

Lisbon: Cristiano Ronaldo's home country Portugal continues to find unique ways to honour the football legend who is known to be its greatest goal machine with no signs of slowing down anytime soon. With over 130 goals for his national team along with numerous accolades, including leading Portugal to a historic victory in Euro 2016 and lifting **(Page-8)**

Islamabad: The United Kingdom this week announced its commitment to support seven climate change initiatives in Pakistan, including the development of solar farms and the use of artificial intelligence **(Page-11)**

EU, China hold 'constructive' talks on EV tariffs



NewsWire

Brussels: The EU's trade chief, Valdis Dombrovskis, said Thursday he had held "constructive" talks with China's commerce minister, Wang Wentao, as Beijing seeks a deal with Brussels to avoid steep tariffs on imported electric vehicles. The meeting was held as divisions grow in Europe over the proposed tariffs, after Spain urged the EU last week to "reconsider" plans for duties of up to 36% on Chinese electric cars, joining Germany in opposition. "Constructive meeting with Minister of Commerce Wang Wentao. Both sides agreed to intensify efforts to find an effective, enforceable and WTO (World Trade Organization) compatible solution," Dombrovskis said on X. Wang also spoke to businesses in the EV sector on Wednesday in Brussels after which he said China "will certainly persevere until the final moments of the consultations," as quoted in a statement by the Chinese Chamber of Commerce to the EU. The European Commission in July announced plans to levy import duties on electric vehicles imported from China after an anti-subsidy investigation started last year found they were unfairly undermining European rivals. The EU wants to protect its automobile industry, a jewel in Europe's industrial



crown, providing jobs to around 14 million people. The commission is in charge of trade policy for the 27-country bloc. The tariffs are currently provisional and will only become definitive for five years after a vote by member states that is expected before the end of October. China has angrily responded to the EU's plans, warning it would unleash a trade war. Last month China also filed an appeal with the WTO over the tariffs. Beijing has already launched its own

investigations into European brandy and some dairy and pork products imported into China. Dombrovskis told Wang that the probes were "unwarranted, are based on questionable allegations, and lack sufficient evidence," the EU's trade spokesperson, Olof Gill, said. "(He) thus called for these investigations to be terminated and informed the Chinese side that the EU will do its utmost to defend the interests of its industries," Gill added in a statement.

Denmark updates income levels for foreign work permit applicants



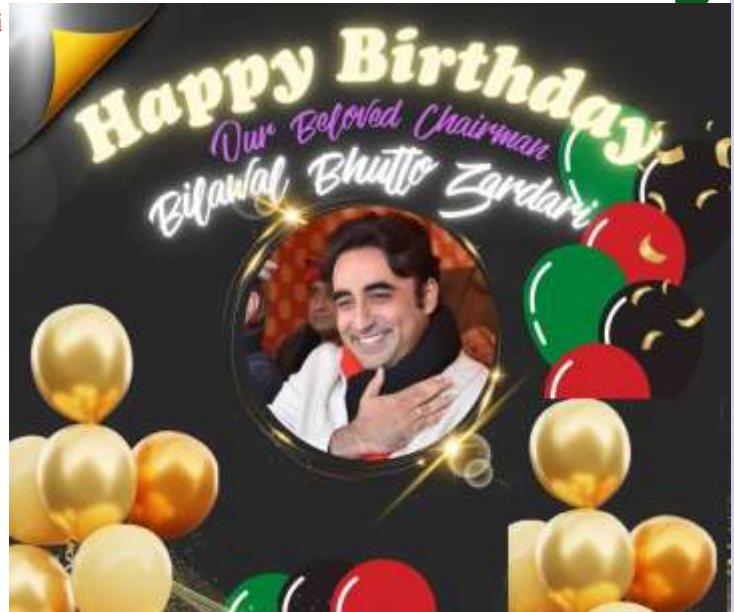
Covert Report

Copenhagen: Denmark has applied new income levels for foreigners applying for a residence and work permit for work purposes from October 1, 2024. The update aims to ensure that foreigners receive salaries in line with the Danish standards. Those who apply for a work permit before September 30 will have their application assessed based on the statistics for the third quarter of 2024. The Danish authorities have announced that the country will enforce a new income requirement from October 1, 2024, for foreign nationals applying for a work permit to take up employment in the country.

PPP celebrates Bilawal Bhutto's 36th birthday

Liaquat Ali

Islamabad: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari this week celebrated his 36th birthday with party leaders and workers cutting cakes at ceremonies throughout the country. As Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari marked his 36th birthday, his sister Bakhtawar also took to her social media to wish him with a video of a cute interaction between her brother and her son, Mir Hakim Mahmood Chaudhry. In the heart-warming video, reposted by Bakhtawar, 34, on her Instagram story, Bilawal can be seen engaging in a creative activity with her two-year-old son with whom he seems to share a special bond. "Happy 36th Birthday," she wrote on her Instagram Story and mentioned the PPP chairman's official Instagram handle. She also dotted the text with three red heart emojis. Bilawal who is the grandson of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and son of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto and President Asif Ali Zardari was born in Karachi on September 21, 1988. He completed his education from Oxford University and also got his political education from his mother Shaheed Benazir Bhutto, ex-prime minister of Pakistan. After the tragic death of his mother and ex-prime minister of Pakistan Benazir Bhutto in December 2007 he was elected as chairman of Pakistan People's Party. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari first elected as Member National Assembly (MNA) in 2018 from Larkana constituency but he also took part in elections from Lyari. He was elected as MNA from Larkana in 2023 elections but did not form his government and decided to join hands and extend full support to the incumbent government. He also introduced a renowned slogan (Democracy is the best



revenge) in society. Nowadays he is playing vital role inside and outside the Parliament. President Asif Zardari on different occasions express his desire to see Bilawal Bhutto Zardari as the prime minister of Pakistan as he has all the qualities to become prime minister of Pakistan. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari also served as foreign minister from 27 April 2022 to 10 August 2023. On the occasion of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's 36 birthday, workers of Pakistan Peoples Party holding different functions across the country by cutting cakes, and praying to Almighty Allah for his long life and prosperity.

CHINA'S 75TH anniversary celebrated



the warm and friendly welcome he received. Expressing gratitude to the Chinese leadership for their support during challenging times, the PM acknowledged that without Chinese assistance, meeting IMF conditionalities would have been extremely difficult. He reiterated Pakistan's unwavering support for China's positions on Hong Kong, Taiwan, and other international issues. PM Shehbaz Sharif announced that Pakistan is entering the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). This phase will enhance cooperation in various sectors, including agriculture, information technology, and mining, he added.

Celina Ali Islamabad: China's National Day Reception was hosted by the Chinese Embassy this week with Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari and Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif among the prominent guests. The President and the PM on the occasion extended heartfelt congratulations to the Chinese people and leadership on the 75th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China. Speaking at China's National Day Reception ceremony in Islamabad, President Zardari maintained his commitment to collaborate with China for shared prosperity and the promotion of global peace

and stability. He noted that Pakistan and China are "all-weather friends and partners in peace and progress," highlighting the invaluable contributions of successive generations to transform their friendship into a strategic cooperation. He expressed optimism about furthering the high-quality development of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), affirming that China will always find Pakistan a trusted partner and reliable friend. PM Shehbaz Sharif also celebrated the occasion, calling it a significant day for both nations during his address. He reflected on his visit to China in June, noting



8 of the best coastal towns in Italy you may not have heard of



They say Odysseus stopped at Ponza and was bewitched by Circe into staying for a year. Well, that was his excuse. And who wouldn't want to linger in this low-key island town? There are no sights to speak of, public transport is near non-existent and compared to sophisticated Capri, it seems like a throwback to the 1970s. Like the Roman weekenders who visit, you come to remember how to relax on an island that rises sheer from the sea. Swim in aquamarine seas, dawdle among bright houses in the harbour and eat fritto misto (a selection of fried seafood) at beachfront restaurant Da Enzo al Frontone.

Best viewpoint: A terrace by the lighthouse at the end of Via Molo Musco for a view of the colourful houses on Via Banchina di Fazio.

3. Vieste, Puglia

Like Dubrovnik just across the Adriatic, Vieste stacks up on the cliffs of a promontory. It's a maze of white houses, steps and arches, where washing is strung like bunting and cats doze in sunny corners. Visit the 11th-century Norman cathedral for Baroque frescos, but otherwise the best plan is to just go wherever your feet take you. You'll get lost among narrow alleyways, and that's half the point — stumbling upon fragments of centuries-old walls or a favourite pizzeria you'd have otherwise missed. For beach-time, there's Del Castello, studded by a monolithic stack of limestone at its town's end.

Best viewpoint: Via Judeca for a view of Punta San Francesco, a medieval cluster of buildings on a finger of rock jutting into the sea.

Sandy beach with bathes sat on the sand surrounded by pastel-coloured buildings perched on the cliffside

People walking down steps surrounded by white buildings Perched upon the cliffs of Italy's Adriatic coast, Vieste's narrow alleyways, lined with white houses, lead to golden-sand beaches.

4. Orosei, Sardinia Nicely rustic, Orosei's medieval town feels lived in and genuine. The smell of fresh bread drifts through its cobbled alleys; time is measured by the bells from its 13 churches. It's a fine base, then, to explore the Golfo de Orosei, the wild, uncommercialised alternative to glitzy Costa Smeralda. Though there's good hiking in the gulf's national park, you'll find it hard to stray far from the beaches. Cala Goloritzè and Cala Mariolu are the famous ones, visited on beach cruises. But you're spoiled for choice: Spiaggia Biderosa, Capo Comino and Sa Curcuria have sugar-white sand and are backed by tall pines — and never get too busy.

Best viewpoint: Cala Mariolu as you arrive by boat — a fringe of fine, white shingle beneath cliffs lapped by sapphire shallows.

5. Atrani, Campania

It's the Amalfi coast, but not as you know it. Around the headland from Amalfi town, Atrani's wedge of pastel buildings is a legacy of its past as a suburb of Amalfi dogs. They're all tied together by Escher-esque scalinatelle (roughly translated as little staircases), which look their best around the church of Santa Maria Maddalena. There are no coach tours here, meaning you can enjoy a crowd-free aperitif at La Risacca on pretty Piazza Umberto I, then dine in peace at a family trattoria



Italian Ambassador to Pakistan, Marilina Armellini

island is in a national marine park — and footpaths go across a rugged interior to beautiful bays like Cala

and trattorias line alleys. Fishermen bob on their vessels in the bay. And the best thing? You can have it all



James Stewart

Destinations like Cinque Terre, in the northwestern Riviera, and the southern Amalfi Coast tend to hog all the attention, and for good reason: their colourful houses, precipitous cliffs and turquoise waters are what many associate with the Mediterranean. But travellers who venture further afield are justly rewarded. From north to south, we pick six lesser-known coastal towns with just as much character, but a fraction of the crowds.

1. Scilla, Calabria

Pale houses spilling down a hillside to the sea, parasols and gelati vendors set up on an arc of fine-shingle beach, and a nuggety castle on a bluff. This isn't, in fact, the Amalfi Coast's Positano, but the quieter town of Scilla on the Violet Coast, in the southern region of Calabria. The fishing district of Chianalea is particularly attractive. It's strung out beside the waves, where cobalt-blue boats are hauled on slips and swordfish ciabatta is the speciality — don't miss the ones at Civico 5 on Via Grotte. Spend some time here and it takes a little while to notice what's missing: traffic and crowds.

Best viewpoint: The Piazza San Rocco Belvedere, accessed via a free lift behind, for views over terracotta rooftops and out to sea.

2. Ponza, Lazio



like Il Veliero. There's just one catch: since Netflix's Ripley series was filmed here, bookings have risen 93% — so go soon.

Best viewpoint: Via Gabriele de Benedetto, off the main coast road, for a view across the beach to the facade of Santa Maria Maddalena.

6. Termoli, Molise

Even Italians overlook Molise, so you can be forgiven for not knowing about this southern region of only 300,000 people. That's what makes Termoli such a find. The fishing town is the romantic Italy of collective imaginations: a fortified outpost by the sea with a medieval castle at its tip, a cathedral on the piazza and colourful houses peeking above walls, all crammed on to tangled lanes. Trabucchi (rickety wooden jetties with fishing nets suspended at their ends) jut into the water. There are beaches, too: pick vast Sant'Antonio for family-friendly shallows or go to Lido Mistral for SUP rental.

Best viewpoint: Sant'Antonio Beach, which has plenty of space, for views of the old town's towers and fortified walls.

7. Levanzo, Sicily

The smallest of the Egadi Islands, off the Sicilian coast, Trapani has no large hotels and no beach clubs. Its sole village, a crescent of sugar-cube houses that 250 lucky people call home, looks more Moroccan than Mediterranean. The only sight is the Grotta del Genovese with its 13,000-year-old paintings. But the sea is gorgeous — the



Minnola. If you're looking to do nothing more pressing than sleep, eat and experience the dolce far niente (the sweetness of doing nothing), you'll fit right in.

Best viewpoint: the sight of Levanzo village beneath a knuckle of rock from the ferry dock.

8. Noli, Liguria

While travellers typically stampede east of Genoa to the Riviera di Levante, Genoans quietly drift west to the Riviera di Ponente — more specifically to Noli. During the Middle Ages, it was a maritime republic to rival Genoa. Romanesque San Paragorio church, medieval walls and towers, and the old bishop's palace — now Michelin-starred restaurant Vescoavado — speak of former greatness. Yet Noli today has to content itself with just being arguably the loveliest fishing town in the area. The beach hugs the curve of the bay with wooden boats parked on the sands, while palms sway behind. Ateliers

largely to yourself. Best viewpoint: Noli's huddle of rooftops before the sea, seen from the hilltop ruins of Castello di Monte Ursino. This article was produced by National Geographic Traveller (UK)



GCI is China's solution to promote progress of human civilization

Li Junru

In today's world, where the futures of all countries are closely linked, development, security and civilization play important roles in promoting the modernization process of human society. The Global Development Initiative (GDI), Global Security Initiative (GSI) and Global Civilization Initiative (GCI), proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping, offer profound insights into the issues of our time. The Global Times invites scholars to provide readers both at home and abroad with an in-depth understanding of these three initiatives. This is the third article in the series.

The GDI, GSI and the GCI present China's approach to global governance from the perspectives of the world economy, security and culture. The GCI outlines China's solution to advance the world's modernization process and the progress of human civilization in an increasingly chaotic world. This "China's solution" has four distinctive features.

Take the new vision of human civilization as core concept

The GCI faces up to the new trends in international relations since the Cold War, and proposes a new vision of civilization in which cultural exchanges transcend estrangement, mutual learning transcend clashes, and coexistence transcend feelings of superiority.

What happened to the world and how should we respond? Where should humanity be headed and what should international relations and the international order look like in this post-Cold War era? These questions have been hot topics in international relations research for quite some time.

On this basis, the GCI calls for respect for the diversity of world civilizations, and advocates that countries need to uphold the principles of equality, mutual learning, dialogue and inclusiveness among civilization. This vision of civilization represents a new view of civilization in the 21st century. It is the core concept of China's answer to where humanity should be headed in the post-Cold War era.

Based on common values of humanity

Different from the traditional view of civilization, the GCI not only takes into account historical heritage and practical interests, but also considers the common values

of humanity as a solid cornerstone.

Since modern times, various theories of international relations have emerged, but national interests linked to the history of each country have always served as an important basis for handling relations between countries. During the Cold War, although ideological lines dominated the theory of international relations, national interests still played a particularly important role in addressing international relations.

In the new era, President Xi has emphasized that everyone's interest is closely interlinked as we are all living in the same global village. He also stressed that despite differences among countries in history, culture, institution and level of development, their peoples do subscribe to the common values. The GCI underscores peace, development, equality, justice, democracy and freedom are the common pursuits of people of all countries. President Xi also said that countries need to keep an open mind in appreciating the perceptions of values by different civilizations, and refrain from imposing their own values or models on others and from stoking ideological confrontation.

It can be said that proposing a brand-new concept of common values of humanity is itself a major theoretical innovation. The GCI takes the common values of humanity as an important cornerstone, and it provides China's answer to where humanity should be headed in the post-Cold War era.

Focus on cultural inheritance and innovation

The GCI, with the new vision of human civilization at its core and the common values of humanity as its cornerstone, represents China's response to the challenges facing the world. In order to achieve "civilization transcendence," it emphasizes that countries should be encouraged to push for creative transformation and innovative development of their fine traditional cultures.

It is known that any civilization is formed through the long historical development of countries; and at the same time, any civilization evolves with the progress of the times. Since China entered a new era of reform and opening-up, as well as socialist modernization, the Chinese Communists have united and led the Chinese people in striving for Chinese modernization driven by the ambition of realizing the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. The history of the Communist Party of

China (CPC) uniting and leading the Chinese people in the pursuit of national rejuvenation for more than 100 years is also a history of continuous exploration of the path to modernization.

After several generations of unremitting efforts, we have embarked on the path of Chinese modernization. It is based on China's national realities, and draws on the experience of other countries. Whether it is the experience of the Chinese revolution or that of reform and opening-up, both

illustrate that no nation can forget its origins, and that historical nihilism is inconsistent with the historical laws of national development. Furthermore, no nation can afford to be complacent or arrogant, as narrow nationalism contradicts the historical laws of national development.

This is true for China and the world. For the majority of developing countries, it is even more important to understand this truth revealed by historical dialectics. Therefore, the GCI emphasizes that we should jointly advocate attaching importance to the inheritance and innovation of civilization, fully tap the historical and cultural values of all countries, and promote the creative transformation and innovative development of excellent traditional cultures of all countries in the process of



modernization. The value of the times is to promote the creative transformation and innovative development of the excellent traditional cultures of various countries in the process of modernization. This is also the focus of our efforts to form the new form of human civilization featured by "civilization transcendence."

Take people-to-people exchanges as approach

The GCI advocates for strengthening international cultural exchanges and cooperation, as well as exploring the construction of a global network for dialogue and cooperation among civilizations.

In today's world, multiple challenges and crises are intertwined. The world's economic recovery is difficult, the development gap continues to widen, the ecological environment is further deteriorating and a

Cold War mentality lingers. The modernization process of human society is once again at a crossroads in history.

If people from different countries stop communicating with each other and remain mired in misunderstanding, fear and hostility toward each other, the consequences will be catastrophic. Therefore, President Xi expressed the sincerity of the Communist Party of China and the Chinese people to the leaders of political parties around

The writer is former vice president of the CPC Central Committee's Party School

China welcomes diverse opinions at BXF, seeks harmony while upholding core interests



Global Times

The 11th Beijing Xiangshan Forum (BXF) is convening in Beijing from Thursday to Saturday. With rising security challenges both in the Asia-Pacific region and globally, what is China's response to these uncertainties? What are China's perspectives on security in its surrounding areas and worldwide? Lieutenant General He Lei (He), former vice president of the Academy of Military Sciences of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), shared his views with the Global Times (GT) reporters Li Aixin and Guo Yuandan.

GT: How shall we understand the theme of the 11th BXF, "promoting peace for a shared future"? And what can people expect from the forum?

He: President Xi Jinping has creatively proposed the concept of building a community with a shared future for mankind, along with the Global Development Initiative,

Global Security Initiative and Global Civilization Initiative amid the accelerated evolution of profound global changes. These initiatives not only provide fundamental guidance for China's diplomacy in the new era but also offer a clear direction for development in an increasingly turbulent world. They represent a significant contribution to global peace, development and security, reflecting the strategic wisdom and historical responsibility of a responsible major country.

The theme of this year's BXF, "promoting peace for a shared future," highlights "peace" as humanity's enduring and relentless pursuit. The goal is to achieve a future of lasting peace, universal security, common prosperity, openness, inclusiveness and environmental sustainability through global cooperation. Nearly 1,000 participants will focus on this theme, engaging in in-depth discussions, sharing ideas openly, pooling wisdom, broadening consensus, and building mutual trust to promote the

creation of a balanced, effective and sustainable security architecture. All the guests have been warmly welcomed. We encourage all representatives to share their views, whether personal or national, and diverse opinions are welcomed. Traditional Chinese culture values harmony, and it is important to find common ground while reserving differences. However, when it comes to the core interests related to the security of national sovereignty, and territorial integrity, we will not tolerate unfounded criticism or malicious attacks. We will not ignore, compromise or make concessions on these fundamental issues.

GT: The South China Sea affairs appear to be a heatedly discussed topic at the forum. What is your perspective on the escalation of tensions in the South China Sea and the Philippines' repeated instigation of new problems?

He: The Philippines is a close neighbor of China across the sea. The two countries had a history of friendly relations. However, since the current Philippine government took office in June 2022, it has quickly aligned itself with the US. This shift has led to a strengthening of the US-Philippine alliance, the opening of more US military bases in the Philippines, and the agreement to deploy ground-based missile systems there. Tensions have escalated due to frequent provocative actions from the Philippine side at China's islands and reefs. The Philippines has unilaterally torn up the "gentlemen's agreement," or the internal understandings, or the "new model" reached between China and the Philippines on properly managing the situation in the South China Sea.

Some Philippine scholars are participating in this forum, all of whom are welcome. This platform offers an opportunity for in-depth and rational discussions on the current situation in the South China Sea and for a better understanding of China's principled positions.

GT: The Taiwan question is a hot topic. The US has sent its deputy assistant secretary of defense to the forum. What key aspects of the Taiwan question should be discussed more explicitly with the US?

He: There is but one China in the world. The government of the People's Republic of China is the sole legal government representing the whole of China, and Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory. This is a fact that cannot be changed by anyone, any organization or any country. China must be reunified, will be reunified, and will inevitably be reunified. This is the common aspiration of all Chinese people, including those in the island of Taiwan. This is a historical trend that no force can stop. The Taiwan question is the core of the core interests of China. The one-China principle is the political foundation and fundamental principle for establishing diplomatic relations with other countries, and it's the foremost red line in US-China relations. The PLA is resolute in its determination, will, capabilities and methods to defend national sovereignty, security, territorial integrity and national reunification.

US arms sales to the island of Taiwan have lasted for a long time, constituting a serious violation of the three China-US joint communiqués and an egregious breach of the important consensus reached by the leaders of the two countries. These actions essentially ignore and undermine the rules of international law. However, regardless of the quantity or type of weapons sold by the US to Taiwan, they will not prevent China's reunification, nor can they change the inevitable failure

and demise of the "Taiwan independence" forces.

GT: Before the US sent its representative to the forum, Zhang Youxia, vice chairman of the Central Military Commission, met with US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan at the end of August in Beijing. What is the significance of recent communications for military exchanges between China and the US?

He: This meeting is a positive step in implementing the important consensus reached by the heads of state of China and the US. It is also a significant measure in turning the San Francisco Vision into reality. It is a welcomed development.

The discussion between Zhang and Sullivan is crucial for clarifying China's firm principles regarding its core interests. It is also important for enhancing strategic communication between the two militaries, avoiding misjudgments and managing risks. As always, dialogue is preferable to silence, and any discussions are better than having none at all. However, China has always paid close attention to actions as well as words.

Global Times

Editor-in-Chief: S. Ali
Associate Editor: Afzal Butt
Email: editor@covert.com.pk
Phone/Fax : +92-51-2723419
690. Street 17 Block E Bahria Town phase 8, Islamabad, Pakistan

High Commissioner Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri highlights opportunities for Pakistani students in Australia

Covert Report
Canberra: Pakistani High Commissioner to Australia Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri this week highlighted opportunities for Pakistani students to study in the best Australian universities. "Excellent opportunity for Pakistani students to study at some of Australia's best universities. Fellowships applications are now open," the envoy posted on X.

Australia Awards Fellowships: Australia engages with developing countries at government, business, professional and community levels. Australia Awards Fellowships offer Australian organisations, from all sectors, the opportunity to deepen and broaden their links with leaders and professionals in developing countries. By providing opportunities for Fellows to undertake short term study and

professional development in Australia, they aim to: strengthen partnerships and links between Australian organisations and partner organisations in developing countries, in support of Australia's strategic development objectives; and increasing the capability and professional development of selected Fellows to advance priority development issues bilaterally, sub-regionally and regionally.

The program is designed to complement Australia's individual bilateral and regional development programs and long-term scholarships by offering senior and mid-career officials and professionals who will be in a position to advance priority development and foreign affairs issues on their return home. Fellowship activities aim to provide high-quality training, exchange of expertise, skills and knowledge, and opportunities to



enhance networks on issues of shared interest. Activities can include a combination of short-term study and/or training, research, professional attachments and networking experi-

ences. Applications are accepted from Australian organisations only. Partner country counterpart organisations and individuals are not eligible to apply for Australia Awards Fellowships.



Amb Asim Iftikhar Ahmad welcomes steady increase in number of Pakistani students in France

Covert Report
Paris: Pakistani Ambassador to France Asim Iftikhar Ahmad this week welcomed steady increase in number of Pakistani students in France in recent years.

In a social media statement ahead of the 3rd Choose France Education Fair in Pakistan, he highlighted educational cooperation including opportunities for Pakistani students in France, collaboration between universities, dual degree and faculty exchange programs.

The Ambassador welcomed steady increase in number of Pakistani students in France in recent years and looked forward to 2-way programs incl student exchange, joint research and educational seminars.

He said Pakistan was also interested in cooperation in vocational training. The Ambassador also welcomed that an important delegation comprising heads of various leading private sector universities of Pakistan were visiting Toulouse for EAI24 Education fair.

The Embassy of France in Pakistan and Campus France Pakistan are organizing the 3rd edition of the Choose France Education Fair taking place on:

- 13th October in Karachi
- 15th October in Lahore

17th October in Islamabad
This is a chance to explore top French universities and schools and their prestigious programs in various academic fields such as Business, Management, IT, Engineering, Social Sciences etc.

France and Pakistan have long-standing ties in higher education and a large number of Pakistani scientists, engineers, economists, business leaders, entrepreneurs and public sector officials have been trained in France over the last many decades.

Choose France Pakistan Education Faire is more than just an event, it's part of a continued effort to broaden higher education opportunities for the Pakistani students in France and to encourage bilateral cooperation.

Meet the universities/schools representatives : Engage directly with representatives from 14 France's top universities and schools and learn how you can be part of their prestigious network.

The Embassy of France in Pakistan is organizing this Choose France Education Fair in Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad through its Cooperation and Cultural Affairs department, in collaboration with local universities and alumni.



Pakistan embassy in Brussels hosts Rahmatal-lil-Alameen Conference



Covert Report
Brussels: The Embassy of Pakistan in Brussels this week commemorated Eid Milad-un-Nabi by hosting the Rahmatal-lil-Alameen Conference, a tribute to the life and teachings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him).

Chargé d' Affaires Faraz Zaidi, conveyed a special message from Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif, emphasizing the profound im-

portance of the day. Counsellor Press of the Embassy Saqeer Wattoo served as the Master of Ceremonies and shared his devotional poetry in praise of the Holy Prophet (PBUH).

The event was attended by members of the Pakistani community from Brussels and the surrounding areas.

The conference ended with collective prayers for the well-being of Pakistan and relief for Muslims enduring hardships in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir and Palestine.

PPP doesn't just talk about change — makes it happen



Umar Rehman Malik

Under the dynamic leadership of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) has embarked on a transformative journey across Sindh's most crucial sectors, honoring the legacy of Shaheed Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto and Shaheed Mohtama Benazir Bhutto. Bilawal's vision for a prosperous and inclusive Sindh transcends mere rhetoric; it is firmly grounded in action. The strides made over the past decade stand as a testament to his leadership.

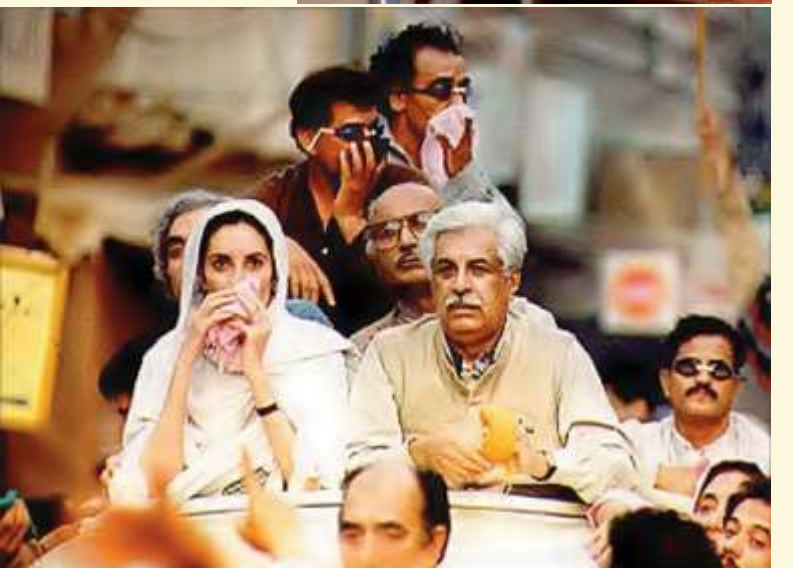


Where others rely on empty slogans and flashy adver-

most advanced medical institutions, including the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases (NICVD), Jinnah Postgraduate Medical Centre (JPMC), and the National Institute of Child Health (NICH). These institutions, offering world-class treatment at no cost, serve as beacons of hope for millions. NICVD, renowned as the world's largest free heart hospital, sets new benchmarks in cardiac care, treating over 2.3 million patients annually through its expansive network. This achievement underscores Sindh's leadership in healthcare and reflects the PPP's commitment to accessible medical care for all. Bilawal emphasizes this commitment, stating, "Actions speak louder than words. We don't just talk about change—we make it happen." The JPMC's use of 'CyberKnife technology' for cancer treatment, otherwise costly abroad, exemplifies this dedication. Education has always been a cornerstone of the PPP's agenda, with a deep-rooted commitment to empowering women. The election of Shaheed Mohtama Benazir Bhutto as Pakistan's—and the Islamic world's—first female prime minister marked a historic step toward gender equality. Today,



empowerment is clear: "Women and youth are at the heart of our strategy for a prosperous Sindh. Their empowerment is our priority." Programs offering stipends and vocational training aim to foster financial independence and gender equality, crucial for Sindh's socioeconomic development. In addition to educational programs, one of the most impactful measures taken by the Sindh government is the allotment of homes in women's names, a bold step toward female empowerment. By providing property ownership to women, particularly in low-income families, the PPP has sought to secure their economic futures, granting them stability and a stronger social standing. This initiative not only addresses gender inequality but also helps families by creating a lasting asset for future generations. In recent years, Sindh faced one of its greatest natural disasters in history with the devastating floods of 2022. These catastrophic floods, triggered by record-breaking monsoon rains, submerged nearly one-third of Pakistan, with Sindh being one of the hardest-hit provinces. Over 33 million people were affected nationwide, and in Sindh alone, hundreds of villages were washed away, displacing millions. Infrastructure damage ran into billions of dollars, with homes, schools, hospitals, and roads destroyed in the wake of the disaster. Yet, in the face of this unprecedented tragedy, the Sindh government, under Bilawal's guidance, initiated extensive rehabilitation programs to assist flood victims. Temporary shelters, food, and medical aid were provided on a massive scale, and long-term rehabilitation efforts have included rebuilding homes and restoring livelihoods. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari made it clear that the government's priority was not just the immediate relief but sustainable recovery, stating, "Our efforts will not stop



Sindh's energy framework, enhancing regional energy security. Concurrently, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has promoted renewable energy solutions, focusing on wind

broader strategy to lower energy costs and promote clean energy among low-income households. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's leadership is marked by a profound dedication to inclusive development across Sindh. He challenges critics of the Sindh government's efficacy, asserting, "You may have heard criticisms suggesting that the Sindh government does nothing or that we do not undertake mega projects. But actions speak louder than words." This focus on tangible outcomes has driven significant advancements in healthcare, education, and infrastructure. A key aspect of this progress is the effective use of Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), which blend public oversight with private sector efficiency to achieve impactful results. Bilawal emphasizes the importance of these collaborations, stating, "Public-Private Partnerships are pivotal in our strategy for development. They leverage private sector expertise and resources, allowing us to achieve more ambitious goals and deliver better services to our people." The recent resounding victory of the PPP in the by-election in Rahim Yar Khan is a powerful affirmation of the nation's faith in Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's leadership on the national stage. His unwavering commitment to public service and his far-reaching vision for a stronger, healthier, and more unified Pakistan have struck a deep chord across the country. Bilawal's leadership transcends immediate concerns, offering a pathway to a sustainable, inclusive, and forward-thinking future. Under his stewardship, new standards of governance and public service are being set—not just as political ambitions but as tangible realities for all. As the people of Pakistan begin to look beyond the fiery exchanges of partisan politics, a renewed hope emerges—one that recognizes Bilawal as the only leader poised to fulfill Quaid-e-Azam's vision of a peaceful, prosperous, and progressive Pakistan, where dignity, integrity, and opportunity become the cornerstone of every citizen's life. The writer is son of Late Senator A. Rehman Malik and Head of PPP Digital Media Islamabad. He is a graduate of Actuarial Science and has served as Special Assistant to Chief Minister on Finance, Government of Sindh.



tisements, the PPP's work speaks volumes. Bilawal embodies the essence of genuine governance, reminding us that actions speak louder than words. While other political factions may generate noise on social media, the PPP has quietly reshaped Sindh's landscape, effecting meaningful change where it matters most. Under Bilawal Bhutto Zardari's leadership, the PPP has achieved remarkable progress in Sindh's healthcare sector. The province now boasts some of the country's

Bilawal Bhutto Zardari continues this legacy, ensuring that women remain central to the PPP's initiatives. Bilawal's vision for education, particularly for women, is evident in institutions like the Benazir Bhutto Shaheed University and progressive initiatives such as the Sindh Education Reform Program. These efforts not only enhance educational infrastructure but also extend access to underserved populations, especially in rural areas. Bilawal's emphasis on women's education and



until every displaced family has a roof over their heads, and we will ensure that this recovery is just and equitable." Environmental sustainability has also been a major focus of Bilawal's leadership. He has recognized the urgent need to address environmental concerns, particularly in the wake of climate change exacerbating natural disasters like the 2022 floods. Under his stewardship, Sindh has pioneered afforestation efforts, planting millions of mangroves along the coastlines to combat deforestation and climate change. These initiatives align with global conservation standards, aiming to preserve biodiversity and boost local economic well-being. Bilawal's commitment to clean energy further reflects the PPP's strategic vision of reducing fossil fuel dependence and mitigating climate change. As he asserts, "Our investment in clean energy and environmental conservation ensures a sustainable future for Sindh. We are committed to fighting climate change while boosting our economy." The PPP has placed significant emphasis on modernizing transportation and urban infrastructure, recognizing their crucial role in economic growth. In cities such as Karachi and Sukkur, major urban beautification and drainage projects have been launched, alongside enhancements to public transportation systems like the Green Line Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). During the inauguration, Bilawal stated, "The Green Line BRT is not just a transit project but a step towards transforming our cities into modern, efficient, and livable spaces." These efforts are essential in modernizing the province's infrastructure, alleviating traffic congestion, and improving quality of life. In the energy sector, the PPP has pursued a balanced strategy, integrating conventional and renewable energy projects. The Thar Coal Project is a cornerstone of

and solar projects along Sindh's coast. Bilawal highlights this commitment: "The whole country believes in providing solar energy to the people. The Benazir Income Support Programme is among our priorities. Solar panels have first been distributed among the people of Karachi and Larkana. We are committed to providing facilities to the poorest segments and will also try to support working-class individuals. In the next phase, we will offer subsidies to the middle class as part of the energy transition." This commitment is evidenced by the distribution of free solar panels, reflecting a



Ancient Greek vase gifted to an Italian leader is returned by his family to Greece

Newsire Athens. A valuable ancient vase gifted more than 70 years ago by the Greek government to an Italian prime minister has been voluntarily returned to Greece by the former statesman's grandson. The Greek culture ministry on Friday

praised the "most courteous gesture" by Paolo Catti De Gasperi, whose grandfather Alcide De Gasperi headed Italian governments from 1945 to 1953. A ministry statement said the mid-to-late 5th Century BC artifact had been presented to De Gasperi by his Greek counter-



part, Alexandros Papagos, during a state visit to Athens in 1953. It said Papagos wanted to convey gratitude for De Gasperi's "decisive contribution" in ceding the Dodecanese islands in the Aegean Sea to Greece - one of a number of territories a defeated Italy was forced to relinquish after World War II. The large, ornate terracotta artifact is decorated with red figures on a black background, and is of the type known as a crater. The ancient Greeks used such vases to mix wine - which they avoided drinking neat - with water. Catti De Gasperi handed the piece over to Culture Minister Lina Mendoni during a

ceremony at the Greek embassy in Rome. The government has been aggressive in seeking the return of its ancient cultural heritage from museums and private collections worldwide - above all the British Museum's collection of Parthenon Sculptures. But Mendoni stressed that this was a completely different case. "We are particularly grateful, because, while [Catti De Gasperi] held [the crater] completely legally, he felt the need and had the generosity to return it to Greece," Mendoni said. "It's a family heirloom that's linked with the modern history of both Greece and Italy."

The vase is decorated with a woman seeing off two warriors preparing to leave for military service, and on the other side three young men in civilian dress. Such artifacts can raise tens of thousands of euros when sold at auction outside Greece, where most antiquities are by law state property. The ministry said the vase will be permanently exhibited at a museum in the ancient Kerameikos cemetery in Athens. Italy seized the Dodecanese, which include the islands of Rhodes and Kos, from the Ottoman Empire in 1912 and held them until 1947.



Bulgaria seeks restrictions on Ukrainian egg imports

Newsire Sofia: The Bulgarian Agricultural Ministry this week joined forces with farmers in a quest to completely stop the flow of cheap Ukrainian eggs to the country. Overwhelming imports are believed to be the key factor preventing the industry from recovering after a devastating bird flu outbreak at the end of 2023. The Bul-

garian government appealed to the European Commission, requesting to protect egg manufacturers "from negative market trends emerging as a result of imports from Ukraine". "The procedure for preparing a written request to the European Commission has already been kicked out," Georgi Tahov, Bulgarian Agricultural Minister, outlined

during a press conference. On 2 July, the European Commission reimposed tariff quotas on Ukrainian eggs, subjecting imports to a €89 per tonne duty. Bulgarian farmers insist the measure is not sufficient and seek a full ban on Ukrainian egg imports. In 2024, Bulgaria experienced a 400% hike in imports of eggs from Ukraine, Daniel Bozhankov, chairman of the Association of Industrial Poultry Breeding, has estimated. According to Bozhankov, the import duty doesn't work - it is equal to only 5% of the wholesale price of eggs, so failed to curb the import flow. In fact, the deliveries have even picked up since the measure was introduced.

Bozhankov claimed that in May, nearly 311 tonnes of eggs were imported into Bulgaria, while in July, only two regions - Veliko Tarnovo and Dobrich - saw 432 tonnes land on their markets. Given the size of the Bulgarian market, the figure is enormous, Bozhankov stated, adding that cheap imports incur "millions of losses" to local farmers.

The Association of Industrial Poultry



Breeding is not backing down. They are demanding that the authorities urge the European Commission to activate the ban on Ukrainian egg imports within 120 days. If their demands are not met, they are prepared to escalate their protest with a mass rally. Ukrainian eggs are 20-30% cheaper compared to those manufactured by local farmers, Bozhankov estimated. He explained that Ukrainian manufacturers manage to keep the production costs relatively low, as they do not need to comply

with European poultry welfare standards. Overwhelming imports are also preventing the Bulgarian poultry industry from recovering from a large-scale bird flu outbreak that wreaked havoc in 2023. Over 1.5 million heads of laying hens were lost in the outbreak, leading to a significant drop in Bulgaria's egg self-sufficiency from close to 115% to below 100%. This loss of self-sufficiency has deprived Bulgaria of its status as a net egg exporter.



Cristiano Ronaldo to be 'honoured' with special €7 coin by Portugal

Newsire

Lisbon: Cristiano Ronaldo's home country Portugal continues to find unique ways to honour the football legend who is known to be its greatest goal machine with no signs of slowing down anytime soon. With over 130 goals for his national team along

these magnificent achievements and records, Portugal has reportedly announced that it is ready to launch a "7" Euro coin to honour its most famous and successful son. The coin will have an image of the five-time



with numerous accolades, including leading Portugal to a historic victory in Euro 2016 and lifting the UEFA Nations League trophy with A Selecao in 2019, Ronaldo's impact on the country's national football is undeniable. Ronaldo, 39, recently added another historic football accolade under his name as he scored his 900th goal during a UEFA Nations League match against Scotland, earlier this month. Additionally, the four-time European Golden Shoe winner's star power seems to know no bounds as he recently made social media history by becoming the first person to have one billion followers across various platforms. According to Sportskeeda, after all



Ballon d'Or award winner embossed on it and will also have "CR7" marked on it. Interestingly, it will be acceptable as a currency across the nation once it is launched. The number seven is synonymous with Ronaldo who has donned that shirt number for almost his entire career. Ronaldo started his career at Sporting Lisbon before becoming a household name with Manchester United. He then earned a dream move to Real Madrid, where he established his dominance in world football. After a run with Juventus and a brief second coming at Old Trafford, Portuguese football legend now contributes his skill to Saudi Arabia's Al Nassr.



Japan to address issue of foreign trainees quitting in record numbers



mar nationals at 1,765 and Chinese at 816, according to Justice Ministry sources. Nearly half of the workers were involved in construction-related jobs, the sources said. The revised guidelines will have a special provision for those unable to

find a new employer as a trainee but wish to switch to the specified skilled worker scheme, enabling them to temporarily work under a designated activities visa until they pass the exam required to obtain the status. The current foreign trainee program, which has been in place since 1993,

has been criticized as simply being an avenue for Japan to import cheap labor. The government will replace the program with a new system as early as 2027 that will permit job transfers after one or two years of employment at one workplace.



Covert Report

Tokyo: Japan will take measures as early as October to enable foreign trainees to transfer jobs more easily, as the number of those who quit without notice due to poor working conditions and other reasons hit a record high of 9,753 in 2023, government sources said. Under Japan's technical intern program, workers are prohibited from switching workplaces for the first three years in principle as they are asked to develop their skills in one area, while job transfer is permitted if there are "unavoidable circumstances." The Immigration Services Agency will revise its guidelines, which have been criticized for being vague, to

ensure they clearly state that job transfers are allowed if interns are abused or sexually harassed or there has been a malicious violation of laws and regulations at their workplaces, including a breach of contract. The revised guidelines will also permit both victims of harassment and their coworkers to request transfers while allowing interns to take a part-time job of up to 28 hours per week over the period of their transfer to cover living expenses. The number of people leaving trainee jobs without notice has been on the rise, climbing to 9,006 in 2022 from 5,885 in 2020. Preliminary figures for 2023 showed a further increase, with Vietnamese workers the largest contingent at 5,481, followed by Myan-

US reaffirms support for Pakistan in tackling global, regional challenges

Covert Report

Washington: United States President Joe Biden has reaffirmed Washington's support for Islamabad in tackling the most pressing global and regional challenges of the time, the Pakistani Embassy in the US stated. The statement came on the occasion of the newly appointed Pakistani ambassador to the US Rizwan Saeed Sheikh's meeting with the president at the Blair House, which was attended by senior officials of the administration as well. Ambassador Sheikh presented his Letter of Credence to President Biden. Although, the White House did not issue any statement in this regard, the embassy quoted the president as saying: "The relationship between our two countries remains important for regional stability and security. We appreciate US-Pakistan cooperation in countering terrorist threats. We share a desire

to build upon our bilateral relationship and strengthen US-Pakistan ties moving forward." It further quoted him as saying: "It signifies more than 75 years of friendship between our nations and our enduring commitment to economic engagement, security cooperation, people-to-people ties, and cultural exchange." On the occasion Ambassador Sheikh conveyed greetings from the president, prime minister, and the people of Pakistan to the leadership and people of the United States. He stated that Pakistan and the United States had a rich legacy of cooperative relations and laid multiple foundations to strengthen bilateral ties. The ambassador observed that Pakistan and the US continue to invest in their relationship and are stepping up cooperation in climate change, energy, health, trade, and investment. "Pakistan-US economic partnership is the core of our engagement, and the United States continues to be the largest destination for Pakistani ex-



ports," Ambassador Sheikh added. Highlighting the significant trade potential between the two countries, the ambassador noted that Pakistan was ready to enhance its trade with the United States and

absorb US investments in alternative energy, green technology, industry, digital platforms, higher education, and other areas of mutual benefit. The ambassador also underscored

the need for structured, broad-based, and result-oriented periodic dialogues in both security and non-security realms to give fresh impetus to the relationship and promote mutual interests, the statement said.

Von der Leyen tightens grip on power in EU - but trouble looms on the horizon

Jennifer Rankin

Ursula von der Leyen was leaving nothing to chance. At a private meeting with members of the European parliament in Strasbourg last Tuesday, she chose not to reveal who would get what job in her incoming European Commission, due to take office at the end of the year. Then immediately afterwards, during a brisk 21-minute press conference, she announced every single name, leaving MEPs fuming. "That's not how it should be done," said one. The secrecy around the big reveal is characteristic of von der Leyen, who carefully controls the flow of information. Named as the most powerful woman in the world by Forbes magazine and soon to start a second term as commission president, she has organised her new team in a way that is a lesson in how to amass control. "This is very like the divide and rule approach," said Sophia Russack, a researcher at the Centre for European Policy Studies in Brussels.

EU watchers have been poring over organisational charts of the new commission, drawing in lines of who reports to who. The answer is soon clear: all power flows to von der Leyen. The "presidentialisation" of the commission has been under way since the EU's "big bang" enlargement in 2004 made the EU executive's top table far bigger, creating a need for more direction. Each of the 27 member states has a commissioner, a privilege none wants to give up. But von der Leyen has taken presidential power to another level. Last week, she oversaw the departure of one of her sharpest critics: French commissioner Thierry Breton, who had expected to return to Brussels for a second term after being nominated by France's president, Emmanuel Macron. Instead, after back channel talks between Macron and von der Leyen, Breton was out. He resigned, accusing her of "questionable governance". In another show of strength, von der

Leyen arm-twisted governments to send her female commissioner candidates, rewarding countries that complied (including Romania and Slovenia) with big jobs or impressive-sounding titles. Governments that snubbed her request to suggest women (Austria, Ireland) found themselves without the "big economic portfolio" they had sought, albeit gaining weighty jobs. In 2019, von der Leyen was a surprise last-minute choice to lead the commission. She took office weeks before the Covid pandemic tipped Europe into unprecedented crisis. During lockdown, working with a small team in the commission's HQ, where she also lives - von der Leyen has a windowless converted washroom on the 13th floor - reinforced her penchant for taking decisions alone.



"The question now for the next term is

whether she can do normal," Russack said. During von der Leyen's first term, she added, "her team operated like a commando hub in a crisis and that worked so well. I wonder if she is able to wield her power in the same way when she doesn't have the excuse of an emergency." The tasks in her in-tray are daunting: the brutal war in Ukraine and the spectre of Donald Trump in the White House. The EU is off-track with targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, while struggling to switch to a green economy in the face of heavily subsidised competition from China and the US. Earlier this month, the former president of the European Central Bank Mario Draghi said the EU must embrace deep reforms and spend €800bn (£670bn) a year to avert "a slow and agonising decline". Few expect EU leaders to agree on Draghi's ambitious agenda. In France, Macron is weakened after snap elections created a prolonged political stalemate. Germany's chancellor, Olaf Scholz, presides over a squabbling three-way coalition that is preoccupied with domestic politics after unprecedented victories for the far right in regional elections, with

another defeat on the horizon on Sunday in Brandenburg. One senior EU official cautioned against the idea that von der Leyen could step into a leadership vacuum. "You are only as strong as the weakest link in the [European] council." To get legislation passed, von der Leyen needs not only EU member states, but also the European parliament, which has more far-right MEPs hostile to the EU than ever before. "On legislation, she will have a lot of trouble," said the senior official. "You are no longer talking about 30 nutcases. You are now talking about 150 people who are not well intentioned." The big tent coalition of pro-EU parties that supported von der Leyen - from her own centre-right European People's party, the socialists, centrists and greens - will be tested. "She will be much more vulnerable and prone to shifts in majority," the official added. Von der Leyen's new commission is likely to take office around 1 December. These few months before the fray may be the peak of her powers.



UK to fund seven climate change projects in Pakistan amid growing environmental challenges



Celina Ali

Islamabad: The United Kingdom this week announced its commitment to support seven climate change initiatives in Pakistan, including the development of solar farms and the use of artificial intelligence to reduce emissions.

The British High Commission revealed this initiative, highlighting Paki-

stan's vulnerability to extreme weather events, such as the devastating floods of 2022 that claimed over 1,700 lives and displaced millions. Among the funded projects are plans to construct floating solar farms, develop AI-driven platforms for emission reduction, and convert agricultural waste into clean energy.

The support will be channelled through the Climate Finance Accelerator (CFA), a £12.6 million technical assistance program backed by the UK government's International Climate Finance commitment to assist developing countries in addressing climate-related challenges.

Each project will receive specialised guidance on financial matters, gender equality, and social inclusion to enhance its proposals and attract investor funding.

Key initiatives include a 500MW floating solar project at Keenjhar Lake aimed at generating clean energy and reducing dependence on fossil fuels.

Additionally, the Quintech Sciences initiative will focus on eco-friendly and health-conscious products while a biochar project will turn agricultural waste into a stable carbon-rich substance, helping to improve crop yields and decrease reliance on synthetic fertilizers.

The Pakistan Environment Trust project will transform agricultural waste into a clean energy source for industrial use, alongside the establishment of a facility to produce Recycled Polyethylene Terephthalate (R-PET) resin, which aims to reduce

plastic dependency and lower carbon emissions.

British High Commissioner Jane Marriott praised the diverse range of projects, stating that they exemplify Pakistan's leadership in addressing climate issues.

"This initiative showcases the UK's partnership with Pakistan in developing local solutions for significant challenges," she remarked. "I am eager to see these proposals gain traction on the international stage and wish them great success," she added.



“Courage is being scared to death, but saddling up anyway.”

“If you cannot do great things, do small things in a great way.”

Italy: Meloni vows to revise ‘disastrous’ EU Green Deal



Alessia Peretti

Rome: Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has pledged to push for the review of the European Green Deal, criticising its “ideological approach” and warning that it risks leading to deindustrialisation. Meloni criticised European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen’s flagship project at the Confindustria conference. “Shall we say that it’s not the smartest strategy? And we say this because we are friends of Europe and want to defend Europe’s industrial capacity. Those who are friends of Europe must have the courage to point out what isn’t working,” she said, reaffirming her government’s commitment to “correct” these policies. “Decarbonisation at the cost of deindustrialisation is a

debacle,” the Italian leader added. The European Green Deal has led to “disastrous results” due to its “ideological approach,” the Italian prime minister added. Citing the recently published report on European competitiveness by former prime minister and former ECB president Mario Draghi, Meloni said, “Europe’s ambitious environmental goals must be backed by sufficient investments and resources, with a coherent plan to achieve them.” “Otherwise, the energy and environmental transition will inevitably come at the expense of competitiveness and growth,” she added. While Meloni has long been critical of the European Green Deal, her new-found influence on the new European Commission line-up – as evidenced by the nomination of her choice for the position of executive vice-president, even though her ECR group in the European Parliament is not part of the pro-European majority – could, as she hopes, see the dismantling of von der Leyen’s flagship policy.

France and Italy order upgraded SAMP/T air-defense systems

Rudy Ruitenber and Tom Kingston

Paris and Rome: France and Italy ordered the next generation of the SAMP/T air-defense system as they seek better protection against threats including hypersonic missiles, with French Armed Forces Minister Sebastien Lecornu touting the “fully European” nature of the system. Lecornu announced an order for eight SAMP/T NG systems, with the first ones to enter the armed forces in 2026, while Italy ordered ten systems, the country’s Defense Minister Guido Crosetto said on Tuesday. Neither country provided a value for the order, though France

included a spending authorization of €674 million (US\$750 million) for the purchase in its 2024 military budget. The French are still smarting from Germany proposing Diehl Defence’s IRIS-T and the U.S.-made Patriot as the backbone of the European Sky Shield Initiative, rather than the SAMP/T developed by Thales and missile maker MBDA. The next-generation upgrade gives the French-Italian system an intercept range of more than 150 kilometers (93 miles), similar to the range reported for RTX’s Patriot, and improved capability to intercept hypersonic missiles. “This fully European system is capable of dealing with more significant threats, in particular

short- and medium-range ballistic missiles, including hypersonic,” the French Armed Forces Ministry said. “European air defense is central to the security of all Europeans.” French President Emmanuel Macron last year warned against European countries rushing to buy air-defense capabilities in response to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, saying that purchasing off-the-shelf would mean buying a lot of equipment from outside the continent. Lecornu and Crosetto attended a conference on European air and missile defense organized by Italy in Rome, after a similar meeting in Paris last year, and the French minister called for continuation of the effort “to deploy sovereign and innovative European technologies” with a third conference.

“We have ordered ten SAMP/T new-generation systems and we are improving the Aster missile,” Crosetto said on Tuesday. “Like the French we are focusing on national security.” Italy earlier this year already signed a contract for four of the systems with Europe’s Organisation for Joint Armament Co-operation, with main contractor Eurosam saying the system would be delivered from 2025. OCCAR last year signed for the purchase of five SAMP/T NG systems for the Italian Air Force, with a value of about €700 million. Italy confirmed in June it would send a second SAMP/T air defense battery to Ukraine in response to urgent appeals by Kyiv to help defeat Russian missile attacks. The battery due to be sent was one of five operated by Italy. At the time, Italian foreign minister Antonio Tajani said Italy would not allow Ukraine to use Italian weaponry to strike targets inside Russia. Italy and France jointly supplied a first battery to



Ukraine last year that has been defending the Kyiv area. SAMP/T is a truck-based tactical antimissile system designed to destroy cruise missiles, manned and unmanned aircraft and tactical ballistic missiles. A complete SAMP/T NG system includes a radar providing 360-degree coverage with a range of more than 350 kilometers, a command-and-control module, and as many as six launchers, each fitted with eight Aster 30 missiles, with a battery typically requiring 20 crew members, according to the manufacturers. Each launcher can fire its eight missiles in about 10 seconds. Discussing Italy’s new SAMP/T order, Crosetto said on Tuesday that European democracies were struggling to procure and produce weapons in a hurry. “This is only the start and we are already late because we are not ready to face today’s challenge,” he said, adding, “We are slow because

we live in a world of democracies that will always lose out to dictatorships.” France aims to have eight SAMP/T NG systems by the end of 2030, with a goal of 12 systems around 2035. The defense committee of the National Assembly in 2022 advised buying four more systems, saying the country needed a total of 16 to be able to meet its commitments. The French typically deploy several systems to secure major international events, such as the Paris Olympics. The country plans to invest €5 billion to strengthen its air defenses as part of the 2024-2030 military planning law. Swiss federal armaments office armatisuisse also attended the conference in Rome, saying its aim for the visit was to discuss new technological developments in integrated air defense and the opportunities there, as well as possible future threats and challenges.

