

Portugal wins Best Golf Destination titles for 3rd year running **NewsWire**

Lisbon: Portugal has won the award for "Best Golf Destination in the World" at the World Best Awards 2024 in Funchal, and has also scooped the prize for "Best Golf Destination in Europe" for the third year running. The announcement came this afternoon, with Turismo de Portugal attributing the country's success "to the integrated tourist experience." (Page-8)

World-leading climate initiatives to be developed through UK programme in Pakistan **Celina Ali**

Islamabad: New funding announced this week will support first-of-its-kind investment facility to deliver climate technologies and private sector support in Pakistan. The announcement follows launch of FCDO report highlighting the estimated cost of inaction on climate (Page-11)

China extends tariff exemptions on certain U.S. goods until Feb. 28, 2025



Beijing halted the entry of fentanyl into the US. However, this latest renewal is significantly shorter than the previous one. In April, the Tariff Commission announced that it would extend the exemption for 6 months and 29 days, while in this case the duration will be 2 months and 27 days.

The extension will allow the import of key products such as rare earth elements, gold ore and some appliances and chemicals without additional tariffs until the end of February, just over a month after Trump returns to the presidency. Trump's first term, between 2017-2021, was marked by a trade war with China. The exemption list was announced in May

2019, when China imposed additional levies of up to 25 percent, worth some \$60 billion, on products imported from the US in response to a tariff hike ordered by Trump on some \$200 billion worth of Chinese goods.



Covert Report

until Nov. 30, 2024.

Beijing: China will continue to exempt certain U.S. goods from additional tariffs until the end of February next year, the Customs Tariff Commission of the State Council said this week. According to a statement issued in April, these items from the United States were excluded from the tariff countermeasures against the U.S. Section 301 measures

After the extension, the exemption will last until Feb. 28, 2025, the commission said in a statement. The decision, which was announced by the Customs Tariff Commission of the State Council (the Chinese executive), comes days after US President-elect Donald Trump threatened to impose additional 10 percent tariffs on Chinese goods until

Denmark Embassy, UNODC, NACTA kicked off peace project through football match



Celina Ali

Islamabad: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in partnership with National Counter Terrorism Authority (NACTA) and support from the Embassy of Denmark, Islamabad this week kicked off the project "Strengthening Pakistan's Response to effectively prevent the spread of violent extremism virtually and amongst youth in vulnerable communities (SPREE)" by organizing a football match at Islamabad Model College for Boys (IMCB) H-9. The project aims at bolstering regional stability and improving rule of law in Pakistan the among youth. The project was launched through the football match under the theme "Play for Peace". The objective of the event was to demonstrate sports as a powerful tool which can foster peace and tolerance among youth and society which is crucial in development of sportsman spirit which helps children understand the importance of rule of law. The opening ceremony was graced by the Danish Ambassador, His Excellency Jakob Linulf, country Representative of UNODC and DG NACTA. HE Jakob expressed that Denmark firmly believes in the power of youth to drive positive change. By supporting healthy initiatives, Denmark reaffirms its friendship with the people of Pakistan enabling them to become leaders in promoting peace and stability regionally and globally. He applauded the role of NACTA and UNODC in peace building efforts. Meanwhile Mr. Troels Vester, Country Representative UNODC said, "UNODC along with its partners, is playing a key role in strengthening Pakistan's ability to prevent the spread of violent extremism, particularly in vulnerable communities and among the youth. Through such initiatives, UNODC continues to provide spaces for young people to engage in

constructive, community-building activities in Pakistan. While addressing the students, Director General Communications & Outreach NACTA Ms. Saleha Zakir Shah said that NACTA is deeply committed to preventing violent extremism in all its forms. As per mandate NACTA is not only fostering studies in understanding the factors that lead to radicalization, especially among young people but also taking impact oriented tangible steps with its partners. She further remarked that social cohesion through youth engagement has great potential to strengthen the social fibre which is the core identification of Pakistan. DG NACTA emphasized that Sports has magnetic power to connect the youth with each other and urged the youths to adopt sportsmanship to invest in society with tolerance and co-existence. In this regard, communal efforts are the dire need of time to curb the menace of violent extremism, hate speech and terrorism. The event began with the national anthem, setting the tone for a day steeped in unity and pride. Following this, players from both teams the spirited Blues and the determined Whites— were introduced to the crowd, receiving cheers and encouragement. The IMCB H-9's football field was more than a venue that day it became a stage for unity, hope, and a brighter future. The match was a spectacle. Divided into two halves of 30 minutes each, it was a display of skill, determination, and sportsmanship. The Blue team, known for their aggressive strategy, faced off against the Whites, and celebrated for their defensive resilience. The first half was marked by intense back-and-forth action, with both teams creating scoring opportunities. Despite valiant efforts, neither side managed to find the back of the net, leaving the crowd on edge as they waited for a breakthrough. The match took a thrilling turn when the White team netted the first goal in the first 10 minutes, sparking jubilation among their supporters. Undeterred, the Blue team fought back with determination and resilience, demonstrating their unwavering spirit. In the end, the intense showdown culminated in a nail-biting shootout, where the Whites claimed victory with a score of 1-0.



Bilawal Bhutto for 'National Action Plan 2.0' to combat terror

Liaquat Ali

Islamabad: Pakistan Peoples Party Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari this week stressed the need for the 'National Action Plan 2.0' to combat terrorism in the country, following terrorist attacks against foreigners, civilians, and armed forces. "The government never desires for any citizen to lose their life in incidents of unrest. We hope both the federal and provincial governments will play their roles in the national interest," he said while addressing the party's gatherings across Pakistan via video link. The Sindh-ruling party celebrated its 57th founding anniversary. The country has seen an increase in militancy since the Afghan Taliban returned to power in 2021, with the Pakistani chapter of the movement carrying out attacks mostly targeting security forces. One of them was a blast at the Quetta Railway Station that killed 27 people. Earlier this month, seven security personnel were martyred in an exchange of fire with terrorists who attempted to attack a security forces' post in the general area of Shah-e-Mardan of the Kalat district in Balochistan. In October, a man attack killed two Chinese nationals and a Pakistan citizen just outside the Jinnah International Airport in Karachi. Moreover, unidentified gunmen killed over 40 people in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's Kurram this month. Bilawal called for a "National Action Plan 2.0" to collectively combat terrorism and to reach a consensus on the critical issue. The South Asian country introduced such a plan when the banned terrorist organisation TTP killed 131 children and 10 other people after attacking the Army Public School in Peshawar on December 16, 2014. He also highlighted the necessity of developing policies to engage with disgruntled individuals and terrorists, asserting that planning is essential to effectively defeat terrorism. Bilawal was of the view that the country would have to develop policies to engage with disgruntled individuals and terrorists, saying: "Terrorism can only be defeated through planning." In his speech, Bilawal claimed that the PPP was divided to make room for the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf. He alleged that efforts were made to distance the PPP from politics, yet the party was fulfilling "significant responsibilities" in both the National Assembly and the Senate. He reiterated that eradicating poverty "is a priority for the PPP, which has always made decisions" considering the welfare of the people and the country. Bilawal expressed a desire to see peace and increase job opportunities in the nation. He pointed out that the "biggest issue" facing the country is political instability, asserting that political stability was essential to address terrorism and the economic crisis. But the PPP chief identified the opposition as the "main obstacle" to achieving this stability and accused them of neither being democratic nor politically constructive. The secon of Bhutto dynasty criticised certain parties for not engaging in politics within the appropriate framework, stating that the attacks on May 9 and events in Islamabad do not fall within the political domain.



Bilawal stressed the need for politicians to engage in constructive political discourse, asserting that it is the government's responsibility, along with the opposition, to create political stability and effectively govern the state. Bilawal urged opposition parties to adopt a democratic approach, criticising those engaged in non-political opposition for their unconstructive behaviour. He questioned how non-political opposition could expect to foster a political climate. He stressed the importance of not exacerbating Pakistan's existing problems, warning that if the opposition continues its political tactics, it would harm both themselves and the country. Bilawal emphasised that a positive role from political parties could lead to solutions for pressing issues, asserting that the PPP was committed to "positive politics". He was apparently referring to the PTI's Islamabad march where at least six people, including three Rangers personnel, were killed. Former prime minister Inran Khan's party has claimed that firing on the third day of protest killed their 12 supporters.

Henan's consumption growth outpaces national average in Jan-Oct

Henan Daily

Zhengzhou: Strong momentum in the dining and retail sectors, a vibrant cultural and tourism market, and a higher quality of life driven by trade-in programs.

With a series of policies aimed at boosting domestic demand and consumption taking effect, Henan's consumption potential is accelerating.

In October, the province's total retail sales of consumer goods reached 257.358 billion yuan, a year-on-year increase of 7.1%. In the first 10 months of the year, the total retail sales of consumer goods in Henan reached 2.2393 trillion yuan, a year-on-year increase of 5.9%. Both figures are higher than the national average.

Taking advantage of policies such as trade-in programs and consumer subsidies in mid-October, online platforms and offline merchants launched Double 11 promotions ahead of schedule and extended the promotional period, helping to sustain the strong momentum in the retail and dining sectors. In October, the total dining revenue in Henan reached 4.646 billion yuan, up



7.4% year-on-year, while retail sales of goods amounted to 58.143 billion yuan, an 11.1% increase from the previous year. The trade-in program, while driving consumption upgrades, has effectively boosted sales of bulk commodities such as automobiles and household appliances, further unlocking market potential. Fueled by various car promotions and the province-wide trade-in policy, Henan's total retail sales of automobiles in October reached 20.571 billion yuan, a 6.2% year-on-year increase. Green consumption trends have emerged in the home appliance sector. In October, the retail sales of household appliances and audio-visual equipment with energy efficiency ratings of Level 1 and Level 2 in enterprises above the

designated scale in Henan increased by 61.6%. "The consumption structure in Henan has become increasingly diverse, with industries such as commerce, catering, entertainment, and tourism merging across boundaries, creating numerous new consumption scenarios and models. This has effectively promoted the expansion and upgrading of Henan's consumption market," said a representative from the Department of Commerce of Henan Province. Looking ahead, Henan will continue to focus on bulk commodities such as automobiles and household appliances, while also emphasizing key sectors like catering. By leveraging innovative consumption scenarios to promote new forms of consumption, Henan aims to further boost its consumption market.



Representatives of Belarus' travel industry examine tourism potential of Chinese Province of Henan

Covert Report

Representatives of the Belarusian tourism industry took part in an information tour of the Chinese Province of Henan at the end of November. BelTA learned from the National Tourism Agency.

The delegation included representatives of the tour operators authorized by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China to receive groups of Chinese tourists, the National Tourism Agency and the Chinese Cultural Center

in Minsk. The tour participants visited the key cities of the province: the capital Zhengzhou, historical Kaifeng and Luoyang, the legendary Shaolin Monastery. Meetings were held with local tourism authorities and



tour operators in the format of workshops (business matchmaking events). "The main topic of discussion was the prospects for the exchange of tourist groups between Belarus and Henan using convenient Minsk-Urumqi-Minsk flight by the Belavia airline," the National Tourism Agency said, adding that an extensive network of domestic flights opens up wide opportunities for travel throughout China. In addition to the Belarusian delegation, representatives of travel companies from

Australia, Mexico, the Republic of Korea, France, India, Pakistan, Hong Kong and Macau took part in the information tour. The event was organized by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of China. The National Tourism Agency noted that the information tour is an important step in the development of tourism cooperation between Belarus and China. It opens up new horizons for attracting Chinese tourists and strengthening international ties in the field of tourism.

Si River nurtures Confucian culture in China's Shandong Province

NewsWire

Beijing: The Si River, formerly known as Sishui, belongs to one of the major rivers in ancient times.

The Si River that originates from Heiyu Mountain in Xintai City, Shandong Province, flows through seven counties and districts including Xintai, Sishui, Qufu, Yanzhou, Zoucheng, Rengcheng, and Weishan, and drains into the South Four Lakes at the junction of Rengcheng District and Weishan County in Jining City. The river is 169 kilometers long, with a drainage area of 2,383.6 square kilometers.

"Time passes by like this, flowing away day and night," Confucius once sighed by the rushing Si River, leaving a remark that has lasted for a thousand years.

For thousands of years, the Si River, with its broad embrace and surging momentum, has not only nurtured the profound Confucian culture but also attracted numerous sages, philosophers,

and literati to visit here.

The five saints of Confucianism, as well as figures like Mozi and Zhongzi, either grew up here or engaged in activities here, forming an inseparable bond with the Si River.

Li Dao Yuan, a geographer from the Northern Wei Dynasty, praised the Si River in his work "Shui Jing Zhu" as a renowned river of Haidai area.

The Tang Dynasty poet Li Bai traveled extensively along the Si River, leaving behind the beautiful line "The autumn waves of Si Shui brighten Culai Mountain far away."

The Southern Song Dynasty philosopher Zhu Xi also wrote the poem "When along the Si River I seek blooms of the brilliant day, before my eyes stretches away a boundless scene of beauty."

A glance at the visage of vernal breeze, and I know, a thousand flowers of purple and red set spring aglow.

Quanlin, an important water source upstream of the Si River, was once considered as the ancient

source of the Si River.

Located 25 kilometers east of Sishui City, at the foot of Peiwai Mountain, Quanlin is at the edge of the Taiyi low mountain hills, where various springs converge to form a spectacular spring group.

Quanlin is named for its abundant famous springs, with numerous springs as dense as a forest, earning it a reputation throughout the world.

The spring group boasts seventy-two famous springs, dozens of large springs, and countless small springs, making it a brilliant pearl embedded in the eastern part of the homeland of Confucius and Mencius, hailed as "the crown of springs in Shandong."

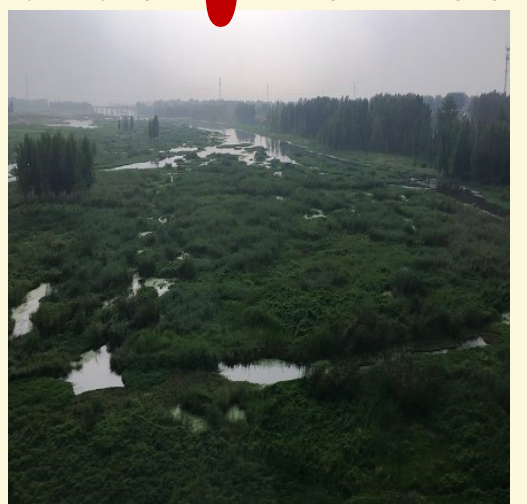
With its beautiful natural water scenery, Quanlin has attracted many literati, emperors, and generals through the ages, leaving behind a wealth of poems appreciating the springs. This place features green willows, lush grass, bubbling spring like pearls, and floating water

algae, creating a picturesque scene that is naturally captivating and beloved by people.

During his southern tour, Emperor Kangxi of the Qing Dynasty passed through Quanlin, and wrote "Record of Quanlin," praising it as "a place with superior springs, where sacred traces remain."

Today, the Si River Haidai Mingchuan Park and Si River Longwan Lake Art Town have been built along the banks of the Si River, where the charm of art perfectly merges with the vitality of water.

In addition to appreciating various artworks, the idyllic rural scenery resembling a paradise makes people linger and forget to leave.



New welcome center for migrants in Milan, Italy



Director of the IOM's Mediterranean Coordination Office, the center provides services such as DNA testing for family reunification, assistance with completing reunification procedures, and interviews to facilitate voluntary return to the migrant's country of origin, when requested.

News wire

Milan: Milan has a new center for migrants, the Milano Welcome Center, which will be a unique point of access to services for those who just arrived in town and have been granted international protection. The Milano Welcome Center, housed in a refurbished 2,000-square-meter municipal building near Milan Central Station, hosts approximately 60 professionals, including cultural-linguistic mediators, social workers, legal consultants, psychologists, educators, Italian language tutors, and administrative staff. These experts come from both the municipality and partner organizations in the third sector. The facility operates as a "one-stop shop": it aims to be the sole point of access for services dedicated to migrants and refugees, with a particular focus on new arrivals, to support their inclusion by consolidating in one single place the services, support, information and orientation services offered. "When we talk about migrants and refugees, the key to inclusion lies in quality pathways that respect cultural differences and origins while supporting individuals and families in achieving real autonomy," noted the Mayor of Milan, Giuseppe Sala.



"What is essential is the strengthening of the integrated service system dedicated to the new citizens of Milan in close cooperation between public and private institutions that work in this sector in the area of Milan, maintaining at the same time a role of strong leadership for the Municipality," noted the Welfare Councilor Lamberto Bertolè. The center has a multilingual front office where a person can go, even without a previous appointment, from Monday to Friday from 9 am until 5 pm. The synergy with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) is a cornerstone of the center's operations. Under a Memorandum of Understanding signed by Mayor Sala and Laurence Hart,

UK, China can set example of joint climate action

Piers Forster and Wang Yi

Global surface temperatures reached record levels in 2024 as the impacts of climate change are being felt around the world. All countries, no matter their development status, are affected by climate change. For example, this month has seen floods in Valencia, Spain, claiming more than 200 lives, and flooding in Colombia causing a state of emergency affecting over 200,000 people.

In China, the rated precipitation in the first three quarters of this year was 10.5 percent higher than in the same period of a normal year, with extreme rainfall, and sudden and frequent floods and climate-related disasters resulting in a large number of casualties, relocation of people and economic losses.

Multilateral talks at the Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP29) in Baku, Azerbaijan, have delivered some progress, especially on climate finance. The just-concluded Baku conference was "finance COP" where a new goal for climate finance was negotiated.

According to the deal, developed countries have promised to contribute \$300 billion as climate finance per year by 2035. Though it was far short of the trillion dollars sought by the least- and less-developed countries, it was a hard-won achievement for developing countries.

For the first time the total climate finance includes a possible voluntary contribution from China, which acknowledges its position both as a major economy and

a major investor in green technology in developing countries.

The participating countries also agreed to the rules of the carbon market, which should boost market-oriented cooperation on climate and enable businesses to support the recovery of nature and promotion of carbon removal technologies in other countries.

However, there was less progress on climate mitigation aspects. At the COP28 in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, last year, the participating countries agreed to triple renewable energy capacity by 2030 and transition away from fossil fuels. Yet it was difficult to reach a consensus on the mitigation work program which would continue this progress in Baku, with the participating countries eventually deciding to revisit the issue next year and continue talking meanwhile.

The slow progress on multilateral issues means there is increasing focus on bilateral, sub-national and country-group dialogues that can offer ways to further progress. Amid rising political tensions worldwide, strong bilateral cooperation between the United Kingdom and China can provide the international leadership needed to boost the fight against climate change this decade.

During the COP29 talks in Baku, British and Chinese leaders met at the G20 Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and agreed to cooperate on areas such as clean energy and climate change as part of their efforts to address shared global challenges.

Following this meeting, and to support both multilateral and bilateral cooperation, we propose that our expert

climate change committees advance our interactions. Our committees have different mandates and institutional structures. Nevertheless, we can collaborate effectively to better advise our countries on how to decarbonize and achieve green transition in a way that creates jobs and boosts the economy.

The UK climate committee recently advised the UK government on its 2035 Nationally Determined Contribution, while the Chinese climate committee is advising the Chinese government on how to achieve its dual carbon goals and minimize climate risks, as well as support the international climate negotiations. Both countries could reach a broader and more practical consensus with support from their respective climate committees.

Supported by the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, China's Ministry of Ecology and Environment and Chatham House, the UK climate science community and policy experts have been collaborating since 2013 in order to better understand the risks posed by climate change, and the policies needed to improve resilience against climate change.

In the last two years, this collaboration has deepened. The two countries' climate committees have jointly explored how to provide constructive advice to our governments across a range of agreed issues of common interest and relevance to our respective national context. We, hereby, propose that our expert committees advance the interaction within their current institutional structures to help us better advise our respective governments.

There is a need to support our countries' efforts to decarbonize their energy supply while ensuring energy security. Both countries have ambitious plans to increase renewable energy generation and our committees can support this effort through their work. The UK, having closed its last coal-fired power station in October, now needs to replace its gas generation with a mix of renewables and energy storage solutions including battery storage and hydrogen. It also needs to rapidly improve its electricity grid to cope with the rising demand for energy, including clean energy.

In China, the demand for energy is still growing faster than the growth of renewable energy generation, but otherwise its challenges are similar to those of the UK, except that renewable, rather than gas generation, will largely be displacing its coal consumption. Both China and the UK are facing the challenge of transforming the energy system, mainly built upon renewable energy. In this regard, the two countries' committees can learn from each other ways to support their countries to build a secure energy system that principally uses renewable energy, so they can add more green energy to their total



H.E. Caroline Wilson, UK ambassador to China.

energy mix against the backdrop of fast changing climate.

The committees can further deepen their collaboration on evaluating climate risks, especially in urban and regional areas, and river basins. We also need to better understand and link climate governance with nature governance. Piers Forster, interim chair of the UK Climate Change Committee, presented the results from the London Climate Resilience Review at two China-led events on the sidelines of COP29, and the UK climate committee is preparing a report on how well can the UK adapt to climate change.

As an expert in the Chinese delegation, Wang Yi, vice-chair of China Expert Panel on Climate Change, was invited to the "China Pavilion" on the sidelines of the official events of the UNFCCC, and various events organised by the business communities and social organisations at COP29, to speak on the progress of the climate conference, share China's experience in energy transition, and policies to address climate change and overcome common challenges. Experts and scholars from the UK and China, who have been engaged in cooperation and have attended several UN climate change conferences, shared their research findings and assessment of climate risk assessment, asserting the need to link climate governance with nature management. And by deepening their cooperation, they can improve our climate risk assessments and response.

In order to build a greener, more climate-resilient and inclusive sustainable society, the UK and China should take full advantage of their successful climate cooperation over the past decade to further deepen our cooperation. The two countries could also consider issuing a joint statement to promote the multilateral climate agenda. And workstreams could be set up with focus on clean energy transition, co-governance of climate and nature, reducing climate risks, strengthening climate-resilience, green finance to work together with other countries to promote the green transition in an equitable, just and orderly manner, and facilitate sustainable economic development.

We look forward to the UK and China formally submitting comprehensive and strong NDCs for 2035. By progressing toward these targets, the two sides can set an example for the rest of the world to follow.

Piers Forster is interim chair, United Kingdom Climate Change Committee; and Wang Yi is vice-chair, China Expert Panel on Climate Change.



Lebanon deal should prompt all parties to pursue immediate ceasefire in Gaza

China Daily

One day after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced that the Israeli Security Cabinet had approved a two-month deal to end the fighting in Lebanon, a ceasefire came into effect on Wednesday, marking a significant step forward for efforts to end the hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah and fueling hopes that a deal can be reached to end the conflict in Gaza. According to reports, although Hezbollah is not an official signatory given its designation as a terrorist organization by the United States, the

group has agreed to move its fighters north of the Litani River — approximately 40 kilometers from the de facto Israel-Lebanon border. Israeli forces meanwhile are to gradually withdraw from southern Lebanon. A five-country monitoring panel, led by the United States, is to oversee the implementation of the agreement, with 5,000 Lebanese troops deployed to ensure compliance. China, which has been closely following the situation in Lebanon, has welcomed the deal and has called on all parties to do their utmost to honor it.

Urging the relevant parties to abide by UN Security Council Resolution 1701 that calls for a full cessation of all attacks on Israel by Hezbollah and Israeli military operations in Lebanon, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning also called for greater efforts to be made to promote an immediate and lasting ceasefire in Gaza, as China believes that the failure to achieve a ceasefire in Gaza is the root cause of the ongoing turmoil in the Middle East.

This is a pertinent prompt as the latest development has also renewed international hopes for a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip, where millions of Palestinians have been trapped in an appalling humanitarian crisis for more than a year.

Now that Tel Aviv has eliminated almost all the top echelons of both Hezbollah and Hamas, it is high time relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions to end the war in Gaza were fully implemented as soon as possible.

In his remarks to a UN meeting held on Tuesday to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, Chinese President Xi Jinping pointed out that the question of Palestine is at the heart of the Middle East issue and concerns international fairness and justice.

The top priority now should be to promote the full and effective implementation of UN Security Council resolutions by parties to the conflict, and the realization of an immediate and uncondi-

tional ceasefire in Gaza, so as to create conditions for alleviating the humanitarian crisis.

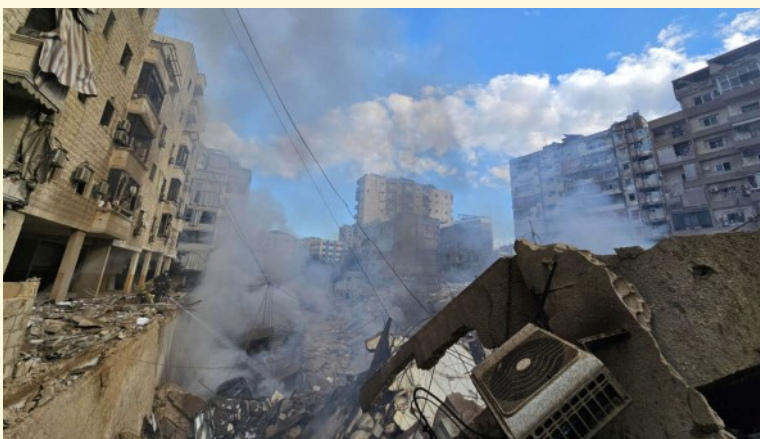
Indeed, the conflict in Gaza must be brought to an end. To date, the Palestinian death toll in Gaza has reportedly surpassed 44,000, with millions more displaced and living in hellish conditions.

The conflict in Gaza has not only spilled over to Lebanon but also to other parts of the region, involving more regional forces. Influential parties should shoulder their due responsibilities and do more to realize a ceasefire in Gaza.

The United States, in particular, should end its unconditional support of Israel, which has emboldened and enabled Tel Aviv to launch one military offensive after another against any it deems to be an enemy. In light of this, China has urged the US to discard its political calculations and stop selectively ignoring international and humanitarian law. With the US having stubbornly stood on the opposite side of international

calls for a ceasefire and the conscience of humanity, China hopes that the deal for a ceasefire in Lebanon will prompt it to shoulder its responsibilities as a major country, and play a constructive role in restoring peace and stability in the Middle East by working to promote an immediate ceasefire in Gaza.

The vicious circle of violence must end, and the people of Gaza, Palestine and the broader Middle East deserve a concerted international effort to establish lasting peace.



China Daily

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High Commissioner Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri advises Pakistani travellers to complete homework before flying to Australia



Covert Report
 Canberra: Pakistani High Commissioner to Australia Zahid Hafeez Chaudhri this week advised the Pakistani travellers to complete their homework before flying to Australia. "Important information to avoid difficulties at the airport!" he posted on X, tagging Australian High Commissioner to Pakistan Neil Hawkins' post which read: "Attention Australian visa holders! Got a shiny new passport? Before travelling to Australia, make sure to update your details in ImmiAccount to avoid travel delays! Update instantly here: <http://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/change-in-situation/passport-details>. Safe travels!" If you are an Australian visa holder or applicant, it is crucial to inform the Australian authorities if you've received



a new passport before you travel to or from Australia. This ensures that your new passport is linked to your visa or visa application, which helps avoid potential travel disruptions. Whether you are traveling from overseas to Australia or you are a permanent resident of Australia, updating your passport details is mandatory. If you fail to do this before your



travel, you could face significant delays when attempting to enter or leave Australia. This requirement applies to all Australian visa holders and applicants, regardless of your travel origin or status as a permanent resident. The process for updating your passport details is simple and can be done quickly through your ImmiAccount. Once updated, the details are

usually linked instantly, ensuring there are no interruptions to your travel plans. If you do not have an ImmiAccount, you can still update your passport details, but you will need to fill out an online form. **Be aware that this method may take longer due to processing times.**

Ambassador Asim Iftikhar Ahmad reiterates commitment to diaspora's facilitation



Celina Ali
 Islamabad: Pakistan Ambassador in France Asim Iftikhar Ahmad this week reiterated that facilitation of the diaspora was a top priority of the government and

the embassy was fully committed towards that objective. The ambassador interacted with members of the Pakistan community in a Khuli Kuchehri at Pakistan Mission Paris which focused discussion on provision of efficient consular services and redressal of complaints, a post on X said. He briefed the participants about the various mechanisms for addressing issues and complaints pertaining to government departments, including the portal, OPF and the Ombudspersons Offices and encouraged the community to fully utilize those forums. "Regarding direct flights between Pakistan and Europe, one of the main and longstanding demands of

the community, he welcomed the announcement the same day regarding EASA authorization that would soon lead to resumption of PIA flights to Paris. This was the result of concerted efforts by the government," the post quoted the ambassador as saying.



Kazakhstan and China partner for Sany wind turbine plant

Covert Report
 Astana: Kazakhstan's Samruk-Kazyna state fund and China's SANY Renewable Energy (SANY RE) have begun construction of a \$114 million wind turbine component manufacturing plant in the Zhambyl region, marking a step in the country's renewable energy sector. The plant, which is set to begin operations in late 2025, will produce essential components such as nacelles, hubs and towers for wind power plants. The project is a key initiative in Kazakhstan's strategy to boost renewable energy production and reduce dependence on traditional energy sources.

Nurlan Zhakupov, chairman of the board of Samruk-Kazyna, stressed the importance of the initiative: "This [involves] attracting \$114 million in foreign direct investment. The project will be implemented without additional loans from Kazakhstan's development institutions. The level of localization will be at least 30%. To support this, SANY RE plans to establish a new R&D center." Samruk-Kazyna aims to put 6 GW of renewable energy sources into operation by 2030 in collaboration with its partners, addressing Kazakhstan's



stan's growing energy demands while promoting sustainable development. SANY Renewable Energy is a division of SANY Group, a leading Chinese engineering and

manufacturing company. The company's expertise in renewable energy technology aligns with Kazakhstan's drive for cleaner energy solutions. Founded in 2008, Samruk-Kazyna manages key

strategic assets in Kazakhstan, including major corporations such as Air Astana, Kazatomprom and KazMunayGas, which play a vital role in the nation's economic development.

Umar Rehman Malik celebrates PPP foundation day



heed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, PPP has shaped Pakistan's future through landmark achievements, from the Constitution to the nuclear program, and revolutionary progress in women's empowerment, education, healthcare, infrastructure, and social welfare." The PPP's journey, he said, has been marked by the imprisonment, suffering, and victimization of its leaders and workers, who gave their lives for democracy and justice. Under Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari. "PPP remains committed to upholding the legacy of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto towards a peaceful, prosperous, and pro-

politicians in the country joined hands against the rule of Ayub Khan, under the leadership of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. It is affiliated with the Socialist International. The PPP's platform was formerly socialist, and its stated priorities continue to include transforming Pakistan into a social-democratic state, promoting egalitarian values, establishing social justice, and maintaining a strong military. It, alongside the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz and the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, is one of the three largest political parties of Pakistan. Since its foundation in 1967, it has been a



1993 and 2008), while on four occasions major centre-left force in the country and



Abdullah Jan Islamabad: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) leader Umar Rehman Malik this week celebrated the PPP foundation day. "On #PPPFoundationDay, heartfelt con-



gressive Pakistan," Umar Rehman Malik said. The PPP was founded in 1967 in Lahore, when a number of prominent left-wing

the party's leadership has been led by the members of the Bhutto family. The PPP has been voted into power on five separate occasions (1970, 1977, 1988,

(1990, 1997, 2002 and 2013) it emerged as the largest opposition party. There have been a total of four prime ministers from the PPP.



Bulgarian Ambassador Irena Gancheva, Sindh CM discuss bilateral ties



NewsWire

Karachi: Bulgarian Ambassador Irena Gancheva called on Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah in Karachi this week.

During the meeting, they discussed bilateral relations, economic and cultural cooperation and matters of mutual interest.

On the occasion, Sindh Chief Minister apprised the Ambassador that Sindh government wants to en-



hance cooperation with Bulgaria in the agricultural sector, education, research, culture and other sectors.

Greece withdraws from 2025 World Expo in Osaka, becoming 8th nation



Covert Report

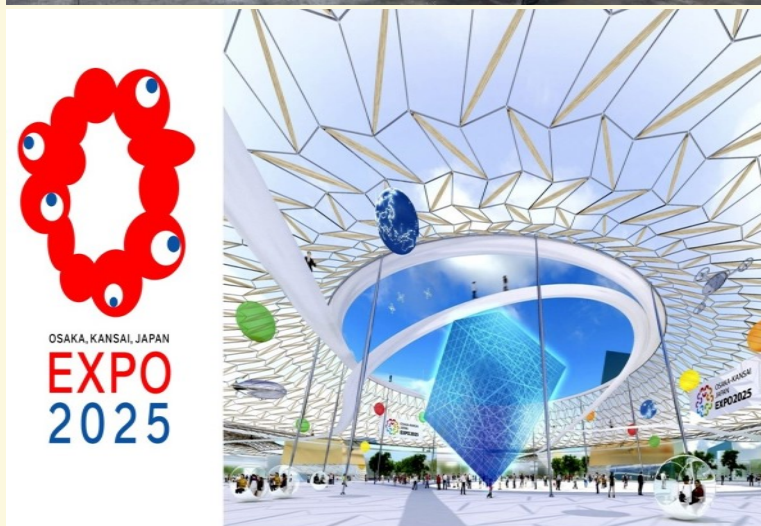
Athens: Greece has decided to withdraw from the World Expo scheduled for next year in Osaka, Japan, the organizer said this week, with the European country citing fiscal constraints.

It is the eighth country to drop out after initially planning to participate in the expo, to be hosted by the commercial hub of western Japan, amid concerns about the event's ballooning costs.

The Japan Association for the International Exposition, meanwhile, made a formal announcement that Ukraine, which has been under invasion by Russia since 2022, will join the event, keeping the number of participating countries and regions unchanged at 161.

Greece had intended to use the "Type B" pavilion, renting and exclusively using a facility constructed by Japan. The organizer said it will reconsider how to utilize the space in the future. The expo is slated to run for six months from April 2025.

So far, Mexico, Estonia, Russia, Niue, Argentina, Afghanistan and Niger have announced their withdrawal from the event. The organizer said Ukraine will take part in the "Type C" pavilion, which will be built by Japan and shared among participants.



Portugal wins Best Golf Destination titles for 3rd year running



News wire

Lisbon: Portugal has won the award for “Best Golf Destination in the World” at the World Golf Awards 2024 in Funchal, and has also scooped the prize for “Best Golf Destination in Europe” for the third year running.

The announcement came this afternoon, with Turismo de Portugal attributing the country’s success “to the integrated tourist experience, good air and land accessibility, exceptional hospitality, high-quality sports and hotel infrastructures that cater for different profiles of players (whether professionals or amateurs), and excellent value for money.”

According to the organisation, golf, through its link to tourism, “contributes to an increase in tourist revenue and to the expansion of tourist activity throughout the year and throughout the territory”.

This was the 11th edition of the World Golf Awards, taking place in Madeira – and this year, Madeira also picked up several accolades, including the award for “Best Emerging Golf Destination in the World”.

Portugal currently has 92 golf courses, spread across various regions, with a particular focus on the Algarve, Lisbon, Porto and the North. The World Golf Awards are voted for by golf industry professionals from over 100 countries and are part of the World Travel Awards



Japan provides grant assistance to two NGOs for development projects in Sindh



Celina Ali

Islamabad: The Government of Japan this week decided to provide grant assistance up to USD 95,311 (equivalent to PKR 26.5 million) in total to two local NGOs for development projects in Sindh.

The grant contracts were signed between the Consul General of Japan, Mr. HATTORI Masaru, and representatives of the two NGOs at the Consulate-General of Japan in Karachi on November 28,

2024. The two NGOs that will implement the projects are Disabled Welfare Association (DWA) and Sindh Community Foundation (SCF).

The DWA will receive 31,329 US dollars grant (equivalent to PKR 8.7 million) to get new transport vehicles and vocational training equipment for low-income women with disability in Karachi. Through this grant, the DWA will be able to provide vocational trainings to approximately 40 women with disabilities each day, as a result, the DWA would empower

them to achieve social and economic independence. Through receiving 63,982 US dollars grant (equivalent to PKR 17.8 million), the SCF will be able to construct climate resilient water filtering plants and sanitation system. This will allow benefiting approximately 6,000 villagers to access clean water and 850 villagers to the toilets each day. Thus, the SCF would contribute to reduction of water-borne diseases, and environmental pollutions, and better health of the people.

US sets tariffs for solar panels from South-east Asian nations

Covert Report

Washington: US trade officials announced on Nov 29 a new round of tariffs on solar panel imports from four South-east Asian nations after American manufacturers complained that companies there are flooding the market with unfairly cheap goods.

It is the second of two preliminary decisions that President Joe Biden's Commerce Department is making in 2024 in a trade case brought by South Korea's Hanwha Qcells, Arizona-based First Solar and several smaller producers seeking to protect billions of dollars in investments in US solar manufacturing.

The group, the American Alliance for Solar Manufacturing Trade Committee, accused big Chinese solar panel makers with factories in Malaysia, Cambodia, Vietnam and Thailand of causing global prices to collapse by dumping products into the market.

According to a preliminary decision posted on the US Commerce Department's website on Nov 29, the agency calculated dumping duties of between 21.31 per cent and 271.2 per cent, depending on the company, on solar cells from Cambodia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam.

Jinko Solar received duties of 21.31 per cent for products made in Malay-

sia and 56.51 per cent for those produced in Vietnam.

China's Trina Solar received a dumping margin of 77.85 per cent for products it makes in Thailand and 54.46 per cent for those it produces in Vietnam.

In contrast, the Commerce Department did not lay out any dumping margin for Hanwha Qcells products made in Malaysia. In October, the department had calculated subsidy rate of 14.72 per cent for the company.

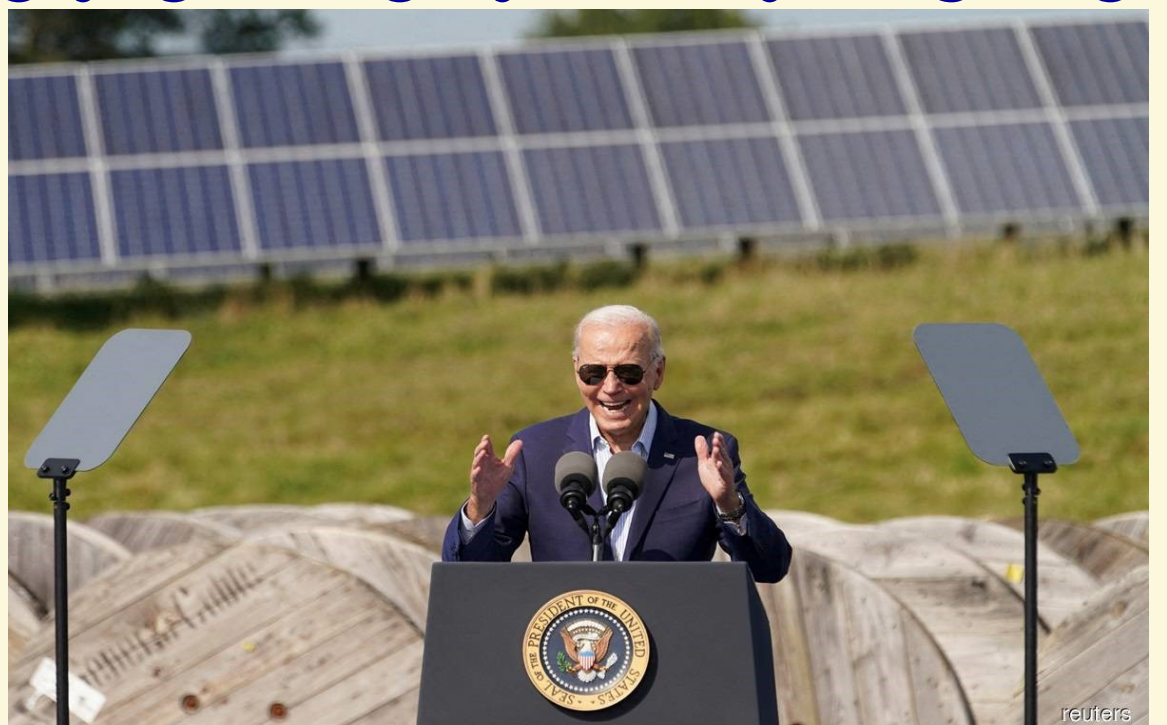
The department's final determinations are set for April 18, 2025, with the International Trade Administration set to finalise its determinations on June 2 and final orders on June 9.

"With these preliminary duties, we are moving closer to addressing years of harmful unfair trade and protecting billions of dollars of investment in new American solar manufacturing and supply chains," said Mr Tim Brightbill, partner at Wiley Rein and lead counsel to the petitioners.

Representatives for Jinko and Trina were not immediately available for comment.

Most solar panels installed in the US are made overseas, and some 80 per cent of imports come from the four nations targeted in the Commerce Department probe.

The US government in 2024 raised the alarm over China's massive investment in factory capacity for clean energy goods.



Mr Biden's landmark climate change law, the Inflation Reduction Act, includes incentives for companies that produce clean energy equipment in the US – a subsidy that has prompted a flurry of

plans for new solar factories. President-elect Donald Trump has called the Inflation Reduction Act too expensive, but also has said he plans to slap hefty tariffs on a range of sectors to protect

American workers. Dumping occurs when a company sells a product in the US at a price below its cost of production or lower than what it charges in its home country.

EU enlargement: Illusion or reality?

Newsire

Brussels: In a show of solidarity following Russia's 2022 full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the European Union offered the prospect of eventual membership to Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, signaling to the Kremlin that these countries are not within its sphere of influence. When United States President-elect Donald Trump returns to the White House in January, achieving NATO membership and obtaining the security guarantees that come with it will seem even harder for these nations. As a result, many of their citizens will likely view joining the EU as increasingly important. Yet there are many stumbling blocks along the way. These obstacles risk making the offer from Brussels of eventual membership an illusion and an empty gesture.

The appointment of a dedicated enlargement commissioner in the new European Commission, who will take office on December 1, aims to add credibility to the process. However, the reinstatement of this traditional role, covering candidates in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, will do little by itself to make EU membership a reality.

With risks and uncertainties overshadowing Europe's future, three scenarios depict how the dilemmas of EU enlargement may play out in the years ahead.

Under this scenario, Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, as well as Albania and the countries of the former Yugoslavia, gradually fulfill the conditions set by the EU and proceed toward membership. Turkey remains a nominal candidate, despite Ankara's efforts to play off the U.S., Russia, China and the Gulf countries against each other.

By 2035, Ukraine and Moldova manage to fend off Russian encroachment and adopt sufficient democratic and human rights reforms to convince the 27 EU governments that they are ready to join the union. An apparently lasting armistice between Ukraine and Russia persuades European governments that they are not importing instability when the country finally fulfills its European ambition. Russian President Vladimir Putin's successor withdraws Russian forces from Transnistria, which becomes a semi-autonomous region of Moldova. Georgia, however, still vacillates between pro-Russian and pro-Atlanticist leaders and cannot yet be certified ready for membership.

Republika Srpska from displays of separatism, permitting both countries to move forward toward EU membership.

The five previously reluctant EU member states finally recognize Kosovo as an independent sovereign state, deeming this a reasonable price to pay for the stability and security to be gained by admitting this querulous region into the union.

Thus, on May 1, 2034, 30 years after the EU's big bang enlargement of 2004, eight candidate countries sign accession treaties and become full EU members on June 1, 2035 – albeit with lengthy, conditional and reversible transitional periods.

The second scenario takes a bleaker view of the prospects for EU enlargement. The EU green-lighted membership talks in record time in 2022-2024 to give a boost to Ukraine and Moldova in their struggles with Moscow. But this geopolitical decision ignored obstacles on both sides, including unresolved disputes between Poland and Ukraine going back to World War II, and complaints from Budapest about the treatment of Ukraine's Hungarian minority.

Enlargement supporters underestimated both Russia's resolve to curtail Ukraine's independence and the challenge that complex EU regulations pose for Eastern European and Balkan countries. These countries still grapple with imperfect democracies, persistent corruption, ethnic tensions and disagreements with neighboring states. Within the EU itself, political and economic hurdles also exist, including concerns among farmers about competition from Ukrainian exports and worries about the impact of expansion on the EU's budget.

In this scenario, hostilities between Ukraine and Russia grind to a halt in the years following Donald Trump's return to office. But no political settlement or peace treaty is signed, as war aims still diverge. Instead, there is an uneasy ceasefire with the military positions of both sides frozen in eastern Ukraine and Crimea. Sporadic skirmishes continue across the demarcation line in the east. Russian forces still occupy the Transnistrian pseudo-state in Moldova as well as large enclaves in Georgia.



By the late 2020s, in this scenario, policymakers conclude that the offer of membership was premature for countries that were de facto at war or otherwise unprepared for the rights and obligations of membership. The offer was made hastily as the EU's geopolitical toolbox contained few carrots except enlargement and few sticks except sanctions. At the time, hopes were set on the EU becoming a geopolitical power and Ukraine was seen as contributing to European security with its battle-hardened army and armaments production, including advanced drones. But these arguments faded as it became apparent that Ukraine's accession would bring new security risks due to persistent tensions with Russia. Still, there could be no stepping back from the offer of membership once it had been made. The EU could not, for example, condition Ukraine's accession on the signature of a peace treaty with Russia without handing a veto to the Kremlin.

In this scenario, therefore, the EU seeks to keep the prospect of eventual membership alive, while acknowledging that this might take many years, or even decades. Some argue that the EU itself requires an enlargement perspective – however distant – to avoid becoming inward-looking and to retain confidence in the attractiveness of its model, against the lure of the enlarged BRICS and the rejection by the Global South of the kind of human rights and climate conditionality the EU attaches to trade agreements and, of course, to membership.



This scenario, therefore, posits the continuation of open-ended accession negotiations, at a slow pace, combined with concrete support for the candidates' efforts to modernize their countries in line with EU standards. The EU offers greater incentives for reforms by providing benefits up front as countries make measurable progress. This entails prior admission to the single market, access to EU funds for economic restructuring before membership, and observer status in EU institutions. These benefits are reversible in case of backsliding.

As in the second scenario, the reconstruction of Ukraine, once high-risk hostilities cease, is a major priority. But this scenario does not foresee new candidates joining the EU by the mid-2030s, with one possible exception. Montenegrin Prime Minister Miloško Spajic claims that his country could join the EU by 2028. Montenegro's membership would, arguably, cause scarcely a ripple with its 600,000 inhabitants, 7 billion-euro gross domes-

tic product, (around 12,000 euros per capita) and an economy that already uses the euro as its currency. But this hypothesis is not a given. The country has made progress in addressing key governance criteria, clearing the way to detailed negotiations in other areas. But recently pro-Serb and pro-Russian political parties have come to the fore and anti-EU parties have proposed a "foreign agent" act, similar to the one which led the EU to suspend negotiations with Georgia. The 2028 goal for membership seems over-optimistic. Anyway, the EU has yet to decide on whether the value of a mini-enlargement in reinforcing its credibility would outweigh the complications. Reforms to the EU's own decision-making system, a condition set by Germany and others for any enlargement, are unlikely to be achieved in time for Montenegro's early accession. This scenario sees the EU offering incentives to candidate countries for continued reforms and the resolution of conflicts with neighbors, while keeping open the prospect of eventual membership. Incentives range from

economic assistance to participation in specialized EU agencies and observer status in certain EU institutions. Partial political and economic integration becomes the new reality while actual membership, however hypothetical, remains the stated long-term goal. The EU offered eventual membership to Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and other manifestly unprepared countries as a gesture of geopolitical solidarity. But the EU is a community of law, and the accession process is merit-based. This means that the first scenario, EU expansion within a decade, which is implicitly endorsed by European leaders, is highly improbable. The second scenario, insurmountable roadblocks, would represent such a setback for Europe and victory for Russia that EU leaders, despite their differences, would surely take measures to avoid it. Consequently, they will be tempted to make a little leap forward in the form of partial de facto integration, possibly accompanied by the early accession of a small Balkan country.



Dr. Riina Kionka
European Union Ambassador to Pakistan

To overcome problems in the membership talks, the EU agrees to 20-year transition periods before all EU rules apply fully to the new members. Restrictions on the free movement of goods, capital, services, workers and travelers are to be phased out slowly as countries demonstrate their ability to enforce EU principles and procedures. A reversibility clause enables the EU to suspend the benefits of membership in the event of democratic backsliding.

The EU takes the lead in supporting the reconstruction of war-damaged parts of Ukraine. This gives the commission and the European Investment Bank oversight of Ukraine's fulfillment of European environmental, climate, energy and digital regulations, enabling Kyiv to get ahead in negotiating EU membership. The private sector bears the brunt of the cost with the EU and other donors providing the initial capital investment.

Germany, still tentatively ruled by a grand coalition of democratic parties, backs off from its previous demand that the national veto be abolished in the Council of Ministers on foreign policy and budget issues before further enlargement. Small European countries refuse to renounce the veto, their guarantee against edicts from Berlin or Paris. An upsurge of public opinion against floundering populist governments across the EU sweeps away remaining obstacles.

Under the successor of Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic, this pivotal Balkan country unequivocally opts for the EU in the late 2020s, despite sizeable Chinese investments and Russian advocacy of ethno-religious affinities. Serbia's considerable administrative capacity, inherited from the former Yugoslavia, and its endowment of critical minerals, enables it to progress rapidly in membership talks.

Montenegro is the first to complete negotiations, followed by Albania, while it takes North Macedonia longer to convince the EU, and especially Greece and Bulgaria, that it poses no threat to their cultural and linguistic heritage and can take on the rights and obligations of EU membership.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, afraid of isolation, at last overcomes political deadlocks among the country's main ethnic groups and implements the governance reforms demanded by Brussels. Serbia's leaders restrain

The Ukrainian and Moldovan governments insist that the EU refers in their eventual accession treaties to their entire national territories, even though a considerable part of these remains under Russian occupation. The EU considers as possible solutions the Cyprus model, with EU law suspended in the part of the island occupied by Turkey, and the German model, whereby the German federal states formerly under the German Democratic Republic became part of the EU after the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989. But these precedents fail to convince those who fear that the EU would be importing instability rather than exporting stability in admitting countries partially occupied by a hostile foreign power.

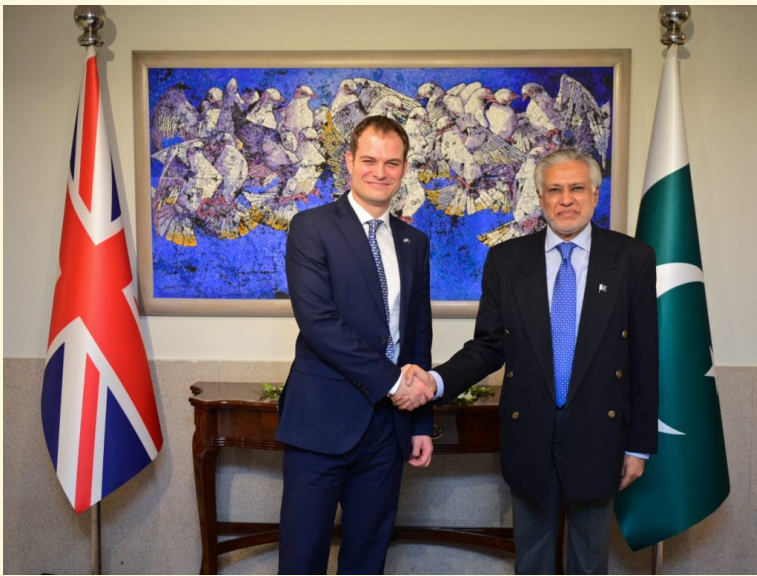
Italy insists that the Balkan countries' membership bids should not be leapfrogged by Ukraine and Moldova, simply to send a message to Mr. Putin. But these countries remain mired in ethnic tensions, conflicts with neighbors, corruption, state capture and administrative shortcomings, with Russian and Chinese influence on the rise. So, progress toward EU membership is slow. All candidate countries reject the EU's proposal of long transitional periods, claiming that this would amount to second-class membership. They particularly resent the proposal for long-term EU supervision of democracy and the rule of law, arguing that this would be an infringement of their sovereignty.

The need for referenda in several EU countries, including France, to approve the outcome of the negotiations hangs like a Damocles sword over the entire process. The days when the public could be asked to vote again, or leave it to the diplomats, if voters misguidedly reject an EU treaty are over. Antipathy to enlargement lingers in EU countries still dependent on Russian oil and gas with governments leaning toward Moscow.

In this scenario, target dates for completing the negotiations are repeatedly missed amid growing acrimony. As with Turkey, in the two decades after it opened membership talks in 2005, EU representatives accuse the candidates of failing to implement democratic reforms while the candidates accuse Brussels of insincerity. Russia and China step up disinformation and the illicit financing of political parties. The enlargement process stagnates, and enlargement-averse governments commission studies on alternative models for the EU's relations with its near abroad.



World-leading climate initiatives to be developed through UK programme in Pakistan



Deputy British High Commissioner to Pakistan **Matt Cannell**

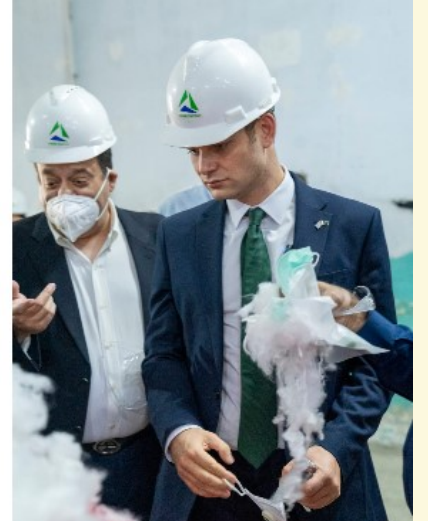
with the International Finance Corporation (IFC). As the largest single country blended finance facility, it will invest in local businesses to help them develop the technologies and meet the significant investments needed to adapt to the threats Pakistan faces from climate change. This announcement marks the conclusion of a two-day visit to Pakistan by Hamish Falconer, Minister for the Middle East, who announced the funding at a launch event in Islamabad. Announcing the new funding in Islamabad, Minister for the Middle East, Hamish Falconer said: "The UK and Pakistan are committed to tackling tomorrow's threats today. That's why we're investing in the expertise needed and supporting local businesses, alongside the Government of Pakistan, to get ahead of the challenges that climate change poses to the Pakistani people and the world. From my own time working as a diplomat in Pakistan to now returning as a Minister, it's clear that the UK and Pakistan's partnership continues to go from strength to strength and is essential in tackling shared global challenges."

The programme will leverage the £108m the UK puts in to mobilise 5-6 times that amount of investment from the private sector and will support the creation of over 100,000 Pakistani jobs. This initiative follows the launch of the British High Commission Pakistan's Cost of Inaction Report, which highlights the estimated cost of inaction on climate change for Pakistan is over one trillion dollars over the next 25 years. The programme is a central part of the UK's Climate Investment Fund Pakistan programme (CIFPAK), which is providing a range of initiatives aimed at encouraging private sector investment and providing the finance that local businesses need to get ahead of this global threat. The UK and IFC will then reinvest any profits from projects back into the facility, financing even more climate solutions. The UK is committed to working with Pakistan to tackle the threat climate change poses to its population. Whilst in Pakistan, the Minister also visited Chakwal Textile Mill to see how UK funding has supported the installation of solar panels and the effect this has had, resulting in both reduced emissions, and energy costs. IFC Country Manager for Pakistan & Afghanistan, Zeeshan Sheikh, said: "This facility reflects IFC's commitment to

supporting Pakistan's climate resilience and adaptation efforts. We are pleased to be partnering with the UK government on an innovative facility that will help crowd-in much needed private investment. As a leading global investor in climate finance, IFC aims to leverage its experience and catalyze private sector financing for climate-smart investments in Pakistan and build a sustainable climate finance ecosystem." With a focus on strengthening the UK's bilateral relationship with Pakistan, the Minister met with Pakistan's Interior Minister, Mohsin Naqvi, and Foreign Minister, Ishaq Dar, to discuss shared values and address common challenges, including ensuring regional stability and de-escalation in the Middle East. The Minister also met with Pakistan's National Assembly Speaker, Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, and the Federal Minister for Law and Justice, Azam Tarar, to promote the importance of democracy and fundamental freedoms. The UK has a close and longstanding relationship with Pakistan, underpinned by strong links between our people and is committed to working together to promote our shared values, including economic prosperity and democratic processes, as well as climate change and security threats.

Celina Ali

Islamabad: New funding announced this week will support first-of-its-kind investment facility to deliver climate technologies and private sector support in Pakistan. The announcement follows launch of FCDO report highlighting the estimated cost of inaction on climate change for Pakistan and delivers on UK climate change commitments. Minister for the Middle East, Hamish Falconer, announced the funding during a two-day visit to Pakistan which focused on strengthening bilateral partnership and promoting shared values. Local Pakistani businesses are set to benefit from £108m in UK funding that will support the development of climate technologies and expertise needed to tackle climate change. Recognising the global threat posed by climate change, this first-of-its-kind programme will be delivered in partnership



"No one can make you feel inferior without your consent." - Eleanor Roosevelt

"You're braver than you believe, and stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think." A.A. Mine

Italy top for NRRP funding,



Italian Ambassador to Pakistan, H.E. Marilina Armellin

122bn out of 194: Meloni



Newswire 'Control Room' on the plan this week.

Rome: Italy is top for the amount of funding received under the European Union's near 200 billion euro post-COVID Recovery Fund for its National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) with 122 billion received out of the total of 194, Premier Giorgia Meloni said after a meeting of the

"With the collection of the sixth installment, expected by the end of 2024, Italy confirms itself as the nation that has received the largest amount of financing, equal to 122 billion euros, corresponding to 63% of the overall allocation of 194.4 billion euros", she said. "During 2024, significant results were achieved that confirmed Ita-

ly's European primacy in the implementation of the Plan, in terms of the number of objectives achieved, total resources received and payment requests approved. "In these days, together with the titular Administrations, the Bodies and the responsible Institutions, we are working hard to report on the objectives of the seventh installment and to formalize the consequent payment request by the end of the year".

France shows off restored Notre Dame after 'impossible' restoration

Francesco Fontemaggi
Paris: France this week showed off to the world the gleaming restored interior of Notre Dame cathedral, just over a week before the 850-year-old mediaeval edifice reopens following painstaking restoration after the devastating 2019 fire. President Emmanuel Macron conducted an inspection of the restoration, broadcast live on television, saying workers had done the "impossible" by healing a "national wound" after the fire on April 19, 2019. While every effort has been made to remain faithful to the original look of the cathedral, an international team of designers and architects have created a luminous space that has an immediate impact on the visitor. The floor shimmers and the freshly-cleaned walls dazzle, while a subtle combination of

natural and artificial light creates a near theatrical impression. "You have achieved what was thought impossible," Macron told restoration workers and officials who packed Notre Dame, after he toured the cathedral. "The blaze at Notre Dame was a national wound, and you have been its remedy through will, through work, through commitment," he said, adding the cathedral's re-opening will be a "shock of hope". Notre Dame will welcome visitors and worshippers again over the December 7-8 weekend, after a sometimes challenging restoration. World leaders are expected to attend but the guest list has yet to be revealed. Macron toured the key areas of the cathedral, including the nave, choir and chapel, and spoke to experts.

"Sublime," said a visibly pleased Macron, who was accompanied by the archbishop of Paris, Laurent Ulrich, plus France's culture minister, the mayor of Paris and other officials. "It is much more welcoming," he added, praising Notre Dame's pale-coloured stones and saying everyone involved in the reconstruction should "be proud". After the devastating fire Macron set the ambitious goal to rebuild Notre Dame within five years and make it "even more beautiful" than before, a target that the French authorities say has been met. The "building site of the century" was a "challenge that many considered insane", Macron has said. Some 250 companies and hundreds of experts were brought in for restoration work costing hundreds of millions of euros. All 2,000 people who contributed to the effort had been invited to the event. The restoration cost a total of nearly 700 million euros (more than \$750 million). It was financed from the 846 million euros in donations that poured in from 150 countries in a surge of solidarity. The 19th-century gothic spire, which collapsed dramatically in the blaze, has been resurrected with an exact copy of the original. The stained windows have regained their colour, the walls shining after fire stains were cleaned and a restored organ is ready to thunder out again. Unseen to visitors is a new mechanism to protect against future fires, a discreet system of pipes ready to release water in case of a new disaster. Notre Dame, which welcomed 12 million visitors in 2017, expects to receive an even higher figure of 14 to 15 million after the reopening, according to the church authorities. French ministers have also floated the idea of charging tourists an entrance fee to the site but



the Paris diocese has said free admission was an important principle to maintain. Macron had hoped to speak inside Notre Dame to mark the reopening on December 7 but after negotiations with the diocese, he is now set to speak in the forecourt only. France is by its constitution a secular country with a strict division between church and state. Sunday December 8 will see the first mass and consecration of the new altar. Macron said in December 2023 he had invited Pope Francis to the reopening of the cathedral but the head of the Catholic church announced in September, to the surprise of some observers, that he would not be coming.

Instead, the pontiff is making a landmark visit the following weekend to the French island of Corsica. The French Catholic church has in recent years been rocked by a succession of sexual abuse allegations against clerics, including most recently the monk known as Abbe Pierre who became a household name for providing aid to the destitute. Over five years on, the investigation into what caused the fire is ongoing, with initial findings pointing to an accidental cause such as a short circuit, a welder's torch or a cigarette.



REDISCOVERING NOTRE DAME