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Solution to current political instability lies in joint efforts

Detailed News On Page-08

Sanchez gets new term as Spanish PM

Detailed News On Page-07



Afridi denies lobbying for Shaheen Shah

Detailed News On Page-06



To reap dividends

Kakar directs to implement SIFC initiatives

COAS reiterates army's resolve to 'backstop' government initiatives for economy's recovery

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Thursday directed all the stakeholders to vigorously pursue the Special Investment Facilitation Council's (SIFC) initiatives through a collaborative approach to reap the dividend in short to medium terms, besides initiating processes for long term endeavours in the larger national interest. The prime minister said this while chairing the 7th meeting of the Apex Committee of SIFC that was attended by the Chief of Army Staff, members of the federal cabinet, provincial chief ministers and high level government officials. The meeting was held to review various initiatives being led through the SIFC forum, a PM Office press release said.

In the meeting, the ministries presented progress on projects identified in key sectors and gave plans to further improve the ecosystem for realizing the envisaged investments in a timely manner. The committee showed extreme satisfaction on overall progress under the umbrella of SIFC, appreciated the enhancing level of engagements with friendly countries, both public and private entities, and the outreach strategy to proactively engage investors' community, which was translating in enhanced traction and approvals at domestic and global stages. It reviewed progress on various measures undertaken to improve investment climate and approved policy level interventions to further improve investors' confidence including repatriation of profits, strengthening domestic dispute resolution mechanism, infrastructural and human resource development, and speedy operationalization of EXIM Bank. The committee also directed to make a comprehensive strategy to address oil and gas issues in a sustainable manner by investing in relevant industries. The apex body reviewed and

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SC links non-implementation of Faizabad verdict to May 9 events

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan has lamented that the violence continued to be perceived as a permissible means to attain one's goals as evident from the May 9 incidents. The remarks made by Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Justice Qazi Faez Isa came as a three-member Supreme Court bench, headed by the CJP, and comprising Justice Athar Minallah and Justice Aminuddin Khan, heard a review petition filed against the SC's 2019 judgement in the Faizabad sit-in case. Following Wednesday's court proceedings, the government announced a three-member commission to identify those who planned, financed, and supported a sit-in at Islamabad's Faizabad area six years back—a dharna that had brought a little-known religious party, the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), into the national spotlight. According to the government's notification, the commission will also recommend legal action against

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BELGIAN KING'S DAY



ISLAMABAD: Chief Guest Fawad Hassan Fawad, Federal Minister for Privatisation, Ambassador of Belgium Charles Delogne cutting cake to celebrate the King's Day. – DNA

Pakistan re-elected to UNESCO executive board

Pak will continue to work together with all member states

DNA

PARIS: Pakistan has been re-elected to the Executive Board of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) for the term 2023-2027. The country's permanent delegation to UNESCO based in Paris, in a statement, said Pakistan received the highest number of votes in the group. "We are thankful to member states for their support and trust."

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PML-N gears up for elections Present conditions are self-inflicted wound, laments Nawaz Sharif

Nawaz recalled that the PML-N was not ready to form a govt in 2022, but saving Pakistan from default became a priority

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Nawaz Sharif – who has served as prime minister thrice – on Thursday said Pakistan would have progressed and much better placed at a rapid speed, if the policies initiated by his government in 1990s were implemented without any interruption. Addressing a gathering at the Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry, he recalled that India had copied the policies introduced in 1990s – the first of his three tenures – and attained economic growth. The then PML-N government helped businesses get rid of the vicious bureaucratic circles, Nawaz said about the trade liberalisation he had brought in Pakistan, which, he added, boosted the country's

Continued on Page 06

Prefer me over three-time PM: Bilawal

ADIL SHAHEEN

ABBOTTABAD: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari took a swipe at the political opponents, saying the parties were indulged in old politics. Addressing the workers' convention in Abbottabad, Bhutto-Zardari said, "The PPP has started its visit to the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa."

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Briefs

IMF, EU officials regularly visit Imran

ABBAS HASHMI

LAHORE: PTI President Chaudhry Parvez Elahi asserted on Thursday that officials from IMF and the European Union regularly visited the party chairman at Adiala jail, where both are currently held. Elahi disclosed this during a court appearance related to a money laundering case against him. He expressed confidence in securing a significant number of votes in the upcoming polls. Elahi emphasised their support for PTI chief, dismissed allegations against him as baseless, and assured public of fair elections without rigging. Additionally, he criticised previous leaders without explicitly naming them and addressed concerns related to his son, Moonis Elahi, in a money laundering case.

Murtaza on warpath against PML-N

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) leader Murtaza Wahab on Thursday launched a fresh salvo at the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) over the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Speaking to the media in Karachi, Wahab said: "The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) is taking credit for our [PPP] projects. Asif Ali Zardari is the mastermind of the CPEC." He alleged, "PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif had not allocated the money in the budget for Karachi".

'Catastrophic' situation as Israeli raid continues

Number of martyrs due to the Israeli aggression has risen to more than 11,500, including 4,710 children

NEWS DESK

GAZA CITY: Israeli occupation forces (IOF) continued on Thursday their holocaust in the Gaza Strip for 41 consecutive days, intensifying airstrikes, targeting residential homes, mosques, communication and internet transmission stations, and wreaking havoc inside the Al-Shifa Medical Complex, and continuing genocide crimes, while escalating ground incursions from multiple axes amid fierce resistance. The Ministry of Interior reported that Israeli helicopters fired shots at civilians' homes in the eastern part of Khan Yunis, south of the Gaza Strip. An Israeli airstrike targeted a house in Al-Sabra neighborhood in southern Gaza City. The Israeli warplanes targeted the vicinity of the Indonesian Hospital in the northern part of the Strip, the occupation aircraft dropped smoke bombs on areas in Beit Lahia, northern Gaza Strip. The IOF carried out continuous artillery shelling east of the Al-Zaytoon neighborhood, east of Juhur Al-Dik, and north of Al-Nuseirat. Israeli warplanes destroyed the Al-Rida Mosque in the Al-Fakhari area and the Al-Amin

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Iran not behind attacks on US bases

FOREIGN DESK

TEHRAN: Iran's foreign minister says the country has had no role in the recent attacks by resistance groups in Iraq and Syria on US-run bases. "These groups in Iraq and Syria, that are attacking US interests, have made their own decisions," Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian told CBS News in an interview published on Wednesday. Pointing to Israel's genocide against Palestinians in the Gaza Strip over the past 41 days, he expressed Iran's strong opposition to the spillover of the war to other parts of the region. "We really didn't want this crisis to expand. But the US has been intensifying the war in Gaza by

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4 terrorists killed in K-P IBOs

High-value target among terrorists killed in IBO: ISPR

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: At least one soldier was martyred during an intelligence-based operation (IBO) in the Kulachi area of Dera Ismail Khan district, said the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) on Thursday. The soldier, identified by the military as Lance Naik Muhammad Ejaz Khan, belonged to Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK). The military's media wing said that "sanitization of the surrounding areas is

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Pak refutes arms sale to Ukraine

Pakistan says TTP in contact with "illegal residents"

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Thursday once again asserted it has not sold arms to Ukraine or Russia, refuting claims made by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in its recently published investigation. Addressing the Foreign Office's weekly media briefing today, spokesperson, Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, said: "We are not even in a position to tell which side is using which weapon in this conflict." She added that the arms sold by Pakistan to anyone have an end-user certificate. Earlier this week, BBC Urdu claimed to be in possession of documents that purportedly show Pakistan's arms sale to Ukraine, an allegation that the Pakistani government has been consistently rejecting. In its report, BBC Urdu stated that the former army chief General (ret'd) Qamar Javed Bajwa addressed the passing-out parade of the British Royal Military Academy on August 12, 2022. As he saw the Pak-UK relations touching "historic heights", a British military cargo plane landed at PAF Base Nur Khan in

Rawalpindi. In future, the plane would land at the same base for five times. The report says that each time, the plane flew from Nur Khan Airbase to the British military base in Cyprus, Akrotiri, and then to Romania, at a time when Russia was waging war in Romania's neighbouring country, Ukraine. Meanwhile, during the presser, the spokesperson informed about a meeting being currently held between Pakistan and Russia to prevent counter-terrorism. "Additional Secretary Haider Shah is leading the delegation from Pakistan." Based on intelligence pertaining to the matter, FO said that the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pa-

kistan (TTP) is in contact with illegal residents in Pakistan. The spokesperson also spoke about Pakistan repeatedly asking the Afghan interim set-up to take action against TTP hideouts in their territory, which it said are used for attacks on Pakistan. "We have asked Afghanistan to take action against these bases," Baloch said. Last week on November 8, Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar ul Haq Kakar asked the Afghan government to take action against TTP hideouts and training centres in Afghanistan, urging it to ensure that "they must not be used against Pakistan". When asked if Pakistan itself would take action against these hideouts in Afghanistan, Kakar said: "We are hopeful that they [Afghan government] will take an action themselves, which is in their own interest and also in our interest." Baloch gave a round-up of Pakistan's presence at the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation's (OIC) joint Extraordinary Session in Riyadh on November 11, during which PM Kakar condemned the ongoing



Continued on Page 06

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PPAF empower Afghan refugees under UNHCR

The programme is committed to empowering over 3,000 Afghan Refugee families residing in six refugee camps in Districts Nowshera, Quetta, Pishin and Islamabad

ADIL SHAHEEN

ISLAMABAD : The Pakistan Poverty Alleviation Fund (PPAF) has embarked upon the distribution of productive livelihood assets to Afghan refugee families under the UNHCR funded Poverty Graduation Programme (PGP) for Afghan Refugees. Currently in its fourth phase, the programme is committed to empowering over 3,000 Afghan Refugee families residing in six refugee camps in Districts Nowshera, Quetta, Pishin and Islamabad. This would enhance their self-reliance and livelihoods by equipping them with transferable skills applicable in both Pakistan and Afghanistan upon their return. In the initial distri-

bution phase, a total of 1,200 livelihood assets are being distributed across the Turkmen, Khesgi, and Akora Khattak camps in District Nowshera, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. A ceremony was held in Akora Khattak camp where Chief Programmes, PPAF, Arshad Rashid, Livelihood Focal Point Officer, UNHCR Peshawar, Ashfaq Hussain distributed livelihood assets among the eligible Afghan Refugee families. Abdul Rehman, Chief HR, Admin and Procurement, PPAF and Executive Director, Initiative for Development & Empowerment Axis (IDEA), PPAF's implementing partner, Muhammad Amad were also present on this occasion. Expressing gratitude to UNHCR for their enduring trust, Arshad Rashid highlighted the positive

sustainable change brought about by the PPAF and UNHCR partnership, impacting over 7,000 Afghan Refugee families since 2017. Beneficiaries, equipped with productive assets and comprehensive training, have progressed significantly in enterprise development, asset management, and financial literacy, leading to enhanced self-sufficiency. Muhammad Amad expressed thanks to UNHCR and PPAF for their support, acknowledging the programme's role in addressing vulnerabilities, improving livelihoods, and enhancing psychological well-being among Afghan refugee families. Notably, each household receiving livelihood assets underwent mandatory 3-day enterprise development training to ensure efficient and sustainable asset utilization.



ISLAMABAD : President of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry Hasan Zafar Bukhari in a group photo with Akma Mukto Nasir of the US Embassy on the occasion of a visit to the Chamber. Qad Waheed, Senior Vice President of the Chamber, Zack Bailey, Trade and Investment Officer of the US Embassy, Hamza Sadiq, Acna Mac Specialist and Ian A. Khan, Commercial Specialist are also present.—DNA

DC pays surprise visit to tehsil hospitals

HYDERABAD : In a late-night surprise visit to Tehsil hospitals Qazi Ahmed and Sakrand, Deputy Commissioner Zahid Hussain Rind checked the attendance of duty doctors and staff. He also inspected the sanitation situation and the medical facilities being provided to patients. During the visit of Tehsil Hospital Sakrand, DC expressed his anger over the hospital administration's bad sanitation situation and directed improvement at the earliest. He also instructed OPD to provide better health facilities to admitted and visiting patients and warned that no negligence would be tolerated in this regard. During the visit, DC directed the District Health Officer and Medical Superintendents of both hospitals to ensure improvement in the situation system and health facilities for patients. DC said that as both hospitals are situated on the National Highway, these essentially require the attendance of doctors and staff and the availability of medicines to cope with any emergency. Assistant Commissioner Nawabshah Salmon Ayub was also present on the occasion.—APP

KP govt declares 'Emergency' for repatriation of illegal foreigners

PESHAWAR :The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) Relief, Rehabilitation and Settlement Department has declared 'Emergency' in district Khyber, Peshawar and Nowshera to expedite the operational activities in the transit and staging points for repatriation of the illegal foreigners. A notification issued here authorized Director General (DG) of PDMA and Deputy Commissioners (DCs) of the three districts to mobilize all resources and engage necessary machinery and other equipment to establish and operate these transit and staging points for repatriation of illegal foreigners. It further said that the Finance department would release all the required funds for the purpose to PDMA for further release to the deputy commissioners for prudent and judicious expenditure. It directed PDMA and DCs to properly maintain the inventory registers and accounts of all the expenditure, issuance of articles etc.—APP

Punjab CM meets KP counterpart in Islamabad

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi met his Khyber Pakhtunkhwa counterpart Arshad Hussain Shah at Punjab House in Islamabad on Thursday. Wheat and sugar prices, matters related to illegal immigrants and border security came under discussion during the meeting. Moshin Naqvi said sugar mills in Punjab are going to begin crushing season on November 25. He also shared the Punjab government's steps to stem smog. The Punjab government yesterday announced the launch of anti-smog

combat. "Educational institutions and government offices will be closed in Lahore on Saturdays while markets will open after 3 pm on Saturdays," the chief minister told the media after a meeting on smog. He added that air filter units will be installed at 12 places in Lahore and a high-powered environmental commission will be established. Experts from Bahauddin Zakaria University of Multan and Punjab University are contacted for artificial rain while Chinese experts have been invited to Lahore for consultation, the chief minister maintained, adding that free registra-

tion of rickshaws will be done in 30 days and after that crackdown on unregistered rickshaws will begin. An environmental lab will be established for the first time in Punjab while the police and transport department have been ordered to crack down on pumps selling substandard petrol, he stated. Farmers will be given modern machinery to destroy crop residues and a team headed by the Chief Secretary will determine the modern machinery for the farmers, Mohsen Naqvi said, adding that modern machinery will be bought for farmers in collaboration with banks.

Journey of development will continue: Mayor

KARACHI :Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab Thursday said that 32 roads would be inaugurated in the next ten days and the journey of development will continue. He expressed these views while addressing the opening ceremony of Iqbal Park in Block 14 Gulberg Town here. Deputy Mayor Karachi Salman Abdullah Murad, People's Party Central District President Masroor Ahsan, General Secretary Dil Muhammad, Saif Yar Khan, Shahzad Majeed and other elected representatives and workers were also present on this occasion. Earlier, Murtaza Wahab along with

Deputy Mayor Karachi inaugurated the Iqbal Park to be built on an area of about 5 acres under the Karachi Mega Project in Federal B Area District Central. Speaking on the occasion, he said many parks had been built at different places to provide recreational facilities to people, in this park built in the central district, a walking track and a parking area have also been built besides a cricket and football ground. He said that we laid the foundation stone of this park at the end of June this year and inaugurated it today. He said that this project was part of the provision of civic services in Karachi. Quality facilities should be provided at local level,

this park is an asset of the people here and you have to support us to maintain it, he said. He said that the project proved the fact that we were doing development work across the city without discrimination. Bakhtiar Youth Center is being constructed fast in North Nazimabad and underpass is being constructed at Meena Bazar Karimabad, we go out everyday and work in one place or another. Mayor Karachi Barrister Murtaza Wahab said that there was a problem of garbage collection in Karachi, which has been solved and the situation has been improved. He said that the construction of roads and star ground in Malir will provide convenience to the citizens.

Court Notice

In the Court of Naveed Abbas Mangat Civil Judge Gujrat
Title: Muhammad Luqman etc. Versus Faisal Hussain etc. Notice to: 38-Javed Iqbal S/o. Ghazanfar Ali, 64-Ashfaq ur Rehman S/o. Muhammad Rafique, 189-Muhammad Safdar S/o. Muhammad Shafi, 190-Muhammad Afzal S/o. Muhammad Shafi, 192-Muhammad Aslam S/o. Muhammad Shafi, 193-Sajida Parveen D/o. Muhammad Shafi, 194-Khalida Parveen D/o. Muhammad Shafi, 195-Rashida Parveen D/o. Muhammad Shafi, 196-Nazia Parveen D/o. Muhammad Shafi, 197-Arooj Fatima, GD/o. Muhammad Shafi, 198-Ayesha Waheed GD/o. Muhammad Shafi, 207-Muhammad Ansar S/o. Ghulam Nabi, 208-Shagufa Perveen D/o. Ghulam Nabi, 209-Nasreen Akhtar D/o. Ghulam Nabi, 212-Javed Iqbal S/o. Ghazanfar Ali R/o. Street Kolian Wali, Muhallah Jattowakal, Gujrat. Suit for Possession through Partition with permanent Injunction Whereas in the above mentioned case it has been proved to the satisfaction of the court that the above mentioned defendants are not served in ordinary way. It is therefore proclaimed under order 5 rule 20 CPC that if the said defendants will not appear personally or through a duly authorized agent or pleader in court at 8 AM on 18-11-2023, otherwise case will be decided ex parte.

Release of fund to help uplift of tribal districts

PESHAWAR : KP Caretaker Minister for Tribal Affairs, Dr Aamir Abdullah Thursday said that release of the committed funds worth Rs100 billion would help resolve issues relating to uplift activities in the tribal districts. He expressed these views while addressing a tribal jirga held in the Deputy Commissioner's Committee Room at Wana, district headquarters South Waziristan. Besides, Deputy Commissioner (DC) South Waziristan Lower Nasir Khan, Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Kashmir Khan, District Police Officer (DPO) Farmanullah

Wardag and district heads of various department, tribal elites also attended the jirga. On this occasion, the tribal elders highlighted problems. Development projects, law & order and hurdles in uplift schemes in the district were discussed in detail. The tribal elders especially complained regarding unfulfillment of commitments made at the time of the merger of erstwhile Federal Administered Tribal Area (FATA) with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and neither final shape was given to the recommendations of the Sartaj Aziz headed committee in this regard.

They requested the provincial minister for utilization of all available resources of the provincial government to initiate large-scale development schemes in the district to mitigate the problems of the residents of South Waziristan Lower. The tribal elders and elected public representatives of the local government also highlighted various other issues and called for their address. In response to the demands of the tribal elders and elites, the minister conceded hurdles in the release of the committed fund for the development of the tribal region.—APP

Govt announces Hajj Policy 2024

ISLAMABAD : The government has announced Hajj Policy 2024 under which the Hajj package for each pilgrim has been reduced by one hundred thousand rupees. Sharing salient features of the new Hajj policy at a news conference in Islamabad Thursday, Minister for Religious Affairs Aneeq Ahmed said the Hajj cost under the government scheme has been reduced to 1075000 rupees for the next Hajj from 1175000 of this year's Hajj. He assured there will be no compromise on the qual-

ity of Hajj arrangements regardless of reduction in expenses. The Minister for Religious Affairs said the Hajj quota for Pakistan is 179210 which will be equally distributed between the government and private hajj schemes. Aneeq Ahmed said that negotiations are continuing with the airlines to get reduced airfare for the Hajj operation. He said if we succeed in securing relief in the airfare, the amount will be transferred to the accounts of pilgrims. He said the pilgrims will also get back thirty five thousand rupees if they choose to stay four instead of eight days in Madina.

Aneeq Ahmed said Hajj 2024 will be digitalized wherein pilgrims will get a mobile application that could be used without internet. The app will have many options including the one of lodging complaints. He said the pilgrims will be provided with many free of cost things including a SIM with seven GB data, a suitcase having QR code, Ihram belts for men, Abaya for women and shoes bags. Aneeq Ahmed said that the Hajj applications will be received from the 27th of this month and this process will continue till 12th of next month. An advertisement in this regard will soon be published.

SCCI urges strengthening Pak-US economic ties

Emphasizing further cementing Pak-US bilateral trade and economic relations, the SCCI chief invited US companies and investors to make investments in a potential sector of KP

STAFF REPORTERS

PESHAWAR : Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) president, Fuad Ishaq said discoveries made in oil, gas and other natural resources in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa but a geological survey hasn't been conducted in the last two decades, therefore, urged the U.S to assist in conducting a geological survey in the province. Emphasizing further cementing Pak-US bilateral trade and economic relations, the SCCI chief invited US companies and investors to make investments in a potential sector of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He made these remarks

during a meeting with U.S. Consul General in Peshawar Mr. Shante Moore, who visited the chamber house on Thursday, according to a press release issued here. On the occasion, the SCCI senior vice president Sanaulah Khan, vice president Ijaz Khan Afridi, former presidents Haji Muhammad Afzal, Zahidullah Shinwari, Zulfikar Ali Khan, Faiz Muhammad Faizi, Sherbaz Bilour, executive members Hafaf Ali Khan, Monawar Khurshid, Kashif Amin, Qurtul Ain and Fahad Amin, Khalid Sultan Khawaja, Ashfaq Ahmad, Saleem Bokhari, Ihsanullah, Muhammad Akhtar, Saddar Gul, Fazl e Wahid, Ishtiaq Ahmad, Women chamber Peshawar vice president Aneela

Khalid, traders and industrialists were present. Accompanied by political economic section chief Mr. Dustin DeGrande, Political Economic Officer James Pershing, and Economic Specialist Mr. Shahid Islam, and others, the US diplomat said his country is fully committed to further enhancing commercial, trade and economic ties with Pakistan. He added the mutual trade volume can be improved by launching joint initiatives, ventures and efforts. Shante Moore mentioned USAID has played a pivotal role in economic and social progress, especially the promotion of small and medium enterprises (SMEs), technical and financial assistance to youth, infrastructure de-






velopment, education, agriculture and other important sectors. Fuad Ishaq praised USAID for initiating a social and economic development program in K-P. Commenting on trade with regional countries, he demanded to allow trade with Afghanistan, Iran and China in Pakistan rupee. He called for tax reforms, especially rationalizing duties/tariffs to further enhance bilateral trade volume with regional states. On the occasion, he stressed the need for the provision of constitutional rights on electricity and gas to Khyber Pakhtunkhwa so that the wheel of business, industry and employment will keep running and ensure sustainable economic growth and

development. He mentioned that KP was adversely affected for the four decades due to unfavourable circumstances because the business, industries, and economic and social progress have been slowed down. Fuad Ishaq on the occasion called for reviewing the agreements of Independent Power Producers (IPPs), which has caused a severe energy crisis in the country. He urged the U.S. to take special initiatives for industrial and agricultural growth in Pakistan. He said the abilities of Pakistani youth are unmatched which should provide technical and financial assistance to utilize their skills for economic development and prosperity.

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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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Motorway Police.....9266044
Motorway Police.....9270601-20
Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596
Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



Enquiry

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



Hospitals

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MH.....5611116
Cantt Hospital.....9270907-11
DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
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Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International 4603666



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

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Relationship between Pak-Belgium is forward-looking

The Joint Communique, issued on November 26, 1947, encapsulates the decision of the two governments to accept respective diplomatic missions 'to strengthen the bonds of friendship and mutual interest'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan said on Thursday that the 75 years of its diplomatic relations with Belgium encompassed the spirit of solidarity and expressed commitment to work with it towards shaping a better world for future generations. A statement by the Foreign Office said the upward trajectory of bilateral relations was deeply embedded in people-to-people linkages and frequent high-level contacts at the leadership level. It mentioned that the institution of bilateral political consultation provided a strong foundation for a multifaceted dialogue that holds the potential to deepen this longstanding



75 YEARS OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN BELGIUM & PAKISTAN

ing bilateral relationship. "The robust trade between the countries has witnessed continuous growth for mutual benefit," it said. "The depth

of bilateral relations encompasses the spirit of solidarity and support demonstrated during times of need, such as disaster management to miti-

gate natural calamities," the FO statement said. The Joint Communique, issued on November 26, 1947, encapsulates the decision of

the two governments to accept respective diplomatic missions 'to strengthen the bonds of friendship and mutual interest'. Following the historic decision, the two countries opened diplomatic missions in 1948.

"It is a proud moment, as the goals outlined 75 years ago paved the way for a strong bond of friendship," the FO statement added. "The relationship between Belgium and Pakistan is forward-looking, as both countries are committed to working together on multilateral forums to address common challenges, such as sustainable development and climate change, as well as fundamental values such as democracy and human rights, providing strength to these relations," it said.

PM annoyed over delay in completion of projects

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Prime Minister of Pakistan has expressed deep concern over the unwarranted delays in completion of project titled "Replace and Upgradation of HVAC Plant Room Equipments and Allied Works at PIMS, Islamabad". After showing dissatisfaction over the reports from Ministry of Housing and Works and Ministry of National Health Services Regulations and Coordination regarding the delays in completion of the project he has been sent to Prime Minister's Inspection Commission (PMIC) for ensuring effective supervision of the project. 2 The Chairman PMIC, Brig. (Retired) Muzaffar Ali Ranjha assigned the task to inquiry team headed by Mr. Zahir Shah Member PMIC for vigorously persuading the project and its completion at the earliest. The team visited PIMS on Wednesday, 15th November 2023 and inspected the ongoing work of the HVAC regarding installation of the centrally air conditioning of the whole buildings of PIMS. The administration of PIMS, the officers of PWD and Contractors were present during the inspection. The team was not satisfied with the progress made by the contractors and PWD. Directions were given during the visit for speedy and effective completion of the project which has been significantly delayed. 3 The PMIC team has stressed for completion of the project on war footing and committed to monitor the progress on weekly basis. A preliminary report will also be submitted to the Prime Minister's Office in this regard.

ADB receives \$8mln funds to meet sanitation challenge

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Asian Development Bank's (ADB) Sanitation Financing Partnership Trust Fund has received \$8 million replenishment from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, further scaling up the partnership between the two institutions to improve access to safe sanitation in Asia and the Pacific.

"As of 2022, the trust fund has leveraged over \$1.64 billion in ADB investments on citywide inclusive sanitation (CWIS) projects in ADB developing member countries (DMCs)," said ADB press statement received here

Thursday. "This replenishment brings the foundation's financial contribution to the trust fund to \$27 million since 2013," it added. "We highly appreciate the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's continued support to the Sanitation Financing Partnership Trust Fund," said ADB Water and Urban Development Sector Office Senior Director Norio Saito. "This contribution will help ADB scale up and magnify the impact of our initiatives to improve access to safe sanitation in the region," Saito added.

This new funding will help advance ADB's focus on addressing climate resilience in sanitation infrastructure and

services while helping make these services affordable, safe, inclusive, and effective. The trust fund was established in 2013 to promote investments in fecal sludge management, focusing on establishing markets, regulatory frameworks, and innovative business models that facilitate the delivery of non-piped sanitation and septage management services in DMCs. The trust fund also aims to accelerate the adoption of the CWIS approach to promote adequate, equitable, and inclusive sanitation service solutions in the region.

Since its creation, the trust fund has helped improve sanitation of 13.93 million

people in the region. Out of the \$1.64 billion leveraged investments in CWIS projects, around \$410 million were channeled towards non-sewered sanitation and fecal sludge management projects.

The trust fund is part of ADB's Water Financing Partnership Facility, which mobilizes financial and knowledge resources from development partners to support ADB's operations in the water sector. As of December 2022, the facility has catalyzed nearly \$10 billion in ADB water sector investments and benefited around 123 million people in 20 DMCs.

Commissioner inaugurates Rawat mandi route

RAWALPINDI: Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Liaquat Ali Chatta here on Thursday inaugurated Rawat vegetable and fruit market route to facilitate the citizens. On this occasion, the commissioner said that the route had been inaugurated to facilitate the citizens. He said that along with the metro track, feeder buses would also be started. The project of more than 60 buses had also been completed which would be launched soon. In the first phase, route permits would be issued to 20 vehicles, the Commissioner informed. The prices of the vegetable and fruit items at the mandi were 15 to 20% less than the open market, he added. Instructions had also been given for provision of a cold storage in the mandi, the commissioner said and informed that four security guards had been deployed in Rawat mandi to ensure safety of the customers. 8 to 10 sweepers had been arranged to ensure cleanliness in the mandi, he said adding, new sheds were being prepared in the vegetable market which were in the process of completion. These sheds would be rent-free for the first four months, while a reasonable rent would be charged thereafter, he informed. Vegetable and fruit mandi was established on 6.5 acres near Rawat, the Commissioner said.

Dr. Saqib stresses need of skill development

MEHTAB PIRZADA

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson Benazir Income Support Program (BISP), Dr. Muhammad Amjad Saqib Thursday emphasized equipping beneficiary children of BISP Taleemi Wazaif initiative to make them self-sufficient in the future. Addressing a gathering of dedicated BISP staff at Jamia Masjid Qasim ul Aloom in Sargodha, Dr. Muhammad Amjad Saqib said that serving 9.3 million needy families is a noble cause and equivalent to worship, according to a news release.

Acknowledging the mission of BISP to alleviate poverty and empower vulnerable populations, Dr. Muhammad Amjad Saqib commended the impact of BISP's efforts in education by providing educa-

tional scholarships under Benazir Taleemi Wazaif to 8.3 million children ensuring their regular attendance in schools. He also stressed the need to provide technical skills education to the interested children from these needy families.

The chairman has called upon BISP manpower to work collectively and make BISP the best institution in the country. Dr. Muhammad Amjad Saqib issued instructions to BISP staff for immediate action and redressal of complaints about deduction from the stipends of deserving women. "Transparency should have ensued in the disbursement of payment during the upcoming Kafalat Tranche", he stated and directed to take legal courses for the quick and effective redressal of complaints. During his visit to

the Sargodha office, Dr. Amjad Saqib urged BISP employees to utilize their resources to provide facilities to needy women, emphasizing the importance of ethical and compassionate treatment. He also considered the establishment of 'Waqf Funds' through banks as a means of furthering BISP's mission.

Dr. Amjad Saqib directed concerned officers to ensure cleanliness, envisioning BISP offices as models of efficiency and service delivery. He urged employees to instill trust in the authenticity of the BISP database, portraying the program as apolitical and corruption-free. He called upon the staff to encourage others to come forward and donate for the welfare of the needy, reinforcing the program's commitment to transparency and social responsibility.

Ambassador invites businessmen to attend Nepal Expo



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Nepal to Pakistan Tapas Adhikari visited Haripur Chamber of Commerce and Industry (HCCI) in Haripur, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and met Mr. Muhammad Tayyab Khan Swati, President and other office bearers of HCCI. The ambassador also had a long interactive discussion with them focusing on bilat-

eral and regional economic cooperation to expand economic opportunities in Nepal and Pakistan. He requested them to participate in the forthcoming Nepal Expo in Kathmandu in March 2024 to explore business opportunity in Nepal with their products and for business networking. I shared the Government of Nepal policy on foreign direct investment and other facilities available for business in Nepal. While

welcoming me, Mr. Swati and other members shared the information on Haripur and its economic contribution in Pakistan. The ambassador also visited Hattar Industrial Zone and observed the production facilities of few industrial units. With more than 400 manufacturing units, Hattar Industrial Zone is the biggest industrial zone in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in Pakistan.

Police carry out search operation in 'Dhoke Abdullah'

RAWALPINDI: Police here on Thursday carried out a search operation in 'Dhoke Abdullah', an adjoining area in the jurisdiction of Saddar Baroni Police Station. According to a police spokesman, the search operation was conducted in order to maintain law and order and flush out suspects following the directions of City Police Officer (CPO) Syed Khalid Hamdani. He informed, that senior police officers and police personnel including women police took part in the search operation. Police checked as many as 58 houses, 12 tenants, 10 shops, and 190 individuals during the search operation. Superintendent of Police, Saddar, Muhammad Nabeel said that police are fully prepared to shield the lives and property of the public and a combing and search operation was done to flush out the suspects and hardcore criminals. He said that police are more vigilant to keep an eye on suspects and to maintain law and order in Rawalpindi.--APP

CRC, IRC commemorate Universal Children's Day

ISLAMABAD: Universal Children's Day is an annual day of action for children, by children, marking the adoption of the convention on the rights of child. Children's rights are human rights. But in too many places today, children's rights are under threat. The International Rescue Committee (IRC), in collaboration with National Commission on the Rights of Child (NCRC), here on Thursday hosted a multi-stakeholder national consultation on how Climate Change is impacting children of Pakistan in commemoration of Universal Children's Day 2023, under the global theme of "For every child, Every Right". Ayesha Raza Farooq, Chairperson NCRC in her opening remarks, noted that the impact of climate change on children was a matter that demands our collective attention and today's consultation provided a platform for us to engage in a meaningful dialogue, share insights, and develop strategies that would resonate beyond this room. The Guest of Honor Khalid George, Caretaker Minister for Human Rights in his keynote speech, opined that Universal Children's Day holds particular significance for Pakistan as it provides an opportunity to reflect on the progress made in ensuring the rights and well-being of every child. Our commitment to the rights of unregistered children must go beyond rhetoric. It requires concrete actions, innovative policies, and collaborative efforts from all stakeholders involved, she expressed. Inousa Kabore, Deputy Representative UNCIEF, in her keynote speech, observed that climate change causes the health and wellbeing of children to be affected, especially those living in high-risk areas of the country. Children are the brunt of climate change, every year the effect has been seen to double. Disrupting education, malnutrition, water borne diseases. Over 3 million children are street vendors in Pakistan and the number of out of school children in Pakistan is estimated at 28 million, she added. The highlight of the national consultation was a thriving panel discussion on "Inclusion, for every child amidst climate impact in Pakistan." The panel discussion was moderated by prominent child rights expert Arshad Mahmood and featured eminent speakers such as Shabnam Baloch (Country Director-IRC), Gohar Khan (Chief Projects Officer NADRA), Izza Farrakh (Senior Education Specialist World Bank) and Dr Naeem Zafar (Mental Health & Child Rights Expert) said in a Press Release issued here on Thursday. The esteemed panelists deliberated upon the impending impact of climate change on child protection, education, psychosocial health of the children in Pakistan. The consultation highlighted the challenges faced by children affected by climate change, focusing on the aftermath of the floods in 2022. The discussions were centered on the impact on children's access to food, water, shelter, and education, recognizing that these environmental hazards not only hinder these essential needs but also reduce children's resilience and adaptive capacity. The panel noted that is Pakistan is one of the countries with low rates of birth registration (despite recent progress), the PDHS 2017-18 indicate that that only 42 percent of children aged under five had their births registered. It is a permanent and official record of a child's existence and provides legal recognition of that child's identity. Not only is birth registration a fundamental human right, it also helps ensure that children's other rights are upheld. Shabnam Baloch, Country Director IRC-Pakistan observed that the collaboration between the International Rescue Committee and the National Commission on the Rights of Child demonstrated a united effort to address the pressing issues faced by the children of Pakistan and work towards effective solutions that were inclusive and sustainable.--DNA

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Briefs

PTDC's remarkable achievements highlighted

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tourism Development Corporation (PTDC) has made remarkable achievements in the tourism industry and its promotion by marketing country's natural landscape, history, culture and archeological sites being providing facilities to tourists. Taking to APP, the PTDC official said that the corporation was working effectively according to the vision to develop the tourism sector as a national priority in a sustainable and acceptable manner, taking full advantage of regional and international trends and developments. He said the PTDC is projecting the country as a tourist friendly destination in bringing Pakistan amongst top five tourist destinations of Asia and marketing of tourist places at home and abroad through tourism show and exhibitions to generate revenue. Tourism sector is contributing a lot to national exchequer as well, he added. The official said that the tourism organization is to act as a catalyst in encouraging the private sector to play active role in tourism promotion and development. It was developing infrastructure and services within the country to facilitate the tourists. He said it has already established Tourist Information Centers (TIC) at various airports to provide accurate information to foreign and local tourists. He said that Minister of State for Tourism, Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Youth Affairs Wasi Shah had unveiled that TIC would set up at Gwadar International Airport to facilitate the tourists about their destination. He said that PTDC with collaboration of the Capital Development Authority (CDA) has kicked off an effective cleanliness campaign at various parks of the federal capital to ensure neat and clean environment to attract large number of tourists in a healthy ambience.—APP

Chairman PHHSA urges policy intervention to export surplus food products

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of the Pakistan Hitech Hybrid Seed Association (PHHSA) Shahzad Ali Malik Thursday stressed the need for policy intervention for exporting surplus food products to the global market, which would not only address domestic overproduction but also tap into the increasing demand for quality agricultural products worldwide. Taking to a delegation of progressive farmers here today, he said, "Pakistan's diverse range of crops, including rice, maize, fruits, and spices, positions it favorably to cater to the varied needs of international markets." He said, "Pakistan has consistently demonstrated agricultural prowess, resulting in surplus yields of various crops," according to a press release issued here. "Capitalizing on this abundance presents a promising avenue to strengthen the country's economic standing through increased foreign exchange earnings," he added.—APP

Curb on energy rates as gas price hike to lift inflation

The inflation forecast is higher than the State Bank of Pakistan's projection of 20-22 percent. The central bank governor has said that the expected gas price hike has been incorporated into the inflation forecast

FAISAL SHEIKH

ISLAMABAD - The Presidential candidate of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industries' (FPCCI) upcoming election for 2024 Muhammad Ali Sheikh has called for keeping check on soaring energy prices, as the recent jump in gas prices will lift the average Consumer Price Index further, hitting all sectors of the economy. Muhammad Ali Sheikh said that the government had increased gas tariff with effect from this month 2023 just before the first IMF review under the \$3 billion short-term loan program. This is the second gas price increase in 10 months. The gas price hike is a condition attached to the loan program. It may pave the way for the release of second IMF tranche of \$700 million. Calling for reverting the decision, he said that the industries that may resort to price increase include fertiliser, cement and steel, which will make agricultural production and construction material more

expensive. The inflation forecast is higher than the State Bank of Pakistan's projection of 20-22 percent. The central bank governor has said that the expected gas price hike has been incorporated into the inflation forecast. Muhammad Ali Sheikh said that feed and fuel stock prices are forecast to increase to Rs580 per million British thermal units (mmbtu) from the current price of Rs510, and to Rs1,580 per mmbtu from the current price of Rs1,500, respectively. Earlier, the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) had notified revised gas prices in February 2023 for consumers of Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC) and Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL), after which Fauji Fertiliser Bin Qasim Limited (FFBL) and Engro Fertilisers jacked up fertiliser prices. As per proposed revised gas tariff for other categories of gas consumers, the gas price for bulk consumers is proposed to be raised from Rs 1,600/mmbtu to Rs2,000/mmbtu, while the gas price for special commercial (Roti Tandoor) will remain the same at Rs697/mmbtu

and gas price for commercial consumers is proposed to go up from Rs1,650/mmbtu to Rs3,900/mmbtu. Similarly, gas tariff for Liberty Power is proposed to increase from existing Rs2,406/mmbtu to Rs3,890/mmbtu while the gas price for Liberty Power is based on HSFO linked formula and not fixed by the government. Likewise, gas price for fertiliser plant of FFBQL (feed) is proposed to be increase from existing Rs510/mmbtu to Rs580/mmbtu while no change in gas price for Engro is proposed as Engro Fertilizer Ltd (new plant) has a claim of extended period for feed gas concessionary tariff of \$0.7/mmbtu due to non-supply of gas by SNGPL and Sindh High Court has granted stay order to maintain the status quo. However, gas price for fertiliser (fuel) is proposed to be increase from existing Rs1,500/mmbtu to Rs1,580/mmbtu. Furthermore, gas price for cement category of gas consumers is proposed to be revised from existing Rs1,500/mmbtu to Rs4,400/mmbtu. He informed that the gas price

for export industry (process and captive) is proposed to be revised from existing Rs1,100/mmbtu to Rs2,050/mmbtu and the gas price for non-export industry (process and captive) is proposed to be increased from existing Rs1,200/mmbtu to Rs2,600/mmbtu. Also, the gas price for the category of CNG is proposed to be revised from Rs1,805/mmbtu to Rs4,400/mmbtu. Sui Southern Gas Company Limited (SSGCL) and Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Ltd (SNGPL) are public sector gas utility companies licensed from Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) for purchase, transmission, distribution and sale of gas to consumers in the country. BMP nominated candidate of the president observed that for the past one and half year, the country is facing a serious financial crunch and continually relying on borrowing to meet its financial needs. He emphasised that persistent fiscal deficits has resulted in consistently high annual gross financing needs, averaging 27 percent of GDP over the past decade.

HEC conducts evaluation at KKKUK

ISLAMABAD: A team from the Higher Education Commission (HEC) Post Graduate Program Review (PGPR) Panel visited Khushal Khan Khattak University Karak on Thursday to assess and enhance the quality of the post-graduate programs offered by the University. Director Quality Enhancement Cell at Khushal Khan Khattak University Karak Muhammad Shah Din, provided the Panel a comprehensive overview of the university's MS, MPhil and PhD regulations and related rules. He briefed the panel on the institution's commitment to maintaining academic excellence and ensuring that its programs adhere to the highest standards of HEC. The inaugural session of the review was attended by all Heads of Departments, Controller of Examinations, Dr. Muhammad Zubair and Assistant Director QEC of Khushal Khan Khattak University, Karak Dr. Nasir Iqbal. The evaluation team, consisting of renowned experts in academia, included Prof. Dr. Muhammad Arif Khattak from Bahria University, Islamabad.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Astronaut Ms Namira Saleem called on President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr.—DNA

Minister Khalil Emphasizes Education for Positive Impact

ISLAMABAD: Caretaker Human Rights Minister George Khalil Thursday highlighted the need to prioritize education for presenting a positive and a soft image of Pakistan and combating child violence on World Children's Day. During a ceremony commemorating World Children's Day, the minister emphasized that the media can play a crucial role in putting an end to violence against children. The minister expressed that celebrating World Children's Day serves the purpose of advocating for children's rights. "We are creating opportunities for children and young individuals to voice their concerns on matters important to them." The Ministry of Human Rights established a commission for Child Rights, emphasizing that prioritizing children's welfare, along with the active participation of philanthropists, can contribute to building a better future for minorities and all. "If we genuinely care for children, we will advocate for their rights." Additionally, the Minister also said the positive portrayal of Pakistan through education, highlighting its strengths over negative aspects. The increasing threat of climate change, floods in Pakistan have grown more frequent, resulting in some communities facing an unending cycle of displacement and despair, he said. Children are experiencing the impact of fatigue from disasters induced by climate change, taking a toll on their well-being. They not only feel exhausted but also harbor heightened anxiety about the potential threat of cascading events, he added.—DNA

Daewoo Express to introduce 200 China manufactured electric buses

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Daewoo Express, one of Pakistan's leading inter-city transport service providers, is planning to introduce 200 China-manufactured electric buses gradually in the next two years. If it goes as planned, it will be the first EV-based inter-city bus service in Pakistan, according to a report published by Gwadar Pro on Thursday. The electric buses are expected to start operations during the summer of next year, and all 200 buses will be in operation by mid-2026. The electric buses will operate on short routes of a maximum distance of 225 kilometers so that they don't have to stop during the journey to charge, as it would be inconvenient for passengers. These 200 electric buses will run on 17 short routes, such as Karachi to Hyderabad; Peshawar to Rawalpindi; Lahore to Faisalabad; Lahore to Sialkot etc. "We will have charging facilities at all of our terminals where these electric buses operate," said Sheriar Hasan, General Manager at Daewoo Express. The company representative said that it is difficult to predict how the introduction of these electric buses will affect inter-city fares, as no one knows what the price of diesel and electricity will be by the time these buses are introduced. "However, it should be remembered that the upfront cost of electric buses is significantly higher than that of diesel buses. If this pilot project of 200 buses is successful, we may consider entering into the electric bus manufacturing business," he added.

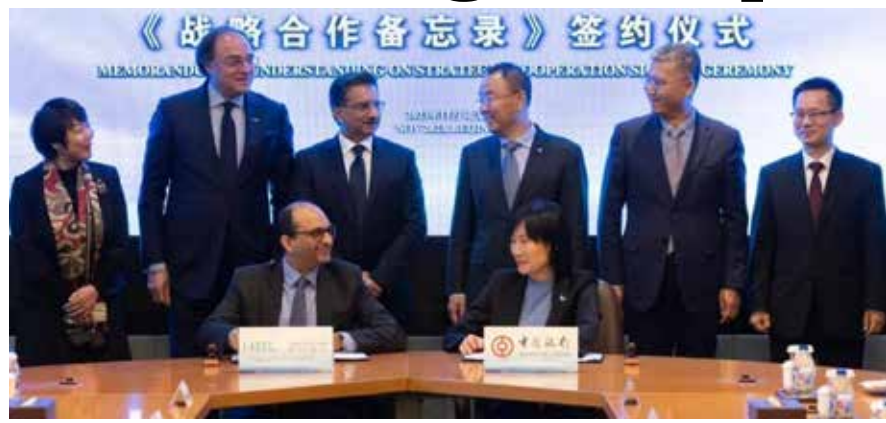
ANF recovers 207 kg drugs in eight operations; arrests nine

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting eight operations across the country managed to recover 207 kg drugs and arrested nine accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Thursday. He informed that ANF was making all-out efforts against drug trafficking at national and international level. In an operation, 122 grams Ice drug concealed in a parcel of spoons booked for US was recovered at a Courier Office in Rawalpindi. 216 grams heroin was recovered at Allama Iqbal International Airport from a parcel being sent to Kuwait. 200 grams weed was recovered at GPO Multan from a parcel sent from America. 100 ecstasy tablets were recovered from two accused going on a motorcycle in Bahria Town Rawalpindi. On the point of the arrested accused, ANF raided on a flat in Sector E-11 and recovered over 3,100 ecstasy tablets. Another accused was arrested during the operation. 19.2 kg hashish was recovered from a car intercepted near Northern Bypass Karachi while an accused was also arrested.—APP

HBL, Bank of China sign MoU for strategic coop

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Habib Bank Limited (HBL) and Bank of China (BOC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for Strategic Cooperation to enhance regional trade, here at the BOC headquarters. The signing of the strategic cooperation memorandum signifies HBL and BOC's commitment to driving economic empowerment and regional connectivity. The cooperation between the two will facilitate seamless trade opportunities, benefiting businesses in South Asia, the Middle



East, Central Asia, and Africa. Gwadar Pro reported on Thursday. Both organizations will also work to deepen strategic cooperation in the areas of

Environmental, Social & Governance (ESG), technology, and training. The MoU would also aim to foster stronger ties between financial institutions

in both countries, improve trade infrastructure, and ultimately will promote economic growth and development through increased regional trade activities.



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APEC must stay true to principles and agenda

It would likely be impossible to form from scratch a regional economic and trade mechanism of APEC's scale, inclusivity and influence in a world that is as divisive as it is today. That the region's economies are pinning high hopes on the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Leaders' Week in San Francisco demonstrates their belief in its objective— to create greater prosperity for the people of the region. What they must remain true to, if they are to realize that goal, is APEC's agenda of inclusivity, innovation and interconnectedness. That explains why the world is paying close attention to San Francisco this week, to see if the economies in the world's most dynamic region, particularly China and the United States, can agree on ways to pull together. It is hoped that they will take advantage of their exchanges in San Francisco to redefine their economic and trade relations, replacing what has been growing confrontation, decoupling and uncertainties with dialogue, cooperation and predictability. As the world's two largest economies, China and the US reaching agreement on responsibly managing and controlling risks and avoiding conflicts would not only have a positive bearing on the stability and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific, but also the world given the region's global significance. Both China and the US, as well as other APEC economies, should be mindful that APEC's continued relevance today stems from its steadfast adherence to the principles of coordination, consultation and openness. It has been under these principles that a unique APEC model has been formed to find ways to resolve differences and build consensus among members at different development stages. Mindful of the differences in culture and the level of economic development, APEC adopted a policy of accommodating latecomers on a voluntary basis, thus effectively bridging possible rifts. The courage, vision and wisdom contained in APEC's historical legacy should be given full play today, and the focus should be on unanimity not division. The San Francisco meeting has every reason to realize its potential of generating new driving force for APEC. Both China and the US need to act responsibly in that regard by reconsolidating the world's confidence in multilateralism and economic globalization.

Strategic meeting paves path for China-US

At the head of the meeting between the two heads of state, the US president expressed, in public at least, low expectations of his first face-to-face talks in a year with Chinese President Xi Jinping. Before departing for San Francisco, asked about his yardstick for success, US President Joe Biden said, "To get back on a normal course of corresponding, being able to pick up the phone and talk to one another when there's another crisis". Their four hours of talks having produced agreement on that and more, and the US leader was notably more upbeat about the meeting afterward. "I believe they were some of the most productive and constructive discussions we've had," he declared. That the two leaders exchanged views in an atmosphere of mutual respect has obviously been conducive to generating the buzz of positivity that both sides have exhibited after the talks. Summarizing the significant progress that had been made in the two leaders' discussions that were "good, comprehensive and in-depth", Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said that the summit would be seen as a milestone in the history of US relations. Indeed, anyone worried about what has been a continuous downward spiral of the two countries will now be heaving a sigh of relief, as the constructive engagement of the two leaders committed to should, if nothing else, arrest the deterioration in bilateral relations. So long, of course, as the US side holds true to the "tangible steps in the right direction" the talks have produced, something it found difficult to do after their previous meeting in Bali because of the anti-China caucus in the US Congress. In the absence of a joint statement, it remains to be seen how much the two sides' opinions converge on the Chinese president's proposal that the countries assume a "new vision" for their relationship based on them making the right choice of cooperation rather than confrontation. Stating that it is unrealistic for either country to change or lay down the law for the other, Xi proposed the two countries build "five pillars" to support stable, healthy and sustainable relations. He proposed that the two sides jointly establish correct perceptions of each other, effectively manage their differences, promote mutually beneficial cooperation, assume their responsibilities as major countries, and promote people-to-people exchanges. That there were perceptible agreements reached, such as the reinstatement of direct military-to-military communication, shows that building these pillars is doable. That was reinforced by the joint climate statement the two countries' climate negotiators issued on Tuesday, which has "added a driving force for the China-US relationship to stop falling and begin stabilizing", as Xinhua News Agency observed, and is heartening news ahead of the upcoming UN climate summit in Dubai later this month. All in all, the summit as Wang Yi said, can have far-reaching influence as the two leaders put forward guiding opinions on the most prominent issues in bilateral relations and set out the future-oriented direction for the two countries to get along.

IMF agreement and beyond

Dr. Shamshad Akhtar



Once again we stand at a crossroads. The decisions over the next decade will determine Pakistan's future. The big question is will Pakistan rise to the challenges ahead and transform its economy? Pakistan needs more innovation and diversity in the structure of the economy for sustainable growth. The manufacturing base, in particular exports, and the agricultural basket are focused on a very narrow range of products and have failed to penetrate new markets. Effective implementation of ambitious reforms will depend on addressing critical underlying institutional and governance constraints

After months of hard work, we have successfully reached a staff-level agreement with the IMF on the first review of the \$ 3bn SBA. This is a very positive development for the economy and will support our efforts for macroeconomic stability. The IMF SBA and support from other development partners provide us an opportunity to get our economy back on track. In today's session, I want to share with you the 'The Big Picture' on pathways for sustainable development and shared prosperity. Pakistan has all the requisites of being a major economic player in the region and Asia. According to a World Bank report, our economy could reach \$ 2 trillion by 2047, from \$ 350 billion today. However, this requires the formulation and implementation of sound economic policies and difficult structural reforms to achieve this potential. Unfortunately, looking back at the last 3 decades, the failure to initiate meaningful reforms has meant that Pakistan has fallen behind regional economies in terms of human and economic development.

Once again we stand at a crossroads. The decisions over the next decade will determine Pakistan's future. The big question is will Pakistan rise to the challenges ahead and transform its economy? Pakistan needs more innovation and diversity in the structure of the economy for sustainable growth. The manufacturing base, in particular exports, and the agricultural basket are focused on a very narrow range of products and have failed to penetrate new markets. Effective implementation of ambitious reforms will depend on addressing critical underlying institutional and governance constraints. We need to build stronger institutions to deal with the momentous challenges facing Pakistan today. First, we must completely overhaul the government's fiscal apparatus so as to lower the revenue-expenditure gap. Tax to GDP has remained low at 10% to 11% in the last 3 decades, with the government forced to finance large fiscal deficits through borrowing from domestic and external creditors. Towards this end, the caretaker government has initiated the process of restructuring Pakistan's tax administration. The digital transformation of tax administration is a crucial step in meeting the objectives of enhanced tax collection and improved compliance. Innovative digital technologies need to be implemented to minimize tax gaps, increase tax collection, and reduce the share of the shadow economy. We are working towards the separation of the tax policy and tax administration functions, so as to remove the apparent conflict of interest in tax collection. Tax policy has to be designed to be fair, equitable, and productive. The revenue and fairness objectives need to be pursued by expanding the tax base, reducing tax exemptions, and through a more efficient digital tax administration. Simultaneously, there is a need to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of public expenditure. There is an urgent need to improve coordination within the federal government and with provinces and reorient

expenditure priorities towards social welfare. Towards this end, the government has initiated dialogue with the provinces for sharing expenditures on BISP and PSDP projects falling under the domain of provinces. A review is being conducted to close departments at the federal level for devolved subjects. Options are being explored to shift the large infrastructure projects under the PPP mode, providing sizeable savings on budgetary resources for both federal and provincial governments. We are looking at ways to enhance allocation to the Viability Gap Fund for undertaking Infrastructure projects in PPP mode. We are also exploring avenues to seek credit guarantees from INFRAZAMIN to enhance private-sector investment in Infrastructure.

To address structural weaknesses of SOEs, improve their efficiency and functioning, and thereby reduce the drain on the budget, the government is focused on operationalizing the Centralized Monitoring Unit (CMU). The CMU will monitor the SOEs and publish regular reports on financial performance and contingent liabilities. We are in the process of finalizing a SOE policy under the SOE law as agreed with IMF. The focus of the policy is on improving the governance and financial efficiency of the loss-making SOEs. The Privatization program has been fast-tracked and Financial Advisors for PIA have been appointed. We are working with the IFC team on Concession and Management Contracts (Privatization) for DISCOs. We are also working on the operationalization of the Sovereign Wealth Fund (SWF). This holding company will help us to fast-track the privatization of SOEs through G2G arrangements. The export-import gap has to be reduced through promoting exports. For this, the competitiveness of Pakistani exports has to be improved and the impediments to exports be removed. The government believes in a market-based exchange rate regime that can avoid the persistent overvaluation of local currency. The anti-export policies of the last 3 decades have led to the loss of competitiveness of our manufacturing base. Exports have failed to make a transition from low-technology to high-technology products as about 70 percent of the country's exports continue to be low-technology products. In addition, the country has failed to diversify its export commodities and export markets. Textiles and clothing sector, which contributes about 5% to world trade, dominates the country's exports, accounting for around 58% of total exports. Similarly, more than 50% of exports rely on only four markets - USA, EU, China and Afghanistan. The country has been losing competitiveness in international markets and finds it harder to sell even within its traditional markets. Pakistan's loss of competitiveness is evident from the fact that exports of goods and services have declined to 10% of GDP, compared to India (19%) and Bangladesh (15%).

To facilitate exports to new markets and encourage the export of new products, we are operationalizing

the EXIM bank. This will bring credit guarantees and insurance products for exporters, encouraging them to target new markets for exports. Another factor is the tariff structure that has a significant anti-exports bias. Within the tariff policy space, a large number of SROs distort the trade regime by modifying the notified import duties selectively without any economic justification. This has resulted in low import content which in turn restricts our manufactured products to a narrow range of low value-added exports. This is also the reason why Pakistan has one of the lowest integration in the global value chains. Some progress has been achieved in streamlining customs rules and procedures to expedite the clearance of both exports and imports through the Single Window operations, but more work is needed to achieve international best practices. The investment-saving gap has grown more acute in the last 3 decades, greatly limiting the growth potential of the economy. In Pakistan, any acceleration in economic growth invariably leads to a balance of payment difficulties, reversing the gains of higher GDP growth. The SIFC has been set up to materialize new investments in critical infrastructure and neglected productive sectors of the economy including agriculture, minerals, and IT services. SIFC is also facilitating G2G arrangements and has successfully executed the first transaction between Karachi Port Trust (KPT) and AD Ports, UAE for the Container terminal at Karachi. SIFC is also facilitating potential partnership of the Saudi Wealth Fund in the \$ 7bn Reko Diq transaction. Under the SIFC a transaction pipeline to expedite investment in critical infrastructure has been developed and it includes \$ 10bn Saudi Aramco Refinery project and the Agriculture Corporate farm lease of 85,000 acres of land to potential foreign investors. The Financial Inclusion strategy focuses on using digital platforms and non-banking channels to bring financial services to the masses. To tackle this challenge, the Pakistan authorities launched an ambitious National Financial Inclusion strategy in 2018. An elaborate digital infrastructure is being developed and includes the launch of the RAAST payment gateway in 2021. This has enabled instant end-to-end digital payments between individuals, businesses, and government entities. In conclusion, bold reforms will lead to a new era of development and prosperity in the country. We need to establish a fast-growing and efficient economy that is capable of creating more quality jobs to absorb its labor force, especially the youth of the country; an economy that is more self-reliant yet economically better integrated with economies in the region and beyond; an economy which is forward and outward-looking, willing and capable of competing for its rightful place in international trade and commerce.

—The writer is the Minister for Finance, Revenue and Economic Affairs

Biden and Xi and the dynamics of 21st century politics

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



Both leaders, grappling with domestic challenges and seeking to bolster their global standing, are preparing to navigate a complex alignment reminiscent of historic diplomatic encounters. The Nixon-Mao summit of 1972 serves as a historical reference point, where strategic pragmatism

In the intricate tapestry of global politics, the impending meeting between U.S. President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping holds the potential to be a pivotal moment in shaping international relations. Both leaders, grappling with domestic challenges and seeking to bolster their global standing, are preparing to navigate a complex alignment reminiscent of historic diplomatic encounters. The Nixon-Mao summit of 1972 serves as a historical reference point, where strategic pragmatism triumphed over ideological differences. Similarly, the Biden-Xi summit is poised to address contemporary challenges facing the United States and China. Against the backdrop of China's economic struggles and internal social unrest, the U.S. aims to influence the course of events by urging a reduction in China's naval activities. Implicit in this dialogue is the shared interest in managing the intricate web of relations involving Russia, China's nominal ally with nuanced affiliations. Drawing parallels with the 1973 Middle East crisis, echoes of historical events persist in the current geopolitical landscape, albeit with new actors and evolving weaponry. The U.S. finds itself torn between a desire to dis-

entangle from perennial conflicts and the mounting calls for international responsibility, underscoring the complexity of contemporary global affairs. This summit, therefore, assumes significance not only in reshaping U.S.-China relations but also in influencing the broader geopolitical landscape. The specter of the Cold War looms over the proceedings, with the U.S. and China positioned at the nexus of strategic cooperation and competition. Both nations seek to balance internal imperatives with external challenges, making the outcome of this meeting potentially indicative of a paradigm shift in the delicate dance of global power dynamics.

In this era of interconnectedness, the Biden-Xi summit transcends bilateral relations, serving as a litmus test for the resilience of the international order. As the world watches, the leaders of the two largest economies grapple with the shadows of history, seeking a path forward that balances the pursuit of national interests with the imperative of global stability. The upcoming meeting between Biden and Xi is not just a routine diplomatic engagement; it mirrors the challenges faced during the Nixon-Mao summit. Both leaders, not at the zenith of their political strength, are

driven by a common desire to improve domestic popularity and enhance their countries' global positions. Much like Nixon and Mao in 1972, they may find themselves forging pragmatic alliances in the face of pressing geopolitical realities. The parallel to the 1973 Middle East crisis is evident, with the world witnessing new actors and evolving conflicts. The U.S., despite the desire to extricate itself from perennial quagmires, grapples with the absence of a clear solution. The international community's calls for responsibility add another layer of complexity to the global landscape, emphasizing the weight of contemporary challenges. The Biden-Xi summit, therefore, goes beyond a mere discussion of bilateral issues. It is a significant event with repercussions for global stability. As the leaders negotiate, the international community observes a delicate dance between the two nations, reminiscent of the Cold War era. The meeting not only shapes U.S.-China relations but also has the potential to redefine the broader geopolitical landscape. In an era where nations are interconnected, the summit becomes a litmus test for the strength of the international order, as leaders seek a delicate balance between national interests and global stability.

Briefs

Kakar directs to implement SIFC...

FROM PAGE 01 appreciated the progress on privatization of State-Owned Enterprises and directed to keep the process at fast pace. The Chief of Army Staff reassured undaunted resolve of the Pakistan Army to backstop government initiatives in various domains for sustainable recovery of the economy.

SC links non...

FROM PAGE 01 the planners and executors of the protest which disrupted lives in the twin cities Rawalpindi and Islamabad between November 6 and November 27, 2017. As a result of the protest, the PML-N government had to sack its law minister Zahid Hamid. The Supreme Court had taken suo motu notice of the sit-in on November 21, 2017. Later, a division bench led by Justice Qazi Faez Isa on February 6, 2019 unveiled its verdict in the sit-in case, criticizing the role of intelligence agencies in the saga. Soon after assuming office of the chief justice of Pakistan (CJP) in September this year, Justice Isa listed for hearing the petitions that had been filed against the SC's February 2019 verdict.

Pak refutes arms sale...

FROM PAGE 01 Israeli aggression in Gaza. "The caretaker prime minister demanded an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and expressed solidarity with the Palestinian people," she said. The spokesperson added that the premier stressed the resolution of the Palestine issue according to the UN resolutions in the meeting with OIC members. Baloch said Pakistan welcomed the OIC-Arab League Joint Summit declaration. "We call on the international community to stop Israeli attacks on hospitals in Gaza." Baloch also revealed that Pakistan has been elected to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation's Executive Board for the year 2027 and aims to establish connectivity in all regions.

Present conditions...

FROM PAGE 01 national exchequer. Other countries of the world too passed through the same phases, he noted with reference to the transition from a planned government-controlled economy to free market where the people have freedom to invest according to the needs and profitability while generating competition. "We understand the economic hardships being faced by Pakistan," he said, adding that rescuing the people from the current record-breaking inflation and poverty was their responsibility. "It is their right if the people demand development, [if they] demand education and health. The government is responsible for providing these services," the three-time prime minister stressed.

Prefer me over three...

FROM PAGE 01 I would like to express my gratitude to the elders, brothers, and sisters for coming in large numbers." Recalling the past contributions made by his party, Bhutto-Zardari said: "Everybody is familiar with the way Asif Ali Zardari delivered between 2008 and 2013. The PPP had introduced the 18th Amendment and the NFC Award. These are the achievements of the PPP that made us proud." President Zardari's accomplishments during the 2008-2013 are before everyone. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa used to be called the 'NWFP', it was during the PPP's tenure and due to the efforts of President Zardari that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was given an identity.

Australia triumphs over South Africa, Secures WC Final

Australia will now lock horns with India in final, scheduled for November 19

OUR CORRESPONDENTS

KOLKATA: Australia qualified for final of the World Cup 2023 after beating South Africa by three wickets in a nail-biting contest at Eden Gardens, Kolkata, on Thursday. Aussies achieved the modest target of 213 runs in 47.2 overs, to reach final for eighth time. Proteas bowlers gave a tough time, slimming the opponent's chances for win, but tail order of Australia held the nerves to clinch the crucial victory. Travis Head and David Warner made a sparkling start to the chase, cutting into Kagiso Rabada and Marco Jansen in the first six overs, racing to 60/0. But Australia's serene progress came to an abrupt halt as the spinners kept the game alive. The introduction of Aiden Markram gave South Africa initial hope as he struck with his first ball to remove Warner for 29. And a terrific grab from Rassie van der Dussen off Kagiso Rabada saw Mitchell Marsh depart without scoring. Steve Smith made 30 off 62 while Marnus Labuschagne and Glenn Maxwell were dismissed in quick sessions. After Josh Inglis removed for 28, Pat Cummins and Mitchel Starc managed to save the wicket and win the game for their side. Earlier, a magical bowling spell from Aussies



restricted South Africa from building a big total as the Proteas were bowled out for 212 in semi-final. Mitchell Starc struck with the new ball and accounted for the South Africa skipper Temba Bavuma for a duck in the very first over. And when Quinton de Kock tried to take on Hazlewood in the sixth over, he ended up ballooning a catch towards the mid-on region. Later, Markram was dismissed

while trying to pierce through the point, and van der Dussen fell in the very next over when he edged one to the second slip. South Africa were four down for 24 before rain arrived to halt play. After the top order collapsed, Heinrich Klaasen and David Miller tried to fight back and build a strong middle-order partnership. But Travis Head got the breakthrough by dismissing Klaasen for 47. Miller

smashed a splendid and much-needed ton to boost the total but he got a little support from fellow players. Mitchell Starc and Pat Cummins claimed three-wicket haul each while Josh Hazlewood and Head took two wickets each. Australia will now lock horns with India in final, scheduled for November 19. This momentous match at Edgbaston continues to haunt South African cricket, serving as a pivotal reference for their

subsequent World Cup woes. The semi-final's drama was intensified by the preceding Super Six encounter against Australia, where the latter's captain, Steve Waugh, delivered a match-winning century, aided by a crucial drop catch by Herschelle Gibbs. Waugh's alleged remark, "You've just dropped the World Cup," added to the narrative, although neither player has confirmed it. This event turned the tide in Australia's favor, rescuing them from the brink of elimination.

The semifinal rematch saw South Africa, needing a modest 214 runs for victory, reaching 205 for nine in the final over, with Lance Klusener on strike and Allan Donald at the other end. Klusener's initial boundary hits raised hope, but a series of mishits followed, culminating in a fateful run attempt that left Donald stranded, his bat lost mid-run, and wicketkeeper Adam Gilchrist capitalizing on the chaos to seal South Africa's demise. This heartbreaking loss became emblematic of South Africa's World Cup misfortunes. Subsequent tournaments saw them eliminated due to various reasons—a misjudgment of a rain-adjusted target in 2003, a heavy defeat against Australia in 2007, a stunning collapse against New Zealand in 2011, and a crushing semi-final loss to NZ in 2015.

Shan shares his roadmap for Pakistan Test team



LAHORE: Pakistan's Test team captain, Shan Masood, shared his vision and roadmap for the national squad, expressing gratitude for the opportunity to lead the team and outlining his plans to elevate Pakistan's standing in red-ball cricket. In a video message posted by Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), Masood began by thanking the cricket board and all stakeholders for entrusting him with the leadership

role, acknowledging the honour and privilege of representing Pakistan on the international cricket stage. "First of all thank you very much. It's an honour and privilege to even play for Pakistan," Shan said. He emphasized the challenges that come with leading a Test team, highlighting red-ball cricket as the toughest format and stressing the collective responsibility to propel Pakistan forward in this domain.

"As far leading Pakistan is concerned, I am extremely grateful to the cricket board, all stakeholders who saw the acumen in me to take this responsibility and take the team forward," he added. The skipper underscored the need for the team to carve out its own identity in the world of Test cricket, aiming to create a blueprint that reflects a distinctive style of play. Shan emphasized the importance of formulating a strategy that excites fans and sets Pakistan apart when facing opponents. "There will be challenges, red-ball cricket is the toughest format and I think it's an onus on all of us to take Pakistan forward in red-ball cricket, create our own identity, formulate a blueprint, play a certain brand of cricket that excite our fans and when other teams play us, Pakistan will be recognized with that identity and brand of cricket," he remarked. Shan urged the players to work together towards this common goal, having a sense of unity and determination within the squad. "Once again, I am extremely grateful and let's aim together to take Pakistan forward in red-ball cricket," he concluded.

Afridi denies lobbying for Afridi's captaincy

LAHORE: Former Pakistan cricket captain Shahid Khan Afridi on Thursday vehemently denied any involvement in discussions or lobbying for the appointment of Shaheen Shah Afridi as the T20 captain. Addressing the speculations surrounding his alleged efforts to keep Shaheen away from the captaincy, Afridi set the record straight in an exclusive statement. "I swear, I never talked about making Shaheen the captain, nor did I ever lobby. I am not involved in these things. I don't have to, and I don't like it either," Afridi stated emphatically during a Saama News program. The rumors gained momentum after Shaheen Afridi was appointed as the T20 captain, prompting Afridi to clarify his position and put an end to the speculation. Afridi revealed that he had expressed his opinion regarding the captaincy during a discussion on the program when Zaka Ashraf sought his viewpoint. "I said that Babar should not be removed from the captaincy. I wanted to keep Shaheen away from the captaincy. It has to happen; this is what happens to the captain in the end," Afridi explained, shedding light on his stance during the conversation. The seasoned cricketer emphasised that his relationship with Shaheen could have led people to speculate about his support or lobbying, but he asserted, "I swear that I am neither interested in these things nor am I fond of them." Afridi concluded by extending good wishes to the newly appointed Test captain, Shan Masood, and the T20 captain, Shaheen Afridi. — DNA

Naseem Shah set to bid farewell to Quetta Gladiators

The report further added that there is notable interest from both Islamabad United and Peshawar Zalmi in securing Shah's services for the forthcoming edition of the Pakistan Super League

LAHORE: Right-arm fast bowler Naseem Shah, who joined Quetta Gladiators in 2019, is poised to end his association with the franchise for the upcoming ninth edition of the Pakistan Super League (PSL). According to a media report, Shah has attributed personal reasons for his decision to part ways with the team. The report further added that there is notable interest from both Islamabad United and Peshawar Zalmi in securing Shah's services for the forthcoming edition of the PSL. Discussions regarding Shah's potential move to either of these teams are gaining traction, with speculation that he may enter the drafting process or be part of a trade deal. It must be noted that during a PSL 8 match between Quetta Gladiators and Lahore Qalandars earlier this year, Naseem Shah appeared visibly frustrated, prompting fans to express their dissatisfaction and advocate for his change of franchise in the next season. Naseem got injured during Asia Cup, ruling him out of the ICC World Cup 2023. Following the injury, the fast bowler underwent shoulder surgery in October and is presently undergoing rehabilitation. — DNA



ISLAMABAD: Foreigners Women are taking interest in paintings during exhibition entitled "Sugar and Spice" at Pakistan National Council of Arts in Federal Capital. — Online

Medvedev secures ATP semifinal spot, Alcaraz rebounds

Medvedev has a long-running rivalry with Zverev, the pair not getting on off-court, and he has now prevailed in five of their six matches this season

SPORTS DESK

TURIN: Daniil Medvedev booked his place in the last four of the ATP Finals on Wednesday after beating Alexander Zverev 7-6 (9/7), 6-4, while Carlos Alcaraz cruised past troubled Andrey Rublev to get his campaign up and running. World No. 3 Medvedev had to win in straight sets to claim a spot in the semifinals in Turin with a match to spare and he saw off big-hitting German Zverev in a stodgy Red Group encounter. He faces Carlos Alcaraz, a 7-5, 6-2 winner earlier in the day, in his final match and has the world No. 2's last-four hopes in his hands. "I hope that I feel well tomorrow and ready to fight because this tournament is tricky," said Medvedev. "I'm into the semis but you want to keep the rhythm and against Carlos... if we play at night you don't want to finish 7-6 in the third (set) at midnight. I just hope I can show my best tennis." Medvedev has a long-running rivalry with Zverev, the pair not getting on off-court, and he has now prevailed in five of their six matches this season. One of those wins

came on his way to his surprise triumph at the clay-court Italian Open back in May, one of five titles won by Medvedev this year. The 2020 champion looks in fine form despite Wednesday's match being his 82nd this year and will cause serious trouble to whoever he faces in the next round. Zverev, a two-time winner at the season-end tournament, would qualify from the Red Group with a win of either sort following Alcaraz's earlier victory. The 26-year-old hit more aces and winners than Medvedev but still ended up on the wrong side of the result after throwing away his service game to save the match. Zverev can still make it through

though and in his final match will face a dejected Rublev, who is yet to win a set at the Pala Alpitour. World No. 2 Alcaraz has had problems with his form and fitness over the past few months and was staring at possible early elimination after losing his first match with Zverev. But he looked in much better condition on Wednesday and comfortably claimed his first ever win in the season-ending tournament, snapping a three-match losing streak to boot. "I'm really happy to show this level and realize my level is still there, giving myself a chance in this tournament," Alcaraz told reporters. "After this win, everything has changed in my mind." The 20-year-old easily dealt with Russian Rublev who once again failed to make his mark in a big match with one of tennis' leading

lights, and lost control of his emotions after giving away a service game at the start of the second set. Being one set and a break down was too much for the 26-year-old who then repeatedly smashed his racket into his left knee, drawing blood, and soon after gave into his anger and promptly collapsed just as he did in his opening defeat to long-time friend Medvedev. Afterwards Rublev brushed off the assault on his own limb as "nothing" but then admitted that he is struggling emotionally with what has been a hard end to the season. On Thursday Jannik Sinner will try to become the first Italian to reach the semifinals when he takes on Holger Rune in the tight Green Group. Straight-set victories over now-retired Stefanos Tsitsipas and Novak Djokovic might not be enough to secure a spot in the next round. And Sinner faces Rune who only had to play three games against Tsitsipas who dropped out with injury. Sinner meanwhile prevailed on Tuesday in a three-hour thriller with Djokovic, who plays Tsitsipas' replacement Hubert Hurkacz with his last-four spot also still in the balance.

'Catastrophic' situation...

FROM PAGE 01

Mosque in the western area of Khan Younis. Eleven martyrs fell as a result of the Israeli occupation's shelling of the Central Petroleum Station, which was sheltering hundreds of displaced people. Dozens of civilians were injured, and several are missing. The IOF continues its presence in the Al-Shifa Medical Complex and carry out attacks and destruction inside it. Meanwhile, fires are still raging in the western areas of Gaza City, which are witnessing continuous bombardment. According to the official media office, the number of martyrs due to the Israeli aggression has risen to more than 11,500, including 4,710 children, in addition to nearly 30,000 wounded, with more than 70% of them being women and children.

Iran not behind...

FROM PAGE 01

throwing its support behind Israel," the top Iranian diplomat emphasized. Amir-Abdollahian dismissed allegations that Iran was responsible for a drone attack in the Red Sea that appeared to be targeting a US missile destroyer. A statement from the Pentagon claimed that the guided-missile destroyer USS Thomas Hudner shot down the drone early Wednesday morning, which originated from Yemen, as it was "heading in the direction of the ship." The Pentagon, however, did not say who it believes fired the drone. "Yemen makes its own decisions and acts independently," Amir-Abdollahian said. In a statement on November 8, Yemen's Armed Forces announced the shooting down of an advanced American drone as the aircraft was operating in support of the Israeli regime. The MQ-9 Reaper drone was brought down using a surface-to-air missile as the aircraft was flying in the airspace over Yemen's territorial waters.

Pakistan re-elected...

FROM PAGE 01

Pakistan will continue to work together with all member states in advancing our shared objectives," the statement said. The statement added it was a matter of immense pride to have been entrusted with the responsibility to serve on the executive board. "Pakistan will avail this opportunity to continue to contribute to the policymaking, development of norms, advancement of global priorities, and effective oversight of programs and activities of the organisation," it highlighted. Moreover, the statement emphasised that Pakistan values the ever-relevant and crucial role of UNESCO as a universal forum to promote the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind and the advancement of global peace and development through education, science, culture, and communication.

4 terrorists killed in...

FROM PAGE 01

being carried out to neutralize any other terrorists found in the area". In a separate IBO, at least four terrorists were killed in the Badaber area of Peshawar. ISPR identified one of the terrorists as a high-value target (HVT) commander Samiullah aka Shenay, along with commander Salman aka Ahmed, Imran aka Muhammad, and Hazrat Umar aka Khalid According to a statement by ISPR, the eliminated terrorists "remained actively involved in numerous terrorist activities, including extortion and target killings in the area." The military's media wing added that weapons, ammunition, and explosives were also recovered from them. "Security Forces of Pakistan are determined to eliminate the menace of terrorism from the country." Earlier, security forces killed seven terrorists in an IBO in the general area of Kiri Machan Khel in the Tank district of K.P. The media wing of the military said that the security forces carried out the IBO on the reported presence of terrorists. "An intense exchange of fire took place during the operation, due to which seven terrorists were sent to hell," it said.

Briefs

Antonio 'deeply concerned' by widening Myanmar conflict

NEW YORK : UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said Wednesday he is "deeply concerned" about the widening conflict in Myanmar, sparked by an offensive launched by ethnic minority armed groups last month. Guterres is "deeply concerned by the expansion of conflict" across a vast swathe of the country that the UN says has displaced more than 200,000 people, spokesman Stephane Dujarric said in a statement. Fighting has raged since October 27 after the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) and Arakan Army (AA) launched attacks on the military near the northern border with China. This week, the AA launched fresh attacks on the military in western Rakhine state, while anti-junta fighters in Kayah state on the Thai border were battling the military near state capital Loikaw. At least 75 civilians including children have been killed and 94 people wounded in the fighting, according to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, citing initial reports from the field.—APP

Unemployment rate climbs slightly in Aust

CANBERRA : Australia's unemployment rate increased by 0.2 percentage points in October, data has revealed. According to official labor market data published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) on Thursday, the unemployment rate in October was 3.7 percent, up from 3.5 percent in September. It marked the 17th consecutive month that the unemployment rate lingered between 3.4 and 3.7 percent, a streak spanning back to June 2022. The ABS said the number of employed Australians increased by 55,000 between September and October, but that was offset by an increase in the number of people actively looking for work. In order to be considered in unemployment data by the ABS, a person must be of working age, out of work and actively looking for employment. The participation rate, which measures the portion of the working-age population who are either employed or searching for work, rose from 66.8 percent in September to an equal record-high 67 percent in October, the ABS said. "The large increase in employment in October followed a small increase in September of around 8,000 people. Looking over the past two months, these increases equate to average employment growth of around 31,000 people a month.—APP

NY state sues PepsiCo over plastic

NEW YORK : New York state sued PepsiCo on Wednesday, pointing to the soda giant's plastic waste as a scourge of waterways and blasting the company's "misleading" statements on the environment. The civil suit, filed by New York Attorney General Letitia James in the state Supreme Court, seeks a finding that PepsiCo contributed to a "public nuisance" in the Buffalo River; the imposition of financial penalties and compensatory damages on the company; and an order that PepsiCo cease the sale of single-use plastic on goods that do not harm the environment. "All New Yorkers have a basic right to clean water, yet PepsiCo's irresponsible packaging and marketing endanger Buffalo's water supply, environment, and public health," James said in a statement. "No one should have to worry about plastics in their drinking water, plastic garbage littering their scenic riverfront, or plastic pollution harming wildlife." PepsiCo said the company is "serious" about plastic reduction and has been "transparent" in its efforts. "This is a complex issue and requires involvement from a variety of stakeholders, including businesses.—APP

OGRA, PRL ink deal for brownfield refinery policy

The implementation of this policy is poised to usher in positive transformations within the oil sector of Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In a landmark development aligning with Pakistan's refining policy, the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) and Pakistan Refinery Limited (PRL) have officially inked a pivotal upgrade agreement today. Following extensive deliberations, consultations, and a series of meetings with key stakeholders, the agreement marks a significant milestone for the energy sector. "After a marathon of meetings, consultations, and deliberations with the stakeholders, the agreement was finalized, and by the grace of Almighty Allah, we have signed the first one with PRL," stated Masroor Khan, Chairman of the Oil and Gas Authority. The Brownfield Refinery Policy, a critical component of the national strategic framework, necessitates



ed these agreements to facilitate their projects towards produc- implementation of this policy is existing refineries in advancing ing Euro-V compliant fuels. The poised to usher in positive trans-

formations within the oil sector of Pakistan. "We believe that the upgrade projects under the Brownfield Refinery Policy are of paramount national importance. This agreement with PRL signifies the initiation of a series of strategic partnerships to enhance our refining capabilities and contribute to the production of environmentally friendly fuels," added Masroor Khan.

"It is pertinent to mention that with the implementation of this policy the local production of Euro 5 compliant Mogas and Diesel will increase, which will reduce the burden of import and will save Foreign exchange" said Chairman OGRA. The Pakistan Refining Policy's successful implementation is anticipated to bring about a positive and lasting impact on the country's energy landscape.

Madagascar Presidential polls begin amid boycott calls

ANTANANARIVO : Madagascar has kicked off its presidential election after a turbulent campaign period marred by boycotts and allegations of election irregularities. Voting commenced smoothly on Thursday morning in the Indian Ocean nation, according to the media news agency, despite an overnight curfew and months of protests leading up to the election. President Andry Rajoelina, a former DJ who first came to power with the backing of the army in 2009, is seeking a second consecutive term in office. His opponents say Rajoelina should be disqualified and accuse him of waging an "institutional coup" to stay in power. Ten key opposition candidates have called on voters to shun the elections. They have organised street protests in the capital, Antananarivo, almost every day in recent weeks, with police dispersing many with tear gas and arresting dozens of demonstrators. "We appeal to everyone not to vote. Conditions for a transparent presidential election, accepted by all, have not been met," Roland Ratsiraka, one of the protesting candidates, said on Tuesday. "We do not want to participate in this fraud, it is a joke on Madagascar." Rajoelina has brushed off criticism and expressed confidence that he will secure re-election in the first round of voting. Controversial re-election bid Madagascar has been in turmoil since media reports in June revealed Rajoelina had acquired French nationality in 2014. Under local law, the president should have lost his Madagascar nationality, and with it, the ability to lead the country, his opponents said. Rajoelina has denied trying to conceal his naturalisation, saying he became French to allow his children to pursue their studies abroad and that he has not been notified of any loss of his Madagascar nationality. "The law is clear, but nobody is taking the responsibility to apply it properly," said William Rasoanaivo, locally known as POV, an award-winning political cartoonist exiled in Mauritius. Rajoelina's challengers have been further angered by a ruling allowing for an ally of the president to lead the nation temporarily after Rajoelina resigned in line with the constitution to stand for re-election. They have also complained about electoral irregularities. "People have become aware of the dictatorship we live under," said 55-year-old Malagasy resident Chrisiani Andriano, complaining that after 11 years in power, Rajoelina had achieved little. "We do not see what he did for us," he said. Other residents said they were primarily concerned about economic challenges in what is one of the world's poorest countries. "What matters to us is first and foremost is getting by on a daily basis," said Benedicte Lalaorison, a 61-year-old underwear seller in the Analakely market in central Antananarivo.—DNA

Sanchez gets new term as Spanish PM

MADRID: Pedro Sanchez won the backing of Spain's parliament on Thursday for another term as prime minister, with the country divided over his decision to grant Catalan separatists an amnesty in exchange for their crucial support in a vote of confidence. Sanchez, in office since 2018, won the backing of 179 lawmakers, three more than the absolute majority of 176 in the 350-seat parliament after an often tense two-day debate. His Socialist party finished second in an inconclusive July general election but he reached deals with several smaller parties to back re-establishing his minority coalition government with hard-left party Sumar.

To win the support of two Catalan separatist parties, he agreed to grant amnesty to hundreds of people facing legal action for their role in Catalonia's separatist movement over the past decade. Among the beneficiaries is Carles Puigdemont, who headed the regional government of Catalonia when it staged a failed secession bid in 2017. Puigdemont organised referendum that was banned by the central government, followed by a short-lived declaration of independence that sparked Spain's worst political crisis in decades. Puigdemont fled to Belgium to avoid prosecution. An amnesty would allow him to return to Spain, while many Spaniards consider him an enemy of the state. Sanchez, who has made a career out of making political gambles, defended the amnesty during the parliamentary debate, arguing it was constitutional and needed to "heal the wounds" opened by the wealthy northeastern region's.—APP

Turkish Airlines expands US network

ANKARA : Türkiye's national flag carrier Turkish Airlines (THY) continues the expansion of its network overseas with the recent announcement of its 13th U.S. gateway by launching a direct flight from Istanbul Airport to Detroit Metropolitan Wayne County Airport (DTW). According to the statement made by the THY press office, the airline's first flight to Detroit was welcomed at the airport with traditional water ornaments, Anadolu Agency (AA) reported Thursday. The welcome event hosted at DTW Airport featured the presence of Turkish Airlines executives alongside local officials. Turkish Airlines Chairperson of the Board and the Executive Committee Ahmet Bolat in his speech at the event touched upon the importance of the Detroit destination for the company. "We are thrilled to bring Istanbul together with Detroit, offering travel, business and cultural discovery opportunities. We have brought our two great cities, Istanbul and Detroit, even closer together," he said. "We continue to offer the highest quality service while allowing our passengers to explore the world with our unique flight network.—APP

Building a rail rival to the Panama Canal

SALINA Cruz : At Mexico's narrowest point, linking the Pacific and Atlantic oceans, the government is building a railway rival to the Panama Canal with promises of economic bounty but amid fears of environmental and social harm. The Spanish conquistador Hernan Cortes already dreamed of such a crossing for humans and goods in the 16th century, but most plans came to naught and a prior, rudimentary connection was all but abandoned with the opening of the canal cutting through Panama in 1914. Then, in 2020, work started on a new coast-to-coast link under the government of President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador. It comprises a 300-kilometer (186-mile) railway line from the Pacific port of Salina Cruz to Coatzacoalcos on the other side of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec - a region rich in biodiversity and Indigenous heritage. The government has announced an investment of \$2.85 billion. According to project coordinator Adiel Estrada, it has created 800 direct jobs and some 2,400 indirect ones - a much-needed injection for a largely impoverished part of the country. Officials expect that once fully operational, by 2033, the "interoceanic corridor" would boost GDP by three to five percentage points.—Agencies

Asian markets drop as rate-hope rally loses steam

HONG KONG : Asian markets fell Thursday as investors took a breather and cashed in on a recent rally, though analysts said the outlook was bright, even as data pointed to a soft landing for the world's top economy. Figures released Tuesday showing a slower-than-expected rise in the US October consumer price index lit a fire under global equities as it cemented traders' views that the Federal Reserve will no longer need to hike interest rates and even fuelled talk of cuts next year. Hopes for a further slowing in inflation were boosted the next day by figures showing producer prices had also come in below forecasts. However, a slightly above-estimate print on retail sales growth tempered the mood, even as it marked a sharp drop from the previous month. The readings allowed dealers to step back and take a pause from their recent buying, leaving Wall Street's three main indexes only slightly higher, and pushing Asian stocks lower on Thursday. Hong Kong, which had jumped almost four percent the day before, led losses, while Tokyo, Shanghai, Seoul, Sydney, Singapore, Taipei, Wellington and Jakarta were also in the red.—APP

UN urges probe into Burkina Faso 'mass killings'

WEB DESK

GENEVA: The United Nations called Wednesday for an independent investigation into "mass killings" in Burkina Faso this month that left dozens of people dead, including children. Burkina Faso's state prosecutor said Monday that more than 70 people had been killed in an attack on November 5 in the town of Zaongo in the central-north of the country, and that most of them were children and elderly people. The UN rights office said it was "following the alarming reports of mass killings" in the West African country. "We call on the transitional authorities to carry out promptly a thorough, independent, and transparent investigation into these serious reports," spokeswoman Liz Throssell said in a statement. She pointed out that while the authorities had confirmed at least 70 deaths, "some reports suggest that some 100 people may have been killed, and a large number injured." "This incident, during which a number of properties were burned down, is also reported to have led the villagers to flee the area," she said. The Save the Children aid group also called for an "immediate investigation" into the killings. "This incident is a grave reminder that children bear the brunt of conflict and insecurity in Burkina Faso," said Benoit Delarte, Save the Children's director in Burkina Faso. "The perpetrators of these crimes against children must be held to account and brought to justice. Impunity for violations of children's rights feed into the narrative that these crimes are acceptable," he added in a statement. The country is battling a jihadist insurgency that spilled over from neighboring Mali in 2015 and has left more than 17,000 civilians and soldiers dead and displaced two million people.



GENEVA : The Federal Secretary Health, Mr Iftikhar Ali Shalwani represented the Government of Pakistan, during 50th board Meeting at Geneva Headquarter.—DNA

Cameron visits Kyiv, holds talks with Zelensky

Britain's Foreign Secretary David Cameron wants to underscore London's support for Ukraine

NEWS DESK

KYIV: Britain's Foreign Secretary David Cameron traveled to wartime Kyiv and met President Volodymyr Zelensky for talks on his first working trip abroad, the Ukrainian leader said on Thursday. Former prime minister Cameron, who was named as Britain's new foreign minister on Monday, said in a video posted by Zelensky's office that he wanted to underscore London's support for Ukraine. Zelensky said he was grateful for the gesture, which comes amid a conflict in the Middle East that he said had drawn global attention away from Ukraine's war with Russia, which is now in its 21st month and with no end in sight. "The world is not so focused on the battlefield situation in Ukraine, and this dividing of the focus really does not help," he said. Britain has been a close ally of Ukraine throughout the full-scale war launched by Russia in February 2022. "What I want to say by being here is that we will continue to give you the moral support, the diplomatic support... but above all the military support that you need not just this year and next year, but however long it takes," Cameron said. He added that Britain would work with its allies "to make sure the attention is here in Ukraine." The Ukrainian statement did not say when the talks took place. Strict security measures in place because of the war mean details of visits by foreign dignitaries



are sometimes released only some time after they have happened. Mr. Zelensky's fears stem from the world's dwindled focus on Ukraine's previous efforts to fight off Russian military incursions. When Russian proxy forces invaded eastern Ukraine in 2014, the fighting evolved into a protracted, low-intensity conflict. Britain provided support to Ukraine during that time - a period in which Mr. Cameron was prime minister - including a British Army training program for Ukrainian soldiers. But the conflict eventually slipped from the world's attention, despite claiming thousands of lives and displacing tens of thousands of

people. In the current conflict, Ukraine's top military commander, Gen. Valery Zaluzhny, said this month that fighting along the hundreds of miles of front line had reached a stalemate, with each side canceling out the other's air and ground capabilities. He said that unless Ukraine could break through with more advanced weapons and technology, the country would be mired in a long war in which Russia would have the upper hand. "The prolongation of a war, as a rule, in most cases, is beneficial to one of the parties to the conflict," General Zaluzhny said in a nine-page essay. "In our particular case, it is the Russian Federation, as it gives it the opportunity to reconstitute and build up its military power." The general said that Russia, which has more soldiers than Ukraine to commit to the battle, was willing to sacrifice vast numbers of troops to keep the fighting going. Moscow has also stepped up its domestic weapons production. Mr. Zaluzhny's comments appeared intended to encourage Ukraine's Western partners to provide his country with weapons capable of breaking the deadlock, including advanced drones, mine-breaching technology and decoy systems to evade Russian air defenses. The Biden administration has sought congressional approval for a \$105 billion aid package that includes assistance for both Ukraine and Israel. But some Republicans oppose sending more aid to Ukraine - and have moved to separate the funding

request for aid for Israel. Cracks have also appeared in European support, with Slovakia's newly elected populist government announcing recently that it was ending military aid to Ukraine. Against that background, President Vladimir V. Putin of Russia appears convinced that he can outlast the West's commitment to Ukraine and force Kyiv into peace negotiations that would see it cede territory. "Russia thinks it can wait this war out, and that the West will eventually turn its attention elsewhere," Mr. Cameron said in a statement released on Thursday. "This could not be further from the truth," he added, noting that "the U.K. and our partners will support Ukraine and its people for as long as it takes for them to achieve victory." Still, global support for Ukraine's cause has faded, especially outside the West. A survey released by the European Council on Foreign Relations on Wednesday showed that countries such as Brazil, India, South Africa and Turkey would prefer the war to end as soon as possible, even if Ukraine has to give up control of some territory. Mr. Zelensky's interview with reporters from Africa seemed to be aimed at preventing that view from gaining ground. The Ukrainian leader denounced "Russia's colonial ambitions" in his country and said that a Ukrainian victory would signal that "any aggressor with any colonial ambitions" can be stopped.

Briefs

Sindh files plea against SC's military courts ruling

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The caretaker Sindh government filed an intra-court appeal on Thursday challenging the Supreme Court's (SC) October 23 judgment, declaring the trial of 103 civilians in military courts unconstitutional. The provincial government has appealed to the apex court to declare the five-judge bench's order null and void, as well as grant a stay on the implementation of the order till this appeal is decided. Moreover, the Sindh government has requested for the clauses set aside by the apex court bench to also be restored. Those who attacked army installations on May 9 - following the arrest of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan - should be tried in military courts, the government has maintained in its appeal. It has further pleaded that the SC did not correctly take into account the law, or the facts of the matter. A five-judge bench of the apex court had last month unanimously declared the trial of civilians in military courts as null and void and ordered that the 103 accused in cases relating to the violence on May 9 and 10, 2023 be tried under the ordinary criminal laws. The court through the 4-1 majority also declared certain clauses of the Army Act as ultra vires the Constitution and of no legal effect. One judge of the bench, reserved his verdict on one para, though siding with the bench on the remaining paras.

Kakar has assets worth over Rs 48.1 million

ISLAMABAD: Details of Caretaker Prime Minister Anwaarul Haq Kakar, Finance Minister Dr Shamshad Akhtar, Interior Minister Sarfaraz Bugti and Information Minister Murtaza Solangi's assets have come to light. PM Kakar has assets worth over Rs48.1 million. He owns 20 acres of inherited agricultural land worth Rs8 million. Similarly, he has shares worth Rs50,000 in the Pakistan Chagai Mining Limited; he has declared price of 10 tolas of gold at Rs80,000. Likewise, he has over Rs22 million in cash in two bank accounts, while he has declared the price of his house furniture at Rs0.4 million. Finance Minister Shamshad Akhtar owns a house worth Rs4 million in Phase-6 of the Defence Housing Authority (DHA), Karachi. Similarly, she has shown the price of a plot at DHA, Karachi at Rs125,000. The caretaker finance minister revealed that she got two lands as a gift from her father. She has a Naya Pakistan certificate worth Rs2.79 billion and shares in Pakistan State Oil (PSO) worth more than Rs0.3 million.—DNA

Bushra expresses distrust in IHC CJ

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman's wife Bushra Bibi on Thursday expressed her distrust in Islamabad High Court Chief Justice Aamer Farooq. "We want all the cases assigned to be transferred to some other bench as we have seen all our cases are being decided on one same line," Bushra Bibi's lawyers said. "You are talking inappropriately and stop doing that, and let us look into the matter," the IHC chief justice, responding to the statement of the lawyer, said. The court issued notices to the bars upon the plea of former first lady. However, the IHC issued notices to the IHC Bar, Supreme Court Bar and Pakistan Bar Council. It is pertinent to mention here that Bushra Bibi had moved a petition in the IHC seeking isolation for having discussion with the PTI chairman.

Solution to current political instability lies in joint efforts

"The President has no other way but to bring such issues to the notice of the government," he said

ALI FURQAN/VOA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday said Pakistan could overcome its challenges relating to political stability if its politicians, executive and the establishment make a joint commitment to address the issues. He, in an interview with Voice of America (VOA), was responding to a question if the upcoming general polls would bring political stability in the country. President Alvi expressed confidence that the result of the polls as an outcome of the public opinion would lead to an environment ensuring stability and prosperity of the country. Dismissing doubts about delay of general election, he said the judiciary, executive and politicians held a unanimity on holding general elections on the announced date of February 8. He maintained that the provision

of level-playing field to all political parties was the mutual responsibility of the government and the Election Commission of Pakistan. "The government has already given assurance about providing level-playing field to all parties," he said, adding that the nation had full trust in the government's commitment in that regard. The president said that through his letter, he invoked the government's attention towards the apprehensions of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). To a query, he said the Constitution did not allow the President to take a 'practical' action to ensure the transparency of an election. "The President has no other way but to bring such issues to the notice of the government," he said. He said though the office of the President did not have an administrative authority, however the points raised by it held a significant value. "There can be many expectations [from



me to act in a particular way], but I will not take any unconstitutional step," he said. The president said he was not the spokesperson of any party, but of all Pakistanis, adding "However, I will continue to identify and point out whenever see any issue." To a question, the president said he never showed negligence with respect to the date of general elections. Alvi appreciated the Supreme Court of Pakistan on demonstrating unanimity over the election date.

He said the case relating to the contesting of elections by PTI Chairman Imran Khan was sub-judice and added that he had full confidence in the judiciary. To another question, President Alvi explained that he did not believe in politics of violence and therefore condemned the incidents of 9th May. "Also, the governments should not create such a situation which may lead to violence," he added. He said he would not like to comment on the cases of the civilians involved in 9th May incidents which were pending with the military courts. Asked if he would take an oath from Nawaz Sharif in case he was elected as prime minister, the president said he would comply with the constitutional requirements in that regard. He said completion of President's constitutional term was sign of stability of the process. On expulsion of illegal Afghan refugees,

he endorsed the government's decision, stating that the country's economy could no more afford to bear their burden. He said any review on the decision regarding the illegal foreigners rested with the Apex Committee. Alvi said the interim Afghan government failed to control the cross-border infiltration despite evidence provided to them and no action was taken against the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan. He said there was no communication gap between Islamabad and Kabul, and urged the Afghan administration to take practical steps in that regard. On the Palestine issue, the president said Pakistan since its independence had been supporting the Palestinians and effectively raised the current Gaza situation at all international forums. He reiterated that the resolution of the Palestine issue lied only in a two-state solution.

New Delhi smog grows more intense

WEB DESK

NEW DELHI: Toxic smog gripping New Delhi grew more intense on Thursday as farm fires raged in nearby fields despite a court-ordered ban, making India's capital the world's most polluted city again. Pollution levels have risen since earlier this week after a brief respite and further mitigation measures are being discussed, but a plan to make rain via cloud seeding to battle the smog has been pushed back due to unfavourable weather. The city held the top spot on a real-time list of the world's most polluted cities on Thursday, with an air quality index of 509 around noon, according to Swiss group IQAir which categorised the air quality as "hazardous". A north-westerly wind blowing over the city is carrying smoke from farm fires in nearby fields and the wind speed within Delhi is light and unfavourable for dispersion of pollutants, a meteorological department official said on condition of anonymity. There were more than 2,500 farm fires in Punjab state on Wednesday, north of Delhi, as farmers defied a Supreme Court-ordered ban on crop residue burning and the local police warned of legal action against them, The Indian Express newspaper reported.

Lapid calls on Netanyahu to resign

TEL AVIV: Israeli opposition leader Yair Lapid has called on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to step down "immediately", amid Israel's indiscriminate bombardment of Gaza in response to Hamas's October 7 attack. Lapid called for a no-confidence vote in parliament that would allow for the formation of a new government led by another prime minister. "Netanyahu should leave immediately... We need change, Netanyahu cannot remain prime minister," Lapid said on Wednesday in an interview with an Israeli news channel. Lapid accuses Netanyahu and the security apparatus under his leadership of an "unpardonable failure" for not preventing the October 7 attack. "We cannot allow ourselves to carry out a long campaign under a prime minister who has lost the people's trust," he said.—Agencies

Thailand eases travel for Pakistanis

ISLAMABAD: In a bid to enhance tourism and foster stronger ties between Thailand and Pakistan, the Thai government has announced revised visa fees for Pakistani tourists, effective November 2023. This move aims to facilitate travel and promote cultural exchange between the two nations.

Tourist visa options

Thailand offers two types of tourist visas - the single entry and multiple entry options, catering to the diverse preferences of travelers. These visas allow Pakistani tourists to explore the rich cultural tapestry, stunning beaches, and historical landmarks that Thailand has to offer.

Financial requirements

To ensure a smooth entry into Thailand, tourists are advised to carry a minimum of 20,000 Thai Baht or \$700. This financial provision is in line with the country's regulations to guarantee a comfortable stay for visitors.

Required documentation

- Prospective tourists must complete the application process with the following documents:
- 2 Application Forms
 - Cover letter/Company Working Letter
 - 1 Empty Passport Page/6 Months Validity of Passport
 - Bank Statement (1 year)
 - 2 Photos Passport Size (taken within 6 months)
 - 2 Copies of CNIC
 - 2 Copies of Passport
 - NTN Letter
 - Confirmed Air Ticket/Hotel Booking

Bank Statement necessity

A crucial aspect of the application process is the submission of a one-year bank statement. This requirement ensures that tourists have the financial means to support their stay in Thailand, contributing to a hassle-free and enjoyable visit.

Revised visa fees

Thailand, in its commitment to offering an accessible travel experience, revised its visa fees in June 2023, taking into account exchange rate regulations. The current fee for a single-entry tourist visa, valid for three months, is set at Rs11,000. For those opting for a multiple-entry visit visa with a six-month validity period, the fee stands at Rs65,000.—DNA

RCCI delegation calls on Hannu Ripatti, Ambassador of Finland



KHAYAM ABBASI

RAWALPINDI: A delegation of Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) headed by President RCCI Saqib Rafiq called on H.E. Hannu Ripatti, Ambassador of Finland in Islamabad. Matters related to enhancing bilateral trade, investment opportunities, exploring non-conventional sectors, facilitation under SIFC, cooperation and connectivity, sector specific information sharing, waste management and recycling and tourism

came under discussion.

Talking to the delegation, ambassador Hannu Ripatti said that Finland has a strong desire to strengthen trade ties with Pakistan and to do more business activities in a better way and through Fin Partnership which can facilitate and help imports and exports in both ways. Ambassador while accepting the invitation to visit RCCI said that he was planning to visit various chambers of commerce and industries aiming for better connectivity and cooperation. "Finland reopened its mission in Pakistan after the closure of 10

years," he said.

The ambassador mentioned that a temporary location at the Serena Business Complex was being used but "soon will have the old premises and start routine operations", including the issuing of visas. He said that the Business Council of Finland will host a business summit in Pakistan in February 2024 and related information will be shared with the chamber of commerce. While answering to a question, he mentioned that a large number of Pakistani students were pursuing their studies in Finland; however, students

were facing problems as they do not have longer-term visas for which applications have to be forwarded to Abu Dhabi which takes time.

RCCI President Saqib Rafiq who also has the portfolio of Chairman Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) discussed scope and opportunities in waste management, recycling the waste and energy from the waste. Senior Vice President, Muhammad Hamza Sarosh, Vice President Faisal Shahzad, executive committee members Abdul Rauf, Mudassir Maqbool were also present in the meeting.

Outbreaks of disease, hunger inevitable in Gaza

GENEVA: The United Nations human rights chief said on Thursday widespread outbreaks of disease and hunger seemed "inevitable" in Gaza after weeks of Israeli assault on the densely populated Palestinian enclave. Speaking at an informal briefing to states at the United Nations in Geneva after visiting the Middle East,

Volker Turk said the depletion of fuel would have a "catastrophic" impact across Gaza. It would lead to the collapse of sewage systems, health care and end the scarce humanitarian aid being supplied. "Massive outbreaks of infectious disease, and hunger, seem inevitable," Turk, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, said.

The World Health Organization has warned of "worrying trends" in disease spread in Gaza, saying there had been an unusually large number of cases of diarrheal disease in the enclave, where bombardments and a ground operation have disrupted the health system, access to clean water and caused people to crowd into shelters. In comments to the media after his briefing to UN member states, Turk said lasting peace was impossible without an end to long-standing violations of human rights. "Warnings by my office and others about human rights violations over many years have been ignored, not only in Israel and in the occupied Palestinian territory, but also by states with influence on the parties to this crisis," he said.—Agencies

US Ambassador opens Punjab's first ARCC at Nishtar Hospital

DNA

MULTAN: The first Anti-Rape Crisis Cell (ARCC) of Punjab, which has been set up for provision of medico legal aid to victims of sexual abuse including women and children, opened at Nishtar Hospital here on Thursday. US Ambassador to Pakistan, Donald Bloom, caretaker provincial Health Minister Dr Javid Akram, ACS South Punjab, Saqib Zafar and UN Women representative for Pakistan, Sharmila Rasool jointly opened the Cell. It aims at getting the victims justice from the courts based on the evidence of the case. Addressing the inaugurating ceremony, US Envoy, Donald Bloom said that the establishment of the Cell in Multan was an important step towards justice for sexually abused women and children. He emphasized the protection of the rights of victims in the fight against the violence and paid tribute to the Punjab government and UN Women for establishing the ARCC. Mr Bloom said that sexual violence was not a local issue but a global

problem that required collective efforts to prevent it adding that the international community was united to deal with it and stands with the victims to get justice. He said that it was the responsibility of the entire society to provide support to any victims. He said that the ARCC would provide legal, medical and psychological support to the victims and it was the first cell in



Amb Blome visited the iconic tomb of Shah Shams Tabraiz

Punjab province and the second in Pakistan The Cell has been set up in Gynae Ward of Nishtar Hospital in collaboration with Punjab Health Department, UN Women and the American Government. The Cell is part of the US-supported protection programme and will be functional round the clock, he added. Punjab Health Minister Dr. Javid Akram said that the setting up of anti-rape crisis cell in Multan reflected the government's thinking regarding the importance of Southern Punjab. This Cell is an important milestone for the provision of justice and is proof of the government's ongoing war against sexual violence, he said. Speaking at the opening ceremony, Sharmila Rasool, Country Representative of UN Women Pakistan highlighted the importance of the Anti-Rape Crisis Cell and said that this cell will form the basis of integrated services for victims of sexual abuse. ACS South Punjab, Saqib Zafar also spoke on the occasion. Nishtar Hospital officials and others attended the event.

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