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PM underscore need for strong political will, global leadership to tackle water crisis

Says our duty to ensure that these rivers, lakes and aquifers that have nourished civilisations for centuries must not be reduced to tales of the past; Also underscored the importance of ensuring the sustainable management of water resources worldwide

RIYADH (APP): Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday underscored the need for strong political will, and global leadership to overcome the water crisis posing existential threat to the nations around the globe.

The prime minister, addressing the One Water Summit on the Margins of United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD COP-16) under the theme "Restore, Preserve, and Adapt" here expressed his profound gratitude to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, France, and Kazakhstan, as well as the World Bank for organizing the timely summit, to deliberate upon, one of humanity's most pressing challenges: water security.

He said that water was the lifeblood of the planet; a cornerstone of economic development, food security, and environmental sustainability. "This life-sustaining resource, however, is coming under increasing stress. Nearly half of the world's population is facing, water scarcity, for at least part of the year. Billions remain, without clean drinking water, as water pollution, is rising, at alarming levels," he added.

The prime minister underscored that the water resources were fast depleting and degrading which was displacing millions, and causing, unprecedented destruction. "This is not a distant threat, but an alarm bell, for collective action. Pakistan is no stranger to these challenges. Our rivers, glaciers and aquifers are increasingly vulnerable to the impact of climate change, and population growth," he said.

He apprised the leaders at the summit that Pakistan was still grappling with the 2022, catastrophic floods, that caused, widespread damage, to its water resources and irrigation sector, in addition to affecting, millions of lives and livelihoods.

At the same time, he said droughts posed an equally potent threat to the country. "Nearly 70% of our land consists of arid and semi-arid areas, and around 30% of our population, is directly affected by drought-like conditions. Projected temperature increases in Pakistan, are significantly higher, than the global average," he added.

Prime Minister Shehbaz highlighted that such catastrophic disasters and challenges were likely to scale up further in the absence of concerted international actions as it was one of the top ten countries, most vulnerable due to climate change.

Commenting on the transboundary water management, he said that water transcended political boundaries, connecting nations and fostering shared ecosystems.

"Pakistan, therefore, attaches great importance to transboundary cooperation. The Indus Water Treaty, which governs, the sharing of the Indus Basin's waters, is one example of such an arrangement."

He added that the treaty witnessed unprecedented challenges in the recent years, due to a number of factors, including construction of upstream dams, whereas its effective functioning was key to maintaining regional peace and stability.

The prime minister also shed light on the "Recharge Pakistan" initiative that aimed to address, climate induced, flood risks, and mitigate drought impacts, through ecosystem based adaptations.



RIYADH: Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif in the family photo of the One-Water Summit.

Doors of CM House are open for special persons: "Kumak Programme" to be redesigned & expanded for support of persons with disabilities: Chief Minister

Announces 100 percent increase in educational scholarships for persons with disabilities; ramps to be established in all government buildings; pink scooters to be provided to special women

Independent Report

QUETTA: The Chief Minister, Mir Sarfaraz Bugti has announced wholehearted patronage of the persons with disabilities adding that the "Kumak" Programme would be expanded for support of the persons with disabilities. He said that this programme would be redesigned and improved further.

He said that that doors of Chief Minister House are open for them every time.

He also announced to take the representatives of disabled persons on board in the policies to be framed by the provincial government.

He said that the rules would be finalized for the disabled persons within 20

days, adding that separate budget would be allocated for them in next financial year's budget.

These and similar other views were expressed and announcements made by Chief Minister while addressing the ceremony arranged marking the International Day of Persons with Disabilities by the Social Welfare Department here at a local hotel on Tuesday.

The Advisor to Chief Minister for Social Welfare, Wali Muhammad Noorzai, Commissioner Quetta, Muhammad Hamza Shafaqat, Director General NADRA, other high ups of Social Welfare Department, representatives of civil society and persons with disabilities along with their families participated in the ceremony.

Besides the non-governmental organizations working for rights of the special persons including persons with disabilities participated in the ceremony. The theme was: "amplifying the leadership of persons with disabilities for an inclusive and sustainable future."

The Chief Minister maintained that the special persons are important part of our society, and as such they would not be left alone and all facilities would be provided to them.

He said that he fully realizes that how much pain and agony, they face in the society. He on the occasion directed to remove all the speed breakers to facilitate the persons with disabilities.



RAWALPINDI: Chief of the Army Staff (COAS), General Syed Asim Munir during the field training exercise near Narowal and Sialkot.

Armed forces fully capable of safeguarding territorial integrity, says COAS

RAWALPINDI (APP): Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Syed Asim Munir, NI (M) affirmed that the Pakistan Armed Forces, with the resolute support of the nation, are fully capable of safeguarding the territorial integrity and sovereignty of our beloved motherland against the entire spectrum of threats.

In his interaction with the participants of field training exercise near Narowal, Sialkot, he emphasized the critical importance of maintaining constant preparedness to counter any potential threats posed by adversaries, said an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) news release.

The COAS visited troops participating in a field training exercise near Narowal and Sialkot. He was given a comprehensive brief on the objectives and conduct of the exercise, which aimed to refine professional skills and battlefield procedures essential for addressing emerging operational challenges.

During the exercise, integrated fire and maneuver operations were conducted by various elements, including Armour, Infantry, Mechanized Infantry, Artillery, Air Defence, Army Aviation and Anti-Tank Guided Missile units.

The exercise also demonstrated the effective employment of electronic warfare capabilities and information operations designed to disrupt enemy communications and counter disinformation strategies in a modern battlefield environment.

The COAS spent the day in the field alongside the troops, commending their training standards, operational readiness, and high state of morale.

Govt proposes 5-year jail, Rs1m fine for spreading fake news

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has proposed a five-year imprisonment or a fine of Rs1 million for individuals found guilty of deliberately spreading fake news, as part of initial amendments to the cybercrime law, a private tv channel reported on Tuesday.

The draft introduces significant changes to the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, 2016 (PECA), including the establishment of a Digital Rights Protection Authority (DRPA) with extensive powers to block or remove online content deemed harmful to public safety or state interests.

According to the draft, spreading false information, inciting fear, or disrupting peace through online platforms could lead to severe penalties.

He said that quality education is the best source of changing lives of the people and their bright future.

He said that the universities are not mere places of learning but are also major centers of creative ideas, modern approach and solution to the collective issues.

Chairs 8th Senate meeting of Turbat University: Governor Balochistan calls for making serious measures to stop brain drainage

QUETTA: The Governor Balochistan, Sheikh Jaffar Khan Mandokhail has underlined the need to make serious decisions for stopping brain drainage.

He said that our very qualified and experienced Ph.D scholars would not go to abroad leaving the public sector universities by ensuring timely payment of salaries and providing necessary facilities to them.

Otherwise, brain drain would cast negative impacts on educational standard and research output.

This can also affect the process of inspiring new students to get admissions in the higher education institutions.

The Governor was chairing meeting of the 8th Senate meeting of University of Turbat here on Tuesday.

Those who were present in the meeting were included judge of Baloch High Court, Mr Justice Shaukat Rakhshani, Vice Chancellor of Turbat University, Professor Dr Gul Hasan, Principal Secretary to Governor, Hashim Khan Ghilzai, Engineer Ahmed Farooq Bazai from Higher Education Commission, besides the representatives of Education and Finance departments.

The Governor expressed satisfaction over the performance of University of Turbat. However, adding he stressed to bring more improvement in it.

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He said that the universities are not mere places of learning but are also major centers of creative ideas, modern approach and solution to the collective issues.



MASHHAD: Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar holds meeting with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi on the sidelines of ECO, Council of Ministers meeting.

Pakistan, Iran agree to deepen bilateral coop. in all spheres

MASHHAD (APP): Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Senator Muhammad Ishaq Dar on Tuesday held a bilateral meeting with Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi wherein both countries agreed to deepen bilateral cooperation in all spheres.

The meeting was held on the sidelines of the meeting of the Council of Ministers of the Economic Cooperation Organisation (ECO) being held here.

During the meeting, they exchanged views on areas of mutual interest and the latest regional and global developments.

The deputy prime minister arrived here on Monday to attend the moot where he would reiterate Pakistan's commitment to the ECO Charter and highlight the potential of greater connectivity in the ECO region, through the development of road and rail networks; liberalization of visa regimes and simplification of border procedures and to attain sustainable growth and enhance the geo-economic potential of the ECO region.

GoB spokesman explains news about "under age" candidate of Usta Muhammad

QUETTA: The spokesman, Government of Balochistan, Shahid Rind has explained the news gone viral on the social media about low age of a candidate appeared for job in Education Department Usta Muhammad.

In an official statement issued here on Tuesday, the spokesman said that Education Department has conducted investigation about the story, according to which, the candidate namely Muhammad Jameel son of Abdul Latif qualified for the junior drawing master on merit. The date of birth of candidate is actually 20th September, 1999, but it was written as 2009 by typing mistake in the documents compiled at the district level, he added.

In this regard, all the documents were scrutinized by Education Department. However, all the documents are present for evidence, which can be checked.

PTI trying to hoodwink masses through false narrative of bodies: Tarar

ISLAMABAD (APP): Federal Minister for Information, Broadcasting, National Heritage and Culture Attaullah Tarar said on Tuesday that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf was trying to hoodwink the people through fake narrative and lies.

Lambasting Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, in a media talk, he said that the party was creating a false narrative of firing on the protesters.

He once again challenged the PTI to present a single piece of evidence showing a law enforcement agencies personnel firing bullets directly on the protesters.

"There is not a single video in which law enforcement agencies person can be seen directly firing upon protesters. They have all kinds of videos but there is no video evidence (of direct firing) as this never took place", he maintained.

The minister said that a video of a man running away in which he was saying that he hit by a gunshot, went viral.

Attaullah Tarar said the same person in another video was claiming that he had got an injury on his hand.

AJK SC suspends controversial presidential ordinance

MUZZAFFARABAD (Online): Azad Kashmir Supreme Court has suspended controversial presidential ordinance of AJK government. A full court presided over by Chief Justice Raja Saeed Akram Khan of AJK SC heard the petition. The court issued order for suspending presidential ordinance after preliminary hearing.

The court on the appeal of bar council and civil society restrained government from promulgating ordinance. It is pertinent to mention here that under the ordinance it was necessary to obtain permission from DC a week before any protest and public meeting or procession. Under ordinance no unregistered party or organization was entitled to file application for protest.



ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi chairing National Action Plan's Coordination Committee meeting.

Imran says he 'still holds trump card close to his chest'

RAWALPINDI (INP): After the embattled Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) faced an abrupt end to its "final call" protest in Islamabad, Aleema Khan, sister of incarcerated party founder Imran Khan, said on Tuesday that her brother "still holds trump card close to his chest".

"PTI founder told me that he would not reveal his trump card right now," Aleema told reporters after meeting the former premier at Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail, where he has been incarcerated for more than one year.

She said that she "waited for six hours yesterday but she was not permitted to meet Imran".

Aleema also dismissed rumours about the PTI founder's deteriorating health conditions, saying that he is "totally fine".

Missing persons case: Regular or joint session of parliament be summoned and matter be resolved: SC

ISLAMABAD (Online): Supreme Court (SC) constitutional bench while issuing notice to Attorney General (AG), interior ministry and other respondents and summoning reports from all respective institutions in missing persons case has observed regular or joint session of parliament be summoned and the problem be resolved.

SC constitutional bench presided over by Justice Amin ud Din Khan took up the case for hearing Tuesday.

Justice Jamal Mandokhail remarked nation and court are looking to parliamentarians. In my view the case of missing persons is very important. The cases of missing persons are running in high courts and SC.

Thousands of people are missing. Here Aitzaz Ahsan and Latif Khosa like politicians are standing. Parliament has to find out solution to this problem.

FIA identifies 924 social media accounts in 'anti-state propaganda' crackdown

QUETTA (APP): Federal Investigation Agency's (FIA) Cyber Crime Wing in Balochistan has launched a significant crackdown against individuals involved in anti-state propaganda on social media. Under the leadership of Director Imran Mahmood, the operation has gained momentum, identifying 924 suspicious social media accounts over the past three months.

The accounts flagged by the agency include 487 on Facebook, 190 on TikTok, 147 on Twitter, 88 on Instagram, and 12 on other platforms. Details of these accounts have been forwarded to the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), which has already blocked 312 accounts.

The Cyber Crime Wing established a dedicated team to monitor and analyze social media activities, using advanced technology to track suspicious behaviors across various platforms, including Facebook, X, and TikTok.

Investigations are underway into 14 cases registered against individuals linked to these activities. The FIA also revealed that 28 social media applications could be exploited by anti-state propaganda and anonymous communication. Director Imran Mahmood emphasized the agency's commitment to combating such activities, stating that no leniency would be shown to those undermining the state's interests. "All available resources are being deployed to apprehend the culprits," he said.

Chairs cabinet meeting

CM Maryma approves special package for security personnel martyred, injured by PTI mob

LAHORE (APP): Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif chaired 20th meeting of the provincial cabinet to discuss and decide on major agenda items. The provincial cabinet strongly condemned brutal violence and attacks on police and rangers during PTI's violent protest on November 24, and offered Fateha for the security personnel martyred in the protest. The cabinet approved special packages for those martyred and injured in the protest. These packages include a total of Rs 29 million for the martyred constable of Punjab Police, a Rs 01 million each for police and rangers personnel injured in the

brutal violence of PTI workers. The CM said that 172 police personnel were injured during the brutal protest of PTI workers, most of them are in critical condition. She said it is shameful to see the condition of the injured personnel undergoing treatment at CMH Rawalpindi, and to note that their killers are our people. She highlighted seeing the violence, the brutality of PTI workers is evident. The CM said the security personnel were beaten by groups with nailed sticks and rifle butts, adding that the skulls, legs and arms of the personnel undergoing treatment at CMH Rawalpindi were fractured due to the

merciless violence of PTI workers' mob. The SP was beaten so mercilessly with nailed sticks that his skull and brain were damaged and his eye was swollen, she said. The CM said, "I have never seen such a display of brutality, cruelty and violence in my life. A policeman was shot at close range, which went through his body." She lamented that the constable martyred by the violence of PTI workers has little children. A special force of 10,000 trained security personnel will be established in Punjab to combat riots. Attacks on Dera Ghazi Khan and Mianwali check posts have increased. She directed to improve the security arrangements.



LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz Sharif presides over the 20th meeting of Punjab Cabinet.

Punjab Governor says: Elimination of drug trafficking in educational institutions is first priority

Independent Report
LAHORE: Governor Punjab Sardar Saleem Haider Khan said that the elimination of drug trafficking in educational institutions is the first priority. He stated this today while addressing the farewell ceremony of Principal Brigadier (Rtd) Mujahid Alam at Lawrence College Ghora Gali Murree. A large number of faculty members, teachers and students of the college were present on the occasion. Punjab Governor Sardar Saleem Haider Khan said that the young generation is the asset of the country. Along with education, he said that moral education and character building is also important for them. He said that it is the responsibility of teachers to involve students in positive activities. Governor Punjab said that a political leadership involving the young generation in subversive activities is tantamount to anti-nationalism. He said that the young generation rejected the politics of violence.

ATC acquits accused in 8-year-old murder case

LAHORE (APP): An anti-terrorism court (ATC) on Tuesday acquitted a man accused of murdering two children in Liaquatabad eight years ago. ATC Judge Manzer Ali Gill announced the verdict on conclusion of arguments from both sides. The court held that the prosecution failed to substantiate the charges against the accused, Haroon Masih, who was brought to court from jail for the hearing. The case dates back to 2016, when Liaquatabad police registered an FIR against Masih, alleging his involvement in the killing of two children.

KPCM Gandapur asks universities to focus on students' grooming

PESHAWAR (APP): Chief Minister (CM) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ali Amin Khan Gandapur on Tuesday asked the public and private universities in the province to focus on students' grooming apart from traditional education to firmly counter the national and international challenges. Addressing the fourth convocation of Iqra National University on Tuesday, he urged students to embrace challenges, remain resilient, and learn from setbacks. "One failure cannot stop your progress; keep moving forward with faith and determination," he added. He emphasized the importance of celebrating others' successes, calling it a hallmark of great individuals. The CM lauded Iqra National University for its rapid progress and expressed pride in participating in its convocation. Highlighting the role of the private sector, he said, "No government can progress without public and private sector support."



PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Social Welfare and Women Empowerment, Syed Qasim Ali Shah along with others take keen interest at stall during celebration ceremony in connection of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, held at Nishtar Hall in Peshawar.

Governor KP visits Data Darbar

LAHORE (APP): Governor of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK) Faisal Karim Kundi on Tuesday visited Data Darbar, the shrine of famous Sufi saint Hazrat Ali Bin Usman Hajveri, commonly known as Data Ganj Bakhsh. Faisal Karim Kundi laid a 'chaddar' of flowers on the grave and along with devotees also prayed for the progress and stability of Pakistan and durable peace in the country. Prayers were also offered for the welfare and wellbeing of Muslim Ummah. Later on, Faisal Karim also distributed 'Langar' (free meal) among the devotees. Speaking on the occasion, the governor highlighted the significance of spiritual figures and sacred sites as an integral part of the country's cultural and social heritage. He emphasized their role in providing spiritual solace to people and fostering social harmony.

Minister highlights Punjab govt measures for special persons

LAHORE (APP): The Punjab Social Welfare and Bait-ul-Mal Department organised a prestigious ceremony on International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The event, held at a local hotel, was attended by Provincial Minister for Social Welfare and Bait-ul-Mal Punjab, Sohail Shaikat Butt, as the chief guest. The ceremony was attended by Secretary Social Welfare Jag Akhtar Mahmood, DG Sikandar Zishan, and other department officials. Representatives from international organizations, including the British Council, FCDO, UNFPA, Awaz II, NGOs, and special persons, also participated enthusiastically. Addressing the attendees, Provincial Minister Sohail Shaikat Butt highlighted that for the first time in Punjab's history, a unique programme, the Humqat Card, was launched under the leadership of the chief minister to benefit special persons. He mentioned that so far, 40,000 special persons have been issued Humqat Cards, with an additional 25,000 individuals to be supported in the second phase. Sohail Shaikat Butt elaborated that after thorough verification at their doorsteps, special persons have been provided with financial assistance of Rs. 10,500 each.

AIOU provides free education to persons with disabilities: VC

ISLAMABAD (APP): Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) is making every possible effort to bring prosperity and convenience to the lives of persons with disabilities. To help them lead dignified and successful lives, the university offers free education from matriculation to PhD level," said the Vice-Chancellor of AIOU, Prof. Dr. Nasir Mahmood, in his statement on the occasion of International Day of Persons with Disabilities.

Contempt of court petition filed in LHC against CM Punjab Maryam Nawaz

LAHORE (Online): Contempt of court petition has been filed against Chief Minister (CM) Punjab Maryam Nawaz in Lahore High Court (LHC). PTI leader Akmal Khan filed contempt of court petition against CM Punjab through advocate Khurram Latif for harassing him despite court's orders. CM Punjab Maryam Nawaz, IG Punjab police, CCPO Lahore and others have been made respondents in the petition. The petitioner has taken plea in the petition that LHC had issued order on November 22 for stopping to harass him illegally and on the same day Islampura police abducted him illegally outside Sessions court. The petitioner was shown to have been arrested in case No 863/24 registered in police station Rang Mahal. Anti Terrorism Court (ATC) discharged him from the case on November 23 but the Islam Pura police again arrested him in evening on November 23 in case No 3691/24 illegally. ATC discharged him from this case on November 25. On November 26 Police station Shafiqi Abad arrested him in case No 4250/24 illegally. Sessions court discharged him from this case. Counsel for petitioner said local police is harassing petitioner continuously.

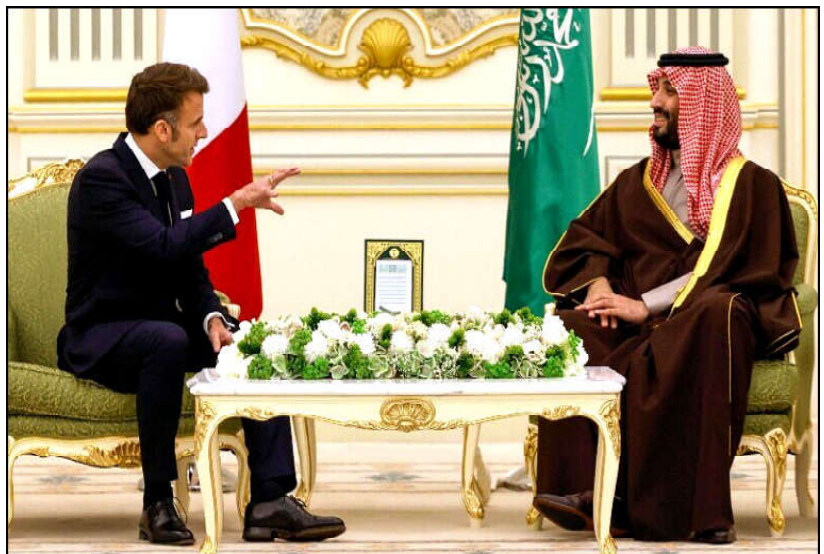
Senate Chairman visits Uch Sharif, condoles death of ex-MNA

BAHAWALPUR (APP): Senate Chairman Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani visited the shrine of Hazrat Mahboob Subhani in Uch Sharif on Tuesday. He offered prayers and laid a floral wreath at the shrine. He also visited the shrines of other elders from his family. The Gilani families from Multan, Uch Sharif, and Jamal Din Wali offered condolences on the death of former MNA Syed Ali Hassan Gilani and performed the ceremonial turban tying for his nephew Syed Ghaus Moeenuddin Gilani. Former Punjab Governor Makhdoom Ahmad Mahmood, Syed Iftikhar-ul-Hassan Gilani.

International News

France's Macron, Saudi crown prince sign strategic partnership, call for Lebanon elections

Monitoring Desk
RİYADH: French President Emmanuel Macron and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman signed a strategic partnership on Monday aimed at deepening bilateral ties and de-escalating conflict in the Middle East, including Lebanon, where the two leaders called for presidential elections. The French leader arrived in Saudi Arabia on Monday for a three-day state visit just as a political crisis threatens to topple the French government. After a meeting with Prince Mohammed, the de facto ruler of the oil-rich Gulf kingdom, Macron's office announced the signing of a new partnership aimed at improving cooperation in "defence, energy transition, culture, mobility between the two countries". The two leaders also "agreed to make every effort to contribute to de-escalation in the region", including helping to consolidate the fragile ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon. "Together, they called for the holding of presidential elections in Lebanon with the aim of bringing the Lebanese people together and carrying out the reforms necessary for the stability and security of the country," the statement from Macron's office said. Macron touched down in Riyadh in the afternoon, where he was greeted by an honour guard of sword-bearing servicemen and celebratory cannon fire as he disembarked from his plane. He did not comment on the political situation in France as he arrived. Macron's visit began as France's less than three-month-old minority government faced the prospect of being forced out by a vote of no confidence in the coming days. The far-right National Rally party said it would vote to oust Michel Barnier's government after the prime minister used an executive tool to push through a social security budget bill without parliamentary approval. The left-wing is also expected to back the motion, which could be held as early as Wednesday. If successful, it would oust the government that was appointed in September after snap polls. Macron's three-day stay also coincides with a flare-up of violence in Syria, where anti-government rebels have seized Aleppo, the country's second-largest city. The fighting in Syria follows France's brokering of a ceasefire in neighbouring Lebanon, where Israel has been fighting Hezbollah. Macron's state visit is the first by a French president to Saudi Arabia since Jacques Chirac in 2006, cementing what the presidency calls a "very close relationship". In 2021, Macron became one of the first Western leaders to meet Prince Mohammed in Saudi Arabia after the 2018 murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi at Riyadh's consulate in Istanbul.



French President Emmanuel Macron meets with Saudi's Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman during an official visit in Riyadh.

South Korea President Yoon declares martial law, slams domestic opponents

Monitoring Desk
SEOUL: South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol declared martial law in a surprise late-night TV address on Tuesday, slamming domestic political opponents and sending shockwaves through the country. Yoon said opposition parties had taken the parliamentary process hostage. He vowed to eradicate "shameless pro-North Korean anti-state forces" and said he had no choice but to take the measure to safeguard constitutional order. Yonhap news agency cited the military as saying activities by parliament and political parties would be banned, and that media and publishers would be under the control of the martial law command. Yoon did not cite any specific threat from the nuclear-armed North, instead focusing on his domestic political opponents. It is the first time since 1980 that martial law has been declared in South Korea. South Korea has had a series of authoritarian leaders early in its history but has been considered democratic since the 1980s. The Korean won was down sharply against the US dollar. A central bank official said it was preparing measures to stabilise the market if needed. South Korea's parliament, with 190 of its 300 members present, passed a motion requiring the martial law declared by President Yoon to be lifted, live TV showed. Finance Minister Choi Sang-mok has convened an emergency meeting among top economic officials, his spokesman said in a text message.

UN commission says 'brutality of past years' must not be repeated in Syria

Monitoring Desk
GENEVA: The UN Commission of Inquiry on Syria on Tuesday urged warring parties in the country to strictly adhere to international law and protect civilians, warning that the dramatic increase in hostilities since Nov. 27 threatens to spread to new parts of the country. "The brutality of past years must not be repeated, or Syria will be driven onto a new trajectory of atrocities," the chair of the commission, Paulo Sergio Pinheiro, said in a statement. "We call on all parties to break from their past patterns and ensure they protect and respect civilians, their human rights and the Geneva Conventions." Commissioner Hanny Megally, for his part, said the commission is investigating reported attacks impacting civilian infrastructure in the city of Aleppo, including at least one hospital and a university dorm, as well as reported airstrikes on Idlib and other densely populated civilian areas. "Both the airstrikes and the rapid changes in territorial control are causing massive displacement of civilians," Megally warned. The commission is closely monitoring the treatment of civilians, including minorities and prisoners of war as opposition forces advance into government-controlled areas, according to the statement. The situation is also "volatile" in northern Aleppo, the commission said.

ICJ opens hearing on climate change

Monitoring Desk
THE HAGUE: The future of the planet is at stake during hearings at the top United Nations court, a representative for Vanuatu said on Monday, opening a historic case that aims to set a legal framework on how countries should tackle climate change. More than 100 countries and organisations are set to present before the International Court of Justice over the next two weeks, the highest number ever. "The outcome of these proceedings will reverberate across generations, determining the fate of nations like mine and the future of our planet," said Vanuatu's representative for climate change, Ralph Regenvanu. "This may well be the most consequential case in the history of humanity," Regenvanu told the 15-judge bench in the panelled hall of the Peace Palace in The Hague. Activists hope the ICJ opinion will have far-reaching legal consequences in the fight against climate change, impacting ongoing court cases as well as domestic and international legislation.

Putin is 'not interested in peace,' says NATO chief

Monitoring Desk
ATHENS: NATO's new chief on Tuesday drew a grim picture of Russia's leadership, saying that President Vladimir Putin is "not interested in peace." Referring to the Ukraine war that Russia launched in February 2022, Secretary General Mark Rutte said: "He is pressing on, trying to take more territory. Because he thinks he can break Ukraine's resolve." "Ukraine is entering another crucial winter. And Russia's aggression shows no sign of abating."

White House defends Biden pardoning son as criticism mounts

Monitoring Desk
WASHINGTON: The White House said on Monday that President Joe Biden pardoned his son Hunter in part to protect him from future prosecution from political opponents, but his move drew fierce criticism, with some Democrats saying it undermined public trust in the rule of law. Biden, a Democrat whose term ends on January 20 when Republican President-elect Donald Trump takes office, signed an unconditional pardon for Hunter Biden on Sunday and said he believed his son had been selectively prosecuted and targeted unfairly by the president's political opponents. Biden said in the past that he would not pardon his son, including to ABC News in June when he was asked if he would rule it out and replied "yes." His surprise move was panned by his Republican political opposition.

Russia claims it took control of 2 more settlements in eastern Ukraine

Monitoring Desk
ISTANBUL: Russia on Tuesday claimed that it took control of two more settlements amid its ongoing offensive in eastern Ukraine. Russian forces captured the village of Romanivka, about 10 kilometers (6.2 miles) south of the city of Kurakhove, a key stronghold of Ukrainian forces in the Donetsk region that houses a thermal power plant.

Ukraine says it will not accept any alternatives to full membership in NATO

Monitoring Desk
ISTANBUL: Ukraine on Tuesday said that it will not accept any alternatives to Kyiv's full membership in NATO, pointing to the "failure" of the 1994 Budapest Memorandum which will mark the 30th anniversary since its signing later this week. "With the bitter experience of the Budapest Memorandum behind us, we will not accept any alternatives, surrogates or substitutes for Ukraine's full membership in NATO," a Ukrainian Foreign Ministry statement said. It said that Kyiv is convinced that the only real security guarantee for Ukraine is its membership in NATO, adding that inviting the country to join the alliance will deprive Moscow of its "illusions about the possibility of hindering Ukraine's Euro-Atlantic integration." The statement argued that not providing Ukraine with effective security guarantees in the 1990s was a "strategic mistake" that Russia "exploited" and that the Budapest Memorandum failed to prevent the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war. "Failure of the Budapest Memorandum to fulfill its functions has led to a catastrophic increase in security threats not only for Ukraine, but also for other countries and regions, including Europe, the Euro-Atlantic area, Central and Southeast Asia, the Middle East and international peace and security in general," it further said. The ministry also defined the Budapest Memorandum as a "monument to short-sightedness in strategic security decision-making." "It should serve as a reminder to the current leaders of the Euro-Atlantic community that building a European security architecture at the expense of Ukraine's interests.

