



Islamabad POST

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Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

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Former UK minister laments Islamophobia in British society

Detailed News On Page-08

Niger's ousted President tried to escape

Detailed News On Page-07



Shaheen equals records with spectacular fifer

Detailed News On Page-06



Human miseries in Palestine Israel levels Gaza district, hits church

Israel forces had struck the Church of Saint Porphyrius in Gaza City, where hundreds of Christians and Muslims had sought sanctuary

CENTRELINE REPORT

GAZA: Israel levelled a northern Gaza district on Friday after giving families a half-hour warning to escape, and hit an Orthodox Christian church where others had been sheltering, as it made clear that a command to invade Gaza was expected soon. In Washington, US President Joe Biden, back from a trip to Israel to demonstrate support, asked Americans in a televised speech to spend billions more dollars to help Israel fight Hamas, which he said sought to "annihilate" Israel's democracy. Israel has vowed to wipe out the Hamas Islamist group that rules Gaza, after its gunmen burst through the barrier fence surrounding the enclave on Oct. 7 and rampaged through Israeli towns and kibbutzes, killing 1,400 people, mainly civilians. "You see Gaza now from a distance, you will soon see it from inside. The command will come," Defence Minister Yoav Gallant told troops gathered at the Gaza border on Thursday. Israel has pounded Gaza with air strikes and put the enclave's 2.3 million people under a total siege, banning shipments even of food, fuel and medical supplies. Since Oct. 7, 3,785 Palestinians have been killed including more than 1,500 children, Palestinian officials say. The UN says more than a million have been made homeless. Israel has already told all civilians to evacuate the northern half of the Gaza Strip, which includes Gaza City. Many people have yet to leave saying they fear losing everything and have nowhere safe to go with southern areas also under attack. The Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, the main Palestinian Christian denomination, said Israeli forces had struck the Church of Saint Porphyrius in Gaza City, where hundreds of Christians and Muslims had sought sanctuary. Video from the scene showed a wounded boy being carried from rubble at night. A civil defence worker said two people on upper floors had survived; those on lower floors had been killed and their bodies were still in the rubble. "They felt they would be safe here."

Continued on Page 06

Too little, too late: UN body

NEWS DESK

GENEVA: The United Nations has announced that the first aid delivery into Gaza via the Rafah border crossing with Egypt is expected to occur "in the next day or so." Martin Griffiths, the UN humanitarian chief, stated that they are engaged in advanced negotiations with relevant parties to facilitate the aid operation. The UN's aim is to ensure a swift and secure start to this humanitarian effort. While the exact timing remains uncertain, there is hope for a prompt and sustained delivery of aid. The humanitarian community emphasises the urgent need for a mechanism to transport aid into southern Gaza, all while continuing to call for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire. Desperately needed international aid is accumulating in Egypt near Gaza, where Palestinians are facing critical shortages of food and water due to ongoing Israeli bombings. The situation in Gaza has deteriorated rapidly, with over one million of its 2.4 million residents displaced. Originally, Egyptian state-linked broadcaster Al Qahera News had announced the opening of the Rafah crossing on Friday, which serves as the sole route into Gaza. However, Cairo later cited the need for road repairs and postponed the opening. The recent escalation in violence stems from a major attack launched by Hamas from the Gaza Strip on October 7.

Continued on Page 06



URUMQI: Caretaker Prime Minister, Anwaar-ul-haq Kakar is being briefed on the history of 99 year old Xinjiang University. - DNA

Australia beat Pakistan in crucial match
Shaheen Afridi bagged his 2nd World Cup fifer

SPORTS DESK

BENGALURU: Australia defeated Pakistan by 62 runs in the 18th match of the ongoing ICC World Cup at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium, Bengaluru, India, on Friday. The Aussies managed to restrict the Green Shirts to 305 runs after posting a colossal 368-run target courtesy of a 259-run stand from David Warner and Mitchell Marsh. Pakistan were off to a great start as their opening duo of Imam-ul-Haq and Abdullah Shafique had a 134-run partnership - the first time a Pakistani opening pair had a

Continued on Page 06

4 terrorists killed in Lakki Marwat IBO

NEWS DESK

RAWALPINDI: On night 19/20 October 2023, security forces conducted an intelligence based operation in general area Semu Wanda, Lakki Marwat District, on reported presence of terrorists. During conduct of the operation, intense fire exchange took place between own troops and the terrorists, resultantly four terrorists were sent to hell, while one terrorist got injured and was apprehended by the security forces. These terrorists remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities against security forces as well as target killing of innocent civilians.

Continued on Page 06

PM meets with Party Secretary of Xinjiang Pak to learn from Xinjiang's success

The PM said as per consensus reached in Beijing, Pakistan's land border at Khunjerab would be converted into an all-weather border

DNA

XINJIANG: Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar has expressed Pakistan's interest in partnering with Xinjiang in promoting connectivity in terms of infrastructure development, economic synergy, trade and investment, agriculture, educational exchanges, science and technology, people-to-people connections. Addressing the students and faculty of Xinjiang University in Urumqi on Friday, he said Pakistan was seeking to learn from Xinjiang's success in agricultural modernisation. "We would also aim to set up a joint agricultural demonstration zone in Pakistan to introduce modern farming techniques and practices," he said. The prime minister said Pakistan aimed to develop linkages between the industries of Xinjiang and Pakistan especially Gilgit-Baltistan region. He said one particular area in this regard could be solar energy, a key sector in Xinjiang.

Continued on Page 06

US urges Pak to accept Afghan refugees

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The United States has urged Pakistan to allow Afghans seeking protection to enter the country. The US State Department said on Thursday that it strongly encourages Afghanistan's neighbours, including Pakistan, to allow entry for Afghans seeking international protection and to coordinate with international humanitarian organizations to provide humanitarian assistance. "We strongly encourage Afghanistan's neighbours, including Pakistan, to allow entry for Afghans seeking international protection and to

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Arrogance left Imran alone

DNA

PESHAWAR: Former defence minister Perviz Khattak Friday said ex-PM Imran Khan has been left all alone because of his arrogance. Addressing the workers of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Parliamentarians (PTI-P), he said since Pakistan came into being, politicians have been fooling people.

Rasheed condemns May 9 events

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former interior minister and Awami Muslim League (AML) chief Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed condemned the May 9 incidents and revealed that he had always advised Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman and former prime minister Imran Khan to maintain good relations with the army.

Holiday Notice

The offices of daily Islamabad POST shall remain closed on Saturday on account of weekly off therefore there will be no newspaper on Sunday.

- Editor

REPARATION OF ILLEGAL IMMIGRANTS
10 DAYS
10

Lankan Army chief lauds Pakistan role for peace

Earlier on arrival at GHQ, the Commander of Sri Lankan Army laid floral wreath at Yadgar-e-Shuhada



STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Lieutenant General H L V M Liyanage, Commander of the Sri Lankan Army called on General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), COAS at General Headquarters, today. During the meeting matters of professional interest, ways for enhancing bilateral defence ties were discussed. Sri Lankan Army Chief praised Pakistan Army for its professionalism and successes in ongoing operations for

bringing peace and stability in the region. COAS highlighted that Sri Lanka has historic relations with Pakistan and its Armed Forces, particularly in the fields of Defense and Training cooperation. The visiting dignitary will also witness the Passing Out Parade at Pakistan Military Academy, Kakul tomorrow. Earlier on arrival at GHQ, the Commander of Sri Lankan Army laid floral wreath at Yadgar-e-Shuhada. A smartly turned out contingent of Pakistan Army presented the guard of honour to the visiting dignitary.

Continued on Page 06

SC fixes hearing on polls, military trials for Oct 23

SCBA, others seek directives for ECP to hold polls within 90 days; last hearing on military courts held in Aug

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court (SC) has fixed the hearing of petitions seeking general elections within 90 days and challenging military trials of civilians on October 23 (Monday). A three-member bench, headed by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa and comprising Justice Aminuddin Khan and Justice Athar Minallah, will take up petitions filed by the Supreme Court Bar Association and others seeking directives to hold general elections within 90 days as stipulated by the Constitution. Meanwhile, a five-member special bench led by Justice Ijazul Ahsan, and comprising Justice Munib Akhtar, Justice Yahya Afridi, Justice Sayeed Mazhar Ali Akbar Naqvi and Justice Ayesha Malik will hear petitions challenging the trial of civilians in military courts. Last August, the SCBA moved the top court to direct the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to announce the date for polls within the constitutionally mandated period of 90 days following the dissolution of the lower house - National Assembly - on August 9. The lawyers association also challenged the approval of digital census 2023 by

Continued on Page 06

JCP recommends Justice Khan's elevation to SC

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Judicial Commission of Pakistan unanimously recommended Justice Irfan Saadat Khan on Friday for his elevation to the Supreme Court. A meeting of the commission was held on the call of Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa who proposed his name to fill one of the two seats currently vacant in the apex court. A statement issued by the JCP secretary prior to the meeting noted that Justice Khan, who is the acting Sindh High Court chief justice, met the stipulated requirements for his appointment as a judge of the SC. "In view of the current pendency of cases together with [the] rising institution of new cases, the vacancy in the Supreme Court should be filled," it added.

Continued on Page 06

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ICCI delegation joins Indonesia's expo trade 2023

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) led by its Vice President Engr. Azhar ul Islam Zafar is in Indonesia these days to participate in the 38th Trade Expo Indonesia Hybrid Edition 2023, which is being organized by the Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Indonesia at Indonesia Convention Exhibition Centre, Jakarta from October 18-22, 2023. The Expo is showcasing various categories of products including food & beverages, home living, digital & services, beauty & personal care, chemical, energy & industrial products, medical equipment & healthcare products and fashion, textiles & accessories. Muhammad Shabbir, Ch. Muhammad Ali, Hamayun Kabir, Ch. Javed Iqbal, Sheikh Muhammad Ejaz, Akhtar Hussain and others are in the ICCI delegation. The ICCI delegation also visited the Indonesian Chamber of Commerce & Industry to explore the possibilities of direct business linkages between the private sectors

of Pakistan and Indonesia. Speaking on the occasion, Engr. Azhar ul Islam Zafar, Vice President ICCI said that Pakistan considers Indonesia an important country of Muslim world with great potential for business relations. He said that the bilateral trade between Pakistan and Indonesia in 2021 was around US\$ 4.3 billion, which can be further increased as both countries have great potential to improve it. He said that Pakistan is a major importer of palm oil from Indonesia and proposed that Indonesian investors should invest in palm oil cultivation in Pakistan as the country consumes around 4.5 million tons of edible oil a year. He said that Pakistan and Indonesia can enhance cooperation in many fields including tourism, mines & minerals, textiles, leather, pharmaceuticals, information technology & e-commerce. He said that regular exchange of trade delegations and participation of private sectors of both countries in each other's trade fairs and exhibitions would help boost bilateral trade up to the real potential of both countries. ICCI delega-

tion members also shared useful ideas to further strengthen bilateral cooperation between the private sectors of both countries to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes. Arsjad Rasjid, Chairman, Indonesian Chamber of Commerce & Industry (KADIN Indonesia) welcomed the ICCI delegates and discussed with them various options for further improving bilateral trade and economic relations between Indonesia and Pakistan. He said that Pakistan is an important non-traditional trading partner of Indonesia and they want to further strengthen trade ties with Pakistan. He emphasized the immense potential for mutually beneficial economic relations between Pakistan and Indonesia and highlighted the importance of long-term collaboration with ICCI to unlock the untapped potential in both markets. He said that the Indonesian Chamber of Commerce & Industry is ready to work with ICCI to promote networking opportunities and explore potential collaboration for lasting business partnerships between the private sectors of both countries.



Poliovirus confirmed in 4 environmental samples

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Poliovirus has been confirmed in the environmental samples of four districts of the country. According to the spokesperson of the Ministry of Health, these samples were confirmed from cities including Karachi, Rawalpindi, Chaman, and Peshawar. The genetic analysis revealed that the virus found in all the samples belonged to the poliovirus cluster in Afghanistan. Caretaker Minister for Health, Dr Nadeem Jan, said that 43 positive environmental samples had been reported in the country, which was very worrying. He added that Pakistan had the world's most sensitive polio surveillance system, as rapid confirmation of the virus in environmental samples demonstrated that the system was working efficiently. The presence of viruses in the environment was a threat to every child, Dr Nadeem Jan said. He said the crippling disease was incurable and that the only vaccine provided lifelong protection to children. "We have organized many polio campaigns this year," he said, adding in November, in the areas where the virus was present, the children would be vaccinated through a campaign. He said parents must give polio drops to children in every campaign.

Dr. Nadeem visits infectious diseases hospital

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Health Dr. Nadeem Jan on Friday visited Infectious Diseases Hospital in Chak Shahzad. The purpose of the visit was to take stock of the facilities and performance in the hospital. The Infectious Diseases Hospital consists of 250 beds. Dr. Nadeem took notice and expressed concern over the hospital not being functional for last two years. The minister formed a three-member committee to make the hospital fully operational, which would be headed by Dr. Muhammad Salman, Chief Executive Officer, National Institute of Health. The committee will formulate an integrated

strategy to make the hospital fully functional. The minister directed the committee to submit its recommendations to him on urgent basis. Later, Dr Nadeem Jan visited Regional Blood Centre. More than forty staff members were absent from the Regional Blood Centre. He took notice and instructed to issue explanation letters to the staff absent from duty. The minister questioned as to why such a big safe blood donation center was non-functional, adding strict action would be taken against the responsible. The minister ordered an immediate investigation into the non-functionality of the

Regional Blood Center. The minister said, "We are ensuring merit and transparency in the health sector," adding salaries of Infectious Diseases Hospital and Regional Blood Centre staff should be paid without delay. He said that implementation of the reform agenda was necessary for improvement in the health sector. He directed to the officers to pay attention to their assigned duties, adding strict action would be taken for negligence in performance of duties. The minister said efforts were being made to ensure the availability of the best medical facilities in the country.—APP

Punjab police, LUMS sign MOU

DNA

LAHORE: Inspector General Punjab Police Dr. Usman Anwar has said that Punjab Police is promoting education & research culture and direct interaction with university and college students. IG Punjab said that Punjab Police has signed MOUs with various educational institutions, in continuation of which a memorandum of understanding (MOU) has been inked with Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) today. IG Punjab said that this MOU with Lums University will not only help the study to understand the police system and research projects but also will help in the latest training of

police personnel, capacity building and up-gradation of service delivery and operational system. IG Punjab said that steps have been taken to provide various modern training short courses to the children of police employees at state of art departments of Lums University. He expressed these views while talking at the MOU signing ceremony in Punjab Police and Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS) at the Central Police Office today. IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar, Head of Department Law & Policy Sikandar Ahmad Shah from Lums University signed the MOU. DIG R&D Khurram Shakoor, AIG R&D Sajid Hussain Khokhar, Associate Prof. Uzair Jameel

Kayani and other senior officers were also present in the ceremony. IG Punjab Dr. Usman Anwar welcomed the MOU and said that under the MOU Punjab Police and Lums University will promote bilateral cooperation in the field of criminal justice system and research. Lums University will provide support for further improvement in the state of community policing projects of Punjab Police. IG Punjab said that the sharing of qualified human resources for instructional support in the legal research domain will be ensured. Lums University will assist in increasing the capacity of police human resources for tackling gender sensitivity and tack-



ISLAMABAD: SAPM Jawad Sohrab Malik engages in productive discussions with Neil Hawkins, the Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan. — DNA

Local resident's mysterious disappearance raises concerns

ISLAMABAD: A cloud of concern hangs over the capital city as the mysterious disappearance of Saqib Aziz, a resident of Islamabad, has led to allegations of insufficient police cooperation from the F-8 Margalla police station. Aziz, who was last seen at the AlBalagh Islamic store in Islamabad, remains missing. Saqib Aziz's family and friends are in anguish as they try to find answers regarding his disappearance. According to those close to Aziz, he was last seen on Thursday (12-10-2023) while visiting the AlBalagh Islamic store, leaving them worried for his safety.

Secretary economic affairs division calls on CM KP

PESHAWAR: Caretaker Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Muhammad Azam Khan was called on by Federal Secretary for Economic Affairs Division Dr Kazim Niaz and a representative of the Asian Development Bank for Pakistan here on Friday. Various matters related to foreign-funded projects being executed in the province especially in the Newly Merged Districts came under discussion. Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Nadeem Aslam Chaudhry and Additional Chief Secretary Imtiaz Hussain Shah were also present on the occasion.—APP

Pak-Australia strengthen labor mobility and coop

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a significant step towards enhancing labour mobility between Pakistan and Australia, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, Jawad Sohrab Malik Friday held discussions with Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan, Neil Hawkins. The meeting was aimed at fostering cooperation and exploring new avenues to enhance labour mobility between the two countries, said a press release issued here. The SAPM informed about the ample pool of skilled Pakistani professionals and workers ready to bolster the Australian labour market, highlighting the potential for addressing labour shortages through cooperation in various

sectors. The central discussion revolved around the vital need for secure labour mobility channels to reduce irregular migration from Pakistan to Australia. Both the sides stressed the importance of providing safe avenues to job seekers abroad. The SAPM asked for further information on in-demand trades, accreditation, and language proficiency requirements for Australian working and skilled visas, aiming to simplify the process for Pakistani job seekers in Australia. Additionally, the discussion explored the possibility of setting up centers of excellence within the Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) sectors of both nations. Malik stated that the centers would prepare Pakistani workers to meet Australian labour market standards. Furthermore, the SAPM highlighted the

prospect of establishing a Migration and Mobility Partnership between Pakistan and Australia, fostering comprehensive cooperation in labour mobility. He also expressed a keen interest in being included in the Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) Scheme, which aimed to address labour shortages in rural and regional Australia, particularly in the agricultural sector. "Inclusion in the PALM Scheme will create opportunities for Pakistani workers to contribute to Australia's labour needs, further strengthening the bonds between the two nations", said Malik. They discussed the potential for linking job portals between the two countries, making it more convenient for employers and job seekers to connect. The meeting was also attended by Managing Director Overseas Employment Corporation (OEC).

Commissioner assures resolving business community genuine issues

DNA

HYDERABAD: The Commissioner Hyderabad Khalid Hyder Shah has assured that all genuine issues of the business community of the historic city would be resolved adding that efforts are being made to complete all ongoing development schemes aimed at providing a better civic infrastructure to the residents. The second largest city of the province did not witness a matching development even in industrial and trade sectors despite increasing population, he said and assured that he would try his best to get an

express feeder approved for power supply to small industries. The Commissioner held out such assurances while speaking to members of the Hyderabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the HCCI spokesman informed and added that the problems relating to traffic management, gas and power load shedding, drainage and water supply which were shared by the representatives of the business community would be resolved at the earliest. He asked the officer concerned to prepare a summary for approval of express feeders for small industries from the Sindh government. He promised that power supply to 200 small

industries would be provided to ensure prosperity in the industrial sector. The Deputy Commissioner Hyderabad Tariq Qureshi who also accompanied the Commissioner informed HCCI members that new traffic signals are being installed. He said that the problems of traders are being addressed adding that the traffic management board was already working. He said that other issues of traders would be addressed as well. The President of HCCI Adeel Siddiqui in his welcome address said that the business community always shouldered responsibilities with the government in times of need like floods and natural disasters.

RCI organizes solidarity rally for Palestine



RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) hosted a meeting to express its support for Palestine followed by a solidarity walk. Ms Mushaal Hussein Malik, SAPM on Human Rights and Women Empowerment attended the meeting and rally as a special guest. RCCI President Saqib Rafiq along with Group Leader Sohail Altaf expressed deep and unwavering solidarity to the Palestinian people during this time of hardship. A resolution was also adopted unanimously for the condemnation of atrocities

and human rights violations by Israel in Palestine. The house demanded the world powers, UN and OIC to play their role for resolving the conflict, permanent peace and humanitarian aid for Palestine. "In this difficult time, our Muslim brothers and sisters in Palestine are not alone," remarked President Saqib Rafiq. At this difficult hour of time, we stand with them in firm support for peace, justice, and a better future. Ms. Mushaal Hussein Mullick said "At this crucial moment, we stand with our people in solidarity, compas-

ion, and hope. She condemned in the strongest terms the unabated Israel's atrocities, oppression and siege of the Gaza Strip, resulting in a grave humanitarian tragedy. The resolution of Palestine and Kashmir issues is vital for durable peace in the world. RCCI office bearers, Former Presidents, EC members, members from Trade Associations, women members, distinguished RCCI members and students from various institutes attended the meeting and also participated in the short walk. — DNA

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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

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



Turkish Airlines.....8494949



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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

78th Indonesian independence, armed forces day celebrated

The Chief Guest Dr. Kauser Abdullah Malik in his remarks expressed satisfaction with the growing momentum of bilateral cooperation and suggested further expansion and diversification in multiple areas of interest

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia Mr. Adam M. Tugio hosted a grand reception today to mark the 78th Anniversary of the Independence and the Armed Forces Day of Indonesia. The reception was attended by a large number of government dignitaries, diplomats and eminent members of civil society. The Federal Minister for National Food Security & Research Dr. Kauser Abdullah Malik was the Chief Guest and Vice Admiral Abdul Samad was the Guest of Honor on the occasion. In his welcome address, Ambassador Adam highlighted significant achievements of modern and developing Indonesia as the world's largest democracy, a G-20 member with trillion dollar economy and its strong commitment to contribute for world peace and security with an inclusive approach. He added that Indonesian National Armed Forces Day are an integral part of this consistent struggle for a more progressive and prosperous Indonesia with their motto of 'Three services, One Determination', reflecting strong spirit of mutual cooperation among three military services.

Talking about Indonesia-Pakistan relations, he said the growing two-way ties are a good example of multi-dimensional constructive engagement and productive cooperation. He deeply appreciated support and cooperation of Pakistan as a valued friend in South Asia during course of Indonesian progress and expected enhanced strategic engagement for the mutual benefit of both countries in the future. The Ambassador gladly pointed out that mutual fascination for each other's culture has grown in recent years, which is reflected by the display of Indonesian Batik with Pakistani traditional design of motif in the reception.

The Chief Guest Dr. Kauser Abdullah Malik in his remarks expressed satisfaction with the growing momentum of bilateral cooperation and suggested further expansion and diversification in multiple areas of interest.

The special feature of the reception was an entertaining performance by Indonesian artists from Padang, West Sumatra Province of Indonesia, reflecting the diversity and charm of Indonesian culture.



Sino-Pak discusses economic cooperation through BRI

ISLAMABAD: China and Pakistan have negotiated for the strengthening of bilateral cooperation and the pivotal role of China in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Pakistan's economic growth. Federal Minister of Commerce, Industry and Production, Dr. Gohar Ejaz held a meeting with Chinese EXIM Bank President Mr. Ren Shengjun, said a press release issued here on Friday. Federal Minister of Commerce, Industry and Production, Dr. Gohar Ejaz, was given a warm welcome in Shanghai by Mr. Ren Shengjun, the President of the EXIM Bank. President Mr. Ren Shengjun commenced the meeting by expressing his desire to see Pakistan become China's hub for productivity and development, emphasizing that now is the opportune time to seize these prospects. He was encouraged by the progress of CPEC and recognized the positive impact of infrastructure developments on connectivity and Pakistan's foreign trade. President Mr. Ren Shengjun disclosed that EXIM Bank had concluded its internal processes for debt restructuring, which would facilitate transactions in RMB and further enhance trade relations. He commended the establishment of the PCC as a promising mechanism for driving private investment and thanked Minister Dr. Gohar Ejaz for his visit, underscoring its significance in enhancing communication. Minister Dr. Gohar Ejaz responded by emphasizing the vital role of China as a key partner in the Belt and Road Initiative, which has already transformed lives in Pakistan. - DNA

AIOU students urge VC to simplify online registration

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: The current students of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) have urged the Vice Chancellor Dr. Nasir Mahmood to make the online registration and enrollment procedure of admissions in the new semester. Talking to APP, the students also demanded to revive the manual procedure of admissions and registration as they were facing immense problems in enrollment and uploading assignments. The students were of the view, that they could not register for next semester due to the absence of manual procedure, lengthy enrollment process and poor internet facilities particularly in far-flung areas of the country. "They have to pay a handsome amount to the bookshops and photocopy shops for online registration and generating fee challan" they added. Meanwhile, a student Ambreen Shahid told APP that in an era of such inflation, they have to pay Rs 100-200 to the bookshops for uploading their assignments on the AAGHI LMS Portal of the university. "Mostly, middle and poor people take admission in AIOU for the sake of acquiring education but their wishes are continuously dashing down with such a laborious and difficult enrollment process," she said.

SAPM urge Muslim world to adopt a united stance

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Human Rights Mushaahid Hussein Mullick Friday demanded that the Israel and Indian governments should be held accountable for the war crimes and urged Islamic countries to take practical steps to adopt a united stance on the long-standing issues. Talking to a Private news channel, she called for the international community to act quickly and hold the Israeli occupation forces accountable for these heinous war crimes against the Palestinian people and for immediate intervention to stop the carnage to prevent humanitarian catastrophe. "Muslim Ummah needs to stand united and convey a message to the world that no more Israeli terrorism against Palestinians would be tolerated," she added. It is the need of the hour that the world leaves its double standards and raises a clear voice for the rights of oppressed Muslims anywhere in the world, SAPM said.

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Briefs

Two bike lifter gangs busted; five arrested

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi District Police in their ongoing operations against car and bike lifter gangs managed to bust two gangs and rounded up their five members besides recovering 15 motorcycles, and other items from their possession. According to a police spokesman, Rawat police conducted a raid and rounded up two members of a dacoit and bike lifter gang including Irfanullah and Rehmatullah. Police also recovered 10 stolen motorcycles from their possession. The arrested accused are record-holder criminals and have been shifted to jail for identification parade. In another raid, Gungmandi police held three members of the Ismail gang namely Humayoun Ismail, ringleader, Sheikh Naveed and Barar Ali and recovered five stolen motorcycles and other items from their possession. Separate cases have been registered against the accused while further investigations are under process. Division Superintendents of Police appreciated the performance of police teams and directed them to continue operations against the car, bike lifters and other lawbreakers.—APP

Turkiye's investors show interest in investments in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Turkish Ambassador Mehmet Pacaci said on Friday that Turkish investors have shown keen interest in making substantial investments in Pakistan, especially in mining, equipment manufacturing, paper products, pharmaceutical sector and special economic zones. Mr. Mehmet Pacaci, the Ambassador of Turkiye said this in a meeting with Tahir Javed, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister/Minister of State on investment at the Board of Investment (BOI), said a press release issued here. During their talks, both parties emphasized the deep religious, cultural, political, economic and social ties between Pakistan and Turkey. The meeting had fruitful discussions which highlighted the enduring and multifaceted relations that Pakistan and Turkey have enjoyed for a long time. Ambassador Pacaci expressed Turkiye's keen interest in making substantial investments in Pakistan, particularly focusing on mining, appliance manufacturing, paper products, the pharmaceutical sector and the clusters of Special Economic Zones. He emphasized the commitment of leading Turkish companies, including Lemak, Dolcer, Turkish Contractors Association, Arcelik, Zorlo, Alberic, and Pak Yetiram, which have already invested in Pakistan. The Ambassador reaffirmed Turkiye's readiness for joint ventures in various investment sectors, citing Pakistan's vast potential in these areas. Ambassador Pacaci highlighted the extensive research conducted on Pakistan's investment landscape and expressed Turkiye's readiness to invest significantly.—DNA

DNA



ISLAMABAD: The National President of the Pakistan Floral Art Society Ms. Farida Kaleem distributing awards on the occasion of the Monthly Meeting titled Magic With Wire held at Islamabad Serena Hotel.—DNA

Pak wants to promote ties with Britain in media sector

During a meeting with the Political Counsellor of the British High Commission Miss Zoe Ware, the discussion was held on Pak-UK relations, hate speech, misinformation, elimination of disinformation, promotion of cooperation in media sectors and the Safe Digital Environment Programme of UNDP

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi said on Friday that Pakistan was desirous to promote cooperation with Britain in the field of media. During a meeting with the Political Counsellor of the British High Commission Miss Zoe Ware, the discussion was held on

Pak-UK relations, hate speech, misinformation, elimination of disinformation, promotion of cooperation in media sectors and the Safe Digital Environment Programme of UNDP. The minister said that Pakistan highly valued its relations with Britain. He expressed the hope that UNDP's Safe Digital Environment programme will help counter misinformation and hateful narratives. The project, he added will further improve the knowl-

edge, capacity and skills of key government agencies and officials in identifying false and hateful narratives in the online space. The minister said that misinformation, disinformation and fake news was a problem of the whole world which should be controlled. The biggest challenge on social media was fake news, he opined. He said that help would be taken from the UK's Modern Media Curriculum for

providing training to journalists and Information Service Academy will play an important role in this regard. He said that awareness sessions on hate speech and misinformation would be organized at the ICA. Cooperation between Pakistan and Britain in the fields of film and drama was also discussed in the meeting. "Film and drama play an important role in highlighting the culture and

positive identity of any country," Murtaza Solangi remarked. The minister while informing the British Political Consul about the activities related to the elections in the country, said Elections will be held on time and the Election Commission of Pakistan would announce the date of polls. The British Political Consul assured her full support for the development of bilateral relations between Pakistan and the United Kingdom.

Ashrafi re-designated as SRPM on 'Religious Harmony'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi has been re-designated as the 'Special Representative to the Prime Minister (SRPM) on 'Religious Harmony and Pakistani Diaspora in Middle East & Islamic Countries'. Ashrafi, a prominent religious scholar and Chairman of the Pakistan Ulema Council has been serving as a bridge between the government and religious communities, both nationally and internationally. His re-designation to this crucial role underscores the trust and confidence the government places in his ability to foster relations with Islamic countries and promote religious coexistence within Pakistan. Ashrafi, known for his deep knowledge of Islamic jurisprudence and his commitment to peaceful coexistence, has played a pivotal role in engaging religious leaders and scholars from various sects and schools of thought. His efforts have led to significant strides in minimizing sectarian tensions and promoting religious tolerance in Pakistan.

Ashrafi as the SRPM actively participated in diplomatic efforts to strengthen Pakistan's ties with Middle Eastern and Islamic countries. He has been a key player in negotiations and dialogues aimed at resolving regional conflicts and promoting a peaceful resolution to ongoing issues. His re-designation is seen as a testament to his effective diplomacy and mediation skills in the international arena. Ashrafi's extensive network of connections within the Middle East and Islamic world is expected to play a vital role in enhancing Pakistan's standing on the global stage. The Special Representative's responsibilities include representing Pakistan at international forums and promoting the country's interests within the Islamic bloc. Additionally, he will continue to work on fostering religious harmony within Pakistan and addressing issues related to interfaith relations. This re-designation has received positive reactions from various quarters, including political leaders, religious scholars, and the international community, who recognize Ashrafi's

valuable contributions to promoting peace and harmony. Ashrafi's unwavering commitment to his role as the Special Representative is anticipated to further strengthen Pakistan's relations with Middle Eastern and Islamic countries and contribute to global peace and religious harmony. 25th Textile Asia Trade Fair Ignites China-Pakistan Textile Synergy Islamabad, October 20 (): The 25th Textile Asia International Trade Fair featured over 550 international brands and attracted more than 450 foreign delegates from 27 countries. "The expo acts as a source of motivation and real opportunities for business ventures to the local businesses and industries," stated Moazzam Ghurki, President of Pakistan China Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PCJCCI), the organizer of the event. "We will try to facilitate joint ventures of the international brand owners with local companies from Gujranwala, Lahore, Sialkot, and Faisalabad, and we will also arrange training for engineers from these cities who manufacture spare parts for sewing and tex-

tiles," he added according to a report carried by Gwadar Pro on Friday. Dongqi Group, one of the leading Chinese textile enterprises, participated in the event. "The expo provided an excellent opportunity to showcase our advanced technology and high-quality products to potential partners and customers. We were particularly interested in establishing collaborations with Pakistan's textile industry, which has great growth potential," said the exhibitor of Dongqi Group. During the exhibition, Dongqi Group had fruitful interactions with visitors from Pakistan and other countries. "We secured significant orders and established preliminary cooperation intentions with promising partners," he added. Salahuddin Hanif, Secretary General PCJCCI highlighted the immense interest shown by many Chinese companies in Pakistan's textile industry. "Companies from cities and provinces like Shanghai, Guangzhou, Jiangsu, Fujian, and Shandong have expressed their desire to relocate their production units to Punjab, with a minimum investment of \$25 million per unit.

'Pakistan Alliance for Girls Education' awarded

ISLAMABAD: In recognition of implementation of highly successful practices in literacy programming the Library of Congress USA has honored Pakistan Alliance for Girls Education (PAGE), as Successful Practices Honorees in 2023 Literacy Awards Program. Pakistan Alliance for Girls Education is an umbrella organization working towards building an enabling environment for gender equity in education, employment, rights, and leadership in Pakistan. Founded in 2014, the organization endeavors to empower girls of Pakistan with access to quality education and leadership opportunities. Ambassador Masood Khan congratulated Fajer Pasha, Executive Director Pakistan Alliance for Girls Education, who called on him at the Chancery today. He also felicitated the entire team of PAGE, terming their efforts as 'a great contribution to the increasing literacy in Pakistan. Ms. Fajer Pasha said it was a great honor for PAGE to be recognized among the top 15 organizations by Library of Congress for implementation of highly successful practices. This, she said, reflected the dedication of the organization and also manifested the commitment and the support being provided by the Government and the people of Pakistan for the cause of education. Briefing the Ambassador, Ms. Fajar said that PAGE was working across Pakistan to promote girls' education and has also been recognized by UNESCO and Government of China through Global Award for Girls' and Women's Education 2023.—DNA



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Pakistani nation stands with Palestinians: Raja Prevez Ashraf

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervez Ashraf has said that genocide, massacre and ethnic cleansing of Palestinian men, women, children and elderly in Gaza and adjoining areas is condemnable and reprehensible. He also underscored that the barbaric and inhumane atrocities committed by Israel are in stark contradiction to settled international laws and tantamount to war crimes. Further, he emphasized, "The world must not be a silent spectator in this darkest hour of human history. It must come forward immediately and play its due role not only in stopping the mayhem and barbarity of Zionist forces but in resolution of the Palestinian issue in accordance with the UN Security Council and OIC Resolutions." He expressed these views during his visit to the Embassy of Palestine in Islamabad on Friday. During his meeting with the Palestinian Emissary to Pakistan Mr.



Ahmed Jawad Rabei, the Speaker pledged unwavering support and reiterated Pakistani people, its Parliament and its government have always supported the Palestinian cause and each Pakistani would continue to support Palestine.

He said that every Pakistani has the same sentiments for Palestinian people and is ready to sacrifice everything for the cause of Palestine. "While expressing his resolve to stand with people of Palestinians, he said that stopping aid to

Gaza is a violation of basic human rights. The Speaker voiced his disapproval of the "double standards" exhibited by champions of Human Rights regarding Israeli aggression. He said that the "manipulation of facts and the politicization of the situation by a few parties to draw a misleading comparison between Palestinian victims and Israeli aggressors are extremely reprehensible. Raja Pervez also expressed profound admiration for the courage and sacrifices made by the Palestinian people, including children who are steadfastly resisting oppression with determination and an unwavering spirit. The Palestinian Ambassador thanked the Speaker for visiting the Embassy of Palestine and extending unwavering support to Palestine in these disturbing times. The Speaker also inscribed his comments in the condolence book at the Palestinian embassy, conveying his heartfelt sympathy to the people of Palestine and the families.

India's approach towards Kashmir unrealistic

ISLAMABAD: The All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) has said that the Indian approach towards the Kashmir dispute is absolutely unrealistic and arrogant. According to Kashmir Media Service, the APHC spokesman in a statement issued in Srinagar said that a political dispute like Kashmir cannot be resolved through military might. He strongly condemned the brute use of military power, including draconian laws Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) by India to suppress the real and genuine demand of the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Kashmiris' demand for their inalienable right to self-determination bears legitimacy and the rightful support of the United Nations resolutions, he added. He said in a democratic and civilized world it is a brazen act of state terrorism and violence to deploy one million troops against a small population of the occupied territory, which marks the highest military per capita ratio in the world. The APHC spokesman refuted India's baseless claims of normalcy in occupied Jammu and Kashmir and said since the abrogation of Article 370 on 05 August 2019, the situation remains on the boil as people under the worst military siege are killed, maimed, tortured, arrested and humiliated. He said the people of Kashmir have passed through many such barbaric annals of their history of illegal occupation at the hands of Indian military forces but they never surrendered before the Indian military might. He also condemned the continued cordon and search operations being carried out by the Indian forces, paramilitary, India's notorious National Investigation Agency, State Investigation Agency and Counter-Intelligence Kashmir unit personnel at many places.—DNA

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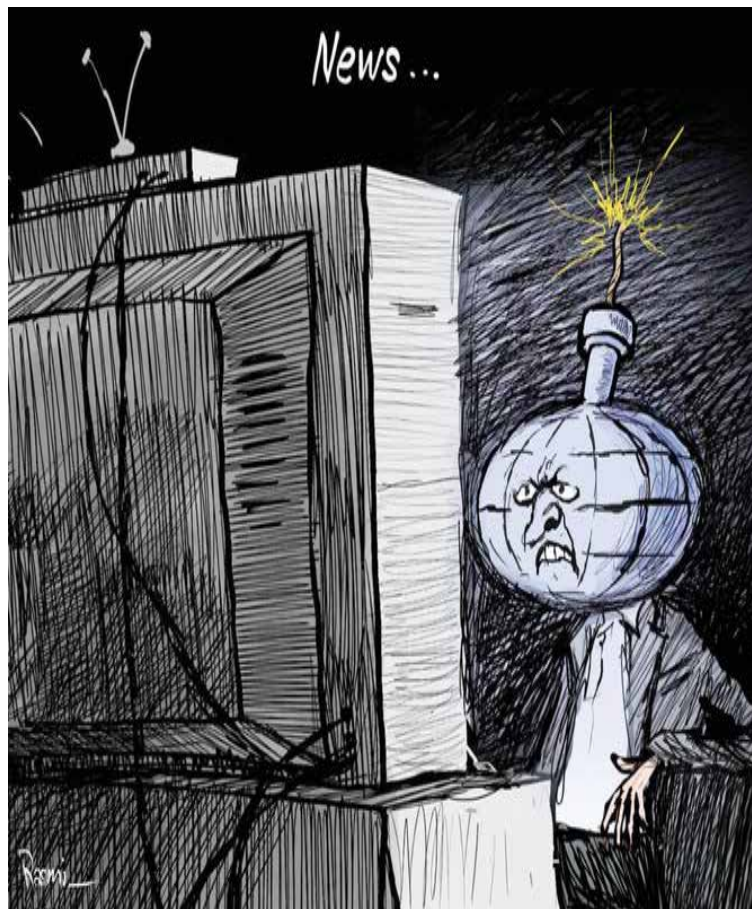
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US commerce tightens rules on advanced chips

The United States Department of Commerce announced a raft of new rules in a bid to "plug loopholes" in the existing restrictions on advanced computer chips and chip-making equipment it launched last year. In addition to cutting off Chinese companies' access to specific advanced chips from such US chipmakers as AMD and Nvidia, two Chinese chip designers, Moore Threads and Biren Technology, have been blacklisted, and licensing requirements for exports of advanced chips and equipment have been expanded to dozens of other countries which allegedly present risks of diversion to China. The aim is to elbow China further away from the semiconductor industry's cutting-edge technology. The excuse, as has been the case since the Donald Trump days, is still the umbrella formula of national security plus human rights. "The goal is the same goal that has always been, which is to limit China's access to advanced semiconductors that could fuel breakthroughs in artificial intelligence," said US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo. AI capabilities empowered by supercomputing and advanced chips have broad military applications. And Raimondo said that the stricter export controls are meant to control such "transformational" technology even though the slowdown in Chinese capability around high-level AI can have societal benefits and be "used for goodness" as the Joe Biden administration has acknowledged. Everything else aside, the US government is clearly taking full advantage of its dominance in new and emerging technologies to keep the upper hand in what it regards as decisive competition with China. Its continuous moves to deny China access to US technologies and equipment is only part of its attempt to suppress Chinese technological progress, especially in the semiconductor field. The attempt serves the strategic purpose of winning the strategic competition with China. The Joe Biden administration has never stopped stressing that it has no intention to choke the Chinese economy. But it seems ready to do whatever it takes to do just that. The Chinese ministries of commerce and foreign affairs were correct in pointing out that US and other Western companies are also among the direct victims of the latest measures. AMD and Nvidia know it. ASML knows it. And the US Semiconductor Industry Association, which is still "evaluating the impact", has stated: "Overly broad, unilateral controls risk harming the US semiconductor ecosystem without advancing national security". While the fabricated national security and human rights narrative may work for a while, its abusive use will hurt both countries, and impede global technological advancement in the end. Everyone knows the enormous potential of new technologies, including AI, to improve people's livelihoods.

Beijing-Moscow relations: cordial cooperation

President Xi Jinping talked with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin on the sidelines of the third Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in Beijing. Putin has attended all of the Belt and Road forums, demonstrating Russia's unswerving support for the China-proposed initiative. To date, the two heads of state have met 42 times over the past decade, consolidating the strong working relationship and deep personal friendship between the two leaders. The exchanges between the two heads of state have been both the anchor and the compass for China-Russia relations. They have ensured the sustained and steady development of bilateral ties by providing a top-level design and strategic guidance. This has been especially important, given the rapidly changing international landscape, and the need for the two sides to enhance their coordination on bilateral and international issues. Following the blueprint drawn by the two leaders, China-Russia cooperation has flourished in recent years. It encompasses a wide range of fields, such as the economy, trade, investment, energy, science and technology, as well as people-to-people and cultural exchanges. Bilateral trade, which hit a historical record in 2022, is expected to set a new record this year, reaching \$200 billion. The strong China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership has also established itself as an important diplomatic and strategic asset shared by both sides as the two countries provide valuable strategic support to each other on multilateral platforms such as the United Nations, the G20 and the BRICS mechanism. With the United States-led West adhering to a zero-sum mentality and stoking bloc competition and confrontation to contain China and Russia, it is only natural that the two countries should opt to strengthen their mutual support on issues concerning each other's core interests. Not to mention that the two countries share the same or similar views on hot-button regional and international issues as well as global governance. As Xi said, it is not an expediency, but a long-term policy to develop China-Russia relations featuring permanent good-neighbourly friendship, comprehensive strategic coordination and mutually beneficial cooperation. Although the West tries to portray otherwise, both countries have repeatedly stressed their relations do not target any third party. In an increasingly turbulent world, the steady and reciprocal China-Russia ties have set a good example for relations between countries. In contrast, the cobwebbed Cold War shenanigans of the US and its allies are stoking geopolitical tensions and creating ever greater global uncertainty. Just because the US chooses to remain stuck in the past, and insists on playing its zero-sum games targeting the two countries does not mean the rest of the international community should tag along with Washington. The determination of Beijing and Moscow to maintain close and cordial ties should be viewed as a welcome stabilizer amid Washington's ruinous attempts to maintain the US' hegemony in the face of a tide of change sweeping the world.

NATO needs results if 75th anniversary summit is to be a success

Luke Coffey

Leading up to the summit in June, expectations were high regarding Ukraine's membership prospects. Many hoped that a formal invitation to join the alliance would be given to Kyiv. This never happened. In place of an invitation to join, the alliance created a NATO-Ukraine Council. This is meant to serve as a high-level forum for increased NATO-Ukraine engagement. Since the summit, there has not been much progress made in terms of finding a consensus between the members on extending a formal

It has now been more than 100 days since the leaders of NATO gathered in June for a major summit in Vilnius, Lithuania. With the war raging in Ukraine, this summit came at a crucial time for European security. Next year's summit in Washington is symbolically important because it marks the 75th anniversary of NATO's founding. To make sure that the next summit is a success, a lot of progress has to be made on some key issues. One hundred days on from the last summit, a lot of work remains to be done. One of the biggest issues that must be resolved ahead of next year's gathering in the US is the issue of enlargement. Since NATO was created in 1949, successive rounds of enlargement have added new members to the alliance, while bringing more stability and security across Europe. NATO's success means that it is a club that countries want to join. No country has ever been forced or pressured into joining the alliance. Leading up to the summit in June, expectations were high regarding Ukraine's membership prospects. Many hoped that a formal invitation to join the alliance would be given to Kyiv. This never happened. In place of an invitation to join, the alliance created a NATO-Ukraine Council. This is meant to serve as a high-level forum for increased NATO-Ukraine engagement. Since the summit, there has not been much progress made in terms of finding a consensus between the members on extending a formal invitation for Ukraine to join the alliance. While all members agree that Ukraine will join NATO someday, putting a timeline on this ambition remains deeply divisive. This means it is unlikely Ukraine will get an invitation next year — unless something changes. The leaders of NATO need to start working overtime to find a consensus. A failure to resolve this issue before next year's summit would be seen as a sign of weakness by Russia.

One of the biggest issues that must be resolved ahead of next year's gathering in the US is the issue of enlargement. Another matter regarding NATO enlargement that has been equally disappointing over the past 100 days regards Sweden's entry into the alliance. Soon after Russia's large-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022, Finland and Sweden jettisoned a long-standing policy of remaining outside military alliances and both applied to join NATO. Finland joined in April, but Sweden's bid stalled over Turkish concerns regarding the status and role of the PKK terrorist organization in the country. At the summit in Lithuania, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was praised for finally giving the green light to Sweden's entry into the alliance. Because the Turkish parliament was in recess at the time, it could not vote to approve Sweden's entry. Now, 100 days on from the summit, the Turkish parliament still has not voted on ratifying Sweden's membership of NATO. This is another issue that needs to be resolved before the summit next year. On a positive note, one area that NATO has made progress on since June is increasing its support for Ukraine. Arming and supporting Ukraine was a top issue in Vilnius. For the first part of the war, the US was the largest source of aid to Ukraine. This has recently changed. According to the Kiel Institute for the World Economy's Ukraine aid tracker, total European commitments are now more than double those of the US. After totaling all forms of aid, including military, economic, humanitarian and refugee support, 20 European countries have given more to Ukraine than the US as a percentage of gross domestic product. A lot of new European commitments have been made since the summit in June. In addition to the focus on Ukraine, NATO must also demonstrate an ability to remain flexible when dealing with new and surprising challenges. Since the last summit, there has been one

unexpected geopolitical event that has had implications for the alliance. On a positive note, one area that NATO has made progress on since June is increasing its support for Ukraine. Last month, Serbia conducted a large-scale military mobilization along its border with Kosovo. Amid simmering tensions since the beginning of the year, Serbia deployed, in the words of the White House, an "unprecedented" number of troops along its southern border. This was alarming for NATO because it maintains a peacekeeping force in Kosovo and security issues in the Balkans have traditionally spilled over into the rest of Europe. Thankfully, NATO acted quickly. The alliance immediately increased the strength of its peacekeeping force with a deployment of hundreds of British troops based out of Cyprus. Soon after, Serbia withdrew its forces from the border with Kosovo. However, ongoing tensions between Belgrade and Pristina remain a concern for the alliance. The way things are going, the future role of NATO in the Balkans will likely be on the agenda at the next summit. As NATO prepares for its 75th birthday next year, the alliance needs to show its people that it remains as relevant today as it was during the time of its founding during the Cold War. Russia's actions in Ukraine make it easier to explain why NATO remains important today, but the alliance still has a lot of hard work ahead of it. NATO needs to double down on finding a consensus regarding Ukraine's potential membership, it needs to finalize Sweden's entry into the alliance, and it must maintain current levels of military support for Ukraine for the foreseeable future. Overall, the past 100 days have not been encouraging. However, if these issues can be addressed over the next several months, it is still possible to lay the groundwork to make the 75th anniversary summit in Washington a success.

— Sourced by Arab news

Turning the tides with NASTP

AVM M Z Faisal (Retd)

Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) powered by sophisticated Artificial Intelligence (AI) will be lethal and give a new balance between qualitative edge and quantitative depth. With emerging technologies rapidly reshaping the future and making current operational concepts obsolete, the NASTP is a world-class setup, intelligently designed and artistically furnished to explore and harness the potential of such game-changing technologies. It is perhaps the largest design and R&D setup of the Pakistan Air Force in "Aircraft

It is said that seeing is believing, and rightly so. Words cannot replicate my incredibly inspiring and reassuring visit to the National Aerospace Science & Technology Park (NASTP) Alpha at PAF Base Nur Khan. Despite spending hours, the entire charismatic splendour of NASTP Alpha couldn't be captured. It was one of my retired life's most rewarding and memorable moments. In these testing times, this visit provided a glimmer of hope and optimism that I feel compelled to share to boost national spirits and reinvigorate a much-needed sense of hope. The PAF is renowned for its young, dynamic leadership undertaking innovative, bold and futuristic projects. The NASTP is one such excellent initiative of strategic national importance conceived and spearheaded by the Chief of the Air Staff ACM Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu. Its main objective is to create an innovation ecosystem nationwide, bringing together industry, academia, and the armed forces to strengthen the PAF by advancing the local aerospace industry. On the broader canvas, NASTP Kamra is the flagship Headquarter encompassing "Design, R&D, manufacturing, Product Lifecycle Management (PLM), Training, Maintenance / Repair/ Overhaul (MRO), Aviation Logistics, along with global supply chains of strategic industries like Aerospace, IT and Computing". NASTP Kamra is then connected to three regional NASTP centres at Rawalpindi, Lahore and Karachi that would "create regional level eco-systems to be ultimately connected at the national level with NASTP Kamra". To put it simply, NASTP is a comprehensive initiative aimed at assembling the most brilliant minds, cutting-edge technologies, and diverse experiences to develop and transform futuristic concepts for the aerospace industry in collaboration with national and international partners. Future wars will be fought in black and white, but much will also be fought in the grey zone. Non-kinetic

methods of warfare, such as electronic warfare, cyber-attacks, artificial intelligence, and quantum computing, will be significant game-changers, tipping the scales against adversaries. Securing superiority in space will be crucial for both offensive and defensive operations. Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) powered by sophisticated Artificial Intelligence (AI) will be lethal and give a new balance between qualitative edge and quantitative depth. With emerging technologies rapidly reshaping the future and making current operational concepts obsolete, the NASTP is a world-class setup, intelligently designed and artistically furnished to explore and harness the potential of such game-changing technologies. It is perhaps the largest design and R&D setup of the Pakistan Air Force in "Aircraft, Space, Radar, Wireless and Communications Systems, Simulators, Cyber, IT, Computing & Big Data, Software Development, and Artificial Intelligence domains". It was heartening to note the Turkish Aircraft Industry (TAI), known for aircraft manufacturing, and leading Turkish UAV company 'Baykar', best known for its TB2 and Akinci drones, set up their offices in NASTP. This strategic collaboration holds great promise for both nations. Expanding on the experience of JF-17 and deepening defence ties with Turkey, PAF is currently working on another fighter program called 'PFX'. The program is in the advanced design stage and will incorporate all futuristic capabilities being developed at different NASTP centres. Already, the PAF 4.5 Gen J-10C, with the advanced avionics package, is ahead of its rival, the Rafale, and when the time comes, it could surprise the formidable S-400 with few undisclosed weapons. It was deeply inspiring to physically find in the NASTP the PAF's recently inducted Turkish and Chinese drones and UAVs in the Medium-Altitude Long Endurance (MALE) and

High-Altitude Long Endurance (HALE) categories, some of which have already demonstrated their combat worthiness in the Azerbaijan-Armenia and Russian-Ukraine conflicts. These drones and UAVs are the present and the future of modern warfare and shall deeply augment the offensive punch of PAF in kinetic and non-kinetic roles. These can be of great operational efficacy against the fresh hybrid war being fought along the border regions of Pakistan. Another indigenous invention of particular interest was the low-cost airborne loitering munition, which can autonomously engage any high-value target with precision. A barrage of fire can unleash a deadly rain of destruction from the sky. The Pakistan Air Force (PAF) is acutely aware of the increasing gap with India in the space domain and has developed an effective strategy to deny India any offensive space advantage in the event of a contingency. The PAF's exceptional focus on cyber warfare, electronic warfare (EW), and quantum computing from offensive and defensive perspectives is praiseworthy. These advanced capabilities, particularly in the domains of EW and cyber warfare, can cause significant damage to adversary by disrupting and destroying command and control systems, satellite networks, tactical data links, missile guidance systems, avionics, targeting pods, and other critical systems. Pakistan's aerospace industry is set to receive a major boost with the inception of the NASTP. The project will fortify the country's aerospace sector, boost economic growth, and augment Pakistan's reputation globally. ACM Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu and the entire PAF leadership deserve commendation for their foresight in conceiving a project of immense national significance and multiple strategic dividends.

The writer is the Director of Warfare and Aerospace at the Centre for Aerospace and Security Studies (CASS), Lahore, Pakistan. He can be reached at casslahore@gmail.com

Briefs

Israel levels
Gaza dist,
hits church

FROM PAGE 01
They came from under the bombardment and the destruction, and they said they would be safe here but destruction chased them," a man cried out. Gaza's Hamas-run government media office said 18 Christian Palestinians had been killed. There was no immediate word from the church on the final death toll. It said targeting churches that were used as shelters for people fleeing bombing was "a war crime that cannot be ignored." The Israeli military said part of the church was damaged in a strike on a militant command centre and it was reviewing the incident. In Zahra, a northern Gaza town, residents said their entire district of some 25 multi-storey apartment buildings was razed to the ground. They received Israeli warning messages on their mobile phones at breakfast time, followed ten minutes later by a small drone strike that hammered the message home. Half an hour after the initial warning, F-16 warplanes brought the buildings down in huge explosions and clouds of dust. "Everything I ever dreamt of and thought that I have achieved was gone. In that apartment was my dream, my memories with my children, and my wife, was the smell of safety and love," Ali, a resident of the district, told Reuters by phone, declining to give his full name for fear of reprisals. The United Nations humanitarian affairs office said more than 140,000 homes - nearly a third of all homes in Gaza - have been damaged, with nearly 13,000 completely destroyed.

SC fixes
hearing
on polls...

FROM PAGE 01
The Council of Common Interests (CCI) on August 5. The petition, a copy of which is available with The Express Tribune, was filed by SCBA members belonging to the Professional Lawyers body (Hamid Khan Group). The election supervisor is bound to hold polls within 90 days if the assembly is dissolved early. As the lower house was dissolved on August 9, three days before the end of its term, elections were supposed to be held by November 9. Yet, the last potential time for elections floated by the ECP is January 2024. Meanwhile, after the approval of census 2023 by the CCI, a delay in the holding of polls seems to be in offing, as according to officials, the process of new delimitations may take four months or longer. The SCBA, in its petition, urged the apex court to declare the participation of the caretaker chief ministers of Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa in the CCI meeting as illegal and in violation of the Constitution. Both the Punjab and Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa assemblies where the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government was in power were dissolved in January 2022. The caretaker governments in both the provinces were bound to hold elections within 90 days but failed to do so.

Too little,
too late:
UN body

FROM PAGE 01
The attack resulted in substantial casualties, with Israeli officials reporting at least 1,400 deaths, primarily among civilians. In response, Israel has conducted extensive aerial bombings, causing significant destruction. An impending ground invasion is anticipated, heightening concerns about the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. As of now, the situation remains critical, with at least 4,137 Palestinians, mainly civilians, reported dead due to the ongoing conflict, according to the Hamas-run health ministry.

4 terrorists
killed in...

FROM PAGE 01
A cache of arms, equipment and explosives was also recovered during the operation. Locals of the area appreciated the operation and expressed their full support to eliminate the menace of terrorism.

FIBA referee workshop
kicks off in Islamabad

PBBF kicks off the FIBA Referee workshop for the growth and development of basketball referees here at Pakistan Sports Complex Islamabad

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: To improve the basketball standard and skills in the country with some significant steps taken by the Pakistan Basketball Federation (PBBF) kicks off the FIBA Referee workshop on Thursday for the growth and development of basketball referees here at Pakistan Sports Complex Islamabad. The three-day workshop will be led by renowned International Basketball Federation (FIBA) Referee Instructor AbdulKarim Shakeb, hailing from Bahrain, who has been appointed by FIBA Asia. Shakeb's extensive experience and knowledge are expected to be instrumental in enhancing the skills of local referees and officials. Prior to the main event, a National Referee Workshop was conducted at the same venue, the Sports Complex in Islamabad. Over 40 referees participated in this preparatory workshop, which aimed to equip them with the necessary



skills and knowledge required for the upcoming FIBA Referee workshop. The National Referee

Workshop received guidance and instruction from key figures in the basketball community. The Associ-

ate Secretary of the Pakistan Basketball Federation and FIBA Commissioner Ouj E Zahoor played

a pivotal role in organizing and conducting the workshop, in collaboration with the National Referees Board. Secretary Referees Board Prof. Siraj Ul Haq Qureshi and members of the board former FIBA referee Yaqoob Qadry and Saadat Jehangir contributed their expertise by conducting training sessions during the National Referee Workshop. Their valuable insights and mentorship are expected to enrich the skills of the referees who will soon partake in the FIBA Referee workshop. This initiative by the Pakistan Basketball Federation not only emphasizes the commitment to improving the quality of officiating in basketball but also aims to strengthen Pakistan's presence on the international basketball stage. The FIBA Referee workshop is poised to be a significant step forward in achieving these objectives, as it equips local referees with the knowledge and skills necessary to officiate international basketball events effectively.

Djokovic to open
2024 at United Cup

SPORTS DESK

SYDNEY: World number one Novak Djokovic will open his 2024 season at the mixed teams United Cup in Aus-

tralia, but injury-plagued Rafael Nadal was not on the Spain team announced Friday. Djokovic will spearhead Serbia at the tournament from December 29-January 7 in Sydney and Perth as he builds towards the defence of his

Australian Open title. Nadal was part of the Spain team in 2023 before injuring his hip at the opening Grand Slam of the year. He has been out of action since and underwent surgery in June. Tennis Australia chief Craig Tiley said this month Nadal planned to make his return to Grand Slam tennis at the Australian Open, which follows the United Cup. Nadal responded on social media by thanking Tiley for his "confidence", without confirming if he would appear. There are ATP events in Brisbane, Adelaide and Auckland in early January that Nadal could also use to prepare for the Australian Open. Nine of the world's top 20 men and five of the top 10 women will feature at the United Cup, with defending champions the United States among the favourites, led by Jessica Pegula and Taylor Fritz. Poland, spearheaded by world number two and four-time Grand Slam winner Iga Swiatek, were named top seeds for the 18-nation event. Other big names to sign on include Stefanos Tsitsipas, Casper Ruud, Alexander Zverev, Maria Sakkari, and Caroline Garcia. "They are all set to play in a format designed to showcase both the men's and women's game and the unique equality in tennis," said tournament director Stephen Farrow. Countries will be drawn into six groups of three and compete in a round-robin format. Each tie will feature one men's and women's match as well as a mixed doubles clash.

Chelsea drawn
in group with
Real Madrid

OUR CORRESPONDENTS

PARIS: Chelsea will face Real Madrid in the Women's Champions League group stage. Emma Hayes' side, runners-up in 2021, are drawn in Group D. Real Madrid were quarter-finalists in 2022, while Paris FC knocked out Arsenal and last season's finalists Wolfsburg in the qualifying rounds. Chelsea, beaten in the semi-finals by champions Barcelona last season, were seeded in pot one as English champions. They are the only British representatives left in the competition after Scottish champions Glasgow City were knocked out in second-round qualifying by Brann. Manchester United were also knocked out in qualifying, by Paris St-Germain, who are drawn in the same group as Bayern Munich. Barcelona - featuring England internationals Keira Walsh and Lucy Bronze - are in Group A and will face FC Rosengard, Benfica and Eintracht Frankfurt. The group stages takes place between 14 November and 31 January and the top two sides from each group will progress to the knockout stages. Man City's Taylor questions Champions League format Saudi Arabia wants to host 2035 Women's World Cup Women's Champions League group-stage draw. Group A: Barcelona, FC Rosengard, Benfica, Eintracht Frankfurt. Group B: Lyon, Slavia Prague, St Polten, SK Brann. Group C: Bayern Munich, Paris St-Germain, Roma, Ajax. Group D: Chelsea, Real Madrid, BK Hacken, Paris FC. 'English clubs need to do better in Europe'. There has been lots of discussion over the current format of Women's Champions League qualifying after English clubs Manchester United and Arsenal. - Agencies

Milan face Juve
amid betting scandal

MILAN: AC Milan will defend their two-point Serie A lead when they face Juventus, a huge match which threatens to be overshadowed by a gambling scandal rocking Italian football. Battered by reports that former midfielder Sandro Tonali gambled on Milan matches while still playing for the team he supported as a boy, the seven-time European champions will try to hold off local rivals and closest challengers Inter Milan who take on Torino on Saturday. Juventus are four points behind Milan in third but have again been engulfed in controversy as Nicolo Fagioli became the first player to be punished for illicit gambling, just weeks after Paul Pogba was suspended for doping violations. The 22-year-old was suspended for seven months on Tuesday after admitting to betting on football matches as a criminal investigation into illegal gambling platforms and organised crime bleeds into football. Tonali, now at Newcastle United, is certain to be slapped with a lengthy worldwide ban, while disgraced paparazzo Fabrizio Corona, who has spent time in jail for extortion, has been threatened with legal action after also accusing Roma attacker Stephen El Shaarawy and Lazio defender Nicolo Casale of betting on matches. "He has never gambled and has no interest in doing so," said El Shaarawy's legal team, adding that the accusations were "totally unfounded and slanderous". The affair hangs over this weekend's action with Corona and mainstream outlets publishing a raft of rumours and apparent leaks from the public prosecutors office in Turin which is leading the criminal probe. On Thursday the head of the Italian Football Federation (FIGC) Gabriele Gravina said "we will never abandon these young men", who have admitted gambling addictions. - Agencies

Shaheen equals records
with spectacular fifer

BANGALORE: Shaheen Afridi has etched his name alongside cricket legend Shahid Afridi by equaling the record for the most fifters for Pakistan in World Cups Australia's David Warner and Mitchell Marsh put on a masterclass in power-hitting against Pakistan as the five-time champions posted a daunting total of 367.9 in their World Cup group game on Friday. Amidst the carnage by Australian batters, Shaheen Afridi emerged as the standout performer among the Pakistan bowlers, securing five wickets and concluding with impressive figures of 5-54. This outstanding feat has propelled him to equal the record for the most wickets by a fast bowler after 48 ODIs. Shaheen Afridi's tally of 95 wickets in 48 ODIs matches that of Mitchell Starc, who also achieved the same milestone in the same number of matches. Furthermore, Shaheen Afridi has etched his name alongside cricket legend Shahid Afridi by equaling the record for the most fifters for Pakistan in World Cups. Following his stellar fifer against Australia in Bengaluru on Friday, Shaheen Afridi now boasts two fifters in World Cups, mirroring Shahid Afridi's own achievement of two fifters in the prestigious tournament. However, amidst these individual achievements, Pakistan found themselves on the wrong side of some unwanted records. David Warner and Mitchell Marsh forged a remarkable partnership, amassing 259 runs for the first wicket, marking Australia's highest-ever opening stand in World Cup cricket. This also marked the first occasion where Pakistan conceded more than a 200-run partnership in World Cup cricket. - DNA



IPS-FJWU conference marks 50 years of constitution

Experts call for fiscal devolution, empowering CCI, local governments, highlight role of NFC for federal harmony

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A functional Council of Common Interests (CCI) with its rules of business, consistent National Finance Commission (NFC) Award governed through subordinate legislation, and devolution of political, financial, and administrative authority empowering local governments are imperative to create the right environment to renew Pakistan's commitment to federalism, uphold the constitution's mandate, and protect its basics for the next 50 years. This was highlighted by veteran statesmen, jurists, and constitutional experts during the concluding session of the two-day conference on 'The Constitution of Pakistan: Lessons for Next 50 Years' co-organized by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Islamabad, and the Department of Law, Fatima Jinnah Women University (FJWU), Rawalpindi. The confer-

ence was addressed, among others, by Raja Zafar-ul-Haq, former senator, Khalid Rahman, chairman IPS, Owais Ahmed Ghani, former governor, Balochistan and KP, Amanullah Kanrani, Balochistan's interim law minister, Dr Saima Hamid, former vice chancellor, FJWU, Prof Dr Shoaib Akhtar, dean, FJWU, Aftab Memon, former federal secretary, ministry of interprovincial coordination, Inayatullah Khan, former minister for local governments,

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Lt Gen (r) Naeem Khalid Lodhi, former federal minister for national security, Ahmed Bilal Mehboob, president, PILDAT, Prof Dr Aziz-ur-Rahman, director, School of Law, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Dr Nadia Khadam, head, Department of Law, FJWU, and Prof Dr Fakhru-Islam, advisor research IPS and former DG, Pakistan Study Centre, University of Peshawar. Emphasizing the fundamental principles upon which Pakistan

was founded - unity amidst diversity and a strong federal structure - the speakers highlighted concerns related to the Council of Common Interests (CCI) and National Finance Commission (NFC) Award, underscoring the need for meaningful reforms. As the 1973 Constitution inherently carries the characteristic of federalism, aimed at safeguarding provincial rights and fostering equitable socio-economic development, this unity remains

pivotal to Pakistan's survival. However, there are rising concerns about the functionality of the CCI, meant to safeguard and protect the rights of the provinces, as its secretariat remains nonfunctional for all practical purposes, said Inayatullah Khan. The issue has been compounded because there are no rules of business for the CCI even after 50 years, added Amanullah Kanrani. The speakers said this dysfunctionality is undermining the spirit of federalism and fueling dissatisfaction among provinces because their rights are not being upheld. Furthermore, NFC has failed to implement its Awards to the provinces. Since 2010, the succeeding NFCs have struggled to reach a consensus and implement awards within their stipulated time period, in violation of the constitution. Subordinated legislation is needed to govern NFC awards for consistency, emphasized the speakers.

JCP
recommends
Justice...

FROM PAGE 01
[Justice Khan] is knowledgeable, well experienced, versatile with an upright character and in my opinion deserving of being appointed as [a] judge of the Supreme Court. He is also the most senior judge amongst the chief justices and judges of all the high courts," it continued. The JCP secretary also wrote that CJP Isa wanted that suggestions for determining the criteria for the appointment of high court judges should also be discussed in the meeting. The official asked the members of the body to attend the meeting on October 20. Justice Khan had been ignored for his elevation to the SC for the past six years. Meanwhile, Justice Aqeel Abbasi's name was proposed for the SHC chief justice's office.

Pakistan to
learn from
Xinjiang's...

FROM PAGE 01
He said, "We look forward to promote cultural and people to people connections with Xinjiang. He invited tourists from Xinjiang and other parts of China to visit tourist places in Pakistan. The prime minister said Xinjiang held a special place in the hearts of Pakistanis as neighboring region with longstanding cultural and historical linkages. He said Khunjerab border connecting Pakistan and China through this region was a more than a geographical demarcation. "It is not only a channel of trade and transportation but also a vital bridge that connects the two great nations." He said, "We will jointly work to identify the respective strengths of Gilgit-Baltistan and Xinjiang and build on our synergies for improving the livelihoods of the people of our region."

US urges
Pak to
accept...

FROM PAGE 01
coordinate with international humanitarian organizations ... to provide humanitarian assistance," a US State Department spokesperson told reporters on Thursday as reported by Reuters. Pakistan has set a November 1 deadline for all illegal immigrants, including hundreds of thousands of Afghans, to leave the country or face forcible expulsion. Pakistan says the deportation process would be orderly and conducted in phases and could begin with people with criminal records. Afghanistan's Taliban rulers have said Pakistan's move to evict illegal Afghan migrants was "unacceptable".

Australia
beat Pak...

FROM PAGE 01
century stand against Australia in a World Cup match. However, Abdullah was removed after scoring 64 runs as he got a top edge on Marcus Stoinis' delivery. Soon after the right-handed batter lost his wicket, Imam, too, followed him to the pavilion for 70 runs. Pakistan were 154-2 in 23.4 overs and were in dire need of a big partnership to get back in the team but their skipper Babar Azam was removed by Adam Zampa just after scoring 18 runs courtesy of an excellent catch by Pat Cummins. The Green Shirts kept on losing wickets at regular intervals but after the arrival of Iftikhar Ahmed, it looked like Pakistan would get in the game once again as the 33-year-old started hitting boundaries. Adam Zampa provided the Aussies the much-needed breakthrough and removed Iftikhar and Mohammad Rizwan in back-to-back overs. The Green Shirts were all out for 305 runs in 45.3 overs. Batting first, Australia posted 367 runs on the scoreboard, recording the biggest total against Pakistan in the World Cup. Warner and Marsh formed a 259-run stand and created history as that was Australia's highest-ever opening stand in World Cup cricket. It was also the first time Pakistan conceded more than a 200-run partnership in World Cup cricket. The opening stand was also Australia's second-highest for any wicket ever and the second-highest by any team ever.

Briefs

Mongolia
boosts
financial
literacy with
nationwide
campaign

ULAN BATOR : Mongolia has launched a nationwide campaign to enhance public financial and economic awareness, particularly the awareness on the importance of saving money, the country's central bank said in a statement on Friday.

The annual campaign is being organized on the occasion of World Savings Day, which is celebrated every year on Oct. 31 worldwide, said Bank of Mongolia, the central bank of Mongolia. During the two-week campaign under the motto "Let's save money and build our future together," the central bank and other relevant organizations will organize various activities such as children's painting competitions, online contests, training sessions and meetings to empower citizens through financial literacy and make saving money a habit. The Asian country started marking World Savings Day in 2017. — Agencies

Sudan
fighting
threatens
thousands
of refugees

KHARTOUM : Fighting between the Sudanese army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) has spread south of Khartoum towards Gezira state, endangering the lives of thousands of people who have fled there from the capital. The conflict is also intensifying in South Kordofan state, where a large rebel force, the SPLM, that mobilised in June, has been relentlessly attacking army barracks, and in Darfur, where Arab militias backed by or affiliated to the RSF have been accused of conducting a brutal campaign of ethnic violence.

Across Sudan, school closures have affected about 20 million children. The RSF is understood to be actively recruiting older children from the southern outskirts of Khartoum, while the army has been recruiting young men and women from tribes in areas it controls in the north. Fighting between the army and the RSF erupted on 15 April over tensions linked to a planned transition to civilian rule.

Months after mediators suspended negotiations, there appears to be no clear winner and no end in sight to a war that has displaced more than 5.75 million people, killed thousands and destroyed major cities. The RSF is now attempting to move southwards towards Gezira state, a key agricultural area and population centre. Hundreds of thousands of people, as well as some government and humanitarian functions displaced from Khartoum, have moved there. —APP

Norma
weakens to
category 3
hurricane

Mexico City : Hurricane Norma weakened Thursday to a Category 3 storm as it headed for Mexico's Pacific coast — still strong enough to cause flash floods and damage, forecasters said. By 2100 GMT on Thursday, the tropical storm was downgraded by one category on the Saffir-Simpson Hurricane Wind Scale of the US National Hurricane Center (NHC), which grades hurricanes up to a maximum Category 5.

Norma was located about 265 miles (425 kilometers) west of Manzanillo in the western Mexican state of Colima, it said, with winds exceeding 125 miles (205 kilometers) per hour and stronger gusts. The storm was traveling northward towards the Baja California peninsula at a speed of about six miles per hour. "Some weakening is expected during the next few days, but Norma is forecast to be a hurricane when it moves near the southern portion of Baja California" by Friday night and Saturday, said the NHC. —Agencies



URUMQI: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar offers prayers in a local mosque. —DNA

Britain's Labour deals big
by-election blows to PM Sunak

Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's Conservatives, winning two previously safe parliamentary seats in victories leader Keir Starmer said showed voters wanted change at the next national election

NEWS DESK

LONDON : Britain's Labour Party dealt a crushing blow to Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's Conservatives, winning two previously safe parliamentary seats in victories leader Keir Starmer said showed voters wanted change at the next national election. The double defeat showed a big slump in support for the governing Conservatives, who have won the last four national votes, and suggests Labour is on course to win power for the first time since 2010 at an election expected next year. While so-called by-elections are often lost by the governing party, the scale of the defeat in two parliamentary seats the Conservatives have held for years

piles pressure on Sunak, who took over almost a year ago after his party became embroiled in scandals and chaos under previous leaders. Starmer, who has moved his Labour Party closer to the centre, said the votes showed Labour was the "party of the future". "It is clear that the voters here have turned their back on a failed Tory (Conservative) government. They've had enough of the decline of the last 13 years and they are crying out for change," he said, sharing the stage in Mid-Bedfordshire, an area about 50 miles (80 km) north of London, with his new lawmaker. Labour won Mid-Bedfordshire by overturning a majority of almost 25,000 — the biggest deficit the party has overcome in a by-election since 1945. It also overturned a large majority

in another former Conservative stronghold, Tamworth, a largely rural constituency in central England, with the party enjoying the second-highest swing from Conservatives since World War Two. Many Conservatives had already resigned themselves to losing the two votes. But several said Sunak still had time to try to claw back the substantial lead Starmer's party enjoys in the opinion polls. The Conservative party has only won one of the last 12 by-elections in this parliament, with half of the contests caused by resignations of politicians for misconduct. Greg Hands, the Conservatives' campaign chief, pointed to the low turnout, saying the Conservatives had to find a way to get their traditional supporters out to vote. "I didn't see

any enthusiasm for Labour," he said. Sunak, a 43-year-old former investment banker, has tried to cast himself as a bold reformer, no longer the cautious technocrat who restored some of Britain's credibility after scandals and chaos forced his two predecessors from office. But with voters angry over high inflation, economic stagnation and long waiting times to use the state-run health service, Sunak is running out of time to close the gap on Labour, which has enjoyed a double-digit poll lead over the Conservatives for over a year. In a speech at his party's conference this month, Sunak sought to cast himself as a tough decision maker who was focused on reviving the economy while meeting what he said were the public's demands of

watering down steps to reach climate change targets and tackling illegal immigration. The domestic measures have so far failed to change the polls but Sunak will hope that he can establish himself as a statesman before the next election. He is now in the Middle East where he is encouraging countries to avoid an escalation in the conflict between Israel and Hamas. One Conservative lawmaker said Sunak, and his finance minister Jeremy Hunt, needed a "radical rethink", urging the government to offer tax cuts to win over voters. The contests in Mid-Bedfordshire and Tamworth were caused by the resignations of politicians close to former Prime Minister Boris Johnson. Former minister Nadine Dorries resigned in a row over her failure to secure a role in the upper chamber of parliament.

Russia
decides on
detention of
us journalist

KAZAN : A Russian court said it would decide on Friday whether to place a Russian-American journalist in pre-trial detention for allegedly failing to register as a foreign agent. Alsu Kurmasheva was working for the US-funded Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty media outlet before she was detained by law enforcement officers in the Russian city of Kazan on Wednesday. The Sovetski court in Kazan said it would rule on a prosecutors' request that she be formally held in custody on charges that carry up to five years in jail. Kurmasheva is the second US journalist to be detained by Russia. Wall Street Journal reporter Evan Gershkovich was arrested in March for "spying" — a charge that he, his employer and the White House vehemently deny. Kurmasheva was working as an editor with the US outlet's Tatar-Bashkir service, her employer RFE/RL said. She was covering efforts to preserve the Tatar language despite "increased pressure on Tatars in recent years". Since launching full-scale hostilities against Ukraine in February 2022, Russia has engaged an unprecedented crackdown on independent journalism. Gershkovich was the first Western reporter to be jailed on spying charges in Russia since the Soviet era. A Moscow court earlier this month rejected an appeal against his detention and ordered that he be detained until the end of November. Kurmasheva lives in Prague, Czech Republic, but entered Russia on May 20 for a family emergency, according to the New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ). She was temporarily detained at Kazan airport on June 2 before her return flight. The United Nations human rights office said in a social media post it was "concerned" by Kurmasheva's detention. "Journalists must be left to do their vital work free from pressure, intimidation and reprisals," it said. —Agencies

UN Rights Chief:
Women's reproductive
rights unfinished

UNITED NATIONS : UN Human Rights Chief Volker Turk called for progress on the 'unfinished agenda' of women's sexual and reproductive health rights at an event in Geneva to mark the 30th anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). Former Prime Minister, Shaheed Benazir Bhutto, was among the world leaders who attended that watershed conference, held in Cairo. It adopted a Programme of Action promising that women and girls must have the power to make decisions about their own lives, their bodies and their futures. In a statement issued in Geneva, Turk commended the "leaps" made during the past three decades which include a reduction in deaths during pregnancy, and "substantial investments" in healthcare, education and social services. Many people are also living longer, healthier lives. "But this is an unfinished agenda," he said. "Alongside the progress, we have seen regression." Turk pointed to "patchy implementation" of the principles laid out in the Programme of Action in many parts of the world. "Gender equality backlash is spreading, denying women and girls autonomy, the capacity to choose their futures or their roles within families and households, and silencing their voices," he said. "Toxic masculinity — and misogyny — have inflamed and normalized hate." Additionally, COVID-19, conflict and economic downturns have also disproportionately affected women and girls. Meanwhile, "babies don't stop being born during conflict or disaster, and people still get pregnant." Today, roughly 50,000 women are pregnant in Gaza, where health services are currently under attack it was pointed out. "The earthquake in western Afghanistan this month has rendered pregnant women there even more vulnerable, while women and girls in Ukraine still need access to life-saving sexual and reproductive health services." —DNA

Niger rulers claim ousted
president's tried to escape

About 1,400 soldiers were based in Niamey and in western Niger to combat fighters linked to Islamic State and al-Qaida, bringing with them fighter jets, drones, helicopters and armoured vehicles

ABUJA : Niger's military rulers say they have foiled an attempt by Mohamed Bazoum, the former president they ousted in a coup in July, to escape custody. "At around three in the morning, the ousted president Mohamed Bazoum and his family, his two cooks and two security elements, tried to escape from his place of detention," the regime's spokesperson, Amadou Abdramane, said on state television. The escape attempt failed and "the main actors and some of the accomplices" were arrested, he said in the broadcast on Thursday evening. An investigation has been launched. Abdramane said the escape plan had involved Bazoum getting to a hideout on the outskirts

of Niger's capital, Niamey. They had then planned to fly out on helicopters "belonging to a foreign power" towards Nigeria, he added, denouncing Bazoum's "irresponsible attitude". Since Bazoum was toppled by the military on 26 July, he has refused to resign. The former president was being held at his residence in the heart of the presidential palace with his wife, Haziza, and son, Salem. Abdramane did not say where they were being held now. In September, Bazoum's lawyers said he had filed a legal case with a court of the Economic Community of West African States against those who deposed him. They also said they were taking his case to the UN human rights council. The army

officers who overthrew Bazoum cited as justification the deteriorating security situation in Niger because of jihadist attacks. Niger is battling two jihadist insurgencies: a spillover in the southeast from a long-running conflict in neighbouring Nigeria; and an offensive in the west by militants crossing from Mali and Burkina Faso. At the start of the month, Niger held three days of national mourning after 29 soldiers were killed in a suspected jihadist attack, the deadliest since the military took power in July. The first group of French soldiers, ordered out of Niger by its post-coup military rulers, arrived on Thursday by road in N'Djamena, the capital of neighbour-

ing Chad. The convoy "has arrived without any particular problems" in N'Djamena after 10 days on the road and in coordination with Nigerian forces, the French military spokesperson, Pierre Gaudillière, told AFP. The troops will depart by air from Chad to France, with the withdrawal expected to be completed by the end of December. About 1,400 soldiers were based in Niamey and in western Niger to combat fighters linked to Islamic State and al-Qaida, bringing with them fighter jets, drones, helicopters and armoured vehicles. France has supported Bazoum since the coup and is calling for his release, as are several other countries and organisations. — Agencies

Merck
announce
\$22bn cancer
drug deal

TOKYO : Shares in Japan's Daiichi Sankyo soared on Friday after the pharma group announced a cancer drug deal with Merck worth up to \$22 billion. Under the agreement announced by both firms, US giant Merck will pay Daiichi for the rights to three cancer drugs in development. Daiichi shares briefly surged as much as 18 percent on the announcement and at midday were up 12.9 percent at 4,041.00 yen. The deal will combine Daiichi's expertise and technology with Merck's "deep experience in oncology and clinical development capabilities... for patients across multiple types of cancer", a joint statement said. The companies will jointly develop and potentially commercialise the three drugs worldwide, except in Japan where Daiichi will maintain exclusive rights. —APP

EU addresses security concerns amid Israel-Hamas war

The European Union began taking steps to limit the impact of the war between Israel and Hamas on the bloc, amid heightened security tensions after a firebomb attack

FOREIGN DESK

BRUSSELS: The European Union began taking steps to limit the impact of the war between Israel and Hamas on the bloc, amid heightened security tensions after a firebomb attack on a Berlin synagogue and killings in Belgium and France by suspected Islamic extremists. Spain, which currently holds the EU's rotating presidency, activated a crisis mechanism to speed up decision-making and coordination between the 27 member countries, the bloc's institutions and major partners like the United Nations or the United States. Officials from across the EU have expressed concerns about a rise in antisemitic attacks, radicalization online, the use of encrypted messaging services by extremists, and the need to speed

up the deportation of people who might pose a public danger. But calls for an increase in security across the board are creating deep unease as the solutions being discussed could undermine free movement and the right to assemble in Europe. Italy is introducing border checks to counter a possible rise in tensions over the Israel-Hamas war. Denmark and Sweden are too, due to what they have said is a terrorist threat. France intends to keep checks in place until at least May 2024, citing "new terrorist threats and external borders situation." More police have been deployed in Belgium, France and Germany. EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell believes part of the solution to Europe's security woes must involve the bloc helping diplomatically and financially to bring an end to years of conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. "We have learned

from history that the most difficult decisions are always taken when we are on the edge of the abyss. I believe that is where we are now: on the edge of the abyss," Borrell told EU lawmakers on Wednesday. "When I hear Muslim religious authorities speaking the language of inter-religious conflict and explicitly stating that Europe is a party to this conflict, I feel that the storm clouds are looming," he said. Still, not all of Europe's challenges are directly linked to the war. Earlier on Thursday, Sweden hosted a meeting of ministers from eight countries, among them Germany, Belgium and France, focused on how to handle incidents where people burn the Muslim holy book, the Qur'an. Prosecutors are trying to establish whether that was a key motive for a Tunisian man to shoot three Swedes in Brussels on Monday, killing two of them, ahead of

a Belgium-Sweden soccer match in the capital. While the Qur'an burnings are not directly linked to the conflict between Israel and Hamas, they are a sign of rising tensions between religious and other communities in Europe. The war that began Oct. 7 has become the deadliest of five Gaza wars for both sides. More than 5,000 people have been killed in Israel and Gaza. Nearly 12,500 Palestinians have been wounded, and over 200 people in Israel taken hostage. "We have to address multiple impacts from the continuing crisis in the Middle East" in the EU, European Commission Vice President Margaritis Schinas said. "This entails the protection of our Jewish communities, but also the protection against a generalized climate of Islamophobia that has no place in our society," he told reporters in Luxembourg, where

EU interior ministers were meeting. Pro-Palestinian rallies have been held in several European cities since the war. France has banned them. Germany has also promised to take tougher action against Hamas, which is already on the EU's list of terrorist organizations. Chancellor Olaf Scholz told the German parliament that local authorities "must not allow gatherings ... at which it must be feared that antisemitic slogans will be shouted, that people's deaths will be glorified and everything we can't accept here." In France, the Palace of Versailles — a major tourist attraction — and three airports were evacuated for security reasons and temporarily closed Wednesday. The incidents were the latest in a spate of evacuations in the past five days, and the French government is threatening to fine or jail prank callers.

Briefs

Sharif's wife files lawsuit against Kenyan police

NAIROBI: Slain journalist Arshad Sharif's wife has registered a case against the Kenyan Elite police unit for her husband's murder in Kenya. Javeria Siddique in her petition has made the attorney general of Kenya, national police service of the country and the director public prosecution respondents. She has urged that the officers involved in Sharif's murder be put on trial and be punished for their crime. She urged the court to issue directives to the Kenyan attorney general (AG) to apologise to Sharif's family within seven days of court's orders, admit facts, accept responsibility and issue a written apology at public level. Sharif's widow, while confirming the filing of the case, said: "I have got a case registered in Nairobi for seeking justice in murder case of my husband. We got the case registered against general service unit of Kenya because they committed crime publicly and then admitted it was matter of mistaken identity. But to me it was targeted murder. But Kenyan government never apologised. They never contacted us." The registration of the case comes after it was reported the five Kenyan police officers who were involved in the killing quietly resumed their duties without any action taken against them. - Agencies

Govt to only finance important projects for provinces

ISLAMABAD: The Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC) has decided to only finance extremely important development projects in the provinces with 50% of funds allocated by the federal government and provinces each. The Planning Ministry has, meanwhile, identified all the Public Sector Development Programmes (PSDP) listed projects to be presented before the Cabinet Committee on Economic Revival (CCER) with its aims to scrap all such schemes and save Rs314 billion under the austerity drive. Finance Minister Dr Shamsud Akhtar, following her return from Morocco where she is attending the annual meetings of the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), will be chairing the CCER meeting. "The exercise to abandon the provincial nature projects from PSDP list is underway," a top government official said on Thursday. It was decided in the last SIFC's Apex Committee meeting that development projects of provincial nature would only be executed in the future through the cost-sharing of 50%:50% of funds borne by both the Centre and provinces.

IMF comes up with another stringent demand

ISLAMABAD: The IMF has proposed strict austerity measures for Pakistan's development budget as the global lender raises concerns about the allocation of funds for new projects in the ongoing financial year. In response to the IMF's austerity conditions, the authorities are considering stopping funds for new development projects. The IMF suggests that Pakistan's caretaker government should allocate funds for ongoing projects, especially those near completion, instead of starting new ones. As a result, the relevant authorities will need to reassess their development project priorities. It's essential to note that the global lender has no objections to providing funds for districts affected by recent floods in Pakistan. Additionally, the IMF has urged Pakistan to "immediately raise" gas tariffs to address losses and circular debt in the gas sector. - DNA

'Muslims Don't Matter'

Former UK minister laments Islamophobia in British society

"We are a liberal democracy with a long and proud history, we demean ourselves by adopting a totalitarian approach to a section of our fellow citizens, British Muslims. We undermine our stated values, and we appear as hypocrites"

LONDON: Over a decade after her "Islamophobia has passed the dinner table test" speech in government, Baroness Warsi, a former UK minister, has made a keynote intervention - "Muslims Don't Matter: the silencing, stereotyping and stigmatising of Muslims by the British press and political parties". In her speech delivered at the University of Leeds Thursday evening, she meticulously referenced polling, policy decisions and the handling of high-profile events including the current conflict in the Middle East as examples of how British Muslims are held to higher standards than other fellow citizens. She argued this is creating a climate of fear within a community of nearly four million. Urging the end of culture wars, she urged policymakers to change course to avoid potentially catastrophic outcomes. In her speech Warsi said: "This week is Hate Crime Awareness Week and recently published government figures on hate crime once again show in the year ending March 2023, a rise in religiously motivated hate crime and once again Muslims are the most targeted religious group (where the perceived religion of the victim was recorded, 2 in 5 (39%) of religious hate crime offences were targeted against Muslims (3,452 offences)."

In referencing the treatment of British Muslim communities in the political sphere, she argued: "There is a particular irony to this political struggle because, on the one hand, the government insists on the observance of 'Fundamental British Values' but when Muslims challenge actions that detract from our commitment to rule of law for example with torture and rendition, or challenge actions that undermine democracy, in speaking up for freedom of speech or freedom of association, or challenge actions that undermine respect and tolerance by calling out Institution-



al Islamophobia, or challenge actions that undermine individual liberty - when Muslims apply these Fundamental British Values in their participation in wider society, they are demonised, marginalised, excluded from political arenas and treated as outcasts. "We are a liberal democracy with a long and proud history, we demean ourselves by adopting a totalitarian approach to a section of our fellow citizens, British Muslims. We undermine our stated values, and we appear as hypocrites." Continuing to fight the battle to rid her party of Islamophobia, she challenged the Labour Party not to partake in a race to the bottom and urged mainstream politics to remain a place where British Muslims are authentically heard. On this, she stated: "And only this week we see reports of the Labour Party banning its councillors and members of Parliament from attending

pro-Palestinian marches not others, despite having spent months before the recess fighting the government to protect the right to protest in the Public Order Act." She asked fellow Brits who believe in equality and fairness to join British Muslims. "I ask you to join what is in effect a Muslim civil rights movement, a demand to belong, to be a part, to play our part, to have the same rights and freedoms as others, to be heard, to have the right to be heard, for our citizenship to be worth the same as everyone else's, to be treated equally under the law." Referencing the fallout of the Dan Wootton controversy, the Farage de-banking debacle and the ongoing fight to define Islamophobia, the former minister sounded the alarm by warning if the climate of hate towards the Muslim communities continues, it could pave the way for a nation where the dehumanisation, attacks and othering of Muslim communities become a normal fabric of British society. However, she ended on an optimistic note by saying the good in both society and British Muslim communities has always prevailed and will do so. Baroness Warsi emphasised this whilst speaking about her family's personal experiences. "My grandfather fought Hitler's armies as part of the British Indian Army, they did not give their blood and sweat for the freedoms we have today for their descendants to be stereotyped, stigmatised and silenced," she said. The UK leader added that her forefathers fought for Britain, helped build its industries and infrastructure, added colour, sounds and wonderful flavours to the rich tapestry of its culture and as a young and growing community, "British Muslims are once again providing the workforce, entrepreneurs, and international networks to, if I may repurpose a phrase for good." - Agencies

Kamran Bangash arrested in Peshawar

DNA

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader and former Khyber Pakhtunkhwa minister Kamran Khan Bangash was arrested from Peshawar's Chamkani area on Friday, police officials said. They said the PTI leader had been shifted to the Chamkani police station. On Wednesday, the Peshawar High Court had expressed annoyance over the repeated arrests of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leaders and the harassment of their family members. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chief secretary and police chief had assured the court that such a thing would not happen in future, and that they would approach the court if any PTI leader's arrest was required. It is important to mention here that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf leader Kamran Bangash is also facing NAB cases.

LHC orders immediate release of teachers

DNA

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Friday declared null and void the detention of 114 teachers across the province, ordering their release on immediate basis. Justice Shakeel Ahmad heard the case and Advocate Malik Aziz Awan gave arguments during the hearing. The judge after hearing the arguments ordered to release teachers. On Thursday, the court, hearing petitions against the detentions, had ordered the jail superintendent to produce five teachers in the court. Dozens of teachers were taken into custody after they protested against leave encashment issue and "privatisation" of public sector schools. In reaction to detentions, teachers have also threatened to boycott examination duties, saying they will abstain from duty during the intermediate exams starting from October 20. They have also announced to boycott paper setting exercise and practical examination duty later.

GCC, ASEAN leaders call for permanent ceasefire in Gaza



NEWS DESK

RIYADH: Gulf and ASEAN leaders have issued a statement calling all parties involved in the Gaza conflict to implement a permanent ceasefire, and condemned the attacks on civilians in the Palestinian enclave. Summit leaders also called for much-needed delivery of humanitarian aid, relief supplies and other essential necessities and services to Gaza. In their statement, the leaders urged parties to the conflict to protect civilians, to refrain from targeting them and to adhere to international humanitarian law, especially the principles and provisions of the Geneva Convention regarding the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. The statement all called for the immediate and unconditional release of hostages and civilian detainees, especially women, children, the sick and the elderly, and urged all parties to work towards reaching a peaceful solution to

the conflict. The leaders of the two regional blocs also expressed their support to revive the Middle East peace process, and to resolve the conflict between Israel and its neighbors in accordance with international law. The regional leaders also agreed on the Framework of Cooperation 2024-2028, aiming to further strengthen partnership and cooperation to realize the potential for growing cooperation between both sides. Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman earlier reiterated the Kingdom's support for efforts to reach a just solution to the Palestinian cause in his opening speech at the summit. The crown prince also said that he was 'saddened' by the escalating violence in Gaza, for which innocent people were paying the price, and firmly rejected the targeting of civilians. Indonesian President Joko Widodo, who led the 10-nation ASEAN this year, in his opening statement also called for an end in the violence in Gaza in accordance with international laws.

Abbas to attend Cairo peace summit

CAIRO: Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas will be among international leaders to participate in the Cairo summit for peace on Saturday. Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa and Kuwait's Crown Prince Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah also confirmed their presence in Cairo. French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna, European Council President Charles Michel and EU's top diplomat Josep Borrell have confirmed their presence in the meeting, which will discuss the Palestinian-Israeli issue, according to reports. Colonna had already travelled to Cairo, Beirut and Israel last week as Paris looks to reduce the risk of an escalation across the region. Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis and Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni will also participate in the peace summit, government sources told Reuters. South African President Cyril Ramaphosa confirmed his attendance to discuss the conflict in Israel and the Gaza Strip, his office said. "President Ramaphosa has been deeply concerned by attacks on civilians, the resulting enormous loss of life, displacement of people and the humanitarian crisis that has engulfed the Gaza Strip," South Africa's presidency said in a statement on Friday. "South Africa stands ready to join the global effort that will bring about lasting peace to the Middle East." The other attendees expected so far are Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulidis, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock, Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa and British foreign minister James Cleverly. The summit, which was called by Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, aims to de-escalate the violence in Gaza, help reach a ceasefire and arrive at a just solution for the Palestinian issue. Israel has intensified its bombardment on Gaza over the two weeks, killing at least 3,800 people and wounding more than 13,000. Calls for peace have intensified as Gaza prepares to receive long-awaited aid after an agreement to open Rafah border crossing. - Agencies

41 Canadian diplomats exit India amid murder row

NEW DELHI: Canada announced on Thursday that it has withdrawn 41 of its diplomats from India, marking a significant deterioration in bilateral relations. The withdrawal comes as a result of an ongoing dispute regarding the killing of a Sikh separatist on Canadian soil. Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly confirmed the move and disclosed that New Delhi had threatened to revoke diplomatic immunity for all but 21 of Canada's diplomats and their families by Friday, thereby compelling Ottawa to recall the remaining personnel. "We have facilitated their safe departure from India," Joly said. "This means that our diplomats and their families have now left." Tensions between the two nations have been on the rise since Canada publicly linked Indian intelligence to the murder of Canadian citizen Hardeep Singh Nijjar near Vancouver in June. Nijjar was a vocal advocate for a separate Sikh state, often referred to as Khalistan, carved out of India. Canada has demanded India's cooperation in the investigation, but New Delhi has

vehemently denied the allegations and taken retaliatory measures, including the suspension of visa services for Canadians. Additionally, Ottawa recently expelled an Indian diplomat in response to the issue. Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, speaking in New York last month, expressed India's willingness to examine any evidence presented by Canada. He also noted, "We have actually been badgering the Canadians. We've given them loads of information about organized crime leadership which operates out of Canada," referring to Sikh separatist elements. Furthermore, Jaishankar pointed out that Indian diplomats have been threatened, Indian consulates have been attacked, and comments have been made that constitute interference in Indian politics. The Sikh separatist movement, which seeks an independent state of Khalistan, has largely waned within India, where security forces used deadly force to quell the insurgency in the 1980s. However, Canada is home to a substantial Sikh population of approximately 770,000, constituting about two percent of the country's population. Within this community, a vocal faction continues to advocate for the creation of Khalistan. Last month, hundreds of Sikh protesters rallied outside Indian diplomatic missions in Canada, igniting tensions further by burning flags and trampling on pictures of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Joe Hotha, a member of the Sikh community in Toronto, voiced concerns, saying, "We are not safe back home in Punjab, we are not safe in Canada." - DNA

China has sharply expanded nuclear arsenal, US says

WASHINGTON: China has significantly expanded its nuclear stockpile over the past year and is now holding some 500 operational warheads, the US has said. An annual report released by the Pentagon also said Beijing hoped to double its arsenal to over 1,000 warheads by 2030. But it said China remained committed to a "no-first-strike" nuclear policy. While the report said the rise exceeded projections, China's stockpile is still dwarfed by those of Russia and the US. Russia has a nuclear arsenal of some 5,889 warheads and the US can field 5,244, according to the independent Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. In 2021 the US Department of Defense estimated China had around 400 warheads. "We're not trying to suggest a very large departure from where they [China] looked to be headed... but we are suggesting that they're on track to exceed those previous projections," a senior Pentagon official told reporters on Thursday, adding that the issue raised "a lot of concerns" for the US. President Xi Jinping has declared China will field a "world-class military" by 2049. Since he came to power in 2012, he has sought to modernise the country's armed forces. Thursday's Pentagon report said that China's drive to boost its nuclear arsenal was set to "dwarf previous attempts in both scale and complexity". US officials said Beijing had probably completed the construction of three new clusters

of missile sites in 2022. These fields include at least 300 new Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBMs) silos, the report said. ICBMs are ballistic missiles with a range greater than 5,500km (3,400 miles). China's People's Liberation Army has also been seeking to develop ICBMs that would allow it "to threaten conventional strikes against targets in the continental US, Hawaii and Alaska", the US report found. The analysis said that despite the growth of its nuclear stockpile, China remained "committed to a policy of 'deterrence' of an enemy first strike and 'counterstrike' when deterrence fails". In a press briefing on Friday, foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said the US report "is full of prejudice and spreads the theory of the threat posed by China". Ms Mao added that China had "always maintained our nuclear forces at the lowest level required for national security, and we have no intention of engaging in a nuclear arms race with any country". Henry Boyd of Henry Boyd International Institute for Strategic Studies told the BBC the reported rate of increase did not look "hugely exceptional". He also conceded that China was "moving slightly faster than estimated" towards its stated goal of 1,000 warheads. Lyle Morris, a senior fellow at the Asia Society Policy Institute, told the BBC that developments such as hypersonic missiles were making China reconsider its second-strike policy, forcing the expansion of its stockpile. - Agencies

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