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China, Pakistan successfully wrap up joint air exercise

BEIJING (Global Times): With the return of participating Pakistani forces to their home country on Tuesday, China and Pakistan successfully wrapped up the Shaheen-X joint air exercise in Northwest China, with observers on Wednesday predicting more military interactions and exchanges that will further deepen pragmatic cooperation between the “Iron Brothers.” The J-10C and JF-17 fighter aircraft of the Pakistan Air Force contingent on Tuesday landed back at an operational air base in Pakistan after successful participation in the joint air exercise in China, the Pakistan Air Force said in a press release on Tuesday. Aimed at validating interoperability between China and Pakistan in the face of realistic contemporary air combat scenarios, the exercise was a collaborative endeavor that facilitated the exchange of valuable insights and lessons learned, according to the Pakistani press release. A video attached to the press release highlighted that the Shaheen-X was an operational exercise that deepened brotherhood, created synergy, enhanced professional skills and operational preparedness and shared cultural values. The Chinese People’s Liberation Army (PLA) Air Force dispatched warplanes including the J-16 fighter jet to the joint exercise, the video showed. The drill, the 10th edition in the Shaheen exercise series, started on August 28 in Jiuquan, Northwest China’s Gansu Province and



Yinchuan, Northwest China’s Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, the Xinhua News Agency reported. In addition to fighters, other types of aircraft such as early warning aircraft and ground equipment, including ground-to-air missile systems, radar installations and communications units, also participated in the drill that practiced typical combat scenarios such as joint air defense and joint countermeasures, according to Xinhua. The exercise featured advanced warplanes from both sides and formed complete combat systems that stress interoperability, a Chinese military expert who requested anonymity told the Global Times on Wednesday. The J-16 from the Chinese side is the PLA Air Force’s most powerful and all-rounded fighter jet, only second to the stealth-capable J-20, while the J-10C from the Pakistani side is the Pakistan

Air Force’s most advanced aircraft, the expert said. Pakistan commissioned the first batch of Chinese-developed J-10Cs in March 2022. They can be interconnected with their Chinese counterparts through the PLA Air Force’s KJ-500 early warning aircraft, the expert said. Fu Qianshao, a Chinese military aviation expert, told the Global Times that the exercise is beneficial to both sides in terms of skills, tactics and interoperability. The two countries use different training approaches, but at the same time fly the same aircraft, the J-10C, so both sides can learn from each other, Fu said. Experts anticipate there will be more high-level exchanges, joint exercises among the armies, navies and air forces of the two countries, personnel training, as well as technology cooperation, including arms sales and joint development, in the future.

India approves procurement of additional Su-30s

NEW DELHI (Agencies): India’s Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) has accorded an Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) to procure 12 new Sukhoi Su-30MKI aircraft with associated equipment from Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL), according to the Indian Ministry of Defence (MoD). The AoN signifies the initial approval for the defence acquisition. The AoN is part of an ongoing, four-year effort by the Indian Air Force (IAF) to procure 12 additional Su-30MKIs to replace attrition-related losses. According to data on air accidents nine Su-30MKIs have crashed since 2012. However, an IAF source said the procurement of the 12 new aircraft could also support the formation of a new squadron. “The induction of 12 Su-30MKIs presents a superior capability than [ageing Mikoyan-Gurevich] MiG-21s,” the IAF source added. Janes earlier reported that the establishment strength of an IAF squadron is 18 aircraft. The acquisition of 12 new aircraft would comprise two-thirds of a new squadron.

Protests in New York as Netanyahu attends UN meet



NEW YORK (Agencies): Demonstrators gathered outside the New York hotel where Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was staying to protest against the government’s judicial reforms, reported the Times of Israel. They also plan to stage protests across the city today as the prime minister arrived in New York to participate in meetings with global leaders at the UN General Assembly. Expat activists and members of the Jewish community in New York organised their protest before dawn as they assembled outside Netanyahu’s hotel in Manhattan’s Upper East Side.

Swiss Parliament outlaws the niqab

Bern (Agencies): The Swiss Parliament passed legislation on Wednesday making it illegal to cover one’s face, including wearing a niqab – a Muslim woman’s face veil – with a fine of 1,000 Swiss francs (approximately \$1,114), Anadolu Agency reports. The “burqa ban” law was approved by the upper chamber of parliament, known locally as Nationalrat, by a vote of 151 to 29, public broadcaster, SRF, reported. All requests from parliamentarians for changes in wording, fine levels and exemptions were rejected. In 2021, the Swiss government held a referendum on the issue, with 51.2 per cent voting in favour of a nationwide ban on wearing face veils in public, and 48.8 per cent voting against it. The new law makes it illegal to cover one’s face in public and private places accessible to the general public “in such a way that the facial features are not recognisable.”



Violators face a fine of up to 1,000 Swiss francs (\$1,114). However, there are several exceptions to the ban, including religious services, indigenous customs, theatrical performances and veiling for health or climatic reasons. The new federal law has replaced local laws in 15 Swiss cantons prohibiting hooding. France and Belgium were the first countries in Europe to outlaw the niqab in public places in 2011, followed by Bulgaria in 2016, Austria in 2017 and Denmark in 2018.

India expels Canadian diplomat in tit-for-tat move as spat over assassinated Sikh activist deepens



NEW DELHI (Agencies): Canada’s accusation that India may have been involved in the assassination of a Sikh activist on its soil has triggered a growing spat with Ottawa and New Delhi both expelling senior diplomats, sending relations between the two countries plunging. The tit-for-tat diplomatic expulsions came after Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Canada was investigating “credible allegations” linking India to the June killing of Canadian citizen and prominent Sikh leader, Hardeep Singh Nijjar. “Over the past number of weeks, Canadian security agencies have been actively pursuing cred-

ible allegations of a potential link between agents of the government of India and the killing of a Canadian citizen Hardeep Singh Nijjar,” Trudeau said in parliament on Monday, adding his government would take all steps necessary “to hold perpetrators of this murder to account.” Canada said it had kicked out an Indian diplomat, who foreign affairs minister Mélanie Joly described as the head of the Indian intelligence agency in the country. “Today we’re acting by expelling a key diplomat, but we will get to the bottom of this,” she told reporters in Ottawa, adding Trudeau has raised this issue with both US President Joe Biden and British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak. India’s foreign ministry on Tuesday responded in kind, saying it had expelled a senior Canadian diplomat based in India. Nijjar was a prominent Sikh leader in western Canada, and according to local police, he was gunned down in his truck in June by two masked gunmen outside a Sikh temple in Surrey, British Columbia.

Shots fired outside US Embassy in Lebanon

BEIRUT (Agencies): Shots were fired at the US Embassy in Lebanon on Wednesday evening, spokesperson Jake Nelson told Reuters. He added that no injuries were reported. “At 10:37 pm local time, small arms fire was reported in the vicinity of the entrance to the US embassy,” Nelson said. “There were no injuries, and our facility is safe. We are in close contact with host country law enforcement authorities.” The incident took place on the anniversary of the

deadly suicide car bombing of one of the buildings belonging to the US diplomatic mission in Beirut in 1984. The attack carried out by Islamist militants claimed the lives of 23 people, including two Americans. The embassy was moved from central Beirut to its current location in the Christian suburb of Awkar following another attack in April 1983, which killed 63 people. A new diplomatic compound is under construction on a 43-acre site.

EU allocates nearly \$150m to help Afghan people, focusing on women, girls

BRUSSELS (Agencies): The EU announced, Wednesday, that it will release €140 million (nearly \$150 million) in aid for education, healthcare, agriculture and women’s economic advancement in Afghanistan, Anadolu Agency reports. The funds had been frozen in December 2022 due to the interim Taliban administration’s ban on women working in non-governmental organisations, the bloc said in a statement. It added that the decision to release the funds was based on six months of monitoring and assessment of the “for women by women” principle, which ensures Afghan women and girls participate in all aspects of the aid delivery process. The funds will continue to be directed through UN agencies, international NGOs and the World Bank, which all work on the ground, according to the statement. The support will also strengthen women’s economic empowerment by enhancing their skills development, facilitating access to fi-



nance and market opportunities, improving their economic resilience and supporting small enterprises led by women, it said. “We know how difficult it has been to navigate the increasingly severe situation in Afghanistan. Yet, over the last six months, the international community has found a way to deliver desperately needed support to women, girls and other vulnerable groups,” said Jutta Urpilainen, the Commissioner for International Partnerships, in the statement. Urpilainen underscored that the support offers livelihood solutions for millions, while not recognising the Taliban de facto administration.

Israel arrests 2 men for stealing tank from military base



TEL AVIV (Agencies): Israel Police reported this morning that a tank had been stolen from an army training base located in the Elikim interchange and was later found in a scrap yard in northern Israel. According to the Jerusalem Post, the incident, initially reported to authorities by the Defence Ministry, is under joint investigation by both law enforcement agencies and the Israeli Ministry of Defence. “From a preliminary investigation of the circumstances of the case, it is suspected that the tank is not active and was stolen from the scene for reasons that are

being investigated at this stage,” police said. “Upon locating the stolen tank, a notification was sent to the Ministry of Defence and the police opened a joint investigation with the Ministry of Defence,” the statement added. Following the incident, two men from northern Israel, one from Tiberias and the other from Haifa, were arrested as suspects in connection with the theft. Moreover, a military statement clarified that the tank was the chassis of a , which had been taken out of service many years ago. “It has no means of armament, and its systems do not function,” the statement said. “The tank was stationed in a firing area, that’s open to any passersby, and was used as a stationary vehicle for soldiers’ exercises.” It concluded: “The tank was returned to the security system. The investigation of the incident continues, and a command investigation will also take place.”

US Muslim Mayor Leads Lawsuit to End FBI Watchlist

WASHINGTON (Agencies): When Mohamed Khairullah was abruptly turned away from a White House Eid Al-Fitr celebration four months ago, he demanded answers. Khairullah, the long-time Mayor of Prospect Park, New Jersey, had been invited to the event and was on his way to the US capital when he received a call telling him that he would no longer be allowed to enter the executive mansion. He was offered no explanation. Since then, Khairullah has been joined by prominent New Jersey politicians, including Senators Cory Booker and Bob Menendez and Representative Bill Pascrell, in demanding answers. The Biden administration’s response? Silence. Khairullah is now the lead plaintiff in a lawsuit seeking to end the secret FBI watchlist that he was placed on in 2019, which he believes has led to repeated encounters with law enforcement, including the White House disinvitation. “We



have sought answers from the federal government as to why I’m on the watchlist and about the treatment I’ve received, whether it’s at airports, border crossings, or the disinvitation to the White House, and it has fallen on deaf ears,” he told Anadolu in a phone interview. Khairullah is joined by 11 other Muslim-Americans who have never been charged with, much less convicted of, terrorism-related offenses. They have chosen to sue the Biden administration in a district court in Massachusetts in an effort to end the watchlist’s use.

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.

NHMP increases fine amount over different offences;launch awareness campaign

PESHAWAR (APP): The National Highways and Motorway Police (NHMP) has advised the motorists to strictly follow the traffic rules while driving on motorways and highways as the fine amount over different violations have been increased and being implemented with immediate effect. A letter issued by the office of Inspector General of Police NHMP said here Wednesday that as per the decision of a meeting chaired by the Federal Minister the implementation of the revised fine amount was approved under 12th schedule of NHSO-2000. It said that all the field formations of NHMP have been directed to launch briefing, campaigns and distribution of pamphlets and brochures regarding implementation of revised fine amount on priority basis for awareness and sensitization of drivers, commuters, passengers and general public. According to the

revised fine amount list, the minimum fine starts from Rs 500 and maximum amount is Rs 5000 depending upon the nature of offence. Similarly six new fines were added in the list over different violations. The new violations to be fined included use of unlawful police light, mimic Law enforcing agencies in the vehicle to be charged with Rs 5000, use of fancy number plates with Rs 1000, use of HID lights Rs 2000, use of evading of law by improvised tinting of glasses Rs 1000, driving without fastening seat belts either by driver or commuter Rs 1500, use of phone, tab while driving Rs 500 and driving vehicle without side mirrors Rs 500. The other penalties include exceeding speed limits Rs 2500, overtaking where prohibited Rs 1500, failure to yield the right of way to other vehicle Rs 1000, interfering with an emergency vehicle Rs 5000, driving at night without proper light

Rs 5000, driving on wrong side of the road Rs 2500, disobeying stop sign Rs 3000, following too closely or cutting in too sharply Rs 1000, driving with rear screen covered partially or fully Rs 750, jumping traffic queue Rs 1000, using turn indicator for any purpose other than those prescribed Rs 750, failure to observe lightening hours Rs 1000, obstructing traffic Rs 2000, failure to observe slow sign Rs 2000, prohibited land changing Rs 1000, careless driving Rs 1500, driving without license Rs 5000, driving unregistered vehicle Rs 2000, opening door dangerously Rs 1000, improper turn Rs 2500, improper land usage Rs 1000, driving vehicle emitting smoke, visible vapors, grill, sparks, ashes or oily substance Rs 1250, driving vehicle producing unduly harsh, shrill, loud or alarming noise Rs 1000, improper u-turn, Rs 1000, parking on a bridge Rs 750.

KP IGP inaugurates modern command, control centre

KOHAT, (APP): The Inspector General of Police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Akhtar Hayat Khan on Wednesday inaugurated the modern command and control center in the district to ensure peace and order. The command and control center building was equipped with led screens linked with the CCTV cameras installed throughout the city, wireless communication system and other facilities. The IGP went through the centre and witnessed monitoring of the internal and external check posts, various

markets and educational institutions in the city through the screen installed in the control center. He issued instructions to the authorities to keep an eye on the security of sensitive places and to remain on high alert to avert any untoward incident. On the occasion the IGP said that the main purpose of setting up the command and control center was to deal with street and other organized crimes in the city through timely response and using modern technology and equipment.

Mineral Department told to give preference to firms in leases

PESHAWAR (APP): Advisor to KP Caretaker CM on Mineral Development Dr. Syed Sarfaraz Ali Shah has said that instead of individuals, firms should be given opportunities to grant mineral leases. He was presiding over the introductory meeting at the Mineral Development Department here on Tuesday. Secretary Minerals Hameedullah Shah, Additional Secretaries Muhammad Ilyas, Musarat Zaman, and other senior officials of the department also attended the meeting. The advisor said that firms enjoy legal status and their experience should also be considered in the selection process. He further said that they have to provide the best opportunities and facilities to the investors in order to bring improvement in the economy and increase the income of the province by controlling the expenses. The advisor said that besides companies and firms, the department itself should also have to focus on the identification

of new sites to attract foreign and domestic investors and companies. He said that inviting pre-qualification of firms is the best procedure in this regard. He directed to digitize the whole system of the department and provide all facilities to investors at once place. Regarding the provision of facilities to miners, he said that efforts should be made in the ongoing projects to provide best education to the children of the mining workers and medical treatment facilities to their families in the settled districts and especially in the newly merged districts. Earlier, during the briefing, the Advisor was informed that the department has so far issued 2257 licenses while work on granting 1097 leases was in progress. The department has 12 schemes under the annual development programme (ADP) including nine ongoing and three new projects, while a total budget of Rs 66.672 million has been released for four months.

DC Kohat held meeting regarding Tehsil Lachi civic issues

KOHAT (APP): Under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Kohat Dr. Azmatullah Wazir, a meeting was held on Tuesday regarding the civic issues in Tehsil Lachi. According to DC office, District Education Officer, XEN, In-charge SNGPL, District Police, PESCO, MOL Company representatives, City Mayor Kohat, Tehsil Chairman Lachi and officers from other concerned departments attend-

ed. In the meeting, a detailed briefing was given by participants to DC Kohat on gas, electricity, water, road repair and other issues in Darmalak area of Tehsil Lachi. As there were more complaints regarding gas in Tehsil, the DC issued necessary orders to the in-charge SNGPL to solve the gas pressure problems in Darmalak so that the problem of gas pressure is solved as soon as possible.

PHC fines KP CM,CS,Law Sec,Advocate General

PESHAWAR (APP): A three-member bench of the Peshawar High Court (PHC) on Tuesday expressed resentment over the provincial government for not submitting a reply to the court order. During a hearing in a case against the removal and appointment of new law officers, the

bench comprising Justice Attiq Shah, Justice Waqar, and Justice Shakeel imposed a Rs 100,000 fine on each KP Chief Minister, Chief Secretary, Law Secretary, and Advocate General. The court adjourned the hearing while seeking a government reply on the next hearing.

KP Governor urges business community to work for strengthening country's economy

PESHAWAR (APP): Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Haji Ghulam Ali here on Tuesday urged the business and traders community to work in liaison and strengthen the economic condition of the country. He was talking to a 30-member delegation of the Hazara Division Chamber of Commerce and Industry that was led by its president and former MPA, Khursheed Azam Jadoon. Talking to the delegation, the KP governor said that efforts and dedication of the business community are needed to make Pakistan a leading economy in the region. He said that the business community and stakeholders should adopt a common strategy to make the country prosperous and economically strong adding they would be provided with needed facilities and help. The delegation apprised the Governor about their problems and said that steps are needed to facilitate tourists to recreation places of Poo-

na and Ambraila waterfalls in Hazara Division. They also demanded a reduction in land transfer fees and restoration of agricultural land transfer to benefit the common man. The Governor assured the delegation resolution of their problems and highlighted steps taken by the government for the facilitation and benefits of the business community. Haji Ghulam Ali also urged the business community to work in unison and counter conspiracies being hatched against state institutions. He said that those who are fomenting distrust and chaos are enemies of the state that must be stopped. Later, the Governor met with a delegation of Lakki Marwat elders led by Zafarullah Khan and discussed matters including promotion of education and health facilities. He also met with various delegations that were led by CM's aide, Malik Mehar Elahi, Sardar Aurangzeb Nalota and Siddiq-ur-Rehman Paracha.

Former MNA inaugurates development projects in Upper Chitral

CHITRAL (APP): Former Member of the National Assembly (MNA) Maulana Abdul Akbar Chitrali Tuesday inaugurated a series of development projects in various valleys of Upper Chitral. Maulana Chitrali kicked off the inauguration by dedicating a PCC road in the remote area of Oveer, backed by a Rs. 50 million fund allocation. He also initiated the construction of the Kosht Link Road, a project estimated at Rs. 300 million, during a simple event in Bumbagh, attended by a large gathering. The former MNA also launched a link road in Khoot of Torkho Mulkho Tehsil, committing Rs. 40 million for its development. Maulana Chitrali continued his spree of inaugurations, including the Rich Bridge in Tehsil Torkho, a project worth Rs. 10 million. He also inaugurated the Trich Road, valued at Rs. 40 million, an attrac-

tion located on the outskirts of the Trich Mir Mountain. Furthermore, he pledged to commence work on the Madak Nashko road, with an approved budget of Rs. 5 million, as well as another road project with the same allocation, emphasizing their prompt initiation. Speaking at public gatherings during these inaugurations, Maulana Abdul Akbar Chitrali emphasized the significance of safeguarding the development funds. He urged the locals to form committees at the grassroots level to monitor the daily progress of these development projects, ensuring contractors maintain both quality and quantity standards. The people of Upper Chitral, who have long awaited such initiatives, expressed their gratitude to Maulana Chitrali for his commitment to addressing the region's neglected development needs. APP/ghf

KP IC&TE Minister visits KP-EZDMC headquarters

PESHAWAR (APP): KP Caretaker Minister for Industries, Commerce and Technical Education (IC&TE), Dr Syed Aamir Abdullah visited the headquarters of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Economic Zones Development and Management Company (KP-EZDMC) on Tuesday. During the visit, he also chaired a meeting wherein he was briefed in detail by the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) KP-EZDMC, Javed Iqbal Khattak about the ongoing projects and fu-

ture plans of the company for industrial development of the province. The Minister appreciated the performance of the company and expressed hope that the Board of Directors and the management would continue their efforts with the same zeal and commitment for the growth of industrial activity in the province. Earlier, on arrival at the headquarters of the company, the employees of the company accorded a warm welcome to the minister.

Major anti-drug campaign launched in Kohat

KOHAT (APP):On the directive of Inspector General of Police Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Akhtar Hayat Khan, a special 7-day campaign against drugs, especially ice, was launched in the Kohat district on Tuesday. According to a statement issued here, under the leadership of Regional Police Officer Sher Akbar Khan and District Police Officer Kohat Farhan Khan, they were directed to conduct a crackdown on the drug dealers involved in the sale and smuggling of

drugs. 43 drug dealers have been arrested during the campaign, and cases have been registered after recovering 30.785 kg of hashish, 8.035 kg of ice, and 2.310 kg of heroin from the possession of the arrested drug dealers. On this occasion, DPO Kohat Farhan Khan told APP Correspondent that the successive operations against drugs will continue for the next 7 days, and all resources are being used against the elements involved in drug trafficking.

Hazara Police launch major operation against drug dealers

ABBOTTABAD (APP): Deputy Inspector General (DIG) Hazara Police Muhammad Ijaz Khan Tuesday initiated a sweeping crackdown against drug dealers operating throughout the eight districts of the Hazara region. Over the course of the past three weeks, police have taken swift action, registering 250 drug-related cases and apprehending 250 drug dealers. This operation has resulted in the seizure of substantial quantities of illicit substances, including 271 kilograms of Hashish, 38 kilo-

grams of heroin, 16 kilograms of ice, and a significant 1027 liters of alcohol. The DIG Hazara while addressing this critical issue, underscored the unwavering commitment to eradicating the drug trade from Hazara. He said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police are well-versed in handling threats to the nation. Furthermore, he stressed that there would be no tolerance for dealing with drug dealers in the region and stringent actions would be taken against them.

KP wins record 22 medals in McDonald Inter-School Swimming Championship

PESHAWAR (APP): Khyber Pakhtunkhwa team claimed a record 22 medals in the McDonald Inter-School Swimming Championship recently held in Gaddafi Stadium Swimming Pool, Lahore, international qualified FINA coach Mobeen Khan Khalil told media men here on Tuesday. The team claimed four gold medals as many silver and 14 bronze medals in the two-day Championship wherein teams from other provinces actively participated. Like every year; this year, Director General Sports Capt. (Retd) Khalid Mehmood extended both fi-

nal and moral support to the team, Mobeen Khan said. He said the coach Saleem Akhtar made a great effort with the team during practice sessions at the Adil Khan Swimming Pool, Qayyum Sports Complex and the players have given outstanding performances by winning a record 22 medals including four gold medals, four silver medals and 14 bronze medals. He disclosed that Mian Saman in the U10 took silver medal, Azlan Jarjis bronze medal in the same category, Azmat Mehmood won bronze medal in the U12, Zulqifal took three medals, one

silver and two bronze medals in the U12 category, Fizaz Akhtar got three gold medal in the U10 category, Nasir took two gold medals and three bronze medals in the U12 category, Shaheer Afzal took one silver and two bronze medals in the U14 category, Hamad Akhtar took one silver medal and two bronze medals in the U14 category, Abdur Rehman took two bronze medals and Shasawar got one bronze medal in the U16 category. Thus Khyber Pakhtunkhwa team claimed 22 medals which is a record. Talking to media men, Director General

Sports Khyber Pakhtunkhwa appreciated the team for their matchless result in the Inter-School Swimming Championship sponsored by McDonald. He assured the upcoming swimmers that soon the Adil Khan Swimming Pool would be made an all-weather Swimming Pool. He also appreciated coach Saleem Akhtar for his hard-working efforts with the boys who gave a superb performance. The boys did hard work and thus got the best result. He said that the medal winners would be given cash incentives as well besides excel-

lent coaching and training so that in future they would be able to represent Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in the National Junior and National Senior Swimming Championships. It is worth mentioning here that due to the non-availability of the all-weather swimming pool, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa team failed to take part in the 34th National Games and due to swimming medals by the Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa lot the overall trophy in the Games and Sindh got the trophy with just a gold medal difference because of their swimming medals.



Shehroze Kashif achieves another milestone by scaling Mt. Manaslu

ISLAMABAD, (APP):The unflinching determination of Pakistani climber Shehroze Kashif enabled him to achieve another feat when he successfully summited Nepal's 8,163 metres Mount Manaslu. "Congratulation to Shehroze on his amazing feat of climbing the eighth-highest mountain in the world, Manaslu. He is now the youngest climber to reach the summit of 12 summits over 8000 metres. It is really amazing," Secretary Alpine Club of Pakistan, Karrar Haidri said in a statement. "His commitment and the encouragement he's received from everyone are admirable. I hope he has a safe descent and more luck on his upcoming adventures," he added. Two years back, in September 2021 he had ascended Manaslu, but after two days it was revealed that he had missed the actual summit point. "Congratulations to Shehroze Kashif on his triumphant summit of Mount Manaslu. Shehroze reached the summit of Mount Manas-

lu on 20th September at 5:01AM PST. "BARD Foundation is beaming with pride for this remarkable achievement. Summiting Mount Manaslu is a significant step towards his dream of becoming the youngest mountaineer to summit all 14 tallest peaks," the BARD Foundation, which sponsors Shehroze's expeditions said in a statement. Born on March 11, 2002, Shehroze made history by becoming the youngest climber in the world to summit K2 on July 27, 2021. He also became the youngest Pakistani to summit Mount Everest on May 11, 2021. After the successful summit of Mount Everest, Sports Board Punjab made him the youth ambassador of Punjab. He summited Broad Peak at the age of 17, after which he was called 'The Broad Boy'. He started climbing mountains at the age of 11 with Makra Peak being the first one, followed by Musa ka Musalla and Chembra Peak at 12, Mingli Sar in Shimshal at 13, Khurdopin Pass

at 15, and Khosar Gang in alpine style at 18 years of age. Shehroze currently holds two Guinness World Records for being the youngest to climb K2 and the youngest to climb Broad Peak. On May 5, 2022, he became the youngest in the world and the first Pakistani to reach the summit of Kangchenjunga - the third-highest peak in the world. On May 16, 2022, he summited the world's fourth-highest peak, Mount Lhotse (8,516m), in Nepal. On November 1, 2022, Shehroze was recognized by Guinness World Records for the year 2023 for summiting Mount Everest and K2. In May, 2023 he summited Nepal's Mount Dhaulagiri (8,167m), the seventh highest peak of the world. In July 2022, Shehroze and Fazal Ali went missing between Camp 4 and Camp 3, after successfully summiting Nanga Parbat. However, the duo was discovered shortly after. Shehroze intends to summit all above 8,000m peaks before the year end.

Show-cause notices issued to police officials over poor performance

ISLAMABAD (APP):Chief Traffic Officer has issued show-cause notices to police officials over poor performance and inadequate arrangements at parking places, negligence, and carelessness in official duties. According to police spokesperson, Chief Traffic Officer Syed Mustafa Tanveer has directed to take legal action against illegal parking, double parking, and encroachment on pedestrian walkways outside commercial centers and shopping plazas including the Margalla Road, Super Market F-6, Jinnah Super Market F-7, F-8 Markaz, F-10, G-8 Markaz and other commercial areas. Furthermore, he has instructed to further improve the

smooth flow of traffic, control accidents and provide the maximum possible travel facilities to citizens and take strict legal action against drivers who violate traffic laws. He emphasized that law enforcement should be swift against violators of traffic laws, including those riding motorcycles without helmets, driving recklessly, not wearing seat belts, using mobile phones, disregarding traffic signals, and other traffic violations. He stated that Islamabad Capital Police is taking all necessary measures to provide every possible facility to citizens and is using modern technical resources to prevent traffic law violations in the city.

ADB sees implementation of reforms key to economic stability

ISLAMABAD (APP):Pakistan's adherence to an economic adjustment program through April 2024 will be critical to restoring macroeconomic stability and the gradual recovery of the country's growth, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) said in a report on Wednesday. According to the Asian Development Outlook (ADO) September 2023, Pakistan's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth is projected to recover modestly to 1.9% in fiscal year 2024 (1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024) from 0.3% in FY2023, with price pressures remaining elevated. However, significant downside risks to the outlook remained unchanged, including global price shocks and slower global growth. "Pakistan's economic prospects are closely tied to the steadfast and consistent implementation of policy reforms to stabilize the economy and rebuild fiscal and external buffers," said ADB Country Director for Pakistan Yong Ye. "Greater fiscal discipline, a market-determined exchange rate, and speedier progress on reforms in the energy sector and state-owned enterprises are key

to reviving economic growth and protecting social and development spending," Yong Ye added. Pakistan's economy was jolted by severe floods, global price shocks, and political instability in FY2023, causing growth to weaken and inflation to rise. According to the ADO, the implementation of the economic adjustment program and a smooth general election in FY2024 are expected to boost confidence, while easing import controls is likely to support investment. Favorable weather conditions and the government's relief package of free seeds, subsidized credit, and fertilizers are expected to support a recovery in agriculture. This, in turn, will help the industry, which will also benefit from the increased availability of critical imports. Inflation is expected to ease to 25% in FY2024 from 29.2% in FY2023, as base-year effects set in, food supply normalizes, and inflation expectations moderate. However, sharp increases in energy tariffs under the economic adjustment program, and the continued weakening of the rupee will keep inflationary pressures elevated.

TIKA conducts weeklong "Search and Rescue Training" in Pakistan

KARACHI (APP):Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA) has conducted a week-long "Search and Rescue Basic Training" within the scope of the Emergency and Disaster Response Training Program (ADAMEP) in cooperation with the International Humanitarian Aid Association (IHH) and Sindh Boys Scouts Association. The training program was held at Sindh Scouts Gulshan Training Center and attended by Consul General of the Republic of Turkey in Karachi Cemal Sangu, TIKA Karachi Coordinator Halil Ibrahim Basaran, Sindh Scouts Chairman Hasan Feroz and others. Speaking at the program, CG Cemal Sangu said that the disasters experienced in Pakistan, Türkiye and recently in Libya and Morocco further increased the importance of search and rescue activities; therefore, he stated that this training program was very important for both Türkiye and Pakistan and thanked all the institutions that contributed to the organization of the activity. TIKA Karachi Coordinator Halil Ibrahim Basaran said TIKA gives great importance to search and rescue training. He said they carried out these trainings in coun-

tries such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, Lebanon and Bangladesh, in this context, he expressed that they are very pleased to be carrying out the first of several stages of the training program in Pakistan. Basaran thanked the IHH Search and Rescue team, who came to Pakistan for the training, and the Sindh Scouts, who contributed to the organization of the training, for their contributions, and stated that their cooperation with the Scouts Union, which has volunteers all over Pakistan, will continue. Sindh Scouts Chief Patron Hasan Feroz said search and rescue activities, which started with the disaster in Kashmir in 2005 were the starting point. He stated that the scouts are the first to respond to disasters and similar situations due to their scouts in all regions of Pakistan, and expressed his gratitude to Türkiye for the training and equipment support to increase the search and rescue capacity of the Sindh Scouts association. The training, attended by more than 50 people from Sindh Scouts and Alkhidmat search and rescue volunteers, will continue throughout the week and end with the certificate program on 23 September.

ANF seizes 67 kg drugs in four operations

RAWALPINDI (APP):Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) while conducting four operations across the country managed to recover over 67 kg drugs and arrested seven accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Wednesday. He informed that two suspects were arrested from a passenger van intercepted near Phagwari Bazaar in Murree. Eight kg hashish was recovered from the possession of the accused. 52.8 kg hashish and 6 kg opium were recovered from a truck intercepted near Wali Interchange Nowshera. The accused resident of Peshawar was trying to smuggle drugs to Punjab. On the pointation of the arrested accused, his accomplice, a car driver resident of Kohat, was also arrested. In third operation, 200 ecstasy tablets were recovered from two suspects riding a motorcycle near Haji Camp Adda Peshawar. The accused confessed to supply drugs to students of educational institutions. In fourth operation at Multan International Airport, 750 grams ice tactfully concealed in a bag was recovered from the possession of a Bahrain-bound passenger, resident of Dera Ghazi Khan, who was going on flight number GF-789. Separate cases have been registered against the arrested accused while further investigations are under process.

Man shot dead in court premises

DG KHAN (APP):A man was allegedly shot dead while another received serious injuries as an alleged outlaw opened fire in the limits of district courts, here on Wednesday. According to police sources, the victims Jalal and Rasheed had enmity with another citizen Younis, who allegedly opened fire. There has been a dispute between both sides and the case of their dispute was registered with Kala Police Station. On Wednesday, Younis opened fire at Jalal and Rasheed when they came to appear before the court. Jalal died on the spot while critically injured Rasheed was shifted to hospital by Rescue 1122. Police arrested the alleged outlaw and started an investigation into the mishap.

3 die as a passengers van plunges into ravine in Battagram

ISLAMABAD (APP):At least three passengers including a woman lost their lives while four others got injured when a passenger van plunged into a deep ravine in Battagram on early Wednesday morning. According to local police, a passenger van was on its way to Battagram when suddenly the driver lost control of the vehicle which consequently fell into a deep ditch, a private news channel reported. Rescue teams and local people rushed to the site after the incident and took part in the rescue activities. After hectic efforts, the bodies were retrieved from the ravine and were shifted to the District Headquarters Hospital Battagram.

REAP expect record rice export of \$ 3 billion in Year 2023

ISLAMABAD, (APP):Rice Exporters Association of Pakistan (REAP) on Wednesday expected that this year, the export of rice will be above the record \$ 3 billion, which is very encouraging. Last year 2021-22 the rice crop was destroyed due to the floods, because of which the export of rice has decreased, Chairman REAP, Chela Ram Kewlani told APP Last year, he said the production of rice crops improved and there were also new opportunities in the emerging markets of different regions. He said that facilities are given to rice exporters by the government, but due to the high tariffs in different countries, the export of rice has become a problem, so agreements with these countries are needed. Kewlani said that during the finalization of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with different countries, the rice sector should also be included so that the tariff lines will come down for rice exporters. He said that this would have a positive impact on rice export and new opportunities will be created for the exports in the sector. Chairman REAP said that by increasing the export of rice, the exchange rate will be stable, but overall the country's economy will be strengthened. Meanwhile, talking to

the APP, former Chairman Rice Export Association of Pakistan and Rice Exporter Ali Hasan has said that rice exporters in Pakistan are looking for global markets, but there are also some challenges facing them such as high tariffs and other duties in the rice exporter markets. He said that rice should be included as a product for the export of rice in all free trade agreements so that the original potential of rice export can be achieved. Ali also expressed the hope that this year there will be an increase in rice production and stocks and a record increase in its exports. Replying to a question, he said that after the approval of the Global Indication (GI) law in the country, Pakistan will have significant opportunities to increase its economic and trade activities in the international market. The rice exporter said that now after this legislation; a level playing field will be available for the export of various Agro-trade goods including rice in the international market. He said that Geographical Indication would serve as a potential economic tool to promote and increase national and international trade by attracting global demand and premium prices for Pakistani products in the international market.

Excise staff to facilitate vehicle registration, transfer, and token tax at Rose, Jasmine Garden today

ISLAMABAD (APP):In a bid to bring convenience to the public, the Islamabad Excise and Taxation Department will be present in the parking lot of Rose and Jasmine Garden today from 3 to 5 p.m. to facilitate vehicle registration, transfer, and token tax. The move comes on the instructions of Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Irfan Nawaz Memon, who is keen to make the process of vehicle registration and transfer as smooth and hassle-free as possible for citizens. In addition to the excise staff, the Facilitation Center Doorstep ICT vehicle today.

Diabetes medicines supply to be ensured: Minister

ISLAMABAD (APP):Caretaker Minister for Health Dr. Nadeem Jan here on Wednesday directed to ensure progress in the supply of diabetes and epilepsy drugs to the masses. According to the spokesperson of the Ministry of Health, following the instructions of the Minister for Health, the process of registration of insulin and heparin medicine has started on an emergency basis. He said that "Dr. Nadeem Jan is ensuring fast-track processing of the Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan's (DRAP) registration cases on a priority basis". The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of DRAP has been instructed to ensure registration on

the fast track and report to the minister on a weekly basis. Registration of drugs would help supply drugs in the market, especially for diabetes and epilepsy patients, Dr. Nadeem said. He said that "the most effective measures are being taken to increase the capacity of the pharma industry". He said that "the work is being done under a comprehensive strategy to promote the pharma industry in Pakistan". "We are working in consultation with the pharma industry." The DRAP registration board reviewed more than ten applications on a priority basis. The registration board approved several applications.

Kashmiri Rights Outfit Chief thanks President Erdogan for raising Kashmir issue at UNGA

MIRPUR (AJK): (APP):Chairman of veteran Kashmiri rights defender Kashmir Institute of International Relations (KIIR) Altaf Hussain Wani has expressed his gratitude to Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan for his continued support to Kashmiris' legitimate cause and raising the issue vociferously during his speech to the UN general Assembly. Terming it as a welcome development, the KIIR chief said in a statement issued on Wednesday, "We deeply appreciate the role of our brotherly country that besides lending all out support to our struggle have significantly contributed in raising global awareness about the peaceful settlement of the long running Kashmir conflict". Lauding president Erdogan's wisdom and broader understanding of the challenges being faced by the world today, Wani said that it was high time

that the world leaders should reciprocate president Erdogan's call for ending conflicts to ensure durable peace in the world. Referring to the unresolved Kashmir dispute and precarious situation in the Indian held territory of Jammu and Kashmir, the KIIR chief said that it was high time that the UN should play its role to resolve the dispute peacefully and consider establishment of Commission of Inquiry as recommended by the OHCHR report to hold an independent investigation into human rights violations in the restive region. Urging the global community to play its due role in holding India accountable for its crimes committed by its troops in the IoK, Wani said, "Appeasement or inaction on the part of the world community would only embolden the abuser".

Trawler held for illegal fishing in Pasni

QUETTA (APP):The Fisheries Department's patrol team, along with the Levies Force, are conducting war-based operations against illegal trawlers and arrested a fishing crew along with fish involved in illegal trawling in the Pasni area of Balochistan on Tuesday. Director General of Fisheries Mir Saifullah Khetran confirmed the arrest of the illegal trawler while talking to media persons. The official further said that the patrolling team of the Department of Fisheries has been working hard for

the past several months in order to prevent illegal trawlers in the areas, saying that no one would be allowed to poach them. He said that such steps are being taken to improve exports, adding that the Fisheries Department is always ready against illegal trawlers. He said that fishermen should be supported to stop illegal fishing, while an increase in fish production would be possible only by establishing the best discipline in the sea. Further investigation was underway.

Pakistan committed to stable, peaceful Afghanistan: FM

ISLAMABAD (APP):Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani has expressed Pakistan's commitment to stable, peaceful, prosperous and connected Afghanistan. The foreign minister stated this in a meeting with U.S.

Special Representative on Afghanistan Thomas West on the sidelines of United Nations General Assembly in New York. They agreed continued cooperation for lasting peace in Afghanistan.

Arrangements to be finalized to launch health card programme soon: CM

QUETTA (APP):Balochistan Caretaker Chief Minister Mir Ali Mardan Khan Domki on Tuesday said that all arrangements should be finalized to launch the health card programme soon. He directed all the stakeholders to ensure transparency and expedite the process to finalize the panel hospitals across the country. The chief minister while presiding a meeting regarding the issuance of health cards in the province, directed the State Life Insurance Corporation and NADRA to finalize their respective affairs. He said out-of-pocket health spending led to increased poverty as expensive treatments are beyond the reach of poor people, so it is important to immediately provide free-of-cost treatment facilities to the masses. In the

meeting, Chief Secretary Balochistan instructed the authorities concerned to complete all the arrangements in the next three days and inform them about the final date of health card issuance. The provincial government will provide health insurance facilities amounting to Rs 1 million to around two million families, he added. According to programme, the Computerized National Identity Card (CNIC) will be considered the health card for the permanent residents of the province. The objective of the programme is to improve the health status of the targeted population through increasing access to quality health services and to reduce poverty through the reduction of out-of-pocket payments for health expenses.

IHC seeks report regarding case against Javed Latif in Peshawar

ISLAMABAD (APP):The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Tuesday sought A report regarding cases registered against Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz leader Javed Latif and others in Peshawar. Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri heard the case regarding the matter. A report was submitted by the Lahore Police regarding termination of a similar case against the PML-N leaders. It stated that the procedure to quash the first information report

was underway. The complainant had stated that he did not want to further pursue the case. After this, the court sought a report regarding the case registered in Peshawar against Javed Latif and others. The case was then adjourned till second week of November. It may be mentioned that the previous government in Punjab had registered the said cases with regard to telecasting of press conference of Javed Latif on PTV.

HRCP calls for empowerment of marginalised groups in political, electoral arenas

ISLAMABAD (APP):A national conference organized by the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) in partnership with the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom on Tuesday-Pakistan (FNF) called for extensive reforms to improve the political and electoral participation of marginalized groups, including women, persons with disabilities, transgender persons, and religious minorities. In his welcome address, HRCP secretary-general Harris Khalique emphasized that all marginalized groups must be brought into the political mainstream to move towards empowerment. He also underscored the necessity of a level playing field for voters as well as candidates. Birgit Lamm, head of FNF's Pakistan office, introduced the conference by highlighting the importance of free and fair elections to underpin the legitimacy of governments. In the first session, transgender rights activist Dr. Mehrub Moiz Awan said that electoral participation for marginalized groups must be grounded in genuine solidarity rather than in the politics of sympathy. Former speaker of the Balochistan Assembly, Rahila Durrani, recommended special political academies to empower women to contest general elections and encourage political engagement. In the second session, former HRCP chairperson Afrasiab Khattak shed light on the duality in Pakistan's constitutional and legal frameworks regarding marginalized groups, whereby the principle of equality is contradicted by laws that undermine it. Researcher Dr. Naazir Mahmood expanded on the role of educational curricula in peddling skewed perspectives of

Pakistan's political history, thus steadily depoliticizing the electorate. Discriminatory laws must also be revoked, and constitutional guarantees must be instituted for marginalized groups to be adequately represented in parliament. The panelists agreed that linking the right to vote with the possession of national identification cards effectively disenfranchises marginalized groups by shifting the burden of responsibility from the state to citizens. Peshawar High Court lawyer Sangeen Khan recommended progressively increasing the minimum 10 percent stipulation of women's votes in a constituency's total polled votes, compelling political parties to increase women's representation in their own ranks to secure more votes. Checks and balances must also be imposed to ensure the 5 percent quota for female legislators is not misused. In the final session, the panelists discussed the impact of elite capture on marginalized citizens. Academic Dr. Asim Bashir Khan pointed to the indirect gerrymandering of constituencies through overinflated population figures, effectively discounting constituents' interests. Ewajee Alliance chair Sana Durrani and former finance minister Aisha Ghous Pasha also recommended extensive political reforms and a new social contract that safeguards citizens' rights. In his concluding address, HRCP Council member Farhatullah Babar criticized the depoliticization of the electorate, stating that the demonization of politics had effectively diminished the political will to engender change. Reforms must be brought about by politically engaged young activists, he said.

Pakistan's electoral roll swells to 127 Million,ECP releases latest figures

ISLAMABAD (APP):The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) unveiled voter data spanning from 2018 to 2023 on Tuesday, indicating a notable rise in the total count of registered voters across the nation, growing from approximately 105.95 million (105,955,409) in 2018 to nearly 127 million (126,980,272) as of July this year. The count of male voters has exceeded 68.50 million (68,508,258), while female voters will reach 58.47 million (58,472,014) in 2023. When considering the voter statistics in the country's major urban areas, Islamabad has seen a rise from 765,447 in 2018 to over 1.04 million (1,041,554) this year, as per the data provided by the electoral commission. This year, the total count of voters in Punjab has reached 72.3 million (72,310,582), a notable increase from 60.6 million (60,672,771) in 2018.

In Sindh, the number has risen from 22.3 million (22,391,244) in 2018 to 26.6 million (26,651,161) in 2023. Back in 2018, the count of voters in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the former Federally Administered Tribal Area (FATA) stood at 10.53 million (15,314,659) and 2.5 million (2,512,284), respectively. These numbers have now surged to 20.169 million (21,692,381) in 2023. In Balochistan, the voter count has grown to 5.28 million (5,284,594) in 2023, compared to 4.29 million (4,299,494) voters in 2018. In the country, there are 57 million voters aged 18 to 35, 27.79 million voters aged 36 to 45, and 18.12 million voters aged 46 to 55. There are 11.8 million voters between the ages of 56 and 65, and there are 12 million voters aged above 66 in the country.

Anti-Tobacco Act to be implemented in Hyderabad on priority basis:

HYDERABAD (APP):Divisional Commissioner Khalid Hyder Shah has said that the Tobacco Act would be strictly implemented in Hyderabad on a priority basis so that the young generation could be protected from this menace. He expressed these views while talking to the media after declaring Shahbaz Building Hyderabad as a non-smoking zone. Later, Additional Deputy Commissioner Qaim Akber Numai presided over a meeting under the Tobacco Free City project

of the National Health Ministry Islamabad. On this occasion, Manager Muhammad Aftab Ahmed apprising the meeting about the adverse effects of smoking said that in Pakistan every year over 1,60,000 people die due to smoking, and around 1200 children aged between 5 to 15 were also addicted to tobacco which was alarming. He urged the Government of Pakistan to take concerted steps for the elimination of the menace of smoking but should help smokers quit smoking as well.

Additional Deputy Commissioner Hyderabad Qaim Akber Numai while appreciating the step of the National Health Ministry assured that the District Administration would play a pivotal role in making Hyderabad non-smoking city by eliminating tobacco practices. The meeting was attended among others by Assistant Commissioners, Union representative Faheem Akhter, Project Coordinator Zeshan Danish and Heads of all district departments and representatives.

Oil tanker carrying 50,000 liters of fuel overturns near Shorkot

ISLAMABAD (APP):An oil tanker carrying 50,000 spirit fuel commuting on Shorkot Cantonment Junction Railway Station overturned on early Wednesday morning. According to details, rescue officials said the vehicle carrying 50,000 liters of oil overturned owing to high speed and brakes' failure, a private news channel reported. Following the incident, the district and motorway police cordoned off the affected area and called for machinery, fire brigade, and rescue teams to undertake the rescue operation as reportedly the fuel spread in the area after the accident.

Commissioner visits city areas to review RWMC cleanliness drive

RAWALPINDI (APP):Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Liaquat Ali Chatha on Tuesday visited different areas of the city to review the cleanliness campaign carried out by Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC). He visited Liaquat Bagh, College Road, Jamaia Masjid Road, Raja Bazar, Kohati Bazar, Bani, Waris Khan, Committee Chowk and Iqbal Road. On the occasion, Liaquat said that local people would be included in the committees consisting of Union Council secretaries, social workers, and RWMC employees. This initiative will help in improving the overall performance of RWMC while the cooperation of the citizens will help in ensuring the cleanliness of the city. He said that cleanliness was necessary to eliminate smog and dengue. Chhatta directed the relevant officials to ensure the drainage of stagnant rainwater as accumulated water was a leading cause of dengue larvae breeding. He said that an effective sanitation plan must be implemented to eliminate dengue and smog. Chairman RWMC Saqib Rafique, CEO Sajid Safdar, Senior Manager Operations Dr Hamid Iqbal, and other staff were also present.

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14 arrested in operation in interior Sindh

KARACHI (APP):The Pakistan Rangers Sindh and Police in a joint intelligence-based operation in the village Ogahi, Kandhkot, arrested 14 alleged robbers including one in injured condition. According to a spokesman for Rangers on Tuesday, an exchange of firing between law enforcement agencies and arrested accused took place during the operation. As a result, one of the accused was injured. The arrested robbers belong to the Manzoor alias Gala Ogahi gang. Snatched goods, arms, and ammunition were recovered from their possession. Further investigation was underway.

Shah commends Austrian Climber for raising US\$ 170,000 in funds for Pakistani porter children

ISLAMABAD (APP):Minister of State on Tourism Wasi Shah on Tuesday commended the efforts of Austrian Climber Wilhelm Steindl for raising US\$ 170,000 in funds for the children of Pakistani porter Muhammad Hassan who lost his life during the K2 expedition. Wasi Shah, along with Ambassador of Azerbaijan, Khazar Farhadov, Ambassador's Spouse Tarana Farhadova and Dr. Hannes MACHOR, Minister Plenipotentiary/DHMO officiating as the Chargé d'Affaires and Managing Director PTDC Aftab ur Rehman Rana in a ceremony held to recognize the efforts of Steindl for the family of the late porter Muhammad Hassan, said a press release. Hassan tragically lost his life during an expedition on K2. After his death, one of the mountaineers Wilhelm Steindl ended his summit midway and returned to his home country where he started a campaign with the name "Give me Fund for them" to financially help Hassan's family and collected US\$170,000 to support them. Shah expressed his admiration for Steindl's selfless commitment and said, "What truly amazed and inspired me was Steindl's selfless dedication to Hassan and his family, despite not being Pakistani. He took concrete steps to establish a Give Me Fund for them. At a time when many are consumed by self-interest, individuals like Steindl have reaffirmed my

faith in humanity." However, despite these efforts, my heart remains heavy as my organization couldn't do everything that should have been done for Muhammad Hassan and his family, he said. He said there was no formal arrangement for porters however after he assumed charge of the Ministry of Tourism, PTDC made significant progress in establishing a mountain training center in collaboration with Gilgit-Baltistan University, with Mr. Steindl's full support. Shah said, previously, there was no provision for insurance of porters in case of accidents, leaving families like Muhammad Hassan's without any financial support however after extensive meetings with stakeholders in Islamabad and Skardu, the government agreed on a minimum insurance coverage of Rs 3 million for porters, but he is still working towards increasing it to Rs 5 million. He appreciated Steindl, on behalf of every Pakistani, and said "Your actions exemplify the best of what humans can achieve when they come together for a common cause". In response, Steindl shared his commitment to continue supporting the family of the late porter Muhammad Hassan and announced his plans to establish a school for porters in the near future. He expressed his gratitude to the minister for the warm welcome extended to him in Pakistan.

FESCO issues shutdown program

FAISALABAD (APP):Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO) has issued shutdown program for Wednesday due to necessary repair, maintenance and expansion of electricity lines. According to the program issued by the company, power supply from Dawar, Sakhi Abdul Wahhab, Shah Burhan, Iqbal Rice Mills, Jani Shah, Jhok Millian, Jhang Road, WASA Tube Well, Faisalabad Road, Badshahi Masjid, Beeranwala and Lahore Road feeders linked with 132-KV Chinioi grid station, Millat Road, Sargodha Road, Ghausia Abad, Dawood, Sandal, University Town, Noor Pur, FDA City, Crescent Board, Dry Port, Abu Bakar Block and Muslim Town feeders attached with 132-KV Chinioi Road grid station will remain suspended from 7 a.m. to 1 p.m. while Gojra Road (Naradada) feeder connected with 132-KV Sammundry grid station will observe shutdown from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Wednesday (September 20). Similarly, electricity supply from Gulshan Colony and Jalal Street feeders originating from 132-KV Allied grid station, new Jinnah Colony and Gubind Pura feeders linked with 132-KV University grid station will remain suspended from 7 a.m. to 10 a.m. whereas Allied, Sahil, Model Town, Serena, State Life, Akbar Abad, Eidgah Road and Cres Tex feeders attached with 132-KV University grid station will observe load shedding from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. on December 20. Meanwhile, power supply from Wapda City feeder connected with 132-KV Khurarianwala grid station will also remain suspended from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Wednesday (December 20, 2023).

Commissioner urges Swift Feasibility Report for Agriculture Projects in Mirpurkhas

MIRPURKHAS (APP):Commissioner Mirpurkhas Faisal Ahmed Uqaili on Tuesday emphasized the urgency of preparing a feasibility report for agricultural projects in Mirpurkhas Division. According to the DC office, during a meeting held at the commissioner committee hall, officials from the Sindh government and the Mirpurkhas district administration convened to explore diverse agricultural initiatives. These projects aim to harness the region's agricultural potential, providing a significant boost to local farmers while simultaneously generating employment opportunities and facilitating the expansion of agricultural product exports. Several projects were discussed, including setting up a mango pulping unit to preserve mango varieties, cultivating cotton with saline water, processing camel milk for employment, promoting cluster bean and date palm production, activating

the canola market, and operationalizing the chili plant in Kunri. Deputy Commissioner Mirpurkhas Dr. Rashed Masood, Deputy Commissioner Tharparkar Abdul Halim Jagirani, Additional Commissioner Umerkot Sohail Ahmed Soomro, Director General Pakistan Research Council Zakir Hussain Dahri, Deputy Directors from Livestock and Forest Departments, and Deputy Director of Agriculture Research Wali Muhammad Baloch, among other concerned officers, attended the meeting. Commissioner Faisal Ahmed Uqaili directed the Deputy Commissioners, Agriculture Department, and Forest Department officers from all districts to submit details of agricultural and forest lands within two days. This information will facilitate the swift preparation of a comprehensive report, paving the way for the prompt commencement of agricultural projects across the division.

Matters regarding restructuring of PIA discussed

ISLAMABAD (APP):Caretaker Minister for Privatisation Fawad Hasan Fawad on Tuesday chaired a meeting with different stakeholders regarding restructuring of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) leading to a privatisation process. Advisor to PM on Aviation along with key members of his team, senior management and legal and financial consultants of PIA were also present, said a press release. Clear timelines regarding the process were agreed with a view to meet the target set by the Prime Minister and the Cabinet, it added.

KU announces MBBS results

KARACHI (APP):Controller of Examination of the University of Karachi Dr Syed Shahid Zaheer Zaidi on Tuesday announced the results of MBBS Final Professional (Modular) Supplementary Examination 2022 and MBBS Final Professional Supplementary Examination 2022. As per the gazette issued, 16 candidates were registered and appeared in the MBBS Final Profession-

al Supplementary Examination 2022 of which 10 students were declared passed. The overall pass percentage was 62.50 percent. Meanwhile, the gazette shows that 10 students were registered and appeared in the MBBS Final Professional (Modular) Supplementary Examination 2022 and all of them cleared their papers. The overall pass percentage was 100 percent.

LDA’s Metropolitan Planning Wing stops issuing NOCs to new housing societies

LAHORE (APP): Metropolitan Planning Wing of Lahore Development Authority (LDA) has stopped issuing NOCs to new housing societies in its jurisdiction. The decision was taken after the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) raised the issue of massive land use in different districts of Punjab and wrote a letter in this regard. Nadeem Akhtar Zaidi, Chief Metropolitan Planner (CMP) told the scribe that at present the wing was not issuing any new NOC. He said this was being done on the instructions of Housing department, which forwarded a letter of ECP. The ECP issued a letter in mid August 2023 imposing a ban on the issuance of No-Objection Certificates (NOCs) for new housing societies and made

its approval mandatory in cases of urgency. The ECP’s letter stated that the caretaker government has a mandate only to manage routine operational emergencies and should not make significant policy decisions. The ECP’s letter stated that the ECP has noticed that the cases of changes in land usage was initiated by the provincial government across various districts and the issuance of NOCs by deputy commissioners to multiple housing societies has begun to compromise vital green spaces and productive agricultural land. This trend could potentially lead to disorderly and unplanned residential expansion, accompanied by possible corruption concerns in specific regions, the ECP’s letter said, adding

the responsibility of devising an appropriate policy to tackle this challenge falls squarely on the shoulders of the elected government. Consequently, an immediate cessation of new NOC issuance is urged, with a directive to communicate this decision to all deputy commissioners, the letter said and maintained that in instances where the caretaker government identifies pressing matters in this context or any other, they were expected to present a well-justified case for review and approval by the commission before any action was taken. “Upholding the commission’s legal mandate and guidelines is a fundamental expectation from the caretaker government as they fulfill their duties,” the letter concluded.

CM explores bilateral collaboration with Ningxia officials during China visit

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Caretaker Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi paid a visit to the Communist Party Secretary Office in Yinchuan, the capital of China’s Ningxia province. Nangxia Communist Party Secretary Liang Yanshun extended a warm welcome to CM Mohsin Naqvi and the accompanying delegation, said a handout issued here. During their official meeting, the CM and Nangxia Communist Party Secretary Liang Yanshun discussed the development of Ningxia and the implementation of a streamlined one-window operation. They mutually agreed to leverage China’s expertise in meat production, dairy development, Information Technology, and drip irrigation systems. Furthermore, It was decided in principle to declare Sahiwal and Bahawalpur as sister cities of Wuzheng and Zhang Wei in Nangxia. Mohsin Naqvi extended a written invitation to Secretary Nangxia Communist Party, Liang Yanshun, to visit Punjab, which was graciously accepted. Additionally, both parties concurred on the revival of the 17-year-old sister province agreement between Nangxia and Punjab. The CM emphasized the unbreakable

bond of friendship between Pakistan and China and expressed admiration for the industrial and agricultural development model in Ningxia. In response, Nangxia Communist Party Secretary Liang Yanshun commended Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi’s efforts, assuring unwavering cooperation for the progress and prosperity of Punjab and its people. Subsequently, Nangxia Communist Party Secretary Liang Yanshun bid farewell to Chief Minister Mohsin Naqvi and the delegation. Also present on the occasion were Li Dongsheng, Secretary General of the Standing Committee of Nangxia Communist Party, Wang ZhuJun, Mayor of Wuzhen, Mahong Hai, Mayor of Zongyi, Yang Jinhui, Head of Nangxia Industry and Information Technology, Ping Zhuhei, Director General of the Environment and Ecology Department, Wang Jian, Director General of Agriculture and Agricultural Affairs, Fan Hua Fung, Head of the Foreign Affairs Office. The delegation included Provincial ministers SM Tanveer, Amir Mir, Ibrahim Hassan Murad, Azfar Nasir, Chief Secretary Zahid Zaman Akhtar, and Secretary of Finance Mujahid Sherdil.

Day-long workshop “Integrated Energy Planning for Sustainable Development” on Wednesday

ISLAMABA (APP): The Energy Wing of the Ministry of Planning, Development and Special Initiatives is all set to hold a day-long workshop on Wednesday, igniting the path to sustainable development. The workshop titled “Integrated Energy Planning for Sustainable Development” would bring together the key stakeholders in the energy sector for an in-person LEAP training programme. The Energy Planning and Resource Centre, operating under Integrated Energy Planning (IEP), is pioneering Pakistan’s first Low Emission Analysis Platform (LEAP) energy model through a collaborative, inclusive approach. The LEAP Working Group gathered policy questions from relevant energy sector stakeholders, setting the stage for comprehensive planning. The workshop participants would

be discussing “Estimation of Integrated Energy Demand; Power Sector Energy Mix to Meet Future Demand and Fuel Sector Planning to Address Future Demand.” The Energy Planning and Resource Centre (EPRC) Modelling Team would unveil insights gained from the model’s technical methodology. During the workshop, panel discussions would delve deep into the thematic areas, guided by the presentations, shaping the path forward for the EPRC Modelling Team. In the opening session of the daylong workshop, Deputy Chairman Planning Commission Mohammad Jehanzeb Khan will be the chief guest. The closing session would be chaired by Caretaker Minister for Planning Muhammad Sami Saeed, and Planning Secretary Zafar Ali Shah.

Not everything on social media is true: Wasim Akram

ISLAMABAD (APP): Former Pakistani skipper Wasim Akram has asked people not to believe everything on social media is true, saying fake news gives rise to hatred and ignites unnecessary controversies. The Sultan of Swing made a post on Tuesday, asking people not to believe what he described as fake news circulating on social media. In a post made on X (formerly Twitter), Akram said people need to stop believing everything on social media and how fake news gives rise to hatred. “People need to stop thinking everything on social media is true. The bad is always easier to believe than the good,” he wrote as quoted by wisdom. com. “Fake news, in our part of the world, ignites unnecessary controversies, sparks

hate and toughens the rift between us something that both countries do not need any more of. Enough is enough!” he said. Meanwhile, a quote attributed to Akram has been doing the rounds lately, where he has supposedly questioned the performance of Sri Lanka team in the 2023 Asia Cup final, indicating that there might have been some behind-the-scenes ‘arrangement’ that might have happened between India and Sri Lanka to make sure that India wins. While Akram has not mentioned this, it might likely be possible that his post is in reference to this viral quote. However, Pakistan was scheduled to start their World Cup campaign in Hyderabad, India against the Netherlands on October 6.

SFA suspends kitchen operation of private hospital on serious violation of rules

KARACHI (APP): Sindh Food Authority (SFA), on Tuesday, suspended kitchen operation of a leading private hospital in Karachi on serious violations of rules while a fine of Rs 200,000 was also imposed. A SFA team, on the special instructions of Director General SFA Agha Fakhar Hussain, visited Patel Hospital Gulshan Iqbal Karachi, said a press statement issued here. It said during the inspection of canteen of the hospital, the team not only observed pathetic hygiene conditions in the canteen but

they also found around 40 kilogram of expired meat stored in the canteen. SFA team, temporarily suspended the kitchen operation of the hospital and discarded the expired meat while a fine of Rs 20,000 was also imposed. DG Sindh Food Authority directed all the kitchen or canteen owners of public and private hospitals across Sindh to maintain the quality of their respective kitchens and canteens in accordance with principles of health and hygiene and strictly comply with the rules of food authority.

Iranian envoy calls on George Khalil

ISLAMABAD (APP): Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan Dr. Reza Amiri Moghaddam called on Caretaker Minister for Human Rights George Khalil here on Tuesday. During the meeting, both sides discussed in detail diverse areas of cooperation in the field of human rights between the two brotherly countries. Pakistan and Iran share long-standing and time-tested close fraternal relations, said the Minister underlining the need to expand cooperation between the two neighboring countries.

AC conducts price checks, inspects dengue SOPs

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a crackdown on violators, Assistant Commissioner (AC) Secretariat Aneel Saeed Tuesday conducted price checks, inspected dengue SOPs, arrested beggars, sealed faulty petrol pumps, and removed encroachments in different areas. The assistant commissioner on the directions of Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Irfan Nawaz Memon, visited different areas of the Secretariat Subdivision and conducted price checks in various shops and markets. The violators were fined and warned as per the law. The AC with the dengue monitoring teams ensured adherence of dengue SOPs at various sites i.e. marble factories, workshops, tyre shops, nurseries, dump-sites etc. and inspected the doorstep households where patients were found as per the SOPs. Action was also taken against begging with the help of Civil Defence volunteers and six beggars were arrested and shifted to police stations and Edhi centers. The AC inspected the exact weight and measurement of the petrol pumps, cleaning and fire extinguishing equipment, and the faulty machines were sealed. An anti-encroachment operation was also carried out at Bhara Kaho in coordination with the Magistrate, CDA, DMA and police and several illegal fruit, vegetable stalls were removed, while goods were seized. Aneel Saeed warned the shopkeepers and other businesses to comply with the law and avoid any violations. He also urged the citizens to report any violations to the authorities. The residents appreciated such operations and demanded the authorities to continue such operations on a regular basis to deter violators and maintain law and order in the city.

IESCO issues power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD (APP): Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Tuesday issued a power suspension programme for Wednesday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 08:00 AM to 01:00 PM, Islamabad Circle, COMSAT, Chhata Bakhtawar, Park Enclave, Lahtrar Road, Tramiree, ISI, Rahara, PHA, Kurry Road, CM Pak Zong, Isolation Hospital, Waheed Abad Feeders, from 07:00 AM to 12:00 noon, Islamabad Circle, F-17/1, F-17/2, Nogzi Feeders, Rawalpindi Cantt Circle, Islamabad Feed Mill, Jhata Hatial, Basali, Pind Jatla, Lab. I & II, Industrial, Reliance Weaving Mill, Bhal, Jarrar Comp, Kohala, Morat feeders, Rawalpindi City Circle, Azizabad, People’s Colony, NRC Feeders, Attock Circle, Kamra Rural, Mansar, Gondal, Haji Shah, Hameed, Nawababad, Qutbal, Murt, Fateh Jang Rural Feeder, Chakwal Circle, Basharat Feeder, Jhelum Circle.

Provincial Selection Board-II meeting to be called soon

LAHORE (APP): Additional Chief Secretary Punjab and Secretary Services assured Provincial Management Service (PMS) Association President Naveed Shahzad that the meeting of Provincial Selection Board-II (PSB) will be called soon. According to the PMS spokesperson, Naveed Shahzad held a meeting with the ACS and Secretary Ser-

vices and requested them to call the PSB-II meeting at the earliest. He said a large number of seats were lying vacant across the province. The Secretary Services assured Naveed Shahzad that details of vacant posts would be sent to the admin wing of the S&GAD within few days. Moreover the PSB-II meeting would be held in this month, he added.

Excise staff to facilitate vehicle registration, transfer, and token tax at Rose, Jasmine Garden today

ISLAMABAD (APP): In a bid to bring convenience to the public, the Islamabad Excise and Taxation Department will be present in the parking lot of Rose and Jasmine Garden today from 3 to 5 p.m. to facilitate vehicle registration, transfer, and token tax. The move comes on the instructions of Deputy Commissioner Islamabad Irfan Nawaz Memon, who is keen to make the process of vehicle registration and transfer as smooth and hassle-free as possible for citizens. In addition to the excise staff, the Facilitation Center Door-

step ICT Vehicle will also be present at the venue, offering a range of other services such as domicile certificates, birth certificates, power of attorney, international driving permits, and fuel permits. This initiative is a welcome step by the Islamabad Excise and Taxation Department, and it is expected to benefit a large number of people. The citizens of Islamabad are urged to take advantage of this opportunity and avail the services offered by the excise staff and the Facilitation Center Doorstep ICT vehicle today.

DG Liu Jinsong meets Gwadar based delegation in Beijing

KARACHI (APP): Director-General of the Department of Asian Affairs of the Foreign Ministry of China, Liu Jinsong met with a visiting delegation from Pakistan’s Gwadar region, headed by Vice Chancellor of the University of Gwadar Dr. Abdul Razzaq Sabir. Liu welcomed Sabir and the delegation to China and engaged in discussions and interactions with each member of the delegation. According to the communique issued here on Tuesday by the Chinese Consulate, Liu emphasized that over the past decade since the launch of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), with the joint efforts of both China and Pakistan, significant infrastructure projects in Gwadar, including ports, airports, roads, bridges, hospitals, and desalination plant have been completed and put into operation, bringing tangible benefits to the local people. Liu pointed out that China attaches great importance to the well-being and economic development of Balochistan and Gwadar region in Pakistan and continues to invest, demonstrating that China’s friendly policy towards Pakistan is oriented towards all ethnic groups in Pakistan, that the CPEC projects have benefited all regions, tribes and social strata of the country, and that the China-Pakistan Friendship and Cooperation have a very strong inclusiveness and universally beneficial nature. The construction of the CPEC benefits every region in Pakistan, and there will be no exceptions. All projects undertaken by China in various parts of Pakistan, including Gwadar Port, are based on the principles of extensive consultation, joint construction, and shared benefits, respecting Pakistan’s sovereignty and the wishes of the local people, and ultimately benefiting the grassroots population. China requests Chinese nationals in Pakistan to abide by local laws, respect local customs, traditions, religions and cultures, uphold justice while pursuing shared interests, create more job opportunities locally, and engage in more grassroots and charitable activities. China will continue to enhance communication and cooperation with the Balochistan government, public institutions, think tanks, universities, media, and grassroots communities, promoting comprehensive cooperation in connectivity, trade and investment, people’s livelihood, and education, to make more local people feel the benefits and happiness brought by the high-quality development of the CPEC. Liu pointed out that China-Pakistan cooperation needs to balance security and development, with security being a prerequisite and guarantee for development. Counter-terrorism efforts must address both the symptoms and root causes, and genuine long-term stability can only be achieved by reducing pov-

erty and unemployment, and by eliminating external interference and disruption, he stressed. He expressed the hope that the Pakistani side would attach greater importance to the security of CPEC projects, the band build consensus, and resources for development. China is willing to work with Pakistan to eradicate the breeding grounds for terrorism. Liu stated that there is a famous saying on the Pakistan Monument at the top of Shakarparian Park: “The destiny of a nation is in the hands of every individual, and every individual is a guiding star for their nation.” The key to Pakistan’s development lies in self-confidence, self-improvement, and self-reliance. Concepts such as “To get rich, first build ports and roads,” “Establish pilot projects and special economic zones,” and “No stability without agriculture, no prosperity without industry, no vitality without commerce, and no upgrading without finance” are all mature experiences from China’s reform and opening up that Pakistan can refer to and learn from. China sincerely hopes that Pakistan will maintain political stability and policy continuity and adhere to a development path that suits its national conditions, he said. Dr. Sabir and the delegation highly praised China’s development achievements and the China-Pakistan relationship. Seeing is believing. They expressed their deep appreciation for witnessing China’s people being hardworking, humble, disciplined, brave, and kind. They also acknowledged China’s unparalleled modernization achievements and admired President Xi Jinping’s wise leadership and the proposed neighborhood diplomacy concept of amity, sincerity, mutual benefit, and inclusiveness. Pakistan takes pride in being a friend of China and sees China’s achievements as its own. Pakistan’s friendship with China transcends party lines, encompasses the entire government, and is a consensus across society. Pakistan was one of the earliest countries to respond to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). They said over the past decade, the construction of the CPEC has continued unabated, injecting strong impetus into the development of various regions in Pakistan, including Balochistan province and Gwadar region. The people of Gwadar deeply feel the speed, effectiveness, inclusiveness and universal benefits of corridor cooperation and firmly believe that people from all over Pakistan will continue to benefit from the friendly cooperation between the two countries. They look forward to further enhancing people-to-people exchanges and practical cooperation between the two countries, ensuring that the China-Pakistan friendship continues to grow and pass down from generation to generation.

Saudi minister says Vision 2030 aligns with UN SDGs

RIYADH (Agencies): Saudi Arabia’s Vision 2030 aligns powerfully with the UN sustainable development goals, according to a top government official. Speaking at the SDG Summit on the sidelines of the 78th UN General Assembly in New York, Saudi Minister of Economy and Planning Faisal F. Al-Ibrahim said the national transformation program under the leadership of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, strongly corresponds with the SDGs. Highlighting the recently launched Global Water Organi-



zation, the minister said: “It is a monumental step that champions international innovation and it is a call to action for nations worldwide to come together.” Alibrahim said: “We have contributed more than \$87 billion in international

aid to combat poverty and kickstart development.” According to a report by the UN Conference on Trade and Development, achieving the global sustainable development goals will necessitate annual investments ranging from \$5.4 trillion to \$6.4 trillion until 2030. The research, which assessed 50 indicators related to the SDGs in 90 countries encompassing three-fourths of the global population, underscored the substantial financial challenges that lie ahead, particularly in emerging economies.

Windfall for shareholders as Eco World International’s dividend tops RM935mil

PETALING JAYA (Agencies): Shareholders of Eco World International Bhd (EWI) can look forward to even more dividends after the property developer declared a second tranche dividend of RM144 million to add to the first tranche of RM792 million declared last month, bringing the grand total to RM936 million. That’s not all as its president and CEO Teow Leong Seng said today that shareholders can look forward to “potentially more to come in FY2024”. “This is consistent with our intention to progressively



distribute the bulk of the proceeds received from the monetisation of stocks, less our reduced working capital requirements, to our shareholders as dividends over time,” he said in a statement accompanying the results of its third quarter ended July 31 (Q3

FY2023). “The appreciation of the British pound since Q4 FY2022 when we first announced our intention to distribute excess cash back to shareholders has increased the ringgit value of the group’s remaining unsold completed stocks.” In late August, EWI declared a bumper dividend of RM792 million, or 33 sen per share, following the completion of its capital reduction exercise on Aug 3. Based on its share capital of 2.4 billion, the second tranche of RM144 million translates into a dividend of 6 sen per

KFAED grants \$570m loan to boost GCCIA’s electricity expansion project

RIYADH (Agencies): In a bid to enhance regional connectivity, the Gulf Electricity Interconnection expansion project has secured a \$570 million loan from the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development, according to an official release. The initiative is a part of the Gulf Cooperation Council Interconnection Authority’s efforts to address energy challenges faced by its member nations and Iraq. The project aims to secure technical and economic benefits by increasing the capacity, efficiency, and reliability of the electrical networks in GCC countries. Kuwait, as one of the primary beneficiaries of the development, will receive



an additional supporting capacity of 2,500 megawatts, further enhancing the country’s electricity grid. The project is also set to have a significant impact on the electrical network in southern Iraq. The region will receive an electrical capacity boost of 500 MW, which will not only meet part of its energy demand but also enhance the performance and sta-

bility of its electrical network. The scope of the development encompasses the creation of a primary linking station at Al-Wafrah in Kuwait, with an expected completion date set for December 2024. Additionally, the project will involve the construction of dual overhead transmission lines to connect the station to the Al-Fadhili station in Saudi Arabia. It will then extend double overhead lines back to the Al-Zour area in Kuwait. Furthermore, cables will connect the Al-Wafrah area to the Sabah Al-Ahmad 3 and Sabah Al-Ahmad 4 stations in Kuwait, ensuring they are plugged in to the country’s electrical network.

French Apple staff call strike ahead of iPhone 15 launch

PARIS (Agencies): Unions at Apple’s stores in France have called for a strike on Friday and Saturday, when the iPhone 15 is due to be launched, demanding better pay and working conditions. Apple unions including CGT, Unsa, CFDT and Cidre-CFTC have asked for a 7% wage increase to compensate for inflation, and an end to a monthslong hiring freeze. Management did not want to offer more than a 4.5% hike, union officials said. Apple France



did not return a request for comment. “Management having decided to ignore our perfectly legitimate demands and concerns, the four unions of Apple Retail France ... call for a strike on Sept

22 and 23,” CGT Apple Retail said in a statement on social media platform X, formerly Twitter, today. It added that representatives of Apple France’s corporate division and Apple’s Barcelona team in Spain also called for a strike. The unions called for workers to demonstrate on Friday morning at Opera Garnier, next to Apple’s flagship Paris store. A CGT Apple Retail union official said the call for a strike had been sent to Apple’s 20 French stores.

German investment in China eases in H1 after record high

BERLIN (Agencies): German direct investment in China eased in the first half of the year albeit remaining close to its record high in 2022 and increasing as a share of the country’s overall investment abroad, according to official data analysed by the IW institute. Investment in China dropped to €10.31 billion (US\$11.02 billion) in the first half of 2023 from €12 billion in the first half of last year, the IW said in an analysis shared exclusively with Reuters.



However, that was still nearly twice as much as the €5.5 billion invested in 2019, before the coronavirus pandemic hit. It was also more than twice the €4 billion invested on average in

the first half of the year over the previous decade. The data underscores concerns that German firms continue to invest heavily in China despite the government’s pleas for companies to reduce their exposure and its sharp cut in investment guarantees for the country. Overall German direct investment flows dropped more sharply, to €63 billion from €104 billion last year, as Europe’s largest economy battled recession.

Goldman raises Brent oil forecast to US\$100 as Opec+ cuts

NEW YORK (Agencies): Goldman Sachs Group Inc rejoined the US\$100-a-barrel oil club, raising its forecast for crude back to triple digits as worldwide demand hits unprecedented levels and Opec+ supply curbs continue to tighten the market. With prices advancing by more than 30% since mid-June to breach US\$95 a barrel on Tuesday, the Wall Street bank nudged up its 12-month forecast for global benchmark Brent to US\$100 a barrel from US\$93. However, most of the rally in



the vital commodity “is behind us,” the bank said in a note. Oil has rallied strongly in recent months, hitting a 10-month high, thanks to the significant supply curbs from Opec+ linchpins Saudi Arabia and Russia. Brighter

outlooks in the two biggest economies, the US and China, have also supported the advance, with stockpiles declining at a rapid clip. At present, most major economies remained on track for a soft landing, Goldman Sachs said. “We believe that Opec will be able to sustain Brent in an US\$80-to-US\$105 range in 2024 by leveraging robust Asia-centric global demand growth,” analysts Daan Struyven, Callum Bruce and Yulia Zhestkova Grigsby said in the report dated Sept 20.

Meta plans to expand WhatsApp payment service to India

MUMBAI (Agencies): Meta Platforms Inc is expanding its WhatsApp payment feature to India, letting users in the country purchase goods and services directly from local businesses via chat. The move, which follows the launch of the service in Brazil and Singapore, taps a market with more than 400 million WhatsApp users. Chief executive officer Mark Zuckerberg announced the plan during an event in Mumbai on Wednesday. “I am excited to announce that we are bringing this service to India,” he said in prepared remarks. “This is going to make it even easier for people to pay Indian businesses within a WhatsApp



chat using whatever method they prefer.” Meta, which acquired WhatsApp in 2014 for US\$19 billion, has been trying to generate more revenue by charging businesses for some premium features. The new payment service will support credit and debit cards, along with Indian-based apps that are similar to Venmo or Zelle. It will be free for con-

sumers to use, with businesses paying a processing fee that’s similar to a credit card transaction. WhatsApp is especially popular in places like India, Brazil, Indonesia and Mexico, where it’s common for people to chat with local businesses using the service. More than 200 million companies rely on WhatsApp’s Business App to communicate with customers. But turning that popularity into revenue hasn’t been an easy path for Meta, which also owns Facebook and Instagram. Zuckerberg has said that the company’s push to monetise WhatsApp has lagged behind efforts at its other social media apps.

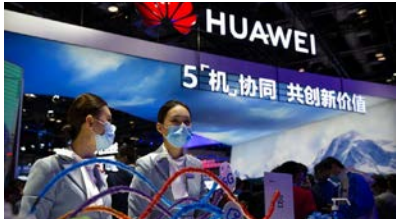
PIF supporting real estate renaissance in Saudi Arabia

RIYADH (Agencies): Real estate has been considered one of the safest bets for investors globally and thanks to the Public Investment Fund, Saudi Arabia is now able to offer a sizable portfolio to the world. The opportunities are amplified by real demand in a swiftly expanding market that is providing some of the best returns on investments in the region and beyond. Figures released by the General Authority for Statistics in August showed the Kingdom’s Real Estate Price Index edged up by 0.8 percent in the second quarter of 2023 compared to the same period a year earlier. The report showed that residential property prices rose by 1.1 percent and commercial by 0.2 percent compared to last year. Alongside the rise in house values is an increase in rent deals. Data released in March by the Real Estate General Authority, or Ejar, showed



residential and commercial deals in this sector almost doubled in value in 2022 compared to the year before, reaching SR76 billion (\$20.2 billion). The report added that the total value of commercial rent transactions amounted to SR40.9 billion in 2022, while those of residential properties reached SR35.1 billion. The Kingdom is witnessing remarkable economic growth alongside an increase in real estate and infrastructure projects, partly spurred on by its goal to raise the proportion of homeownership for its citizens to 70 percent by 2030.

Germany weighs curbs on Huawei, sparking telco backlash



BERLIN (Agencies): Germany’s interior ministry is planning to force telecoms operators to slash their use of equipment from China’s Huawei and ZTE, a government official said, prompting an angry response from operators who warned of likely disruption and legal action. The ministry wants to impose the changes to 5G networks after a review highlighted Germany’s reliance on the two Chinese suppliers, as Berlin reassesses its relationship with a country it dubs both a partner and a systemic

rival. The ministry has designed a staggered approach to try to avoid too much disruption as operators remove all critical components from Chinese vendors in their 5G core networks by 2026, the official said. The operators should also reduce the share of Chinese components in their RAN and transport networks by Oct 1, 2026, to a maximum of 25%, said the official, who declined to be named. Operators swiftly criticised the proposals, while Huawei Germany rejected what it called the “politicisation” of cyber security in the country. “Such an approach will have a negative impact on the digital transformation in Germany, inhibit innovation and significantly increase construction and operating costs for network operators,” it said in a statement.

Saudi Arabia’s HRDF to join international cybersecurity organization

RIYADH (Agencies): Saudi Arabia has increased its stakes in cybersecurity protection, with the Human Resources Development Fund receiving approval to join the US-based Forum of Incident Response and Security Team – an institution known for its global best practices. According to the Saudi Press Agency, the membership enables access to global cybersecurity incident response practices and facilitates the sharing of technical information among participants. The objective is focused on improving the efficiency of organizations in safeguarding their systems and data. Following meeting cyber and regulatory standards, members are selected to join. The exchange of knowledge in a security incident response involves 656 businesses and government organizations spanning 101 countries. HRDF, also known as HADAF, is the Kingdom’s 11th member and aims to improve cyber maturity by implementing measures to guar-



antee the protection and safety of information and services, according to SPA. In May, the fund partnered with King Saud University to launch the career counselor training program in cooperation with the National Career Development Association. The initiative strives to improve and develop the national competencies in the education and vocational sector and contribute to the employment of national cadres in various areas. Additionally, it aims to promote engagement within the business community and contributes to achieving one of Saudi Vision 2030’s goals, specifically through human capacity development.

Japan receives 2 million visitors for 3rd straight month in August



TOKYO (Agencies): Japan welcomed more than 2 million visitors for a third straight month in August, recovering to more than 80% of pre-pandemic levels for the first time, official data showed on Wednesday. The number of foreign visitors for business and leisure was 2.16 million last month, data from the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) showed. Visitor arrivals improved to 85.6% of the levels seen in 2019, before the Covid-19 pandemic led to travel curbs around the world. The August numbers were down from a post-pandemic high of 2.32 million in July, but the recovery is continuing, aided by increases in international flights and a weak yen, which makes trips to Japan more

affordable than they have been in decades. The number of travellers from the United States, Europe, Australia and the Middle East is already above pre-pandemic levels, JNTO data showed. That helps compensate for visitor numbers from China that are still far below 2019 levels. There were 364,100 visitors from China in August, a 16% increase over the previous month, benefiting from Beijing’s lifting of restrictions on group travel to Japan. Chinese travellers made up about 30% of all visitors and 40% of all tourist spending in Japan in 2019. The lifting of the ban on group travel “will be a big tailwind for inbound visitor spending”, said Masato Koike, economist at Sompo Institute Plus. Tourism to Japan nearly stopped for more than two years during the pandemic, but arrivals have risen steadily since the government resumed visa-free travel for many countries in October 2022 and scrapped remaining Covid controls in May 2023. Just over 15 million visitors have arrived in Japan in the first eight months of 2023, JNTO data showed, still far from the record pace of about 32 million in

Most Spanish women footballers rejoin squad after deal

BARCELONA: Most of Spain's international footballers have agreed to rejoin the squad, the government said today, following a strike by the World Cup winners over the disgraced former president of the federation forcibly kissing a player. The announcement followed hours of negotiations over player demands for further changes at the Spanish football federation (RFEF) after ex-president Luis Rubiales resigned. "We have arrived at a series of agreements which will be drawn up



and signed tomorrow" between the RFEF and the Spanish government, Victor Francos, secretary of state for sports, told reporters, adding that two

of the 23 called-up players did not wish to continue with the squad. A total of 19 players from new coach Montse Tome's squad had been on strike over changes they want made to the RFEF, sparking concerns they would not play in upcoming Nations League games. In the hours before the deal was announced, internationals selected by Tome gathered for training despite declaring themselves unavailable, some expressing fear of facing sanctions if they refused to play. (Agencies)

India revs up for maiden MotoGP at circuit where F1 stalled

GREATER NOIDA, India: India hosts its maiden MotoGP on Sunday as the premier motorcycling championship looks to tap a potentially lucrative new fan base and succeed on a track where Formula One stalled. Two-wheelers are India's most popular means of petrol-powered transport with more than half of all households owning at least one motorbike or scooter, compared to just eight percent with cars. Sales figures show an increasing appetite for high-end, high-octane motorbikes, and organizers are banking on the



trend to fuel interest in the sport in the world's most populous country. "We have more than a million bikes in the 250cc-plus category selling every year in India, which means more than

a million people are buying bikes for more than just transportation," Vaibhav Sinha, chief executive of Indian MotoGP promoters Fairstreet Sports, told AFP. "They are using it for thrills, adventure, sports and leisure riding," he added. "We intend to tap this potential to make biking a very big sport in our country." But the lead-up to the race has seen concerns raised about the safety of the Buddh International Circuit, with particular fears about walls that are too close to the asphalt. (Agencies)

Barca, Man City and PSG start Champions League with wins

BERLIN: Barcelona's João Felix, Manchester City's Julian Alvarez and Paris Saint Germain's Kylian Mbappe all scored Tuesday as their teams made winning starts in the Champions League. But the wildest celebrations of the night came in Rome, where Lazio goalkeeper Ivan Provedel headed in the team's equalizer in the fifth minute of injury time to earn a 1-1 draw with Atletico Madrid. It was the last action of the game. As the group stage began without either Lionel Messi or Cristiano Ronaldo for the first time



since 2002-03, a 16-year-old almost scored on his competition debut for Barcelona. Lamine Yamal struck the side netting, then saw an effort saved by Antwerp goalkeeper Jean Butez af-

ter coming on as a substitute in Barcelona's 5-0 win over the Belgian team. Celtic finished with nine players in a 2-0 loss at Feyenoord that stretched the Scottish champion's winless streak in the group stages to 11 games. Manchester City started their title defense by coming from behind to beat Red Star Belgrade 3-1 at home. City had 22 shots on goal in the first half yet found itself 1-0 down at the break after Mirko Ivani played Ghana winger Osman Bukari through to score in first-half injury time. (Agencies)

Wolff says F1 risks disarray if Massa succeeds in title bid

LONDON: Formula One risks disarray in the unlikely event of Felipe Massa winning a threatened legal claim for the 2008 world championship, according to Mercedes team boss Toto Wolff. Former Ferrari driver Massa, now 42, has alleged he was denied the title by a "conspiracy" because the sport's leaders knew the 2008 Singapore Grand Prix was manipulated but took no action until a year later. The Brazilian lost that title by a point to Britain's Lewis Hamilton, then at McLaren and now at Mercedes and a seven-time world champion. "I don't



think he has a case, to be honest," Wolff told reporters at the latest edition of the Singapore Grand Prix last weekend. "We are signing up to sporting regulations that are very clear and you commit (to) as a licence holder. If

everybody were to open up situations then the sport would be in disarray and especially when you look at the full championships. "There's so many things that have an influence whether you win or lose that I don't see the case to be honest. "For me this is like watching a telenovela or soap opera playing out in front of me," added the Austrian. The www.motorsport.com website quoted Massa saying Wolff's comments showed "we are on the right path and that people in F1 are realising the seriousness and importance of our case. (Agencies)

UAE-based free divers target more underwater records

DUBAI: After years in the shadow of scuba, the sport of free diving has been increasingly moving from the marginal to the mainstream. Also known by its scientific name "apnea," free diving has always had a fervent following, with its practitioners often obsessively chasing marginal gains in performance. Providing a simultaneous physiological and psychological challenge like few other sports, free diving is pushing the limits of human endurance. Just last year, French free diver Arnaud Jerald broke the world record for the deepest dive with bifins as he descended to a depth of



120 meters in 3 minutes, 34 seconds. Helped by hit Netflix shows like "The Deepest Breath" and "Hold Your Breath: The Ice Dive," free diving's popularity is firmly on the rise and the organization Freediving UAE exemplifies this. It began life in 2009

as a small group of passionate practitioners but has grown into a thriving community of divers — many of whom now test their limits in competitions. In July, one such event, the Apnea Pirates AIDA Cup, was hosted in Dubai. Organized under the auspices of the International Association for the Development of Apnea, it was a first taste of competitive free diving for some and was notable for a number of new national records being set. Palestinian Firas Fayyad and Iraqi Aws Lafta were among those to claim new benchmarks for their respective nations. (Agencies)

2023 Saudi Games: Countdown to Kingdom's largest sporting event starts

RIYADH: The countdown to Saudi Arabia's largest sporting event has started, with more than 6,000 athletes expected to participate in 53 events when the 2023 Saudi Games begins from Nov. 26 until Dec. 10. Building on the resounding success of last year's inaugural edition, the organizing committee of the 2023 Saudi Games is confident that it will provide another spectacular showcase of national sportsmanship and athletic ex-



cellence, a statement said. Six events are exclusively dedicated to the Paralympics, while four will be showcased as demonstration sports. There

will be 12 sports featured in the Saudi Youth Games. As well as competing for a podium finish, athletes will vie for substantial monetary prizes totaling over SR200 million (\$53.3 million). Gold medalists will receive SR1 million, silver medalists SR300,000, and bronze medalists SR100,000. In the youth category, gold medalists will receive SR100,000, silver medalists SR50,000 and bronze medalists SR25,000. (Agencies)

'Pocket Rocketman' Azizulhasni out of Asian Games

KUALA LUMPUR: National track cycling ace Azizulhasni Awang has been forced to pull out of the 2022 Hangzhou Asian Games after injuring himself while training last Friday. The Olympic silver medallist announced his withdrawal from the Sept 23-Oct 8 Hangzhou Asian Games today after discussions with his coach John Beasley and teammates, according to a Bernama report. "I want to apologise to our contingent and all Malaysians.



The focus now is to recover as soon as possible," he told a press conference at the National Sports Council (NSC). "... there are many variables that I will

have to consider, the main one is that it may worsen my condition and prolong my recovery process. "Let's focus on the 2024 Paris Olympics, which is just 322 days away," said Azizulhasni, who is nicknamed The Pocket Rocketman. The 35-year-old bagged three medals at the 2018 Asian Games in Jakarta-Palembang, where he won a gold medal in the sprint event, a silver medal in the team sprint event, and a bronze medal in the keirin event.

Asian Games host Hangzhou – replica Eiffel Tower and robot dogs

HANGZHOU: China's eastern city of Hangzhou is set to host the largest Asian Games ever with nearly 12,000 athletes in action. Ahead of Saturday's opening ceremony, here's what you need to know about Hangzhou and the Games venues: An ancient, scenic city at the southern end of the centuries-old Grand Canal, Hangzhou has in recent years become known as the birth place of Jack Ma's Alibaba and its hugely popular shopping app Taobao. Numerous tech start-ups have set up shop in the city of 12 million people, drawing comparisons to Silicon Valley. The Games will showcase some of China's latest tech, including robot dogs, facial recognition and driverless buses. An AI-powered digital assistant named Xiaomo, in the shape of an "elegant girl," will provide sign-language interpretation. Hangzhou is 160 kilo-



meters (100 miles) — or an hour on a bullet train — from Shanghai. The Games will take place at more than 50 venues, most of them in Hangzhou but a few in other cities. The centerpiece is a massive flower-shaped stadium capable of hosting 60,000 spectators and will stage the opening and closing ceremonies. Inspired by the lotuses that bloom on the city's famed West Lake each summer, the Hangzhou Olympic Sports Center was completed in 2018 and been used mainly as a football stadium since. (Agencies)

Striking Spain players arrive at training camp as dispute continues



BARCELONA: Spanish internationals selected by new coach Montse Tome gathered Tuesday at the women's national team training camp, despite declaring themselves unavailable, with doubts about their willingness to play in upcoming Nations League games persisting. Two-time Ballon d'Or winner Alexia Putellas and other Barcelona-based players flew to Valencia and arrived at the camp in the evening to join the rest of the squad, with all players now present except Cristina

Martin-Prieto, called up late Tuesday to replace the injured Esther Gonzalez. Sevilla forward Martin-Prieto is not on strike. There are still 39 players striking over changes they want made in the Spanish football federation (RFEF) after the kiss scandal which forced disgraced president Luis Rubiales to resign, including 19 of Tome's 23-woman squad. Barcelona defender Mapi Leon expressed concerns over being forced to attend, with any player who rejects the call up at risk of sanctions under Spain's sports law. "We have to talk long and hard about if we are coming to a safe place or not when we have been forced to come," she told reporters in Valencia airport, before heading to the camp in Oliva. "We have been forced to come. But if they want to sanction us, then we have to come." (Agencies)

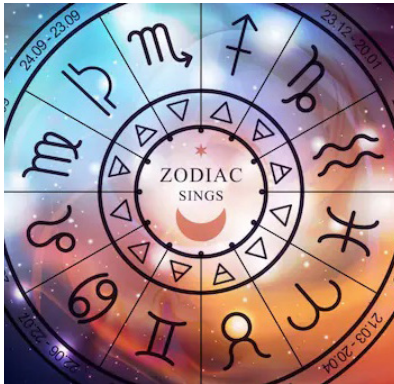
Ronaldo's Al-Nassr get Asian Champion League campaign off to perfect start

TEHRAN: Al-Nassr got their Asian Champions League campaign off to the perfect start on Tuesday with a valuable, and deserved, 2-0 away victory over Persepolis in Tehran. Abdulrahman Ghareeb gave the Saudi side the lead with a goal just after the hour mark and the contest was effectively decided 10 minutes later by a fine strike from Mohammed Qassem, his first goal for the club. By that time, the Iranians were a man down but, still, it was a solid performance from



Al-Nassr, who were on top from the kick-off at the famous, but empty, Azadi Stadium. (Agencies)

DAILY HOROSCOPE: SEPTEMBER 21, 2023



– It's a general reading which may differ from person to person because of time date and year.
– **ARIES**: Try your best to stay grounded today. You need to keep it real with your friends and family today. They're looking to you for advice or at least for calm. You can give them what they need.
– **TAURUS**: Get outside and try to soak up a little nature even if the weather is forbidding. Getting a little uncomfortable might actually be good for you now, and your good energy keeps you healthy.
– **GEMINI**: Things seem to be locked down today, which makes it harder for you to push ahead. In fact, you may want to just call off a big plan for today or postpone it until circumstances change.
– **CANCER**: You've got more to do than you can handle at the moment. If you can delegate some things, do so quickly, but if not, expect a long and kind of boring next few days.
– **LEO**: You're quite excited about something new in your life. Maybe you're taking a class or starting a new exercise regimen. Keep it to yourself for now or you could come

across as an evangelist!
– **VIRGO**: Your love life could use a little boost today, and you have exactly the right kind of energy to pull it off. Take time out from your day if possible, or just send a quick note electronically.
– **LIBRA**: A little alertness goes a long way today, and you ought to be able to catch what's really going on with ease. See if you can get your people to help out when things start to get really weird.
– **SCORPIO**: Get started on something new today. It could be almost anything! Your ability to see the long view should help you get things started right and make serious progress throughout the day.
– **SAGITTARIUS**: You need to reconnect with real life. It could be as simple as making your own meals or finding other ways to be self-sufficient. Plant a garden, do your finances, take care of business.
– **CAPRICORN**: You need to acknowledge your success today. Modesty is all well and good, but people need to know that you can see what's right in front of you! Your great energy helps make it a group win.
– **ACQUARIUS**: Even if you haven't been doing all that much lately, you still feel pretty tired or worn out. Let it wash over you. If you try too hard to fight against it, you just end up with even less energy!
– **PISCES**: With your help, your friends or coworkers can get almost anything done today. You might need to poke your nose into their business, but it's all for their own good, so go ahead!

OIC body urges int’l community to stop Israeli atrocities against Palestinians

NEW YORK, (APP):The OIC Committee of Six on Palestine on Tuesday urged the international community to take urgent concerted actions to stop Israeli atrocities against the civilian population of Palestine. The committee which met here on the sidelines of the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly, called for protecting the Palestinians against the blatant and illegal use of force and flagrant violations of human rights. The foreign ministerial-level meeting also proposed the forming of a joint group open to all OIC Member States to promote the implementation of the Committee’s decisions. Foreign Minister Jalil Abbas Jilani led the Pakistan delegation at the meeting that was chaired by the Secretary General of the OIC and also attended by ministers and high officials from Palestine, Türkiye, Guinea,



Malaysia and Senegal. The foreign minister noted with deep concern the continued deterioration of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including occupied Jerusalem, in particular Al-Aqsa Mosque/Al-Haram Al-Sharif. He strongly condemned the Israeli atrocities, including the killing of innocent civilians, storming of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, expansion of illegal settlements, settler violence, administrative detentions and airstrikes on the densely populated Gaza Strip that were in complete disregard for human rights

and rule of law. The minister stressed that it was imperative to hold Israel accountable for its ongoing illegal actions and acts of aggression for meaningful deterrence. In this regard, he welcomed the United Nations General Assembly’s resolution passed on December 31, 2022, which called upon the International Court of Justice to provide an opinion on the legal ramifications of Israel’s unlawful occupation of the Palestinian territories. While reaffirming Pakistan’s solidarity with the people of Palestine and stressing the importance of implementation of the relevant UN and OIC resolutions, Foreign Minister Jilani reiterated the call for the establishment of a viable, independent and contiguous State of Palestine, on the basis of internationally agreed parameters, pre-1967 borders, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital.

Scientists find ‘missing ingredient’ for pink diamonds



PARIS (AFP/APP):Scientists said on Tuesday they have found the “missing ingredient” for pink diamonds, some of the world’s most expensive stones due their rarity and beauty, and the discovery could help find more. More than 90 percent of all the pink diamonds ever found were discovered at the recently closed Argyle mine in the remote northwest of Australia. But exactly why Argyle – which unlike most other diamond mines does not sit in the middle of a continent but on the edge of one – produced so many pink gems has remained a mystery. In a new study published in the journal Nature Communications, a team of Australia-based researchers said the pink diamonds were brought to the Earth’s surface by the break up of the first supercontinent around 1.3 billion years ago. Hugo Olierook, a researcher at Curtin University in the state of Western Australia and the study’s lead author, told AFP that two of the three ingredients for forming pink diamonds had already been known. The first ingredient is carbon – and it must be in the bowels of Earth. Anything shallower than 150 kilometres (93 miles) deep would be graphite – “that stuff in your pencils, not nearly as pretty on an engagement ring”, Olierook said. The second ingredient is just the right amount of pressure, to damage the otherwise clear diamonds. “Push just a little bit and it turns pink. Push a little too hard and they turn brown,” he said. Most of the diamonds discovered at Argyle were of this less valuable brown hue, he added.

EU appoints new research commissioner

BRUSSELS (AA/APP):The Council of the European Union appointed on Tuesday Bulgarian economist Iliana Ivanova as the new EU commissioner for innovation, research, culture, education and youth. EU affairs ministers, who are meeting in Brussels, approved the appointment of Iliana Ivanova (Bulgaria) as a new European commissioner, by “common accord with the President of the Commission, Ursula von der Leyen,” the council announced in a statement. Ivanova takes over the portfolio of innovation, research, culture, education and youth from Marya Gabriel who resigned in May to become Bulgaria’s foreign affairs minister. The European Parliament gave the green light for Ivanova’s nomination last week. Ivanova was a member of the European Court of Auditors between 2013 and 2023, and an EU lawmaker between 2009 and 2013.

High seas treaty to move closer to reality with first signatures



UNITED NATIONS, UNITED STATES, Sept 20 (AFP/APP):Dozens of nations are set Wednesday to sign a historic treaty on protecting the high seas, seeking the quick entry into force of an accord designed to protect ecosystems vital to the planet. The United Nations in July sealed the first treaty on the high seas after 15 years of discussion. The start of signatures, during the annual UN General Assembly, “represents an important step to establishing meaningful protections,” said Nichola Clark of the Ocean Governance Project of The Pew Charitable Trusts. “We begin a new chapter where the global community must take bold action in order to realize those protections, and ensure the ocean’s enormous reservoirs of biodiversity continue to provide benefits for ocean health and the communities across the globe that depend on it,” she said. The text of the treaty was formally adopted by consensus even though Russia said that parts of it were unacceptable. The high seas start beyond countries’ exclusive economic zones, or 200 nautical miles (370 kilometers) off coastlines – covering nearly half the planet. Nonetheless, they have long been ignored in discussions on the environment. A key tool in the treaty will be the ability to create protected marine areas in international waters – only around one percent of which are now protected by any sort of conservation measures. The treaty is seen as crucial

to an agreement to protect 30 percent of the world’s oceans and lands by 2030, as agreed by governments in a separate historic accord on biodiversity reached in Montreal in December.

- ‘Race to ratification’ -
The treaty will come into force 120 days after 60 countries ratify it. According to the United Nations, more than 60 governments plan to initial the treaty starting Wednesday. But formal ratification depends on each country’s own domestic process. Mads Christensen, interim executive director of Greenpeace International, voiced hope that the treaty would come into force in 2025, when the next UN oceans conference takes place in France. “We have less than seven years to protect 30 percent of the oceans. There is no time to waste,” he said. “The race to ratification has begun and we urge countries to be ambitious, ratify the treaty and make sure it enters into force in 2025.” But even if the treaty draws the 60 ratifications needed to come into force, it would still be well below the universal support for action sought by environmental defenders. Oceans are critical for the health of the whole planet, protecting often microscopic biodiversity that supports half of the oxygen breathed by land life. The oceans are also critical to limiting climate change by helping absorb greenhouse gas emissions. The treaty, officially known as the treaty on “Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction” or BBNJ, also introduces requirements to carry out environmental impact studies for proposed activities on the high seas. Such activities, while not listed in the text, would include anything from fishing and maritime transport to more controversial pursuits such as deep-sea mining or even geo-engineering programs aimed at fighting global warming.

Australia warns of worse fires, heat as El Nino kicks in



SYDNEY (AFP/APP):Australia’s weather bureau confirmed on Tuesday that an El Nino weather pattern is under way, bringing hot and dry conditions that risk a severe wildfire season and drought. The announcement, which follows similar confirmations from other weather agencies, came as the country bakes in unseasonal heat, with the weather agency warning of more to come. Government forecaster Karl Braganza said elevated surface temperatures in the Pacific Ocean could impact the country until early next year. “This summer will be hotter than average, and certainly hotter than the last three years,” he said. “Importantly with the El Nino now settling into that pattern in the Pacific Ocean, that increases our confidence that this pattern is going to last until the end of summer,” he added. The El Nino climate pattern occurs on average every two to seven years and usually lasts between nine to 12 months. In July, the UN’s World Meteorological Organization declared El Nino was already under way

and said there was a 90-percent chance that it would continue during the second half of 2023. El Nino is typically associated with warming ocean surface temperatures in the central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean. It can bring severe droughts to Australia, Indonesia and other parts of southern Asia, coupled with increased rainfall in parts of southern South America, the southern United States, the Horn of Africa and central Asia. The relationship between El Nino and climate change is not well understood. But Australia’s government science agency earlier this year concluded that climbing global temperatures may increase both the likelihood of the pattern forming, and the severity of its impacts.

UK announces \$6.2m to support Somalia in counterterrorism



MOGADISHU (Agencies): The UK, on Tuesday, announced the equivalent of \$6.2 million in funding to support Somali security forces as they combat terrorism and work to restore stability in areas liberated from the Al-Shabaab terrorist group, the British Embassy in the Somali capital, Mogadishu, said in a statement. The funding aims to maintain support and operations against Al-Shabaab and help build the capacity of the security forces, taking on greater responsibility as the African Union proceeds with its mission’s withdrawal from the Horn of Africa country. According to the statement, the funds will be used for non-lethal logistical support to the Somali security forces, including food, shelter, and medevac. It said, adding that the transition from the African Union mission in Somalia to Somalia-led security “remains our collective goal”. The Somali national army and its allied clan-based militias who continue on an offensive against the Al Qaeda-affiliated group have liberated large swathes of territories in the central states of Hirshabele and

Galmudug. Al-Shabaab has increased attacks since Somalia President, Hassan Sheikh Mohamud, who was elected for a second term last year, declared an “all-out war” on the terror group. Meanwhile, the number of people wounded in the conflict has increased dramatically this year as hostilities flared in different parts of the nation, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said late on Monday. It noted that ambulance teams from the Somali Red Crescent Society have reported a more than three-fold rise in the number of people requiring treatment for wounds caused by weapons. The ongoing military offensive by the government against Al-Shabaab in recent months and conflict in the northern part of the country between armed Somaliland forces and clan militias known as SSC-Khatumo has seen a sharp spike in the number of people wounded. Close to 1,900 people required treatment for weapon wounds in the past eight months of 2023 — an increase of over 300 per cent compared to all of 2022, according to the ICRC. The number of people uprooted from their homes in Somalia has more than tripled this year due to conflicts across the country. About 569,000 people were displaced due to conflict or insecurity in January-July, compared to 168,000 over the same period last year, according to data from the Protection and Return Monitoring Network. The aid group said conflict was the main factor forcing people to leave their homes this year in Somalia, followed by climate shocks like drought and floods.

Deadly disease outbreak kills over 1200 children in Sudan – UN

KHARTOUM (Agencies): More than 1,200 children under the age of five died in refugee camps in war-torn Sudan between mid-May and September as a result of a lethal combination of a suspected measles outbreak and severe malnutrition, the United Nations and the World Health Organization have said. The deaths occurred in Sudan’s White Nile state, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and WHO said in a joint statement on Tuesday, reiterating their concern about the “worsening” health situation in the African country as a result of fighting between rival army groups since April. Over 3,100 suspected cases of measles and high malnutrition, as well as more than 500 suspected cases of cholera, have been reported in other parts of the country, according to the UNHCR teams. Health facilities are overwhelmed be-

cause of shortages of staff, life-saving medicines, and critical equipment, the organizations said, adding that repeated attacks on hospitals and medical teams have exacerbated service delivery challenges, worsening disease outbreaks and fatalities. “...dozens of children are dying every day – a result of this devastating conflict and a lack of global attention. We can prevent more deaths, but need money for the response, access to those in need, and above all, an end to the fighting,” UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi said. WHO Director-Gen-



eral Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said local health workers, with assistance from the WHO and its partners, are making every effort under “very difficult conditions” to prevent more fatalities and the escalation of outbreaks. “They desperately need the support of the international community to prevent further deaths and the spread of outbreaks. We call on donors to be generous and on the warring parties to protect health workers and access to health for all those who need it,” Tedros insisted. The conflict that erupted between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and

the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) on April 15 has killed more than 7,000 people, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project. Last month, aid agency Save the Children reported that at least 498 children in the North African country, including two dozen babies at a state orphanage, had died as a result of food shortages and the closure of nutrition centers caused by fighting. Speaking to reporters in Geneva on Tuesday, the UN children’s agency (UNICEF) spokesman James Elder estimated that thousands of newborns will die across the war-torn country by the end of the year. “Every month 55,000 children require treatment for the most lethal form of malnutrition, and yet in Khartoum less than one in 50 nutrition centers is functional,” Elder was quoted by AFP as saying.

Ukraine Receives Industrial 3D Printers from the US to Produce Military Parts

WASHINGTON (Agencies): Ukraine has acquired advanced industrial-level 3D printers from the United States, equipping them with the capability to manufacture critical spare parts for military equipment. William LaPlant, the US Under Secretary of Defense for Procurement and Maintenance, disclosed this delivery in August, highlighting that Ukrainian personnel completed training on operating these printers just last week. Speaking at the Center for a New American Security, LaPlant announced, “Finally, last month we delivered these industrial 3D printers to them in

Ukraine, and last week their training on working with this printer was completed.” He also mentioned the presence of a massive 3D printer, comparable in size to a truck. This substantial printer empowers Ukraine to produce all the necessary components for various military applications, enhancing its self-reliance and operational capabilities. LaPlant emphasized that the introduction of 3D printers on the Ukrainian side is a game-changer. It accelerates the restoration of frontline-damaged equipment and opens up new possibilities. He further noted that the capabilities of 3D

printing extend beyond speed, enabling the creation of parts that would be challenging or impossible to produce using conventional methods, especially in the demanding conditions of a conflict. LaPlant highlighted that Ukrainian specialists took matters into their own hands and began 3D printing parts even without the required authorizations and technical data packages in the face of the full-scale Russian invasion. In times of an existential threat, concerns about intellectual property laws tend to take a backseat, he remarked. Collaborative efforts were made to rectify this

situation, ensuring that Ukraine now possesses the essential technical data packages for its 3D printing needs. This action aimed to provide them with the necessary resources to address the challenges posed by the conflict and support their defense efforts effectively. However, specific details regarding the number of 3D printers sent to Ukraine were not disclosed by the US official. The Use of 3D Printers in the Ukraine Conflict The ongoing conflict in Ukraine has underscored the advantages of 3D printing technology, thanks to its adaptability and rapid production capabilities.

These advantages substantially simplify the logistical challenges of supplying essential resources to the frontlines. Most 3D printers are compact and can be seamlessly installed in subterranean bunkers, making them ideal for wartime production. Moreover, the inherent capabilities of 3D printing offer a strategic advantage by enabling efficient mass production of crucial components simultaneously across multiple locations. Since the Russian invasion in February 2022, Ukrainian forces have showcased resourcefulness by incorporating ammunition crafted with 3D printers.

Australia confirms raising concerns with India over Sikh leader's killing in Canada

ANKARA (AA/APP):Australia on Wednesday confirmed that it has raised its concerns with India over the killing of a Sikh separatist leader in the Canadian westernmost province of British Columbia. Speaking to reporters in New York on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly session, Foreign Minister Penny Wong, while responding to Canadian allegations that India was behind the killing of a Canadian citizen, said: "These are concerning reports." "I note that investigations are still underway, but obviously these are concerning reports, and as I've said, we are monitoring these developments closely with our partners, and we'll continue to do so," she said, according to a transcript published on the Foreign Ministry's web-



site. When asked whether Australia has communicated its concerns with India, she said: "I will confirm that we have raised our concerns with India. I'm not going to go into any further detail on that." Responding to the safety of Indian Sikhs in Australia, Wong said that her country allows peaceful expression of different views which is a key part of Australia's democracy. Sikh leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar was shot dead on June 18 in Surrey, Brit-

ish Columbia, in front of a Sikh temple. So far, no arrests have been made. However, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Monday that there are "credible allegations" that the Indian government was behind Nijjar's shooting death. Nijjar was a vocal supporter of independence for a Khalistani state in the Punjab region. Earlier on Monday, Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister Melanie Joly said a "top Indian diplomat" has been expelled from the country and expects India's full collaboration "to get to the bottom of this." According to some media reports, the diplomat was Pavan Kumar Rai, who was allegedly associated with India's premier intelligence agency, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW).

Tornado in eastern China kills 10, hundreds relocated



BEIJING (AFP/APP):A tornado in eastern China killed 10 people and seriously injured several others, state media said Wednesday, the latest in a string of extreme weather events to strike the country. "Yesterday afternoon, a strong tornado occurred in Suqian, Jiangsu Province... causing casualties and property loss in certain areas," state broadcaster CCTV said. The tornado affected more than 5,500 people, with 137 houses collapsing, according to "preliminary statistics" cited in the report. More than 400 people have been temporarily relocated because of the twister, state media said. Video footage shared on social media by the state-run People's Daily showed high winds whipping debris around above residential buildings, as well as a street strewn with fallen signs and other objects. China saw record-breaking downpours and weeks of historic heat this summer, with scientists saying such extreme weather events are being exacerbated by climate change. Whole villages in Jiangsu were levelled and at least 98 people were killed in 2016 after the region was hit by a storm with hurricane-force winds and the worst tornado in half a century.

Women in the driver's seat with female crash test dummy



LINKÖPING SWEDEN (AFP/APP):Her name is SET 50F and she's the world's first female crash test dummy, designed by a Swedish engineer to help make sure women are better protected in cars. The legislation only requires carmakers to conduct crash tests with dummies based on male proportions -- a model dating back to the 1970s -- even though statistics show that women are more at risk of injury in the event of a frontal collision. Carmakers have used smaller-sized versions of male dummies to represent women and children, but those have not taken into account the different morphology of women's bodies. Astrid Linder, an engineer at the Swedish National Road and Transport Research Institute (VTI), decided to change that with "the world's first average-sized female crash test dummy," according to VTI. In a warehouse in Linköping, 200 kilometres (125 miles) south of Stockholm, the female dummy is strapped into a car seat projected along a metal rail at 16 kilometres per hour (10 miles per hour), before being brought to a sudden halt. A screen shows the body moving in slow motion at the moment of impact, the mannequin's chest visibly distinguishing it from a standard male crash test dummy. "The muscles in the neck are normally weaker in a woman," says Tommy Petterson, one of Linder's colleagues at VTI, pointing to the nape of the dummy's neck, deformed by the impact. "If you compare it with a male dummy, this neck is more flexible and has more movement."

Building boom spells success for Somali women engineers

MOGADISHU, (AFP/APP):As Somalia's capital witnesses a construction boom following improvements in security, civil engineer Faduma Mohamed Ali is hard at work, supervising male labourers twice her age and breaking barriers in the conservative country. The 22-year-old has battled social stigma, family opposition and workplace harassment, but told AFP she never doubted her choice of career. "I always liked buildings," she said. When she enrolled in a civil engineering degree programme -- the only woman in her class -- her relatives were quick to cast aspersions. "They said, how can a girl waste time to study civil engineering?... this is work for men." The jibes continued even after she graduated and found a job in Mogadishu. "They used to ask -- are you crazy?" In a country where women account for less than a third of the workforce, according to the World Bank, many parents frown on the prospect of their daughters working in close quarters with men. "I would not have (wanted)... my daughter to work at a construction site with men, this is not for women. I would rather she chose... a female-dominated profession," said



Abdikafi Hassan Duale, a father of six. "This is for their safety and protection from social harassment," he told AFP. But attitudes are changing. Fathi Mohamed Abdi told AFP that her parents were "very happy" and supportive of her decision to become the first civil engineer in their extended family. "They started encouraging me in this while I was studying, and they have continued to do so now that I am working," the 23-year-old said. They even "wake me up in the morning when I oversleep (so I can) get to work", she added. At university, she was one of only two women studying civil engineering but her choices have paid off as construction activity picks up. "Due to the growing investment in the construction industry in our country, we are getting so many opportunities," she said.

Russia seeks to erase border with occupied Ukraine



AVILOUSPENK RUSSIA (AFP/APP): To enter Russia from occupied Ukraine, all Tatiana has to do is arrive at the edge of the war-battered Donetsk region, show guards her Russian passport, say "thank you" and cross. Moscow has controlled several key border points since 2014 but the frontier has become more porous since the Kremlin annexed four Ukrainian territories last year, encouraging residents to take up new citizenship. "It's become more comfortable because we've become Russians," the 37-year-old from a Russian-occupied town near the frontline told AFP. Tatiana used to have to go through a more arduous procedure to enter Russia -- a check run by Moscow-sponsored separatists, then through Russian customs. "We had two borders to cross, which meant long, long traffic queues," she said near a motel on the frontier. She was heading for Taganrog -- a town in southern Russia once home to writer Anton Chekhov -- to do some errands, including taking out insurance. The smoother crossings are one of the most visible signs of change since the Kremlin annexed the industrial Donetsk region alongside three other regions of Ukraine at a lavish ceremony last year. They illustrate how quickly Russian authorities are seeking to absorb occupied territories, even though the international community, including Russia's allies, do not recognise Moscow's authority there.

- Frontline life -
Moscow last weekend hosted local government elections in the annexed Ukrainian territories and claimed pro-Kremlin party United Russia had won easily in each region. Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin said in May that officials had handed out nearly two

million Russian passports to Ukrainians in occupied regions. But its military still does not fully control any of the four regions annexed last year, and Ukrainian forces are gaining ground in two of them -- Zaporizhzhia in the south and Donetsk in the east. Despite that, thousands of people travel to Russia by bus or car from occupied cities like Donetsk, Lugansk and Mariupol -- a port city captured by Moscow after a brutal months-long siege. Further away from the front, however, signs of the conflict are visible everywhere. AFP journalists on the road between Taganrog and the Avilo-Uspenka crossing point saw Russian military vehicles daubed with large Z and V tactical symbols. And two Russian attack helicopters flew overhead. "The closer you get (to Russia), the safer you feel," Tatiana said, describing life in her "frontline" Ukrainian town of Gorlivka as both dangerous and stressful. While the conflict has spilled over into Russia -- with cross-border drone attacks and shelling now routine -- Russian authorities are working to contain the fighting on one side of the border.

- 'Not quite in Russia' -

A taxi driver, speaking on condition of anonymity, told AFP that two of his passengers -- a mother and her son -- had recently been stopped by Russian customs officers as they left the Ukrainian region of Lugansk. The man was accused of deserting from his military unit and his mother accused of trying to help him return home. While entering Russia has become easier for civilians like Tatiana, difficulties remain for lorry drivers, who are still subject to meticulous checks by Russian customs officers. "The rules for crossing for cars are very different from those for goods," Vlad, a 26-year-old truck driver who spends long hours in his lorry each time he passes through, told AFP. Nearby, retired postal worker Natalia was waiting for the one train connection each day from Russia back to the occupied Donetsk region. "We would obviously like more forms of transport," the 69-year-old told AFP after visiting relatives in Taganrog. "We're not quite in Russia yet but we're going to hope," she said.

Saudi FM meets Dutch FM on sidelines of UNGA 78



NEW YORK (SPA/APP):Prince Faisal bin Farhan bin Abdullah, the Saudi Minister of Foreign Affairs, met Tuesday with the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs Hanke Bruins Slot, on the sidelines of the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA 78). At the headquarters of the Kingdom's permanent delegation to the United Nations, the two ministers discussed bilateral relations and ways to strengthen and develop them and reviewed aspects of consolidating bilateral and multilateral work. They also discussed the latest developments in

major international issues and efforts to address them. Princess Reema bint Bandar bin Sultan, Saudi Ambassador to the United States of America, and the Kingdom's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Dr. Abdulaziz Al-Wasel attended the meeting.

Rwanda's Kagame says he will run for fourth term

NAIROBI (AFP/APP):Rwandan President Paul Kagame has said for the first time that he plans to run for a fourth term in elections due to be held next year. "Yes, I am indeed a candidate," Kagame, who has ruled over the country with an iron fist for decades, told Jeune Afrique, a French-language news magazine, in an interview published online on Tuesday. "I am pleased with the confidence that Rwandans have placed in me. I will always serve them, as long as I can," the 65-year-old was quoted as saying. The Rwandan government in March decided to synchronise the dates for its parliamentary and presidential elections, which are due to be held in August next year. Kagame had previously not made his intentions clear, but has presided over controversial constitutional amendments that allowed him to serve a third term. A former rebel chief, Kagame has been regarded as the country's de facto leader since the end of the 1994 genocide. He won a third term in 2017, taking home nearly 99 percent of the vote.

France 'will not welcome migrants' from Lampedusa: interior minister

PARIS (AFP/APP): France will not welcome any migrants coming from Italy's Lampedusa, interior minister Gerald Darmanin said on Tuesday after the Mediterranean island saw record numbers of arrivals. Some 8,500 people arrived on Lampedusa on 199 boats between Monday and Wednesday last week, according to the UN's International Organization for Migration -- prompting European Commission president Ursula von der Leyen to travel there Sunday to announce an emergency action plan. According to Darmanin, Paris told Italy it was "read to help them return people to countries with which we have good diplomatic relations", giving the example of Ivory Coast and Senegal. But France "will not welcome migrants" from the island, he said, speaking on French television Tuesday evening. Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has called on Italy's EU partners to share more of the responsibility. The recent arrivals on Lampedusa equal more than the whole population of the tiny Italian island. The mass movement has stoked the immigration debate in France, where political parties in the country's hung parliament are wrangling over a draft law governing new arrivals. France is expected to face a call from Pope Francis for greater tolerance towards migrants later this week during a high-profile visit to the Mediterranean city Marseille, where the pontiff will meet President Emmanuel Macron and celebrate mass before tens of thousands in a stadium.

Russia Tests High-Speed Sniper Rounds

MOSCOW (Agencies): Lobaev Arms, a Russian manufacturer known for its long-range high-precision rifles, has commenced testing of a "high-speed bullet" with the potential for hypersonic capabilities, enabling instantaneous and effective penetration of targets. Russia is currently conducting tests on hypersonic sniper rounds, which can achieve speeds exceeding 1,500 meters per second (m/s), according to Vladislav Lobaev, the founder and head of Lobaev Arms, a private Russian weapons manufacturer, as reported by RIA Novosti. Lobaev clarified that the ammunition is still referred to as "potentially hypersonic" because it currently operates at the threshold of hypersonic velocity. Lobaev first gained attention in September 2018 when he set a goal to develop small arms ammunition with a velocity of 2,000 m/s. He explained that such rounds are essential for high-precision sniper rifles, offering increased range for "grazing fire." Grazing fire is a military term denoting fire that travels approximately parallel to the ground.

Neanderthal remains over 50,000 years old discovered in Spain



MADRID, (AA/APP):The remains of Neanderthals, primitive humans who lived between 250,000 and 40,000 years ago, were found in Simanya Cave within Sant Llorenç Savall Natural Park near Barcelona. At a press conference held Tuesday at the Archaeological Museum of Catalonia, it was announced that the 50,000-year-old remains consist of 54 pieces and include those of an adult, likely female, as well as those of a teenager aged 11-12 and a child aged 7-8. The remains are among the most significant Neanderthal remains found in the Iberian Peninsula, providing insights into the distribution of Neanderthal populations across Europe, according to the press conference. Ongoing excavations in the cave are being conducted in partnership with several universities of Spain and Italy.

6.2-magnitude quake hits south New Zealand

WELLINGTON (Xinhua/APP):-- An earthquake with a magnitude of 6.2 jolted 45 km north of Geraldine, New Zealand's South Island, at 9:14 a.m. local time Wednesday, according to New Zealand's geological hazard monitoring institute GeoNet. Residents in Christchurch and other South Island regions felt the shake, which had a depth of 10 km. No injuries or property damage have been reported so far.

IMF to grant \$1.3bn loan to quake-hit Morocco

WASHINGTON (Agencies): The International Monetary Fund (IMF) will provide Morocco with a \$1.3 billion loan following the September 8 earthquake that killed thousands in the North African country, Anadolu Agency reports. IMF Managing Director, Kristalina Georgieva, said in statements cited by the Moroccan state news agency, MAP. Georgieva said the loan will be used to back Morocco's efforts "in the face of climate-related risks". She, however, said the loan will still need to be approved by the IMF board during its annual meetings in the Moroccan city of Marrakech on 9-15 October. Morocco was struck by a magnitude 7 earthquake on 8 September, killing nearly 3,000 people and injuring thousands, according to official figures. Marrakesh, 72km from the quake's epicentre, suffered some damage in its ancient Madinah quarter from the earthquake, Morocco's strongest-ever in a century.

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