

Lisbon: Foreigners' interest in obtaining a Portugal Schengen visa continues to remain high despite the summer season coming to an end soon. According to data from Google Trends, searches worldwide for a Portugal Schengen visa are currently up 90 per cent. Even though not everyone who searches for a Portugal visa applies for the documents **(Page-8)**

Islamabad: European Union Ambassador Dr. Riina Kionka this week extended congratulations to Pakistanis on their 77th Independence Day and honoured the country's "vibrant diversity in the spirit of respect, unity, and inclusion envisioned by its founder, Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah." At a special event on the **(Page-10)**

EU tariffs on Chinese EVs may lead to loss of Chinese investment



NewsWire

Beijing: The China Chamber of Commerce for Import and Export of Machinery and Electronic Products this week said that by imposing anti-subsidy duties on Chinese electric vehicles



(EVs), the European Union (EU) could lose Chinese investment in Europe. Chinese enterprises expressed grave concerns over reports that the EU's identification of Chinese EVs as "subsidized" could become an excuse to launch future foreign-subsidy investigations into Chinese companies investing in Europe, the chamber said.



It noted that many Chinese auto companies had started or planned to invest or operate in Europe before the EU launched its anti-subsidy probe into Chinese EVs. But since the EU's decision to impose provisional countervailing duties, many Chinese EV enterprises have expressed concerns over the probe and the possible risks of investing in Europe.

Chinese EV companies are paying close attention to the progress of the EU anti-subsidy investigations, and will assess the risks of investing in Europe and make investment decisions accordingly, according to the chamber. The China-EU automobile industrial chain is interdependent and has broad cooperation prospects, the chamber said, expressing hope that the EU will proceed with an open and cooperative attitude, cease the investigations as soon as possible, and support comprehensive cooperation in the China-EU auto industry.

Denmark is surging tourism sector with visa free travel to 190 countries

Covert Report

Copenhagen: As of August 2024, Denmark, nestled on the Jutland Peninsula and surrounded by an archipelago of over 400 islands, remains a country of diverse landscapes and rich cultural heritage. The peninsula, Jutland, constitutes more than two-thirds of the country's total land area. At its northern tip lies the island of Vendsyssel-Thy, separated from the mainland by the Lim Fjord. Danish travelers continue to enjoy the privilege

Spain continues to be the top destination for Danish vacationers, with 18% of all outbound holidays in 2023 heading to the Iberian Peninsula. Italy and Greece followed, attracting 12% and 7% of Danish travelers, respectively. Other favored destinations include France, Sweden, and Germany, which draw numerous Danish tourists annually. Denmark's proximity to these European countries makes them accessible and attractive for short trips and extended vacations alike. Football is Denmark's most beloved sport, with FC Copenhagen being the leading team in the Superliga. Outdoor activities such as cycling and hiking are



of visa-free access to 190 destinations around the world, making it exceptionally convenient for them to explore global cultures and destinations. In 2022, Danish travelers embarked on approximately 6.04 million overnight outbound trips, a slight decrease from the previous year. Historically, 2016 marked a peak in Denmark's outbound tourism, with over 9.6 million departures. The year 2023 saw a 10% increase in international departures from Denmark, highlighting a resurgence in travel post-pandemic. Danish travelers do not focus on a single destination; instead, they exhibit a strong preference for intraregional travel, with the top ten destinations all located in Europe. Denmark's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2023 remained stable compared to 2022, hovering around 2804.74 billion Danish Kroner. This minor decrease of 1.39% reflects a resilient economy despite global economic fluctuations. The stability of Denmark's economy is also reflected in its strong social welfare systems, high standard of living, and robust public services, which contribute to the population's ability to travel. Air travel remains the dominant mode of transportation for Danish outbound tourists. In 2023, Danish tourists made over 3.9 million trips abroad by air. The second most popular mode of transport was by car, accounting for over 1.9 million trips. Train travel is also a favored option for destinations within Europe, providing an eco-friendly and convenient alternative for cross-border journeys.

also popular, thanks to a network of scenic routes. Denmark's extensive coastline offers ample opportunities for water sports, with over 200 Blue Flag beaches and the fjords of Zealand and Jutland providing ideal locations for swimming and surfing. Klitmøller, known as "Cold Hawaii," is a popular destination for surfers from around the world. Denmark's rich history and cultural heritage also drive outbound travel. Danish tourists often seek cultural experiences, visiting museums, historical sites, and cultural events in their destinations. Countries like France and Italy, with their wealth of art, architecture, and history, are particularly appealing to Danish travelers. Moreover, culinary tourism is gaining popularity, with Danish tourists exploring diverse cuisines and gastronomic experiences abroad. TTW Editor Mr. Anup Kumar Keshan said: "As of August 2024, Denmark, with its expansive Jutland Peninsula and over 400 surrounding islands, continues to offer Danish travelers a rich tapestry of landscapes to explore at home and an incredible gateway to the world beyond. With Jutland comprising the majority of the country's landmass, the diverse terrain—from rolling hills to coastal vistas—provides a stunning backdrop for those seeking adventure or relaxation. Additionally, Danish citizens benefit from visa-free access to 190 destinations, allowing them to easily experience and engage with a wide array of global cultures and environments, making Denmark an ideal springboard for outbound travel."

Aseefa Bhutto honored with soft diplomacy award at UAE consulate ceremony for her humanitarian efforts in polio eradication

Celina Ali

Islamabad: First Lady of Pakistan, Aseefa Bhutto was honored with the Soft Diplomacy Award at a ceremony hosted by the UAE Consulate in Karachi this week in commemoration of Pakistan's Independence Day. The Humanitarian Award was presented in recognition of her tireless efforts in eradicating polio and her successful lobbying of the UAE government to support polio vaccination drives in Balochistan. Accompanied by President Peoples Party Women's Wing, Faryal Talpur, who was awarded for her efforts in building relations with the United Arab Emirates. Under the initiatives of the UAE Consulate's Soft Diplomacy program, this award celebrates individuals who have significantly contributed to strengthening diplomatic and humanitarian ties between Pakistan and the UAE. Ms. Bhutto Zardari's advocacy has been pivotal in securing the UAE's assistance in one of Pakistan's most critical public health challenges—the fight against polio. In her acceptance speech, Ms. Bhutto Zardari expressed her deep gratitude for the recognition and reiterated her unwavering commitment to the cause of polio eradication. She emphasized the importance of international cooperation in health initiatives and praised the UAE government for its steadfast support in the fight against polio in Pakistan, particularly in the vulnerable regions of Balochistan. Addressing the ongoing battle against polio, she emphasized, "The fight against polio is one that every Pakistani should fight to secure a better, brighter future for our children. It pains me that we are one of the two countries in the world still unable to eradicate this menace. I remain committed to this fight, to a polio-free Pakistan. I must acknowledge that the UAE has stood steadfast in its support for a polio-free Pakistan." Ms. Bhutto Zardari also highlighted the strong ties between Pakistan and the UAE, acknowledging the UAE's consistent support in various crises: "Pakistan has been fortunate to count the UAE as one of its friends, and we have always relied on your support in times of trouble. Be it our fight against polio, devastating earthquakes, or catastrophic floods, you have



stood beside us, at the forefront, reminding us that we are not alone." She further remarked on the enduring relationship between the two nations, stating, "As the UAE has gone from strength to strength under dynamic leadership, so has our friendship. And many individuals, not least the honorable Consul General here, have worked hard to further and better these bilateral ties. On a personal level, our family's relationship with the UAE has been an immense source of happiness for us over many years. For me, Dubai remains my second home. I cherish the years spent there and look forward to my visits even now." Ms. Bhutto Zardari's efforts have not only been instrumental in reducing polio cases in Pakistan but have also strengthened the bond between Pakistan and the UAE, showcasing how diplomacy and health initiatives can go hand in hand to achieve common goals. The event, held at the UAE Consulate Karachi was attended by distinguished guests, diplomats, and representatives from various sectors who have contributed to enhancing Pakistan-UAE relations. First Lady Aseefa Bhutto Zardari and Faryal Talpur also took part in a plantation drive under the Green Pakistan Initiative.

PBOC: China to promote further high-quality financial development

Newsire

Beijing: China will move faster to improve its central bank system and promote high-quality financial development, the country's central bank governor has said. China will concentrate on improving the twin-pillar regulatory framework of both monetary and macro-prudential policies to maintain the stability of both currency value and the country's financial system, Pan Gongsheng, governor of the People's Bank of China (PBOC), said in an exclusive interview with Xinhua. To this end, China will gradually shift away from a focus on quantitative targets, place greater emphasis on the use of price-based tools such as interest rates, and enrich its monetary policy toolkit, Pan said. Efforts will be made to boost policy communication, enhance policy transparency, improve the mechanism for forestalling and defusing systemic risks, strengthen the financial market and its infrastructure, and build a higher-standard open financial system, he said. The PBOC will promote high-standard financial opening-up with a market-oriented, law-based and internationalized approach, increasing the transparency, stability and predictability of relevant policies, the governor noted. He said that China will deepen institutional

opening-up in the financial sector, steadily and prudently advance the internationalization of the yuan, advance the development of international financial centers, create a more friendly and inclusive business environment, and strive to ensure both financial openness and security. For the real economy, Pan said the central bank will adhere to a supportive monetary policy and intensify counter and cross-cyclical adjustments to stabilize expectations and help consolidate the country's economic recovery trend. In its regulation of monetary policy, the central bank will focus efforts on striking a balance between short-term and long-term objectives, between growth stabilization and risk prevention, and between domestic demand and external conditions, Pan said. He added that the PBOC will move to implement already-introduced policies and measures, develop additional policy tools and enhance policy coordination to meet annual economic and social development goals. He also pledged resolute work to prevent the emergence of systemic risks by balancing economic growth, structural adjustments and risk prevention, increasing the efficacy of financial regulation, advancing legislation on financial stability, and resolving risks in areas such as local government debt, real estate, and small and medium-sized banks.



Need to transform CPEC into model of green BRI: PCJCCI chief

Gwadar Pro

Lahore: Moazzam Ghurki, the President of the Pakistan-China Joint Chambers of Commerce and Industry (PCJCCI), emphasized this week that the concept of 'Green' represents the future of humanity, particularly in a world already grappling with the harsh realities of climate change. During a think tank session at the PCJCCI, Ghurki stressed the need to transform the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) into a model of the green Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This transformation would serve to protect and sustain the natural environment across the region, he added. He expressed hope that such efforts would not only safeguard the environment but also expedite the development of green technologies and the production of green energy within the ongoing CPEC projects in Pakistan. He highlighted that initiatives like intensified plantation efforts, the support and develop-

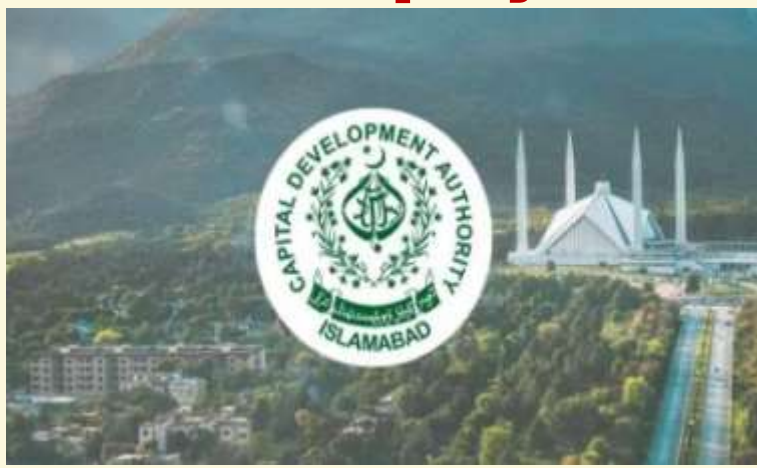
ment of natural forests, the establishment of bee honey hatcheries, and the promotion of green tourism could be pivotal in achieving these goals. On the occasion, Senior Vice President of PCJCCI, Fang Yulong, underscored China's role as a leader in green technologies, alternative energies, and renewable investments globally. He noted that China possesses the resources and expertise necessary to assist Pakistan in maintaining a balanced approach between industrialization and environmental preservation in the years ahead. Yulong also mentioned that the Government of Pakistan had already embarked on an ambitious initiative under the 'Clean Green Pakistan' program, aimed at expanding the country's protected areas from 13 percent to over 15 percent by 2023, while also creating 5,000 green jobs nationwide. Vice President of PCJCCI, Hamza Khalid, provided details on the government's green initiatives, which are being supported by the

Federal Ministry of Climate Change. These initiatives include the world-renowned Ten Billion Tree Tsunami Programme, Clean Green Pakistan, the Protected Areas Initiative, Plastic-Free Pakistan, and the Recharge Pakistan Initiative. Khalid highlighted the significant role of the private sector in driving forward industrialization and agricultural development under the CPEC framework, particularly through innovations, modern technologies, and substantial financial investments. Secretary General of PCJCCI, Salahuddin Hanif, remarked on the vital role of the reconstituted CPEC Business Council in fostering meaningful private sector participation in the various flagship projects under CPEC. He noted that the government is actively facilitating the private sector to accelerate the establishment of large-scale industrial units and information technology zones across the country as part of the CPEC initiatives.



Chinese company visits CDA to discuss Islamabad development

Covert Report



Islamabad: A high-ranking delegation from the China State Construction Engineering Company (CSCEC) made an important visit to the headquarters of the Capital Development Authority (CDA) in Islamabad this week. The purpose of this visit was to engage in detailed discussions concerning various infrastructure development projects within the city. During their visit, the delegation



received comprehensive briefings on both ongoing and upcoming projects in Islamabad, which encompass areas such as transportation systems, public buildings, and broader urban development initiatives. These projects are integral to the city's growth and modernization. Muhammad Ali Randhawa, the Chairman of CDA, took the opportunity to express his deep appreciation for the invaluable contributions made by the CSCEC to Pakistan's infrastructure landscape. He particularly highlighted the company's efficiency in completing projects within the stipulated timeframes while maintaining a high standard of

transparency throughout the process. The CSCEC, recognized globally as one of the largest construction and investment entities, has an impressive track record in Pakistan. Their portfolio includes landmark projects such as the Sukkur-Multan Motorway, the Arfa Karim Tower in Lahore, and their involvement in the JF-17 Thunder aircraft project. During the meeting, the Chinese delegation conveyed a strong interest in furthering their involvement with CDA's projects, offering expertise in areas ranging from design and construction to securing funding. Both sides engaged in productive discussions, exploring the various stages of project development and identifying potential avenues for collaboration and innovation.

Italy's digital nomad visa

Advice and tips from one of the first ever recipients



Ambassador of Italy to Pakistan
H.E. Marilina Armellin

knew where she wanted to live. "When I found out this past April that the digital nomad visa had been launched, I was just so excited and I knew it was something I had to pursue and pursue aggressively," she tells Euronews Travel. "I tried to do as much research as I could ...

However, because this is such a new visa, there literally is not any information out there besides just stating that the visa exists." Luckily, Chelsea found her way and is now one of the first people to have been granted the visa and she is now living in Milan. Here she shares her journey and top tips on how to get Italy's digital nomad visa.

Is it difficult to get Italy's digital nomad visa? Navigating such a new visa process came with many hurdles. Chelsea puts her success down to perseverance and preparedness.

One area, she says, that can be notoriously hard in Italy is getting a rental contract- an essential piece of paperwork for the digital nomad visa application. Most people assume that you need a 'codice fiscale' - an Italian tax code - to sign a lease on a property, she explains. Granted to Italians at birth, this code is required for all kinds of vital everyday services like opening a bank account or even getting an Italian phone number. But a 'codice fiscale' can be difficult to get if you are not already living in the country or don't yet hold a visa. Finding an estate agent in Italy was a lifesaver for Chelsea. "My real estate agent had informed me that there is a way to register the contract, for individuals



who will be moving to Italy and don't yet have this codice fiscale," she explains. "So I would recommend if you do get pushback from a property owner or a real estate management company, definitely inform them that this is a possibility and see how they can work together with

nomad visa.

"My first would definitely be, come overprepared versus underprepared," she explains.

"You want to have all the ammunition at your disposal versus being told that you have a piece of documentation missing and you have to come back and redo the whole process from the beginning." Secondly, she recommends getting help within Italy with vital parts of the process such as finding accommodation.

"I would also recommend, if you have the opportunity to come over to Italy between when you received your appointment (with the Italian consulate) and when the actual appointment will be."

Chelsea adds that forging relationships with locals is a lot easier face-to-face than virtually.

DIGITAL
NOMAD

insurance, the cost of having documents verified and the fees for the visa itself. "The whole process definitely cost a little bit more than I was anticipating." The non-refundable fee for the application alone is €116 per person. With so little information currently out

Rosie Frost
There is still not much information out there to help digital nomads apply for the new Italian visa. After years of speculation Italy finally launched a brand new digital nomad visa in April this year. It allows remote workers to stay in the country for up to a year. It has only been available for a few months but some adventurous travellers are already taking advantage of the scheme.

Chelsea Waite, originally from the US, started her own business in 2020 and has been working remotely ever since. After visiting Italy in 2017 for the first time, she



you." Italy's digital nomad visa is also a little different to some others in Europe. It is aimed at highly skilled workers who carry out "highly qualified work activity" and earn at least €28,000 a year.

Part of the application process for Chelsea meant having her degree certified. She thought that having it notarised by the US Secretary of State's office would be enough. But Italy requires qualifications to be verified through the Information Centre on Academic Mobility and Equivalence or CIMEA, which manages the recognition of foreign degrees within the country.

"You have to upload your proof of degree there, you have to upload your transcripts and then it goes through an internal review process which can take days or it can take months."

It is nuanced requirements like this, she says, that can cause roadblocks in your application.

What are Chelsea's top tips for getting Italy's digital nomad visa? Chelsea has three tips for anyone looking to follow in her footsteps and apply for Italy's digital



"And my third piece of recommendation would just be to stay flexible and to come financially prepared."

She says digital nomads need to consider fees like deposits on flats or houses, health

there about how to apply for Italy's digital nomad visa, Chelsea is now writing a guide to try and help other people navigate the process.



China becomes pro in West's game. How should West react?

Ding Gang

The Paris Olympics have ended, and we witnessed a nail-biter. Team USA and Team China ended up in a dead heat, each securing 40 gold medals. Talk about a photo finish!

This tie reflects the changing dynamics of global power. However, when discussing the geopolitical meaning of China's challenge, many Western analysts need to pay attention to one fact: China, adhering to the rulebook of the Olympic Games, is playing a game, the rules of which were written by the West.

Think about it. After World War II, when Uncle Sam and his European buddies were calling the shots, who would've thought that one day China would be going toe-to-toe with the US at the Olympics? For a long time,

China wasn't even invited to the party. Now, China has become a heavyweight contender. The West wrote the rules, and China learned to play and is now a pro. That's going to ruffle some feathers among the old-timers.

On the Olympic stage, Chinese athletes fight for gold alongside their American counterparts. They're playing fair and square. They're training hard, competing honestly and following that "faster, higher, stronger - together" motto. Isn't that what the West has been preaching all along?

But when China starts bringing home the bacon, some Westerners get their knickers in a twist. Chinese swimmer Pan Zhanle, known as China's "flying fish," passed 21 drug tests from May to July and broke a world record during the competition. Yet an Australian coach questioned the achievement, saying that "it's not humanly

possible."

This skepticism exposes the extreme bias some in the West have against global and human development. Their arrogance is built upon such biases. Facts are facts, and gold is gold, regardless of the color of the winner's skin; it doesn't lessen the weight of the gold medal. Sure, China has its "state-run system" approach to sports, but what nerve has that touched in the Americans? Has it broken any Olympic rules?

The New York Times (NYT) even published a piece asking if China's "state-run system" in sports has changed, which seems like an unnecessary worry. Instead, the NYT should explore three key questions to better understand China's growing influence on the global stage: Why do these established entities feel threatened by China's success and compliance with the



rules they initially set? Can the existing systems accommodate China's rise? How might the West respond to China's rise, to ensure it can sustain its influence while still cooperating with China?

Overall, the content emphasizes the need for a deeper analysis of geopolitical power shifts and the implications for global governance.

History has a funny way of repeating itself. Once upon a time, the US was the new kid on the block, and Europe wasn't too thrilled about it. Now, it's China's turn in the spotlight.

Olympic medals are like a big pie - when someone gets a bigger slice, others get less. The global economy works the same way. The pie is getting bigger, and everyone still wants a bigger slice of it. We have to remember that the US and the West do not necessarily get a bigger share, even if the procedures and rules for dividing the pie are made by them.

Why shouldn't Chinese people stand on the podium? If you lose, you can catch up, but thinking that Chinese people shouldn't be up

there and finding all sorts of reasons to obstruct Chinese athletes from competing is itself a disdain for rules and order.

The Paris Olympics might be over, but the competition between China and the US continues. Uncle Sam will keep throwing hurdles onto China's track. But can the US push China off the track? Fat chance! In the future, it is expected to see more Chinese athletes on those podiums at the Olympics.

China's rise isn't a threat - it's an opportunity. It's proof that human civilization can bloom in different ways. It can't be stopped.

The writer is a senior editor with People's Daily, and currently a senior fellow with the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies at Renmin University of China

US should meet China halfway to maintain global financial stability

Global Times

There have been multiple media reports that a meeting of the China-US Financial Working Group was held in Shanghai on Thursday and Friday. This was the fifth bilateral meeting since the two countries agreed to establish two economic and financial working groups in September last year. The New York Times said the meeting aims to strengthen communication and "discuss ways to maintain economic and financial stability." The meeting focused on issues such as macroeconomic and financial stability, the International Monetary Fund and capital market management. This is particularly urgent and important at a time when the international order is facing challenges and China-US economic relations are tense.

This is another exchange between China and the US in the economic, trade and financial field following the visit of a high-level US business delegation to China. Judging from the topics discussed, it shows the US attempt to have dialogue and coordination with China on financial stability and to respond to potential economic issues. At the same time, it highlights the importance of ensuring global economic and financial stability under

the current complex situation. The willingness for dialogue and coordination shown by both parties is also pursuit of stability amid the recent increase in global economic and financial risks and tensions.

The importance of China and the US as the world's top two economies in the global economy cannot be ignored. Economic and financial cooperation between the two countries has a profound impact on the global economic trajectory. If economic and trade relations between the two major countries remain stable, the global economy will surely benefit. The original intention of establishing the China-US Financial Working Group and the China-US Economic Working Group was also to "sit down and talk" through this platform. In the previous four meetings of the China-US Financial Working Group, the two sides have had professional, pragmatic, candid and constructive discussions on the two countries' monetary policies and financial stability, financial regulatory cooperation, anti-money laundering and anti-terrorist financing, financial infrastructure and other issues.

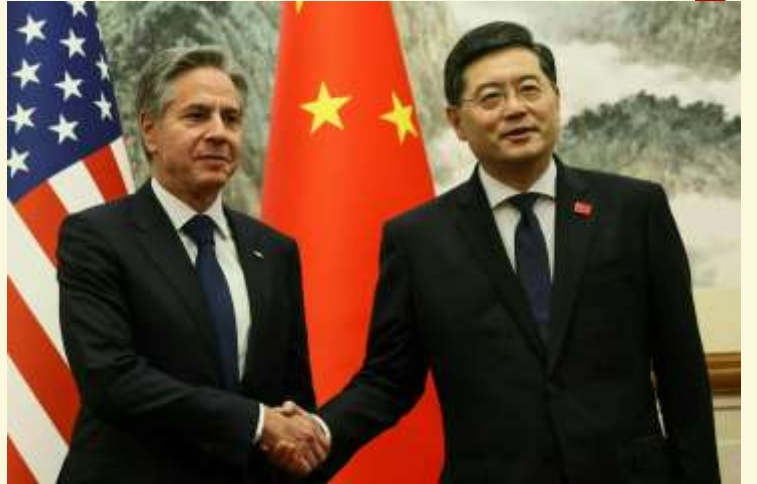
We have also noticed that many foreign media, when reporting on the China-US Financial Working Group

dialogue, mentioned the current trade tensions faced by China and the US. In particular, some US officials continue to make erroneous remarks on issues such as overcapacity in an attempt to put pressure on Beijing, exaggerating the risks that so-called Chinese macroeconomic imbalances and overcapacity pose to the global economy. It is hoped that through this dialogue, the US members of the working group can objectively and comprehensively understand China's attitude and policies in reforming its financial system and participating in global financial governance and cooperation, creating space for the continued development of pragmatic dialogue between the two countries.

In addition, talking about the current global financial risks and the impact of macroeconomic imbalances on countries in the world, the biggest uncertainty is undoubtedly still the US itself. The Federal Reserve's previous act of priming the pump has caused inflation, which has become a Sword of Damocles hanging over the global economy. Uncertainty over whether or not cut interest rates continues to disturb the global stock market, bond market and foreign exchange market. Furthermore, the US national debt exceeding \$35 trillion has also greatly increased global concerns about financial stability. Earlier this year, the IMF gave rare criticism of the US for unsustainable fiscal policies that undermine global financial stability.

Just this week, hundreds of lawyers from around the world jointly sent a letter to US President Joe Biden, calling on the US to end its use of widespread unilateral economic and financial sanctions, saying they lead to economic instability, hunger and reduced access to medicine and essential goods. "We consider the unilateral application of certain economic sanctions to constitute collective punishment." Sanctions have not only caused instability and poverty in many countries such as Venezuela and Cuba, but also plunged the people into living difficulties, and even threatened their survival. The Washington Post previously stated bluntly that sanctions "have become an almost reflexive weapon (of the US) in perpetual economic warfare." How the US effectively responds to these global concerns is equally important to maintaining global financial stability.

China's attitude to maintaining global financial stability is consistent. The Third Plenary Session of the 20th Central Committee of the CPC emphasized the need to



actively participate in international financial governance. When it comes to developing relations with the US in all aspects, including finance, China has been steadfast in its principles of mutual respect, peaceful coexistence, and win-win cooperation. This is also the key to why China and the US can sit down, talk and talk well. It is hoped that the US can meet China halfway, truly make responsible efforts to maintain global financial stability, and take the initiative to assume the responsibility of a major country in global economic governance.

Global Times

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High Commissioner Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri hoists national flag on I-Day



News wire

Canberra: To celebrate the Independence Day of Pakistan, a flag hoisting ceremony was held at the High Commission for Pakistan, Canberra. High Commissioner Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri raised the flag with the national anthem of Pakistan. The flag hoisting proceeded with the recitation from the Holy Quran. Messages of the President and the Prime Minister were

also read out. Speaking on the occasion, the High Commissioner paid tribute to the founding fathers of Pakistan for their sacrifices to create a separate homeland for Muslims of the subcontinent. He appreciated the role of overseas Pakistanis and called them an asset to the country.

Amb Asim Iftikhar Ahmad hoists national flag on I-Day

Paris: On the occasion of the 78th Independence Day of Pakistan, Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad this week hoisted national flag to the

tune of the national anthem at the Embassy of Pakistan, Paris and welcomed distinguished members of the community and French friends including large number of children.



The Ambassador noted that 14th August was truly auspicious as it brought together the entire nation – in celebration, in paying homage to the Quaid-e-Azam and other leaders of the freedom movement, in remembrance of the supreme sacrifices of their forefathers, in honoring their heroes and drawing inspiration from the glorious past and the tremendous achievements over the decades. Congratulating all on the Independence Day, the ambassador emphasized upon the need to draw guidance from the words of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah when he said “If we want to make this great State of Pakistan happy and prosperous, we should wholly and solely concentrate on the well-being of the people, especially of the masses and the poor”. All segments of the society in particular women and youth had an important role to play in national development, he said, stressing upon the value of collective and individual responsibility in upholding and promoting the image and prestige of Pakistan. Ambassador Ahmad also highlighted the plight



of Kashmiri and Palestinian brothers and sisters, who had been struggling for decades against illegal occupation and oppression. Pakistan reaffirmed its complete solidarity and

full support for the people of the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir and Palestine for their freedom and right to self-determination, he added.

Tallest African statue lit in green and white to mark Pakistan I-Day

Dakar: To commemorate Pakistan's 78th Independence Day, the Embassy of Pakistan in Senegal hosted a spectacular light show, illuminating Senegal's iconic monument with the vibrant colors of the Pakistani flag. The ceremony was attended by the Pakistani diaspora in Senegal, and Senegalese dignitaries from the ministries, think tanks, media and private sector. Pakistan's Ambassador to Senegal Saima Sayed, in her remarks, paid tribute to Quaid- Azam

Muhammad Ali Jinnah and the founding fathers of Pakistan. She mentioned that August 14 was not only a commemoration of the independence movement of 1947, it was also a symbol of the resilience and courage of the Pakistani nation. Administrator General of the African Renaissance Monument Birame Mbarou Diouf, in his remarks, expressed the desire to continue such collaborations with Pakistan in the realm of culture and heritage. This followed the launch of the light show by Ambassador Sayed and Administrator General



Diouf which lit up the 198 stairs and the Monument – the tallest African statue – with images of the Pakistani flag and pictures of the Minare Pakistan. With Pakistani national songs in the background and the colours of Pakistan being reflected on the grand African Renaissance Monument, the Pakistani diaspora of Senegal celebrated Pakistan's Independence Day with their Senegalese friends. The African Renaissance Monument is 52 meters high, sits atop a 300-foot-high hill and creates a towering image that is visible from most parts of the city. The Monument is known to represent a memorial for the past, a celebration of the present, and a beacon for the future, symbolizing the “triumph



of African liberation from several centuries of racism and imprisonment. Pakistan and Senegal enjoy close brotherly relations since 1960. Both countries are working together to enhance engagement in diverse fields like, trade, agriculture, education, tourism and this event was a reflection of the strong brotherly ties between Pakistan and Senegal.

Rehman Malik's Institution, IRR International commended for humanitarian efforts in London event



Abdullah Jan

Islamabad: The Institute of Research & Reforms International (IRR), founded by former Interior Minister of Pakistan Senator A. Rehman Malik, was this week commended for its humanitarian services to victims of terrorism, including the successful evacuation of 40 female athletes and their families from Afghanistan, who were at high risk under Taliban rule. Marking three years since the Taliban seized power in Afghanistan, IRR, in collaboration with SADAAH and the Rehman Malik Foundation, hosted an event at Soho House London. The event highlighted the plight, oppression, and suffering of Afghan women and girls, condemning the ongoing gender apartheid and human rights violations. The event also emphasized Pakistan's ongoing efforts and sacrifices in combating terrorism and underscored the suffering of people in the tribal districts.

Speakers, including Baroness Hussein-Ece, Elham Ehsas, Mandy Sanghera, Tim Walker, Sarah Sands, and Anil Qasemi, highlighted the ongoing gender apartheid in Afghanistan under Taliban rule. They emphasized the global community's moral responsibility to support Afghan women and girls, who continue to resist oppression despite severe risks. The call for international solidarity and action was echoed, stressing the need to remember the millions of Afghan girls deprived of education and the importance of supporting Afghan refugees as they rebuild their lives. Speaking on behalf of IRR and the Rehman Malik Foundation, Ali Rehman Malik highlighted the devastating impact of terrorism, particularly from the Taliban, on the social and economic fabric of Pakistan and Afghanistan. He emphasized that Afghan women, especially young girls, are the most vulnerable under Taliban

rule. Malik stressed the importance of international solidarity in addressing these atrocities and urged continued support for the Afghan population in their struggle for basic human rights and freedoms. Expressing grave concerns over the new wave of terrorism in Pakistan, Ali Rehman Malik commended Pakistan's resolve and continued efforts to eliminate terrorism. He noted that no country has suffered more than Pakistan in the war against terrorism, enduring massive economic and developmental losses and the sacrifice of over 76,000 civilians and troops. Malik expressed pride in IRR International's commitment to helping those in distress, particularly those affected by terrorism. He also reflected on his late father, former Interior Minister Senator A. Rehman Malik, who fought terrorism on the front lines and supported subjugated humanity, often referring to the Taliban as "Zaliman"—the cruel. Malik vowed to continue his father's legacy of serving humanity through IRR International and the Rehman Malik Foundation. Shabnam Nasimi, executive director of SADAA and Afghan women's rights advocate, added: "Three years of darkness for the women and girls in Afghanistan. Imprisoned at home and deprived of their basic human rights to an education. We must not let this go on. Stand and speak up for them." The discussions concluded with a strong call for the international community to intensify efforts to combat human rights violations by terrorists. Participants were encouraged to advocate for policy changes, support humanitarian efforts, and raise awareness about gender apartheid in Afghanistan.

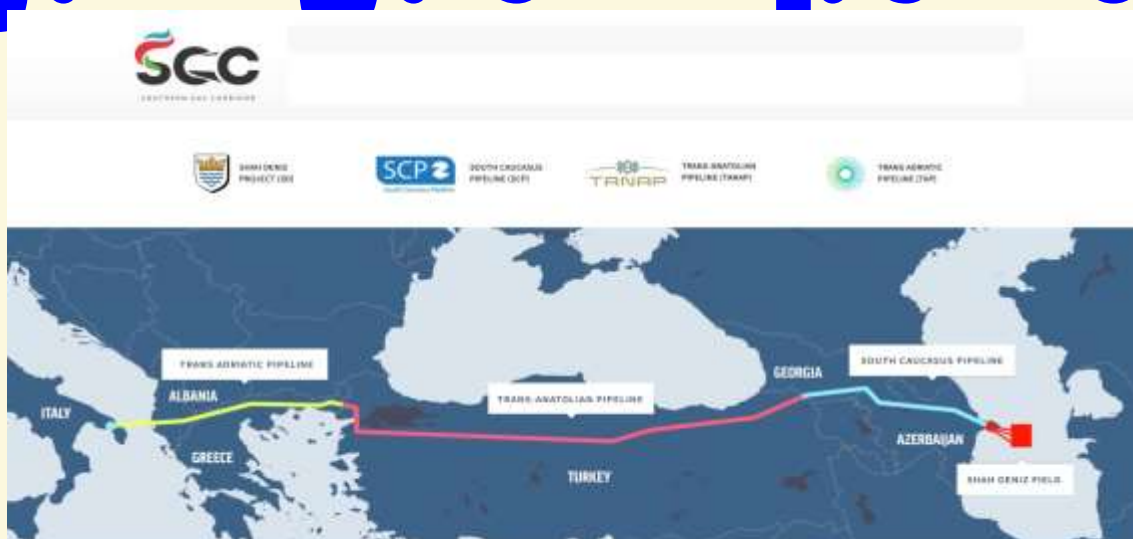


Greece reduces spending on Azerbaijani gas imports

NewsWire

Athens: Greece reduced its expenditure on natural gas imports from Azerbaijan in May 2024, Azernews reports, citing Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union. In May 2024, Greece's spending on Azerbaijani gas imports was 52.6 million euros, down from 68.8 million euros in May 2023, marking a 23.5 percent decrease. During the same period, Greece imported nearly 94 million cubic meters of natural gas from Azerbaijan, compared to 94.2 million cubic meters in May 2023, reflecting a 0.2 percent decline. From January to May 2024, Azerbaijan exported 461 million cubic meters of gas to Greece, valued at 252.3 million euros. This is a reduction from the 488.7 million

cubic meters worth 465.7 million euros exported in the same months of 2023. In 2023, total Azerbaijani gas exports to Greece amounted to nearly 2 billion cubic meters, with a value of 871.9 million euros. Azerbaijan commenced gas deliveries to Europe through the Southern Gas Corridor on December 31, 2020. This corridor transports gas from the Caspian Sea region to European nations via Georgia and Türkiye, with a project cost of 33 billion US dollars. It is anticipated that the capital costs for the Southern Gas Corridor will be recovered within 8 to 10 years. In July 2022, Azerbaijan and the EU agreed to double the gas supply through the Southern Gas Corridor from 10 billion cubic meters to 20 billion cubic meters by 2027.



Bulgaria issues only short-stay Schengen Visas & has no VIS connection problems, MFA clarifies

NewsWire

Sofia: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria this week clarified that the country only issues Schengen visas for short-term stays, stressing that it has no problem with its connectivity to the Schengen visa system. According to the Ministry, over 35,000 Schengen visas have been issued by the end of July. Bulgaria's MFA comments came following reports related to the issuance of Schengen visas and potential difficulties in obtaining a visa. Bulgarian diplomatic representations abroad issue only Schengen visas for short-term stays, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria has emphasised. The same has reiterated that Bulgaria has no problem

with its connectivity to the Schengen Visa Information System (VIS), Schengen.News reports. According to the Ministry, by the end of July, the number of short-term visas surpassed 35,000. Bulgaria's MFA's comments come in response to reports related to Schengen visa issuance and potential difficulties in obtaining a visa or visa refusals. Through a statement, the Ministry stressed that the linking of the Bulgarian National Visa System to the Schengen Visa System became effective through the so-called 'passive access'. By virtue of Council Decision (EU) 2024/210 of December 30, 2023, as of March 31, 2024, Bulgaria issued only Schengen visas for short stays and by the end of July 2024, the number of issued visas exceeded 35,000.



Since then, Bulgaria has been granted active access to the EU Central Visa Information System (CVIS), and information from Bulgaria's national visa system on all visa applications and decisions has been recorded in CVIS. Bulgaria has no problems with its connectivity to the Schengen visa system. The Ministry recalled that based on European legislation, the possession of a visa is not the only reason for a citizen of a third country to be admitted to the Schengen Zone. According to the Ministry, relevant authorities have powers which allow them to refuse entry into EU countries to third-country nationals who do not meet the required entry conditions mentioned in Regulation (EU) 2016/399 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 9 March 2016 on a Union Code of Procedure of the movement of persons across borders (Schengen Borders Code). Bulgaria began issuing Schengen visas on March 31 this year, when the country became part of the Schengen Area by air and sea, in spite of the fact that border controls continue to remain effective. In a bid to attract a larger number of foreigners, authorities in Bulgaria recently announced that they intensified the efforts to facilitate the issuance of tourist and work visas. Through a statement, Bulgaria's Minister of Tourism Evtim Miloshev and the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Maria Angelieva unfolded plans to ease the issuance of tourist and work visas. However, as a result of the implementation of the new version of the National Visa Information System (NVIS) the Bulgarian consular authorities have temporarily suspended the issuance of visas from August 9 until August 18.

Increased interest among foreigners to obtain Portugal Schengen visa



applications each year. The latest data from the Schengen Statistics Portal shows that Portugal received a total of 207,654 visa applications in 2023. Of the total number of foreigners who applied for the document, 173,927 had their visa approval, while 33,220 had their visa denied.

The Europe Summer Tourism Index by SchengenVisa-Info, ESTI, has ranked Portugal as the fifth best European country for summer vacations.

According to ESTI, Portugal has been recognised for having some of the best beaches that attract a high

number of tourists each year.

Portugal has also been ranked high when it comes to its friendliness. The country has been recognised as the third in the top ten list of being the most welcoming.

Portugal also has a high score for culinary, the country is considered to have one of the best cuisines in the European continent.

The full list of the top ten best European destinations for summer vacations is as follows:

Spain
Italy

Greece
Türkiye
Portugal
France
Montenegro
Croatia
Albania
Malta

On the other hand, the least popular countries for summer vacations in the European continent are Belarus, Moldova, Kosovo, and Liechtenstein.

News wire

Lisbon: Foreigners' interest in obtaining a Portugal Schengen visa continues to remain high despite the summer season coming to an end soon.

According to data from Google Trends, searches worldwide for a Portugal Schengen visa are currently up 90 per cent.

Even though not everyone who searches for a Portugal visa applies for the document, the high number of searches still indicates that many are interested in obtaining a visa and visiting the country, Schengen.News reports.

Due to the high temperatures that have dominated the EU's most sought-after summer destinations these months, travellers have grown more cautious about the weather conditions.

This might be one reason there is suddenly a higher interest than usual in obtaining a Portugal Schengen visa



in late summer.

Those who plan on applying for a Portugal Schengen visa in the next weeks or months are advised to take care of their application ahead of time.

Portugal Schengen visa applications can be submitted six months prior to the planned entry to the country at the earliest and 15 days before the planned entry to the country at the latest.

Portugal accepts a high number of Schengen visa



US Mission to Pakistan welcomes Natalie A Baker as new deputy chief of mission

Celina Ali

Islamabad: The United States (US) Mission to Pakistan this week welcomed the arrival of Deputy Chief of Mission Natalie A Baker.

Prior to assuming the duties of Deputy Chief of Mission at US Embassy Islamabad, Baker served as Deputy Chief of Mission at the US Embassy in Doha, Qatar.

Baker has previously served as Director of the Office of North African Affairs in the US Department of State's Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs; Deputy Chief and Chargé d'Affaires, a.i., of the US Mission to Libya; Deputy Director of the Iran Regional Presence Office at the US Consulate in Dubai; and Economic Counselor at the US Embassy in Kuwait. In Kuwait, she worked with the Department of De-

fense to support the withdrawal of US forces from Iraq.

From 2009-2011, Natalie Baker served as Political and Economic Counselor in Libya, as the bilateral relationship was normalizing after a nearly 30-year pause. She remained in Libya until the Libyan Revolution forced the US Embassy to evacuate in February 2011.

Baker's previous other assignments included Special Assistant in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, Consular Officer in Islamabad, Pakistan, and Cultural Officer in Ashgabat, Turkmenistan.

She holds a bachelor's degree from Princeton University and a master's degree in public policy from Harvard University. She is a 2017 Distinguished Graduate of the National War College, National Defense University of the United States of America.



Stores in Japan set up prayer rooms as Muslim visitors increase



could not find a prayer room and had to return to their accommodation.

"Prayer rooms are necessary infrastructure similar to bathrooms and nursing rooms," said a retail industry official, adding that people in the industry need to cooperate to install such rooms.

Among other department stores in Tokyo, Shibuya Parco in the Shibuya shopping district has opened a worship room.

Aeon Mall Co., which operates large-scale shopping complexes, has installed prayer rooms in seven outlets across Chiba, Kanagawa, Aichi, Hiroshima and Okinawa prefectures, with plans to expand the service to other stores.

The number of visitors to Japan from Indonesia, Malaysia and Turkey surpassed 870,000 in 2023, up 2.7-fold from a decade ago, according to the Japan National Tourism Organization.



Covert Report

Tokyo: Department stores and shopping malls in Japan are increasingly setting up prayer rooms to meet the need for Muslims amid a growing number of visitors from Islamic countries on the back of a weak yen.

At the Matsuya Ginza department store in Tokyo's upscale shopping district, a number of people lined up in front of a room designated as a "prayer room" at certain times of the day.

The room is equipped with a foot-washing area for cleansing parts of the body before worship and has mats for several people to offer prayers.

A Malaysian woman in her 30s said she had searched for a prayer room online before arriving in Japan, saying she was thankful as it is difficult to find one in the middle of the metropolitan area.

Muslims typically pray five times a day, though some reduce the frequency to three times while on a trip, according to the Japan Tourism Agency. Their activities would be limited if they



European Union Ambassador Dr Riina Kionka pays tribute to Pakistan



Celina Ali
Islamabad: European Union Ambassador Dr. Riina Kionka this week extended congratulations to

wished Pakistanis a happy Independence Day and reaffirmed the EU's commitment to supporting the country's sustainable socioeconomic de-

velopment. The ceremony was sponsored by the EU mission with its national flag and aired on a Pakistani television channel. The people in Pakistan and abroad appreciated it

profusely as she started her work on trumpet at the outer gate of her mission and concluded it in the balcony of the building. Kionka is ambassador of the EU, political

and economic union of 27 member states, located in Europe. She has vast experience of diplomacy in various countries with important positions. She hails from Estonia where she had worked as career diplomat in the ministry of foreign affairs.



Pakistanis on their 77th Independence Day and honoured the country's "vibrant diversity in the spirit of respect, unity, and inclusion envisioned by its founder, Quaid-i-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah." At a special event on the premises of the European Union Delegation to Pakistan here, Dr. Riina joined Pakistani musicians to perform a unique trumpet rendition of the national anthem as a gesture of honour. She



Pakistan, UK agree to continue counter-terrorism cooperation

NewsWire

London: The United Kingdom has acknowledged unprecedented sacrifices of Pakistan

rendered in war against terror. This was stated by British Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State Hamish Falconer during

a meeting with Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi in London this week.

Speaking on the occasion, Mo-



his Naqvi said Pakistan is a victim of terrorism and its armed forces have rendered unmatched sacrifices in the war against terrorism. He said the collective efforts to curb the scourge of terrorism will prove result oriented.

Mohsin Naqvi further said second phase of repatriation of Afghan refugees will be started soon. He further said that Pakistan is a peace loving country and want good and cordial relations in the region.

High Commissioner Dr Faisal lauds Abdullah for saving girl in UK

NewsWire

London: Days after a British-Pakistani man saved the life of an 11-year-old girl, who was shockingly attacked in London's busy Leicester Square area, the country's high commissioner to the UK, Dr M. Faisal appreciated his efforts and said he represented Pakistan.

The good Samaritan, who disarmed the attacker as he stabbed the young girl, was identified as 29-year-old Abdullah who works as a security guard at the TWG Tea shop in

Leicester Square.

This [Abdullah] is Pakistan," Dr Faisal said, gesturing to Abdullah who had been invited to the High Commission's Independence Day celebration at the mission in Belgravia. He said everyone he has met on the British side is very proud of Abdullah.

The event was marked by a flag-hoisting led by Ambassador Faisal, who also conferred civil awards on distinguished individuals contributing to various fields, including business,

philanthropy, and politics.

The event, attended by UK parliamentarians, diplomats, and the Pakistani community, concluded with a cake-cutting ceremony to mark the nation's independence.

Several British dailies and news channels have praised the heroism shown by Abdullah in tackling the attacker, who has been identified as 32-year-old Ioan Pintaru. The suspect

appeared at West-minster magistrates court and was also charged with possession of a bladed article in a public place, which the court heard was a steak knife. The court heard that Pintaru is a Romanian citizen of no fixed address and the charges were read to him through an interpreter during the 10-minute proceedings.



"It is our choices, Harry, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities." - J.K. Rowling

"Imperfection is beauty, madness is genius and it's better to be absolutely ridiculous than absolutely boring." - Marilyn Monroe

US government clears sale of additional MQ-9 Reapers to Italy

Celina Ali

Islamabad: The US government has cleared the potential sale of six General Atomics Aeronautical Systems (GA-ASI) MQ-9 Block 5 Reaper unmanned air vehicles to Italy. The possible package is valued at \$738 million, says the US Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA). Included in the package are three ground control stations, sensors, communications equipment, as well as other systems, logistics, and support.



"The proposed sale will improve Italy's capability to meet current and future threats by expanding and improving the Italian air force's MQ-9 fleet and advancing US and NATO policy goals of security and interoperability," says the DSCA. "Italy already has MQ-9 Block 5 aircraft with strike capabilities in its inventory and will have no difficulty absorbing these articles into its armed forces." The Italian air force acquired the MQ-9A Predator B as a replacement for its earlier General Atomics MQ-1 Predator fleet. The US company late last year delivered a first of two new

Block 5 air vehicles to the service, as part of a mid-life modernisation activity which also covers updates to four Block 1-standard aircraft. Features introduced with the Block 5 air vehicle include an automatic take-off and landing capability, improved landing gear, and new datalinks.



Italian Ambassador to Pakistan H.E. Marilina Armellin & her husband

France commemorates 80-year anniversary of Allied landings in Provence

Liaquat Ali

Islamabad: France this week commemorated the 1944 Allied landings in Provence, an event overshadowed by the Normandy

landings two months earlier, but still key to the World War II endgame in Europe. Six African leaders joined official events

as President Emmanuel Macron singled out the contribution of soldiers recruited -- often forcibly -- in French overseas colonies, notably in Africa.

It took decades for France to highlight the crucial role of non-white soldiers in the fighting.

Cameron President Paul Biya told Thursday's ceremony that their effort had been decisive.

"There would have been no Allied victory without the contribution from the other peoples, without the foreigners," he said. "The fight was conducted together, to defend the universal values and ideas of peace and justice."

Macron added in his speech that "when it comes to defending the nation's vital interests all those who identify as French are called upon to come together".

Much of the second part of the day's events was cancelled because of storm warnings, including a reception for guests on a helicopter carrier and a re-enactment of the landings in Toulon, at the centre of fighting on August 15, 1944.

That day 100,000 American, British and Canadian troops landed on the beaches of the Var region on the French Riviera. They were followed by 250,000 soldiers fighting for France, recruited mostly from overseas colonies in Africa, with the aim of recapturing



the key ports of Marseille and Toulon from the German occupiers. They succeeded within two weeks, having encountered only limited resistance from an exhausted German army.

