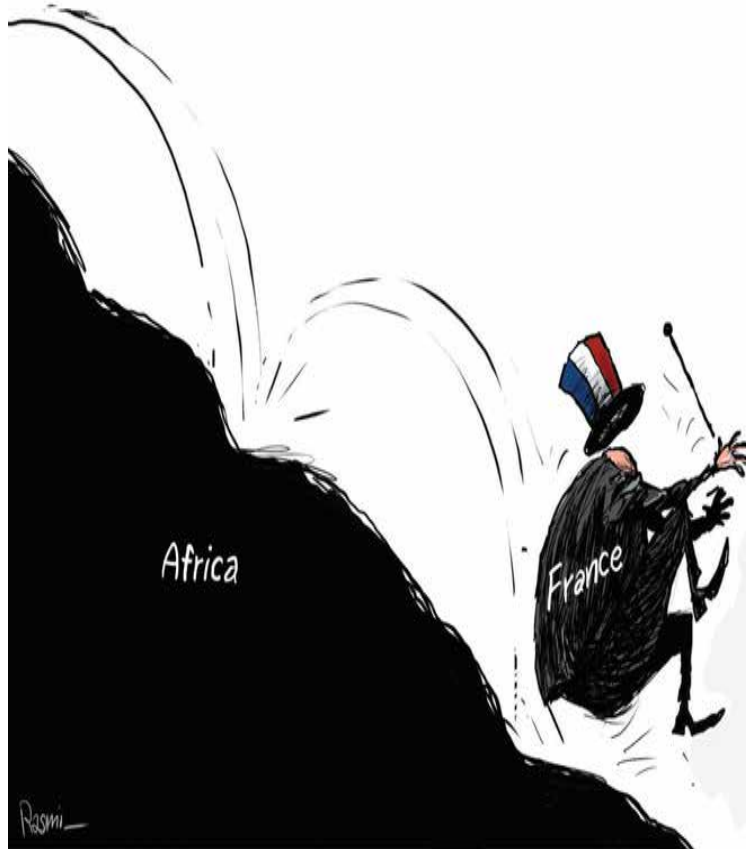
wholeheartedly follow the life and teachings of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH)." The event witnessed the participation of esteemed guests, Secretary General PRCS Muhammad Abaidullah Khan, representatives from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), International Federation of the Red Cross Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and delegates from other National Societies. Notably, Badr-ul-Islam Badr had the privilege of

reciting the Holy Quran, while Mirza Muhammad Ikram, Shahryar Naqshbandi, Faizan Abbasi, and Muhammad Ibrahim Tanweer graced the occasion as reciters. This celebration marked a historic moment as PRCS commemorated Eid Milad-un-Nabi (PBUH) for the very first time in the history of PRCS. The poetic beauty of Qaseedah Burda Sharif was also recited, adding to the spiritual fervor of the event. The closing prayer was led by Mufti Muhammad Yasir.



Removing irrational burdens vital for diplomatic relations

THE high-level reception former US treasury secretary Henry Paulson received during his visit to Beijing on Monday and Tuesday should make Beijing's desire to mend ties with Washington clear to all. Paulson met separately with the Chinese vice-president, foreign minister and central bank president. Vice-President Han Zheng met with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in New York on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly on Sept 18. Foreign Minister Wang Yi had a meeting with US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan in Malta on Sept 16 and 17. Both Han and Wang were thus well informed of the latest concerns of the US side regarding Sino-US relations. That made their meetings with Paulson to-the-point regarding the pain points for ties. In their meetings, Beijing obviously toned down its discourse on the United States' role in the straining of relations. That's not only because of Paulson's nonofficial identity, but more importantly because the hard-earned positive momentum of Sino-US ties, mainly in the economic and financial sectors, promises further improvement in their relations if it is nurtured by both sides. Thus while the Chinese side still put the onus on Washington to ease ties, urging it to expand the "list of positives" and "reduce the list of negatives", it also sent a warm welcome message to US companies. It can be seen from this that the two sides have reached a tacit understanding to seek cooperation in fields where they do not have a direct conflict of interest, such as climate change, and to strengthen their communication to form new rules of the game for their economy and trade competition, since they cannot decouple with each other. At the same time, they will continue to lock horns over security issues, where the space for either side to compromise is limited. Stabilizing the Sino-US economic relationship, as both Han and Wang stressed to Paulson, serves the common interests of the two sides, and thus communication in the economic field should be strengthened. And climate change is one of the few fields where they can maintain exchanges to enable their relations to weather the storms of their disputes. Yet, a flare-up of a military conflict would render all efforts in these aspects in vain. So Washington should dial back its provocations and echo this positive message from Beijing. For instance, abolishing the US' punitive tariffs targeting China that it launched in July 2018, which it can do in its ongoing five-year review of the tariffs, and removing the hundreds of Chinese entities on its Entity List. It is regrettable, therefore, that the US added another 11 Chinese entities to its export control list on Monday citing "national security" concerns. The Joe Biden administration should realize that neither the tariff war started by its predecessor nor the Entity List that it continues to lengthen represent the right way to manage relations between the two countries. Both of these are negative assets for Washington, rather than strategic ones. Now is the time for the Biden administration to remove these irrational burdens on Sino-US ties.



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US understands steps to resume military communication

THE United States Space Force is exploring in internal discussions the possibility of creating a hotline with the Chinese military to avoid crises in space. "What we have talked about, on the US side at least, is opening up a line of communication to make sure that if there is a crisis, we know who we can contact," Chief of Space Operations General Chance Saltzman told Reuters on Monday in Japan. But he also acknowledged it is not in the works yet. It remains to be seen if the White House or US State Department will bring the matter up in talks with the Chinese side, and whether the latter will embrace such an idea. Asked about the matter at the Chinese Foreign Ministry's regular briefing on Tuesday, spokesman Wang Wenbin diverted the question to "competent authorities", saying at present contact between the two militaries has been suspended because of "reasons the US side is well aware of", not least, the US sanctions on the Chinese defense minister. Beijing rejected a call from the US Defense Department in February after the latter shot down what at the time it hyped up as a "spy balloon", saying the US side had "not created the proper atmosphere" for dialogue and exchanges. It later refused to arrange a face-to-face discussion between the two countries' defense chiefs on the sidelines of the Shangri-La Forum in Singapore using the same excuse. Beijing has repeatedly argued Washington should show "sincerity" with "practical moves" in exchange for the kind of communication the US side has demanded. After all, Washington is apparently bent on an all-out offensive to suppress the Chinese military's modernization. Its global initiative to throttle the Chinese semiconductor industry, for instance, is explicitly aimed at slowing down the Chinese military's capabilities. In such a sense, the "proper atmosphere" that Beijing wanted remains absent. Creating a dedicated hotline between the two countries' space forces may or may not be absolutely necessary for smooth communication in case of emergencies. But the conspicuous lack of communication channels between the two militaries is a worrying fact that must be properly addressed. The more the two militaries distrust each other, the more they need proper communication channels to avoid unintended crises. It's becoming obvious that the two countries' overall relations are increasingly being taken hostage by a sense of geopolitical confrontation, and tensions keep escalating between the two militaries in the sea and air, across the Taiwan Strait and in the East China Sea and South China Sea. Given this, there is a need for active military-to-military communication channels to make sure they don't come to blows because of a misjudgment or misunderstanding of each other's intentions.

Saudi-Israeli deal would be a game changer but not for the reasons discussed

James Dorsey

The obstacles haven't prevented Messrs. Bin Salman and Netanyahu from raising heightened expectations recently by suggesting significant progress in agreeing on the terms of a US-Saudi-Israeli deal. Speaking to Fox News, Mr. Bin Salman said his country and Israel were getting "closer" daily to establish formal relations. Mr. Netanyahu was equally ebullient at the UN General Assembly. Largely overlooked in public discussions about a possible Saudi-Israeli normalisation of relations is the fact that the Saudi demands signal that the kingdom, like the United Arab Emirates, which is requesting an "ironclad" security arrangement with the United States, prefers the US rather than China to be its security partner for the foreseeable future

A Saudi-Israeli agreement to establish diplomatic relations involving enhanced US commitments to Gulf security could be a game-changer for great power rivalry in the Middle East. To be sure, US President Joe Biden and Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu face formidable obstacles in paying the price tag Saudi Arabia puts on the normalisation of relations with Israel. In return for relations, Saudi Arabia has demanded legally binding security commitments from the United States, support for its nuclear programme, and unfettered access to sophisticated weaponry – conditions that would be challenged in Congress. The kingdom has also linked diplomatic relations to ambiguously defined progress in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – a demand Mr. Netanyahu will have difficulty meeting with his current coalition government, the most ultra-nationalist and ultra-conservative in his country's history. Speaking to Fox News, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman described the Palestinian issue as "very important" and one that "we need to solve." Mr. Bin Salman shied away from spelling out what a solution would entail beyond saying he hoped it "will ease the life of the Palestinians." Within days of the interview, Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan told the United Nations General Assembly and a webinar normalising relations with Israel would require a plan to establish an independent Palestinian state. On the first visit to the West Bank by a senior Saudi official since the creation of the Palestine Authority in 1994, Ambassador Nayef al-Sudairi, the kingdom's first envoy to the Palestinian entity, said Saudi Arabia was "working towards establishing a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital." Palestinian officials told their Saudi counterparts that as part of the kingdom's agreement to recognise the Jewish state, Israel would have to stop building new settlements, expand Palestinian control over security and construction in

the West Bank, accept full Palestinian membership of the United Nations, and consent to the opening of a Palestine Liberation Organisation office in Washington and a US consulate in East Jerusalem. Nevertheless, senior Israeli officials asserted that Saudi Arabia was merely paying lip service to the Palestinian issue in talks about Israel. A senior Palestinian official conceded "that what is being discussed includes elements that are less than statehood. We're talking about a pathway to getting there." The obstacles haven't prevented Messrs. Bin Salman and Netanyahu from raising heightened expectations recently by suggesting significant progress in agreeing on the terms of a US-Saudi-Israeli deal. Speaking to Fox News, Mr. Bin Salman said his country and Israel were getting "closer" daily to establish formal relations. Mr. Netanyahu was equally ebullient at the UN General Assembly. Largely overlooked in public discussions about a possible Saudi-Israeli normalisation of relations is the fact that the Saudi demands signal that the kingdom, like the United Arab Emirates, which is requesting an "ironclad" security arrangement with the United States, prefers the US rather than China to be its security partner for the foreseeable future. "Isn't it interesting? When you look at MbS' asks from us, they start with he wants a defense treaty with us... What that tells you is that at the end of the day, they don't think there is anybody else they can rely upon if they really stranded," said Dennis Ross, a former US Middle East peace negotiator. Mr. Ross was referring to Mr. Bin Salman by his initials. Former US National Security Council official Kirsten Fontenrose argued that Mr. Bin Salman had created a situation where he could forcefully argue for a binding security arrangement even if efforts to forge a deal with Israel failed. "MbS looks at this and says, 'Right now, it looks like the sticking point is Israeli politics. So, even if I don't get this, I look like the good guy'," Ms. Fontenrose said. I expect

there will be pressure from the Saudis moving forward, even if we don't get normalisation, to follow through... (saying), 'Well, we have arrived so closely on some of these ideas on a US security pact, we've done so much work on civilian nuclear cooperation, why don't we just continue this?' Ms. Fontenrose added. Even so, it is hard to believe that Saudi Arabia and the UAE think they can retain the freedom to hedge their bets and expand relations with China, as well as Russia, particularly regarding the Ukraine war and Western sanctions, in ways that the United States would see as threatening its national security and undermining its policies. While the United States would likely not disrupt the Gulf states' economic and trade ties with China, the Gulf's largest trading partner, it would limit Saudi and UAE cooperation with China on geopolitical issues, nuclear development, technology collaboration, and arms acquisition. "The administration is asking for some things from the Saudis. They want them to continue to peg oil to the dollar, there was some talk that they may allow the Chinese to buy oil with the Chinese currency... What is being asked here is not to stop their commercial relationship but to create boundaries in some of the high-tech areas... It's a two-way street," Mr. Ross, the former US negotiator, said. The kingdom "cannot have it both ways. If it wants that kind of commitment from the United States, it has to line up with the United States... If our security relationship with Saudi Arabia is to be deepened because the Saudis want it, then there are certain obligations that come with that," said former US diplomat and prominent analyst Martin Indyk. Undoubtedly, Saudi Arabia and the UAE will test how far they can push the envelope if they come to a security understanding with the United States. Ultimately, however, they are likely also to find that a security arrangement would, at least in the Middle East, shift the geopolitical US-China power balance in the United States' favour.

Countries must work together to fight climate crisis

Dr. Majid Rafizadeh

If governments around the world come together and take effective action, we still have the opportunity to curb and even resolve this environmental crisis. But if the international community does not approach the climate crisis with the sense of urgency that it deserves and does not take significant action, the situation on this planet will not be sustainable and it will only get more dangerous and unstable. The burden has fallen disproportionately on low-income countries that have contributed the least to the problem

THE latest scientific assessments highlight the fact that we should urgently take action when it comes to the climate crisis. This was demonstrated earlier this year by scientists in a report published by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. "Mainstreaming effective and equitable climate action will not only reduce losses and damages for nature and people, it will also provide wider benefits," stressed Hoesung Lee, the IPCC chair. Tackling climate change was one of the key topics addressed at a high-level summit that took place alongside the UN General Assembly in New York last week. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres issued a stark warning when he pointed out in a speech to open the Climate Ambition Summit: "Humanity has opened the gates to hell. Horrendous heat is having horrendous effects. Droughted farmers watching crops carried away by floods. Sweltering temperatures spawning disease. Climate action is dwarfed by the scale of the challenge." If governments around the world come together and take effective action, we still have the opportunity to curb and even resolve this environmental crisis. But if the international community does not approach the climate crisis with the sense of urgency that it deserves and does not take significant action, the situation on this planet will not be sustainable and it will only get more dangerous and unstable. The burden has fallen disproportionately on low-income countries that have contributed the least to the problem. This means that, when it comes to tackling the climate crisis, some of the most critical steps to take include: reducing greenhouse gas emissions through investments in efficient infrastructure that reduces emissions; reaching net-zero emissions; setting up timelines for each country and committing to phasing out fossil fuels; helping poorer countries to use clean energy and build renewable infrastructure; and conserving water.

The world is increasingly facing water stress or water scarcity, with demand frequently being higher than supply in some areas. The problem with climate change is that it disproportionately affects certain regions and countries, which are themselves not among the highest contributors to the climate crisis. Unfortunately, developing countries, lower socioeconomic classes, older people, women and children disproportionately experience the impact of losses and damages caused by climate change. According to a recent study by a team at Dartmouth College, global warming caused by only five countries – the US, China, Russia, Brazil and India – has caused \$6 trillion in global economic losses. And these losses have reportedly not been suffered equally, with the burden falling disproportionately on low-income countries that have contributed the least to the problem. Some regions in the world are more vulnerable to the effects of climate change than others. The Middle East, in particular, will unfortunately get devastated by the climate crisis if it is not adequately addressed. This is due to the dry or semi-dry environment of the region. Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani last week accurately told the UNGA that the Middle East will be at the forefront of "environmental catastrophe" if the international community does not take appropriate action. To take action, two levels of cooperation need to occur at the same time: regional and global. One of the impacts of climate change can be witnessed in the rising temperatures seen around the world. And temperatures in the Middle East and North Africa are rising almost twice as quickly as in other parts of the world, according to a 2022 report by the Cyprus Institute's Climate and Atmosphere Research Center and the Max Planck Institute for Chemistry. Countries such as Iraq, Syria, Jordan and Iran have also witnessed significant desertification.

Water scarcity is another critical problem for the Middle East and North Africa that has been, at least in part, caused by climate change. This region is already characterized as the most water-scarce in the world. Al-Sudani went on to warn: "Our two rivers (the Tigris and Euphrates) are exposed to the brunt of the effects of drought resulting from climate change. We have an urgent need to preserve rights to water resources and international river basins." The Euphrates could be completely dried out by 2040, according to Iraq's Ministry of Water Resources. In the long term, if some of the damage caused by climate change, such as water scarcity and a lack of agricultural resources, continues to increase in Iraq or other countries in the Middle East to the extent that freshwater resources are depleted, this will have an impact on national security and political stability. To take action, two levels of cooperation need to occur at the same time: regional and global. Countries in the Middle East should establish a regional coordination system with the aim of reaching several objectives. These objectives include working together and helping each other reach net-zero greenhouse gas emissions, setting up timelines for each country to phase out fossil fuels and helping individual nations, particularly those experiencing financial hardship, to transition to clean energy and build renewable infrastructure. But it is also critical that all countries, especially the developed ones, take action too. This means that developing and poorer countries need support in order to adapt to and address the climate crisis. In a nutshell, climate change requires immediate action in order to prevent irreversible damage to the planet. The Middle East is one of the world's most vulnerable regions when it comes to the impacts of climate change. Coordination at the regional and global levels is a must in order to tackle this critical environmental crisis.

– Sourced by Arab news

Briefs

CJP Isa
furious after
multiple...

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the Pemra, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), the Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM), Awami Muslim League chief Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed and Ejazul Haq. Rasheeds lawyer has also sought adjournment of today's hearing saying his client was not in custody and could not be contacted. Faizabad sit-in legal saga This legal saga began on April 15, 2019, when the then-federal government, along with entities like the Defence Ministry, Intelligence Bureau, PTI government, AML chief Sheikh Rashid Ahmed, MQM-P, and the Pemra, among others, filed review pleas contesting the apex court's judgement delivered by the incumbent Chief Justice Qazi Faez Isa regarding the Faizabad sit-in case. Earlier on February 6, 2019, a two-member bench of the apex court comprising the now-CJP Isa and Justice Mughir Alam recommended that persons, issuing an edict or fatwa to harm another person or put another person in the harms way must be dealt with iron hand and prosecuted under relevant laws. It also ruled that the intelligence agencies must not exceed their respective mandates. Later, the bench disposed of a suo moto case regarding the 2017 Faizabad sit-in staged by the TLP.

Rana
demands...

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disqualified then-prime minister Nawaz Sharif from holding public office in the Panama Papers case, making it the third time that the PML-N supreme was ousted from office. In his recent hard-hitting statement, Nawaz held the two former generals responsible for his ouster as the prime minister in 2017 and the prevailing economic crisis being faced by the cash-strapped nation. "[Former] chief justices Saqib Nisar and Asif Saeed Khosa were tools [of the former army chief and his spy chief]. Their crime is bigger than a murder offence. Giving them pardons will be an injustice to the nation. They don't deserve pardon," the PML-N supreme had said. Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) seasoned leader Khursheed Shah, however, advised the PML-N not to engage in such confrontations ahead of the upcoming general elections – scheduled to be held by the last week of January next year.

Afghan
Taliban...

FROM PAGE 01
latest weapons, attacked two Pakistani military posts located closer to Pakistan Afghanistan border in general area Kalash, District Chitral," a statement from the military's media wing read. During the fire exchange, 12 terrorists "were sent to hell", while a large number of the militants were critically injured, as per the ISPR statement. The Afghan Taliban arrested 200 TTP cadres returning from the Chitral attack. They are now behind bars," VOA quoted an official as saying on condition of anonymity because he was not authorised to publicly interact with the media. He added that de facto Afghan authorities were in the process of relocating other TTP members away from the border with Pakistan. "But we have to wait and see the outcome of these steps before drawing any conclusions. So, you have to give them some time to consolidate these measures," the official remarked. Pakistan's special representative on Afghanistan, Asif Durrani, led the delegation to Kabul, with senior military officials also accompanying him. Officials in Islamabad at the time described as "promising" their "extensive" discussions with Taliban Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttuqi and his team. The TTP is designated a global terrorist organisation by Pakistan, the United States, and the United Nations. Meanwhile, Taliban supreme leader Hibatullah Akhundzada has forbidden his forces from launching cross-border attacks against Pakistan, calling them haram or un-Islamic.

Pakistan outplays Uzbekistan
in Asian Games hockey

Pakistan hockey team earned its third consecutive victory in the ongoing 19th Asian Games when it downed Uzbekistan in the extravaganza at Hangzhou

OUR CORRESPONDENTS

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan hockey team earned its third consecutive victory in the ongoing 19th Asian Games when it downed Uzbekistan in the extravaganza at Hangzhou, China on Thursday. According to details, the Pakistan team clinched a commanding victory over Uzbekistan, triumphing by a resounding 18-2 win in their third pool match. Right from the outset, Pakistan established their dominance on the field, relentlessly slotting consecutive goals. Impressively, they have

amassed a total of 34 goals across their three pool encounters thus far. Arbaaz Ahmed showcased his scoring prowess by netting an impressive five goals, closely followed by Rana Waheed and Afraz, each contributing three goals. Umar Bhatta and Abdul Rehman exhibited their skill with two goals apiece, while Arshad Liaquat, Ruman Khan, and Sufyan Khan each notched one goal in their remarkable performance against Uzbekistan. Pakistan's team remains steadfast in their position at the top of the points table in the hockey competition,



securing victories in all three of their matches so far. Trailing closely behind was their formidable rival, India, currently holding the second spot, and Japan in

third place, both after two matches. Trailing closely behind was their formidable rival, India, currently holding the second spot, and Japan in third place, both after two matches. The anticipation for an electrifying encounter was building up as the Pakistan hockey team gears up to clash against their arch-rivals, India, in their upcoming fourth pool match scheduled for September 30. The competition boasts a total of twelve participating teams, segregated into two competitive pools. Pool A comprises teams from India, Japan, Bangladesh, Singapore, Uzbekistan, and Pakistan, while Pool B, includes Korea, Malaysia, China, Oman, Thailand, and Indonesia.

Pool A of India, Japan, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Singapore, Uzbekistan Pool B: Korea, Malaysia, China, Oman, Thailand, Indonesia Men's hockey made its Asian Games debut in 1958 and has been a part of the continental multisport event in every edition since. Pakistan are the most successful team in the competition with eight gold medals followed by the Republic of Korea with five and India with three. Heading into Hangzhou 2023, Japan are the reigning champions having clinched the top podium at Jakarta 2018 after beating Malaysia in the final.

Pakistan
welcomes
peace...

FROM PAGE 01
His Majesty King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, in standing with Yemen and its people and encouraging the Yemeni parties to engage in a dialogue towards achieving a comprehensive, enduring and amicable political solution, under the United Nations' auspices. Pakistan reiterates its principled support for a political solution to the Yemeni crisis through dialogue and consultation.

'No change
in position
on Israel...

FROM PAGE 01
Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar had actively participated in several conferences during the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA). "PM Kakar engaged in productive bilateral meetings with the presidents of Iran and Uzbekistan, and the vice-president of China during his visit to the United States." According to Jilani, PM Kakar also had the opportunity to meet various prominent figures, including Bill Gates, the co-founder of Microsoft. FM Jilani disclosed that he himself engaged in approximately 20 bilateral meetings, took part in a conference focused on addressing damages caused by climate change, and joined a meeting of the US-Pakistani Business Council. The minister highlighted his participation in various meetings, such as the OIC Contact Group for Jammu and Kashmir. He noted that the OIC Contact Group for Kashmir had unequivocally expressed support for the Kashmiri people and condemned the aggression of Indian forces during the meeting. "The demand for the resolution of the Kashmir issue in accordance with the United Nations resolutions was also put forward," added Jilani.

West overly
obsessed
about...

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Pakistan was charting a path, designed to avoid getting caught up in the competition between the West and Russia and China. Kakar said Pakistan had no intention of committing to either camp in the growing US-China rivalry. By siding with the West against the Soviets and again after 9/11, Pakistan paid a high price, Kakar said. "Pakistan in the last 30 years, has been treated unfairly by the West," he told the interviewer. "Every nation for itself. Why should we be worried about this competition. It's between two great powers, two great civilizations, and the implications [affect] 150-plus countries. And Pakistan is just one of them," PM Kakar remarked. Mentioning Pakistan's "neutral" stance on Ukraine, the prime minister said: "This crisis is creating challenges and at the same time it is creating opportunities also within the region, and we are looking at it both ways."

Bloomberg
praises PKR
progress

FROM PAGE 01
won tumbling against the greenback. Major currencies lost ground against the dollar as speculations that the US interest rates will stay elevated for longer. The rupee increased 0.1% to 287.95 per dollar on Thursday, after sliding to a record low of about 307 this month. Pakistan's currency market will remain closed for the Eid Miladun Nabi holiday on Friday. "Many leakages were happening through illegal channels of hawala and hundi trade from the open market," Khurram Schehzad, chief executive officer of Alpha Beta Core Solutions Pvt Ltd, told Bloomberg. "When the dollar rate reverses everyday, the hoarders, the exporters who are holding their export proceeds, start selling their dollars," Schehzad said. The interim rulers have intensified efforts by launching a crackdown on people involved in the illegal dollar trade, allowing the currency to gain some lost ground.

Lionel Messi ruled out
of US Open Cup final

DNA

FORT LAUDERDALE: The Houston Dynamo defeated Inter Miami 2-1 to win the US Open Cup with an injured Lionel Messi watching from the stands at DRV PNK Stadium. Without Messi and his former Barcelona team-mate Jordi Alba, Miami struggled to compete with an enterprising Houston and could have little to complain about the outcome. Miami co-owner David Beckham, who watched the game with his former Real Madrid team-mate Zinedine Zidane, had hoped for another night of celebration after the team's Leagues Cup triumph last month. But Miami lacked intensity and ideas as they were given the runaround by Ben Olsen's impressive Houston team. No clear explanation has been given for Messi's injury with references to "muscle fatigue" followed by talk from coach Gerardo Martino of "scars" from an old injury. "It was not prudent for him to play, we couldn't even consider playing him for a few minutes because we would be taking risks," said Martino after the match. The former Barcelona and Argentina coach said he expected Messi to feature at some stage in the upcoming five games that remain for regular season. "He will certainly play before the league is over. We will go match by match and see how things are coming along and if the medical department can give him the OK to play without any risks," he added. Martino meanwhile said Miami's season was finally starting to catch up with them. "I thought it was a very exhausted team, that's the reality," he said. "The reality is that we were going to feel the consequences of so many games." With no Messi to worry about, Houston were on top from the outset, moving the ball around with confidence and purpose while Miami struggled to get a foothold. Drake Callender was forced into a double save when Nelson Quinones drove towards the far post, the Miami keeper pushing the ball out and then doing well to get his legs to the follow up from Corey Bair. But

Houston grabbed the lead in the 24th minute with a perfect counter-attack ending with Brazilian Artur feeding the overlapping Griffin Dorsey who blasted in at the near post. Utterly dominant: Houston were utterly dominant, passing the ball with a swiftness that left Miami chasing shadows and it wasn't long before they had doubled their advantage. Colombian winger Quinones cut into the box from the left flank and Miami right-back DeAndre Yedlin's desperate lunge brought him crashing to the ground. French forward Amine Bassi made no mistake from the spot to make it 2-0. Martino made two changes at the break, bringing on Ecuadorian striker Josef Martinez and Ecuadorian midfielder Dixon Arroyo. Martinez had a chance to get Miami back into the game in the 56th minute, heading wide from a good position before Benjamin Cremaschi forced Dynamo keeper Andrew Tarbell into a low save. But as Inter pushed forward in search of a goal, Houston broke away and looked to have finished the contest off when Quinones scored after being set up by Bassi but the effort was ruled out for offside after a VAR review. Martinez gave Miami some late hope with a left-foot strike in stoppage time after latching on to a ball from Argentine Facundo Farias. But it was too little, too late from Miami and Houston deservedly won their second U.S. Open Cup title to add to their triumph in 2018. Miami had won the Leagues Cup last month with Messi prominently involved but they must now battle to make the Major League Soccer play-offs with uncertainty over their Argentine star's fitness. Houston coach Ben Olsen said his team had exploited the absence of Messi and Alba. "We prepared all week for Messi and Alba and let's be honest they are a different team (with them). I think they missed him and they missed Alba," he said.

Gunathilaka
cleared of sexual
assault charge

SYDNEY: Sri Lankan cricketer Danushka Gunathilaka was cleared of sexual assault in Sydney on Thursday, saying outside court that he "can't wait" to play again despite remaining under a ban back home. The 32-year-old batsman was arrested in November last year just hours after his country lost to England in their final Twenty20 World Cup match in Australia. He was initially accused of four counts of sexual intercourse without consent after arranging to meet a woman at a bar near the Sydney Opera House through a dating app. Three of those charges were dropped in May. On the remaining count, Judge Sarah Huggett found him not guilty, according to a document provided by the New South Wales District Court in Sydney. "The last 11 months have been really hard for me," Gunathilaka told reporters outside the court. "Everyone believed me, so that means a lot to me," he said. "I am happy that my life is normal again so I can't wait to go back and play cricket." Prosecutors had argued he removed a condom during sex without telling the woman, who had only agreed to protected sex, according to a report by Australian public broadcaster ABC. But the judge said the woman did not have a clear memory of what happened at the time, it said. - Agencies

Qin excels as Zhang Yufei
sets blockbuster stage

HANGZHOU: World-record holder Qin Haiyang sauntered into the Asian Games 200m breaststroke final on Thursday, as fellow Chinese swimmer Zhang Yufei qualified fastest in the 50m freestyle and set up a showdown with Siobhan Haughey. Qin shattered Australian Zac Stubblety-Cook's historical best at the July world championships in Fukuoka on his way to the gold medal with a blistering 2min 05.48sec. The in-form star's 2:11.76 in the Hangzhou heats on day five of pool action was a long way off that, but he was cruising and had plenty left in the tank. His teammate Dong Zhihao, who came fourth at the worlds, qualified third fastest with Hong Kong's Adam Mak splitting the Chinese pair. Qin went on to complete an unprecedented sweep of the breaststroke races in Fukuoka to announce himself as the man to beat at the Paris Olympics next year. He has already secured the 100m title at the Asian Games with the second-fastest time of 2023. He also won silver in the 200m medley and helped steer China close to two relay world records. Qin is scheduled to swim the 50m breaststroke on Friday. Hong Kong's Haughey, one of the world's top freestylers, clinched the Asiad 100 and 200m titles in blistering fashion. The 50m is not her favoured event and she

faces a blockbuster showdown in Thursday night's final against Zhang to complete the treble. Like Haughey, Zhang is also chasing a third individual gold medal in Hangzhou after setting scorching times in winning the 100 and 200m butterfly. She also has two relay golds. The Chinese superstar displayed her versatility in setting a new Games record of 24.50 to qualify fastest ahead of Haughey (24.94) and Singapore pair Quah Ting Wen (25.26) and Amanda Lim (25.26). Japan's Rikako Ikee, the standout performer at the last Asian Games with six golds, failed to make the grade. Ye Shiwen, a silver medalist in the 200m medley behind teammate Yu Yiting, touched in 2:27.09 to lead the pack into the women's 200m breaststroke final. South Korea's Baek In-chul topped the timesheets in the men's 50m butterfly heats with China's Wang Changhao, who came second in the 100 fly, third fastest. After narrowly missing world records in the men's 4x100m medley and 4x100m mixed medley races, China are overwhelming favourites to add more gold in the relays on Thursday evening. They will be contesting the men's 4x100m freestyle and women's 4x200m freestyle, qualifying fastest in both, as they look to bolster the hosts' 19 swimming titles from 27 so far. - Agencies

Babar, Rizwan, Shaheen 'overwhelmed' by Indian welcome

Pakistan players including skipper Babar Azam, Mohammad Rizwan and Shaheen Shah Afridi expressed gratitude for the response the team received upon arrival in India

SPORTS DESK

LAHORE: Top Pakistan players including skipper Babar Azam, Mohammad Rizwan and Shaheen Shah Afridi expressed gratitude for the response the team received upon arrival in India. Men in Green arrived in Hyderabad on Wednesday under tight security ahead of the seven-week-long World Cup, their first visit to their neighbour since 2016. Excited crowds, held back by officers, cheered and shouted the team captain's name Babar Azam, as the Pakistanis arrived at the airport in the southern Indian city for the ODI tournament which opens on October 5. In a message on his Instagram, the Pakistani skipper said, "overwhelmed with the love and support here in Hyderabad!" Messages posted by Babar Azam and Shaheen Shah Afridi on Instagram after they landed in India on September 27. Messages posted by Babar Azam and Shaheen Shah Afridi on Instagram after they landed in India on September 27. On the other hand,

star pacer Shaheen Afridi expressed his excitement about the welcome by posting a message on his social media stating: "Great welcome thus far!" Moreover, Rizwan was "amazed" by the reception by the fans



usually, the matches are staged in third countries. The tournament involves 48 matches being played over 46 days at 10 different venues with the final set for November 19. Pakistan are slated to play two warm-up matches – against New Zealand on September 29 and Australia on October 3 – both in Hyderabad. But with large crowds expected for a Hindu festival on Friday, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) said the first warm-up it will be a closed door match as "per the advice of the local security agencies". Pakistan open their World Cup campaign against the Netherlands, before facing arch-rivals India in the over 130,000-seat Ahmedabad Stadium on October 14. India will begin their campaign against Australia on October 8 followed by the hotly-anticipated clash against Pakistan. Visas for the Pakistan team to travel to India were issued on Monday, Indian and Pakistani media reported, just 48 hours before they were due to travel. There has been no response from India to a request for comment on visa arrangements for Pakistan fans.

Briefs

Vietnam court jails climate activist for tax evasion

HANOI: Vietnam jailed a leading climate activist for three years for tax evasion Thursday, a sentence her family condemned as "unfair", as the communist state ramps up a crackdown on environmentalists. Hoang Thi Minh Hong was sentenced by a court in Ho Chi Minh City for dodging \$275,000 in taxes related to her environmental campaign group CHANGE. The 50-year-old is at least the fifth green campaigner to be jailed on tax evasion charges in the last two years – even as Vietnam's authoritarian government seeks to amplify its attempts to cut emissions. Her lawyer Nguyen Van Tu told AFP that in addition to the prison sentence, the court also imposed a 100 million dong (\$4,000) fine.

Hong's husband Hoang Vinh Nam told AFP he was "disappointed" at the verdict. "The sentence given to Hong today was too heavy," he said. "I think it was unfair to Hong. The defence lawyer did his best but his arguments were not considered properly." State media quoted the indictment as saying the charges related to revenue generated by CHANGE from 2012 to 2022. Hong admitted the charges and along with her family paid the state 3.5 billion dong (\$145,000) in return for leniency, state media said. Hong founded CHANGE to mobilise Vietnamese, particularly young people, to take action on pressing environmental issues, including climate change, the illegal wildlife trade and pollution.—APP

German recession will be worse than feared

FRANKFURT: A recession in Germany this year will be worse than previously feared, leading economic institutes warned Thursday, as high inflation and an industrial slowdown hit Europe's top economy. The economy will shrink 0.6 percent in 2023, the institutes said in their latest joint forecast. They had all flagged in recent months that a downturn was expected, although the figure is worse than those previously mentioned. "The most important reason for this revision is that industry and private consumption are recovering more slowly than we expected," said Oliver Holtemoeller, from the Halle Institute for Economic Research, one of the five groups behind the forecast. German policymakers face challenges on multiple fronts – from still-high inflation that began surging after Russia invaded Ukraine, to weakness in manufacturing and the impact of record eurozone interest rates.—APP

Poland restores palace of Chopin

WARSAW: Decades after the Nazis razed it to the ground, a 17th-century palace of kings and codebreakers in the heart of Warsaw will be resurrected by the Polish government for its symbolic value. "This spot which will return to Warsaw's map is to be a proud reminder of what happened here," said project spokesman Sławomir Kulinski. "It's a place that not only changed Poland's history but also the world's," he told AFP, surveying the excavated red-brick cellars of the Saxon Palace. Built for a nobleman, it became a royal residence and was later home to a young Frederic Chopin. The future composer's father taught at a school inside it. "Chopin wrote his first works while living here," Kulinski said. These include the "Polonaise in G minor" at the ripe old age of seven. "I bet he ran around these cellars with his friends, chasing each other, when he was just a little squirt," Kulinski added. The palace went on to house the Cipher Bureau where Polish mathematicians cracked an early version of Germany's Enigma machine, contributing to the Allied victory in World War II.—Agencies



ISLAMABAD : Chairman Senate, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani meets with British Parliamentary Delegation at Parliament house. —DNA

ICCI for withdrawal of Section 7E to promote investment

Ch. Muhammad Masood, Zulqarnain Abbasi, Ch. Zahid Rafiq, Abid Khan Ch. Nadeem ud Din and others also spoke on the occasion and called upon the government to reduce high taxes on the real estate sector

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD : Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) said that the introduction of Section 7E through Finance Act 2022 has emerged as a major disincentive for investment in the real estate sector due to which the economy is suffering and stressed that the government should withdraw it to promote investment in the real estate and construction sector and revive the economy. He said this while addressing a delegation of

real estate developers and builders during their visit to ICCI.

Ahsan Bakhtawari said that after a judgement of the Lahore High Court, the collection of deemed income tax under Sec-7E has been stopped in Punjab and stressed that the government should withdraw it across the country to end such discrepancies. He informed the delegation that ICCI is making strenuous efforts for the withdrawal of this tax in the next budget to facilitate the growth of business and investment activities in the real estate and construction industry.

He said that the government can take the country's economy from recession to sustainable development by focusing on the real estate and construction sector. Sardar Tahir Mehmood, President, Federation of Realtors Pakistan said that the overseas Pakistanis prefer to invest in the real estate sector in Pakistan, but hike in taxes is discouraging them. He emphasized that the government should give serious consideration to this issue and offer attractive incentives that would boost foreign investment in the country and provide crucial support to

the fragile economy. Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, former President ICCI and CEO Centaurus said that the cut in heavy taxes on the real estate sector can bring foreign investment of billions of dollars to Pakistan and help revive the economy. He said that the business activities of many allied industries are linked with the real estate and construction sector and reducing high taxes on this sector would boost the business activities of all allied industries and stimulate the economic growth of the country. Khalid Iqbal Malik, ICCI

Group Leader said that the real estate sector is the major source of attracting remittances and foreign investment, however, the imposition of unnecessary taxes has led to a significant decline in remittances and investment. He urged that the government should rationalize taxes on this sector, withdraw tax on deemed income and create a conducive environment for this sector to spur the economic development of the country. Engr. Azhar ul Islam Zafar, Vice President ICCI said that after the announcement of the construction

package in the past, many mega construction projects were started in Pakistan, but due to high construction cost and high taxes, work on many projects is suspended, which is harmful for the investors and the economy. He said that the government should take notice of this situation to save this sector from further damages. Ch. Muhammad Masood, Zulqarnain Abbasi, Ch. Zahid Rafiq, Abid Khan Ch. Nadeem ud Din and others also spoke on the occasion and called upon the government to reduce high taxes on the real estate sector.

Serbia denies role in deadly clashes in Kosovo

Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in 2008 and gained recognition from many countries, including Türkiye. But Belgrade has never recognized Kosovo and claims it is still part of Serbia

WEB DESK

BELGRADE : Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic and Foreign Minister Ivica Dacic denied allegations of Belgrade's role in deadly weekend clashes in Kosovo. "Everything they said was a lie...They used this in the dirtiest way. When they kill eight policemen, it is an act of liberation, and the Serbs are terrorists and savages," Vucic said in a program on national broadcaster Radio Television of Serbia (RTS). Kosovo's Interior Minister Xhelal Svecla said Wednesday that evidence is mounting that Serbia was involved in "terrorist action" in his country as he posted photos of documents and arms that were seized from a Serbian armed group after a clash between police and gunmen in northern Kosovo left one officer dead and another wound-

ed. Prime Minister Albin Kurti also claimed that the armed Serbian group was led by Milan Radojic, the vice president of Serbian List – a minority political party in Kosovo in the northern town of Zvecan. Vucic responded, saying: "I know Milan Radojic. I don't know the others... Now I heard about these people. I saw that they lied that one of the men was (Serbian Security and Information Agency chief Aleksandar) Vulin's bodyguard. That man was with Vulin 10 years ago." In a separate post, Svecla claimed that it was confirmed that one of those killed in the operation was Bojan Mijailovic, Vulin's bodyguard during his visit to Kosovo in 2013. Vucic said that Radojic was not wounded and he is in Serbia waiting to answer authorities' call in the Kosovo case. "Milan Radojic never hid. He was not ashamed of his role. He

will certainly respond to the invitation of the competent authorities," he added. By pressuring people, Kurti caused all Serbs to be united in the region, said Vucic. "The situation is boiling...Those people are martyrs and saints for all the people in the north. Kurti united all Serbs. What do they expect next? To be like the convoy from Karabakh? It won't be," he added. Dacic told Vojvodina state TV that Belgrade has nothing to do with the armed group and he does not know who organized it. "Whoever it is that is organizing them in the fight for the freedom of the Serbs must take the effects into consideration," he said. He added that the conflict in the village of Banjska in northern Kosovo is not in Belgrade's interest. Clashes broke out in Banjska near the Serbian border when a group of armed Serbs blocked a bridge.

A shootout erupted when the group opened fire on police. Several security forces were dispatched to the region, and the Brnjak border crossing between Kosovo and Serbia was closed. The area has been the scene of unrest since April, when local ethnic Serbs boycotted elections in northern Kosovo, followed by protests against the election of ethnic Albanian mayors. Albanians are by far the largest ethnic group in Kosovo, followed by Serbs, with about half living in the north. Amid the unrest concerning the elections, NATO peacekeepers were deployed, including a group of extra Turkish reinforcements. Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in 2008 and gained recognition from many countries, including Türkiye. But Belgrade has never recognized Kosovo and claims it is still part of Serbia.

EU 'nearing' agreement on migration policy reform

BRUSSELS : EU commissioners expressed optimism the bloc would finally on Thursday agree a reformed migration policy package, after Germany signalled its backing. "We are now nearing the big agreement that Europe needs after many years of failures," commissioner Margaritis Schinas said as he went into a meeting of EU interior ministers. "Hopefully today they can agree on the last piece of the pact," which had been holding up its adoption, fellow commissioner Ylva Johansson said. Paralysis on the issue has caused frustration in the 27-nation bloc as it faces a rise in irregular migration. The arrival of thousands of asylum-seekers on the Italian island of Lampedusa has spurred urgency to get the revised pact on migration and asylum in place. The aim of the reform, introduced three years ago, is to have EU states share the obligation to look after the arrivals, either by taking in some of the migrants who mainly come to Italy or Greece or contributing money to countries that do. But Germany had balked at some of the headline proposals in it, which include lengthening the detention period of irregular migrants arriving on EU soil from 12 weeks to 20 weeks. It wanted less strict policies applied to minors and families. Going into the Brussels meeting, German Interior Minister Nancy Faeser said she was "confident that we will achieve a good result in the end" and that her government would achieve modifications it wanted to the package. "For us, it is important that, even in the event of a crisis... a state does not make use of it recklessly to then lower standards," she said. The text, drawn up by the European Commission, is in part a bid to forge Europe-wide solidarity in case of a repeat of the massive 2015-2016 influx of asylum-seekers, most of whom were Syrians fleeing their civil war. An earlier attempt to get the reform adopted in July failed when the required weighted majority of EU countries was not met. Hungary, Poland, Austria and the Czech Republic voted against the package, while Germany, Slovakia and the Netherlands abstained. Ministers from other EU countries also expressed optimism that they could get the pact over the line. "We are very close to an agreement," Spanish Interior Minister Fernando Grande-Marlaska said.—APP

Nagorno-Karabakh will cease to exist from 2024

The Azerbaijani victory last week triggered a huge exodus of ethnic Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh

FOREIGN DESK

YEREVAN : The self-declared republic of Nagorno-Karabakh will cease to exist from next year after its president signed a decree dissolving state institutions following its defeat by Azerbaijan. The Azerbaijani victory last week triggered a huge exodus of ethnic Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh and marked the end of decades of conflict. President Samvel Shahramanyan's decree called for all institutions and organizations of the Republic of Artsakh – which is not recognized internationally – to dissolve by the start of next year. "The Republic

of Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) ceases its existence," read the decree, which was shared on Facebook by the Artsakh government. Shahramanyan said the decision had been made "due to the current difficult military-political situation." Azerbaijan's campaign lasted 24 hours, before both sides agreed to a Russia-brokered ceasefire which saw Karabakh's armed forces disband. But the Azerbaijani presidency insisted that the Artsakh government also dissolve itself, warning that, if they did not do so, the offensive would continue "until the end." The decree called on Azerbaijan to observe the "free, unconstrained, and unin-

dered passing of the population of Nagorno-Karabakh, including the militants who laid down their weapons, with their property and transportation means through Lachin corridor." A sudden end Nagorno-Karabakh lies within Azerbaijan's borders but has for decades operated autonomously with a de facto government of its own. After Azerbaijan's lightning offensive – which killed at least 200 people and injured many hundreds more – Baku said it had taken back control of the region, seemingly bringing to an end a conflict that has lasted more than a century. Azerbaijan has long been clear about the choice the local Armenian population had to

make: Stay and accept Azerbaijani citizenship, or leave. The majority of the population have voted with their feet, choosing to flee their ancestral home rather than submit to rule by Baku. More than half of the population of Nagorno-Karabakh has fled for Armenia over the past week, after Azerbaijan lifted the blockade of the Lachin corridor – the only road connecting the enclave to Armenia – to allow people to leave. Some 60,000 people had crossed the border into Armenia by Thursday morning, with many arriving in a "dire" condition, according to Samantha Power, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), in a visit to the

border town of Kornidzor Tuesday. Nagorno-Karabakh has been under blockade for 10 months, after Azerbaijan-backed activists established a military checkpoint on the Lachin corridor and prevented the import of food, medicine and fuel to the country. The region's capital, before the beginning of the offensive, who said they would have to wait in line for hours each day to receive their daily ration of bread. "The military attacks of last week have made a dire situation even worse," Power said Tuesday, adding that many of those who had arrived were suffering from "severe malnutrition," according to doctors at the scene.

Burkina detains 4 officers after thwarted coup

OUAGADOUGOU : Burkina Faso said on Thursday that four officers had been detained, a day after the military government announced it had thwarted a coup attempt. The four are suspected of involvement in a "conspiracy against state security", military prosecutor Ahmed Ferdinand Sountoura said in a statement seen by AFP on Thursday. Two others are "on the run" according to the statement. The junta said late on Wednesday that the intelligence and security services had foiled a coup attempt the previous day. The military government said it would seek to shed "all possible light on this plot". It comes nearly a year to the day since junta leader Captain Ibrahim Traore seized power in the West African nation on September 30, 2022.—DNA

Thai court clears officials in activist disappearance

BANGKOK : A Thai court on Thursday dropped murder charges against four national park officials over the disappearance of an environmental activist almost a decade ago, but jailed one on a lesser offence. It was the latest twist in a long-running legal saga after ethnic Karen leader Porlajee Rakkhongcharoen, better known by his nickname Billy, went missing in 2014 while working on a lawsuit alleging officials had destroyed homes in Kaeng Krachan National Park. The investigation centred around then-park chief Chaiwat Limlikitaksorn, who was the last person to see Billy alive, and who was indicted for murder last year following an outcry after charges were initially dropped in 2020. But on Thursday, the Central Criminal Court for Corruption declined to prosecute any of the officials for murder, acquitting three outright and sentencing Chaiwat to three years in prison for malfeasance. The court said there was not enough evidence to continue with the murder charges. Following the verdict, lawyer Pornpen Khongkachonkiet, who represents Billy's family, said they would appeal. "Whether he is dead or alive, forced disappearance is a breach of basic human rights," she told reporters. "This has a total impact on Billy's relatives and family." Outside of the court, the activist's wife Pinnapa Preuksapan shed tears. "I have fought this for almost 10 years because I couldn't find out where Billy went," she told AFP. "And today, I still don't know the answer."—Agencies

Uzbekistan warehouse blast leaves 1 dead, injuries

TASHKENT : At least one person died and 163 others were injured in an explosion in a company warehouse in Uzbekistan's capital Tashkent early on Thursday, authorities said. The Ministry for Emergency Situations said the explosion took place in the warehouse of a company in the Sergeli district for reasons unknown. Firefighters were dispatched to extinguish the fire. The country's Health Ministry said that one person died and 163 people were injured in the incident. It added that 24 of the injured were hospitalized while others were treated at the scene. Prime Minister Abdulla Aripov also traveled to the site of the explosion, his office said. At Mirziyoyev's direction, a government commission was formed under Deputy Prime Minister Acilbay Ramatov to help those hurt or harmed by the explosion, it noted. The sound of the explosion was heard in many parts of Tashkent, and many people shared images of the explosion on social media.—Agencies

Briefs

Iraq's prime minister visits wedding fire victims

DNA

BAGHDAD: Iraq's prime minister on Thursday visited injured patients and the families of victims in northern Iraq days after a deadly wedding fire killed around 100 people, as two more people died from their injuries. Mohammed Shia Al-Sudani arrived in Nineveh province early Thursday with a delegation of ministers and security officials, state television reported. He met with the wounded and family members of victims at Hamdaniyah Hospital and Al-Jumhoori Hospital. He later visited the Syriac Catholic Mar Behnam Monastery to express his condolences to victims. A health official, speaking on condition of anonymity in line with regulations, told The Associated Press that two critically burned victims — a 30-year-old woman and a 4-year-old child — died from their injuries. Around 250 panicked guests surged for the exits on Tuesday night in the Haitham Royal Wedding Hall in the predominantly Christian area of Hamdaniyah near Mosul after the ceiling panels above a pyrotechnic machine burst into flames. Authorities said around 100 people died in the incident, and the death toll is expected to rise with at least 100 other people still injured, many of them critically burned. The venue's owners have been accused of violating safety protocols.

India outrage as raped girl walks around seeking help

DNA

NEW DELHI: A video showing a young girl walking around seeking help after being raped has sparked anger in India. Many people expressed outrage after CCTV footage showed a man appearing to wave the girl away when she approaches him. But police told local media that the girl, who walked around Ujjain city in Madhya Pradesh state for more than two hours, was helped by some people. A senior police official said a medical examination showed the girl was raped. "Five people who came in contact with the girl are being questioned," Ujjain police superintendent Sachin Sharma told ANI news agency on Thursday, adding that the girl was "incoherent and could not initially give any details about her whereabouts". Police have not confirmed the girl's age yet. A short CCTV video which surfaced online this week sparked condemnation from politicians and on social media. It shows the girl, who appears to be bleeding, walking on a road on Monday. At one point, she approaches a man who seems to wave his hand at her, before walking away again. Police say they are reviewing other CCTV footage from the area to trace the route the girl walked before she got help.



ISLAMABAD: Chief Guest of the event Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani cut the cake along with Ambassador of People's Republic of China to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong and others on the occasion of the 74th anniversary of Founding of China, at local hotel in Federal Capital.—Online

Zardari, Gilani summoned in NAB cases

DNA

ISLAMABAD: An accountability court of Islamabad summoned former President Asif Zardari and former prime minister Yousuf Raza Gilani in separate cases. Accountability court issued summon notices to both politicians in fake bank accounts and Toshakhana cases. They were asked to appear on Oct 24. The court directed Asif Ali Zardari and Yousuf Raza Gilani to appear before the court in their personal capacity. It should be noted that on the last day of his tenure, former chief justice Umar Atta Bandial declared the petition of PTI chairman against the NAB amendments admissible and declared nine out of 10 amendments of the NAB amendments null and void. After the NAB amendments were declared null and void by the Supreme Court, the cases against six former prime ministers including former president Asif Ali Zardari were reopened.

Pakistan floods a 'litmus test' for climate justice: Guterres

NEW YORK: Top UN officials pledged support for Pakistan on Wednesday as it continues the painstaking process of rebuilding in the wake of last year's devastating floods. They also underscored the need to slash carbon emissions and bolster early warning systems to safeguard nations across the world which are becoming increasingly vulnerable to extreme weather. Speaking at the UN Headquarters, in New York, Secretary-General António Guterres said how the world responds now to Pakistan's struggles is a "litmus test" for climate justice. "Pakistan needs and deserves massive support from the international community," he said. Despite contributing less than one per cent of global emissions, Pakistan's people face a staggering 15 times higher risk of dying from climate-related impacts. "Pakistan is a double victim — of climate

chaos, and of our outdated and unjust global financial system that prevents middle-income countries from accessing much needed resources to invest in adaptation and resilience," he stressed. Triggered by torrential monsoon rains, the floods submerged one third of Pakistan, claimed over 1,700 lives, destroyed two million homes, critical infrastructure, and affected 33 million people — half of them children. In the immediate aftermath, the Government, supported by the UN launched a flood response plan, requesting \$816 million to support 9.5 million of the most affected people. That appeal is about 69 per cent funded. Even today, the response continues as UN and partners assist people in flood-ravaged areas, after further punishing rains fell this summer and Pakistan's economy struggles to re-

cover. Agencies such as the UN Development Programme (UNDP) are also helping people rebuild livelihoods. Dennis Francis, President of the General Assembly, urged Member States and the broader UN system to maintain their steadfast support for recovery and reconstruction endeavours. "I urge Member States and stakeholders to step forward and fill the funding gaps needed to mobilize resources," he said, emphasizing the need to address funding shortfalls for both climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction. According to UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), around eight million people (half of them children) in flood-affected areas, remain without access to safe water, 3.5 million children remain out of school, and about 1.5 million require lifesaving nutrition assistance. — Agencies

PTI condemns Farrukh's enforced disappearance

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf denounced the abduction of PTI West Punjab President and former Minister of State Farrukh Habib, demanding the Chief Justice of Pakistan to take immediate notice of the shameful efforts of promoting lawlessness by the state kidnappers in the country so as to rein in the rising fascism and inhuman practice in the country. PTI spokesperson strongly condemned the enforced disappearance of Farrukh Habib and said that the alarming upsurge in the state operation and repression against the PTI ahead of the forthcoming general elections was a shameful attempt to push the PTI, only federal political party, out of the electoral race. He said that the PTI leaders and workers were being abducted under the same notorious plan, which was echoed in the statements of the caretaker prime minister. PTI spokesperson pointed out that every tactic of cruelty, coercion and brutality was being tried under the infamous plan to keep the PTI Chairman Imran Khan and PTI out of electoral arena because they were petrified of his rising popularity in the country. He went on to say that after getting relief from the courts in fake and fabricated cases based on political revenge, the state machinery resorted to shameful tactics practice of enforced disappearances and abductions of PTI people to render the courts ineffective. PTI spokesperson stated that after enforced disappearances of Zahoor Mashwani, Sadaqat Abbasi, Usman Dar, Owais Younis, Abdul Karim, Hasan Niazi, Haider Majeed and Sheikh Rasheed, now Farrukh Habib along with others were abducted, indicating the rising fascism and widespread lawlessness in the country. — DNA

Cracks within PTI legal team laid bare

ISLAMABAD: Cracks within the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) legal team have come to the fore with lawyers Sher Afzal Khan Marwat and Shoaib Shaheen engaging in a spat as the former levelled serious allegations against the latter, according to The News. In a detailed social media post, advocate Marwat from PTI's legal team has levelled serious allegations against party chief Imran Khan's lawyer Shoaib Shaheen, calling him the "sole traitor". However, Shaheen — while speaking to The News — has called the claims Marwat's "personal stance" and not the party's position. On Wednesday, Marwat wrote on X — formerly known as Twitter — that

"the only traitor in PTI's legal team is Shoaib Shaheen Advocate. He mysteriously emerged in the last week of April 2023 and I was surprised to see him at the legal committee meeting in Bani Gala." "He had never been part of the ILF or PTI before and his access to Bani Gala reflected that he had the support of some in our ranks." This post on social media follows a post last month by Marwat in which he had said that there were people within the PTI's legal team who were "leaking sensitive party information to adversaries" and such "traitors" in the legal team and the party's core committee had put his "life in danger". Marwat had deleted his August post apparently on "advice from seniors of the core committee". He further wrote, "Shaheen deals with service tribunal cases and does not know the ABC of criminal law" and went on to claim that he, "despite not being a lawyer in a single criminal case filed against Khan sahab, had started posing as Khan sahab's lawyer, which was a fraud." — DNA

NATO's Chief meets Zelensky to discuss battlefield

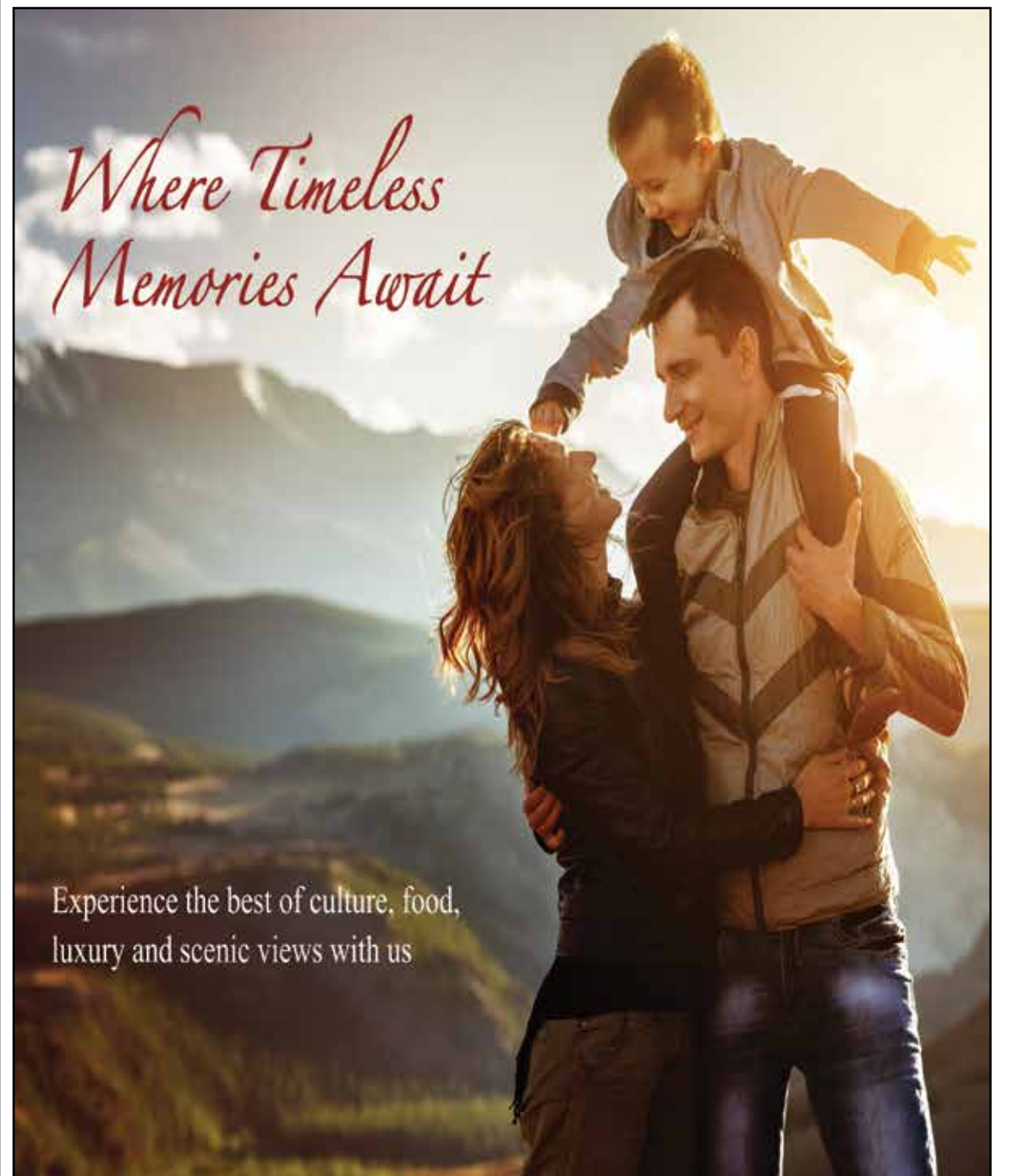
KYIV: NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg met with President Volodymyr Zelensky to discuss the status of the war and needs of troops on Thursday, the day after Russia accused Ukraine's Western allies of helping plan and conduct last week's missile strike on the Black Sea Fleet's headquarters on the annexed Crimean Peninsula. Zelensky said that Stoltenberg agreed to make efforts to get NATO members to help provide additional air defense systems to protect Ukraine's power plants and energy infrastructure that were badly damaged in relentless and deadly attacks by Russia last winter. He also reminded the secretary-general of the persistent attacks that often strike civilian areas, including 40 drone attacks overnight. "In the face of such intense attacks against Ukrainians, against our cities, our ports, which are crucial for global food security, we need a corresponding intensity of pressure on Russia and a strengthening of our air defense," Zelensky said. "The world must see how Russia is losing dearly so that our shared values ultimately prevail." Stoltenberg said that NATO has contracts for 2.4 billion euros (\$2.5 billion) in ammunition for Ukraine, including 155 mm Howitzer shells, anti-tank guided missiles and tank ammunition. "The stronger Ukraine becomes, the closer we become to ending Russia's aggression," Stoltenberg said. "Russia could lay down arms and end its war today." — Agencies

Taiwan unveils new submarine to fend off China

Adm Huang told Nikkei Asia he had personally approached military contacts in the US, Japan, South Korea and India for help but did not specify which country eventually agreed

BEIJING: Taiwan has unveiled its first domestically-made submarine as it bolsters its defences against a possible Chinese attack. President Tsai Ing-wen presided over the launch ceremony in the port city of Kaohsiung on Thursday. US officials have warned that China could be militarily capable of mounting an invasion within the next few years. Taiwan is a self-governing island which China regards as a renegade province and has vowed to reclaim one day. Most observers believe China will not attack the island imminently, and Beijing has said it seeks peaceful "reunification" with Taiwan. But at the same time it has warned against Taiwan formally declaring independence and any foreign support. It has increasingly sought to put pressure on the island with its military drills in the Taiwan Strait, including several conducted this month. "History will forever remember this day," said Ms Tsai as she stood in front of the towering submarine draped in the emblem of Taiwan's flag. She added that the idea of a domestically-made submarine had previously been considered "an impossible task... but we did it". Building their own submarines has long been a key priority for Taiwan's leaders, but the programme accel-

erated under Ms Tsai who has revved up military spending to nearly double its budget during her tenure. The \$1.54bn (£1.27bn) diesel-electric powered submarine will undergo several tests and will be delivered to the navy by the end of 2024, according to military officials. It has been named the Haikun after a mythical massive fish that can also fly, which appears in classic Chinese literature. Another one is currently in production. Taiwan aims to eventually operate a fleet of 10 submarines - including two older Dutch-made boats - and equip them with missiles. The head of the domestic submarine programme Admiral Huang Shu-kuang told reporters last week that the goal was to fend off any attempt from China to encircle Taiwan for an invasion or impose a naval blockade. It would also buy time until US and Japan forces arrive to aid Taiwan's defence, he added. When asked by reporters about the submarine on Thursday, a Chinese defence ministry spokesperson said it was "idiotic nonsense" to try to stop their military's actions in the Pacific. "No amount of weapons [Taiwan's ruling] Democratic Progressive Party buys or makes can stop reunification with the motherland," he added. — Agencies



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