



Islamabad POST

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Pak-Baku discuss military coop as COAS meets Aliyev

Detailed News On Page-08

Kamala Harris urges action on AI threats

Detailed News On Page-07



Shaheen Afridi becomes No. 1 ODI bowler

Detailed News On Page-06



Faizabad sit-in

CJP wants to know who was the mastermind

Supreme Court rejects govt's fact-finding committee on Faizabad sit-in; wants govt to form a commission and devise new Terms of Reference (TORs)

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan Wednesday rejected the government's fact-finding committee, ordering the Attorney-General for Pakistan, Mansoor Usman Awan, to form a new inquiry commission soon pertaining to the implementation of the apex court verdict in the Faizabad sit-in case. The fact-finding committee was constituted by the government, on Friday, to investigate the "role and directions" of all "concerned" officials in the management and handling of the sit-in in 2017 staged by the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan against the then-Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) government.

The orders for a new inquiry commission came during the hearing of a set of petitions against the February 6, 2019, judgement in the Faizabad dharna case. On February 6, 2019, the SC bench comprising the now-Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Qazi Faez Isa and Justice Mushir Alam, ruled that the intelligence agencies must not exceed their respective mandates. Multiple pleas challenging the SC verdict on the Faizabad sit-in were filed by the federal government, Ministry of Defence, the Pakistan Electronic Media Regulatory Authority (Pemra),

Former ISI chief was behind dharna, says Khawaja Asif

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: PML N leader and former Defence Minister Khawaja Asif has said that former ISI chief Lt. Gen @ Faiz Hameed was behind the Faizabad dharna. While speaking a TV talk show Khawaja Asif said that there was no doubt that Gen Faiz masterminded the dharna and encouraged the religious group to stage a sit-in. It was the former ISI chief who then signed the agreement and even paid off the protestors.

the Intelligence Bureau (IB), the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), Pakistan Tehreek-Insaf (PTI) and others. However, most of the petitioners retracted their applications recently, prompting the CJP Isa to ask "why is everyone so afraid to speak the truth". "Is it a joke to file a revision petition and withdraw it?" CJP Isa remarked

during the hearing. The court dismissed review pleas filed by the IB, PTI, the defence ministry, MQM and Ijazul Haq for withdrawal. It also issued notices to Sheikh Rashid over failure to appear in court and adjourned the hearing till November 15. A three-member SC bench comprising the CJP Isa, Justice Aminuddin Khan and Justice Athar Minallah heard the petitions challenging the ruling. During the hearing today, the top judge said the apex court wanted to know who was behind the Faizabad sit-in. "We want to know who was the mastermind of the Faizabad sit-in," he remarked, expressing annoyance over the decision not being implemented since its issuance in 2019. The chief justice, during the hearing, questioned what the incumbent government was doing on the implementation of the SC's decision in the sit-in case. "No one cares about this country," CJP Isa remarked, while Justice Minallah said that the county is only for the elites and has been occupied by them for the last 70 years. Taking a jibe at the government's non-seriousness towards the case, CJP Isa said the court will close the case if the government asks it to do so. "We will again wait for another tragedy like Faizabad to take place.

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SELF-DEFENCE FORCES DAY OF JAPAN



ISLAMABAD: Chief Guest Lt Gen Sarfraz Ahmed, HI(M), Federal Information Minister Murtaza Solangi, Ambassador of Japan WADA Mitsuhiro, Defense Attaché, Colonel ABE Kazuo and others cutting cake to celebrate the Japan Self-Defence Forces Day 2023. - DNA

Japanese self Defence forces Day celebrated

Ambassador WADA says pleased to see the progress in defense exchanges

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Japan to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, WADA Mitsuhiro and Mrs. WADA Naoko hosted a reception on Wednesday, November 1st, 2023, to celebrate the 69th anniversary of the Japan Self-Defence Forces (JSDF) Day. Defense Attaché, Colonel ABE Kazuo represented the Japan Self-Defence Forces (JSDF) at the Embassy. Lt Gen Sarfraz Ahmed, HI(M), was the chief guest on the occasion, while Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi, Federal Health and Minorities ministers

6 terrorists killed in Zhob operation

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Security forces have killed six terrorists in an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in the Sambaza area of Balochistan's Zhob district, the military's media wing said Wednesday. The operation took place on the night between October 31 and November 1, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement. During the operation, an intense fire exchange took place between own troops and terrorists,

Continued on Page 06

Bolivia, others expel Israeli envoys

Hamas pitches 2-state solution as Israeli aggression continues

The death toll includes 3,648 children while 22,219 people have been wounded, a health ministry statement said

NEWS DESK

GAZA: Head of the Hamas's political office, Ismail Haniyeh said Wednesday that they are ready to negotiate a two-state solution with Al-Quds as the capital of Palestine. Ismail Haniyeh has called on the mediators to stop Israel's ongoing aggression adding that Israel has begun ground operations in the Gaza Strip. He added that Palestinians in the Gaza Strip are fighting the Israeli forces on all fronts and that they will disclose the real losses of the Israeli forces soon. Hostages in the Gaza Strip are facing the same atrocities that the Gazans face every day, added Hania.

Continued on Page 06

Pak to continue to support Palestinians

KHAYAM ABBASI

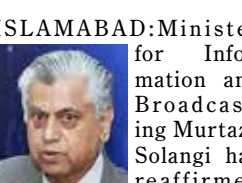
ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Foreign Minister Jilil Abbas Jilani while reaffirming Pakistan's unwavering support for Palestine, on Wednesday said Pakistan always supported the people of Palestinians and would continue to stand by them in future as well. Winding up debate on the motion regarding

Continued on Page 06

Briefs

Entire nation stands with Palestine

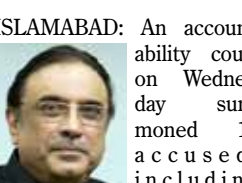
DNA



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Murtaza Solangi has reaffirmed Pakistan's firm support for the right to self-determination of the people of Palestine. Speaking in the Senate on Tuesday, he said Pakistan has always raised its voice for the Palestinian cause. The Information Minister said Pakistan has a principled position on Palestine issue and there is no change in it. He said Israeli state cannot survive, if the Palestinians are deprived of the two-state solution. He emphasized that there will be no peace without justice.

AC summons Asif Zardari

DNA



ISLAMABAD: An accountability court on Wednesday summoned 15 accused, including former president Asif Ali Zardari, for appearance on December 18 in the Thatta water supply reference. Former president Zardari, Ejaz Ahmad Khan, and others are accused of awarding contract of Thatta water supply scheme to Harish & Company in violation of rules and regulations. Judge Muhammad Bashir issued summons and directed all the accused to ensure their presence on next date of hearing. Those who have been issued summons include former secretary Ijaz Ahmad Khan, Ali Akbar, Ijaz Memon, Ali Akbar Abro, Khawaja Abdul Ghani Majeed, Manahil Majeed and Abdul Nadeem Bhattu.

Crackdown begins against illegal migrants

Many held in twin-cities; those facing trials or in prison will not be repatriated

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Authorities on Wednesday launched a crackdown on illegal immigrants across the country as the deadline for undocumented foreigners expired a day earlier, while thousands of illegal Afghan migrants have voluntarily returned to Afghanistan. Undocumented foreigners in different parts of the country including Karachi, Rawalpindi and others are being detained and moved to holding centres before being repatriated to their respective countries. Caretaker Interior Minister Sarfraz Bugti on Tuesday announced that the government would start a crackdown on undocumented immigrants, including hundreds of thousands of Afghan nationals, from Thursday (November 2). "Only two days are left for a voluntary return," Bugti said in a video-recorded statement, adding that the November 1 deadline set for the voluntary return will expire on Wednesday. Pakistan is home to more than 4 million Afghan migrants and refugees, about 1.7 million of them undocumented,

Continued on Page 06

Pakistan stands at the crossroads: Imran Khan

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan made it clear that Pakistan stood at the crossroads; therefore, the legal fraternity must start and lead a movement for upholding the rights of the people of the country, foremost their fundamental right to vote, to choose their leaders and to define their future themselves. PTI Chairman, in his message to the nation, "It is the fiduciary duty of the judiciary and the lawyers to protect the Constitution, upon which rests the progress of our nation." He called upon: "Therefore, the legal fraternity must start and lead a movement for

Continued on Page 06

Newly-appointed envoys present credentials to President Arif Alvi

President denounces use of brutal force against innocent Palestinians



ISLAMABAD: Envoys of Jordan, Holy See, Czech Republic, Brunei and Qatar presenting credentials to the President of Pakistan Dr. Arif Alvi. - DNA

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has denounced the use of brutal force against innocent Palestinians, and called for the lifting of the siege and opening of a humanitarian corridor for Palestinians. He said that Pakistan was

seriously concerned at the incessant Israeli aggression against civilians, which had killed thousands of people including women, children, and elderly. He stressed that the international community should condemn the continued Israeli aggression in Gaza. He stated that Pakistan stood for a total withdrawal of Israel from all occupied

Arab territories, including Jerusalem, as well as the establishment of an independent homeland for Palestinians with Al-Quds Sharif as its capital. The President gave these remarks during a presentation of diplomatic credentials ceremony held at Aiwan-e-Sadr, today.

Continued on Page 06

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CPEC airport project boosts Baluchistan tourism

PTDC will establish a tourist information center at the airport to provide them with comprehensive information about hotels, tourist sites, and all other basic information

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD : Pakistan's southwest Balochistan province has the potential to become a hub of domestic and international tourism after the inauguration of the New Gwadar International Airport, a donation by the Chinese government under the framework of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a Pakistani official said. "In recent years, Balochistan has experienced a notable surge in domestic tourism and with the commencement of the airport operations, geographical distances are expected to diminish, paving the way for an influx of tourists into Gwadar and its surrounding regions," Managing Director of Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) Aftab ur Rehman Rana said in an interview with Xinhua. To facilitate tourism, the PTDC will establish a tourist information center at the airport to provide them with comprehensive information about hotels, tourist sites, and all other basic information, the officer said. He added that in order to tap the potential of the airport, the Balochistan Coastal Development Authority has made a master plan, and marked the areas along the coast on which tour-

ist sites will be developed. Balochistan boasts a stunning coastal stretch, and there are ongoing efforts to develop eco-tourism resorts, beach parks, floating jetties, and relaxation spots along this coastline to cater to both domestic and international tourists, including those visiting Gwadar for business reasons," Rana added. Talking about the security of the tourists, he said that in the initial stage, group tourism will be permitted, primarily driven by security considerations. "Tourists will be required to share their travel plans with a dedicated tourism police force, which will be established to enhance safety and support tourism activities. During this phase, tourists will receive security provisions as they travel in organized groups," Rana said. Subsequently, in the second phase, individual tourists will have the opportunity to explore the area independently when tourism becomes more common, and a comprehensive security plan is established in the area, he added. Lauding CPEC for playing a great role in promoting tourism in his country, Rana said that its road network passes almost through the whole of Pakistan, and all major tourism sites are around the CPEC route. In recent

years, Pakistan's domestic tourism has boomed, and CPEC is the major driving factor behind it because it enhanced connectivity and made road travel easy and shorter for the tourists," he added. The officer said that they are currently engaged in discussions with Chinese tour operators to attract China's outbound tourists and business professionals to Pakistan. In line with these efforts, a group of tour operators from China recently visited Pakistan, and a delegation of Pakistani tour operators is scheduled to visit China to participate in the China Outbound Travel and Tourism Market exhibition in November, the PTDC officials said. "Pakistan has a great business potential in the tourism sector, and if Chinese investors invest in building hotels and resorts in Pakistan, it will not only attract Chinese tourists to Pakistan but also uplift the overall tourism industry in the country," he added. Launched in 2013, CPEC, a flagship project of the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative, is a corridor linking Pakistan's Gwadar port with Kashgar in northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, highlighting energy, transport, and industrial cooperation.



ISLAMABAD: A high powered delegation led by the Ambassador of Republic of Turkiye to Pakistan H.E Mehmet Paçacı called on the Caretaker Federal Minister for Education and Professional Training, Madad Ali Sindhi at his office.—DNA

Kia announces another major cut in car prices

KARACHI : KIA Lucky Motors in Pakistan has announced another cut in the prices of their vehicles. Earlier this month, KIA Pakistan became the first local car company to announce a reduction in prices of its cars. The company decreased the rates of its different vehicles due to the appreciation of Pakistani rupee against the US dollar. In its statement then, the company stated the Kia is thrilled to share the benefits with its customers. This decision reflects Kia's commitment to delivering value and satisfaction to its loyal customer base. And now, the company has announced a second price reduction within a month. The new prices are effective from October 31, 2023. The prices of Kia Sorento and Kia Carnival have been reduced by Lucky Motors Corporation (LMC). It is pertinent to mention that the company has announced different price reductions on full payment and monthly installments. The previous price of Sorento 2.4L FWD on full payment was Rs10,300,00, and now it will cost Rs8,999,000, meaning there is a difference of Rs1,301,000. The price tag of the same car on equal monthly installment was Rs10,800,000, and after a decrease of Rs1,601,000, its new price is Rs9,199,000. On full payment, Sorento 2.4L AWD was available for Rs11,200,000.—APP

GP nominates Waqar as member of Syndicate of Chakwal University

DNA

ISLAMABAD : The Governor Punjab Muhammad Baligh ur Rehman Khan has nominated Waqar Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Chakwal Chamber of Commerce and Industry as the Person of Eminence and Member of the Syndicate of the University of Chakwal for a period of 3 years. The Higher Education Department of the Government of Punjab has issued a formal notification for the nomination of Waqar Bakhtawari as Member of the Syndicate of the University of Chakwal. Commenting on this development, Waqar Zafar Bakhtawari thanked the Governor Punjab Muhammad Baligh ur Rehman Khan for reposing



confidence in his abilities and nominating him for this prestigious position. He said that as member of the Syndicate of Chakwal University, he would contribute his best to raise the educational standards of the University of Chakwal to bring it at par with the top-ranking universities of Pakistan. Waqar Bakhtawari said

that Pakistan is a country of very young population and by providing the youth with the high-quality education, this great asset can be transformed into a huge dividend for the country to drive it on the fast economic growth. He said that he would specifically focus on promoting entrepreneurship in youth so that they could start their own business and contribute more effectively to the economic development of the country. He was of the view that the induction of qualified persons from the private sector in the executive body of universities would be helpful in improving the educational standards and turning universities into the centers of excellence for the youth.

PIA gets Rs550 million from Religious Ministry

DNA

KARACHI : Pakistan International Airlines (PIA), which is facing acute financial crisis these days, has received Rs550 million from the Ministry of Religious Affairs. In this connection, the ministry officials have handed a cheque to the airline's representative. Sources said that the ministry had to pay the amount to the airline under the head of Hajj flight operation. But since the post of secretary in the ministry had been lying vacant since the transfer of Dr. Aftab Ahmed Durrani to the Ministry of Interior on September 18, it could not make payments to different airlines, they disclosed. Sources further said that the national flag carrier had paid 95 per cent of the total amount, while the remaining five per cent was paid in the last few days. They revealed that the PIA had to suffer a loss of over Rs8 billion due to the cancellation of 340 flights in 11 days on account of non-supply of fuel.

WASA to get new machinery before June 2024

MULTAN: Deputy Commissioner, Rizwan Qadeer on Wednesday said that the new machinery would be provided to Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) to improve its system before June 2024. He expressed these views during his visit to the agency's head office here. Managing Director WASA Chaudhary Danish gave briefing on WASA recovery and performance. The DC said that the WASA had been given a special task to resolve sewerage problems and providing clean drinking water in the city Punjab government has provided ample funds to WASA in that regard. He directed WASA officials to complete development projects and restore the roads immediately.—APP

Punjab declares smog emergency

CM Naqvi advised the provincial ministers to undertake visits to both government and private schools starting tomorrow to ensure compliance with the mask mandate

DNA

LAHORE : In a critical move to address the worsening smog crisis, a smog emergency has been officially declared across the province of Punjab on Wednesday. This sweeping measure was announced by Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi following a comprehensive meeting that brought together provincial ministers, top officials, environmental experts, and health specialists. At the meeting, environmental and health experts provided insights on combating the smog and outlined preventative measures to mitigate its adverse effects. Notably, experts expressed

scepticism about the effectiveness of school closures and transport shutdowns as viable solutions to the issue. One of the immediate actions taken is the imposition of a mandatory mask rule for all students, encompassing both government and private schools, to safeguard their health. Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi urged the general public to also make use of masks to protect themselves. CM Naqvi advised the provincial ministers to undertake visits to both government and private schools starting tomorrow to ensure compliance with the mask mandate. The CM said measures are being put in place to penalize those who fail to adhere to smog-reduction protocols,

including proper disposal of construction materials and crop residue. To further address the crisis, the chief minister ordered the withdrawal of challans (fines) against farmers during the smog season, emphasizing the need for responsible disposal of crop residue. Furthermore, efforts to curb smog-emitting vehicles and factories will continue without exception. Provincial Ministers SM Tanveer, Dr Javed Akram, Aamir Mir, Mansoor Qadir, Ibrahim Murad, Inspector General Police Dr Usman, Additional Chief Secretary Interior, and secretaries from various departments and other officials attended the meeting.

Commitment ready to clean Rawalpindi city: RCCI

DNA

RAWALPINDI: President Chamber of Commerce and Industry Rawalpindi and Chairman WMC Saqib Rafiq along with the operational team visited Sarafa Bazar as part of the ongoing weekly cleaning campaign and reviewed the cleaning campaign and issued instructions to make the monitoring more effective by taking the business community along. Senior Vice President Muhammad Hamza Sarvosh, Vice President Faisal Shahzad were also with him. Saqib Rafiq instructed the supervisor to stay in touch with the representatives of the business community and make the monitoring system effective, clean the drains in the narrow streets and ensure zero waste. On this occasion, business representatives Sheikh Asif Idris, Fayyaz Qureshi, Tariq Mughal and others also gave

suggestions to Chamber President Saqib Rafiq regarding solutions to parking problems, cleanliness and traffic congestion. Earlier, Chairman RWMC Saqib Rafiq visited Purodhai

Union Council 7 and 8 Army Colony and reviewed the cleanliness drive. He also issued orders to the supervisor. He said that the cleaning campaign will continue till November 20. He said that

he is determined to make the city of Rawalpindi clean under Mission Clean Rawalpindi. Under the cleaning campaign, the city will be completely clean. To do and ensure zero waste.



FCCI ready to encouraging artists, artisans, students

The FCCI President said that different types of fine arts were deemed necessary to sensitize the heart and soul of people as a callous society could not survive

DNA

FAISALABAD: All segments of fine art should be exploited aggressively to reinvigorate the softness in existing dry and harsh society of Faisalabad and in this connection, the FCCI is ready to play its role by encouraging artists, artisans and students of this genus, said Dr. Khurram Tariq President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI). He stated this while talking to Muhammad Abrar Alam, Director Faisalabad Art Council

(FAC) who visited the FCCI along with his team. The FCCI President said that different types of fine arts were deemed necessary to sensitize the heart and soul of people as a callous society could not survive. He said: "We must make conscious efforts to revert back to the vibrant ethical, moral, social and cultural values of the east". He further said that Pakistan had religious sites for Buddhists. He particularly mentioned "Gul Mittho" in Hunza valley which is a sacred site for Buddha sect of Korea, but

we failed to promote this religious tourism. About a proposed musical festival during this month, Dr. Khurram Tariq said that local artists and singers must be given priority to express their talent in it. "The FAC can provide them a jumping pad to perform at the provincial and national level", he said and added that the event could be arranged immediately after the conclusion of "Loke Virsa" in Lahore. He also proposed a "Wall of Fame" in FAC to acknowledge and pay tribute to the legendary personalities of this area who

had excelled in any field of life. He said the Faisalabad Literary Festival could also be arranged in the month of December. He also stressed the need for organizing these events with innovative ideas instead of treading on the old bitten track. He also quoted literary sittings regularly held in Faisalabad after independence and said that it produced world fame singer Nusrat Fateh Ali Khan. He assured to assist different events organized in the FAC. He said the Art Council should also arrange events, in which local industrialists and busi-

ness community could also participate along with their family members in a cozy and placate environment. He also assured to ink an MOU for close collaboration between FCCI and FAC. Earlier, Abrar Alam explained in detail the aims and objectives of FAC and said that he had plans to infuse new spirit in the FAC in collaboration with the local communities with a dominating role of FCCI. Deputy Director Muhammad Inman Raza and FAC Assistant Director Asad Hayat were also present on the occasion.

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

NOVEMBER

Nov 01/Algeria National Day

Nov 04/Italy Armed Forces Day

Nov 07/Russian Federation Socialist Revolution

Nov 09/Cambodia National Day

Nov 11/Poland Independence Day

Nov 14/Jordan Birthday of King Hussein

Nov 15/Belgium Kings Day

Nov 15/Brazil Republic Day

Nov 15/Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus National Day

Nov 18/Oman National Day

Nov 18/Morocco Independence Day

Nov 21/Bangladesh Armed Forces Day

Nov 22/Lebanon Independence Day

Nov 25/Suriname National Day

Nov 28/Mauritania National Day

Nov 28/Albania Flags 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.....5611116
Cantt Hospital...9270907-11
DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666



Departments

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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

PRCS unveils 192 KV solar System at HQs

Chairman Laghari expressed his enthusiasm, stating, "This solarization project is a symbol of our commitment to a greener and more sustainable future"

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a groundbreaking move towards sustainable energy and the enhancement of humanitarian services, Chairman Pakistan Red Crescent Society Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari proudly inaugurated the 192 KV Solarization Project at the PRCS National Headquarters. Marking a significant leap forward in the organization's commitment to social responsibility and environmental stewardship, the solarization initiative not only demonstrates a pioneering step in green energy adoption but also underscores the PRCS's dedication to uplifting the National Society and advancing its humanitarian mission.

Under the visionary leadership of Chairman Laghari, the Pakistan Red Crescent Society has been on the forefront of transformative initiatives, contributing to the overall improvement of humanitarian service delivery. During his tenure, Chair-



man Laghari has spearheaded a series of strategic measures aimed at enhancing the welfare of PRCS staff, empowering them

through capacity building programs, and facilitating international training opportunities for both staff and volunteers.

The 192 KV Solarization Project stands as a testament to Chairman Laghari's forward-thinking approach, aligning the PRCS

with global efforts towards sustainability and environmental conservation. The solar panels, strategically installed at the National Headquarters, will not only reduce the carbon footprint but also result in long-term cost savings, allowing for redirected resources towards impactful humanitarian projects. Chairman Laghari expressed his enthusiasm, stating, "This solarization project is a symbol of our commitment to a greener and more sustainable future. By harnessing the power of the sun, we are not only reducing our environmental impact but also ensuring that our resources are directed towards initiatives that make a meaningful difference in the lives of those we serve." As the Pakistan Red Crescent Society continues to evolve under Chairman Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari's dynamic leadership, this latest milestone highlights the organization's dedication to innovation, sustainability, and, above all, serving humanity with passion and purpose.

Wafaqi Mohtasib constitutes inspection team for addressing complaints regarding CDA

ISLAMABAD: Taking cognizance of the large number of persistent complaints against the Capital Development Authority (CDA), Wafaqi Mohtasib, Ejaz Ahmad Qureshi constituted an inspection team to visit the Central Directorate of CDA to ascertain the status of its service delivery arrangements and suggest remedial measures. The inspection team is comprised of Senior Advisor Ahmad Farooq, Deputy Advisor Pervez Hameed and Senior Investigation Officer, Adnan Ahmad. The complaints were mostly about the traffic mess caused by the expansion work being carried out by CDA on the Park Road and Islamabad Expressway, depleted condition of roads and streets, defective sewerage system, delayed payments to contractors, substandard construction of infrastructure and delay in payment of pension and retirement benefits to its workers. The Inspection Team met with the Chairman CDA Capt (Rtd) Anwar Ul Haq and other executives of the civic body to get first-hand knowledge about these complaints and discussed with them various measures for timely resolution of the public complaints. The team went around different sections of the CDA Directorate including One Window Facilitation Desk and interacted with the residents who had come there to get redressal of their complaints. The team observed that the public at large was facing problems due to an inordinate delay in the completion of the construction work. The team advised CDA authorities to come up with a time frame for the completion of its ongoing projects. The team also advised the concerned authorities to complete the process for issuing completion and transfer letters within 45 days and objections, if any, must be raised and settled within 30 days. The Team directed the CDA administration not to depute an officer below the rank of BS-19 to represent CDA in the investigation process of the Wafaqi Mohtasib. Earlier, the CDA Member (IT) briefed the Inspection Team about the CDA Management Information System (MIS).

Rwanda wants to increase business, investment ties with Pak

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A delegation led by Dr. Kalinda Francois-Xavier, President of the Senate of the Republic of Rwanda visited Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry and exchanged views with the business community to further enhance business and investment relations with Pakistan. Senator Murangwa Ndagiza Hadidja Chairperson of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of Rwanda, H.E. James Kimonyo Ambassador of Rwanda, Farooq A. Khawaja Honorary Consul General of Rwanda to Pakistan and others were in the delegation. Senator Zeeshan Khanzada also accompanied the delegation. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Kalinda Fran-

cois-Xavier, President of the Senate of the Republic of Rwanda said that bilateral relations between Rwanda and Pakistan are on good track and they want to further strengthen them in various fields including trade, investment, ICT and other sectors. He said that Rwanda is negotiating many MoUs with Pakistan to expand and deepen bilateral relations. He stressed that the Pakistani business community should explore Rwanda which offers great opportunities for business and investment.

H.E. James Kimonyo Ambassador of Rwanda briefed the business community about the comprehensive reforms in Rwanda for foreign investors including zero import tariffs, tax holidays, one stop shop facility and stressed that the Pakistani business

community should invest in Rwanda in mining, manufacturing, energy, agriculture, financial services and other sectors as Rwanda is the best place for doing business. He said that Rwanda is considering opening its embassy in Pakistan that would help further improve bilateral trade ties. Addressing the delegation, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry briefed the delegation about the role of SIFC, which is providing one window facility to investors. He said that under the guidance of COAS General Asim Munir, SIFC is getting significant investment from China and Arab countries and stressed that investors of Rwanda should also take benefit of its services to make investment in Pakistan. He said that Pakistan

and Rwanda should sign a preferential trade agreement to improve bilateral trade. He said that Rwanda should open its embassy in Pakistan, which is very important for improving bilateral relations. He said that both countries should encourage regular exchange of trade delegations to explore all untapped areas of mutual cooperation. He said that Pakistan can export many products to Rwanda including textiles, rice, pharmaceuticals, surgical & medical instruments, cement, processed food and others and stressed that Rwanda should increase its imports from Pakistan. Senator Zeeshan Khanzada said that Rwanda is a good place for business and the private sector of Pakistan should explore it for business and investment activities.

National folk festival to promote cultural tourism

It is pertinent to mention here, the festival would be conducted under the theme 'Peace and Harmony through Cultural Diversity' offers an immense opportunity to enjoy the rich culture of all the provinces

ISLAMABAD: The National Folk Festival (Lok Mela) will promote cultural tourism as a large number of local tourists come from various parts of the country to enjoy amazing and mega event in the capital. Talking to APP here on Wednesday, Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) official said that the biggest folk festival in the country called Lok Mela scheduled to be held from November 3 to 12. It is being organized by the National Heritage and Culture Division at Lok Virsa, he added. He said the festival would attract tourists massively to serve them with cultural and traditional treats by featuring a variety of activities such as provincial pavilions, food stalls, shopping at traditional stalls and music programmes that would reflect and unveil the rich cultural diversity of the country. The official said that the exceptional festival would encourage and fascinate the folk lovers to throng the federal capital and enjoy the music, traditional dances, arts and handicraft. The cultural nights being part of the unique folk mela would also enthrall the tourists, he added. It is pertinent to mention here, the festival would be conducted under the theme 'Peace and Harmony through Cultural Diversity' offers an immense opportunity to enjoy the rich culture of all the provinces.—APP

CPDI, IL hold one-day seminar

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Peace and Development Initiatives (CPDI) in collaboration with Individualland (IL) Wednesday organized a one-day seminar on 'CSOs engagement session' with Federal and Provincial Institutions for Social Inclusion. The event marks a significant milestone to foster collaborative partnerships and effective dialogue between the provincial, federal institutions and civil society, said a press release. During introductory remarks, Mukhtar Ahmad Ali, Executive Director CPDI emphasized the pivotal role of inclusive governance in driving progress. He underscored the indispensable role of the Right to Information (RTI) in promoting transparency and accountability. Additionally, he highlighted the significant impact of the establishment of Information Commissions, which served to streamline and facilitate the process of accessing vital information. Zahid Abdullah, RTI advisor to CPDI brought attention to a critical issue through his comprehensive report "The Invisibility of Women with Disabilities in National Data Sets: Gender Disparities in Access to Disability-Insignia CNICs." His findings revealed a stark contrast: among the 592,072 disability insignia #CNICs issued across the nation, a significant gender gap emerged, with 420,715 issued to males and a notably lower count of 171,357 issued to females. Aqal Sajjad, a distinguished Research Fellow at Arizona University, emphasized the pivotal role of local government, delving into its significance from both national and international vantage points. Notably, he highlighted the vital function of local governance in cultivating effective and ethical leadership. He also underscored the indispensable nature of citizen consultation as a cornerstone of authentic democratic processes. Shoaib Siddique, Chief Information Commissioner at Pakistan Information Commission, provided a comprehensive update on the progress of the RTI Act 2017. He commended CPDI and CSOs for their proactive engagement in exercising their right to access information. He also emphasized the crucial role of empirical studies in assessing the influence of RTI laws on citizens' access to information. Utilizing data-driven insights, we could fortify transparency measures and enhance citizen empowerment, he added. Imran Javed Qureshi, Legal Advisor to Punjab Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW), underscored the crucial role of the PCSW in assessing government policies for gender equality. Operating as a key governmental entity in Punjab, the PCSW prioritizes women's rights and empowerment across diverse societal domains.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Ethiopia to Pakistan Jemal Beker met with the Ambassador of Kazakhstan Erjan Kistafin and extended condolences on the loss of lives in fire.—DNA



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Briefs

NPO to organize webinar on tax & regulatory compliance

ISLAMABAD: The National Productivity Organization (NPO) will conduct a webinar on 'tax and regulatory compliance' on November 09 (Thursday). Tax regulations means tax and other laws statute, ordinance, rule, order or other application of the laws applicable in a given country as well as any international treaty whereas tax compliance is the framework designed by the regulators to ensure the transparent governance in the individual or business decision to comply with the tax laws in a given country, according to an NPO document shared here Wednesday. The objective of the training aimed to help understand the basic taxation laws applicable, how to handle compliance, business to increase their credibility and to avail the benefits associated.—APP

Excise staff to offer vehicle registration

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad residents can now register, transfer, and pay token taxes for their vehicles at the Rose and Jasmine Garden parking lot today from 3 to 5 pm. The excise staff will be present at the parking lot on the instructions of Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Irfan Nawaz Memon, ICT spokesman Dr Abdullah Tabasum said. The Facilitation Center Doorstep ICT Vehicle will also be there to provide other ICT-related services, such as domicile certificates, birth certificates, powers of attorney, international driving permits, fuel permits, and more. This initiative is aimed at making it easier for Islamabad residents to avail of these services without having to travel to the excise office. It is also part of the government's efforts to digitize and streamline its services. The services are digitized and streamlined, making them more efficient and convenient. Residents can save time and money by availing of these services at their doorstep.—APP

AIOU special focus on providing quality education at doorstep

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Regional Director of Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) Sukkur Region Prof. Atta Hussain Musvi here Wednesday said that the university special focus was on providing quality education to students at their doorsteps. The swift centers were set up across the country including Sukkur, he added. Talking to APP here, Prof Atta Hussain Musvi said that the AIOU was engaging able faculty members, tutors, and resource persons. He said that the aim of the university was to provide higher education to male and female students without any discrimination on the basis of reasonable fees.

Pak Pre-COP28 reveals climate-security vulnerabilities

Experts at the roundtable highlighted the multidimensional nature of the climate-security nexus, emphasizing that climate change is not only a traditional security threat but also poses economic and social challenges. Competition for resources, particularly water, was identified as a significant security concern, and the need to connect the dots between security and climate was emphasized

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Civil Society Coalition for Climate Change (CSCCC), with the support from United States Institute of Peace (USIP) and the United Arab Emirates Embassy to Pakistan, hosted a roundtable discussion as part of its pre-COP28 preparations on the interplay between climate change and security. Titled "The Arc of Vulnerability: Climate-Security Nexus," this event brought together distinguished experts, academic, civil society actors, and stakeholders to explore the complex and multifaceted issues surrounding the nexus. The roundtable delved into various dimensions of vulnerability, ranging from the

mountainous regions to coastal communities, with a focus on representing the subnational perspective.

Aisha Khan, Chief Executive CSCCC opened the session with welcome remarks, and reiterated the need for sustained engagement with diverse stakeholders for interdisciplinary and integrated approach in policy planning.

During the keynote speech, Amir Khan Goraya, Assistant Resident Representative at the UNDP highlighted that the devastating floods in 2022 served as stark reminders of the nation's vulnerability to climate change, prompting a growing awareness among the population. However, bridging the gap between awareness and effective action

remains a challenge that needs focused attention. He encouraged Civil society organizations (CSOs) to play a crucial role in advocacy, raising awareness, working with the government, and building community resilience. Experts at the roundtable highlighted the multidimensional nature of the climate-security nexus, emphasizing that climate change is not only a traditional security threat but also poses economic and social challenges. Competition for resources, particularly water, was identified as a significant security concern, and the need to connect the dots between security and climate was emphasized. The discussion moved towards necessary reforms, including the integration of climate change into

national security policies. The roundtable emphasized the importance of developing a coherent approach to climate change at both the vertical and horizontal levels of governance. Institutional reforms, collaborative efforts across government departments, and mainstreaming climate change into various sectors were seen as vital steps in addressing climate change effectively. Participants emphasized the need for accountability, ownership, and the enforcement of climate-related legislation. They called for greater collaboration between government and development sectors, with a focus on aligning projects with climate resilience and sustainability. Climate change was viewed as a development issue, and it was

suggested that policies and legislation should reflect this perspective. The discussion also highlighted the importance of accurate data collection, better data sharing, and enhanced sensitization of communities. It was noted that sensitization should extend beyond awareness to create a degree of readiness and preparedness in the face of climate-related challenges. The roundtable was concluded by Ambassador Nadeem Riyaz, President Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) with a call for strengthening accountability and transparency mechanisms in climate governance, with an emphasis on addressing climate change not only as a global challenge but also a local and community-level concern.



ISLAMABAD: Workers are busy in final preparation of different pavilions before the starting of the annual Folk Mela 2023, which will start from 3rd November at Lok Versa.— ONLINE

Interest rate retention is underwhelming

He informed that Pakistan has to pay billions of dollars, for which huge investments are expected from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates under the SIFC, while other countries and international organizations are expected to provide aid and loans after the 2022 floods

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain said on Wednesday that under the current economic conditions, there was scope for reducing the interest rate, but it was maintained, which is disappointing.

Along with the decrease in the value of the dollar in Pakistan, oil is becoming cheaper in the international market, but the price of petrol and high-speed diesel has not been reduced, he said. Mian Zahid Hussain said that the price of kerosene and light diesel has been reduced slightly, and if the price of petrol and diesel was reduced, people would get some relief. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that due to the low price of oil in the international market, people expected a reduction in the price of petrol and diesel by almost Rs 18, but the prices were maintained. Mian Zahid Hussain said that diesel plays a fundamental role in economic activities and the transportation of essential goods, so the reduction in its price leads to a

reduction in inflation, which should be considered by the authorities. The business leader said that the inflation in the country is increasing more than the estimates of the State Bank, which should be stopped. The IMF had estimated inflation to be 25.9 percent during the current year, while the central bank had predicted inflation to be 20 to 22 percent during the current financial year, but this did not happen, and it reached 31.4 percent in September.

The State Bank believes that inflation will gradually come down, but how will this be possible after the 192% increase in gas prices? In the month of August, the value of the Pakistani rupee fell sharply, but after that, a crackdown was started on illegal currency trading, which started to restore its value, he observed.

He informed that Pakistan has to pay billions of dollars, for which huge investments are expected from Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates under the SIFC, while other countries and international organizations are expected to provide aid and loans after the 2022 floods. Mian Zahid Hussain said that the business community is hopeful that the review of the IMF in November will be successful, as a result of which Pakistan will.

DG stresses provinces for long-term action plan

ISLAMABAD: Director General Health Ministry of Health, Baseer Khan Achakzai Wednesday stressed provincial governments for formulating a long-term action plan to expand the scope of nutrition and rural people's access to safe drinking water as every year around 53,000 Pakistani children die of diarrhoea after drinking unsafe water.

Talking to a private news channel, DG Health expressed his serious concern over the unsafe drinking water in far-flung areas of the country and stressed that provinces should increase their investment to support child nutrition programs. He disclosed that the Ministry of Health with the collaboration of provincial governments would soon launch a campaign to improve maternal nutrition in rural areas by conducting awareness campaigns. He explained that in 2024, 25 awareness campaigns will be held in 67 selected districts that report poor maternal nutrition indicators. DG Health said that improving the knowledge and capacity of healthcare providers to address maternal nutrition issues and promote a collective responsibility approach is the need of the hour.—APP

Thar Foundation reaches 850 Thari women for breast cancer awareness

ISLAMABAD: The Thar Foundation, in its Breast Cancer Awareness sessions in October, reached out to and engaged around 850 women from the local community of Tharparkar. Gwadar Pro quoting a statement from the Thar Foundation, reported on Wednesday that thirty-five sessions were organised throughout the month to actively engage the women of Tharparkar in the comprehensive awareness program. "The campaign's primary goal was to make a lasting impact on breast cancer awareness and prevention," reads the official statement. During the drives, doctors provided valuable insights on self-screening, emphasizing the importance of regular self-checks to detect any changes promptly. In Pakistan, the annual reported cases of breast cancer surpass 83,000, leading to the loss of approximately 40,000 women each year due to this alarming health issue. The rural areas of the country continue to grapple with a lack of awareness, resulting in numerous preventable deaths among women. Early detection and a comprehensive screening campaign, particularly in underserved regions, are imperative to bridge the gap in breast cancer awareness and prevention. Sindh Engro Coal Mining Company (SECMC) and Engro Powergen Thar Limited (EPTL), through the Thar Foundation, are dedicated to enhancing the socioeconomic well-being of the Tharparkar community. Their focus lies on sustainable interventions in health, safe drinking water, education, women's empowerment, and livelihood, aimed at improving local living standards. Due to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the people of Tharparkar have already started to reap the benefits of the Thar Coal project, and their standard of life has started improving. With SECMC's initiated schemes, Tharparkar has started thriving on the socioeconomic front, attracting people from other areas to come for the large-scale potential livelihood opportunities offered by the area courtesy of Thar Coal.—DNA

New gas tariff to be effective from Nov 1

ISLAMABAD: The Petroleum Division (PD) of the Energy Ministry on Wednesday rejected a news item appearing in a section of media about the effectiveness of the new gas tariff from back date, clarifying that the revised prices would be applicable from November 1, 2023. "Reports in some newspapers claiming that the prices are effective from back date, which is misleading. It is categorically stated that gas price revision is effective from November 01, 2023" a news release said.—APP

KPCL releases fish stock in Jhelum river to safeguard endangered species

ISLAMABAD: Karot Power Co. Ltd. (KPCL) released 5,000 fingerlings of Mahseer fish into River Jhelum to safeguard the endangered species. The move is part of KPCL's Biodiversity Management Plan, under which a total of 300,000 Mahseer fingerlings will be released into Jhelum River to restore its population. The Mahseer fingerlings were transported from Punjab Fisheries department's hatcheries in Hattian, Attock, Deputy GM CSAAIL Aftab Alam told Gwadar Pro.

The fish species faces numerous threats to its survival, including habitat destruction and illegal sand mining in the area. KPCL is a subsidiary of China Three Gorges South Asia Investment Ltd. (CSAIL) and operates the 720MWs Karot hydropower plant on Jhelum River, the first hydropower project completed under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).—APP

IRSA releases 109,700 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 109,700 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 56,400 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1523.68 feet and was 125.68 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 28,100 cusecs and 50,000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1202.60 feet, which was 152.60 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 8,600 cusecs and 40,000 cusecs respectively.—APP

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USAID project to enhance wheat seed production

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a groundbreaking initiative aimed at bolstering Pakistan's agricultural sector, USAID's Economic Recovery and Development Activity, in collaboration with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Agriculture Research Department and local farmers, is pioneering an innovative approach to certified wheat seed production in District Mardan. This project, termed "Enhancing Wheat Seed Production through Seed Cluster Approach," promises to bring about transformative changes in the region's wheat production capabilities, according to a press release issued here on Wednesday. Pakistan, being the 8th largest wheat producer globally and the 3rd largest in Asia, has a significant stake in agriculture, contributing 7.8 percent of the value added in the sector and 1.8 percent of the country's GDP (Economic Survey of Pakistan 2021-2022). To address the challenges faced by wheat farmers in procuring good

quality high-yielding wheat seed sustainably, the seed cluster approach has been adopted. Dr. Shakeel Kakakhel, Deputy Chief of Party for USAID's Economic Recovery and Development Activity, highlighted the activity's significance, stating, "In KP, the yield of wheat has remained low as compared to other provinces. The average yield in Punjab and Sindh is 2.9 tons/hectare, while average yield of wheat in KP is 1.56 tons/hectare. Various factors such as lack of high yielding varieties, water shortages, and uneven pesticide and fertilizer applications cause yield to be relatively lower. Seed determines more than any other element of what result a crop can achieve." The annual wheat seed requirement of KP is around 30,000 tons, while only 7 percent (2,100 tons) of certified wheat seed is available to farmers according to Federal Seed Certification and Registration Department. The remaining seed comes from informal sources either farmers' saved seed or seed obtained from fellow farmers, mid-

dlemen, or village shops, where information about the source of variety is in most cases unknown. Under the cluster approach, 250 farmers in Sawal Dher, District Mardan, will receive basic wheat seed for 250 acres of land, blended fertilizer, plant stimulant, and handholding a move aimed at strengthening the foundation of the wheat farming community in the region. This activity will ensure that certified seed is available to local farmers of district Mardan and adjoining districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the years to come. Using certified wheat seed will guarantee an increase in yield by 15-20%, thus minimizing KP dependency on other provinces for major staple crop. Fazal Wahab, Director Planning Agriculture Research in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, expressed his enthusiasm, saying, "This project is a significant step toward modernizing wheat seed production in our region. We believe it will not only benefit the farmers but also help Khyber Pakhtunkhwa maintain its position as a major wheat producer in Pakistan." The key to the success

of the seed cluster approach lies in the training and support provided to selected seed growers. These growers will receive comprehensive training in certified seed production techniques, courtesy the Agricultural Research KP and the federal Seed Certification and Registration Department. With this knowledge, they will produce high-quality seeds that meet required standards. Akbar Ali Shah, a progressive grower from Mardan, expressed his optimism, noting, "I am excited about this project as it offers us an opportunity to contribute to our community's growth and produce better wheat seeds. This initiative will not only increase our income but also boost the region's agriculture." The "Enhancing Wheat Seed Production through Seed Cluster Approach" project embodies a collective effort to empower local farmers, improve crop yield, and fortify KP's standing as a major wheat producer. It is anticipated that this innovative approach will provide long-term benefits for the farming community in Mardan.

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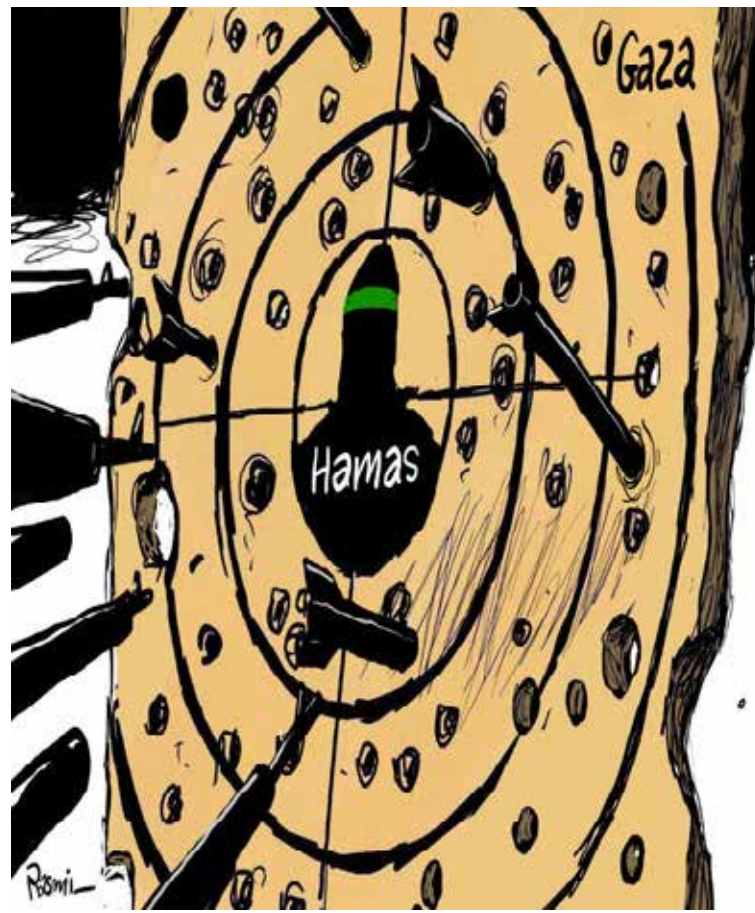
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Covid inquiry: shocking failures under spotlight

Even given all that is already known about poor decision-making, avoidable deaths, lockdown-breaking parties and atrocious procurement, the evidence being related to the Covid inquiry has the power to shock. Though Boris Johnson and Rishi Sunak are not due to testify for a few more weeks, the reflections of Dominic Cummings, Lee Cain and other key figures at No 10 shine an unforgiving spotlight on the heart of government. On Monday it was revealed that Chris Whitty, the chief medical officer, described the "Eat out to help out" scheme launched in August 2020 as "Eat out to help out the virus". On Tuesday Mr Cummings said that the prime minister was routinely described as "the trolley" – a reference to his erratic nature and chaotic changes of policy direction. From the man who went from being Mr Johnson's most senior adviser to his enemy, such contempt might be viewed as sour grapes. But a diary kept by Sir Patrick Vallance, the chief scientific adviser, revealed that he too saw Mr Johnson as "weak and indecisive". Simon Case, the cabinet secretary whose evidence has been delayed for health reasons, complained that Johnson "cannot lead". Mr Cain, the former head of communications, put it more gently when he told the inquiry that the pandemic was the "wrong crisis for his skillset". Questions to Mr Cummings from Hugo Keith KC rightly probed the sequence of events leading up to the about-turn in mid-March 2020, when it was decided that a policy of mitigation had been a mistake and a lockdown began to be envisaged. Mr Cummings' disdain for Whitehall is well known, so his criticisms of "Potemkin" meetings, conducted for show and little else, were unsurprising. So were his views on "pop-ins" to the prime minister's office by civil servants eager to influence him. But his account of inconsistent data, communication failures between the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies and Downing Street, and the lack of pandemic planning, all point to problems that go beyond personalities. So does the well-documented hiatus in mid-February, when the prime minister and numerous others went on holiday in the midst of a national crisis. Such complacency is inexcusable. But it was never the whole story, as political calculations continued to influence decision-making alongside scientific evidence. Lord Bethell, a former health minister, said this week that Mr Johnson treated the pandemic as secondary to Brexit. Witnesses at the inquiry have described his oscillation between a libertarian impulse to "let the virus rip" – partly on grounds that those most likely to die were already old – and a more cautious approach that put public health first. This seesaw went beyond the chaotic early months. In one message, Mr Case referred to the prime minister's wish to abandon restrictions as "Trump-Bolsonaro levels of mad and dangerous". Such recklessness was not limited to No 10. Sir Gavin Williamson, then the education secretary, was said to have rejected mask-wearing in schools on the quite disgraceful grounds that he "didn't want to give an inch to the unions" – a bullish approach endorsed by Matt Hancock and Grant Shapps.



A friendly gesture to repair a critical relationship

China and the United States should follow a policy of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation while making greater contributions to global peace and development. Vice-President Han Zheng told a delegation of Flying Tigers veterans in Beijing. Stating that President Xi Jinping recently replied to a letter from the chairman of the Sino-American Aviation Heritage Foundation and Flying Tigers veterans, Han said the Chinese people will always remember the heroic deeds of the Flying Tigers during World War II and never forget old friends. More than 80 years ago, China and the US fought side by side against fascism, with the Flying Tigers bombing Japanese targets and defending China in the air. The story of the Flying Tigers is a story of profound friendship forged with the blood of the two peoples. In fact, many major challenges facing today's world, from the Ukraine crisis and the Palestinian question to climate change and global economic recovery can be addressed using the spirit of the Flying Tigers – a spirit that should be passed down from generation to generation. Beijing's warm reception of the delegation is the latest move by China showing its goodwill and commitment to repairing bilateral relations. Han's meeting with the US veterans as well as the heartfelt welcome they and the offspring of the Flying Tigers pilots received from the people during their tour in the country showed the Chinese side is trying its best to create the right atmosphere for a meeting between President Xi and US President Joe Biden on the sidelines of the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting in San Francisco this month. China has always believed the two countries should be partners rather than rivals, and ought to pursue mutual benefit, not indulge in zero-sum games. As for the setbacks Sino-US relations have suffered in recent years, they can be attributed to the change in the US' perception of China and some US politicians' belief in the "America first" slogan. And the only way, they believe, they can ensure the US' status is by maintaining the US' global hegemony, even if that means riding roughshod over international laws and other countries' concerns. Yet the differences between China and the US should not become a reason for confrontation or prevent them from cooperating on issues of common interests. Competition should not define all aspects of their relations. More importantly, the US should remember that the one-China principle and the three Sino-US joint communiques have always been the political foundation of their relations. With the global situation becoming increasingly volatile and Sino-US relations reaching a critical crossroad, the two sides should join hands to not only work for mutual benefits, but also address global challenges.

Shifting the burden of incompetency

Qamar Bashir



What is truly disconcerting is that these statements emanate from none other than the self-proclaimed economic wizard, Mr. Ishaq Dar, a man whose wealth has grown to such astonishing proportions

Whenever our nation grapples with economic and financial challenges exacerbated by the incompetence, inefficiency, and incapacity of our ruling class, the most vulnerable among us bear the heaviest burden. The individuals who already struggle to secure even two meals a day, who cannot fathom the luxury of a single cup of tea, and who lack the means to send their children to school, are advised to subsist on half a roti instead of a full one, to savor half a cup of tea in place of the comforting warmth of a full cup. While the ruling class, seemingly impervious to the suffering of their fellow countrymen, continues to live in opulent villas abroad, traverse the skies in private jets, and occupy custom-designed offices adorned with luxuries beyond imagination. In recent times, the very individuals responsible for our nation's financial management, particularly the former PDM finance minister and later the incumbent caretaker finance minister have issued statements to transfer the burden of their inefficiency, incapacity, and incompetence onto retirees, who have already dedicated over four decades of their lives in service to the government and the public. This audacious proposition asserts that the weight of pensions has

become intolerable for the government and suggested that the only viable solution lies in the formulation of a policy that would, in essence, strip pensioners of their hard-earned entitlements – the pensions they diligently accrued during their years of dedicated service. What is truly disconcerting is that these statements emanate from none other than the self-proclaimed economic wizard, Mr. Ishaq Dar, a man whose wealth has grown to such astonishing proportions that he himself may not possess an accurate account of it. If even a fraction of the wealth amassed by individuals like him could be repatriated to our country, it could potentially transform our economic and financial landscape, paving the way for a brighter and more prosperous future. This callous narrative reveals a shocking lack of compassion and an outrageously irrational approach. It implies that the government's solution is to either slash pensions, impose a time limit on disbursements, freeze adjustments for inflation, or even strip surviving spouses of their rightful pension benefits after a pensioner's passing. In this grim scenario, it seems that if these measures fail to miraculously fix the government's financial outlook, the next steps could entail extreme and unthinkable actions. The government might instruct the defense forces to auction their weapons, insist on our soldiers to stop wearing their uniforms, close down our diplomatic missions abroad, halt government operations, extinguish traffic lights to save electricity, cease fuel purchases for vehicles to cut fuel costs, shut down power and gas production, and ground planes. In the eyes of our ruling class, the answer to our financial and economic hardship is to strip away the very means of survival from the salaried, working, and middle-class citizens, and now even the pensioners. Pensioners, in their post-retirement years, often find themselves in the twilight of life. Many have already experienced the erosion of their physical and mental faculties. Despite these personal challenges, they continue to grapple with daunting burdens. They strive to keep the home fires burning, endeavor to fulfill their commitments, such as educating their children, supporting their daughters' marriages, and securing a peaceful place to reside. Additionally, they must navigate the financial maze, endeavoring to meet essential needs while coping with the weight of utility bills that have grown burdensome. Yet, what keeps them up at night are not their personal struggles, but the distressing and insensitive remarks of government ministers, amplified by the media. These comments label them as a strain on the national economy and a drain on the government's treasury. In their wildest dreams, these retirees might never have anticipated that, after dedicating four decades of their prime years in service to the government, they would be met with anything other than gratitude. Instead, they now face the heart-wrenching reality of being labeled as burdens on the system, with proposals that threaten to strip them of their only means to make ends meet. It's become

abundantly clear that the path to financial and economic improvement does not hinge on the cruel act of depriving citizens of their right to a dignified life. Instead, it lies in a concerted effort to enhance our systems and invest in vital areas. We should channel resources into education and research and development, promoting innovation and nurturing creativity. We need to create an environment where people can fully unlock their potential. The solution lies in expanding our exports, enticing foreign investment, fostering entrepreneurial ventures, establishing industrial hubs, enhancing the efficiency and productivity of our businesses, and elevating the quality and demand for our products and services, improving the quality and quantity of our products and services. By adding value to our offerings and creating our own brands, we can tap into new markets and boost our competitive edge. Facilitating easy access to loans for startups will nurture fresh business niches, invigorating our entrepreneurial spirit. Indeed, the path to financial and economic prosperity also involves a shift in our national focus. Instead of positioning ourselves solely as a security state, we should adopt a stance that seeks peace and cooperation with every nation worldwide. By doing so, we can redirect resources towards building a modern agricultural sector, establishing thriving industrial zones, and enhancing the security and safety of travel to attract global tourism. Additionally, the creation of a pension fund and investment in saving schemes can not only generate reasonable profits but also serve the nation's broader financial needs. Furthermore, emulating successful models like France, where pension reforms raised the retirement age and adjusted qualification criteria, can help manage pension costs effectively. Gradual increases in retirement age, changes in contribution rates for employees and employers, and the implementation of partial pensions or delayed benefits for those choosing to work beyond the standard retirement age can all contribute to a sustainable pension system. Encouraging government employees to participate in voluntary retirement savings plans and streamlining the consolidation of multiple pension plans into a more efficient system will further reduce administrative burdens and enhance fund management. These insensitive statements disregard the specific provisions of the Civil Services Act of 1973. According to Section 13 of this act, a civil servant's retirement from service occurs after completing twenty years of service, thus qualifying for pension and other retirement benefits. Furthermore, Section 19 outlines the entitlements upon retirement, including the right to receive a prescribed pension or gratuity. In the unfortunate event of a civil servant's passing, whether before or after retirement, their family is entitled to receive a pension, gratuity, or both. These legal provisions are in place to safeguard the welfare and financial security of civil servants who have dedicated their careers to public service. Any attempt to deviate from these established rights would not

only be legally questionable but also ethically unjust. Caring governments prioritize the welfare of not only their retired employees but the entire population, providing unemployment allowances for those temporarily out of work. For instance, in France, every unemployed individual is entitled to receive a consistent amount, such as Euro 900, until they secure gainful employment. Countries like England and France have well-structured pension systems encompassing several key benefits, including the main pension benefit, calculated based on an employee's salary and years of service. Supplementary pensions are provided by employers, varying according to job titles and years of service. Reversion pensions support surviving spouses, usually amounting to 50% of the deceased spouse's pension. In cases of disability, invalidity pensions are provided to government employees unable to work. Additionally, governments offer a range of social welfare programs and allowances, such as Pension Credit, Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, Winter Fuel Payment, free healthcare services, vision care, dental treatment, travel cost assistance, disability support, free bus passes, and special considerations for those with disabilities, including free passports. Pensioners, many of whom are at an advanced age, have shouldered responsibilities and contributed their skills and dedication to the nation. They are owed respect, dignity, and honor, not derogatory labels like "burden" or "parasites." The pensions they receive are not handouts but were part of a solemn job agreement signed even before their entry into government service. When government employees embark on their careers, they willingly accept substantially lower salaries compared to their private sector counterparts, fully aware that these reduced wages are offset by the promise of pension and retirement benefits in the future. It's a mutually agreed-upon arrangement that provides financial security in exchange for their commitment and dedication. If the government is intent on shifting the burden of its own shortcomings to retired civil servants, it should commence this effort with fresh entrants. The onus is on the government to be transparent, fully disclosing the terms and conditions of employment. It should offer every candidate the opportunity to sign a job contract with a comprehensive understanding of the contract's provisions, including pension and retirement benefits. This approach should be consistent and applied uniformly to all state employees, including the judiciary, parliaments, and armed forces. No exceptions. We can be certain that without the assurance of pension and retirement benefits, no sane individual would willingly choose government service. It is our time to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of our civil servants and afford them the respect and security they have earned and deserve.

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Revival and Sustainability: Transforming Pakistan's Economy through Advanced Technologies

Prof. Dr. M. Suleman Tahir



In FY 2022-23, Pakistan's GDP growth rate stood at 0.3%, according to data from the State Bank of Pakistan. High inflation rates have eroded purchasing power and strained household budgets. In July 2021, Pakistan's annual inflation rate was recorded at 19.9%, according to the World Bank open data

Pakistan's economy, like many others worldwide, faced severe challenges and disruptions in recent years. The COVID-19 pandemic, inflation, energy crises, and fiscal deficits have all contributed to economic instability. To ensure a resilient and sustainable future, Pakistan must embrace innovative approaches in key sectors such as sustainable manufacturing, modern agriculture, the chemical industry, energy storage and handling, and bio refineries. Currently, Pakistani economy is facing variety of challenges. Majority of economic indicators are declining. Pakistan experienced a sharp decline in GDP growth, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. In FY 2022-23, Pakistan's GDP growth rate stood at 0.3%, according to data from the State Bank of Pakistan. High inflation rates have eroded purchasing power and strained household budgets. In July 2021, Pakistan's annual inflation rate was recorded at 19.9%, according to the World Bank open data. Energy shortages have plagued Pakistan's industries and households for years. According to the International Energy Agency, Pakistan's electricity generation capacity has struggled to meet demand, leading to frequent blackouts. The fiscal deficit reached 4.6% of GDP in FY 2022-23, according to the Ministry of Finance. High deficits can lead to inflation and hinder economic growth. Given these challenges, it is imperative to explore sustainable strategies that can not only address these issues but also lay the foundation for a more resilient and prosperous economy. Sustainable manufacturing involves minimizing environmental impacts, optimizing resource use and adopting cleaner technologies. Developed economies like Germany have successfully implemented sustainable manufacturing practices, leading to increased competitiveness and reduced environmental harm. Germany's "Industry 4.0" initiative has transformed its manufacturing sector by integrating digital technologies, robotics, and IoT to enhance efficiency and reduce waste. This approach has not only boosted

productivity but also reduced resource consumption. Pakistan can emulate such models to revitalize its manufacturing sector, which contributed 9.2% to GDP in 2022. Agriculture remains a vital sector in Pakistan, employing a significant portion of the population. However, outdated farming practices and limited access to modern technology have hampered productivity. In contrast, countries like the Netherlands have embraced modern agriculture techniques, achieving high yields with minimal environmental impact. The Netherlands employs precision agriculture, using data-driven decision-making, and advanced machinery to maximize crop yields. For example, they have pioneered vertical farming and greenhouse technologies, reducing land requirements and water usage while increasing productivity. Pakistan's adoption of similar techniques could bolster food security and increase exports, given its fertile land and diverse climate. The chemical industry provides crucial raw materials to various sectors, including agriculture and manufacturing. To promote sustainability, developed nations like Sweden have invested heavily in green chemistry, which emphasizes the development of environmentally friendly products and processes. Sweden's chemical industry has seen significant growth in biodegradable and eco-friendly products, aligning with global trends towards sustainability. Pakistan could harness this potential by investing in research and development to create green chemicals and processes. This not only reduces environmental harm but also opens up new markets and revenue streams. Bio refineries offer a sustainable approach to produce biofuels, bio-chemicals, and biodegradable materials from biomass resources. Many developed economies, including the United States and Brazil, have embraced bio refineries as a means to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and promote a circular economy. The United States, for instance, has made significant strides in biofuel production from corn and soybean feedstocks. Brazil has become a global lead-

er in bioethanol production from sugarcane. Pakistan, with its substantial biomass potential, can establish bio refineries to produce biofuels and value-added bio-chemicals, reducing greenhouse gas emissions and generating employment.

A reliable energy supply is essential for economic stability and growth. Many developed countries have transitioned to renewable energy sources coupled with advanced energy storage solutions, reducing carbon emissions and ensuring a stable power supply. Germany's Energiewende, or energy transition, is a prime example. It involves a shift away from fossil fuels and nuclear power in favor of renewable energy sources such as wind and solar. By 2020, Germany produced over 57.7% of its electricity from renewables, according to the Fraunhofer Institute. Pakistan can follow suit, capitalizing on its abundant solar and wind resources to reduce energy shortages and mitigate climate change.

Pakistan's economic challenges are formidable, but they are not insurmountable. By embracing sustainable manufacturing, modernizing agriculture, investing in green chemistry, transitioning to renewable energy sources, and establishing bio refineries, Pakistan can pave the way for economic revival and long-term sustainability. Solutions evolved by the developed economies like Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, the United States, and Brazil illustrate the transformative power of sustainable practices. These examples serve as beacons of hope, showcasing how sustainable approaches can lead to economic prosperity while mitigating environmental harm. With the right policies, investments, and commitment to sustainability, Pakistan can emerge from its economic challenges stronger, more resilient, and on a path toward a sustainable future.

—The writer is the Vice Chancellor Khwaja Fareed University of Engineering and Information Technology, Rahim Yar Khan

Briefs

CJP wants to know who was the mastermind

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Are we threatened by external enemies or internal threats?" he questioned, rejecting the government's fact-finding committee. The chief justice said anyone here gets up and blocks the roads, then goes abroad after harming the country. The chief justice's remark hinted at Pakistan Awami Tehreek (PAT) chief Tahirul Qadri's participation in the 2014 sit-in by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) against the then-government of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) in the centre. "Was the purpose of importing a person to overthrow the government of that time?" CJP Isa asked, further questioning if the said person's services will be sought again in the future. "Did this person from Canada pay for his own ticket?" he questioned, further asking if it is possible to determine this by the investigation committee.

Newly-appointed envoys...

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The Ambassador-designate of Jordan, Dr Maen A.M. Khreassat, Ambassador-designate of Holy See, Archbishop Germano Penemote Apostolic Nuncio, Ambassador-designate of Czech Republic, Mr Ladislav Steinhübel, the High Commissioner-designate of Brunei Darussalam, Colonel (r) Pengiran Haji Kamal Bashah bin Pengiran Haji Ahmad, and the Ambassador-designate of Qatar to Pakistan, Ali Mubarak A.E. Al-Khatir, presented their diplomatic credentials to President Dr Arif Alvi and later separately called on him. Talking to the envoys, the President said that Pakistan was closely monitoring the situation in Palestine and wanted the restoration of the inalienable rights of the people of Palestine. He highlighted that Pakistan had consistently supported the Palestine cause, and wanted a comprehensive resolution of all outstanding Arab-Israeli disputes to ensure lasting peace in the region.

Crackdown begins against...

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according to the interior ministry, including many who were born in Pakistan and lived there their entire lives. Islamabad announced earlier this month that it wanted all undocumented immigrants to leave by November 1 after they were found involved in crimes, smuggling and 14 suicide bombings out of 24 this year. In Karachi, authorities detained four illegal Afghan immigrants from Sadder area and shifted them to a holding centre from where they will be repatriated to Afghanistan after fulfilling legal formalities. Heavy contingent of police also reached the metropolis' Sohrah Goth area and warned the undocumented immigrants through loud-speaker to return to their country by today midnight. Similarly, dozens of illegal immigrants from different areas were detained from Balochistan's Chaman area, Levies officials said.

6 terrorists killed in Zhob...

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resultantly, six "terrorists were sent to hell", the ISPR said. "A cache of arms, ammunition, and explosives has also been recovered," it said. The gunned-down terrorists remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities against security forces and target killing of innocent civilians, the military's media wing said. Sanitisation is being carried out to eliminate any other terrorists found in the area, it mentioned. "Security forces of Pakistan, in step with [the] nation, remain determined to thwart attempts of sabotaging peace, stability and progress of Balochistan," the ISPR added.

Shaheen becomes No. 1 ODI bowler, Babar retains top spot

Afridi has been in sensational touch for Pakistan at the Cricket World Cup and is currently the joint leading wicket-taker for the tournament

SPORTS DESK

LAHORE: In-form pacer Shaheen Afridi can now lay claim to be the best ODI bowler in the world after the Pakistan spearhead capped off an impressive start to the ongoing ICC Men's Cricket World Cup by rising to the No.1 ranking on the latest ODI Bowling Rankings. Afridi has been in sensational touch for Pakistan at the Cricket World Cup and is currently the joint leading wicket-taker for the tournament alongside Australia spinner Adam Zampa, with the duo having taken 16 scalps apiece. The tall left-armed took another three wickets during Pakistan's emphatic triumph over Bangladesh in Kolkata on Tuesday to keep his side's semi-final hopes alive, and it also helped catapult the 23-year-old past nine of his contemporaries to claim the mantle as the No.1 ranked ODI bowler. Australia's Josh Hazlewood (second), India's Mohammed Siraj (third) and South Africa's Keshav Maharaj (fourth) all lose one place courtesy of Afridi's nine-spot jump, with spin duo Kuldeep Yadav (seventh) and Mujeeb Ur Rahman (eighth) both gaining



two places inside the top 10. It is the first time that Afridi has held the No.1 ranking in any format and means Pakistan players simultaneously cling on to the top spot in two ODI categories as skipper Babar Azam maintains his narrow lead at the head of

the corresponding batting list. But Babar's lead at the top of the ODI batter rankings is down to just two rating points, with the Pakistan captain almost paying the price for an innings of just nine runs against Bangladesh. The right-hander has a total of 216 runs from seven innings at the World Cup and his closest challenger in India's Shubman Gill has not yet been able to capitalise with just 104 runs from four knocks. The challengers continue to close in on the top pair, with experienced Australia opener David Warner rising one place to fourth on the back of his 413 runs at the World Cup while India skipper Rohit Sharma improves three spots to fifth following his 398 runs for the tournament. Scott Edwards is another eye-catching mover on the list for ODI batters, with the Netherlands captain catapulting up 11 places to equal 16th after 204 runs from six innings at the World Cup. Bangladesh skipper Shakib Al Hasan maintains his lead at the top of the rankings for ODI all-rounders, with South Africa left-armier Marco Jansen the big mover up two spots to ninth and New Zealand youngster Rachin Ravindra climbing 14 spots to 17th.

Spain thrash Swiss, England stumble in Belgium

PARIS: World champions Spain ruthlessly dispatched Switzerland 7-1 in the Women's Nations League while England's hopes of progression were dented by Belgium. Alexia Putellas grabbed a goal either side of half-time and an assist as the Spaniards put Switzerland to the sword in Zurich. The match was the team's first since FIFA announced on Monday that former Spanish football chief Luis Rubiales had incurred a three-year ban for his forced kiss on Jenni Hermoso. If the news had any impact on the players, it was soon forgotten as Oihane Her-

andez gave them the lead after four minutes, which Putellas then added to seven minutes later. The world champions piled the misery on the hosts after the break, adding five goals, Alayah Pilgrim grabbing a consolation strike for the Swiss. Star midfielder Aitana Bonmati was present for the occasion despite picking up the Ballon d'Or on Monday in Paris. Spain sit five points clear of Sweden, who drew 1-1 with Italy, at the top of Group A4 with a maximum 12 points from four matches. Switzerland, on the other hand, had endured a difficult start in a tough group,

going down to four consecutive losses. World Cup runners-up England slipped to a 3-2 defeat in Leuven that puts their Nations League hopes in the balance. It was the first time that England have conceded three goals since Sarina Wiegman took over as coach in 2021. Laura de Neve curled in a free-kick to give Belgium the lead on nine minutes, only for Lucy Bronze and Fran Kirby to put England back in charge. The home side were level, though, before half-time through their captain Tessa Wullaert who struck deep into first-half additional time. When Geor-

gia Stanway was penalised for handball five minutes from time, Wullaert calmly put away the penalty to secure the win for Belgium. The European champions languish third in Group A1 on six points, three behind leaders Netherlands who won 1-0 in Scotland. France stumbled to a 0-0 home draw against Norway, but with 10 points they remain top of group A2, three clear of second-placed Austria who beat Portugal 2-1. Herve Renard's side lacked inspiration but were denied three times by the post as well as some good saves by Norwegian goalkeeper Aurora Mikalsen. - Agencies



PCB ICA T20 club cricket tournament starts

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Under the umbrella of Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), the JJ PCB-ICA T20 club cricket tournament started at Islamabad on the different cricket grounds. After getting NOC from Pakistan Cricket Board, all the cricket clubs affiliated with Regional Cricket Association Islamabad (RCAI) will be seen in action in the JJ PCB-ICA T20 cricket tournament. The purpose of organizing the tournament is the promotion of club cricket in Islamabad. All cricket clubs which were part of the scrutiny process held on 25th August 2023 are participating in the two weeks long cricket tournament. According to the PCB notification, the tournament will be supervised under Zeeshan Nadir Maqbool, who is the chairman tournament committee while Abdul Waheed, Muhammad Waqar and Ali Khan will act as members of the committee.

ICC WC not over for Pakistan: Babar Azam

NEW DELHI : Pakistan captain Babar Azam said Tuesday that he still clings to the hope that his team can squeeze into the ICC World Cup 2023 semi-finals despite the odds stacked against them. "Yes. We are trying to win our next two matches and let's see where we stand," said Babar Azam after a seven-wicket romp over Bangladesh gave them a third win in seven matches. "We will take a lot of confidence into those matches." Pakistan have six points and sit in fifth place in the ICC World Cup 2023 points table. Australia, in fourth place, have eight points and a game in hand while third-placed New Zealand are third, also on eight points, having also played one game fewer. Pakistan face the Kiwis on Saturday in Bengaluru before finishing their ICC World Cup 2023 group campaign against defending champions England

in Kolkata on November 11. As well as two wins, the 1992 champions will need other results go their way if they are to stay in the tournament. On Tuesday, Shaheen Shah Afridi grabbed three wickets while openers Fakhar Zaman and Abdullah Shafique made 81 and 68 respectively as Pakistan chased down a 205-run target for the loss of three wickets with 105 balls to spare. "We know when Fakhar [Zaman] plays the way he can for 20-30 overs it is a different ball game. So we let him play his natural game and it is good to see," said Babar Azam of Zaman, the only Pakistan batsman to have scored a double century in one-day international cricket. Babar Azam added: "We started well. Shaheen took early wickets. The main thing is we stuck to our length in the middle overs and we took wickets."

Fakhar, a 33-year-old left-hander, was playing only his second match of the tournament after being sidelined with a knee injury. "We were anxiously waiting for this win," said Zaman. "Every win in the World Cup boosts the confidence and our aim is to win the remaining two matches. Our target is semi-final." Zaman admitted the defeat to India earlier in the tournament had been a bodyblow but the team had gained new confidence by pushing South Africa all the way. Pakistan fought hard against the Proteas only to lose by a narrow one-wicket margin in Chennai on Friday. "That loss to India made the difference, every match against India does but we fought well in the South Africa match and that fight gave us much-needed rhythm," said Zaman. Zaman also said the impact of his injury was not as severe as first feared. - Agencies

Jessica beats Aryna Sabalenka to reach semi-finals

She will now play Sabalenka on Thursday evening to determine the second qualifier from group

OUR CORRESPONDENTS

MEXICO: Jessica Pegula beat world number one Aryna Sabalenka in straight sets to move into the semi-finals of the WTA Finals in Cancun, Mexico Pegula, 29, clinched victory on her seventh match point, sealing a 6-4 6-3 victory over the Belarusian, who made 33 unforced errors. Elena Rybakina defeated Maria Sakkari 6-0 6-7 (4-7) 7-6 (7-2). She will now play Sabalenka on Thursday evening to determine the second qualifier from the group. American Pegula, who had defeated Rybakina on Sunday, has now won her past five matches against top-10 players and said she is feeling "more comfortable" against the elite players this year. "I don't think it feels like such a big deal," she said. "Last year when I made top five, I think I psyched myself out a little bit. You have



thoughts in your head - do I really belong at that level?" In contrast, Sabalenka rarely looked at ease at the newly constructed Estadio Paradisus, and described the playing surface as being "like leather". The 25-year-old is one of several players who have complained about the condition of the court at this week's tournament. "You never know what's going to happen, whether the bounce is going to help you or work against you," Sabalenka said. "I guess today was a day where it didn't work well for me. But it's OK - I still have a chance to pass the group, so I'm trying to stay strong. I'll do some recovery and just try to analyse what happened. I'll do everything I can in the next match." Wednesday's Group B matches see Wimbledon champion Marketa Vondrousova take on Ons Jabeur, while US Open winner Coco Gauff faces Iga Swiatek.

Pakistan stands at...

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upholding the rights of the people of Pakistan, foremost their fundamental right to vote, to choose their leaders and to define their future themselves." Imran Khan said that whom they choose as their leader was secondary, but they must be given their basic and fundamental right enshrined in the constitution to choose their representatives. PTI Chairman alarmed: "Pakistan stands at the crossroads; it is a critical juncture where we are watching the steady destruction and dismantling of our justice system. We must, therefore, act immediately if we are to prevent its complete collapse." "If we do not fight for justice and stand behind our judges, we will not be able to establish Constitutional supremacy in this country or stand against this rule of might, where only the fittest and the richest survive," he added.

Hamas pitches...

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The statement added that the mediators have been told that the massacre in Gaza should be stopped, adding that Netanyahu's false claims will never be fulfilled. The US should stop obstructing international efforts to end the violence in Gaza, Ismail Haniyeh added. Fifteen Israeli soldiers have been killed fighting in Gaza since Tuesday, a spokesman for the country's military told AFP. Israeli troops have been fighting Hamas militants on the ground since Friday, backed by heavy air strikes which have killed multiple civilians in the Palestinian territory. He said "the world seems unable, or unwilling, to act," adding that "this cannot go on. We need a step change." The World Health Organisation (WHO) has welcomed the first evacuations of wounded patients out of the Gaza Strip but stressed that thousands of injured civilians and people with chronic illnesses also needed treatment, AFP reports. "The WHO welcomes Egypt's decision to accept 81 injured and sick people from the Gaza Strip for treatment," the WHO's Eastern Mediterranean regional branch said in a statement.

Pak to continue...

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Israeli aggressive actions and atrocities against innocent Palestinians, he demanded immediate withdrawal of Israeli troops from Palestinian territory and cease violation of human rights. The minister also demanded to recognize Palestine as an independent state with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital. He said that it was our religious and national duty to support the Palestinians people against the brutal Israeli occupation. "We should all show solidarity towards the oppressed people of Palestinians," he said. The minister said Gaza had been under the occupation of Israel for the last 17 years and the Palestinians people had been facing unprecedented terror wave since October 7.

Japanese self...

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also attended the reception. The reception was attended by the military officials as well as Ministers, parliamentarians, senior members of the Government of Pakistan, members of the diplomatic community and other dignitaries from the public and private sectors. In his remarks, Ambassador WADA stated "I am very pleased to see the progress in defense exchanges and cooperations between Japan and Pakistan," and "I believe that the deepening of the exchanges and cooperations between the JSDF and Pakistan Armed Forces, in addition to the grassroots cooperation, will lead to the strengthening of the Japan-Pakistan relations." In February, the Maritime Self-Defense Force participated in the multilateral joint exercise "AMAN23" hosted by the Pakistani Navy. In August, the two countries co-hosted the Preparatory Meeting for the UN Peacekeeping Ministerial in Islamabad. In September, the 9th Japan-Pakistan Security Dialogue was held in Tokyo to discuss a wide range of issues including foreign policy, security policy and counter-terrorism measures.

Briefs

German President seeks forgiveness for Tanzania

BERLIN : President Frank-Walter Steinmeier on Wednesday expressed his "shame" at crimes committed during Germany's colonial rule in Tanzania and pledged to raise awareness of the atrocities in his own country. "I would like to ask for forgiveness for what Germans did to your ancestors here," Steinmeier said during a visit to the Maji Maji Museum in the southern city of Songea, according to a transcript of his speech. Tanzania was part of German East Africa, which saw one of the bloodiest uprisings in colonial history between 1905 and 1907. Experts say between 200,000 and 300,000 members of the indigenous population were brutally murdered during the so-called Maji Maji Rebellion, mostly as a result of the systematic destruction of fields and villages by German troops. Voicing his "shame" at the events, Steinmeier said Germany was ready to work with Tanzania towards a "communal processing" of the past.

"What happened here is our shared history - the history of your ancestors and the history of our ancestors in Germany," he said, promising to "take these stories with me to Germany, so that more people in my country will know about them". "I want to assure you that we Germans will search with you for answers to the unanswered questions that give you no peace," he added.

SA factory activity declines in oct

JOHANNESBURG : South African manufacturing activity shrank at a faster pace in October, dragged down by weak domestic demand and adverse global events despite an improvement in local power supply. The seasonally-adjusted Absa Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) fell to 45.4 points in October from an upwardly revised 46.2 in September, further below the 50-point mark that separates expansion from contraction. South African bank Absa, which sponsors the PMI survey, said in a statement that it was "perplexing" the index had fallen despite an easing of rolling power cuts - known locally as load-shedding - in October. "With key units of the Kusile power station resuming operations earlier than expected and the associated reduced load-shedding in October, adverse global events seem to have driven the poor expectations reading," Absa added. The sub-index measuring expected business conditions in six months was down by more than 12 points in October, while the business activity sub-index saw a slip of almost 3 points, likely reflecting constrained demand for manufactured goods.—APP

Search continues for Australian after shark attack

SYDNEY : Australian authorities searched Wednesday for the remains of a 55-year-old surfer after a witness reportedly saw an attack by a large shark that "had his body in his mouth". There has been no trace of the victim since the marine predator struck Tuesday morning near the popular surfing spot of Granites Beach in South Australia, police said. "The man's body is yet to be found and the search resumed early this morning," police said in a statement. A 70-year-old surfer at the scene when the attack happened, Ian Brophy, said he was about to enter the water when someone yelled: "Shark!" "As I turned around, I saw the shark go and just launch and bite," he told Adelaide's The Advertiser newspaper. Brophy said he saw the predator go "over the top of the guy and bite and drag him down under the water and then nothing for a minute or two and blood everywhere and then up pops the board".—APP

US Vice President urges action on AI threats

"We reject the false choice that suggests we can either protect the public or advance innovation. We can - and we must - do both. And we must do so swiftly, as this technology rapidly advances"

NEWS DESK

LONDON : Short-term threats posed by artificial intelligence to democracy and privacy need to be addressed as urgently as longer term existential threats, Kamala Harris, the US vice-president, is expected to say in a speech setting out the Biden administration's vision before the UK's Bletchley Park summit on AI. In a speech in London on Wednesday before attending the conference, she will say: "We reject the false choice that suggests we can either protect the public or advance innovation. We can - and we must - do both. And we must do so swiftly, as this technology rapidly advances." Harris wants to advance beyond the debates about the future potential, sometimes speculative, existential threats posed by AI in the future to examine harms that are already happening, including those associated with discrimination and disinformation. She will say the existential threats

are "without question, profound, and demand global action. But let us be clear: there are additional threats that also demand our action, threats that are currently causing harm and which, to many people, also feel existential." Harris is particularly interested in technology to combat AI-generated voice calls that may be seeking to steal from vulnerable people. She also wants measures to trace authentic government-produced digital content and AI-generated or manipulated content, including through digital signatures, watermarking, and other labelling techniques. She will set a series of tests when it comes to the development, testing, and use of AI, including: "Whose biases are being written into the code? Whose interests are being served? Who reaps the reward of speedy adoption? Who suffers the harms most acutely? Who will be hurt if something goes wrong? Who has been at the table?" She will also reveal that 30 countries have agreed

to sign a US-sponsored political declaration for the use of AI by national militaries. The vast bulk of the signatories are western-oriented nations, suggesting a new cold war AI division may be starting to form. She warns of "AI-enabled cyber-attacks at a scale beyond anything we have seen before, to AI-formulated bio-weapons that could endanger the lives of millions". The goals of the political declaration, first set out in February, include for states to commit to "strong and transparent norms that apply across military domains, regardless of a system's functionality or scope of potential effects. States would also commit to pursue continued discussions on how military AI capabilities are developed, deployed and used in a responsible manner, and to continue to engage the rest of the international community to promote these measures." The political declaration, she promises, would preserve the right to self-defence and countries' ability

to responsibly develop and use AI in the military domain. Her two days in the UK represent a chance for her personally to show American leadership on an issue that offers a fresh dimension for her often criticised vice-presidency. Harris confirmed that the US Department of Commerce would establish the United States AI Safety Institute (US AISI) that will create "guidelines, tools, benchmarks and best practices for evaluating and mitigating dangerous capabilities and conducting evaluations to identify and mitigate AI risk". The institute will develop technical guidance on issues such as authenticating content created by humans, watermarking AI-generated content, identifying and mitigating against harmful algorithmic discrimination, ensuring transparency and enabling adoption of privacy-preserving AI. It would also serve as a driver of the future workforce for safe and trusted AI. Our US morning briefing breaks down

the key stories of the day, telling you what's happening and why it matters. Is the AI safety summit already too late? The body would share information and collaborate on research with peer institutions internationally, including the UK's planned AI Safety Institute. Inside the US administration, the Biden team is setting governance boards to track the progress of AI, advise agency leadership on AI, and to coordinate and track agencies' AI activities. Defending the need for state regulation, Harris will say: "History has shown in the absence of regulation and strong government oversight, some technology companies choose to prioritise profit over the wellbeing of their customers, the security of our communities and the stability of our democracies. "One important way to address these challenges - in addition to the work we have already done - is through legislation. Legislation that strengthens AI safety without stifling innovation."

Australian state urges residents to flee wildfires

SYDNEY: Residents in three areas in Australia's northern Queensland state were ordered to evacuate their homes on Wednesday, as bushfires burned out of control. Firefighters including those flown in from across Australia and New Zealand have been battling blazes in the state that have already killed two and destroyed dozens of homes. People in two adjacent areas, near the town of Dalveen, were on Wednesday ordered to evacuate immediately. "Every Australian's heart goes out to the people... who are being impacted once again by these bushfires," Australian Treasurer Jim Chalmers, whose electorate is in the state, told a news conference on Wednesday. "I really wanted to express our gratitude as well for all of the people who are reinforcing the efforts in those affected communities." The blazes in the area also affected the neighboring state of New South Wales (NSW) to the south. "It was a pretty horrifying experience," NSW resident Michelle Balint told state broadcaster ABC on Wednesday, recounting a wall of flames racing across the family's land. "We've never seen anything like it." Authorities on Wednesday imposed a third evacuation warning in the far north of the state, near Watsonville.—APP

Bang garment workers protest, block roads

DNA

DHAKA :Thousands of Bangladeshi garment workers barricaded roads in Dhaka Wednesday demanding fair wages for clothing they make for major Western brands, with at least two killed during days of protests. Sabina Begum, a 22-year-old seamstress, said she joined the protests because she was "struggling to ensure bread and butter" for her family, saying the monthly minimum wage of 8,300 taka (\$75) did not cover basic needs. "How can we spend a month with 8,300 taka when we need to spend 5,000-6,000 taka alone for the rent of a one-bedroom house?" Begum told AFP. The garment worker protests come as Bangladesh also reels from separate anti-government demonstrations, with opposition party supporters demanding Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina step down ahead of elections due by the end of January. Bangladesh's 3,500 garment factories account for some 85 percent of the South Asian country's \$55 billion exports, but conditions are dire for many of its four million apparel workers.



RIYADH : Dr. Saira Siddique CEO & Founder of Pakistan's pioneering virtual hospital medIQ Smart Healthcare called on H.E. Ambassador Ahmad Farooq. The discussed Productive discussions on the transformative journey of the healthcare industry and innovative digital health solutions.—DNA

Uganda shifts exclusive petroleum deal to vitol

KAMPALA : Uganda plans to hand over exclusive rights for supply of all petroleum products to a unit of global energy trader Vitol and end a system that sources the oil products through neighbouring Kenya, Uganda's energy minister said. Fuel companies in the landlocked East African nation buy their supplies through affiliated firms in Kenya that import the product on their behalf through Mombasa port. That system, which accounts for 90% of Uganda's fuel imports, exposes it to supply disruptions and high pump prices, Energy Minister Ruth Nankabirwa said in a statement. "UNOC and Vitol Bahrain E.C. have negotiated a five-year contract, and the Partner (Vitol) will be financing the business by providing a working capital," she said late on Tuesday. According to central bank data, Uganda imported \$1.6 billion worth of petroleum products in 2022. The cabinet has approved changes to the petroleum law that will allow Vitol to exclusively supply the state-owned Uganda National Oil Company (UNOC), the minister said.—APP

N.Korea closes multiple embassies around world

SEOUL : North Korea is poised to close as many as a dozen embassies including in Spain, Hong Kong, and multiple countries in Africa, according to media reports and analysts, in a move that could see nearly 25 percent of Pyongyang's missions close worldwide. North Korea's recent closing of its diplomatic missions was a sign that the reclusive country is struggling to make money overseas because of international sanctions, South Korea state media outlet KCNA said the country's ambassadors paid "farewell" visits to Angolan and Ugandan leaders last week, and local media in both African countries reported the shutdown of the North's embassies there. Both Angola and Uganda have forged friendly ties with North Korea since the 1970s, maintaining military cooperation and providing rare sources of foreign currency such as statue-building projects. The embassy closings set the stage for what could be "one of the country's biggest foreign policy shakeups in decades", with implications for diplomatic engagement, humanitarian work in the isolated country, as well as the ability to generate illicit revenue, wrote Chad O'Carroll, founder of the North Korea-focused website NK Pro. More than a dozen missions may close, likely because of international sanctions, a trend of Pyongyang's disengaging globally and the probable weakening of the North Korean economy, he said in a report on Wednesday. Seoul's unification ministry, which handles inter-Korean affairs, said the pullout reflected the impact of international sanctions aimed at curbing funding for the North's nuclear and missile programs. "They appear to be withdrawing as their foreign currency earning business has stumbled due to the international community's strengthening of sanctions, making it difficult to maintain the embassies any longer," the ministry said in a statement. "This can be a sign of North Korea's difficult economic situation, where it is difficult to maintain even minimal diplomatic relations with traditionally friendly countries."—DNA

Uzbekistan - France: a Comprehensive High-level Partnership

MUKHIDDIN KHASHIMOV

France pays special attention to Central Asia as a region with an important geopolitical position, significant energy and other resources, and great economic, investment, transportation, communication and humanitarian potential. Uzbekistan is considered by France as a large and influential state in Central Asia, which plays a key strategic role in the region and pursues a balanced and forward-looking foreign policy. Paris highly appreciates the regional policy of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, who has significantly activated the Central Asian vector of foreign policy, based on the principles of mutual benefit, equality, pragmatism and consensus. This new approach contributes to solving vital problems of Central Asia and maintaining stability, security and sustainable development of the region. Uzbek-French relations have a deep history, as evidenced by the correspondence between the great statesman Amir Temur and French King Charles VI. A new page was opened in the relations between the two countries with Uzbekistan's independence. Today, it is observed Uzbekistan's active open, pragmatic approach and France's interest in deepening and expanding bilateral ties. The foreign policy activities of Uzbekistan's leader have created a new political atmosphere and achieved positive results in a number of spheres of cooperation. A solid legal framework has been created between the two countries, consisting of 62 agreements, including 26 interstate and intergovernmental, 23 interdepartmental and

13 other agreements. An open and trustful dialogue has been established between the leaders of the two countries. It is noteworthy that the presidents of the two countries are reformers: in Uzbekistan, the deep transformations in all spheres are underway under the leadership of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev; similar processes are taking place in France under the framework of Emmanuel Macron's program doctrine. Since March 1, 1992, in more than 30 years after the establishment of diplomatic relations, 5 high-level visits have been organized: to France - 4, to Uzbekistan - 1. Over the last 5 years, President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has visited this country twice. The first official visit took place on October 8-9, 2018 at the invitation of President Emmanuel Macron. The French Republic became the first European country visited by the President of Uzbekistan since he took office in 2016. The agreements and trade contracts worth a total of \$3.4 billion were signed at that time. On November 21-22, 2022, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev paid his second official visit to France. During the visit, the two heads of state held negotiations, meetings with the President of the French National Assembly Yaël Braun-Pivet and representatives of leading companies and financial institutions of France, as well as joint visits to Uzbekistan's national exhibitions at the Louvre Museum and the Arab World Institute. As a result of the visit, 14 bilateral documents were signed, as well as 59 agreements and contracts worth 6.086 billion euros. Political dialogue and practical interaction

between the countries is strengthened by active inter-parliamentary exchange. Both chambers of the Oliy Majlis have established groups for cooperation with the French Parliament. The French Senate has a France-Central Asia interparliamentary group and the National Assembly, the lower house of the French parliament, has a France-Central Asia friendship group. The French Republic is one of the active partners of the Republic of Uzbekistan in

a solar photovoltaic station with a capacity of 100 MW in Nurabad district of Samarkand region is underway with "Total Eren" company, geological exploration works on promising areas for uranium mining are carried out jointly with "Orano Mining" company, together with an international consortium, including the company "EDF", a combined-cycle power plant with a capacity of 1600 MW is being built in Syrdarya province; together with "SUEZ", the



economic, investment, financial and technical spheres among European countries. In recent years, the number of joint ventures and projects with the participation of French companies has tripled. The current portfolio of active joint projects in Uzbekistan has exceeded 5 billion euros. There are 46 enterprises with French capital in Uzbekistan, including 17 enterprises with 100% French capital. At present, a number of large investment projects are being realized in Uzbekistan with the participation of French investments. In particular, the construction of

projects "Tashkent Water Sector Transformation Plan" and "Improvement of Drinking Water Supply in Surkhandarya province" and others are being implemented. The French company "Veolia" has received management of the heating network of Tashkent city on the basis of public-private partnership (PPP) for the next 30 years. An effective mechanism of interaction - Intergovernmental Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation between Uzbekistan and France was established. On May 5, 2023 in Tashkent city the 9th IGC meeting was held. The

9th IGC meeting within the framework of the visit of Mr. Olivier Becht Minister-Delegate for Foreign Trade, Economic Attractiveness and French Citizens Abroad. Systematic work on increasing investment and financial-technical cooperation continues, in particular, through the French Development Agency (FDA). The intergovernmental Agreement on the establishment and activities of the FDA and PROPARCO in Uzbekistan, signed in 2016, allowed to intensify bilateral cooperation. The total amount of funds allocated by FDA for the implementation of 10 projects amounted to 990 million euros of loans, 4.3 million euros of grants from FDA and 19.6 million euros of grants from the Investment Fund for Central Asia. On November 20, 2022, the Program of Cooperation with FDA for 2023-2025 was signed, which envisages implementation of projects worth 1.070 billion euros. Trade is the most important component of international relations to ensure the welfare of the two countries by creating sustainable income throughout the supply chain. For 2022, trade turnover amounted to \$339.5 million (+20.9%); exports - \$67.9 million (3.2 times), imports - \$271.3 million (+4.5%). In January-July 2023, trade turnover increased almost threefold - from \$183.4 million to \$517.6 million. Uzbekistan increased exports to 239.5 million dollars (3.5 times), imports from France - to 278.1 million dollars (2.4 times). The issue of ensuring quality and safety of goods and services is an essential component of bilateral trade relations. The French side provides active assistance in the field of certification and standardization, including through the French representatives of "AFNOR",

"Bureau Veritas". One of the priority areas of cooperation are cultural, humanitarian, scientific-educational and tourist ties, which in recent years have entered the trajectory of dynamic development. Already today, cooperation in these spheres has a multidimensional and multilevel character. Cultural personalities, scientists, parliamentarians, civil society institutions, mass media of the two countries are involved in strengthening cultural and humanitarian ties. Today, the Association for the Study of Temurid Art and History and the Association "Avicenna-France" operate in France. Representatives of France regularly participate in the international festival "Sharq Taronalari" in Samarkand. From November 2022 to March 2023, one of the largest and most popular museums in the world "Louvre" organized an exhibition entitled "Treasures of the oases of Uzbekistan at the crossroads of caravan routes", as well as from November 2022 to June 2023 the exhibition "Road to Samarkand. Wonders of silk and gold" at the Institute of the Arab World in France. There is a growing common interest in interaction in the educational sphere as well. In Uzbekistan, over 200 thousand students in more than 700 schools, colleges and lycées, and in 12 universities study French with great interest. The established direct contacts between higher educational institutions also contribute to the deepening of relations in the educational sector.

— The writer is Head of Department of the Information and Analytical Center for International Relations under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Briefs

Chinese ambassador, Fazlur Rehman discuss ties

ISLAMABAD: Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan, Jiang Zaidong along with his delegation Wednesday met with JamiatUlema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) Chief Maulana FazlurRehman and discussed ties between the two countries. According to a JUI-F Spokesperson, the delegation included Minister Counselor Zhang Nu, Zhang Duva and Wang Sita. The matters related to bilateral relations and China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) were also discussed in the meeting. The ambassador said "We want Pakistan to use China's technology in agriculture." The meeting also agreed to expand the scope of CPEC. also underscored the importance of including more projects in CPEC. Fazal expressed his resolve to form industrial and economic zones in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. The ambassador also invited the JUI-F chief to visit China. Mohammad Jalaluddin, a former ambassador, and adviser on foreign affairs, and Mufti Abrar Ahmed, who is the spokesperson for JUI-F were also present in the meeting. - APP

LHC orders government to impose smog emergency in Lahore

DNA

LAHORE: The Lahore High Court (LHC) on Wednesday blamed the incumbent government for the current situation in Lahore due to the smog and ordered the administration to impose a citywide emergency. The orders were issued when the LHC took up pleas seeking the court's intervention in the matter. During today's hearing, Lahore Commissioner Muhammad Ali Randhwa and other officers appeared before the court. The court directed the government not to de-seal factories that are responsible for black smoke and directed school and college students to inform the authorities of such factories. It also ordered the commissioner and other officers to visit schools and colleges to inform students about the decision regarding factories that emit black smoke. "The government is responsible for the current situation of smog," observed Justice Shahid Karim. While addressing the officers, the judge told them to look at the city's situation and reminded them that they were the owners of the city and in a position to do something about it.

Court reserves decision on Shehbaz's bail plea

DNA

LAHORE: An accountability court reserved its decision on Wednesday on the bail application of former prime minister Shehbaz Sharif and other accused in the Ashiana housing society case. The decision is scheduled to be announced on November 7. The court also approved a one-day exemption from attendance plea for Ahad Khan Cheema, the now special advisor to the caretaker prime minister. The hearing was presided over by Judge Malik Ali Zulqarnain. During today's hearing, NAB prosecutor WarisJanjua presented his evidence, stating that as per the record available there was no possibility of proving the accused guilty. He further expressed his accord with the findings of the investigation report. Cheema, who was formerly the director general of the Lahore Development Authority (LDA) had sought a one-day exemption from attendance, explaining that as an advisor to the caretaker PM he was in Islamabad to fulfill his official responsibilities. Accused Munir Zia's lawyer presented arguments on the bail application, contending that NAB's reference was based on malice.



BAKU: President of Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev received Chief of Pakistan's Army Staff General Asim Munir. Among other high ranking officials from Azerbaijan Defence Ministry, Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan Khazar Farhadov was also present during the meeting. - DNA

Pak-Baku discuss military coop as COAS meets Aliyev

COAS appreciated the high morale, remarkable standard of operational readiness of Azerbaijani Forces

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M), COAS is on an official visit to the Republic of Azerbaijan. The visit is aimed at enhancing military to military cooperation and defence collaboration between the two brotherly countries. During the visit, COAS called on H.E IlhamAliyev, President of Republic of Azerbaijan, Defense Minister, 1st Deputy Minister & Chief of General Staff and Commander of Azerbaijan Air Force. During the meetings, COAS emphasized on enhancing cooperation in the fields of defence and training. COAS appreciated the high morale and remarkable standard of operational readiness of Azerbaijani Armed Forces. Political and military leadership of Azerbaijan acknowledged continued support of Pakistan and vowed to enhance mu-

tual cooperation between the two states and their Armed Forces to a new level. During the meeting President IlhamAliyev noted that friendly and brotherly relations between the two countries are successfully developing in a variety of fields including the military one. President IlhamAliyev hailed continuous support the government and people of Pakistan provided to Azerbaijan during Armenia's aggression against the country. The fact that Pakistan did not establish diplomatic relations with Armenia because of this country's aggression was described by the head of state as demonstration of brotherly attitude to Azerbaijan. President Ilham Aliyev expressed his satisfaction to Pakistan for the political support to Azerbaijan during the Second Karabakh War. The head of state pointed out that the historical mission of de-occupation of Azerbaijani lands had been accomplished with

the country's sovereignty totally restored and large-scale reconstruction work started in the liberated lands. Praising successful cooperation between Azerbaijan and Pakistan in the defense industry, President IlhamAliyev pointed out the importance of conducting joint military training between the two countries. Touching upon sovereignty and territorial integrity of both countries at the international level, the head of state reiterated that Azerbaijan had always supported brotherly Pakistan on the issue of Jammu and Kashmir. President Ilham Aliyev expressed his confidence that AsimMunir's visit would contribute to cementing cooperation between the two countries. Asim Munir congratulated Azerbaijan on the Victory in the Second Karabakh War and the country's achievements in the anti-terrorist measures taken in September this

year, adding that it was welcomed with great joy in Pakistan. The Chief of Pakistan's Army Staff once again emphasized that Pakistan, remaining committed to fraternal relations with the people of Azerbaijan, had not recognized Armenia until today. AsimMunir expressed his gratitude to Azerbaijan for its support with respect to the Jammu and Kashmir issue. During visit to the General Staff Headquarters, COAS was warmly welcomed as the solemn welcoming ceremony was held in the Defense Ministry. The Chief of Pakistan's Army Staff passed along the guard of honor and the national anthems of both countries were performed. The "Book of Honor" was signed in accordance with the protocol. Colonel General ZakirHasanov welcomed the Pakistani delegation and expressed his satisfaction with seeing them in Azerbaijan.

CNS official visit to Saudi Arabia

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Naveed Ashraf called-on top Leadership of Royal Saudi Armed Forces during an official visit to Saudi Arabia. During meetings with Chief of the General Staff of Saudi Armed Forces, Gen Fayyadh bin Hamed Al-Ruwali at Ministry of Defence and Commander Royal Saudi Naval Forces Vice Admiral Fahd Bin Abdullah al-Ghofaily at RSNF Headquarters matters of bilateral naval collaboration and regional maritime security were discussed. The Naval Chief underscored the contribution of Pakistan Navy towards regional maritime peace and stability through its initiative of RMSP and participation in Combined Maritime Force.



RIYADH: Naval Chief Admiral Naveed Ashraf exchanging views with Chief of the General Staff of Saudi Armed Forces Gen Fayyadh Bin Hamed Al-Ruwali during his visit to Saudi Arabia. - DNA

Saudi-based Wafi Energy signs deal to take over Shell Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Shell Petroleum Company Limited, a subsidiary of Shell plc (Shell), has agreed to sell its 77.42% majority interest in Shell Pakistan Limited (SPL) to Saudi Arabia-based Wafi Energy LLC, said an official statement issued by the company on Wednesday. "The sale is part of Shell's strategy to high-grade its mobility network and was first announced on Capital Markets Day in June 2023," the statement added. The sale is expected to be completed by the fourth quarter of 2024, subject to regulatory approvals. Upon completion, the Shell brand will remain in Pakistan through brand licensing agreements and customers will continue to have access to Shell's premium fuel and lubricant portfolio, it said. "SPL remains committed to delivering safe, reliable operations." WAFI Energy LLC, one of the leading fuel station companies in Saudi Arabia, is a fast-growing retail gas station network and the sole licensee of Shell Retail Network in Saudi Arabia. The company was incorporated in 2012 with an author-

ised and paid-up capital of 3 million Saudi Riyal. The development came after Shell Pakistan's parent company, Shell Petroleum Company Limited (SPCo), notified its intent to sell its shareholding in the Pakistani entity in June this year. SPCo had a 77.42% stake in Shell Pakistan as of December 31, 2022, according to the annual report for that year. Shell Pakistan said at the time that the divestment plan would have no impact on its current business operations, which would continue as usual. The company also said that it was seeing strong interest from international buyers. Shell Pakistan is one of the leading oil marketing companies in Pakistan, with a network of over 800 retail outlets across the country. The company reported a profit after tax of Rs6,450 million for the nine months ended September 30, 2023, compared to Rs2,864 million in the same period last year. - DNA

Khamenei calls upon Muslim countries to boycott Israel

The Leader lauded the Palestinians for their resistance and steadfastness in the face of Israeli atrocities in the besieged Gaza Strip, stating that their resilience has aroused the human conscience

NEWS DESK

TEHRAN: Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has called upon Muslim states to press for an end to the ongoing Israeli atrocities against the besieged Gaza Strip, impose sanctions on the Tel Aviv regime and stop oil and goods exports to the occupied territories. Ayatollah Khamenei made the remarks during a meeting with students from across the country on Wednesday, ahead of the National Student Day and the National Day of Fight against Global Arrogance, which Iranians celebrate on November 4. The Leader lauded the Palestinians for their resistance and steadfastness in the face of Israeli atrocities in the besieged Gaza Strip, stating that their resilience has aroused the human conscience. "What Muslim states must insist on is the immediate cessation of [Israeli] crimes in Gaza. They must promptly stop the bombardment of Gaza, and stop the export of oil and other commodities to the Zionist regime," he said. "Mus-

lim states must not cooperate economically with the Zionist regime, but denounce these catastrophes and crimes vociferously and without hesitation in all international forums." "The scale and circumstances of what is going on must be clarified. The Zionist regime must be condemned, and the entire Muslim world must be mobilized against it," the Leader added. Ayatollah Khamenei lauded the Palestinians for their resistance and steadfastness in the face of the devastating Israeli onslaught against the Gaza Strip, saying their resilience aroused the human conscience. The Leader noted that protesters in Western countries, Britain, France, Italy and various US states have taken to the streets en masse and chanted slogans in condemnation of Israel and the United States. "It was an absolute disgrace for them, which they can neither recover from nor justify," the Leader said. "The Muslim world should not forget that all through the critical issue of Gaza, the party which stood against Islam and the oppressed Palestinian nation was [the United States of] America, France and Britain."

Bolivia severs diplomatic ties with Israel

LA PAZ: Bolivia has become the first Latin American country to cut diplomatic ties with Israel over what it describes as "aggressive and disproportionate" military actions in Gaza. The country called for a ceasefire and said it would be supplying the blockaded Gaza Strip with aid. An Israeli official said the move was "a surrender to terrorism". LiorHaia accused the Bolivian government of "aligning itself with the Hamas terrorist organization". Bolivia's Deputy Foreign Minister Freddy Mamani said that the government had taken the decision to cut ties "in repudiation and condemnation of the aggressive and disproportionate Israeli military offensive taking place in the Gaza Strip". He added that the country wanted an end to Israel's blockade that was preventing "the entry of food, water and other essential elements for life". Gaza has been under an Israeli siege for weeks, with essential aid only reaching people through Egypt's Rafah crossing sporadically. "Israel condemns Bolivia's support of terrorism and its submission to the Iranian regime, which attest to the values the government of Bolivia represents," MrHaia said in response. Iran has been accused of providing support for Hamas to carry out the 7 October attacks. While Iran's leaders have celebrated and praised the violence, they have denied involvement. Bolivia is not the only Latin American country to have begun taking diplomatic steps against Israel. Chile's President Gabriel Boric said on Tuesday he was recalling the country's ambassador in Tel Aviv for consultations "given the unacceptable violations of International Humanitarian Law that Israel has incurred in the Gaza Strip." - Agencies

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