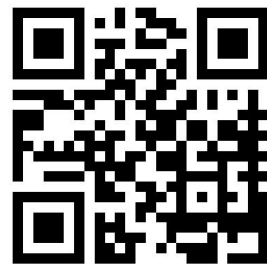




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Editor: Omer Rizwan

CIA bribed analysts into Covid-19 conclusion: whistleblower

WASHINGTON (Agencies): An unnamed CIA whistleblower has made the dramatic allegation that six analysts there were bribed to reject the theory that COVID-19 resulted from a research-related leak of a new coronavirus, according to a press release today from the office of the Republican leading a congressional investigation into the pandemic. The allegation was strongly rejected in a CIA statement released hours later. A majority of U.S. intelligence agencies has so far concluded that the COVID-19 pandemic mostly likely started when SARS-CoV-2 jumped from an infected animal host into people; a wildlife market in Wuhan, China, has received intense attention from researchers as the potential source. But the Department of Energy and FBI so far have favored the so-called lab-leak hypothesis, even though none of the agencies



has expressed high confidence in their conclusions on COVID-19's origin. CIA, for example, had reportedly said it was "unable to determine" whether SARS-CoV-2 made a direct jump from animals to humans—or came from a lab. Now, Representative Brad Wenstrup (R-OH), who chairs the House of Representatives's Select Subcommittee on the Coronavirus Pandemic, says his panel and the House's Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence have heard testimony from a whistleblower "who presents as a highly credible senior-level CIA officer." According to the press release, the whistleblower testi-

fied that only the most senior analyst of a seven-member CIA team investigating the origin of COVID-19 supported the zoonotic transmission theory. The whistleblower alleged the other six team members supporting the lab origin then received "a significant monetary incentive to change their position," wrote Wenstrup and Representative Mike Turner (R-OH), who chairs the intelligence panel. In response to emailed questions from Science, CIA Director of Public Affairs Tammy Kupperman Thorp challenged the whistleblower's account: "At CIA we are committed to the highest standards of analytic rigor, integrity, and objectivity. We do not pay analysts to reach specific conclusions. We take these allegations extremely seriously and are looking into them. We will keep our Congressional oversight committees appropriately informed," she wrote in the agency's statement.

Kim Jong-un invites Putin to North Korea – KCNA



MOSCOW (Agencies): Kim Jong-un invited President Vladimir Putin to visit North Korea during their meeting in Russia on Wednesday, Pyongyang's state media reported, amid warnings that Kim was poised to offer the Kremlin artillery shells and other munitions for the war in Ukraine. Kim told Putin that their closely watched meeting had brought bilateral ties to a new level, and expressed his willingness to foster stable, future-oriented relations for the next 100 years, news agency KCNA said. The report went on to say that Kim was briefed on technical details about Russian space vehicles during his visit to a cosmodrome, but there was no mention of any arms supplies, trade of weapons or technical assistance over weapons programs. Japan's Kyodo news agency quoted sources saying Kim was scheduled to visit a factory that manufactures Sukhoi fighter jets and other aircraft after the talks with Putin. US and South Korean officials have expressed concern that Kim could provide weapons and ammunition to Russia, which has expended vast stocks in more than 18 months of war in Ukraine. Moscow and Pyongyang have denied such intentions.

Germany to Spend Over \$64Bln on Major Defense Contracts by End of 2023

MOSCOW (Agencies): Lehnigk-Emden added that the funds would be allocated for the purchase of US F-35 fighter jets and Chinook heavy transport helicopters, as well as the Israeli Arrow 3 missile defense system, the report said. Germany will allocate 60 billion euros (\$64.3 billion) from the Bundeswehr's special fund by the end of the year for major defense orders, including the purchase of F-35 fighter jets, a newspaper reported on Sunday, citing Director-General of the Federal Office of Bundeswehr Equipment, Information Technology and In-Service Support Annette Lehnigk-Emden. At the same time, Lehnigk-Emden noted that her agency, despite the desire for faster decision-making, still faces a number of obstacles, including the need to obtain parliamentary approval for any defense spending exceeding 25 million euros, the report stated.

Taiwan building drone fleet to confront Beijing

TAIPEI (Agencies): Taiwan is set to produce thousands of additional military and commercial-grade drones as part of a modernization project intended to counter any potential Chinese attack, according to an official white paper issued by the island. In its National Defense Report for 2023, the military outlined plans to vastly expand Taipei's drone fleet, saying it had already designed five new "army-purpose UAVs" to "deal with hostile threats." Citing alleged provocations by China, the paper said Taiwan would aim to build 700 military drones and another 7,000 conventional UAVs by 2028. "With the rise of the PRC, the geopolitical landscape of the Western Pacific has formed a posture of great power competition," the document said, adding that Taiwan is "at the forefront... of rival political systems" and must contend with "relentless and substantive threats of military invasion from the PRC." The drone effort

is part of a "Five-year Force Buildup Plan" embarked on by the Taiwanese government, which also entails additional foreign military purchases, domestic weapons development, joint training with allies and a recruitment drive. Officials on the island have grown louder in their warnings of a potential Chinese invasion in recent months, citing military activity by Beijing in the airspace and waters around Taiwan. China has launched multiple rounds of wargames in the area following high-level meetings between US and Taiwanese officials over the last year, including a massive simulated blockade after then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taipei in 2022. Beijing considers the island as part of its sovereign territory, and claims the right to retake the area by force if necessary. It has repeatedly slammed foreign arms deals with Taiwan – namely by the US – insisting other states should keep no direct relations with Taipei.

Libya Floods: Death Toll Surges Past 5,000 as Thousands Remain Missing

DERNA (Agencies): Recent satellite images offered a before-and-after look at the devastating effects of floods in Libya, documenting how entire neighborhoods were left submerged. To date, thousands of people remain unaccounted for. The aftermath of Mediterranean Storm Daniel has plunged Libya into a humanitarian catastrophe, with over 5,000 lives lost and approximately 10,000 individuals still missing as disrupted communication lines leave families anxiously awaiting news of loved ones. Derna Mayor Abdulmenam Al-Ghaithi speculated on Wednesday that current death toll figures may reach between 18,000 and 20,000 due to the severity of the flooding. "We expect a very large number of deaths, it may



reach 18,000 or 20,000," the mayor said on air of the Arabic broadcaster. About 25% of Derna has been destroyed by floods, Libyan Civil Aviation Minister Hisham Shekiwat told Sputnik on Tuesday, underscoring how "the scale of the destruction is very large." At the same time, Libya's eastern city of Susah is facing power outages, communication issues and road blockades, the head of the Susah municipal council told Sputnik.

Controversy Soars Among Archaeologists as Remains of Human Ancestor Sent Into Space

NEWYORK (Agencies): The debatable journey, which took place on September 8th, 2023, was intended to symbolize humanity's acknowledgment of its ancestors and ancient relatives. The scientific community has found itself dealing with a bit of controversy after a Virgin Galactic mission, facilitated by South African-born billionaire Timothy Nash, carried fragments of ancient human ancestor remains on a voyage to the edge of space. These remains - a collarbone of 2-million-year-old A. sediba and a thumb bone from H. naledi - were selected by Lee Berger, an ex-

plorer instrumental in their discovery and a director of the Centre for the Exploration of the Deep Human Journey at the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa. Critics argue that the mission lacked scientific justification, posing a risk of irreparable damage to these priceless specimens in the event of a malfunction. The permit application for the mission was approved by the South African Heritage Resources Agency (SAHRA), primarily aimed to promote South African human origins research globally, rather than address scientific inquiries.

Musk gave control of Starlink to Pentagon – biographer

WASHINGTON (Agencies): Elon Musk gave the US military full control over a "certain amount of Starlink equipment" and can no longer influence how the system is being used to aid Kiev's war effort, his biographer has unveiled, claiming the tech mogul wished to end his involvement in a scheme that could "cause a nuclear war." Speaking to the Washington Post's David Ignatius for an interview published on Wednesday, Musk biographer Walter Isaacson was asked about the billionaire's decisions regarding Starlink, a constellation of satellites designed to provide global internet access and phone service which has also been used by the Ukrainian military. Musk was initially "critically supportive" of Kiev and allowed near-full access to the Starlink system, according to Ignatius, who wondered why the entrepreneur eventually became "very nervous" and began restricting the range of the satellites, including in sensitive regions such as Crimea. "I've talked to him during this whole thing, and there was late one night, he said, 'Why am I in this war?' He said, 'I, you know, created Starlink so people could chill and watch Netflix movies and play video games. I did not mean to create something that might cause a nucle-



ar war," Isaacson replied. The author went on to say that Musk "decided to sell and give total control over a certain amount of Starlink equipment, Starlink services to the US military so that he no longer controls the geofencing," adding that the SpaceX CEO "no longer controls the terms of use" for the satellites. Isaacson said Musk had also developed a "military version of the Starlink" dubbed "Starshield," suggesting that he hoped to pass off the project to the military. "I think that was his way of saying, 'I got to get out of this. Even I don't believe I should have this much power,'" the biographer continued. Musk has come under fire over his refusal to help Ukrainian forces attack Moscow's Black Sea fleet in the Crimean port of Sevastopol – a revelation which only came to light in an excerpt from Isaacson's biography published last week.

China releases 'blueprint' for integrating with Taiwan

BEIJING (Agencies): The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has pitched an economic-integration plan for Taiwan, while at the same time deploying a historically large fleet of warships and aircraft surrounding the self-governing island. Released on Tuesday by the CCP's Central Committee and Beijing's State Council, the proposal was touted as a "blueprint" for Taiwan's future development. Under the plan, the coastal province of Fujian would become a "demonstration zone" for the integrated development of Taiwan. The proposal calls for allowing Taiwanese residents to live, work, and study on the mainland, initially in Fujian. Taiwanese businesses would also be allowed to hang a shingle in the neighboring province and would be encouraged to list their shares on Chinese stock exchanges. Tensions in the Taiwan Strait have escalated in recent years amid rising concerns that China will attack the island. Washing-

ton has ramped up weapons sales to Taipei, and US politicians have made controversial visits to the island. China, which claims sovereignty over Taiwan, has vowed to reunify with the breakaway province – by force if necessary. Only 13 nations recognize Taiwan as a sovereign country. "Solving the Taiwan issue and realizing the complete reunification of the motherland is the unswerving historical task of the Communist Party of China, the common aspiration of all Chinese people, and the inevitable requirement for realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation," the CCP said in its proposal. Taiwanese MP Wang Ting-yu, a member of the island's ruling Democratic Progressive Party, called the integration blueprint "ridiculous." Speaking in a video message on Wednesday, he said, "China should think about how it can take care of its bad debts, but not how it can conduct united-front work against Taiwan."

US, Bahrain sign strategic security and economic agreement

WASHINGTON (Agencies): The United States and Bahrain on Wednesday signed a strategic security and economic agreement which U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said would expand defense and intelligence collaboration between the two countries. The agreement was signed at a meeting at the State Department between Blinken and Bahrain's crown prince and prime minister, Prince Salman bin Hamad Al-Khalifa. "At the heart of the agreement is a shared goal: working together to build a region that is more secure, more prosperous, and that's more connected to the world economy," Blinken said to reporters just before the signing ceremony. "We're looking forward to using this agreement as a framework for additional countries that may wish to join us in strengthening regional stability, economic cooperation and technological innovation." The development comes during a period of churn in the Gulf as the Biden government negotiates with Saudi Arabia about a U.S.-Saudi defense pact and the possibility of an Israel-Saudi agreement aimed at normalizing relations.



Bahrain already hosts the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet and the headquarters of the U.S. Naval Forces Central Command. Thousands of U.S. military personnel are deployed in Bahrain, which is designated as a major non-NATO ally. A senior Biden official, briefing reporters on Tuesday ahead of the announcement, said the crown prince's visit to Washington is the culmination of nearly a year's worth of diplomatic engagement, including multiple trips to Manama by senior U.S. officials. In a region wary of Iran's influence, the official said the agreement is "about deterrence and setting conditions for a more stable region going forward." The deal was described by U.S. officials as a legally binding agreement, but one that does not carry the Article V mutual defense pact that is part of the NATO treaty.

About Khyber Mail The Khyber mail was first published in Peshawar, Pakistan in 1932. A newspaper in English by the eminent journalist Sheikh Sana Ullah. From 1932 to 1989 it has survived as leading English newspaper in the region by the sons of Sana Ullah i.e. Sheikh Zaka Ullah, Sheikh Inayat Ullah and Sheikh Saleem Ullah. The publication was shut down in 1989 due to various reasons. The current owner Rizwan Inayat son of Sheikh Inayat Ullah and grandson of Sheikh Sana Ullah, has restarted the family heritage but meeting with the requirement of the century, by giving the readers current happenings around the world with one touch anywhere any time and updating the reader to pace up with the world.

KP to have full-fledge forensic lab soon; cabinet approves project: CM’s aide

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Advisor to the Chief Minister for Health Dr Riaz Anwar on Wednesday said that a state-of-the-art and first-of-its-kind forensic lab is being established in the provincial capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He said that the provincial cabinet has approved Rs 10 billion for the lab to be built in the Hayatabad area of

Peshawar, Phase 7, adding that despite economic hardship, the establishment of this lab is inevitable. Riaz Anwar said foreign experts would be hired to work in this lab, whose accommodation and security would also be arranged by the provincial government. In his message released here on Wednesday, he said the facility of both medical and non-medical

tests including post-mortem, poison and DNA testing for identification, firearms and fingerprints analysis would be available at the lab. The CM’s aide said that such labs were already operating in Punjab and Sindh and the provincial government had been taking their assistance in different cases but now the facility would be available within the province.

PESCO removes over 700 illegal hooks,Rs 15mln fine imposed on pilferers

PESHAWAR (APP): In a grand operation against power pilferers, the teams of Peshawar Electric Supply Company (PESCO) on Wednesday removed over 700 illegal direct hooks and imposed a Rs 15 million fine on the accused. According to PESCO spokesman the grand crackdown against power theft was conducted in

collaboration with the district administrations and police, adding that 215 illegal connections were removed in Peshawar, 109 in Khyber, 66 in Mardan, 30 in Hazara-I, 90 in Hazara-II, 94 in Swat, 40 each in Bannu, and Swabi. The PESCO also filed applications for registration of FIRs against more than 400 people involved in

electricity theft, he said, adding that several power pilferers were arrested on the spot and handed over to the police as well. The spokesman said that with an increase in the crackdowns, many illegal consumers voluntarily removed direct hooks. PESCO urged the masses to report power theft by calling 118.

DPO for maintaining peace,narcotics control in Tank

PESHAWAR (APP): District Police Officer Iftikhar Ali Shah on Wednesday said that additional personnel was sought to control the deteriorating situation in the district, especially in Bettani areas and crackdown on narcotics traffickers. In a media statement, DPO Iftikhar Ali Shah expressed his efforts and heartfelt desire to see Tank especially Bettani areas prosper,

crime rates decrease, and relief for the local population. He disclosed the request to the IGP for additional police personnel to maintain peace in the area and control the situation which was approved. It is worth mentioning here that Bettani elders recently held a grand meeting at Umer Ada regarding the worst law and order situation in Bettani circle which was attended by

local elders, politicians, social figures, and media representatives, highlighting their concerns about the alarming security situation in Bettani areas. The DPO assured the Bettani tribe that the maintenance of peace in the district is his priority and applauded the Bettani tribe for their support in controlling the law and order situation in the district.

Metropolitan govt to hold budget session on Sep 14

PESHAWAR (APP): The annual budget session of Capital Metropolitan Government Peshawar would be held on Sept 14 (Tomorrow). Mayor Peshawar, Haji Zubair Ali on Wednesday convened the budget

session for the year 2023-24 on Sep 13. The second day budget session will be held on Sep 15. The budget session would discuss budgetary allocations for the year 2023-34 and related issues.

UNDP,KP Judicial Academy train women lawyers in legal aid

PESHAWAR (APP): The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in collaboration with the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Judicial Academy, has organized a two-day pilot training for women lawyers on representing legal aid clients from 13 to 14 September. This initiative brings together young 20-female lawyers from Peshawar. Caitlin Chittenden, Senior Rule of Law and Justice Reform Specialist at UNDP welcomed the participants and highlighted the objectives of the sessions. In his opening remarks, Muhammad Shoaib, Director General (Acting) laid emphasis on legal aid. He underscored the sig-

nificance of legal aid in international and domestic legal frameworks where it is acknowledged as a fundamental human right and a guarantee of a fair trial, equality before the law, protection against discrimination, and access to effective remedies. The Inaugural Session was attended by the faculty members and directors of the Academy. The two-day training program aims to provide participants with an orientation of District Legal Empowerment Committees (DLECs), gender-based violence (GBV), and its underlying dynamics and equipping lawyers to better serve GBV survivors and victims.


Five killed, 13 injured in late-night accident near Rashakai Interchange

PESHAWAR (APP): In a late-hour accident on the Motorway, a Peshawar-bound bus overturned near Rashakai Interchange in Nowshera district, killing five passengers and injuring 13 others. According to details provided by the Motorway Police on Wednesday, a bus en route from Lahore to Peshawar overturned near Rashakai Interchange after its driver fell asleep. As a result, five passengers were killed on the spot while 13 others including two wom-

en sustained critical wounds. Police said the condition of the four injured was stated to be critical. The rescue teams shifted the dead and injured to Qazi Hussain Ahmad Medical Complex Nowshera and Mardan Medical Complex. Police said the driver of the bus who also sustained injuries in the mishap, was arrested. The bus which fell into a shallow ditch after overturning was retrieved with heavy machinery and the road was made clear for traffic.

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ETEA declares result of MDCAT 2023; Uzra Riaz tops test

PESHAWAR (APP): education Testing and Evaluation Agency (ETEA) on Wednesday announced the result of the Medical Entrance Test (MDCAT) 2023 wherein only 110 students could score 190 plus marks out of a total of 45640 candidates. Uzra Riaz topped the test securing 198 marks followed by Haseeb Khan who secured 197 marks. Mansoor Khan, Shah Faisal Khan, Syed Aqeel Bacha and Abdul Razzaq secured the third position with 195 marks and Saifullah Imtiaz,

Muqtasad Khan, Saifullah Khalid, Halimah, Anam Khan and Saqlain Khan shared the fourth position with 194 marks. According to ETEA results, 1094 students scored 180 to 189 marks, and 2085 could score between 170 and 179, adding that 63.5 per cent of students passed the test with a minimum of 45 per cent marks. It said that more than 20 thousand students could not even get 100 marks on the test while the tests of 219 students were cancelled over charges of “unfair means”.

Excise police recover 1230 grams ICE, 17 kg hashish

PESHAWAR (APP): The Excise police in two different operations against drug peddlers on Wednesday recovered 1230 grams of ICE and 16.8 kilograms while arresting three accused. The spokesman of the Excise department said that two suspects were arrested in an operation that took place at Ronda Toro Farm on Marhati Road in district Mardan

where Excise police recovered 16.8 kg of hashish from the drug peddlers. Similarly, in another raid Excise police station Peshawar recovered 1230 grams of ICE worth millions of rupees and arrested a drug seller from Frontier Road, Chowk Matni here. The police had registered cases against the accused and started an investigation for further legal action.

Hot,humid weather likely to prevail in most parts of KP

PESHAWAR (APP): The Provincial Meteorological Center Wednesday predicted hot and humid weather in most districts of the province. However, isolated thunderstorm rains with gusty winds are likely to occur over Swat, Upper Dir, Kohistan, and Khyber districts during the evening and night. During the last 24 hours, hot and humid weather prevailed over most districts of the province. Rainfall recorded during the last 24 hours at different stations of KPK

was nil. The maximum and minimum temperatures recorded in °C at different stations of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP): Peshawar City 39/27, Chitral 37/17, Timergara 37/25, Dir 34/22, Mirkhani 38/17, Kalam 28/12, Drosh 38/24, Saidu Sharif 36/19, Pattan 39/26, Malam Jabba 23/15, Takht Bhai 38/27, Kakul 32/19, Balakot 35/24, Parachinar 26/14, Bannu 40/27, Cherat 32/21, D.I. Khan 41/27. The highest temperature recorded in the province was 41°C in DI Khan.

Peshawar traffic police collects Rs 160.71 million in fines

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawar City Traffic Police has imposed fines on 928,156 individuals for traffic violations and collected over Rs. 160.71 million in eight months. Under the guidance of Inspector General of Police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Akhtar Hayat Khan, Chief Traffic Officer Qamar Hayat Khan has launched a program in Peshawar. This program aims to enhance compliance with traffic laws, promote better behavior among citizens, and implement the ‘Salute First, Then Speak’ policy. It also includes the

training of traffic wardens at the province’s first-ever Traffic school. Giving eight months’ details, Chief Traffic Officer Qamar Hayat Khan said that traffic accidents have been reduced during the first eight months of the current year compared to the previous year, attributing this improvement to enhanced traffic management. Additionally, Peshawar City Traffic Police conducts awareness campaigns on traffic laws through billboards in Peshawar cantonment, educating citizens about traffic regulations.

Rain predicted from September 15 to 20 in KP

PESHAWAR (APP): The Regional Meteorological Department on Wednesday predicted days of rains starting September 15 to 20 in most parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. A notification issued by the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) stated that the Regional Met Office Peshawar has informed that a new spell of rains is starting for which people are urged to take all precautionary measures to avoid any loss of life, damage to in-

frastructure and crops and animals. Furthermore, all concerned authorities asked to take safety measures. Tourists are to be informed about weather forecasts, ensure availability of all emergency services staff and machinery and other resources, and all concerned line departments to remain vigilant in restoring road links. In case of any occurrence, updates may kindly be shared with PDMA, active round the clock via helpline 1700.

KP to soon have first kind of largest forensic lab: Dr Riaz Anwar


PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Advisor to the Chief Minister for Health Dr Riaz Anwar on Wednesday said that a state-of-the-art and first-of-its-kind forensic lab is being established in the provincial capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He said that the provincial cabinet has approved Rs 10 billion for the lab to be built in the Hayatabad area of Peshawar, Phase 7, adding that despite economic hardship, the establishment of this lab is inevitable. Riaz Anwar said foreign experts would be hired to work in this lab, whose

accommodation and security would also be arranged by the provincial government. In his message released here on Wednesday, he said the facility of both medical and non-medical tests including post-mortem, poison and DNA testing for identification, firearms and fingerprints analysis would be available at the lab. The CM’s aide said that such labs were already operating in Punjab and Sindh and the provincial government had been taking their assistance in different cases but now the facility would be available within the province.





Power suspension in southern districts, Mattani Grid notified

PESHAWAR (APP): Peshawar Electric Supply Company (Pesco) announced on Wednesday that due to maintenance work, power supply will remain suspended from Bannu Grid Station on September 14th from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Consequently, consumers of Kurram Garhi and Kurum Garhi Power House feeders will face inconvenience. Likewise, the power supply will remain suspended from Karak Grid Station on September 14th,


15th, and 19th, from 7:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. Consequently, consumers of Sabir Abad, Sabir Abad-2 and 3, Karak-1 and 2, and Township feeders will face inconvenience. The power supply will also remain suspended from Kurram Garhi Grid Station on September 14th, 16th, and 19th, from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Consequently, consumers of Cantt-2, Surwangi, and Kurram Garhi Line feeders will face inconvenience.

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thekhybermail@gmail.com



Editor-in-Chief: Rizwan Inayat

Editor: Omer Rizwan

First Floor, Town Heights, Old Bara Road,
University Town Peshawar - Pakistan.

Website: www.thekhybermail.com

E-mail: khybermail@gmail.com - Phone: 091-7081579



Gas Tariff Hike

The impending increase in gas tariffs, set to surge by more than 50%, is a bitter pill for the already burdened Pakistani populace to swallow. This decision, influenced by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), is a direct blow to the wallets of ordinary citizens. It comes on the heels of a ray of hope offered by a slight reduction in electricity bills, but the gas tariff hike throws us back into the abyss of financial uncertainty. The alarming statistics surrounding the gas sector are indeed concerning. An annual loss of Rs. 350 billion and a staggering total circular debt of Rs. 2.70 trillion paint a grim picture. While it is evident that the sector requires attention and reform, passing on such a hefty financial burden to the end consumer is not the solution. The approval by the Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Ogra) for gas price increases, with Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) and Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC) both set to witness hikes of Rs. 415 and Rs. 417 per mmbtu, respectively, is a stark reminder of the dire straits we find ourselves in. This increase, effective July 1, 2023, will hit the common man's pocket hard, making the use of gas unaffordable for many. Exploring alternatives, such as the import of cheaper gas, should be a priority. However, our options seem limited, leaving us with no choice but to bear the brunt of this increase. The IMF agreement also mandates the implementation of a weighted average cost to recover imported gas prices from consumers. This complex formula aims to calculate gas prices by factoring in both imported LNG and local rates, inevitably leading to higher costs for consumers. It is important to note that while the IMF has granted temporary relief for electricity bills, it is a selective measure benefiting only a fraction of consumers. The government's request for relief for consumers using up to 400 monthly units was declined, leaving millions unaffected by this supposed "assistance." The burden of unpaid bills and electricity theft cannot be denied, but it is equally essential to ensure that such efforts do not disproportionately affect the common people. Interim Energy Minister Mohammad Ali's concerns about losses due to theft and unpaid bills, amounting to Rs. 589 billion annually, are valid. However, there must be a balance between curbing these issues and ensuring that essential services remain affordable.

Child abuse is a grim reality in our society

— By Saira Samo

CHILD abuse and labour practices continue to plague our society, with reports of domestic assault and torture on child workers often hidden beneath the veneer of social hierarchy. Despite sporadic instances gaining attention on social media, the government's response to this heinous practice has been inadequate. Recent cases, like that of Rizwana and Fatima, highlight the magnitude of the issue. These cases expose the underlying problem of child abuse, especially sexual abuse, which is on a concerning rise. Reports of child abuse and labour in elite households, where vulnerable children work, often go unnoticed by the authorities. The tragic case of Rizwana, who suffered abuse and torture while working in the home of a judge in Islamabad, garnered attention on social media. Unfortunately, justice eluded her, and her tormentors remained unpunished. Similarly, the case of Fatima, a 10-year-old girl working in the house of a peer in Khairpur, sheds light on the exploitative practices. Her mysterious death raised questions about her living conditions and the alarming power dynamics at play. The alarming increase in child sexual abuse cases demands urgent attention. The reported cases have surged by more than 33% compared to the previous year. In 2022, child sexual abuse cases included abduction, rape, sodomy, gang rape, and gang sodomy. These horrifying statistics reveal the dire situation that children are facing in our society. Data analysis of the reported cases paints a grim picture of vulnerability. Children

aged six to 15 are most susceptible to sexual abuse, with both genders affected, though more male victims are reported. Shockingly, even children under five years of age fall prey to this heinous crime. The majority of abusers are acquaintances or family members, a stark reminder that the danger often lurks close to home. The data further indicates that strangers account for a significant portion of perpetrators. It is not confined to a specific region; it's a nationwide crisis. While Punjab reports the highest number of cases, all provinces record instances of abuse. Urban and rural areas are both affected, highlighting the widespread nature of the issue. Although the Zainab case alert bill was introduced, its effectiveness remains questionable due to delays in implementation. The harrowing reality of child abuse is depicted through different settings. Children face abuse not only in their own homes but also at the hands of abusers in various places like workplaces, Madaris and public spaces. The variety of locations underscores the need for comprehensive measures to protect children wherever they are. Child abuse and labour practices persist as a dark stain on our society. Cases like Rizwana and Fatima serve as stark reminders of the urgency to address this issue. The government must implement effective policies, expedite justice, and raise awareness through education. Only then can we hope to create a safer environment for our children, free from exploitation and abuse.

Courtesy Pakistan Observer

Women comprise approximately half of the total population of Pakistan. The majority of women live in rural areas. They are mainly engaged in farming, fisheries, livestock and management, mostly as unpaid contributing family workers or on very low wages. Our rural women earn lower wages as seasonal hands than their male counterparts. Yet, they experience greater workloads that include reproductive work, fetching water and fuel, along with care work. It has been estimated that more than fifty percent of the world's food production is done by women. However, their work remains unnoticed. Pakistan's agriculture is labour intensive with women making an essential contribution. Their roles are substantially different across regions and are changing rapidly. Our rural women are intelligent and involved in activities such as cultivation, processing as well as preserving locally adapted nutritious crop varieties. They may be recognised as the innovation leaders for sustainable development in agriculture in Pakistan. Moreover, they are exceptionally hard working. A study points out that in Pakistan, climate change will decrease agricultural productivity by 8-10% by 2040 and wheat production will decrease massively. Another study predicts that the worst impact of climate change will be felt by wheat and rice (especially Basmati rice) both in the coming years. It anticipates that wheat yield will decrease by 6% and the Basmati rice yield will fall by 15-18% across Pakistan. Pakistan is extremely vulnerable to the negative impacts of climate change. The recent monsoon season

Women in agriculture

— By Amina Amin Kanju

affected 15% of the total population. Extreme heat waves were followed by the worst rains and floods in the country's history. Agriculture is an essential sector for human survival and economic development. It provides food, fibre, and other vital products. Thus, in such crucial conditions, women can play a huge role if supported and encouraged to walk along men in bringing sustainability. Rural women own less land and have inadequate access to agricultural inputs such as seeds, fertilisers or labour-saving machines and equipment. Their property rights are often challenged and even when they own property, they may not control it. Provincial Governments should initiate job-oriented diplomas for rural females who do not continue in school after middle or matric. Skills training should align with the work of rural women in agriculture and livestock, as well as the needs of the non-agricultural rural economy. The government must ensure that, as small producers, women have equal rights to access and control productive resources. Distribution of state land to women farmers would go a long way, provided the land is cultivable and the land grant is accompanied by a resource package. Empowering women in agriculture is critical for achieving sustainable development and food security in Pakistan. Good finance, rightly deserved land ownership, better education, and modern technology can improve their productivity, income, and decision making power. Cotton is the country's most widely cultivated crop and an important raw material for its growing textiles industry, representing 8.5%

of GDP. However, as cotton farmers contend with the effects of extreme weather and pest outbreaks damaging the crops, the future of Pakistan's cotton production will depend on men and women playing an equal role in fighting climate change and promoting sustainable farming practices. Female cotton farmers can set a powerful example in their communities, inspiring more women to take on greater responsibilities in their family businesses and inspiring girls to pursue leadership opportunities in their communities. In rural Pakistan, this means overcoming entrenched attitudes towards the roles of men and women in the home and in the field. Gender equity is critical for achieving sustainable development goals and ensuring the well-being of women and their families. Above all, promoting gender equity in agriculture can lead to decarbonisation, poverty reduction, and human rights advancement. Also where education is another essential need in empowering women, most of them in rural areas do not have access to quality education due to cultural, social, and economic barriers. With our economy in shatters and inflation so high, agriculture is our only source of hope. Encouraging women in agriculture will help prosper our economy. Moreover, women's contribution to agriculture is critical for sustaining life on the planet in general. Also, the government needs to approach, involve policymakers, private sector, civil society, and women themselves. Women must be encouraged to take on greater responsibility in the fields, and even to become independent farmers. Courtesy The Nation

Economic metamorphosis

— By Dr. Ghulam Mohey-ud-din

Pakistan is currently grappling with a severe economic crisis characterised by escalating electricity and fuel prices and a depreciating foreign exchange rate, resulting in widespread public discontent. The public and business communities are vociferously protesting against the surging electricity bills, which are anticipated to escalate further due to the persistent devaluation of the national currency and the elevated cost of imported fuel. This dire economic scenario has been exacerbated by a protracted impending sovereign default situation, mainly stemming from the delay in the International Monetary Fund (IMF) review and the looming risk of non-completion of the IMF programme, a concern that has persisted for the past several months. Despite the approval of a substantial stand-by arrangement (SBA) of US\$ 3 billion in July 2023, the economic challenges afflicting the nation have not been alleviated. Because, the IMF assistance always comes with some conditionalities, performance indicators and targets. The conditions attached to the IMF assistance have, in many ways, exacerbated the situation, making it arduous for the current interim as well as the outgoing government to provide any form of financial relief or subsidies. This situation necessitates a comprehensive re-evaluation of the economic policies and strategies. At the heart of Pakistan's economic woes lie critical blunders in the energy sector. One pivotal fault was the Independent Power Producer (IPP) policy introduced in the 1990s and continued after that, particularly the practice of fixed capacity payments to IPPs. This approach has been detrimental, contributing to an unsustainable energy mix heavily reli-

ant on imported fossil fuels, leading to exponential growth in the circular debt. Another vexing issue pertains to the rampant line losses, primarily due to electricity theft, and a non-transparent tariff structure characterised by an array of additional taxes, charges, and levies. The underlying causes of these indirect taxes, both in electricity tariffs and fuel prices, can be attributed to Pakistan's persistently low tax-to-GDP ratio and the failure of effective taxation reforms and implementation. Pakistan's tax-to-GDP ratio, standing at approximately 9.3 percent, is starkly below the Asia and Pacific average of 19.8 percent and 17.7 percent for India. This glaring disparity highlights the need for substantial reforms in Pakistan's taxation system to enhance revenue generation. An intimately intertwined challenge is the progressively weakening local currency, the Pakistani Rupee (PKR), against the US\$, primarily due to a widening trade deficit and current account deficit. A significant reason for this predicament is Pakistan's lop-sided reliance on consumption-led growth, manifested in a staggering "final consumption expenditure" constituting 96.24 percent of the GDP, as per the World Bank's Development Indicators (WDI). This is markedly different from the prudent consumption patterns observed in countries such as China, India, and Bangladesh, where these percentages stand at 54, 71, and 74 percent, respectively. Similarly, the stark contrast in gross domestic savings rates further highlights the gravity of the situation. Pakistan's gross domestic savings rate is a mere 3.76 percent of GDP, underscoring the lack of domestic resources available for investment in productive sectors. This is a stark con-

trast to countries like China, India, and Bangladesh, where the rates are 46 percent, 29 percent, and 26 percent, respectively. Consequently, Pakistan's gross capital formation or investment as a percentage of GDP remains alarmingly low at around 15 percent. Unfortunately, only 3.76 percent of this is financed by domestic savings, necessitating substantial inflows of foreign capital, which in turn lead to escalating debt levels and currency depreciation. In light of these pressing challenges, a profound economic transformation, i.e., a complete economic metamorphosis, is imperative to enhance both gross domestic savings and the tax-to-GDP ratio. This transformation entails a multifaceted approach that encompasses various measures, including tax reforms, strengthening of the energy sector, reduction of line losses, promotion of a diversified energy mix, and a strategic shift from consumption-led to investment-led growth. To increase the tax-to-GDP ratio, governments can broaden the tax base by including more sources of income and wealth in the tax system. They can also increase tax rates but be careful not to do so too much as it can harm economic growth. Additionally, governments can improve tax administration by strengthening the tax collection agency, simplifying the tax code, and reducing corruption. Finally, they can reduce tax exemptions and deductions that allow some people and businesses to avoid paying taxes. Making it easier for businesses to pay taxes by providing electronic filing and payment options, and by simplifying the tax laws can also be helpful.

Courtesy Pakistan Today

Letters to the Editor

Incremental inflation in Pakistan

Over the past five years, Pakistan has experienced an alarming increase in inflation. In 2022, the inflation rate reached 38.55%, indicating a 12.38% surge from 2021. This incremental rise in inflation has far-reaching consequences for our nation. Recently, the Ministry of Planning and Development presented a report to the National Assembly, revealing that approximately 24.3% of Pakistanis, equivalent to 55 million people, are living below the poverty line. In addi-

tion, Pakistan's Human Development Index (HDI) for 2022 stands at 0.544, ranking 161st among 192 countries. Furthermore, the unemployment rate in 2022 was 6.87%, a 0.9% increase from the previous year. These figures highlight the severe impact of inflation on our citizens, particularly those residing in rural areas, where approximately 62.27% of the population faces dire living conditions due to rising prices. Tragically, this has led to an increase in suicides, with 9.9 per 100,000 people (13.3% male and 4.3% female) reported in 2021–2022, according to the World Health

Organization. Such circumstances not only foster crime and chaos but also undermine our nation's economic stability. It is imperative that the government and relevant authorities take immediate steps to curb inflation, considering the well-being of our citizens. I strongly urge the government, business leaders, and hoarders to demonstrate compassion for their fellow countrymen and contribute to the creation of a peaceful and prosperous nation where happiness prevails.

- SHERJAN FAZAL
- Balochistan.

HR defenders facing harassment, attacks in IIOJK: Shamim Shawl

ISLAMABAD (APP): Kashmiri representative, Shamim Shawl has deplored that human rights defenders continue to face harassment, intimidation, attacks and reprisals for their work for the promotion and protection of human rights in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir. According to Kashmir Media Service, Shamim Shawl said, freedom of speech is a principle that supports the freedom of an individual or a community to articulate their opinions and ideas without fear of

retaliation, censorship, or legal sanction. She said the right to freedom of expression has been recognized as a human right in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights law by the United Nations. She said, “Despite a clear right to access and communicate with the international human rights bodies, human rights defenders continue to face harassment, intimidation, attacks and reprisals for their work for the promotion and protection of human rights. Human rights

defenders are not allowed to monitor and voice for the victims of Indian state terrorism in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir.” She pointed out that Indian troops, under the protection of black laws, are targeting the Kashmiris and mainly the women human rights defenders. Over the last 24 years along with the killing of over one hundred thousand innocent men and women, a good number of human rights defenders were also killed, detained, harassed and intimidated in IIOJK, she added.

5 people killed in Nowshera road accident

ISLAMABAD (APP): At least five persons were killed on the spot while 13 others sustained injuries when a bus turned turtle in Nowshera on Wednesday. According to Rescue 1122 officials, the accident occurred at the Motorway M1 near Rashakai Interchange where a bus turned turtle when its driver fell asleep. As a result, five persons lost their lives and 13 others were critically wounded. Police and rescue teams reached the spot and shifted the bodies and injured to a nearby hospital. Police have also arrested the driver of the bus and started further investigation.

Sargodha Board Announces HSSC Part-II results

SARGODHA (APP): The board of Intermediate and Secondary education (BISE) Sargodha announced the results of Intermediate Part-II Annual Examination 2023, here on Wednesday. According to Controller Examination Riaz Qadeer Bhatti, a total number of 52,868 candidates appeared in the annual examination and 33,636 were declared successful, showing 63.62 pass percentage. Commissioner and Chairman of the Education Board Muhammad Ajmal Bhatti congratulated the successful candidates.

Household registration campaign in full swing

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police have launched the ‘Knock the Door’ campaign, intensifying efforts to register both employees as well as tenants and maintain high vigilance in the city. This initiative is currently in full operation, a police spokesperson said adding that multiple teams from the Islamabad Capital Police are actively visiting neighborhoods and conducting door-to-door registrations. Their mission extends beyond registration, as they also seek to address any concerns or issues faced by the citizens. Notably, the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) Islamabad has successfully recorded data for 164 domestic workers across 519 residences within the jurisdiction of Sumbal Police Station during the last 24 hours. The Primary objective of this campaign is to enhance public safety and maintain law and order in the Federal capital.

SHO,Muharrer suspended

DG Khan (APP): District Police Officer (DPO) Wednesday suspended Station House Officer (SHO) and Muharrer of Civil Lines Police Station for keeping women illegally in its custody. Taking notice of the video going viral about the women being held illegally, the DP issued the suspension order today. After suspension, the DPO deputed SP’s investigation as the inquiry officer. The suspended security officials were made close to the police line. The DPO said nobody would be allowed to play with honour of the common person in the name of ‘any investigation’.

Renowned playwright,story writer Abdul Qadir Junejo remembered

ISLAMABAD (APP): Renowned dramatist, story writer and literary figure Abdul Qadir Junejo was remembered on his birth anniversary on Wednesday. He was born on September 13, 1945, in Tharparkar; Junejo was not only known for an impeccable command of story and column writing but he was an incredibly talented drama writer of his time as well. During his career, he wrote several Sindhi and urdu soaps, dramas, stories, and many literary books. His notable works were published in English, Urdu, and Sindhi languages and he wrote dramas and serials that aired on ptv and other television channels. He

gained popularity through various works, such as Parenda, Dewareen, Choti Si Dunya, and Dhool. The playwright wrote six Sindhi and 13 Urdu drama serials He remained director of the Institute of Sindhology at the University of Sindh, Jamshoro. He also remained the chairperson of the Sindhi Language Authority at the provincial government’s Culture Tourism and Antiquities Department from 2005 to 2008. The government of Pakistan awarded him Pride of Performance in 2008 while the Sindh government honoured him with Latif Award in 2016. He died on March 30, 2020, in Jamsoro due to liver disease.

‘Welfare of writers,poets top priority of present govt’:Jamal Shah

ISLAMABAD (APP): Caretaker Federal Minister for National Heritage and Culture Jamal Shah Wednesday said that the welfare of actors, writers, and poets is among the topmost priorities of the present government and concrete steps are being taken to facilitate the literary segment. Talking to ptv news channel, he said the government has planned various special packages for artists’ community, and people with related skills in a bid to revive the country’s entertainment industry. He said we have directed the authorities concerned to make all-out efforts to promote the culture of the country abroad, adding, artists need to provide quality entertainment to the citizens by making dramas, tele-films, and other programs on the current themes

and utilize their positive thinking and best quality, direction, and production. Replying to a question, the minister assured that his ministry is determined to highlight the heritage, civilization, language, art, and culture of the province in a creative and constructive way. Set up new museums and strengthening and modernizing the existing museums are also priority areas of the ministry, he said, adding, that the government would utilize all available resources for the restoration of the heritage and historical sites of the area. To another question, he said poets and artists are our identities in the world, he said, adding, that launching the artist support fund for the welfare of artists would reflect the government’s priorities.

26 drug peddlers held,narcotics recovered

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Capital Police have apprehended 26 drug peddlers from different areas of the city including those involved in supplying drugs at educational institutions and recovered 8,550 gram hashish and 4,983 gram heroin from their possession during the last 48 hours. Following the special directions of Islamabad Capital City Police Officer (ICCPo) Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, a police spokesperson said that Islamabad Police have intensified the crackdown against the drug peddlers involved in supplying drugs at educational institutions to eliminate this menace from the city. During this crackdown, the Margalla police

team arrested two accused namely Hanook Tanveer and Asif Khan and recovered a total of 980 gram heroin from their possession. Karachi Company police team arrested an accused namely Nabeel Masih and recovered 637 gram heroin from him. Shalimar police team arrested two accused namely Azhar and Shan and recovered 560 gram hashish and 215 gram heroin from their possession respectively. Likewise, the Ramna police team arrested Sajjad and recovered 510 gram heroin from his possession. Golra police team arrested two accused namely Asif Khan and Afzal and recovered a total of 1021 gram heroin from their possession.

265 power pilferers netted on 6th day of ongoing drive

MULTAN (APP): Multan Electric Power Company (MEPCO) has apprehended 265 power pilferers of various categories on the 6th day of the ongoing operation carried out across South Punjab under the directions of the prime minister. The taskforce teams raided at various places across the region against power pilferers and imposed Rs 20 million fine on them. As many as 246 domestic, 14 commercial, 4 agricultural tube wells and one industrial user were caught stealing electricity in MEP- CO region. Cases were registered against 92 power pilferers at various police stations. A major electricity theft was caught in Rehman boys

hostel in Gulgasht area. The team led by SDO Malik Kazim Awan detected electricity theft during checking In Mumtazabad, electricity theft was caught by installing direct wires to 10 shops and a hotel. The LT line was disconnected to end Kunda culture in Basti Malana Rahim Yar Khan. Likewise , the electricity was being stolen by installing locks on the lines passing over the houses in basti Malook. A grand operation was conducted against power pilferers along with the police force in Rojhan Only seven meters were installed in more than 50 houses in Basti Randhani, Basti Shiro Khan and Basti Faizullah Tambani.

IIOJK traders upset over Modi govt's move to slash custom duty on US apples

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Narendra Modi-led Indian government’s decision to relax customs duty on apples imported from the US has upset the fruit traders in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir. According to Kashmir Media Service, the Modi government’s move to slash additional tariff duty of 20 percent on the US apples and walnuts has left Kashmir’s fruit growers dismayed and worried about their future in light of the drop in output, poor pricing, and other factors confronting them. The growers fear that the US fruit would be imported to India at lower rates, as a result local produce would lose market share. The President of Kashmir Valley Fruit Growers Dealers Union, Bashir Ahmad Bashir, said the move will have a negative impact on Kashmiri apples. He said that the Indian government must reconsider the decision, taking into

account the losses the farmers will suffer. The Apple growers in IIOJK maintain that they have faced a lot of problems due to the 2019 shutdown and the Covid-19 lockdown, and now the further reduction of import duties from the US products will affect their business. Manzoor Ahmad Mir, an apple grower from North Kashmir’s Sopore told the media that the American apple growers are provided huge subsidies by the government while the growers from occupied Kashmir don’t have such options. I think the Indian government wants to cripple the apple industry in Kashmir, he said. Pertinently, the horticulture sector plays an important role in IIOJK and contributes significantly to its economy. In 2019, Kashmir produced about 1.9 million metric tons of apples. As per the official figures, horticulture is a source of livelihood for 33 lakh people.

CDA demolishes over 7k illegal structures in markets,roads,green belts

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Directorate of Enforcement, Capital Development Authority (CDA) has demolished over 7,000 illegal structures in the markets, roads, green belts, and sidewalk tracks in the Federal capital during the last year. “During the operation, around 12,137 items of encroachers have also been confiscated, subsequently these articles are auctioned. Besides, fines worth Rs. 4.876 million has also been recovered from trespassers as a penalty,” sources in the CDA told APP. They said, “Directorate of Enforcement has launched as many as 1,363 anti-encroachment operations carried out across the board in the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) during the last year.” The sources said, “Directorate was vigorously undertaking anti-encroachment operations on a regular basis throughout Islamabad in order to curb the illegal constructions in the ICT.” They said the continuous operations were being carried out on a

day-to-day basis 24/7 for retrieval of state land from land grabbers and encroachers. The matter was being dealt with by the Directorate of Municipal Administration working under the administrative control of the Municipal Corporation, Islamabad (MCI), they added. About the steps taken for the protection of citizens, provision of emergency medical assistance, and water facility on hiking tracks, they said, “The forest guards keep patrolling throughout the day in all the trails and hiking tracks of Margalla Hills, National Park.” Moreover, they said the forest guards were equipped with wireless sets which were connected to the centralized control room of the Environment Wing, CDA Whenever any medical emergency or any untoward situation arises at any trail or hiking track; these forest guards directly communicate with centralized control room system, where control room further call to rescue teams to attend medical emergency.

Administration for sustainable livelihoods to flood-affected people

DERA ISMAIL KHAN (APP): The district administration is taking solid measures to make flood-affected people self-reliant, economically As part of such efforts, a ceremony was held here in collaboration with an NGO where Assistant Commissioner Rodkahi Muhammad Fasih Ishaq Abbasi gave away cows to the needy people and widows who belonged to flood-affected areas of the district. Speaking on the occasion, the AC said that an initiative had been launched to provide sustainable livelihoods to the flood-affected people

which help raise their living standards. He said that the entire distribution process was being carried out in a transparent manner and only the needy people were provided with cows. He urged the beneficiaries to take benefit of the initiative in a true sense by raising the cows to support and feed their families. In this regard, he said the organization would monitor those who had been given cows to ensure that the initiative was yielding desired results and bringing economic prosperity to the lives of the beneficiaries.

Law ministers for smooth conduct of general elections

ISLAMABAD (APP): The federal and provincial law ministers on Wednesday during a meeting underscored the importance of upholding the principles of democracy and ensuring the smooth conduct of elections. Caretaker Minister for Law and Justice, Ahmad Irfan Aslam convened a meeting with provincial law ministers including Kanwar Dilshad (Punjab), Muhammad Omer Soomro (Sindh), Arshad Hussain Shah (Khyber Pakhtunkhwa) and Amanullah Kanrani (Balochistan). The meeting was held to discuss matters pertaining to the upcoming general elections to the National and Provincial Assemblies, said a press release During the meeting, all Law Ministers underscored the importance of upholding the principles of democracy and ensuring the

smooth conduct of elections. It was unanimously agreed that the Constitution must be read as a whole and no provision of the Constitution be read in isolation from other relevant provisions. As per the Constitution, the conduct of general elections and announcement of election dates is the sole competence of the Election Commission of Pakistan. The Provincial Law Ministers emphasized that in order to strengthen the Federation, ensure harmony amongst all federating units and avoid unnecessary financial burden on the national exchequer incurred owing to the provision of security arrangements on different election dates, the general elections to the National and the four Provincial Assemblies must be held on the same day.

Addl.IGP takes notice of target killing of Madrassa administrator

KARACHI (APP): Additional Inspector General of Police - Karachi Khadim Hussain Rind on Wednesday taking notice of the targeted killing of Madrassa administrator in Gulistan-e-Jauhar, sought a detailed report into the incident from Deputy IGP - East. According to a spokesman for Karachi Police, the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) had collected

the evidence from the crime scene while the agencies hinted at the involvement of a foreign intelligence agency in the incident. City Police Chief Khadim Hussain Rind said the targeted killing of the Madrassa administrator was an incident of terrorism, the aim of which was to disrupt the law and order on the occasion of Rabi-ul-Awwal.

Quality research witnesses substantial increase as current year publications reach 29000

ISLAMABAD (APP): Chairman Higher Education Commission (HEC) Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed has said that the number of universities as well as the quality of research has witnessed a substantial increase in the last two decades. Talking to APP, he highlighted a substantial transformation in the realm of research with

the current year boasting 28,967 publications in Impact Factor Journals. He said that owing to these factors and many other initiatives a number of Pakistani universities are now featured in World and Asian rankings. The chairman of HEC also shed light on the remarkable evolution of universities in the country over the

past two decades. Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed said that HEC’s efforts are underway for improvement in gender parity in higher education institutions, growth in PhD faculty and establishment of Centres of Excellence in emerging disciplines such as Nanoscience and Nanotechnology, Quantum Computing, etc.

Eight Secondary,as many Higher Secondary schools to be supervised by dist

DG KHAN (APP): Four Secondary and as many Higher Secondary Schools of each tehsil of the district would be brought under the control of district administration to be supervised by DC, ADCs and ACs. It was decided in a meeting carrying agenda of school reforms with Deputy Commissioner Shahid Zaman in the chair. CEO Education Idrees Khan, DEOs, Deputy DEOs, Assistant Director Khurshid Qaisrani and others participated in the meeting. On the occasion, it was ascertained that the standard of the school education

would be made at par with Danish and Centre of Excellence, the renowned school systems working here like other districts in the province. The meeting reviewed indicators of the School Improvement Frame to improve performance in educational ranking in the province. Deputy commissioner Shahid Zaman stressed to take grave measures to achieve good performance in the school system. He emphasized everybody related to the education system plays a cohesive role in reaching out healthy environment of schooling.

Rain-wind/thunderstorm likely from September 15-20 with occasional gales

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has forecast a rain spell from September 15-20 which would subside the prevailing hot and humid weather conditions across the country, giving maximum relief to the heat-stricken. The moderate monsoon currents from the Bay of Bengal were likely to penetrate the upper parts of the country from September 15 (evening or night) while a westerly wave was also likely to enter these areas on September 16. Under the influence of these systems, rain/wind-thunderstorm with a few moderate to isolated heavy falls are expected in Kashmir, including Neelum

Valley, Muzaffarabad, Poonch, Hattian, Bagh, Haveli, Sudhanoti, Kotli, Bhimber, Mirpur, and Gilgit Baltistan including Diamir, Astore, Ghizer, Skardu, Hunza, Gilgit, Ghanche and Shigar from September 15-20. Rain/wind-thunderstorm with a few moderate to isolated heavy falls are also expected in Murree, Galliyat, Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Attock, Chakwal, Jhelum, Mandi Bahauddin, Hafizabad, Gujranwala, Gujrat, Sialkot, Narowal, Lahore, Kasur, Sheikhupura, Chitral, Dir, Swat, Shangla, Buner, Mansehra, Kohistan, Abbottabad, Haripur, Kohat, Peshawar, Mardan, Swabi, and Nowshera during the period occasional gales.

Day & night action being taken against electricity thieves in Attock division,says XEN

ATTOCK (APP): XEN IESCO Attack Babar Mahmood has said that in the light of the government's instructions, under the supervision of Deputy Commissioner Rao Asif Raza, there are many operations against electricity theft in the district of Attock like in the whole of Pakistan. He expressed these views while having a special conversation with APP at the IESCO Hazro office on Wednesday. Chief Coordinator Attack Press Club Registered Nisar Ali Khan was also present on this occasion. XEN Attock Babar Mahmood further said that a house was raided by the police along with SDO Attock City and the electricity thief was caught red-handed and immediately handed over to the law enforcement agency and heavy fines were imposed on them. Further,

when the barber shop established in the Commercial Market of Attock was checked, he was also found to be an electricity thief, who was handed over to the law enforcers on the spot. Day and night operation is going on and raids are being conducted with the police in different areas. He said that no exception will be taken against electricity thieves and whoever is caught in a serious crime like electricity theft will face legal action. Along with the action, they will also be charged a heavy fine. Moreover, XEN said that day operations against electricity thieves are going on in the entire district which he is monitoring himself and commercial and domestic consumers are being checked every day so that no electricity thief escapes from the grip of the law.

13 drug peddlers netted with 19 kg charras, 1200 grams heroin

RAWALPINDI (APP): Rawalpindi police in an action against suspected drug peddlers conducted raids in different areas and rounded up 13 accused on recovery of over 19 kg charras and 1200 grams heroin. According to a police spokesman, Dhamial police held Zulfiqar for having 1200 grams of heroin, a female drug smuggler with 2060 grams of charras and Dolat Khan for carrying 1760 grams of charras. Saddar Baroni police rounded up Anil with 2100 grams of charras and Ibrar for possessing 2740 grams of charras. City Police in their operation netted Sikander for having 1680 grams of charras while New Town police nabbed an accused namely Shehzad

for having 1440 grams of charras. Pirwadhai police arrested Yasir and recovered 1080 grams of charras and R.A. Bazar police held Umar on recovery of 1425 grams of charras. He further informed that Westridge, Taxila, Saddar Wah and Wah Cantt police arrested Mehboob, Akpal Khan, Kamran and Shehbaz on recovery of 1200, 1480, 1440 and 1160 grams of charras respectively. Separate cases have been registered against all accused while further investigations are underway. City Police Officer, Rawalpindi had directed the police officers to accelerate ongoing operations against drug peddlers, bootleggers and other lawbreakers, he added.

Dentist cautions against extended use of mouthwashes,medicated pastes

ISLAMABAD (APP): Dental Surgeon Dr. Noman Saleem has advised against using medicated tooth pastes for over two months and mouthwashes for more than six weeks continuously, which may lead to tooth staining. Talking to APP here on Wednesday, Dr. Noman said that it is recommended that one should brush teeth twice a day, floss once a day, and get their scales once a year to maintain lasting oral health. He explained that there is a common misconception that scaling causes sensitivity, while in fact it is recommended once a year for every adult. He clarified that sensitivity is caused by nerve trauma from consuming very cold, hot foods and drinks too rapidly. Elaborating on proper toothbrush selection, Dr. Noman advised that soft-bristled toothbrushes do not clean plaque effectively, while hard-bristled brushes can damage teeth over time. "Tooth-

brushes with medium-soft bristles are recommended to avoid potential tooth damage during brushing", he added. He cautioned that smokers should also avoid hard bristled toothbrushes and abrasive toothpastes which can wear down tooth enamel over time. He reassured that any toothpaste approved by the food and Drug Administration (FDA) is sufficient for cleaning, and even traditional options like Miswak sticks and solo brushes can be effective. cribing proper brushing technique, Dr. Noman recommended using a gentle circular motion to clean all surfaces of teeth thoroughly. He noted electric toothbrushes are ideal since they have built-in pressure sensors to protect against excessive abrasion while brushing. On whitening treatments, he said that many patients desire whiter teeth, but gradual yellowing is a natural aging process.

‘One nation,one law to be ensured,’says PM



to ensure the rights of the people. He said every effort would be made to resolve the problems of the people of GB and provide them with an honourable life. He vowed to focus on tapping the economic potential of

GB through its tourism and energy production sectors. Kakar said the road infrastructure of GB would be improved to enhance its connectivity with the rest of the country. He mentioned holding detailed meetings with local stakeholders and highlighted the importance of removing mutual misunderstandings. About financial problems faced by Gilgit Baltistan University, he said following his discussion with the vice-chancellor, the finance division had been directed to step in.

Major Arms Haul: Police arrest arms dealer

DG KHAN (APP): Dera Ghazi Khan police claimed to have apprehended an inter-provincial arms dealer and seized a substantial cache of illegal weapons. According to police sources, Muhammad Shafiq son of Muhammad Ishaq and a resident of district Haripur, was apprehended during an operation. During the search of Shafiq's vehicle with registration number AXQ/687, law enforcement officers uncovered a staggering array of weaponry. The team confiscated items including 3 Kalashnikovs, 17 30-bore pistols, 6 Kalashnikov magazines, 34 pistol magazines, 410 rounds of Kalashnikov ammunition, and a staggering 3900 rounds of pistols. In response to this alarming discovery, the police have filed a case against the outlaw.

Pakistan Navy seizes huge cache of narcotics at sea

KARACHI (APP): The Pakistan Navy in an intelligence-based counter-narcotics operation alongwith the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) seized approximately 782 kilogrammes (Kgs) of narcotics at the Arabian Sea on Wednesday. The apprehended drugs were stowed in hidden compartments of a fishing boat that was successfully intercepted by a Pakistan Navy Ship, a news release said. The estimated value of seized narcotics is US \$ 235 million in the international market. The seized drugs were subsequently handed over to ANF for further legal proceedings.

Gung Mandi police arrest two thieves

RAWALPINDI (APP): In an operation against criminal elements, Rawalpindi Police have arrested two thieves besides recovering Rs 13.2 million and other items from their possession. According to a police spokesman, Gung Mandi Police arrested two accused namely Ghufuran and Saifullah, who were accused of stealing cash and valuables from a shop. He informed that the police team constituted under the supervision of SHO Gung Mandi Police Station on the directives of SP Rawal, Faisal Saleem conducted a raid and managed to net the criminals who were record holders. Police working on scientific lines managed to net the accused, he added.

IRSA releases 259000 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD (APP): The Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 259000 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 213400 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1545.1 feet and was 147.1 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam were recorded as 115700 cusecs and 130000 cusecs respectively. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1237.50 feet, 187.5 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet.

Two godowns sealed

SARGODHA (APP): The district administration on Wednesday sealed two godowns over illegal stock of sugar and ghee in Shahpur. According to official sources, Assistant Commissioner Shahpur Anum Babar checked various shops and markets, and sealed two godowns for hoarding of sugar and ghee.

AIOU initiated fellowship program with Indonesian university

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) signed an MoU with Indonesia Open University (IOU) Terbuka last year regarding the faculty and student exchange, joint educational and research projects and fellowship programs. According to the AIOU, in this regard, a fellowship program under the Asian Association of Open Universities was held at Terbuka University from August 20 to September 6. Chairman, Department of Distance, Non-Formal and Continuing Education AIOU, Dr. Muhammad Ajmal represented AIOU and completed his fellowship program. It is pertinent to mention here that faculty members of AIOU and IOU keep visiting both universities for educa-

tional and research projects and fellowship programs. Dr. Muhammad Ajmal stated during the fellowship in Indonesia that Allama Iqbal Open University has expanded globally. It is pertinent to mention here that last semester, over 450 students from 35 different countries were enrolled in AIOU. This achievement demonstrates the increase in the quality of education and the university's commitment to providing a diverse and inclusive learning environment. Directorate of International Affairs at Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has been making efforts to enhance relations with open universities worldwide on the instructions of the Vice Chancellor AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood.

Ganich for independent mode of payment between Pakistan,Russia to bolster trade activities

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of Russian Federation, Danila Ganich on Wednesday wished for an independent mode of payment between Pakistan and Russia in an attempt to bolster trade activities, which presently was around \$700 million. Addressing a seminar titled 'Pakistan-Russia Relations and the Way Ahead', organized by the Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) at the forum titled, 'Diplomatic Reflections', the Russian Ambassador shed light on different topics pertaining to Ukraine-Russia War, Pak-Russia bilateral ties and regional issues. About bilateral relations with Pakistan, the Ambassador said that there were excellent contacts at all levels and the understandings on the political, military and commerce sides were growing. The Ambassador said that

Pakistanis as a whole was supportive of Russia and even during the war in Afghanistan by the erstwhile Soviet Union, there were pockets of support inside Pakistan. He particularly mentioned the Russian largesse in supporting Pakistan's stance against Islamophobia and observed that all religions should be respected. He castigated the West for irrationally advocating freedom of speech and that too when it entails to polarizing the society. Ganich said, "We support counter-terrorism measures along with Pakistan, as we understand that your country has paid a great price in the form of 80,000 casualties during the war on terrorism." He said military drills between the two countries, known as 'Friendship', will continue, and an episode has been planned for next year.

SLA to host national conference on Artificial Intelligence,Technology on 1 September

HYDERABAD (APP): Sindhi Language Authority(SLA) to hold a national conference on Artificial Intelligence, Technology, and the future of the Sindhi Language with the objective of highlighting the importance of Technology and artificial intelligence in the development of languages and

usage on 17 September. According to the Spokesman of SLA, eminent linguistics experts would read their papers on the computerised development of languages, digitalization, artificial intelligence, modern information technology, and usage of Sindhi language.

Pakistan,Iran explore cultural collaborations

ISLAMABAD (APP): Jamal Shah, the Caretaker Federal Minister for National Heritage & Culture Division, and Ehsan Khazaei, the Cultural Counsellor at the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, discussed the cultural ties between Pakistan and Iran, as well as recent developments like cultural agreements between the two nations. In their meeting, the two parties explored the cultural connections between Pakistan and Iran, along with recent advancements in these relations, which encompassed cultural agreements between

the two friendly nations. Additionally, they deliberated on collaborating to arrange diverse cultural events, such as an Iranian film week and other cultural exchanges. The minister expressed Pakistan's desire to enhance cultural connections with Iran, encompassing areas such as arts, cinema, handicrafts, literature, heritage, and culture. Ehsan Khazaei, the Cultural Counsellor at the Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Iran, noted the numerous cultural and historical similarities shared by Pakistan and Iran.

Japanese envoy assures Defence Minister for continued support to Pakistan

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, Wada Mitsuhiro called on Minister for Defence, Lieutenant General (R) Anwar Ali Hyder here at the Ministry and assured of his government's continued support to Pakistan and exploring new avenues of mutual collaboration. The Defence Minister highlighted the historical close ties between Pakistan and Japan and appreciated the Japanese support for prosperity and development in Pakistan over the years through Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA), said a news release on Wednesday. He expressed his hope that Japan would help create economic activities in Pakistan through mutually benefi-

cial participation in the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as well as considering investment in maritime and industrial manufacturing sectors especially like Gawadar Shipyard. The Defence Minister emphasized on continuation of training and collaboration between two Navies and reiterated Pakistan's continued commitment to UN Peacekeeping Operations. The minister also commended the efforts of Japanese Government for regular holding of Pakistan-Japan Politico-Military and Military to Military Dialogues, adding that such interactions were a concrete expression of the desire of both the countries to enhance mutual defence collaboration.

Saudi military industries sector participates at DSEI in London

LONDON (Agencies): Saudi Arabia is taking part in the Defense and Security Equipment International conference in London, from September 12 to 15, with the support of the General Authority for Military Industries and strategic partners from the public and private sectors. The Kingdom's pavilion at DSEI was opened on Tuesday by Saudi Ambassador to the United Kingdom Prince Khalid bin Bandar bin Sultan, and officials and investors in the military industry sector. Prince Khalid toured the



pavilion, which hosts the Ministry of Investment, Saudi Arabian Military Industries, and Saudi Chemical Company Holding. The pavilion showcases the accelerated progress and investment opportunities in the

Kingdom's military industries sector. GAMI Governor Ahmed bin Abdulaziz Al-Ohali, who heads the Saudi delegation to DSEI, underlined the Kingdom's strategic participation in the exhibition aims to engage with the sector's global leaders and showcases the attractive investment environment in Saudi Arabia, opening new possibilities for cooperation with pioneering international companies and building partnerships between local and international military industry firms.

As climate catastrophes rise, reinsurers reduce risk exposure

MONACO (Agencies): Natural disasters are now happening so frequently that reinsurers — the firms that sell insurance to insurance companies — are scaling back their exposure to such risks. While this may make business sense, it raises the question of whether individuals and businesses will be able to protect themselves against the effects of climate change if their insurance companies cannot even get coverage themselves. Just weeks after wildfires caused major damage in



Hawaii and parts of Europe, and as catastrophic floods ravaged Libya, the issue was front and centre at a major industry gathering held in Monaco this week. Reinsurers identified climate change as the big-

gest risk they now face in a survey by PricewaterhouseCoopers and the Centre for the Study of Financial Innovation. "Climate change is the number-one risk once again as reinsurers bear the brunt of the cost of catastrophe claims from an ever-increasing number of extreme weather events," the report said. "As these losses spiral upwards, the survey highlights growing concerns that some areas and types of business could become uninsurable," it added.

Ford to double output of hybrid F-150 truck as EV sales slow

NEW YORK (Agencies): Ford Motor Co is doubling production and cutting prices of gasoline-electric hybrid F-150 pickups as pure electric models become a harder sell among budget-minded buyers. Ford is seeing growing demand for the hybrid-powered of F-150, which currently accounts for one-in-10 deliveries of its top-selling model. By cranking up production next year, Ford said Tuesday it'll offer the hybrid for a starting price of US\$55,000 plus destination and delivery charges — the same price



as an equivalent gas-fuelled model. "We expect sales to roughly double," John Emmert, general manager of Ford North American truck business, said in an interview. "As we get that scale, that allows us to sell it at price parity" with a convention-

al F-150. The move is part of chief executive officer Jim Farley's plan to quadruple sales of hybrids over the next five years as Ford expands gas-electric models throughout its lineup. It comes as the automaker is throttling back ambitious production plans for its full-electric models and slashing EV prices as car buyers push back at the high price of pure battery power. "We have been surprised, frankly, at the popularity of hybrid systems for the F-150," Farley told analysts on the company's second quarter earnings call in July.

Google argues quality kept its search on top, defends billions paid

WASHINGTON (Agencies): Google argued on Tuesday the US was wrong to say the search and advertising giant broke the law to hold onto its massive market share, noting its search engine was wildly popular because of its quality and that dissatisfied users could switch with "a few easy clicks". The Justice Department has accused Alphabet's Google of paying US\$10 billion annually to device makers like Apple, wireless companies like AT&T, and browser makers like Mozilla to keep its search engine's market share at



around 90%. Google's search engine is a key part of its business, driving advertising sales and other areas of profit for the world's fourth most valuable company. "This case is about the future of the internet," said Kenneth Dintzer, arguing for

the Justice Department that Google began in 2010 to illegally maintain its monopoly. But Google's lawyer, John Schimdtlein, said the payments compensate partners for the work of making sure that the software gets timely security updates and other maintenance. "Users today have more search options and more ways to access information online than ever before," Schimdtlein added. He went on to say Google won competitions that Apple and Mozilla held to pick the best search engines.

Alibaba opens AI model Tongyi Qianwen to the public

SHANGHAI (Agencies): Alibaba said on Wednesday it would open its artificial intelligence model Tongyi Qianwen to the public, in a sign it has gained Chinese regulatory approval to mass-market the model. Authorities in China have recently accelerated efforts to support companies developing AI as the technology increasingly becomes a focus of competition with the US. The Alibaba Cloud Intelligence Division said organisations including OPPO, Taobao, DingTalk and Zhejiang University have reached cooperation



agreements to train their own large language models or develop language model applications based on Tongyi Qianwen, according to a post published on its WeChat account. The post also said that in the near future, an open source version of the

large language model would become available for free commercial use "by the whole society". Earlier this week, Alibaba's Cloud division's chief, former group CEO Daniel Zhang, stepped down from his post. He was replaced by newly installed Alibaba Group CEO, Eddie Wu. In an internal letter to Alibaba staff on Tuesday, Wu said that AI would be at the centre of Alibaba Group's future strategy. "Over the next decade, the most significant change agent will be the disruptions bought about by AI across all sectors," Wu said in the letter.

Markets await US CPI test, surging oil adds to price jitters

SYDNEY (Agencies): Asian shares were subdued after Wall Street wobbled overnight with markets bracing for key US inflation data on Wednesday, while an oil price spike stoked anxiety about persistent price pressures, complicating the interest rate outlook. The euro edged higher and markets moved to favour a hike from Europe's central bank on Thursday, following a Reuters report that the European

Central Bank (ECB) expects inflation will stay above 3% next year in its updated forecasts, well above its target of 2%. MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan was flat while Tokyo's Nikkei eased 0.2%. Australia's resource-heavy shares lost 0.7%, Chinese blue-chips were flat but Hong Kong's Hang Seng index moved 0.6% higher. At the forefront of markets' minds is the crucial US Consumer

Price Index (CPI) report expected on Wednesday, which should shed further light on the inflation outlook and provide some clarity about whether the Federal Reserve is done tightening. While core CPI is seen cooling to 4.3% year-on-year in August from 4.7%, rising energy costs are forecast to keep headline inflation hot. And the latest spike in oil prices to ten-month highs is unlikely to escape the Fed's attention.

Apple bows to EU and unveils iPhone with USB-C charger

CUPERTINO (Agencies): Apple unveiled its new iPhone lineup on Tuesday, with its Lightning charger ports replaced on the newest models by a universal charger after a tussle with the European Union. The European bloc is insisting that all phones and other small devices must be compatible with the USB-C charging cables from the end of next year, a move it says will reduce waste and save money for consumers. Apple



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tussle with the European Union. The European bloc is insisting that all phones and other small devices must be compatible with the USB-C charging cables from the end of next year, a move it says will reduce waste and save money for consumers. European Union commissioner Thierry Breton responded to iPhone switching to the new connections by saying universal chargers are "common sense".

UK economy underperforms in July amid strikes, wet weather

LONDON (Agencies): Britain's economy contracted at the fastest pace this year in an unexpectedly poor reading for the month of July, with strikes in hospitals and schools weighing on output, official data showed on Wednesday. The Office for National Statistics said gross domestic product shrank 0.5% in July from June, worse than all forecasts in a Reuters poll of economists that had pointed to a contraction in gross domestic product (GDP) of 0.2% from June. All major sectors of the economy — services, manufacturing and construction — declined in July, the data showed. The data underlined signs that Britain's



economy is weakening, perhaps by more than the Bank of England had expected ahead of its September interest rate meeting. Data on Tuesday showed a faster rise in the unemployment rate than the central bank expected, although the BOE remains worried that strong wage growth will fuel persistent inflation.

TikTok rejects Indonesia's planned social media transaction ban

JAKARTA (Agencies): TikTok on Wednesday criticised calls by Indonesia to ban social media transactions, as Jakarta rails against what it says are monopolistic practices by major companies with e-commerce platforms such as the Chinese-owned firm. Indonesia users spent more money on TikTok than anywhere else in Southeast Asia over the past year, as the app's e-commerce arm rapidly grew to gain a substantial regional market share and millions of sellers since its 2021 launch. Several government officials in recent weeks have called for social media and e-commerce to be separated, taking aim at companies like TikTok for what they say are monopolistic practices threatening



local and small businesses. "Close to two million local businesses in Indonesia use TikTok to grow and thrive through social commerce," Anggini Setiawan, TikTok Indonesia's head of communications told AFP. "Forcing social media and e-commerce to separate into different platforms would not only hamper innovation, it would also disadvantage Indonesian merchants and consumers."

Qantas loses court fight over Covid lockdown layoffs

SYDNEY (Agencies): Qantas illegally sacked 1,700 ground staff during Covid-19 lockdowns, Australia's High Court ruled Wednesday, dismissing an appeal by the airline and opening up the prospect of hefty compensation. The 102-year-old airline is already under fire over soaring ticket prices, allegations it sold tickets for cancelled flights, and claims that it pressured the government to stop international rival Qatar Airways from offering more flights to Australia. Australia's Federal Court ruled last year that Qantas's outsourcing of ground staff jobs at the height of the pandemic was illegal despite its stated "commercial imperatives". The court said



Qantas had failed to disprove that one reason for the mass sacking was to prevent the workers from taking industrial action in the future. The High Court said it agreed with that ruling, unanimously dismissing Qantas's appeal. The Transport Workers Union (TWU), which took Qantas to court over the layoffs, hailed the decision and called for the airline's board to be replaced.

Dollar steady ahead of key US inflation data, yen retraces gains

TOKYO (Agencies): The dollar was broadly steady on Wednesday ahead of a key US inflation report later in the day, though it rose on the yen as traders assessed comments from Japan's top central banker on a possible early exit from its negative interest rate policy. The US currency advanced around 0.2% to 147.36 against the yen, which retraced its biggest one-day percentage rise in two months on Monday, following the remarks from Bank of Japan (BOJ) Governor Kazuo Ueda over the weekend. As investors have more time to consider Ueda's comments, "the fundamental driver of the upside pressures on yen" have returned, said Alvin Tan, head of



Asia FX strategy at RBC Capital Markets. "I think the market also is reading the statement more carefully. The statement to our mind was quite a conditional one, (Ueda) didn't promise anything." Influential ruling party lawmaker Hiroshige Seko on Tuesday also signalled his preference for ultra-loose monetary policy, after Ueda's comments pushed up the yen and bond yields.

Nike investors reject pay equity, human rights proposals

NEW YORK (Agencies): Nike investors voted against two shareholder-led proposals during the sportswear giant's annual meeting on Tuesday, according to a preliminary tally by the company. One of the resolutions, filed by Massachusetts-based investment adviser Arjuna Capital, called on Nike to provide more data on pay equity for female and minority employees. The second, filed by activist shareholder platform Tulipshare, asked the company to issue a report on whether its supply chain policies effectively address Nike's stated equity goals and human rights commitments. Proposals require more than 50% of shareholder votes to win, but Nike is not required to adopt them. The company will disclose the final vote tally in a future US Securities and Exchange Commission filing. Arjuna's resolution on pay equity reporting failed for the second time since 2021 despite back-



ing from proxy advisory firm Institutional Shareholder Services, which in August recommended that investors vote for the proposal. Nike has faced growing pressure for more transparency into its supply chain. More than a dozen investors are calling on Nike to pay garment workers in Cambodia and Thailand that a labor rights group said lost wages after COVID-19 factory shutdowns, according to a Sept. 7 letter to Nike's CEO John Donahoe. Nike told Reuters it has not sourced product from the Cambodian factory since 2006 and that it also found "no evidence" that it owed workers in Thailand back pay.

World No.2 Lilia Vu headlines elite lineup for Aramco Team Series presented by PIF – Hong Kong

HONG KONG: The stage is set for an incredible spectacle of golf as the eagerly awaited Aramco Team Series presented by the Public Investment Fund descends upon Hong Kong. From Oct. 6 to 8, 2023, the renowned Hong Kong Golf Club will play host to a star-studded roster, spearheaded by World No. 2 Lilia Vu, alongside Chinese golf stars Xiyu Lin and Muni He. Last month, Vu made it to the top of the Rolex Women's World Golf Rankings for the first time in her career. Her journey to the top has been remarkable, considering that she began the year ranked No. 43. The year 2023 has seen the American achieve incredible feats, including not one but two victories at the majors. The 25-year-old clinched the AIG Women's Open, adding to her triumph in a playoff at the Chevron Championship in April. She



also won at the Honda LPGA Thailand in February and will be aiming for another victory on Asian soil at the Aramco Team Series presented by PIF – Hong Kong. Vu's incredible achievement of winning two majors in a single year makes her the first female player to achieve this feat since World No. 4 Jin Young Ko accomplished the same in 2019. The remarkable feat also makes her the first American woman to achieve this milestone since Juli Inkster did so in 1999. (Agencies)

Halep to appeal 4-year ban for anti-doping violations

BUCHAREST: Romania's former world No 1 Simona Halep said on Tuesday that she would appeal to sport's highest court against the International Tennis Integrity Agency (ITIA) decision to ban her for four years after two separate anti-doping rule violations. The 31-year-old former Wimbledon and French Open champion had been provisionally suspended since October 2022 after testing positive for banned blood-booster roxadustat at the US Open last year where she lost in the first round. Halep was "shocked and disappointed" and blamed contaminated supplements, adding that she "refused to accept their (ITIA) decision of a four-year ban" which runs until Oct 6, 2026. "I am continuing to train and do everything in my power to clear



my name of these false allegations and return to the court," Halep said in a statement to Reuters. "I intend to appeal this decision to The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) and pursue all legal remedies against the supplement company in question." The ITIA said earlier on Tuesday it came to its conclusion based on the collection and analysis of 51 blood samples provided by Halep. (Agencies)

Haaland's 25th goal helps keep Norway in Euro 2024 hunt



OSLO: Erling Haaland notched his 25th goal in 26 international appearances to help Norway to a 2-1 win over Georgia on Tuesday that kept their Euro 2024 qualification hopes alive. The 23-year-old striker struck on 25 minutes before captain Martin Odegaard doubled their lead eight minutes later as the home side dominated the match at Oslo's Ullevaal stadium. However, with Norway

needing all three points to remain in the hunt for one of the two qualifying spots from Group A, Budu Zivzivadze rattled the home side's nerves by pulling a goal back for Georgia in stoppage time. Norway manager Stale Solbakken said his side posed a bigger threat as the game wore on. "A slightly slow start, but at the same time we had full control. They laid very low and closed well. Then we gradually became more and more dangerous," he added. "We have full control for a long time before they scored a little out of nothing." Norway are third after five matches in the group, eight points behind leaders Scotland and two behind Spain, who have played one game fewer. (Agencies)

Meet the first Saudi female boxer to win international gold

Riyadh: Hala Saleh Al-Rashidi, a boxer from Al-Ahli Club, became the first Saudi woman to win a gold medal in the 51kg category at the UAE Open Boxing Championships in Abu Dhabi, which concluded on Sunday with the participation of 176 players. She bounced back from her loss in the Arab Games held in Oran, Algeria, in July of last year, where all judges ruled against her. Al-Rashidi was one of seven female boxers participating in the Saudi national boxing team's delega-



tion during the training camp held in the Philippines from April 15 to May 5, which came as part of the federation's efforts to prepare outstanding players in Saudi Arabia for international competitions. (Agencies)

Pakistan defeat Kyrgyzstan in Central Asian Beach Volleyball C'ship

ISLAMABAD: (APP) Pakistan Women's Beach Volleyball Team made history as they defeated Kyrgyzstan 2-1 in their inaugural match of the Central Asian Beach Volleyball Championship at the iconic Cox's Bazar Beach on the southeast coast of Bangladesh on Wednesday. According to information made available here by the Pakistan Volleyball Federation (PVF), Pakistan women powered past their opponents 11-21, 21-14 and 15-13 to emerge victorious. Teams from

hosts Bangladesh, Pakistan Bhutan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, India, and Maldives are participating in the three-day-long competition. "This is a historical moment for us because the Pakistan Women's Volleyball Team is participating in an international event for the first time and they launched their campaign on a winning note against a strong team." "Pakistan's Azra Farooq and Muqaddas Bukhari played a crucial role in the win," the PVF said in a statement.

Pakistan becomes first team to play 200 T20I matches

LAHORE: Pakistan cricket team becomes the first squad to play 200 matches in limited overs format with a win over England in the 200th T20 game. Interestingly, Team Green played their first T20 against England at Bristol while they also face off with the same country in their 200th game. As of September, Men in Green played 199 T20I games, clinching 121 victories,

70 defeats, two ties, and five no results for an overall winning percentage of 63.14. Meanwhile, Pakistan's archrival India is on the second position with 181 T20 games while the Windies stand at third with 171. Members of the Pakistan team shared their best moments from the T20 format in a video released by the official handle of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB). (APP)

Saudi Arabia's boxers shine at UAE championships

ABU DHABI: Several boxers from Saudi Arabia won top honors over the weekend in Abu Dhabi at the UAE Open Boxing Championships. Amateur boxers born between 1983 and 2008 — divided into junior, youth and elite categories — from the UAE, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman and Iraq, took part in the contest from Sept. 8 to 10. A total of 176 boxers took part in the tournament organized by the UAE Boxing Federation in partnership with the Abu Dhabi Sports Council. Among those in attendance were Sheikh Zayed bin Nahyan bin



Zayed Al-Nahyan; UAE Boxing Federation and Asian Boxing Federation President Anas Al-Otaiba; and International Boxing Association Vice President Abakarov Abdulmutalim. Saudi Arabia's female flyweight Hala

Saleh Rashidi from Al-Ahli Club in the Kingdom won a gold medal after defeating Nissa Mahdi from the UAE. Nawaf Al-Jahani (46 kg) from Saudi Arabia also impressed by winning the first men's junior final. Al-Ahli club youth boxers Ibraheem Khaleel Al-Jehni (51 kg) and Yazan Ahmed Al-Ghami (57 kg) also rose to the occasion by winning gold medals. Local fighters also showcased their talent with UAE boxer Ahmed Ali Al-Mansuri defeating fellow Emirati Zayed Al-Zaabi in the junior light bantam-weight (52 kg) final. (Agencies)

Italy beat Ukraine in key Euro 2024 qualifier; Spain win big and Romania fans' chants stop game

LONDON: European champions Italy took a big step Tuesday toward being able to defend their title. Spain and Belgium won easily on their path to Euro 2024. Sweden look like it's failing to qualify for the first time in 28 years. Romania and Kosovo managed to finish a game that risked being abandoned. Political pro-Serbia chants by home fans in Bucharest forced a 45-minute delay in the first half and players were taken back to their locker rooms. After Romania risked forfeiting the game as a 3-0 loss, late goals earned a 2-0 win though the national federation now faces punishment in a UEFA disciplinary case. The



highest-stakes game of the evening saw Italy secure a vital 2-1 win over Ukraine in what shapes as a tight race to finish second in the group led by England. Two first-half goals by Inter Milan midfielder Davide Frattesi in his home stadium at San Siro gave new coach Luciano Spalletti a first win after a tension-filled draw at

North Macedonia on Saturday. Italy's improved and more energetic performance survived Ukraine forward Andriy Yarmolenko cutting the lead before halftime. Italy and Ukraine are tied on seven points — with North Macedonia, which beat Malta 2-0 but has the toughest schedule — trailing six behind England, who Spalletti's team must face at Wembley Stadium next month. A possible scenario is a decisive final-round game between Ukraine and Italy on Nov. 20: a place at Euro 2024 for one, and for the other uncertainty next March in the play-offs that stopped Italy going to the past two World Cups. (Agencies)

Riyadh Stars team win Saudi Arabia's 1st Women's Hockey Championship

RIYADH: Hockey team Riyadh Stars have won the Kingdom's first Women's Championship and received their award from Saudi Hockey Federation's President Mohammed Al-Mandil on Monday. Al-Mandil handed the cup and gold medals to the winners of the tournament, which took place at the Prince Faisal Bin Fahd Stadium in Riyadh from Sept. 10-11. Riyadh Najd took second place and collected silver medals, while the Jeddah Pearls team were third. Al-Mandil also crowned Najd Falcons winners of the Hockey Championship (men's category), while the Arab Legends team came



second and the British School third. Asmaa Al-Shami was the female tournament's best goalkeeper while Kayra Ingerir won the award for top scorer. Lian Eshki took the best player award. Ahmed Nabil was named best goalkeeper in the men's category, while Khalid Mahfouz received the top scor-

er award after scoring 10 times. Peter Patrick took the best player award and Muayyad Mansour collected the best goalkeeper prize in the youth category. Rakan Al-Nawaisir won the best youth player award. Al-Mandil said that the event had achieved its goals and that the first edition of the Women's Championship had been a resounding success. He added that the federation intended to expand the organization of such championships, and stressed his appreciation for the support the body had received from the Ministry of Sports and the Olympic Committee. (Agencies)

Everton close to being sold to US investment firm 777 Partners

LONDON: Everton Football Club are close to an agreement to be acquired by 777 Partners LLC following months of talks between the parties, according to a person with knowledge of the matter. Club owner Farhad Moshiri, who has invested hundreds of millions of pounds into the underperforming team during

his tenure at the Liverpool-based club, is expected to exit with a fraction of the money he invested, said the person, who asked not to be identified since the negotiations are private. A deal could be announced as soon as Tuesday. If consummated, the sale will bring the number of American-owned Premier League

teams to 10 out of 20. The parties are in the late stages of talks, and the deal could still fall apart. Moshiri's legacy includes a partly-complete, state-of-the-art stadium in the Bramley-Moore Dock area of Liverpool. An outside spokesperson for Everton declined to comment. (Agencies)

International fencing delegation looks at Saudi Arabia's readiness to host World C'ship

RIYADH: A delegation representing the International Fencing Federation has arrived in Saudi Arabia to ascertain the Kingdom's readiness to host the World Fencing Championship for Juniors and Youth in April. Headed by the IFF's CEO Nathalie Rodriguez, along with her companions, and accompanied by Tunisian Ziad Al-Friyani, the competition director and head of the legal committee, the delegation is visiting the Kingdom to examine the preparations in Riyadh, which hosts the championship between April 12 and 20 next year.

Ahmed Al-Sabban, the president of the Saudi Arabian Fencing Federation, and Abdullah Al-Sunidi, the federation's executive director, are accompanying the delegation during the three-day visit, said a media statement.

A meeting will be held on Wednesday with Al-Sabban to discuss hosting requirements and needs. The delegation on Tuesday visited the sports hall at King Saud University which is due to host the championship, and toured the premises and looked at transportation and technical requirements.

The IFF's General Assembly in November named Riyadh as host of the major global event. It will boast more than 1,500 participants from over 100 countries, with hundreds of officials representing administrative and technical staff, including referees, coaches, and working committees. (Agencies)

DAILY HOROSCOPE: SEPTEMBER 14, 2023



– It's a general reading which may differ from person to person because of time date and year.

– **ARIES:** You're in the middle of a big decision and need to take the least selfish option. It may hurt a little, but it should feel a lot better once you're past this current phase. You can get your way later.

– **TAURUS:** You might be biting off more than you can chew, but even knowing that you might still go for it! You just can't resist the allure of getting more than usual for little to no effort. Wait and see.

– **GEMINI:** Your great mental energy helps you keep on the move today. It may be that you need to deal with a few surprises, but almost all of them should be pleasant. Keep an eye out for an old friend.

– **CANCER:** Family arguments could break out more easily today, and you're not blameless! Sometimes this stuff just needs to be aired, though, so don't try to cover it up. Life gets better soon!

– **LEO:** It's a great time for a party at your place or anywhere else! You're

likely to have fun almost anywhere and doing almost anything, but the social vibe is impossible to ignore.

– **VIRGO:** It's time to shake things up, maybe quite a lot! Your energy is a little jittery, which is actually perfect for making a splash and drawing attention your way. Proceeding should be simple.

– **LIBRA:** Your personal energy is at a peak, and you could be almost tireless no matter what you're doing. It's hard to feel anything but cheery!

– **SCORPIO:** It's kind of hard for you to figure out what you need to do next, so put off the decision for a little while longer if that's possible. If not, you might need to ask someone wise for advice.

– **SAGITTARIUS:** You're in an odd mood today and might be struggling for something larger than yourself. In fact, it's a good idea to take part in politics or seek justice for someone who's been wronged.

– **CAPRICORN:** You should feel free to say yes to almost anything that comes your way today as long as it's vaguely reasonable! It's a great time to start new projects of all kinds, so don't be timid.

– **ACQUARIUS:** No matter what else you've got going on today, you need to make sure that you try at least one new experience. You crave novelty, and while it doesn't have to be a thrill, that certainly can't hurt!

– **PISCES:** Let go of anything old that's been holding you back. You've got a free pass to get on with your life! It's a really good time for you to meet new people and try new projects of all kinds.

Egypt declares 3 days of national mourning in solidarity with Libya, Morocco

CAIRO (Agencies): Egypt declared three days of mourning on Tuesday “in solidarity with our brothers in Morocco and Libya” for the victims of the earthquake and storm that hit the two North African countries in recent days. “President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi extended his as well as the Egyptian people’s sincere condolences over the victims of the humanitarian catastrophes in Morocco and Libya,” spokesman Ahmed Fahmy said. “Three days of mourning were declared in the Arab Republic of Egypt in solidarity with the brothers in Morocco and Libya over the victims,” Fahmy added. El-Sisi gave directives to the Egyptian Armed Forces

to provide immediate humanitarian aid to both states during a meeting with a number of senior commanders on Tuesday. Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry reaffirmed Egypt’s support for and full solidarity with Morocco following the earthquake, that has caused thousands of deaths and injuries, during a phone call with Nasser Bourita, Morocco’s minister of foreign affairs, African cooperation and expatriates. Ahmed Abu Zeid, spokesman for the Egyptian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said that Bourita appreciated the condolences sent to its leadership and people, as well as Cairo’s decision to declare a state of mourning. Speaker of

the Egyptian House of Representatives Hanafy Gebal also offered his sincere condolences on behalf of the chamber on Tuesday to both Morocco and Libya, the latter of which was struck by Storm Daniel at the weekend. He was joined in his condolences by Shawqi Allam, the grand Mufti of Egypt, who expressed his full solidarity with the families of the victims. Egypt’s Ministry of Religious Endowments, or Awqaf, allocated 30 million Egyptian pounds (\$970,666) of its budget as part of a broad aid package provided by the Egyptian state, divided equally between Morocco, Libya, and Slovenia after devastating floods hit the Balkan country.

Dozens killed in Sudan airstrike – AFP

NYALA (Agencies): Air raids in several areas of South Darfur’s state capital, Nyala, in war-torn Sudan on Wednesday killed at least 40 civilians, according to an AFP report, citing a medical source and witnesses. “Forty civilians have been killed in an airstrike that hit two markets and a number of the city’s neighborhoods,” the anonymous medical personnel told the French outlet. Witnesses in the area had previously reported airstrikes on two markets, which resulted in civilian casualties. The Darfur region has reportedly witnessed some of the worst violence since fighting erupted on April 15 between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF). According to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project, nearly 7,500 people have been killed in the five months of intense fighting. The latest attack came a day after reports of 17 civilian deaths in Omdurman, Sudan’s second-most populous city, which witnesses blamed on RSF shelling. However, in a statement on Wednesday, the RSF claimed attacks on Monday and Tuesday were carried out by the “extremist Burhan militia,” referring to the Su-



danese army. The RSF also alleged that the bombing of “residential areas and markets in Khartoum, East Nile, Bahri, and Omdurman” by the SAF this week had “resulted in the killing of more than 104 people and the injury of hundreds.” Last month, the Sudanese paramilitary group unveiled a strategy for ending the deadly conflict and building a ‘new Sudan’. General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, the leader of the RSF, has expressed a desire to reach a long-term ceasefire agreement with his rival army chief, General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan. The army chief has rejected the RSF proposal, saying he will not “make deals with traitors.” The Sudanese government announced on Wednesday that General Al-Burhan was on his way to Türkiye to meet with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan about “bilateral relations and ways to strengthen them.”

North Korea fires ‘unidentified ballistic missile’ – Seoul

PYONGYANG (Agencies): North Korea has fired two short-range ballistic missiles, the South Korean military said Wednesday, with leader Kim Jong Un in Russia ahead of a summit with President Vladimir Putin. South Korea detected “two short-range ballistic missiles fired by North Korea from the Sunan area towards the East Sea at around 11:43 to 11:53 today”, the Joint Chiefs of Staff said, referring to the body of water also known as the Sea of Japan. “Our military has strengthened surveillance and vigilance in preparation for further launches, while maintaining full readiness by closely cooperating with the US.” The Japanese coast guard said two ballistic missiles were launched. Japan’s top government spokesman Hirokazu Matsuno told reporters that the missiles “appear to have fallen outside Japan’s exclusive economic zone but we are analysing details”. Kim is in Russia with his top military officials and is set to meet Putin on Wednesday.

New Mideast corridor would include trains to India - Delhi says

NEW DELHI (Agencies): A new ports and railway corridor for the Middle East and South Asia will include train links to India, an Indian foreign ministry official said on Monday, offering new details about the plan unveiled over the weekend at the G20 summit in Delhi. Asked about the proposals, Ausaf Sayeed, a secretary in the Foreign Ministry, spelled out that the corridor would include trains to India and not just links by port. “India would be connected by railroads is the right interpretation, rather than India building the railroads,” he said in response to a question at a media briefing. The multinational rail and ports deal, which includes as members the United States, Saudi Arabia, India, the European Union and the United Arab Emirates, is being viewed as a response to China’s ambitious Belt and Road Initiative. The corridor would be “the equivalent of the Silk Route and Spice Road,” Saudi Investment Minister Khalid Al Falih said at an event in New Delhi later in the day, adding that it will provide “greater energy connectivity, green materials and processed and finished goods that will rebalance the global

day for talks focused on defence cooperation. Russia is eager for North Korea’s stockpile of artillery shells, likely for use in Ukraine, while Pyongyang is looking for help in upgrading its Soviet-era equipment, especially for its air force and navy, experts say. “Fascinating: a launch without Kim Jong (Un) in the country. A first,” US-based analyst Ankit Panda wrote on X. “Starting in 2019, KJU stopped attending every single publicized launch (and sometimes his presence was deliberately obscured),” he wrote. “There’s precedent for launches without Kim, but not without Kim in-country.” North Korea has conducted a string of banned weapons tests so far this year; the last one involving two short-range ballistic missiles on August 30. It also last month failed in its second attempt to put a spy satellite into orbit. South Korea and the United States have ramped up defence cooperation in response, staging joint exercises as well as naval drills with Japan.

Alien corpses’ presented in Mexican Congress



Alleged “non-human” alien corpses have been displayed to Mexican politicians at the country’s Congress. The two small alleged alien corpses, retrieved from Cusco, Peru, were presented in windowed boxes in Mexico City on Wednesday, stirring excitement within the UFO conspiracy theorist community. The event was spearheaded by journalist and ufologist Jaime Maussan, who testified under oath that the mummified specimens are not part of “our terrestrial evolution”, with almost a third of their DNA remaining “unknown”, reported Mexican media. The claims by the self-claimed ‘ufologist’ have not been proven and Mr Maussan has previously been associated with claims of discoveries that have later been debunked. At the public hearing, Mr Maussan showed US officials and members of the Mexican government several videos of “UFOs and

unidentified anomalous phenomena” before unveiling the alleged alien corpses. He said: “These specimen are not part of our terrestrial evolution... These aren’t beings that were found after a UFO wreckage. They were found in diatom (algae) mines, and were later fossilized.” Mr Maussan told attendees the specimens had been studied by scientists at the Autonomous National University of Mexico (UNAM) who were able to draw DNA evidence using radiocarbon dating. After comparisons were made to other DNA samples, it was found that over 30% of the specimens’ DNA was “unknown”, he said. X-rays of the specimens were also shown during the hearing, with experts testifying under oath that one of the bodies is seen to have “eggs” inside, while both were said to have implants made of very rare metals, such as Osmium.

Two Syria soldiers killed in Israel strike over Tartous - Syrian media

TARTOUS (Agencies): Two Syrian soldiers were killed and six others were wounded in an Israeli air strike over the Mediterranean port city of Tartous near the ancestral home region of Syrian President, Bashar Al Assad, Syrian state media reported on Wednesday. It gave no details of the specific locations that were hit, Reuters reports. Israel has staged hundreds of strikes against alleged Iranian targets in Syria in recent years, but has mostly avoided hitting the coastal provinces where Russia’s main military assets are concentrated. Israeli officials were not immediately available for comment. The strikes are part of an escalation of what has been a low-intensity conflict whose goal is to slow



down Iran’s growing entrenchment in Syria, Israeli and regional military experts say. The strikes were close to the Russian Navy’s only Mediterranean base in the port of Tartous where Russian warships are docked, while Moscow’s major Hmeimim Air Base is also in nearby Latakia province. Russia’s intervention, alongside Iran, helped turn the tide in favour of Assad in the country’s over decade-old conflict.

Afghan soldier who was arrested at US-Mexico border after fleeing Taliban is granted asylum

HOUSTON: An Afghan soldier who fled the Taliban and traveled through nearly a dozen countries before being arrested at the Texas-Mexico border and detained for months has been granted asylum, allowing him to remain in the United States, his brother said Wednesday. Abdul Wasi Safi, 27, is one of tens of thousands of Afghan citizens who fled to the U.S. following the withdrawal of its forces from Afghanistan in August 2021. The soldier, called Wasi by family and friends, and his older brother, Sami Safi, worried that if Wasi Safi wasn’t granted asylum, he could be sent back to Afghanistan, where he would likely be killed by the Taliban because he had worked with the U.S. military. But Wasi Safi’s lawyer surprised the brothers Tuesday with news that his asylum request had been granted. The brothers, who live in Houston, had thought a decision wasn’t coming until a Nov. 19 court hearing. “I have tears of joy in my eyes,” Sami Safi said. “Now he can live here. Now he can be safe here.” Olsa Alikaj-Cano, Wasi Safi’s immigration attorney, who represented him with his credible fear interview as well as with his asylum application before the Houston Immigration Court, said she and an attorney representing the federal government filed a joint motion on Friday asking an immigration judge to waive the November trial hearing and grant asylum. But Alikaj-Cano said the judge’s decision came after Wasi Safi was thoroughly vetted by the U.S. government.

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