



Islamabad POST

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Italian photographer captures beauty of Pakistan thru camera

Detailed News On Page-08

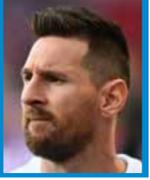
No restrictions on PTI as political party

Detailed News On Page-08



Messi's return fails to rescue Inter Miami

Detailed News On Page-06



Over 370 martyred

Palestinians sacrifice lives for their state

Over 700 Israeli soldiers and illegal settlers killed; US announces mily aid for Tel Aviv; caretaker FM Jalil Abbas expresses solidarity with Palestine against Israeli oppression



NEWS DESK

GAZA: The death toll from Saturday's massive attack by Hamas on Israel has risen to 600 while over 1,000 have been injured with Palestinian gunmen escaping with dozens of hostages including military personnel, Israeli media reported on Sunday. At least 370 Gazans were also martyred when Israel responded with one of its most devastating days of retaliatory strikes. Fighting continued into the night. The health ministry of the Palestinian authority said at least 370 Palestinians have been martyred, including 20 children,

Continued on Page 06

OIC condemns Israeli aggression

NEWS DESK

JEDDAH: The General Secretariat of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) is greatly concerned about the developments on the ground and the dangerous Israeli escalation in the occupied Palestinian territory. It condemned the Israeli military aggression that led to the fall of hundreds of martyrs and wounded among the Palestinian people, stressing that the continuation of the Israeli occupation and its failure to adhere to the resolutions of international legitimacy, and the escalation of the pace of its attacks and daily crimes against the Palestinian people, their land and sanctities, and depriving them of their legitimate rights is the main reason for instability. The OIC held the Israeli occupation responsible for the escalation and, at the same time, called on the international community, especially the UN Security Council, to assume its responsibilities towards stopping

Continued on Page 06

Despite missing targets

Pak likely to receive next IMF tranche

The report also said that Pakistan is yet to implement the gas price adjustment it had agreed with the global lender

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Pakistan is likely to receive the next tranche of the \$3 billion stand-by arrangement (SBA) with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) even though it may miss a few deadlines, a brokerage report said on Saturday. Topline Securities said the country had met the targets for net international reserves, net domestic assets, and foreign currency swap/forward position as of the end of June 2023 but highlighted that Islamabad had missed the targets of the primary deficit, which measures the fiscal balance excluding interest payments, and for external public debt disbursements. The report also said that Pakistan is yet to implement the gas price adjustment it had agreed with the global lender. The adjustment was a prior action for the completion of the second review of the program. Pakistan got the first installment of a stand-by arrangement from the IMF in the amount of \$1.2 billion in July after the Executive Board of the lender approved the bail-out package to stabilise the country's economy.

Continued on Page 06



SKARDU: A jeep Racer participant approaching towards its target during the "Sarfaraanga Cold Desert Rally 5th Edition 2023 in Final round at world highest desert sarfaraanga. - APP

Huge crowd to welcome Nawaz on return: Maryam

She said the inflation in Nawaz Sharif's tenure was just 2% and the prosperity of the country was ousted

ABBAS HASHMI

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) Senior Vice President Maryam Nawaz Sunday said that the crowd shows that the public will give Nawaz Sharif a grand reception on October 21. She said that a huge crowd of the people of only one area has gathered. How huge will the gathering at Minar-e-Pakistan be on October 21 when their leader returns. Maryam said that Nawaz Sharif will bring along hope and prosperity of the nation with him when he returns. She said the inflation in Nawaz Sharif's tenure was just 2% and the prosperity of the country was ousted. For the sake of the people, he witnessed lesser days of power and more of difficulties.



Continued on Page 06

Fazl censures parties for opportunism

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman said the country was sinking into a quagmire, while some political parties were busy campaigning for the elections, reported The News. The politician, who is also the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) chief, expressed his concerns regarding the country's prevailing economic conditions. "The country's overall administrative structure is on the decline," he said, addressing a convention for his party workers.

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Revival of economy first priority

DNA

LONDON: PML-N supremo and former prime minister Nawaz Sharif has said that his first and last priority is the revival of Pakistan's economy. Nawaz said this while talking to a delegation of the PML-N's overseas leaders in London. He was of the idea that everyone would have to play their role for ensuring the stability of Pakistan in the economic field. He added that the public would conduct accountability through their power of vote. The three-time former premier said the journey to development would resume from where it had been ended.

Bilawal grieved over quake losses

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has expressed his deep sorrow and condolences following the devastating earthquake that struck the city of Herat in Afghanistan. The earthquake has resulted in a tragic loss of life and widespread devastation, leaving communities in distress. In a heartfelt statement on Sunday, Bilawal Bhutto conveyed his shock and grief over the calamity.

PAF's multinational exercise Indus Shield 2023 kicks off

Exercise Indus Shield-2023 will witness participation from 14 esteemed Air Forces including Turkiye, Saudi Arabia, Qatar



STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: In a magnificent display of international camaraderie and airpower, PAF has proudly inaugurated its 14th NATION Multinational Air Exercise, Indus Shield-2023, at an operational air base of Pakistan Air Force today. Air Vice Marshal

Tariq Mehmood Ghazi, Air Officer Commanding, Central Air Command, Pakistan Air Force, was the Chief Guest at the inauguration ceremony. While addressing the exercise participants Air Officer Commanding Central Air Command emphasized on the significance of multi-national

Continued on Page 06

Nipah virus in Pakistan low: NIH

Virus transmits to humans from animals

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The National Institute of Health has said the risk of occurrence of Nipah virus (NiV) in Pakistan is low. However, it has urged authorities at entry points across the country to remain vigilant. The virus, according to the World Health Organisation, was first recognised in 1999 during an outbreak among pig farmers in Malaysia. It can be transmitted to humans from animals (such as pigs and bats) or contaminated food and can also be transmitted directly from human-to-human. Fruit bats of the Pteropodidae family are the natural host of Nipah virus. There is no treatment or vaccine available for either people or animals. The primary treatment for humans is supportive care.

Death toll from Afghan quake shoots up to 2,000

Rescue teams along with local men are struggling to pull out the dead and injured

Pakistan grieved over devastating earthquake

KHAYAM ABBASI

ANKARA: The death toll from Saturday's massive earthquake that hit the northwestern part of Afghanistan has shot up to 2,000 with nearly 10,000 injured as rescue workers scrambled to pull out an unknown number of people trapped under rubble, officials and local media reported. Afghanistan Disaster Management Authority said that some 2,053 deaths have been confirmed, while 9,249 People are injured. More than 1,300 houses have been partially or fully destroyed in the earthquake. State-run Bakhtar News Agency, citing Afghan Red Crescent, reported that some 12 villages in the Zinda Jan and Ghorian districts of Herat province - home to 1.9 million people - have been "completely destroyed." Rescue teams along with local men are struggling to pull out the dead and injured trapped under the razed houses. On Saturday, Afghanistan Disaster Management Authority's spokesman Mullah Janan Saig said the death toll could further rise, adding that the tremors caused heavy damage in northwestern Herat and Badghis provinces.

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Sunday expressed deep sadness and condolence over loss of precious lives and properties in devastating earthquake that hit Western regions of Afghanistan on Saturday. "The Government and people of Pakistan are deeply saddened by the devastating earthquake in Western regions of Afghanistan yesterday, resulting in tragic loss of life and widespread damage to property," a statement issued by the foreign office spokesperson said. "We extend our sincerest condolences to the families of those who lost their loved ones and pray for the early and complete recovery of the injured." The statement added that Pakistan stood in complete solidarity with the brothers and sisters in

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REPARATION OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS 23

TURKISH AIRLINES BEST PART OF THE JOURNEY Stopover IN ISTANBUL EASY VISA FREE ACCOMMODATION

AQI remains unhealthy in Lahore

DNA

LAHORE : The Air Quality Index (AQI) remained unhealthy in the provincial metropolis on Sunday. AQI calculations of five categories of pollution, including particulate matter, ground level Ozone, carbon monoxide, sulfur dioxide, and nitrogen dioxide, reached an unhealthy level. The Air quality index (AQI) rate was recorded between 178 and 200 in the early morning on Sunday, Met Office sources told APP. Obviously, the AQI is clearly indicating an alarming level of smog threat continued to loom in the capital of Punjab province. The sources said the air in Lahore was very unhealthy. AQI as high as 151-200 is considered unhealthy, while an AQI rating between 201 and 300 is more harmful and AQI over 300 is dubbed extremely hazardous. Meanwhile, the lowest temperature in Lahore was recorded at 23 degree centigrade. The smoke produced by burning of crop residues, shoe factories waste, use of unrecommended coal, burning of trash and black oil and tyres is deteriorating the atmosphere. Environmentalists say that an increased trend in air pollution in winter, change in the wind speed, its direction and sliding minimum temperature, increases air pollution.

DPO inaugurates Nishan-e-Haider Chowk

SARGODHA : District Police Officer Muhammad Faisal Kamran on Sunday inaugurated the "Nishan-e-Haider Chowk" at Major Aziz Bhatti Shaheed Town. SSP Patrolling Akhtar Abbas Joyia, ASP City Usman Mir, DSP Traffic Arshad Gondal, Electronic Media Club Chairman Nadeem Khan and a large number of residents also participated in the ceremony. The DPO said, "Martyrs are our pride, and their sacrifices continue to inspire us. They live in our hearts forever, whether they belong to the armed forces, police or other security agencies." Electronic Media Club Chairman Nadeem Khan said that the nation would never forget the sacrifices of martyrs, and martyrdom is a rank bestowed upon the fortunate ones. Later, prayers were offered for the safety and progress of the country.—APP

COURT NOTICE

In the court of Mr. Muhammad Farooq, Azam Sahib Judge Family Court Gujrat. Case Title, Rukhsana Kousar V/S Shafeeq Ahmed etc. Notice to, Shafeeq Ahmed S/O Muhammad Rafeeq, Muhammad Rafeeq S/O Wali Muhammad caste Jutt Gondal R/OMajra Tehsil & District Gujrat. Present Living Abroad. Suit for, Recovery Of Dowry Articals etc. The above mentioned defended are not served in ordinary way. It is therefore proclaimed that If the said defended with not appear personally or through a duly authorized agent or pleader in court at 8 AM on 11-10-2023 the proceedings will be taken ex-parte against you.



ISLAMABAD: A view of demolished houses during Islamabad Police and Capital Development Authority (CDA) joints an anti-encroachment operation of illegal Afghan Basti, in Federal Capital. —ONLINE

PIDE research reveals internet shutdowns cost 1.3 billion loss

Cost Pakistan PKR 1.3 Billion in Direct Loss Customers unable to book Online Cab rides, resulting in a staggering 97% reduction in number of rides Online Food Delivery Services face a loss of PKR 135 million per day Denial of orders to Pakistani Freelancers due to internet outages

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD: In a recent study conducted by the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), and Mr Mohammad Shaaf Najib, Research Fellow at PIDE, the internet has become a fundamental necessity in modern times. However, Pakistan's internet infrastructure lags behind in terms of both quality and coverage. The recent internet closure in various parts of Pakistan has had a profound impact on multiple sectors, leading to substantial financial losses and operational challenges. Online cab services, online food delivery services, freelancers, transport companies, and postal services have all been severely affected by the prolonged disruption of internet services. The PIDE infographic shows that online Cab Services, a cornerstone of modern transportation, saw a

staggering 97% reduction in the number of rides on days when the internet has been closed down. This significant downturn equates to a loss of PKR 29 to 32 million for the industry per day. Similarly, Online Food Delivery Services suffered a 75% reduction in the number of orders, translating into a substantial daily loss of PKR 135 million. Meanwhile, the freelance community, which contributes significantly to Pakistan's economy, has also felt the brunt of internet disruptions. Denial of orders to Pakistani-based freelance workers resulted in over \$1.3 million loss of revenue, equaling PKR 390 million, impacting livelihoods of many and the national economy as a whole too. Besides, suspension of 3G/4G services for a single

day causes a loss of PKR 450 million to the telecommunication sector alone. Furthermore, PIDE had earlier estimated the economic costs of protests to be around 2.0% of the GDP. Closure of economic activity either through protests or due to closure of internet services contributes a significant loss to economic activity in the country. Dr. Nadeem Haque, PIDE's Vice Chancellor, said in the press release that access to high-quality internet not only enhances opportunities for the youth, particularly in remote areas but also plays a pivotal role in bridging the divide between the privileged and the common public. Utilizing online tools for education and professional purposes can empower youth from rural regions to compete on a national and inter-

national level. PIDE has been a consistent advocate for "Internet for All" and believes that the government must prioritize immediate nationwide internet coverage. Additionally, regulatory measures should be introduced to encourage telecommunication companies to expand internet access across the country. Spectrum auctions should be geared towards ensuring universal internet coverage rather than solely as a means of generating revenue. The Internet is a critical tool for facilitating economic transactions and business operations. It is disheartening to note that internet shutdowns in Pakistan, often for arbitrary reasons, disrupt essential economic activities. PIDE is committed to fostering a digital landscape that not only empowers individuals.

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NFPA Appoints Naveed as Principal member of EGPC

LAHORE : The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) in the United States has appointed Pakistani Fire Safety Expert, Naveed Anjum, as a Principal Committee Member of the Electric Generating Plant Committee (EGPC) for NFPA 850. According to NFPA's notification, Naveed Anjum will serve on the Electrical Generating Plant Committee, marking him as the first Pakistani to receive this recognition. This is a significant honor for both Pakistan and its industrial organization, the Lalpur Plant (Nishat Group) of Pakistan. A committee consisting of principal members formed by NFPA USA, including thirty-one American fire safety experts, has appointed Naveed Anjum as the only Pakistani elected as a principal member of the Electric Generating Plant Committee (EGPC) even in the South Asia. The primary goal of this committee is to establish global fire safety standards for power generation plants. As a result of the committee's recommendations, NFPA 850, 851, and 853 standards are revised. These standards provide comprehensive fire safety recommendations for various types of electric generating plants, including those using gas, oil, coal, and alternative fuels, as well as high-voltage direct current converter stations and combustion turbine units used for electricity generation. Naveed Anjum's appointment as a Principal Committee member within NFPA 850 is a momentous recognition of his expertise and dedication to the field.—DNA



TAXILA: SBBWU and affiliated colleges students are visiting Taxila Museum in collaboration with the Directorate of Museum and Archaeology KP. — APP

BMP calls for major oil price reduction

The Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry' Businessmen Panel (BMP) has asked the government to make a substantive drop in petroleum products following a huge cut in the global oil market by almost \$9 per barrel and an immense recovery of the rupee to ease inflation to 27% in Oct, which has been hovering at around 31%. FPCCI former president and Businessmen Panel Chairman Mian Anjum Nisar observed that the Pakistani rupee appreciated 2.7% to Rs283/dollar compared with the previous fortnight's average of Rs292/ a dollar. In the same way, the price of petrol plummeted by 15% to \$84.3 per barrel in the international market compared with last fortnight's

average of \$99.3. The international price of high-speed diesel dipped by 10% to \$110.6 per barrel compared with last fortnight's average of \$122.3. Quoting a research report, he said that the price of Arab Light crude, which Pakistan imports from the Middle East, fell by 9.1%, or \$8.9 per barrel, to \$88.68 by October 5 compared to the average price of \$97.58 for the September 18-29 period. Incorporating the drop alongside rupee appreciation and assuming the international prices and currency remain at the same level for the next 10 days, the local petrol and diesel prices should go down by Rs40 per litre and Rs20 per litre, respectively, in the next fortnightly price revision effective from October

16, 2023. Mian Anjum estimated that exchange rate adjustments in the last fortnightly prices of petrol and diesel were Rs11.9 and negative Rs2.8 per litre, respectively. Even assuming the same currency adjustment for motor spirit/petrol and nil adjustment for HSD in the upcoming fortnightly prices, the MS and HSD prices should be dropped by Rs29 and Rs20 per litre, respectively. Moreover, Russia has surprisingly lifted the ban on export of diesel, which will create a supply glut for the premium product. This may spark a price war in the international market and benefit oil importing countries like Pakistan. The caretaker government has already reduced petrol price by Rs8 to

Rs323.38 per litre with effect from October 1, 2023. It cut diesel price by Rs11 to Rs318.18 per litre. The BMP Chairman said that Pakistan heavily relies on imported fuels to meet domestic demand. Estimates suggest that it meets around 70% of energy needs through imports while the remaining 30% is met through local field production. The share of energy, including gas, stood at around 26% (\$2.17 billion) in total imports of \$8.23 billion in the first two months of current fiscal year. Pakistan's demand for petroleum products hit a 44-month low at 1.06 million tons in September 2023 in the wake of a significant surge in prices over the past couple of months. Besides, the availability of smuggled diesel,

economic slowdown and a sharp drop in car sales also caused the decrease in demand. He said that the illicit activities such as the black market and smuggling of Dollars in key sectors are draining Pakistan's economy of a staggering \$23 billion per year. These clandestine operations, encompassing black market currency trade, oil smuggling, gold smuggling, and import controls, have detrimental effects on Pakistan's economic stability. They distort exchange rates, leading to currency devaluation, which, in turn, can fuel inflation as imported goods become costlier. Moreover, such activities undermine the efficacy of monetary policies and erode confidence in the financial system.—DNA

DC ensures sale of fertilizers at govt rates

NAWABSHAH: Deputy Commissioner Zahid Hussain Rind here on Sunday chaired a meeting of officials of Agriculture Department and dealers of agriculture fertilizers to take view of controlling the prices of agriculture fertilizers and its hoarding. The DC stressed on sale of all fertilizers at government and factory rate and said that action would be initiated against dealers found involved in overcharging. He said that economy of the district depends on agriculture and the wheat is an important product of the district that plays an important role in agri produce and also a food security for public. He said that the district administration was taking all possible steps for better output to provide relief to growers. He said that the raiding teams would be constituted by district administration with the cooperation of officials of Agriculture Department to impose fine and seal the shop of dealer found involved in overcharging. He instructed Additional Director Agriculture to form strategy regarding availability of fertilizer, rates fixed by producing companies and to ensure the sale of products at fixed prices and to send the same to DC office so that relief could be provided to growers through instant actions.—DNA

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COMSTech urged to Start Programs for Iranian Women Scientists

DNA

ISLAMABAD: H.E Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General COMSTech had a meeting with H.E. Mrs. Jamileh Alamohoda, the first lady of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Isfahan. In the meeting, Prof. Choudhary briefed the first lady about COMSTech activities, programs and joint collaborative programs with the Mustafa Science and Technology Foundation of Iran. Prof. Choudhary also informed that he has signed several MoUs with the top universities and scientific organizations of Iran. H.E. Mrs. Jamileh Alamohoda urged COMSTech to initiate joint training programs for Iranian women scientists. Prof. Choudhary reiterated his commitment to work together with the Iranian universities and organizations.

143 dengue cases reported in Punjab

LAHORE :The battle against dengue virus continues in Punjab as 143 new cases were reported on Sunday, according to the latest data from the Health Department. This year, a total of 5,469 confirmed dengue cases have been reported across 36 districts in Punjab. Lahore leads the unfortunate tally with a staggering 2,130 cases, closely followed by Rawalpindi with 1,561 cases, Multan with 620, Gujranwala with 268 and Faisalabad with 245 cases. As many as 52 new dengue cases were reported in Lahore, 47 in Rawalpindi, 10 in Multan, 11 in Gujranwala, 10 in Faisalabad, Sheikhupura recorded 3 new dengue cases, 2 cases reported from Kasur, Gujrat, Chakwal, Okara, Bahawalnagar, Bahawalpur and Rajanpur each confirmed one new dengue case during the same period.—APP

National Days and Armed Forces Days

OCTOBER

- Oct 01/China National Day
- Oct 01/Cyprus National Day
- Oct 01/Republic of Korea Armed Forces Day
- Oct 01/Nigeria Armed Forces Day
- Oct 02/Guinea National Day
- Oct 03/Germany Unification Day
- Oct 03/Republic of Korea National Foundation Day
- Oct 05/Indonesia Armed Forces Day
- Oct 06/Egypt Armed Forces Day
- Oct 09/Uganda Independence Day
- Oct 12/Spain National Day
- Oct 23/Hungary National Day
- October 24/United Nations United Nations Day
- Oct 25/Romania Armed Forces Day
- Oct 26/Austria National Day
- Oct 27/Turkmenistan Independence Day
- Oct 28/Czech Republic National Day
- Oct 29/Turkey Republic Day

Hotels & Restaurants



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



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

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



Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115
PIA Flight Info.....114
PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange 9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi.5555489
CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

CMH.....5611111
MH.....561116
Cantt Hospital...9270907-11
DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666



Departments

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: CEO Monal Luqman Ali Afzal posing a picture with the Federal Minister for Defence Production Lt. Gen (Retd) Anwar Ali Hyder, Ambassador of Egypt Tarek Dahroug and Defence Attache Brig. General Saad at the Egyptian Armed Forces Day. — DNA

Indian SC's verdict on status of Kashmir will have no consequences

The experts were of the view that the Indian attempts to change the status of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK) do not alter the international recognition of the issue and validity of UN resolutions, especially Resolution 47, which calls on India "to hold a plebiscite as soon as possible on the question of the accession" of Jammu & Kashmir to India or Pakistan

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The burning Kashmir issue should be seen as an international armed conflict and a matter of illegal occupation, annexation and settler colonialism and all unilateral actions by the Indian government or court verdict to legitimize them have no legal standing in the eyes of the UN, the world community and international law. This was discussed during the 22nd meeting of the Institute of Policy Studies' Working Group on Kashmir (IPS-WGK), a body of experts and opinion leaders on Kashmir affairs, under the title 'Article 370 in the Indian Supreme Court: Arguments, Outcomes & the Way Forward.' The hybrid session, chaired by Khalid Rahman, chairman IPS, was addressed by Ambassador (r) Syed Abrar Hussain, vice chairman IPS, Sheikh Abdul Mateen, special representative of All Parties Hurriyat Confer-

ence (APHC) chairman Masarat Alam Bhat, Dr Asma Shakir Khawaja, executive director, Centre of International Studies (CISS), Muzaffarabad, AJK, Iftikhar Gillani, senior Kashmiri journalist based in Ankara, Ambassador (r) Ishtiaq Hussain Andrabi, Advocate Imran Shafiq, international law expert, Advocate Nasir Qadri, executive director, Legal Forum for Kashmir (LFK), Dr Sheikh Waleed Rasool, Kashmiri academician and activist, Dr Khurram Abbas, director, India Study Centre, Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad (ISSI), Reema Shoukat, communication strategist, Institute of Regional Studies (IRS), among others, and moderated by Farzana Yaqoob, former AJ&K minister and general secretary IPS-WGK. The experts were of the view that the Indian attempts to change the status of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJK) do not alter the international recognition of the issue and validity of UN resolu-

tions, especially Resolution 47, which calls on India "to hold a plebiscite as soon as possible on the question of the accession" of Jammu & Kashmir to India or Pakistan. Thus, international resolutions remain fundamental in strengthening the case for Pakistan and Kashmiris. The Indian Supreme Court last month reserved its judgment on petitions challenging the revocation, through an act of parliament on August 5, 2019, of Articles 35-A and 370 of the Indian constitution, which accorded Jammu & Kashmir a special autonomous status. In this backdrop, Khalid Rahman stressed the need to remain consistent and innovative in advocacy. He underscored that the Kashmir cause needs to be echoed through robust and proactive advocacy tailored to the changing political and international environment. Abrar Hussain said although the verdict was reserved after 16 hearings, the statements, particularly those of the Indian

chief justice, imply the presumptions that Kashmir's sovereignty was entirely relinquished at the time of 'accession' in 1947. Presenting the analysis of all 16 hearings of the Indian Supreme Court, Nasir Qadri underscored that the proceedings lack any discussion on key aspects of Kashmir's sovereignty and accession. He said there is little room for a diplomatic solution to the conflict as India has already employed hybrid war tactics. He stressed that as one of the three major parties to the conflict Pakistan should amplify its moral, legal and material support the struggle. Imran Shafiq said that stakeholders in the issue are Pakistan, India, Kashmiris, and the international community. While the court proceedings were held within the parameters set by the Indian constitution, Pakistan and the international community view the Kashmir issue in light of UN resolutions. He emphasized that UN resolutions, such as Resolution 48,

Resolution 47, the Simla Agreement, and others, are the foundational documents on the Kashmir issue that have strengthened the case for Pakistan and Kashmiris. He said that, despite Indian presumptions and attempts to legitimize its hegemony, the process is only symbolic, with no actual authority or legal standing for the UN. The participants observed that there was no written submission or discussion of the true nature of the J&K dispute and its international character in the court proceedings. He underscored that India is trying to propagate through its presumptions that the Kashmir cause is unachievable and that the international community is not listening to the Kashmiris and Pakistan. Whatever is the outcome of the verdict, it is expected to have major consequences for the people of Kashmir and the Kashmir issue itself. Therefore, Pakistan must prepare a counter-strategy on war footing.

Pakistan and China to step up academic coop in rapeseed

DNA

BEIJING: "We are willing to assist Pakistan in the development of the rapeseed industry. We have discussed with the Pakistani delegation and reached a cooperation intention in rapeseed which includes the exchange of germplasm resources, cooperative breeding and regular ex-

change visits." This was stated by Li Dianrong, rapeseed expert at Hybrid Rapeseed Research Center in Shaanxi, China, according to Gwadar Pro. Last Wednesday, a delegation led by Fateh Marri, vice chancellor of Sindh Agriculture University, visited the Hybrid Rapeseed Research Center for investigation and exchange, accompanied by Li Dianrong and Li

Youli, deputy secretary of the center. During the visit, Li Dianrong introduced the latest progress in rapeseed research. Engaged in research of rapeseed breeding and cultivation technology for 50 years, Li has independently cultivated 22 hybrid rape varieties. He is also known as father of hybrid rape. "Our center is willing to provide support in per-

sonnel training and services to contribute to the development of Pakistan's rapeseed industry. We also plan to try out new rapeseed varieties in the Pak-China agricultural demonstration park." He said. The delegation visited the crop breeding sharing platform, molecular design breeding laboratory, plant culture room and other research sites of the center.

IESCO to start installing 1.4m AMI meters

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) has planned to start installing over 1.4 million Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) meters of all tariffs in Rawalpindi circle from January 2024. Official sources told on Sunday that the project would be completed within two years. Currently, data back and operation centers were being set up at Gujjar Khan and IESCO Headquarters and G-10 respectively besides operational laboratory. They said that initially, some 512 AMI non-billing meters were installed in March 2022 as a pilot project. Switching over to AMI system will bring about a permanent elimination of power pilferage with a systematic control of transmission through round-the-clock monitoring of the electricity meters. This new technology, being introduced, would help reduce power sector losses, enhance quality of billing and recoveries, control power load-shedding and would also address the consumers' complaints of wrong or over-billing, they said. The AMI system will end human interventions in meter reading, enhance customer support, better measurements, more accurate billing, a degree of control of consumption and help the persisting dilemma of power outage by enhancing ability of IESCO to reduce non-technical losses. This system has already been installed at Multan and Lahore Electric Supply Companies (MEPCO and LESCO) but at a very limited scale adding that the project was launched at Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) with the financial assistance of the Asian Development Bank (ADB). ADB had provided \$170 million for AMI project being carried out in the IESCO phase wise. "In the first phase, all electricity meters installed at Rawalpindi Cantonment and City Circles were being switched to AMI with an estimated cost of \$ 95 million. Over 900,000 electricity meters would be replaced in the city with smart meters in four years," they said. The authorities are confident that the AMI system would provide precise information regarding power supply and consumption down to individual consumers, enabling the power distribution companies to investigate causes of non-technical power losses. "The AMI project would completely end human interventions besides bringing transparency in meter reading," remarked IESCO Chief Dr Muhammad Amjad. He said the company has around 3.4 million consumers and a data centre has been set up at IESCO's headquarters with the capacity of five million. —DNA

Chairman, PHSA for building tax capacity

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Hi Tech Hybrid Seed Association (PHSA), Shahzad Ali Malik Sunday said to build tax capacity, governments would urgently need to take a holistic and institution-based approach with focus on leveraging core domestic tax policies. Talking to a delegation of industrialists here, he called upon the government to implement bold reform plans and focus on tax base broadening through the rationalization of tax expenditures, more neutral taxation of capital income, and better use of taxes. Shahzad said this multi-pronged approach, over the long term, could balance equity and efficiency considerations. He said government must improve the design and administration of core domestic taxes—value-added taxes, excises, income taxes, and corporate income taxes. The chairman said revenue in low-income countries, for instance, could be doubled by limiting preferential treatments and improving compliance without increasing standard tax rates. The widespread adoption of digital technologies would result in higher revenue collection and narrow compliance gaps, he added. He urged the government would prioritize and coordinate reforms carefully across the government's agencies as the broader institutional context matters. This created a virtuous circle by which enhanced institutions improve state capacity, which in turn increases the quality of tax design and its acceptance by citizens, he observed.—APP

RDA taking strict action against illegal housing societies

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) is taking strict and indiscriminate action against illegal housing societies in accordance with the law, said Director General (DG) Saif Anwar Jappa here Sunday. He informed that the Metropolitan Planning and Traffic Engineering (MP&TE) Directorate, RDA under PDC ACT-1976 and Punjab Development Authorities Private Housing Scheme Rules was taking action against illegal housing schemes in Rawalpindi district as the owners and sponsors of un-approved housing schemes were cheating the general public through misleading advertisements. The RDA, on the directives of the Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Liaquat Ali Chata, had launched grand operation against all illegal housing schemes without discrimination and sealing their offices, he added. The owners of some illegal housing schemes were giving the impression that RDA was taking action against few schemes which was false and baseless, he said adding, the authority would continue its ongoing operation against the rules violators.—APP

President urges world to play role for international peace

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Sunday called upon the international community to play its active role for peaceful resolution of the Israel-Palestine dispute in accordance with the relevant UN resolutions and international law. In a post on X, he said progress towards peace could not materialise without condemnation of usurpation and brutalisation of Palestinian rights and people by Israel. "Continuous annexation of land, illegal settlements, disproportionate reactions and killings. The result is no hope and no progress towards peace," the president added. He said time had come to move forward in line with UN resolutions, adding "International community can play a big role today towards world peace."—APP



ISLAMABAD: Wives of diplomats posing for a picture during the Egyptian Armed Forces Day function.—DNA

Briefs

ICLAPA provides free services to Cleft Lip, cleft Palate children

DNA

ISLAMABAD: At the medical camp held here twenty-three affected children Cleft lip and cleft palate were examined to get them recovered from the defect-birth disease. They were short-listed for treatment and surgery. The patients included those from far-flung areas including Malakand. The treatment and surgery process will soon be started at the local hospitals of Islamabad & Rawalpindi. A team of doctors and surgeon led by Dr. Azhar Sheikh conducted the detail examinations. The camp was arranged by Islamabad Cleft Lip and Palate Association (ICLAPA). According to the Association's senior member Mrs. Farhat Akhtar Rehman, ICLAPA's team of surgeons are working to bring smiles on the faces of lip and palate patients bringing positive change in their lives. The Association had been providing free medical facilities to the poor families since 2004 with the support of families, friends and philanthropists.

Wanted member of car lifter gang held

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Capital Police Tarnol police station team has arrested a wanted member of a car lifter gang and recovered a stolen vehicle worth Rs 2.5 million from his possession, a public relation officer said. He said that, following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCP) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, the Islamabad Capital Police has intensified crackdown against the criminal elements in order to eliminate the crime from the city. Following these directions, the police team used technical and human resources and succeeded in apprehending a wanted member of a car lifter gang and recovered a stolen vehicle from his possession. The accused was identified as Muhammad Ali. During the preliminary investigation, the accused confessed to being involved in numerous car lifting incidents in various areas of Islamabad, Rawalpindi and other districts. Arrest of other accomplices of the accused is underway. Numerous cases were already registered against the nabbed accused and further investigation is underway. ICCPO, Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan further directed the police officials to enhance the vigilance to curb car lifting incidents in the federal capital. He also requested citizens to assist police in curbing crime as successful policing is not possible without the cooperation of citizens. He said that community policing would be ensured in order to curb crime and protect the lives and property of the citizens.



ISLAMABAD: Students of Beaconhouse Karakoram campus H-11, Islamabad posing for a group photo with Chief Guest Mr Khawaja Haider Regional Director Beaconhouse School System (BSS), principle Rukhsana Shehzad and Head A levels Maria Faisal after investiture ceremony.—DNA

National faculty development programme

HEC pre-service training for 6 cohorts of fresh PhDs ends

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The National Academy of Higher Education (NAHE), under the auspices of Higher Education Commission (HEC), has successfully concluded its sixth Cohort of the Pre-Service National Faculty Development Programme (NFPD). Twenty-seven Fellows of the Interim Placements for Fresh PhDs (IPFP) programme attended the programme. Through-

out the intensive training programme, IPFP Fellows remained engaged in a diverse range of sessions, including Effective Teaching and Learning, Course Design, Lesson Planning and Delivery, Assessment and Evaluation, Technology in the Classroom, Learning Management System, Grant Writing, Publishing Research, and Personal and Professional Development. The curriculum was thoughtfully designed to equip the participants with essential skills and knowl-

edge to excel in the academic sphere. The programme fostered a dynamic learning environment, incorporating daily interactive sessions, presentations, and assignments tailored to various modules. This approach ensured that participants not only gained theoretical knowledge but also applied it practically, ensuring a well-rounded educational experience. Mr. Muhammad Faisal Butt, Director General of NAHE

(HEC), attended the ceremony as chief guest. In his remarks, he emphasised the pivotal role of professional development in molding exceptional educators. He highlighted how these IPFP Fellows are poised to unlock the potential of their future students by instilling innovative and entrepreneurial mindsets. He also underscored the crucial role future academic leaders in driving the socio-economic development of nation. He urged the participants to extend their

professional support to students during their placements at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) under the IPFP. He also lauded the dedicated efforts of NAHE in organising this programme, which stands as a testament to its commitment to advancing the quality of higher education in Pakistan. NAHE, a flagship initiative of HEC, is dedicated to nurturing academic excellence and fostering the development of future educators and leaders.

Pak-Afghan transit trade rules get stricter

ISLAMABAD: Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) made amendments to the Customs Act 2001, stringent the rules between Pakistan and Afghanistan transit trade. The notification issued by FBR stated that the financial security condition has been imposed on goods for the Pak-Afghan transit trade, these new conditions will be applicable to importers, customs agents, brokers, and transport operators. According to the new conditions, the financial security for the transit operation will be provided through authorized bank guarantees. These guarantees will be valid for at least one year and can easily be cashable within Pakistani borders. Notably, the bank guarantee will cover the taxes and duties applicable on vehicles and goods involved in the transit. The FBR officials stated that the aim of these new conditions is to provide financial security to the Pakistan-Afghanistan transit operation.

FM Jilani to attend ECO meeting in Azerbaijan

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Foreign Minister Jilani Abbas will undertake an official visit to Azerbaijan to attend the two-day meeting of the Council of Ministers of Economic Cooperation Organization commencing from Monday. The Theme of event is 'Green Transition and Interconnectivity'. During his visit, the foreign minister will address the Council of Ministers (COM) and hold bilateral meetings with participating ministers of member states and other dignitaries on the sidelines of the event, according to a statement issued by the Foreign Office Spokesperson on Saturday.—DNA

Dua foundation provides free education

QUDSIA BANO

ISLAMABAD: In a heart-warming and significant event held at the prestigious Jinnah Institute, Rawalpindi, the Dua Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to providing free education to exceptionally talented orphans, took a giant stride towards realizing its mission. The event witnessed the presentation of scholarship certificates to orphaned students, enabling them to pursue their studies in various fields, thus igniting the flame of hope and knowledge in their lives. The event was graced by distinguished personalities, with Zamurd Khan, the patron-in-chief of Sweet Homes, and Rahat Qudusi, the Chief Operating Officer of Jinnah Institute of Rawalpindi Law College, serving as the esteemed chief guests. Their presence underscored the significance of the occasion and highlighted the collaborative efforts needed to uplift the less fortunate in society. Expressing his admiration for the event and its organizers, Zam-



urd Khan emphasized the crucial importance of such initiatives in a country like Pakistan, where access to education is considered the birthright of every individual. He passionately articulated, "I truly believe that orphans should not be neglected in this race for education. These students, I am confident, will shine brightly in the future, bringing honor and glory to Pakistan through their remarkable achievements." Mr. Dawood, owner of Dua Foundation, shared the organization's journey and objectives. He noted that Dua Foundation

initially began its noble work in collaboration with Faizul Islam in 2012, providing scholarships to its students. However, five years ago, the foundation expanded its horizons by embracing students from diverse backgrounds and fields. The primary focus was to address a critical gap: many orphanage institutions offer scholarships only up to the matriculation level. Dua Foundation's mission is to provide unwavering support to orphaned students in their pursuit of higher education. From humble beginnings with four stu-

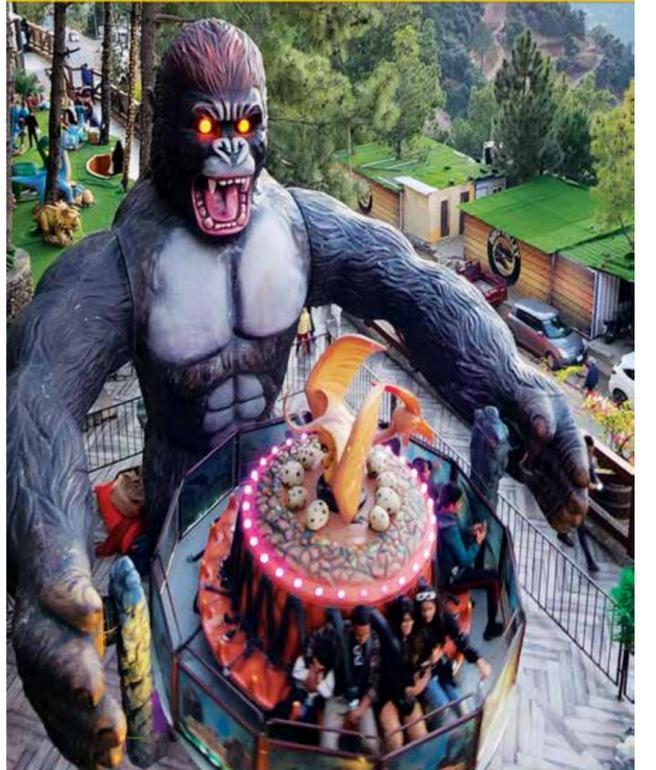
dents, Dua Foundation has now grown to support 30 students, all of whom receive free education. The foundation directly pays the educational fees of its beneficiaries to the institutes they attend, ensuring transparency and efficiency in its operations. However, what sets Dua Foundation apart is its exceptional mentors, who serve as elder siblings to the students. The organization boasts a cadre of professors and scholars from various esteemed institutions, including Sargodha PAF College and Punjab University, who voluntarily dedicate their time and expertise to mentor and guide these bright young minds. As a testament to the outstanding performance of its students, Dua Foundation is extending its education funding program to cover graduation-level studies. The organization's first student to benefit from this expansion is already on their journey toward higher education, with plans to further widen its reach in the future.

First Pakistani meat company approved by GACC

BEIJING: In a groundbreaking development for Pakistan's meat industry, a local meat company named Pakistan's Organic Meat has achieved a historic milestone by becoming the first Pakistani entity to be registered with the General Administration of Customs of China (GACC). This achievement not only opens up new avenues for Pakistan's meat exports but also solidifies the country's position in the global meat market, said Ghulam Qadir, Commercial Counsellor here at the Pakistan Embassy. Ghulam Qadir told China Economic Net that the company that has achieved this remarkable feat is "The Organic Meat Company Ltd," a leading player in Pakistan's meat processing and export industry. This achievement comes after years of rigorous quality control measures and compliance with international standards. He further said that to secure registration on the GACC, Organic Meat Company Ltd underwent rigorous inspections and quality audits. This demonstrates their commitment to maintaining high-quality standards in meat production, processing, and packaging. "Registration on the GACC opens the doors to the vast Chinese meat market, which has a growing demand for high-quality meat products. This milestone positions Pakistan as a credible and reliable supplier of meat to China. This achievement has the potential to significantly boost Pakistan's meat exports, contributing to the country's economic growth. It also creates opportunities for job creation within the meat processing industry", he added. He further said that this achievement enhances the country's reputation on the global stage.—DNA



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ICCI calls for development of Blue Area on modern lines

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) said that Blue Area is the largest commercial centre of Islamabad, which plays an important role in the development of the economy and stressed that the CDA should focus on its better development to facilitate the growth of trade activities. He said this while talking to a delegation of Traders Welfare Association, Blue Area, Islamabad that visited ICCI led by its President Raja Hassan Akhtar and congratulated ICCI Office Bearers for one year's extension in their tenure. Ahsan Bakhtawari said that parking is the most serious issue of the Blue Area and CDA should allow parking of vehicles on the green area of Fazal Haq Road till the construction of a parking plaza is materialized. He said that ICCI intends to organize a mega shopping festival in the Blue Area in collaboration with TWA Blue Area to boost trade activities and enable customers to get a chance of shopping at affordable rates. Raja Hassan Akhtar, President, Traders Welfare Association Blue Area

highlighted the important issues of traders of his market. He said that the non-availability of parking, the old sewage system and non-functional street lights are the main issues of the Blue Area and stressed that the CDA should address them on an urgent basis. He stressed that CDA should set up a flower market in the Blue Area besides pruning trees. He demanded that the CDA should set up a food street in the

Blue Area, which is the need of the hour for the traders and citizens. He said that Ahsan Bakhtawari is working actively to resolve the problems of traders and hoped that he would address the unresolved issues of traders in his remaining tenure. Faad Waheed, Senior Vice President ICCI said that Blue Area is the key hub of business activities in Islamabad and stressed that the CDA

should develop it on modern lines. Engr. Azhar ul Islam Zafar, Vice President ICCI said that ICCI would fully cooperate with TWA Blue Area in resolving the key issues of traders to facilitate them in business development. Yousuf Rajput Group Leader, Mian Basharat Kakakhel Secretary General Blue Area Association, Syed Amin Pirzada and others were in the delegation.



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Belgian sleuths must cease shooting in dark

The "China threat" farce seems to be playing out again, this time in Belgium. Last week, Belgian intelligence agency, VSSE, told the media that they are investigating "possible espionage and/or interference activities" by Chinese entities "including Alibaba", especially Alibaba's logistics operations at the cargo airport in Liege. But as has become the norm for Western countries, the VSSE has not provided any concrete evidence to back its claim. Instead, it said the presence of Alibaba "constitutes a point of attention for the VSSE" because Chinese companies are "bound to share their data" with the Chinese authorities. "China has the intent and capacity to use this data for non-commercial purposes," the agency said. This is not the first time a Belgian department or Western media outlets have hyped up such give-a-dog-a-bad-name-and-hand-it-allegation. In May 2021, the Chinese embassy in Belgium refuted similar accusations against Alibaba, emphasizing that the baseless allegations were nothing but the "China threat" theory. As the embassy spokesperson said, this is an extremely irresponsible practice that not only misguides the Belgian public but also sullies the reputation of Chinese businesses and individuals in Belgium. The e-commerce giant's logistics company Cainiao has operated the smart logistics hub since it opened in 2021 after Alibaba and the Belgian government reached an agreement on the establishment of the project in 2018. The Chinese company follows the European Union's strict data protection regulations as well as Belgium's local laws and rules. That's why the logistics center at Liege has flourished as a regional e-commerce hub in Europe despite the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, creating jobs for locals and opening up the Chinese market to Belgian enterprises. The fact that the VSSE has failed to furnish any evidence to substantiate its claim prompted Cainiao to say the allegations are based on "conjecture". Importantly, Cainiao's partner, the Liege Airport, has not spoken against their cooperation. "Cainiao is an ambitious and innovative partner, which pushes us to reinvent ourselves and to be better," Frederic Jacquet, CEO of Liege Airport, said at the opening of the logistics center in November 2021. "Like other important partners of Liege Airport, Cainiao will help us grow in a win-win relationship, which finds its full meaning in the development projects that are ours." Although a new law came into force in Belgium to screen foreign investments in critical infrastructure in July 2023 – some attribute the VSSE's newly found zeal for targeting Alibaba to the law – it is by no means an excuse to baselessly accuse a company, even if it is a foreign company, of spying. Unfortunately, Belgium may end up paying the price for its intelligence agency using "national security" for some unknown, weird purpose, because such moves shake multinational companies' confidence in a country's business environment, thus harming its economy.



Europe's duty: outsourcing border controls criticized

Last month's Venice film festival, a fictional portrayal of African migrants seeking to reach Europe received widespread acclaim. Me, Captain charts the journey of two Senegalese teenagers as they navigate violence, extortion, detention and forced labour at the hands of corrupt police and traffickers in north Africa. It won a Silver Lion and standing ovations. The movie is at times a heartbreaking watch. But Guardian reporting from Tunisia suggests that the reality is – if anything – grimmer, and that Europe is deeply complicit in the horror that is unfolding. In July, the European Union signed an agreement promising a substantial cheque to Tunisia's authoritarian leader, Kais Saied, in exchange for a crackdown on irregular migrants seeking to cross the Mediterranean to Italy. According to testimony from migrants and NGOs on the ground, the result has been the brutal pushback, abuse and intimidation of sub-Saharan African migrants. Our reporter was told that more than 4,000 people had been detained and then dumped in remote desert areas on Tunisia's borders with Libya and Algeria. Some were beaten and robbed of their money by border guards. Scores are believed to have died of thirst, as they attempted either to make their way back to the coast or elsewhere. The Guardian spoke to one Cameroonian asylum seeker who became separated from his wife and child. When a photo of a mother and daughter lying dead, face down in the desert, subsequently went viral, he recognised them immediately. Such a sight, according to other testimony, is not uncommon. This intolerable cruelty towards acutely vulnerable people should not come as a surprise. In neighbouring Libya, where an EU-sponsored cooperation agreement was signed six years ago, detained migrants have been routinely subjected to rape, beatings, extortion and collective expulsion. Mr Saied – who assumed repressive, dictatorial powers in 2021 – has used incendiary rhetoric that has licensed racist hostility to black migrants, with outbreaks of violence the inevitable result. Nevertheless, the European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, flanked by Giorgia Meloni, Italy's radical-right prime minister, and Mark Rutte, the Netherlands' outgoing leader, have seen fit to employ him as a kind of border guard. And at a European summit in Granada on Thursday, Rishi Sunak united with Ms Meloni in endorsing such deals. A partnership with Egypt may be next. Craven complicity with human rights abuses, in the name of secure borders, is a betrayal of the values that Europe stands for. As Germany's foreign minister, Annalena Baerbock, argued: "Democracy, human rights and cooperation must guide us in our cooperation – something that was not given suitable consideration, in the agreement with Tunisia." This should never have needed to be said. But, as the Granada summit underlined, the challenge of 21st-century migration is in danger of unravelling the moral fabric of European politics. Insidiously, and incrementally, a fortress mentality has come to dominate the mainstream in a way that, even a few years ago, would have been inconceivable. Geopolitical instability and conflict, global inequality and the climate emergency mean that mass migration is a phenomenon of our age. That throws up great problems, dilemmas – and, for an ageing continent that needs to refresh its workforce, opportunities. But a "whatever it takes" approach that can countenance looking the other way.

Russia's strategic calculus

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



To the south of these mountains are Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. These mountains protect a crucial part of Russia. The area to the northwest of these mountains leads to the Sea of Azov and the border with Ukraine, near the Donbass region

Currently, Russia is paying a lot of attention to its western side, particularly Ukraine and nearby countries. But Russia is also worried about its southern border, which stretches through the Caucasus Mountains. To the south of these mountains are Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia. These mountains protect a crucial part of Russia. The area to the northwest of these mountains leads to the Sea of Azov and the border with Ukraine, near the Donbass region, which has seen a lot of conflicts over the years. To the northeast is the Volga River and the city of Stalingrad, now called Volgograd. North of the mountains, the land is flat, and it's about 550 miles from Astrakhan to Crimea. If Russia were attacked from the south, it would greatly affect its ability to fight in Ukraine. In the long term, it could also block key rivers like the Volga and Don. So, protecting the Caucasus from any hostile power is vital for Russia. It's almost as important as Ukraine. In the past, Russia fought

wars with Chechnya and Georgia, and these experiences influenced Vladimir Putin's thinking about border areas. Recently, Azerbaijan sent troops to occupy land between itself and Armenia, which has caused tensions. Armenia is not as wealthy as Azerbaijan, and they have had issues, especially regarding Nagorno-Karabakh, a region with an Armenian population but officially part of Azerbaijan. Historically, Russia supported Armenia, even when trying to mediate conflicts. But things changed. The United States got involved, initially supporting Georgia and later keeping cautious relations with Azerbaijan, while distancing itself from Armenia. However, when a new Armenian government was elected and didn't trust Russia, the United States started getting closer to Armenia. This prompted Azerbaijan to take control of Nagorno-Karabakh. This situation has led to increased tension and possible conflict. Russia has a significant peacekeeping presence in the region, and although things

are calm now, they could act against Armenia or revive the Georgia conflict. Armenia must either make a deal with Russia or turn to the United States, but neither choice will fully satisfy them. The United States wants to have some influence in the region to potentially threaten the North Caucasus, although this is a risky and unlikely move. Russia is not opposed to the idea of the United States taking such risks. With the ongoing war in Ukraine, the United States might use this as a bargaining chip in negotiations with Russia. It sounds good on paper but is quite risky in reality. So, the question now is whether Georgia will reach out to the United States in exchange for military support and whether Azerbaijan will do the same. However, since Azerbaijan and Russia seem to be closely connected now, this is unlikely. Russia seems to have secured the Caucasus region, making it very difficult for the United States to get involved. The United States has Armenia as an ally, but Armenia doesn't have much leverage.

Lifestyle choices and cancer risk reduction

Seerat Fatima



Alcohol also affects the immune system, lowering the body's immunity, making it less capable of detecting and destroying cancerous cells.

Moreover, a weakened immune system makes the body more vulnerable to other infections.

Alcohol has a severe impact on the liver, disrupting its activity and causing mutations, known as liver cancer. Recent studies have shown that even small doses of alcohol have highly detrimental effects on the human body, making it advisable to avoid alcohol entirely for a healthy life. Healthy and balanced diet planning is an exceptional

The cell is the basic structural and functional unit of life. A cell is often termed as a single room in which all biological processes take place. Cells form the basis of life, and trillions of cells combine to form the human body. Cells are referred to as the building blocks of a living organism, as they replicate to give rise to the body's structure and perform essential functions. There are trillions of cells working in the human body, and the function of each cell is of utmost importance. In this vast universe, Allah has not created anything without purpose, and similarly, every cell in our body has a specific and necessary function. Problems can arise if cells do not work properly, as thousands of cells work together to perform specific functions in our body. Cell division is a continuous process that occurs in the human body, ensuring its growth and stability. Simply put, cell division is the process in which a parent cell divides into daughter cells. It is a simple multiplicative process that forms new cells from older ones. Any abnormalities in cell division and replication can lead to a disorder known as "cancer." Abnormal cells divide uncontrollably and spread to form tumors in the body, disrupting normal bodily functions. Cancer has the adverse ability to develop and spread in any tissue and organ of the body. Malignant tumors are the most dangerous type of cancer, as they can invade neighboring cells and cause severe destruction. It is important to note that cancer does not have a single cause. While the most common concept of cancer is based on uncontrolled cell reproduction, this is not the complete picture. In addition to spontaneous internal mutations, external agents such as radiation, chemicals, hormonal drugs, and other toxic substances can disrupt the normal process of cell division and cause cancer. Almost 40 to 60 percent of cancer cases are attributed to exposure to environmental chemicals in food, such as pesticides, herbicides, and preservatives. Cancer can bring a person to the brink of death.

Therefore, every individual should take special precautions to protect themselves from deadly diseases like cancer. Every human should choose a healthy lifestyle for an active and hearty life. These healthy habits not only help prevent cancer but also allow a person to live a disease-free life. It is mandatory for individuals to quit smoking if they desire a healthy and productive life. Tobacco contains 7,000 chemicals, 250 of which seriously affect human health, with 60 being carcinogens that can directly cause cancer. Carcinogens are so devastating for human health that

they directly damage the DNA of cells and cause uncontrolled cell division. When tobacco smoke comes into contact with body organs such as the mouth and lungs, it causes severe irritation and inflammation. Smoking increases the risk of weakening immunity, as it plays a detrimental role in lowering white blood cell counts and causing inflammation. Continuous smoking can lead to lung cancer, which is the leading cause of death among men worldwide. According to 2012 statistics, 1.6 million people globally died due to lung cancer, a number expected to increase in the near future. Lung cancer is the second most prevalent cancer among men in Pakistan, with a high prevalence of tobacco use among men aged 25 to 44, particularly in rural areas, where illiteracy and lack of education are significant contributing factors. Alcohol consumption significantly contributes to the development of various types of cancer in the human body. Acetaldehyde is produced as a byproduct of alcohol metabolism and is a carcinogen that significantly increases cancer risk. Alcohol stimulates the high production of estrogen in women, which can cause breast cancer.

Alcohol also affects the immune system, lowering the body's immunity, making it less capable of detecting and destroying cancerous cells. Moreover, a weakened immune system makes the body more vulnerable to other infections. Alcohol has a severe impact on the liver, disrupting its activity and causing mutations, known as liver cancer. Recent studies have shown that even small doses of alcohol have highly detrimental effects on the human body, making it advisable to avoid alcohol entirely for a healthy life. Healthy and balanced diet planning is an exceptional solution to treat cancer in the body. Healthy food choices are essential for maintaining a robust body. A balanced diet, including foods from all food groups such as fruits, vegetables, legumes, pulses, meat, and dairy products, is recommended for cancer patients. To maintain a stable and healthy body, all nutrients are essential and should be consumed in adequate quantities. While carbohydrates, fats, and proteins are all crucial for normal body functioning, proteins are particularly recommended for cancer patients. Cancer patients often undergo complex treatments, including chemotherapy and radiation, which can lead to muscle loss and weakened immunity. Protein plays a significant role in the healing process by repairing tissues and promoting growth. For patients who need to fulfill their protein requirements, lean protein sources such as skinless poultry, fish, and boiled eggs are excellent choices. Additionally, easily

digestible proteins can be obtained from plant sources such as pulses, legumes, and beans. To boost immunity, fresh fruits and vegetables containing antioxidants, vitamins (E and A), and minerals are essential. Garlic can strengthen the immune system, soy foods can help shrink tumors, and carotenoids found in some fruits and vegetables can protect cells from free radicals and reduce the risk of cancer. The impact of fats on human health varies depending on the type consumed. Saturated fats have highly detrimental effects on human health and are commonly obtained from animals, including red meat, poultry, and full-fat dairy products. Coconut oil and palm oil are also rich sources of saturated fats. Saturated fats are responsible for increasing blood cholesterol levels, which pose a significant threat to human health by increasing the risk of heart diseases. They are also a major cause of weight gain and obesity, which directly influences the risk of cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, and cancer, particularly colorectal cancer. In contrast, healthy fats, known as monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats, are mainly obtained from plants such as olive oil, nuts, seeds, and fish, which also contain healthy unsaturated fats. These unsaturated fats have anti-inflammatory effects and contribute to reducing health risks, particularly in providing protection against cancer. It is generally believed that fats are harmful to the human body, but this is not entirely true.

The right amount of fats is crucial for human health. The key is for people to understand which types of fats to consume and in what quantity. Physical activities and exercise are beneficial in reducing health risks and maintaining a lively body. A proper sleeping schedule is essential for reducing mental stress, as disturbed sleep can increase stress and weaken the immune system, making the body more susceptible to various infections. The causes of cancer are numerous and can include heredity, genetics, and random mutations of cells. Adopting a healthy lifestyle and diet can significantly reduce the risk of cancer development. Regular health checkups are essential for early diagnosis and treatment. If left untreated, cancer can lead to severe health problems and can be fatal. The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) has reported that 0.8 million people are newly diagnosed with cancer in Pakistan, with 0.11 million fatalities due to cancer. By adopting healthy habits, not only can fatal diseases be avoided, but people suffering from these diseases can also recover more quickly.

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Briefs

Palestinians sacrifice lives for...

FROM PAGE 01
and nearly 2,000 wounded by Israeli air strikes in Gaza since Saturday. Israeli forces battled holdout Hamas fighters and pounded targets in the Gaza Strip with the army saying tens of thousands of soldiers were deployed in southern desert regions near the coastal enclave, to rescue Israeli hostages and then evacuate the entire region within 24 hours. "We'll reach each and every community till we kill every terrorist in Israel," said military spokesperson Daniel Hagari, a day after hundreds of Hamas fighters crossed into Israel in vehicles, boats and even using paragliders. "Our mission for the upcoming 24 hours is to evacuate all residents" from communities around the Gaza Strip, he told journalists. In the Israeli-occupied West Bank, seven Palestinians were martyred by Israeli gunfire in the same period, the report added. Six of them, including a 13-year-old boy, were martyred during stone throwing clashes in separate incidents while the seventh man was martyred as he tried to stab an Israeli, the health ministry statement said. Hamas said its unprecedented offensive by land, air and sea was in response to the desecration of the Al Aqsa Mosque as well as Israeli atrocities against Palestinians over the decades. These include the 16-year blockade of Gaza, Israeli raids inside West Bank cities over the past year, increasing attacks by settlers on Palestinians as well as the growth of illegal settlements, according to Arab media.

Death toll from Afghan quake shoots up to 2,000

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"Three villages in Herat province were completely destroyed, and hundreds of people are still trapped under the debris," Saqi told Anadolu over the phone. According to the US Geological Survey (USGS), strong earthquakes of magnitude 5.5, 5.9, and 6.2 jolted the Afghan provinces. It said the epicenter was 40 kilometers (24.8 miles) northwest of Herat city. The World Health Organization's Afghanistan office said its teams were in hospitals assisting treatment of wounded and assessing additional needs. The war-torn country is currently grappling with a humanitarian crisis on the heels of the withdrawal of aid by foreign countries and organizations since the Taliban re-captured Kabul two years ago. Afghanistan is frequently struck by tremors, mainly in the Hindu Kush mountain range, which sits near the confluence of Eurasian and Indian tectonic plates. A 5.9 magnitude earthquake in June last year killed over 1,000 people and left tens of thousands homeless in the Paktika province.

OIC condemns Israeli...

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The Israeli aggression, providing international protection for the Palestinian people, and sponsoring a credible political process to end the Israeli occupation and establish an independent, sovereign Palestinian state, with East Al-Quds as its capital on the lines of June 04, 1967, and achieving a just and comprehensive peace based on the vision of a two-state solution per international legitimacy resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative.

Pakistan grieved...

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Afghanistan during this difficult time. "We are in contact with the Afghan authorities to get a first-hand assessment of the urgent needs of those affected by the earthquake. Pakistan will extend all possible support to the recovery effort," it added.

19th Asian Games

South Korea beat Japan to maintain gold medal streak

South Korea fought back to overcome Japan 2-1, winning a third straight gold medal in the competition and earning its players a highly sought-after exemption from mandatory military duty

OUR CORRESPONDENTS

HANGZHOU: During the Asian Games men's football final, South Korea fought back to overcome Japan 2-1, winning a third straight gold medal in the competition and earning its players a highly sought-after exemption from mandatory military duty. Lee Kang In, who joined Paris St Germain (PSG) from Spanish side Mallorca started against Japan but Korea found themselves a goal down after less than two minutes. They levelled midway through the first half through Stuttgart forward Jeong Woo-yeong - his tournament-leading eighth goal - before Cho Young-wook struck the winner 10 minutes after the break. While the historic win marked the team's third gold medal in Asian Games football in a row, it was also a meaningful one for the team for a different reason. The win secures South Korea's entire 22-man squad exemptions from the country's compulsory



military service, enhancing their chances of a prolonged career in the game's leading leagues in Europe, Reuters reported. Additionally, PSG's attacking midfielder

Lee Kang In, was granted a leave pass from the French club to compete at the Games. The exemption from mandatory military service means Lee can expand his career

in other countries, following in the footsteps of Tottenham forward Son Heung Min, who won gold in Jakarta in 2018 and was also exempted from compulsory mil-

itary service. Coach Hwang said the exemption was "very different from playing football" and has high hopes for Lee's future, AFP reported. "As long as the player has the Taeguk Warriors emblem on his shirt, he has the right and responsibility to play for Korea and play for its glory," he said. "I am expecting his future success." Japan took the lead when Uchino slotted in his early strike after Kei Sato had outprinted the defence to find Masato Shigemitsu, who fed Uchino to score. South Korea's Cho and Jung Ho Yeon both tried their luck before Jeong levelled the scores in the 27th minute, rising above Manato Yoshida to nod in a cross from Hwang Jae Won. Fullback Hwang was also involved in the winner, cutting through the Japanese defence to lay possession off to Jeong whose touch allowed Cho to put his side ahead. Moreover, Uzbekistan won the bronze medal earlier in the day, with Khusain Norchaev scoring twice as the Central Asians handed Hong Kong a 4-0 defeat.

Kane Williamson to stay on bench for Netherlands match

NEW DELHI: New Zealand captain Kane Williamson will remain out of the side for their second match in ICC World Cup 2023 against the Netherlands on October 9. New Zealand head coach Gary Stead confirmed his absence from the game against Netherlands while giving an update about his recovery and status for future games. "Kane's also been progressing very well. I think the fielding is still the element for him that he's just got to get a little bit higher and get a little more trust in his body," said Stead. He, however, hinted that Williamson is likely to achieve full fitness in time for New Zealand's third game, which is against Bangladesh on October 13 in Chennai. "But he is progressing really well and we are pretty confident he will be playing the third match for us," he added. "We have got another training to get through today so we will finalise the team once we have got through that training." Kane Williamson tore the cruciate ligament in his right knee playing for Indian Premier League side Gujarat Titans in April, which looked to have scuppered his chances of making the showpiece tournament. However, he made it to New Zealand's squad for the ICC World Cup 2023 and participated in New Zealand's warm-up games against Pakistan and South Africa, scoring 54 and 37 respectively. He missed New Zealand's thumping nine-wicket win over defending champions England in the opening game of the ICC World Cup 2023, courtesy of Devon Conway and Rachin Ravindra's dominant centuries. New Zealand pace duo Tim Southee and Lockie Ferguson also missed the first game due to injuries, however, Gary Stead is hopeful that the pace duo is likely to recover for the game against Netherlands. "Lockie Ferguson got through training really well so providing he is scrubbed up okay this morning, he will be available for this next game," Stead said. "Tim Southee also got through the training really well. It was great to see him back at the bowling crease and also doing a little bit of fielding as well." "He will just get a final x-ray done this morning and we will make a call after that but it is all looking good for selection from now on and into the rest of tournament," he concluded. -Agencies

Xiyu Lin wins individual title at Aramco Team Series

HONG KONG: China's Xiyu Lin clinched her maiden Aramco Team Series title, presented by PIF, after coming out on top against world No. 3 Jin Young Ko in a playoff at the Hong Kong Golf Club. With heavy storms and strong winds anticipated from midday, the tournament was shortened to 36 holes, with a sudden death playoff scheduled in the morning between overnight leaders Ko and Lin, who were tied on 11-under-par. The playoff took place on the 18th hole. After missing her chance to win with a par putt on the first playoff hole, Lin held her nerve, sinking a spectacular 40-foot birdie putt to triumph on the second and claim her first victory at the Aramco Team Series. Regarding the monster putt, Lin said: "I'm still a little in shock. I mean, everything happens for a reason. I didn't hold my putt in the first playoff hole. I told myself to stay patient. And then it was another good drive and a good close shot. And, you know, making that putt is pretty phenomenal." Lin, who took home an Asian Games bronze medal



last week, added: "With the rain and the wind, the hole played very differently. The last two days I've been using my pitching wedge into the green, and today, I had 190 yards to the hole. It's a great course, it's a great-positioned hole. It's a great stage for a playoff because this hole is very challenging." The world No. 12 has been in two playoffs in the past two seasons, losing on both occasions at

the Honda LPGA Thailand in 2022, and earlier this year at the JM Eagle LA Championship. She added: "That was one of my best putts. I have been in playoffs a lot of times in the past two seasons and I haven't won one but I kept telling myself that I haven't done anything wrong and my time is going to come. It's my first Aramco Team Series and also my first time playing in Hong Kong in a

long time. It means a lot when you can capture a win in front of a field that includes the world No. 1 and No. 3. It was a pretty good feeling, and also this week I got so much support from the local fans and I feel really grateful. This means a lot to me and will always hold a very special place in my heart." The final leg of the Aramco Teams Series will take place at Riyadh Golf Club in Saudi Arabia from Oct. 27-29. -Agencies

Verstappen on course for third title in Qatar sprint

DOHA: Max Verstappen said his third consecutive drivers' world title triumph, achieved in sprint race at the Qatar Grand Prix, was "the one I am most proud of - the best." The 26-year-old Dutchman, who was champion in 2021 and 2022, finished second behind McLaren's Oscar Piastri after his Red Bull team-mate and only remaining title rival Sergio Perez crashed out of the race and the championship reckoning. "This one is the best," he said, "I think the first one was the most emotional because that is when your dreams are fulfilled, but this is definitely my best year for consecutive wins and stuff like that and the car itself has been probably in the best shape as well. "So, for me, this is the one I am most proud of because of the consistency." Verstappen has won 13 of this year's 16 Grands Prix to date, seizing the title with six races to go - a rare measure of supremacy not achieved since seven-time Michael Schumacher won for Ferrari in 2002. He is the 11th driver overall to win three drivers' titles and one of only five to win in succession along with Juan-Manuel Fangio, Michael Schumacher, Sebastian Vettel and Lewis Hamilton. "It's something, of course, that I never even really dreamt of doing," he said. "It's a very proud moment for myself, for my family, my close family. I think everyone within the team I'm working with to be able to experience all of this together... it's amazing." Verstappen said his experience with Toro Rosso, with whom he made his F1 debut aged only 17 in 2016, and Red Bull had been important to his life and his development. "I keep trying to improve and of course I don't necessarily think I've become a faster driver, but you have a lot more experience in the car, you grow as a driver and you grow also I think as a person in life. "I think all these kind of things, when I compare to my first season in Formula One, they help a lot in terms of just dealing with every kind of pressure situation throughout the weekend. "Everything that might be thrown at you in difficult conditions, for example. At the end, it's all about trying to deliver every single weekend, which is, I think, very hard in F1." Typically, he stressed that he had no plans to allow any celebrations of his third title to interfere with his plans to win Qatar Grand Prix when he seeks to claim his 14th win in 17 races this year. -DNA

Sri Lanka fined 10 per cent of match fee

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka have been fined 10 percent of their match fee for maintaining a slow over-rate against South Africa in Match 4 of the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup on October 7, 2023. Javagal Srinath of the Emirates ICC Elite Panel of Match Referees imposed the sanction after Dasun Shanaka's side was ruled to be 2 over(s) short of the target after time allowances were taken into consideration, said a press release. In accordance with Article 2.22 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which relates to minimum over-rate offenses, players are fined 5 percent of their match fees for every over their side fails to bowl in the allotted time. Dasun Shanaka pleaded guilty to the offense and accepted the proposed sanction, so there was no need for a formal hearing. On-field umpires Richard Illingworth and Shahid Saikat, third umpire Michael Gough, and fourth umpire Alex Wharf leveled the charge. -Agencies

Lionel Messi's return fails to rescue Inter Miami

Inter Miami's playoff hopes were extinguished as they suffered a 1-0 defeat at the hands of FC Cincinnati in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Argentine forward Alvaro Barreal proved to be the hero for Cincinnati, netting the decisive goal in the 78th minute

SPORTS DESK

MIAMI: Lionel Messi and Inter Miami's playoff hopes were extinguished as they suffered a 1-0 defeat at the hands of FC Cincinnati on Saturday night in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. Argentine forward Alvaro Barreal proved to be the hero for Cincinnati, netting the decisive goal in the 78th minute. Messi, making his long-awaited return from a leg injury that had sidelined him since September 20, entered the game as a substitute in the 55th minute. However, despite his presence, Inter Miami (9-17-6,

33 points) couldn't find the back of the net, sealing their elimination from playoff contention. With other results working against them, Miami now find themselves near the bottom of the Eastern Conference, trailing the last playoff spot by seven points with just two matches remaining. FC Cincinnati (20-5-8, 68 points) continued their remarkable season, adding to their already impressive campaign by clinching the Supporters' Shield for the best regular-season record in the league. Despite controlling the game's possession with 61.6 percent, Inter Miami struggled to convert

chances into goals, managing only two shots on target out of 16 attempts. In a scoreless first half, they

came agonisingly close on three occasions, striking the woodwork with efforts from Tomas Aviles, Josef

Martinez, and Benjamin Cremaschi. Messi's introduction added flair to Miami's attack, but his free-kick attempt in the 59th minute soared over the crossbar. FC Cincinnati finally broke through when Barreal capitalised on a parried shot by Miami's goalkeeper, Drake Callender, slotting home his fifth goal of the season. Despite Messi's late attempts, including a left-footed shot and two late fouls near the box, Cincinnati held on for the win, ending Miami's playoff aspirations. The defeat marked another setback for Inter Miami, who had been riding high

after winning the Leagues Cup in August. However, without Messi's magic, their season took a different turn, losing their US Open Cup final and falling out of playoff contention in the league. As Messi faces an international call-up for Argentina's upcoming World Cup qualifiers, Miami's final two matches, both against Charlotte, may offer some consolation, but the road ahead remains uncertain for the team. In a related note, Wayne Rooney's D.C. United saw their playoff hopes dashed despite a 2-0 victory over New York City FC in their final match of the season.



PAF's multi-national exercise...

FORM PAGE 01
air exercises in achieving common objectives in the face of evolving dynamics of air warfare. He commended the efforts of the Air Power Center of Excellence on the organization of the mega exercise, which would augment the existing partnership between the key allies in addition to bolstering interoperability amongst the participating Air Forces. He also added that the planning and execution of Exercise Indus Shield-23 underscores the vision of the esteemed, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force regarding the crucial role played by PAF in advancing technology, modernizing its capabilities and employing contemporary combat tactics to effectively address shared challenges of aerial defence. Air Vice Marshal Tariq Mehmood Ghazi highlighted that the exercise would prove to be a step forward, to promote warm and brotherly relations amongst the leading air powers of the region.

Huge crowd to welcome...

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Nawaz Sharif is responsible for making Pakistan an atomic power and bringing the CPEC to Pakistan. He gave 14 mega projects to Pakistan and made possible the production of 14000 megawatts of electricity and ended the load-shedding. He worked his best and ended the terrorism in the country. What he got in return was 11 years in exile, said PML-N Senior Vice President. She said that had conspiracies not concocted against Nawaz Sharif, the country would not have been in this turmoil. Maryam said that the country was ruled by "jokers" for four years. Nawaz Sharif was born and raised here unlike others. He never received any foreign funds. The ones who mocked PML-N themselves became a mere joke and an example.

Fazl censures...

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The senior politician maintained that anti-religion forces were adding to their clout and influence, while the establishment and bureaucracy's grip had weakened. He insisted on thinking about the country's betterment, as it continues to grapple with a host of internal and external challenges. The JUI-F leader said they brought together various political forces on the platform of PDM, whose government saved the country's economy. He added the economy had fallen to such a level that it was difficult to revive it, he blamed the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government for it. "Pakistan would have been a member of the G-20 forum had the continuity of economic policies not been hampered over the years," he said. Fazl said his party was ready to go into the election, asking the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) if it did not know how the weather would be in January.

Pak likely to receive...

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Under the agreement, the remaining \$1.8 billion from the IMF has to be disbursed in two tranches after reviews in November and February. The latest IMF programme has set nine performance criteria, four indicative targets, and 10 structural benchmarks for the upcoming review. The governor of the State Bank of Pakistan at a briefing for analysts on September 14 said that all quantitative performance targets related to the central bank, which includes net domestic assets, swaps, and net international reserves have been met. Similarly, according to the Finance Ministry, the government is committed to maintaining fiscal discipline and achieving primary balance targets. "Despite challenges and few missed targets, related to external funding, primary deficit, gas prices adjustment, etc, we think that there is a high probability that Pakistan will get the next IMF tranche," said Topline Securities in a report.

Briefs

HK shuts schools, raises typhoon alert

HONG KONG :Hong Kong issued its second-highest storm warning signal on Sunday, prompting the closure of some transport services and schools, as Typhoon Koinu skirted the financial hub, bringing rains and powerful gusts. Koinu comes just a month after Hong Kong was lashed by Typhoon Saola, which triggered its highest "T10" storm alert.

A week after that, the city experienced its highest rainfall in nearly 140 years, flooding subway stations and malls, and causing landslides. Hong Kong's weather observatory on Sunday warned of strong winds and intense rain bands as Koinu moved towards the Pearl River Estuary and was expected to skirt as close as 70 kilometres (43 miles) south of the city before midnight. Typhoon Koinu was a "T8" signal for most of the day on Sunday – the second-highest in Hong Kong's warning system. The warning level is triggered when a storm's maximum sustained wind speed reaches 117 kilometres (72 miles) per hour. Koinu's maximum sustained wind speed was observed at 145 kilometres (90 miles) per hour. At 7 pm (1100 GMT), the weather observatory raised the warning signal to "T9". "This means that winds are expected to increase significantly," it said.—DNA

Over 100,000 displaced by Somalia floods :UN

MOGADISHU, Oct. 8 (Xinhua/APP) –Flash floods caused by heavy rains on Wednesday have displaced 107,000 people in the Baidoa district in southwestern Somalia, the United Nations humanitarian agency said on Sunday.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said several houses were reportedly inundated, including makeshift shelters housing over 86,700 internally displaced persons in 136 displacement sites in Baidoa city.

"The rains mark the beginning of the October to December rainy season in Somalia, expected to have above-normal rains and increased flooding due to the influence of the El-Nino conditions in Somalia," the OCHA said in its latest update. The heavy rains and flooding have come following five seasons of drought that have displaced more than 1.4 million Somalis and killed 3.8 million livestock since mid-2021, according to the United Nations.

The OCHA said the majority of the displaced people have moved to higher ground, closer to their settlements. "Access to the affected areas remains a challenge as some roads are blocked due to the widespread flooding. Critical needs identified include relocation to safe sites, food, water, shelter, and medical assistance," OCHA said.

Climate change spurs toxic storms in Tajikistan

DUSHANBE : The air was dry and warm and the skies over Dushanbe were grey without a hint of sun during another recent toxic sand storm that enveloped the capital of Tajikistan.

Storms like this, which experts say are being caused by climate change, are becoming increasingly frequent across Central Asia, harming its inhabitants. The imposing mountains around Dushanbe were barely visible through the haze and hulks of apartment blocks under construction stood like ghostly apparitions. Tajikistan was ranked one of the top 10 most polluted countries in the world in the 2022 IQA air quality index. "I can't stop coughing. I'm fed up with this dust choking me," Munira Khushkadamova, a teacher, said during a visit to the Sofia clinic in Dushanbe. For the last two years, the 43-year-old has been suffering from respiratory failure – a diagnosis given to her from her doctor Faical Sakhray.—APP



PRAGE: Pakistan's new Ambassador to Czech Republic Aysha Ali reviews guard of honour before presenting her credentials to the President of Czech Republic Peter Pavel.—DNA

Hamas violently forces detour from Saudi-Israeli momentum

DNA

WASHINGTON: With its surprise attack against Israel, Hamas has violently shifted the world's eyes back to the Palestinians and dealt a severe blow to momentum to secure a landmark US-brokered deal between Israel and Saudi Arabia. The Iranian-backed Islamist militants who run the impoverished, blockaded Gaza Strip on Saturday fired thousands of rockets and infiltrated forces into Israel, 50 years after Arab states' assault on Israel during the Jewish holy day of Yom Kippur. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel was at war. Just weeks earlier he had brushed aside the Palestinian issue during a speech at the United Nations and said normalization in 2020 with three other Arab nations in the so-called Abraham Accords had "heralded a new age of peace." Netan-

yahu also said Israel was on the cusp of a bigger prize – recognition by Saudi Arabia, guardian of Islam's two holiest sites. President Joe Biden, eager before next year's US election for a major diplomatic win, has pushed for a deal, and more talks were expected in coming weeks – despite skepticism from some of Biden's fellow Democrats about the proposed security guarantees to the conservative kingdom, whose rights record has long been under scrutiny. "It was always a tough hill to climb, and that hill just got a lot steeper," said Brian Katulis, vice president of policy at the Middle East Institute in Washington. The violence throws a spotlight on disputes between Israel and the Palestinians and "makes it harder to sweep those complicated issues under the rug the way the 2020 Abraham Accords did," he said. Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler, Crown

Prince Mohammed bin Salman, has spoken recently of progress with Israel but also insisted on movement on the Palestinian cause, seen as a priority for the aging King Salman. Saudi Arabia's foreign ministry returned to familiar language Saturday, saying in a statement that the kingdom had been warning of an "explosive situation as a result of the continued occupation and deprivation of the Palestinian people's legitimate rights." Aziz Alghashian, a Saudi expert on Saudi-Israeli relations, said the statement was intended to dispel any notion that the kingdom would prioritize normalization at the expense of supporting the Palestinians. "This kind of situation has made Saudi Arabia go back to its traditional role," he said. "Netanyahu put another obstacle to these normalization talks because he said this is now a war. I don't anticipate normalization is going

to take place against the backdrop of war," Alghashian said. A US official said it was "premature" to discuss the violence's effect on normalization, as Secretary of State Antony Blinken discussed the conflict with his Saudi counterpart, Prince Faisal bin Farhan, by telephone. A Saudi readout of the call said Prince Faisal stressed "the kingdom's rejection of targeting civilians in any way and the need for all parties to respect international humanitarian law." Netanyahu has cast diplomacy with the Palestinians as antiquated and described a future of friendship with Gulf Arabs, who share Israel's hostility toward Iran's clerical rulers. Netanyahu's government, the most right-wing in Israeli history, has continued to pursue settlements, although the prime minister backtracked in 2020 on annexation in the West Bank as he sought to woo the United Arab Emirates, the lead country in the Abraham

Accords. Joost Hiltermann, Middle East director of the International Crisis Group, which looks to resolve conflicts, said Hamas may have acted in part due to fear of a "looming further marginalization of the Palestinian cause in Palestinian eyes" if Saudi Arabia recognizes Israel. With Israel expected to respond forcefully to Saturday's attacks, Arab states will likely feel obliged to take a harder stance in line with public sentiment, he said. "If that all happens, then I would foresee a scenario where, just like we have a cold peace between Israel and Jordan, between Israel and Egypt, we end up with a cooling of the relationship between Israel and the Emirates and probably a delay, at least, of any sort of deal between Israel and Saudi Arabia," he said. Steven Cook, a senior fellow on the Council on Foreign Relations, pointed to a survey that showed just two percent of Saudis backed

normalizing ties with Israel. "It wasn't that long ago," he noted, "that there were telethons happening in Saudi Arabia in support of Hamas suicide bombers." Iran opposes normalization. The Biden administration has largely sought to lessen US involvement in the Middle East, also by easing tensions with Iran. Iran's clerical leadership, which since last year has suppressed major protests led by women, supports Hamas and Lebanon's Hezbollah and hailed the offensive. "This is about Iran's priorities in the Middle East," said Danielle Pletka of the conservative American Enterprise Institute. Republican Senator Lindsey Graham said that the attack appeared "designed to stop peace efforts between Saudi Arabia and Israel." "A peace agreement between those two nations would be a nightmare for Iran and Hamas," he said.

Saudi Arabia raises stakes in climate action

RIYADH: Saudi Energy Ministry has upped its ante in its fight against climate change to meet its environmental commitments, said a senior government official on Sunday at the Middle East and North Africa Climate Week 2023. Speaking to Arab News, Khalid Abuleif, the Energy Ministry's sustainability adviser, said the sector is aligning its policies with the global environmental objectives, particularly the Paris Agreement. "The ministry is actively implementing measures to enhance energy efficiency, promote the use of renewable energy sources and decrease the carbon intensity of the energy sector," said Abuleif. He added that these efforts are consistent with Saudi Arabia's commitment to achieve the objectives of the Paris Agreement and net-zero emissions in the Kingdom by 2060. Abuleif, who also serves as the climate change chief negotiator for the ministry, added: "Saudi Arabia has set ambitious targets for reducing GHG (greenhouse gas) emissions and increasing the share of renewable energy in its energy portfolio." He affirmed that the Kingdom is fully engaged in achieving and accelerating clean technologies for reducing emissions from hydrocarbon utilization through abatement and removals. Abuleif emphasized that the energy sector ensures clean and efficient fuel production and prioritizes investing in innovative climate solutions. He said innovations such as "mobile carbon capture technologies, prototype solar cells that currently have the world's highest certified power conversion efficiency, underground carbon locking" are leading the energy transition. The Energy Ministry is also working diligently to create a favorable regulatory environment encouraging investment in renewable energy and reducing carbon emissions.—DNA

Russia seeks return to UN rights council

UNITED NATIONS: Russia, which was ousted from the UN Human Rights Council after its forces invaded Ukraine, will attempt a return to the body – an uncertain move that will provide a gauge of its international support. The UN General Assembly will vote that day to elect 15 new members to the Geneva-based UN body, for terms running from 2024 to 2026. The council's 47 members are allocated by region, and each large regional group usually pre-selects its own candidates, which the General Assembly then generally approves. But this year two groups have more candidates than available seats: Latin America (candidates from Brazil, Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Peru will contest three seats), and Eastern Europe (Albania, Bulgaria and Russia will vie for two seats). Moscow's candidacy has drawn skepticism,

and the vote will come just days after a Russian missile attack on the Ukrainian village of Groza killed more than 50 people in a scene of carnage. "We hope UN members will firmly reject (Russia's) preposterous candidacy," a State Department spokesperson told AFP on condition of anonymity. "Members of Russia's forces have committed violations of international humanitarian law, including war crimes and crimes against humanity in Ukraine," the spokesperson added. Mariana Katarzova, a top UN expert, recently said repression inside Russia had intensified since its February 2022 invasion of Ukraine, reaching levels "unprecedented in recent history." To be elected to the rights council, a country needs 97 votes of the UN's 193 member countries. In April 2022, 93 countries voted to suspend Russia from the council, while 24

opposed that move. That majority vote against Russia was less lopsided than other resolutions defending the territorial integrity of Ukraine, with around 140 countries approving. But the situation with the rights council is more complex, as some countries also seen as rights offenders fear they may face the same fate. The vote Tuesday will be by secret ballot – perhaps shining a clearer light on a fragmented world in which several developing countries have grown weary of the West's persistent focus on Ukraine. "I think Western diplomats in New York are rather worried Russia could sneak back into the Human Rights Council" in what would be "a public relations disaster for the UN on a massive scale," said Richard Gowan of the International Crisis Group. "Russia has always argued that many UN members sympathize with it in private but won't support

it in public for fear of antagonizing Western powers," he added. "Moscow will hope that this supposed silent majority supports it in this secret vote." Vassily Nebenzia, the Russian ambassador to the UN, pushed back, saying: "There are no beacons of democracy or rogue states, as is sometimes being portrayed. No member state can claim to be immune from human rights violations." Louis Charbonneau of the NGO Human Rights Watch (HRW) conceded that no member of the council "has an unblemished rights record," but added that "every UN member nation should recognize that the council has membership standards for which Russia and China show despicable disregard." His group has called on member countries to also refrain from voting for Beijing, citing its violations of the rights of China's Uyghur minority. China, however, risks little in the vote.—APP

4 civilians killed in northern Syria army attack

IDLIB : At least four civilians were killed in attacks by Syrian armed forces in northern Syria, local sources said Sunday. The Syrian army and Iranian-backed foreign terror groups carried out intense attacks in Idlib city center using ground-to-ground weapons. At least 15 others were wounded in the attacks and were transferred to nearby hospitals, according to information obtained from the White Helmets civil defense organization. Türkiye, Russia and Iran decided to create four "de-escalation zones" in Syria in areas not under the control of the Syrian government at a meeting in Astana, Kazakhstan in 2017. The Damascus administration, Iran-backed terrorists and Russia continued their attacks and seized three out of four districts and headed for Idlib. Although Türkiye reached an additional agreement with Russia to strengthen the cease-fire in September 2018, the attacks intensified again in May 2019. After a new cease-fire deal for north-western Syria was reached between Ankara and Moscow on March 5, 2020, the cease-fire was largely preserved.—APP

China's rail-sea trains reach 30,000 trips

NANNING: China's rail-sea intermodal trains have made over 30,000 trips along the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor since the service was launched in 2017, said local authorities in south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region on Sunday.

On Sunday, a rail-sea intermodal train carrying 110 goods containers departed from Guangxi's Qinzhou railway container center station. Bound for southwest China's Chongqing Municipality, it marks the 30,000th trip.

Launched in 2017, the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor is a trade and logistics passage jointly built by provincial-level regions in provincial China and ASEAN members. Since it was launched, its rail-sea intermodal trains have recorded a steadily growing number of trips and an increasing annual cargo volume.—DNA

Germans cast midterm votes testing Scholz's coalition

BERLIN : Almost 14 million people are eligible to cast ballots on Sunday in southern Bavaria, the country's biggest state, and western Hesse, with a surge in immigration and economic woes among key topics. With the voter base making up almost one in five of Germany's electorate, and both states qualifying as economic heavyweights among the country's 16 regions, the polls are seen as a crucial indicator of the population's mood. After forming a three-party coalition two years ago, Scholz soon had to contend with Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the ensuing energy crisis, which plunged Germany into recession.

Adding to its problems, the chancellor's coalition – comprising his centre-left SPD, the Greens and the pro-business FDP – has been consumed by bitter fighting on issues ranging from climate laws to spending cuts. "The parties that form the federal government are in a bad starting position here," Arndt Leininger, a political expert from the Chemnitz University of Technology, told AFP. "In both states, all three parties are currently below their results in the last regional elections." Not helping the cause of the SPD and its coalition partners, both states are conservative strongholds, with Hesse ruled for 24 years by the main opposition CDU and Bavaria since 1957 by the CSU, headed by Markus Soeder. Meanwhile the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) is forecast to make gains after a recent surge in poll ratings at the national level and a string of local election triumphs.—Agencies

French arms to Armenia raises regional concerns : Azerbaijan

FOREIGN DESK

BAKU : Azerbaijan's president has rebuked the European Union and warned that France's decision to send military aid to Armenia could trigger a new conflict in the South Caucasus after a lightning Azerbaijani military operation helped Baku regain total control of Karabakh last month. Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev last week pulled out of an EU-brokered meeting with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan at which Brussels said it was standing by Armenia. But Aliyev criticised the EU's approach – and particularly France's position – when European Coun-

cil, Charles Michel, telephoned him, according to an Azerbaijani statement issued late on Saturday. President Aliyev said "that due to the well-known position of France, Azerbaijan did not participate in the meeting in Granada", the Azerbaijani presidential office said. During the telephone conversation, Aliyev said that "including Azerbaijan in the quadrilateral statement without the participation of Azerbaijan in Granada was not the right approach". "The provision of weapons by France to Armenia was an approach that was not serving peace, but one intended to inflate a new conflict, and if any new conflict occurs in the region, France would be responsible for causing



it," said Aliyev. "The anti-Azerbaijani statement adopted by the European Parliament on the basis of a xenophobic and chauvinistic approach and the opinions expressed in it were unacceptable, adding that this did not serve

peace and stability in the region," he said. Michel expressed the bloc's commitment to the Armenian-Azerbaijani normalisation process ahead of a trilateral meeting in Brussels. Protesting against French moves on Thursday, the EU invited the leaders of Azerbaijan and Armenia for the peace talks in Brussels by the end of October. "We believe in diplomacy and political dialogue. This is why we invite Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan for the meeting," Michel said following a quadrilateral meeting with Pashinyan on the sidelines of the European Political Community meeting in Grand, Spain. Hikmat Hajiyev, foreign policy advisor to the Azerbaijani pres-

ident, said Baku had proposed the participation of Türkiye and Spain in a planning meeting, but that proposal was also rejected by France. The meeting was scheduled to be held on the sidelines of the third summit of the European Political Community, which was an initiative of Macron to which leaders from more than 40 European countries were invited. Azerbaijan regained full control over its territory of Karabakh last month after taking counter-terrorism actions, which resulted in the surrender of illegal armed groups, ending a decades-long conflict. Authorities have repeatedly said they will protect the rights and ensure the security of the Armenian residents in Karabakh, in accordance with Azerbaijan's law.

Briefs

PMDC official killed, 1 injured in IED blast

DNA

QUETTA: The project manager of the Pakistan Mineral Development Corporation (PMDC) was killed in an improvised explosive device (IED) blast targeting his vehicle in Quetta on Sunday, according to the police. Quetta Senior Superintendent of Police (Operations) Jawad Tariq confirmed the casualty to media and identified the deceased as Shabat Mirza. He said the PMDC official was traveling to the Sor Range in a car along with his driver, Muhammad Zakir, when the blast occurred. "Mirza passed away on the spot while his driver sustained critical injuries." SSP Tariq said Zakir was immediately moved to the Quetta Civil Hospital Trauma Centre.

"According to initial investigation, explosives were fitted on the side of the road," the police official stated, adding that the Counter Terrorism Department had cordoned off the blast site and started collecting evidence. Sor Range is located in a mountainous region, Tariq said, adding that CTD officials were also questioning locals for further information. Today's blast comes amid a recent uptick in acts of terrorism in Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Last month, at least 59 people were killed in a deadly suicide bombing at a procession celebrating the birth of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) on 12 Rabiul Awwal in Mastung. Following the ghastly attack, the Balochistan government had announced an "all-out war" against terrorists in the province.

PIA delegation in Jakarta to resolve aircraft issue

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A seven-member delegation headed by the Secretary of Aviation Saif Anjum is in Indonesia in an effort to resolve a two-year dispute over two Airbus 320 planes that Pakistan International Airline (PIA) returned to a leasing company in September 2021. The delegation, which also includes PIA CEO Amir Hayat, Chief Technical Officer, and Chief Financial Officer, will depart from Islamabad to Kuala Lumpur. The leasing company refused to take back the aircraft on the ground that it did not meet the criteria specified in the contract. PIA has been paying for the aircraft parked in Indonesia ever since. The national airline has also offered to buy the aircraft for an additional \$30 million, but the leasing company has not yet responded. The delegation's visit to Indonesia is seen as a last-ditch effort to resolve the dispute and bring the two aircraft back to Pakistan. PIA leased the two Airbus 320 planes from AirAsia in 2012. The lease expired in September 2021, and PIA returned the aircraft to the leasing company.

Pakistan through the eyes of Italian photographer



ISLAMABAD: A talented Italian photographer Marzia Reggiani's works was displayed, at Islamabad Serena Hotel. Ms. Reggiani captured beautiful places of Pakistan with her camera. She, through her works, also portrayed lifestyle and various aspects of the Pakistani society. The visitors admired the great work done by Marzia Reggiani and hoped she will continue this effort with a view to building strong cultural linkages between Pakistan and Italy. – DNA

Rishi Sunak calls Trudeau for de-escalation in Ottawa-Delhi row

"Prime Minister [Sunak] reaffirmed the UK's position that all countries should respect sovereignty and the rule of law, including the principles of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations," the UK Prime Minister's office said

LONDON: UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has talked to Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau about the recent row between Ottawa and Delhi over the death of a Sikh separatist. In a late-night phone call on Friday, the two leaders discussed the Ottawa-Delhi row during which Trudeau updated Sunak on the situation relating to Canadian diplomats in India. The two leaders, in separate statements, had emphasized adhering to the rule of law while de-escalating the tense situation. The British leader emphasized the importance of respecting sovereignty and the rule of law, as well as the need for de-escalation, according to the statement re-

leased by No. 10 Downing Street. "Prime Minister [Sunak] reaffirmed the UK's position that all countries should respect sovereignty and the rule of law, including the principles of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations," the UK Prime Minister's office said. It added that the British leader told his Canadian counterpart, "He hoped to see a de-escalation in the situation," and agreed to remain in contact with him until the Ottawa-Delhi row has been resolved. "The leaders emphasized respect for the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations and the need to ensure the safety and security of their citizens. They under-

scored the importance of de-escalation in this context. Prime Minister Trudeau and Prime Minister Sunak agreed to remain in close contact and to continue working together to tackle global issues," read the Canadian government's statement. The ongoing diplomatic row between India and Canada – both close London allies and members of the Commonwealth of Nations, a large group of former territories of the British Empire – over the June killing of Canadian-Indian Hardeep Nijjar in Vancouver prompted Sunak to call Trudeau on Friday to stress the need for the de-escalation of tensions. Also on Friday, the US ambassador to India had

reportedly told his team that Washington may "need to reduce contact" with New Delhi's officials if the Ottawa-Delhi row were to continue. The Ottawa-Delhi row has been going on for months, and Trudeau last month gave a statement in the Canadian Parliament alleging India's involvement in Nijjar's assassination. In the statement, the PM said that Canadian security forces were "actively pursuing credible allegations" linking Indian government agents to the murder of the Khalistan Tiger Force leader in British Columbia in June. The accusation, however, was strongly rejected by India as "absurd and motivated". – Agencies

China raises concern over Gaza situation

DNA

ANKARA: China on Sunday said it is "deeply" concerned about the current escalation of "tensions and violence" between Palestinians and Israelis, calling on relevant parties to remain calm and exercise restraint. A Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson, in a statement, urged an immediate end to the hostilities to protect civilians and avoid further deterioration of the situation, local broadcaster CGTN reported. "The recurrence of the conflict shows once again that the protracted standstill of the peace process cannot last," the spokesperson said. The fundamental way out of the conflict, the spokesperson observed, lies in implementing the two-state solution and establishing an independent State of Palestine.

Junior officers deputed to DISCOs

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has assigned junior officers to various power distribution companies (Discos) with an array of perks and privileges despite the fact that they are drowning in circular debt. These junior officials of Grade 17 have been appointed to their positions, and as a result, they will now be entitled to handsome salaries and a host of other benefits, including vehicles and accommodations, all at the expense of Discos. A notification has been issued directing the BS-17 officers of the Pakistan Administrative Service to report to the companies for a period of 60 days on an attachment basis as special duty, effective immediately. –DNA

Rahul, Kohli power India to win against Australia

SPORTS DESK

CHENNAI: India beat Australia by six wickets in the fifth match of the ICC World Cup 2023 at the M.A. Chidambaram Stadium, Chennai, on Sunday. KL Rahul and Virat Kohli took control of the struggling Indian batting line as the home side had lost three wickets for just two runs in the first two overs. The two batters built a match-winning 165-run partnership, making sure that the Blues don't start their World Cup journey with an embarrassing loss in front of their home crowd. Kohli contributed 85 runs while the wicketkeeper batter Rahul amassed 97 runs, leading their side to an important win. Mitchell Starc and Josh Hazlewood gave early blows to the hosts and removed Ishan Kishan, Rohit Sharma and Shreyas Iyer but couldn't break the impeccable defense of the two match winners. However, in the eighth over, Mitchell Marsh dropped Kohli's catch when he was on 12, giving the 34-year-old a new life after an

early scare. Batting first, Australia were restricted to 199 runs courtesy of a fantastic bowling display by Indian spinners, Ravindra Jadeja and Kuldeep Yadav. The two spinners shared five wickets between them with Jadeja picking three while Yadav getting two to his name. It was a complete and dominant performance by the Indian bowling as all six bowlers bagged a wicket. Ace pacer Jasprit Bumrah got two while Mohammad Siraj, Hardik Pandya and Ravichandran Ashwin got one each. After winning the recent Asia Cup 2023 and beating the Aussies in a three-match ODI series, the Blues continued their great form. On the other hand, things have started to get difficult for Pat Cummins as his side have one win in the last six ODIs and not having more than one natural spinner (Adam Zampa) may cause more trouble for the Aussie in spinning Indian conditions. India will play Afghanistan next on October 11 in Delhi while Australia will take on the in-form South African side on October 12 in Lucknow.

Indian flood toll up to 77 as waters recede

NEW DELHI: At least 77 people are confirmed dead in the floods that hit India's northeast, authorities said Sunday, with destroyed roads and bridges leaving thousands more still cut off despite waters receding. Violent torrents struck Sikkim state on Wednesday after a high-altitude glacial lake suddenly burst. Scientists warn that similar disasters will become an increasing danger across the Himalayas as global temperatures rise and ice melts, spurred by climate change. "A total of 29 bodies have been retrieved from different parts of Sikkim," state relief commissioner Anilraj Rai told AFP by phone. In neighbouring West Bengal state, Jalpaiguri district police told AFP that another 48 bodies had been recovered. More than 100 people are still missing, according to official figures. Water levels along the Teesta river "returned to normal" four days after the floods hit, an official from Sikkim's state disaster control room told AFP. The office said more than 2,500 people stranded in the floods had been rescued. But evacuations have been complicated by the destruction of roads, bridges and telephone lines across much of Sikkim. Another 3,000 people were still stranded in

several relief camps in the state's north with airlift rescues delayed by bad weather, the office said. More than 1,200 houses were damaged by the floods, according to the state government. Among the dead were eight Indian army soldiers posted to Sikkim, which sits on India's remote frontiers with Nepal and China and boasts a sizeable military presence. India's defence ministry said in a Saturday statement that the floods had washed away "firearms and explosives" from military camps. Local media reports on Friday said that two people had been killed and four others injured by a mortar shell that exploded while flowing through the flood waters in West Bengal. The water surge came after intense rainfall burst the high-altitude Lhonak Lake, which sits at the base of a glacier in peaks surrounding the world's third-highest mountain, Kangchenjunga. Water powered downstream, adding to a river already swollen by monsoon rains, damaging a dam and sweeping away houses. Himalayan glaciers are melting faster than ever due to climate change, exposing communities to unpredictable and costly disasters, according to the ICIMOD research group. – Agencies

No restrictions on PTI as political party: caretaker government

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi has reassured that there's no restriction on the Imran Khan-led Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and that announcing the election date is not the interim government's mandate. Expressing confidence in the Election Commission of Pakistan's (ECP) capability – as an autonomous constitutional body – to conduct polls, Solangi said that the elections would be held as per the date announced by the top electoral authority. Reassuring that all registered political parties including PTI have equal opportunities, the information minister – while speaking to a private TV channel – said that political parties and their leadership have the freedom to give their opinion on any important issue. "There are no restrictions on



PTI as a political party," said Solangi. Media in Pakistan enjoy freedom and the courts are also free, he said, adding that all registered political parties have equal opportunities and the caretaker government along with the ECP would ensure equal opportunities for all political parties in the upcoming elections. Commenting on Nawaz Sharif's homecoming on October 21, the caretaker info minister stressed that the interim setup has nothing to do with PML-N supreme's return.

Nawaz, the three-time former prime minister, has been living in London following a self-imposed exile since November 2019 owing to health reasons. He was disqualified for life in 2017 by the Supreme Court for not declaring a receivable salary. Solangi said that Nawaz did not flee the country illegally and his return would be dealt with as per the law and the Constitution. Responding to a question pertaining to the expulsion of illegal foreigners living in the country, the information minister accentuated that no other country in the world had hosted as many refugees during the past four decades as Pakistan has done. The countries could not survive with soft borders with anybody entering its territory without documentation and living freely and preparing fake passports and identity cards, he said. The minister said that the people residing illegally in the country should voluntarily leave the country by October 31.

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