



CURRENT AFFAIRS

**Short Notes / News
For the month of
SEPTEMBER 2021**

September 1, 2021: Current Affairs

1. Nadra launches app for biometric verification

- Keeping pace with technological advancements, the National Database and Registration Authority (Nadra) on August 31, 2021 introduced an innovative application enabling people to use their smartphones for biometric verification.
- Talking to Dawn, Nadra chairman Tariq Malik said that by introducing the app, Pakistan has accelerated moving towards the digital identity lifecycle. 'It is a game-changer as it helps create trust in a variety of transactions between people, identity providers, and public and private sector, he said.
- Prime Minister Imran Khan launched Nadra's Pak-ID mobile application to facilitate applicants of National ID card using Pak-ID portal.

2. New curbs for unvaccinated people from today

- The government will be putting in place a number of restrictions on unvaccinated people from September 1, 2021 (today) as the country reported over 100 Covid-19 deaths for the fourth time in about three weeks.
- In another development, the National Command and Operation Centre (NCO) will begin vaccinating people over 17 years of age and administering booster shots to those intending to travel abroad from Wednesday (today).
- On the other hand, a record number of over 1.4 million doses were given in a single day throughout the country.

3. Rules of business for south Punjab secretariat approved

- As promised by Prime Minister Imran Khan, the Punjab government has taken practical step to solve problems of the people from the southern part of the province, said Chief Minister Usman Buzdar.
- Addressing a post-cabinet meeting press conference, Mr Buzdar said the meeting approved amendments to the Punjab Government Rules of Business 2011, empowering the bureaucracy in the south to solve people's problems locally.
- The amendments clearly defined powers of the south Punjab additional chief secretary (ACS), secretaries and departments. The south side, the CM said, would include Bahawalnagar, Bahawalpur, Dera Ghazi Khan, Khanewal, Layyah, Lodhran, Multan, Muzaffargarh, Rahim Yar Khan, Rajanpur and Vehari.

4. ECC okays Rs50bn cover for ADB's \$300m to be used for vaccine purchase

- The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet on August 31, 2021 approved Rs50.1bn local currency cover for \$300 million financing from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for procurement of Covid-19 vaccine, Rs215m grant for local government elections of cantonment boards and \$10m temporary funds for Roosevelt Hotel to meet emergency expenses.
- The ECC meeting presided over by Finance Minister Shaukat Tarin was attended by three other members of the 14-member body of the federal cabinet.
- The Aviation Division presented a summary requesting for provision of funds to clear emergency liabilities of the Roosevelt Hotel Corporation, including payment of local taxes and utilities. The PIA-IL requested the ECC to allow it to utilise \$10m available with the National Bank of Pakistan (NBP) to clear the immediate financial liabilities.

5. Pakistan-Kazakhstan military drill concludes

- The closing ceremony of the Pakistan-Kazakhstan joint military exercise 'Dostarym III' was held at the National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC), Pabbi, on August 31, 2021.
- According to a press release of the Inter-Services Public Relations, the exercise was aimed to develop, strengthen and bolster military cooperation between the two countries in the face of emerging counterterrorism and counterinsurgency domains.
- Special Forces of both the countries took part in hostage and rescue, compound clearance, heli rappelling and close qtr battle (CQB) and exchanged the first-hand experience and ideas. The exercise focused on integrated synergy, interloper ability, quick decision making and swift action at tactical level. The exercise furthered reinforce the mutual cooperation and understanding between the two states to effectively counter the threats

6. Pakistani microfinance pioneer wins Magsaysay award

- A Pakistani microfinance pioneer, a Bangladeshi scientist who helped develop a cheap oral vaccine against cholera, and a Filipino fisherman were among August 31, 2021's winners of Asia's equivalent to the Nobel Prize.
- Pakistani development worker Mohammad Amjad Saqib, 64, was a winner for his first-of-its-kind interest and collateral-free microfinance programme that has helped millions of poor families.
- Nearly two decades after its launch, Akhuwat has grown into the nation's largest microfinance institution, distributing the equivalent of \$900 million and boasting an almost 100 per cent loan repayment rate, the award foundation said

7. Don't blame Pakistan for Kabul's fall, US told

- It was not Pakistan's military strategy but Afghanistan's internal problems that caused the collapse of the former Afghan government, argues Islamabad's US ambassador Asad Majeed Khan.
- Last week, Republican Congressman Michael G.
- Waltz sent a letter to US President Joe Biden, urging him to sanction Pakistan for its alleged support to Taliban militants who, according to Mr Waltz, captured Kabul with Islamabad's support.

8. Drone attack on Saudi airport wounds eight, damages plane

- A bomb-laden drone on August 31, 2021 crashed into an airport in southwestern Saudi Arabia, wounding eight people and damaging a civilian plane, Saudi state television reported, the latest assault on the kingdom amid its grinding war in neighboring Yemen.
- The Saudi-led coalition fighting in Yemen blamed the assault on Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels, saying it was the second such strike on Abha airport in the last 24 hours.
- An earlier ballistic missile attack scattered shrapnel across the tarmac but caused no casualties. The Houthis did not claim responsibility for the strikes and its military spokesman did not answer calls seeking comment

9. Biden blames Afghan army, Trump for messy exit

- President Joe Biden on August 31, 2021 rejected criticism of his decision to stick to a deadline to pull out of Afghanistan this week, a move that left 100 to 200 Americans in the country along with thousands of US-aligned Afghan citizens.
- In a televised address from the White House state dining room, Biden criticised the ousted Afghan government's inability to fight back against swift Taliban advances, which forced the United States and its Nato allies into a hasty and humiliating exit, and highlighted the role played by former president Donald Trump.

- The deal brokered by Trump authorised 'the release of 5,000 prisoners last year, including some of the Taliban's top war commanders, among those who just took control', Biden said.

10. US suspends diplomatic presence in Kabul, to conduct ties 'from distance'

- The United States on August 31, 2021 decided to maintain diplomatic relations with Afghanistan even though it's now controlled by its former arch enemy, the Taliban but will no longer have any personnel on the ground.
- 'We have suspended our diplomatic presence in Kabul, and transferred our operations to Doha, Qatar, which will soon be formally notified to Congress,' US Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced.
- 'A new chapter of America's engagement with Afghanistan has begun. It's one in which we will lead with our diplomacy,' he said in a speech broadcast live from his office.

CSSTimes

September 2, 2021: Current Affairs

1. Veteran Kashmiri leader Geelani passes away

- Syed Ali Geelani, a top Kashmiri leader and one of the severest critics of India's occupation of Kashmir, died late on September 1, 2021. He was 92.
- Geelani died surrounded by family members at his home in Srinagar, an aide and his relative said.
- Shortly after the news broke, scores of people converged at his home in Hyderpora neighborhood in Srinagar to mourn his death.
- Geelani remained under rolling house arrest much of the time since 2008.

2. PM launches Ehsaas Education Stipends programme

- Prime Minister Imran Khan on September 1, 2021 said the government was committed to sending all children to schools by giving incentives to them.
- 'Over 20 million children in the country are out of schools. Efforts are under way to ensure their inclusion in the educational mainstream,' the prime minister said while launching the Ehsaas Education Stipends programme.
- The programme is aimed at providing financial assistance to deserving households for the education of their children at primary, secondary and higher secondary levels.

3. First CPEC power transmission project gets under way

- The first China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project in the power evacuation and transmission sector, the 660kV High-Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) Matiari Lahore transmission line, started commercial operations on September 1, 2021 on its scheduled date.
- On the first day, the project saved the country from a major breakdown by protecting the transmission, dispatch and distribution systems from a possible cascading effect due to tripping at Jamshoro.
- 'It is a matter of great importance that the country finally succeeded in having the first and the biggest HVDC transmission line to evacuate 4,000 megawatts from power plants in the south in direct current (DC) mode, transport and transmit it to Lahore after converting it into alternate current (AC) mode and finally feed it to the distribution systems in the load centres in Punjab,' National Transmission and Despatch Company Managing Director Azaz Ahmad explained to Dawn.

4. People under 18 to get Pfizer jabs: NCOC

- On a day when the government initiated vaccination of youngsters aged between 17 and 18 years, the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) issued revised guidelines according to which only Pfizer vaccine will be administered to all those under 18.
- The revised guidelines for vaccination of age groups below 18 years, according to an NCOC announcement, are effective from Wednesday.
- Also, number of Covid vaccine doses administered in a day crossed the one and a half million mark as new vaccination targets had been set for 24 large cities, announced federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Asad Umer while sharing details of the progress

5. Taliban parade shows off seized US hardware

- A Black Hawk helicopter flew circles over the Taliban's spiritual heartland in southern Afghanistan on September 1, 2021 while fighters below stood aboard captured Humvees as the Islamist group paraded US military hardware.

- The Taliban's victory lap, celebrating the final withdrawal of US troops, followed the group's astonishing two week takeover that capped a simmering 20-year insurgency.
- Also on Wednesday, thousands of people trying to flee Afghanistan rushed to its borders as an administrative vacuum left foreign donor unsure of how to respond to a looming humanitarian crisis

6. China opens new route to Indian Ocean via Myanmar

- China's special envoy for Asian Affairs Sun Guoxiang visited Myanmar last week for talks with its military rulers, as a new route spanning the Southeast Asian nation opened up connecting Chinese trade flows to the Indian Ocean.
- As opposed to most Western countries that have condemned the Myanmar army for ousting the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi, China has taken a softer line and said its priorities are stability and not interfering in its neighbour.
- During his Aug 21 to Aug 28 visit, Sun met military ruler Min Aung Hlaing as well as foreign minister Wunna Maung Lwin and Minister for the Union Government Office Yar Pyae and 'exchanged views with them on the political landscape in Myanmar' China's foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said.

7. Pollution to reduce life expectancy of 480m Indians by 9 years: study

- Air pollution is likely to reduce the life expectancy of about 40 per cent of Indians by more than nine years, according to a report released by a US research group on September 1, 2021.
- More than 480 million people living in the vast swathes of central, eastern and northern India, including the capital, New Delhi, endure significantly high pollution levels, said the report prepared by the Energy Policy Institute at the University of Chicago (EPIC).
- 'Alarming, India's high levels of air pollution have expanded geographically over time,' the EPIC report said

8. Truce comes into force in southern Syria

- A Russian-brokered ceasefire came into force on Wednesday in Daraa province, the cradle of Syria's uprising where government forces have been battling holdout rebels, a war monitor and state media said.
- The southern province of Daraa, held for years by opposition forces, was returned to government control in 2018 under a previous Moscow-backed ceasefire that had allowed rebels to stay in some areas.
- But since late July armed groups have exchanged artillery fire with government forces and the regime has imposed a crippling siege on Daraa city's southern district of Daraa al-Balad.

9. UN softens up to Taliban, but keeps them on sanctions list

- The UN Security Council has quietly omitted the word 'Taliban' from its statements naming the groups that are required not to support terrorists operating from Afghanistan.
- On Aug 16, the Security Council issued a statement, 'reaffirming the importance of combating terrorism in Afghanistan' and of ensuring that the Afghan territory 'is not used to threaten or attack any country.'
- The statement also said that 'neither the Taliban nor any other Afghan group or individual should support terrorists operating on the territory of any other country'

10. Taliban approve Afghanistan's first Test in Australia

- The Taliban have approved Afghanistan's first cricket Test since their takeover, raising hopes that international matches will continue as usual under the new rule of the Islamists.
- 'We have got approval to send the team to Australia,' chief executive of the Afghanistan Cricket Board Hamid Shinwari.
- During their first stint in power, before they were ousted in 2001, the Taliban banned most forms of entertainment including many sports and stadiums were used as public execution venues

CSSTimes

September 3, 2021: Current Affairs

- 1. Geelani's body snatched from family, buried against will**
 - As Syed Ali Geelani was buried in Srinagar amid a lockdown imposed by Indian forces across the disputed region on September 2, 2021, Pakistan demanded a probe by the UN Commission on Inquiry into grave human right abuses in India-held Kashmir.
 - The indefatigable campaigner against Indian occupation died late on Wednesday at the age of 92 following a long illness.
 - Pakistani nation paid rich tribute to Mr Geelani for his life-long struggle for justice and freedom on the official mourning day with the country's flag flying at half-mast.
- 2. World lacks policy to support dementia patients: WHO**
 - Only a quarter of countries worldwide have a national policy, strategy or plan for supporting dementia patients and their families.
 - This was the major finding of the World Health Organisation (WHO) report about public health response to dementia, released on Thursday.
 - It has been estimated that more than 55 million people (8.1pc women and 5.4pc men over the age of 65) are living with dementia. This number is estimated to rise to 78 million by 2030 and to 139 million by 2050.
- 3. Long range twin-engine jet inducted into Navy**
 - The induction ceremony of Pakistan Navy's first modern long range maritime patrol twin-engine jet aircraft was held at PNS Mehran on September 2, 2021.
 - Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Mohammed Amjad Khan Niazi was the chief guest.
 - Upon arrival at Mehran base, the chief guest was received by Commander of Pakistan Fleet Rear Admiral Naveed Ashraf.
- 4. Islamabad to cooperate with world community for Afghan peace: FO**
 - The Foreign Office on September 2, 2021 reiterated the government's commitment to cooperate with the international community for peace in Afghanistan.
 - Speaking at the weekly media briefing, FO spokesman Asim Iftikhar said: 'Pakistan is committed to working together with the international community to advance the shared objectives of peace, progress and stability in Afghanistan.'
 - Pakistan has remained deeply engaged with the international community since the Taliban took over Kabul on Aug 15. Several world leaders have spoken to or met Prime Minister Imran Khan and Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi
- 5. Bank financing for under-construction projects allowed**
 - The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has allowed buyers to get bank financing for under-construction housing units aiming to bring about growth in the construction and housing sector in line with the government's policy.
 - 'To facilitate buyers of under construction housing units in obtaining housing finance, the central bank has issued guidelines to banks and DFIs that allow them to extend loans for under-construction projects,' said the SBP on September 2, 2021.
 - The SBP said that currently banks are reluctant to provide such financing which limits the options of home buyers that need financing to complete units.
- 6. Pakistan gets EETL notice to give up sovereign right to take over its ship**
 - In what appears to be increasing mess in liquefied natural gas (LNG) business, Pakistan on September 2, 2021 got one-day notice from Engro Elengy Terminal Limited (EETL) to give up its sovereign right to take over its ship and commit full 'take or pay' for larger

capacity as the government received more expensive bids for five LNG cargos in October and November.

- On top of that, the country would be facing about 300 million to 600m cubic feet of gas shortage for two to four days starting this weekend. In case the government decides to retain Engro's regasification terminal currently in use and has greater capacity, the shortage would last for two days and 300 mmcf.
- In case the original contracted terminal resumes operations, the shortfall would be for four days and up to 600mmcf

7. US refuses to endorse Ghani's claim of Pakistan's role

- The US State Department has refused to endorse former Afghan president Ashraf Ghani's claim that 10 to 15 thousand Pakistanis had joined the Taliban offensive on Kabul.
- Instead, a senior State Department official praised Pakistan and other partners for providing 'critical assistance' to US efforts to evacuate American troops and civilians from Afghanistan.
- 'I'm just not in a position to comment on that, to confirm those reports, said the department's spokesperson Ned Price when asked to comment on Mr Ghani's claim. The US official did not respond to another query: Whether Washington still considers Mr Ghani as Afghanistan's legitimate ruler

8. Taliban close to forming govt as women protest

- The Taliban said on September 2, 2021 they were close to forming a new government, as dozens of women held a rare protest for the right to work under a new regime that faces enormous economic hurdles and deep public mistrust.
- The militants, who have pledged a softer brand of rule than during their brutal reign of 1996-2001, must now transform from insurgent group to governing power.
- The announcement of a cabinet, which two Taliban sources told AFP may take place on Friday following afternoon prayers, would come just days after the chaotic pullout of US forces from Afghanistan, ending America's longest war with an astounding military victory for the group

9. Danish minister on trial for separating migrant couples

- A former Danish immigration minister insisted she was innocent on September 2, 2021 at the opening of her impeachment trial on charges of illegally separating couples who arrived in the country to claim asylum.
- The 26 judges of the special court, which only convenes to try former or current members of government, will determine whether Inger Stojberg violated the European Convention on Human Rights.
- Law professor Frederik Waage pointed out that it was only the third such case in more than a century, calling it 'historic' Without examining the cases individually, Stojberg ordered the separation of 23 couples in 2016 where the woman was under 18 even though the couples' age difference was mostly small and some had children

10. Ronaldo breaks men's scoring record with two goals to hit 111

- Cristiano Ronaldo missed a penalty but still broke the men's international scoring record before adding a second goal as Portugal beat visiting Ireland 2-1 in World Cup qualifying.
- Ronaldo grabbed his 110th goal in the 89th minute to move ahead of former Iran striker Ali Daei.
- Six minutes into stoppage time, Ronaldo made it 111 in 180 games to break Irish hearts after defender John Egan gave his nation the lead in the 45th

CSS Times

September 4, 2021: Current Affairs

1. 24 districts face tougher Covid curbs from today

- More restrictions have been placed on 24 districts of the country as the government continues to take measures to stem the spread of Covid-19.
- The National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) on September 3, 2021 decided to impose additional non pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) in 24 districts, including the capital Islamabad, for nine days, with effect from today (Saturday). The curbs will remain effective till Sept 12.
- The forum will review the non-pharmaceutical interventions on Sept 9.
- On the other hand, the country reported 57 casualties and over 3,700 new cases in a single day.

2. Number of Afghans entering Pakistan, Iran remains 'small': UNHCR

- Afghan nationals have not been fleeing in large numbers across the borders to Pakistan and Iran in the wake of the Taliban takeover on Aug 15, but some have crossed over indicating they intend to claim asylum, the UN refugee agency said on Friday.
- Babar Baloch, spokesman for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), speaking from Islamabad, said that the numbers of people leaving Afghanistan 'remain small', but gave no figures. 'So far what we have not seen is a large refugee influx,' Baloch told a Geneva news briefing.
- Up to 500,000 Afghans could flee their homeland by year-end, the UNHCR had said last week

3. Licence granted to operate budget airline

- After approval from federal government, the Pakistan Civil Aviation Authority has granted a Regular Public Transport (RPT) licence to operate Fly Jinnah, a budget airline that will initially ply domestic routes.
- The Lakson Group, one of Pakistan's leading business conglomerates, and the Air Arabia Group, operator of the first and largest low-cost carrier of the Middle East and North Africa, announced their decision on Friday to form a joint venture to launch Fly Jinnah.
- After Serene Air and Air Sial, Fly Jinnah will be the latest airline to enter the country's growing aviation market and will operate both nationally and internationally.

4. Key concerns persuade US, Pakistan to maintain links

- Two key concerns losing a nuclear-armed country to China and having no influence over the Taliban prevent the Biden administration from moving further away from Pakistan, shows a set of documents leaked to the media.
- The Politico a news outlet that covers the US capital city published a report on Friday on messages exchanged between Washington and Islamabad recently.
- The messages also show that 'the Biden administration is quietly pressing Pakistan to cooperate on fighting terrorist groups such as ISIS and Al Qaeda in the wake of the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan,' the report claimed

5. Saudi state media companies to start moving from Dubai to Riyadh

- Dubai-based Saudi state owned media companies will start moving staff this month to the capital Riyadh, sources said, as Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman presses ahead with plans to remould the kingdom as a regional business hub.
- The move follows a Saudi government decision earlier this year to stop giving state contracts to companies and commercial institutions that base their Middle East headquarters in any other country in the region. State-owned Al-Arabiya and Al Hadath

TV channels informed their employees this week about plans to start broadcasting 12 hours a day from Riyadh by next January, two sources familiar with the matter told Reuters.

- They added that it could take up to two years to complete the relocation

6. Belgium creates `garbage highway` for flood victims` dump

- In eastern Belgium, an abandoned highway is almost completely buried under kilometres of piled-up rubbish: crushed refrigerators, splintered furniture, torn curtains, twisted metal, stuffed toys, defunct electronics and shards of glass.
- The makeshift dump comprising 90,000 tonnes of domestic debris stretching for eight kilometres down the closed A601 motorway north of the city of Liege is testament to the devastation wreaked by unprecedented floods in mid-July.
- When residents in this part of the affected Wallonia region had their homes, schools and businesses broken apart by the rushing water, authorities were suddenly con-fronted with a mountain of refuse

7. IS-inspired man shot dead after knife attacks in New Zealand

- An attacker inspired by the militant Islamic State (IS) group injured six people in a New Zealand supermarket knife rampage on September 3, 2021, before being shot dead by undercover police officers who had him under round-the-clock surveillance.
- Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said she was `gutted` the man, a Sri Lankan national, had managed to carry out his `hateful` assault even though he was on a terror watchlist.
- She said the man, who arrived in New Zealand in 2011, entered a shopping mall in suburban Auckland and seized a knife from a display before going on a stabbing spree

8. Taliban sources claim taking control of Panjshir

- Taliban forces have taken full control of Afghanistan, including the Panjshir valley where opposition forces had been holding out, three Taliban sources said on September 3, 2021 as heavy celebratory gunfire was heard in the Afghan capital Kabul.
- `By the grace of Allah Almighty, we are in control of the entire Afghanistan. The troublemakers have been defeated and Panjshir is now under our command,` said one Taliban commander.
- It was not immediately possible to confirm the reports

9. CAS Zaheer Ahmed elected PSF president

- The Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber has been elected as the president of the Pakistan Squash Federation (PSF).
- The election was conducted here during the 48th annual general meeting of the PSF at the Air Headquarters.
- Air Chief Marshal Zaheer presided over the meeting after the general council elected him as the president.
- Besides squash legends, representatives from provincial squash associations, affiliated members and Pakistan Sports Board were also present during the meeting.

10. Haider makes history for Pakistan at Paralympics

- For everything Haider Ali has won in his storied career, perhaps nothing will ever come close to his discus throw at the Tokyo Olympic Stadium.
- Not his long jump silver medal at the 2008 Paralympics in Beijing, nor his bronze at the age of 31 in the same discipline eight years later in Rio de Janeiro.
- Defying his years, it was finally time for gold on September 3, 2021 when Pakistan`s first and only medallist at the Paralympics became the country`s first gold medal winner, getting a personal best in the process. Nothing beats that, really.

September 6, 2021: Current Affairs

1. Defence and Martyrs Day today

- The nation is commemorating the 55th Defence and Martyrs Day on September 6, 2021 (today) to pay homage to martyrs.
- On Sept 6, 1965, the people of Pakistan and the country's armed forces thwarted nefarious designs of the enemy.
- The best way to pay tribute to the country's martyrs is to uphold their glorious legacy by writing new chapters of virtuous deeds and heroic acts. The people and the armed forces are moving together with a renewed spirit to propel Pakistan into a more secure and prosperous country

2. Four FC men martyred in Mastung suicide attack

- Four personnel of the paramilitary Frontier Corps were martyred and 21 others injured in a suicide bombing at a convoy on Quetta-Mastung road, on September 5, 2021.
- The banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) claimed responsibility for the suicide attack.
- According to officials, the FC convoy was targeted in the morning when the personnel deployed at Sona Khan check-post were returning to their headquarters after performing night duty and handing over the charge to another contingent

3. PM solicits world help for Afghan rebuilding

- Prime Minister Imran Khan on September 5, 2021 called upon the world community to provide economic support to the people of Afghanistan and help them rebuild the war-torn country.
- Prime Minister Khan during separate phone conversations with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani and Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince Mohamed Bin Zayed called for addressing dire humanitarian needs and stabilising economy of Afghanistan, according to an official announcement made by the PM Office

4. Merkel calls for talks with Taliban to ensure more evacuation

- German Chancellor Angela Merkel on September 5, 2021 called for a dialogue with the Taliban as the hardline Islamists finalise a new government that will set the tone for their rule in Afghanistan.
- 'We simply have to talk to the Taliban about how we can get people who have worked for Germany out of the country and bring them to safety,' Merkel told a new conference in North Rhine-Westphalia state.
- 'They are the ones we have to talk to now. We want to get people out of the country who have worked for German development organisations in particular and who now feel threatened,' Merkel said.

5. UAE relaxes residency requirements

- The UAE announced a new visa on September 5, 2021 allowing foreigners to work in the country without being sponsored by an employer, relaxing residency requirements in an attempt to boost economic growth.
- Foreigners in the oil-rich United Arab Emirates are generally only given limited visas tied to their employment, and long-term residency is difficult to obtain.
- But those holding the new 'green visa' will be able to work without company sponsorship, and can sponsor their parents and children up to 25 years old, officials said.

- 'It targets highly skilled individuals, investors, businesspeople, entrepreneurs, as well as exceptional students and postgraduates,' said Minister of State for Foreign Trade Thani al-Zeyondi

6. Army claims it has ousted Guinea president in coup

- Special forces soldiers appeared on September 5, 2021 to have ousted Guinea's long-serving president, telling the nation they had dissolved its government and constitution and closed its land and air borders.
- As the United Nations condemned any takeover by force and the West African region's economic bloc threatened reprisals, the elite army unit's head, Mamady Doumbouya, said 'poverty and endemic corruption' had driven his forces to remove President Alpha Conde from office.
- 'We have dissolved government and institutions, Doumbouya _ a former French foreign legionnaire _ said on state television, draped in Guinea's national flag and surrounded by eight other armed soldiers. 'We are going to rewrite a constitution together.'

7. New Delhi to probe Geelani's family under anti-terror law

- Police in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir opened a case on September 5, 2021 against family members of the late resistance leader Syed Ali Geelani under a harsh anti-terror law for allegedly raising anti-India slogans and wrapping his body in the Pakistan flag.
- Ali Geelani, who died on Wednesday at age 92, was the emblem of Kashmiris' defiance against New Delhi and had been under house arrest for years.
- His son, Naseem, said Indian authorities buried the body in a local cemetery without any family members present after police snatched his body from the home. Police denied that and called it 'baseless rumours by some vested interests'

8. Houthis fire missiles, 'bomb-laden drones' into Saudi Arabia

- Two children were hurt and 14 homes damaged as Saudi forces intercepted ballistic missiles fired across the border by Yemeni rebels, scattering debris over the eastern city of Dammam, officials said on September 5, 2021.
- The attack, which took place on Saturday, was the latest in a series by the Iran-backed Houthi rebels who control almost all of Yemen's north.
- Saudi Arabia intervened in Yemen's war on behalf of the internationally recognised government in 2015, shortly after the Houthis seized the capital Sanaa.

9. Taliban advance deep into Panjshir valley; US fears civil war in Afghanistan

- Taliban fighters advanced deep into the last holdout province of Panjshir on September 5, 2021, as the top US general warned Afghanistan faces a wider civil war that would offer fertile ground for a resurgence of terrorism.
- Following their lightning-fast rout of Afghanistan's army last month and celebrations on Monday when the last US troops flew out after 20 years of war the Taliban are seeking to crush resistance forces defending the mountainous Panjshir Valley.
- The Taliban, who rolled into Kabul three weeks ago at a speed that analysts say likely surprised even the hardline Islamists themselves, are yet to finalise their new regime

10. Nasa's tiny copter is still flying high

- It was only supposed to fly five times. And yet Nasa's helicopter on Mars, Ingenuity, has completed 12 flights and it isn't ready to retire.
- Given its stunning and unexpected success, the US space agency has extended Ingenuity's mission indefinitely.

- The tiny helicopter has become the regular travel companion of the rover Perseverance, whose core mission is to seek signs of ancient life on Mars.

CSS Times

September 7, 2021: Current Affairs

1. Taliban claim Panjshir has fallen but rivals vow resistance

- Taliban fighters broke out into prayers as their banner fluttered from a flagpole in Panjshir on Monday, after the Islamist group announced the capture of the last pocket of resistance to their rule.
- In videos circulating on pro Taliban social media, fighters passed underneath portraits venerating their old enemy, the late Panjshir resistance commander Ahmad Shah Massoud.
- Three weeks after seizing Kabul, the Taliban claimed to have conquered the rugged valley on Monday a historic blow to the province

2. Punjab finalises structure of LG system

- The Punjab government has almost finalised the structure of the proposed local government system.
- The LG system has placed the Metropolitan Corporations (MCs) and the district councils on top being supreme authorities, Dawn has learnt.
- The metropolitan corporations, according to a proposed draft of the system, will have town councils at each divisional headquarters and all tehsils of Lahore district. MCs will further have neighbourhood councils in the third tier

3. Taliban urge Afghan forces to integrate with new govt

- The Taliban on September 6, 2021 called on former members of the Afghan forces to integrate with the new hardline rulers.
- `The Afghan forces who were trained in the past 20 years will be asked to rejoin the security departments alongside Taliban members,` spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid told a press conference in the capital Kabul.
- The spokesman added that any insurgency against their rule would be `hit hard`, after earlier saying they had captured the Panjshir Valley the last pocket of resistance.

4. Germany protests to Russia over pre-election cyberattacks

- Germany has protested to Russia over attempts to steal data from lawmakers in what it suspects may have been preparation to spread disinformation before the upcoming German election, the Foreign Ministry in Berlin said on September 6, 2021.
- Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Andrea Sasse said that a hacker outfit called Ghostwriter has been combining conventional cyberattacks with disinformation and influence operations, and that activities targeting Germany have been observed for some time.
- She said that, ahead of Germany`s parliamentary election on Sept 26, there have been attempts using phishing emails, among other things to get hold of personal login details of federal and state lawmakers, with the aim of identity theft

5. Blinken in Doha for talks on Afghan crisis with Qatar

- US Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived in Doha on September 6, 2021 for crisis talks with the Qataris after the Taliban claimed to have full control over Afghanistan.
- Shortly before landing, an official disclosed that four Americans had left Afghanistan with Taliban knowledge, in the first departures arranged by Washington since its chaotic military pullout.
- The four US citizens left by land and were greeted by US diplomats, said the senior official, without specifying to which country they crossed, adding that `the Taliban did not impede them`

6. US starts land evacuation

- As Pakistan takes centre stage in the effort to evacuate stranded people from Afghanistan, the United States confirmed on Monday that it has facilitated the evacuation of four US citizens via the land route.
- `Our embassy greeted the Americans as they crossed the border into the third country,` a senior US State Department official told CNN.
- The official confirmed that these were the first four Americans that `we`ve facilitated in this manner` since the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan. The official did not identify the country the US used to facilitate the evacuation, but Pakistan is the closest land route out of Afghanistan. `We don`t know what route they used but we have no problem facilitating the evacuation of US citizens from Afghanistan,` Pakistan`s Ambassador to the US Dr Asad Majeed Khan told Dawn. `Pakistan has been providing every support that it could to facilitate the evacuation of all those wanting to leave Afghanistan.

7. Nasa`s rover gets its first piece of Martian rock

- Nasa has confirmed that its Perseverance rover has succeeded in collecting its first rock sample on Mars.
- `I`ve got it!` the space agency tweeted in the early hours of September 6, 2021, alongside a photograph of a rock core slightly thicker than a pencil inside a sample tube.
- Nasa said last week it thought it had accomplished the feat, but poorly-lit photographs taken by the rover meant that the team operating the mission were not certain whether the sample had stayed inside its tube

8. Misbah, Waqar quit coaching roles as mega event looms

- With change imminent at the helm of the Pakistan Cricket Board, Misbah-ul-Haq and Waqar Younis decided they didn`t want to stick around too.
- Pakistan head coach and bowling coach resigned from their roles on September 6, 2021, a month before the Twenty20 World Cup begins and with the national team finalising its preparations for the tournament in the United Arab Emirates by hosting New Zealand and England.
- Former Pakistan captain Ramiz Raja is set to be elected the new PCB chairman on Sept 13, replacing Ehsan Mani, and that seems to have played a part in Misbah and Waqar deciding to quit and the announcement made barely an hour after chief selector Mohammad Wasim had named the national team for the two upcoming series and the T20 World Cup

9. Belmondo, French cinema`s handsome devil, dies at 88

- Jean-Paul Belmondo, a star of France`s New Wave cinema after his breakthrough performance in Jean Luc Godard`s A bout de souffle (Breathless) in 1959, died on Sunday.
- He was 88.
- The death of a leading figure in French cinema was felt across the country. President Emmanuel Macron tweeted that France had lost a `national treasure`.
- `It seems to me that all of France is sad,` Michel Godest, Belmondo`s friend and lawyer, told a television channel, breaking down in tears

10. World`s oldest Test cricketer dies

- John Watkins, who had been the world`s oldest living Test cricketer, has died in Durban at the age of 98, Cricket South Africa (CSA) announced on September 6, 2021.

- His death leaves fellow South African Ron Draper, 95, as the oldest surviving Test player, while Australian Neil Harvey, 92, is believed to be the only player still alive who played Test cricket in the 1940s.
- Draper played his only two Tests, against Australia, in the early 1950s

CSS Times

September 8, 2021: Current Affairs

1. Punjab gets seventh IG, fifth chief secretary in three years

- In yet another top-level reshuffle in Punjab bureaucracy, the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) government on Tuesday changed the police chief and chief secretary of the province.
- Sardar Ali Khan has become the 7th Inspector General and Kamran Ali Afzal the 5th Chief Secretary of Punjab during three years of the PTI government.
- Sardar Ali has replaced Inam Ghani as Punjab police chief, while Kamran Ali took charge from outgoing chief secretary Jawad Rafique Malik

2. Navies of Pakistan, Germany, US hold exercise in Arabian Sea

- Navies of Pakistan, German and the United States conducted a two-day passing exercise in the Arabian Sea, which concluded on September 7, 2021.
- The exercise was held with an aim of strengthening cooperation and advancing a common vision to ensure peace and stability. Multiple ships from the partner nations, including Pakistan Navy's PNS Alamgir, the USS Shiloh and the German Navy's FGS Bayern, operated in close proximity to promote interoperability, share maritime knowledge, and improve maritime domain awareness. The second day of the training was bilateral between Pakistan and the United States to continue building on the important and substantive collaboration.

3. Lt Gen Abbas made army's chief of general staff

- Lt Gen Azhar Abbas was on September 7, 2021 named as army's next Chief of General Staff (CGS).
- Gen Abbas would be the 35th CGS of the army. He replaces Lt Gen Sahir Shamshad Mirza, who was posted out as commander of Rawalpindi-based 10 Corps a post previously held by Gen Abbas.
- The post of CGS is considered the most influential position within the army after that of the army chief.
- The CGS is assigned operational and intelligence matters at the General Headquarters with directorates of Military Operations and Military Intelligence falling under his purview. Gen Abbas is from the Baloch Regiment.

4. Pakistan to host virtual meeting of ministers from Afghanistan's neighbours

- Pakistan will host a virtual meeting of the foreign ministers of neighbouring countries of Afghanistan on September 8, 2021 (today) to discuss developments in the war-ravaged country.
- The meeting would be attended by foreign ministers of China, Iran, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.
- The meeting is being held a day after Taliban's announcement of an interim government for Afghanistan.
- The Foreign Office in a statement said that the foreign ministers' meeting will review the evolving situation in Afghanistan to address common challenges and realise emerging opportunities to ensure regional stability and prosperity.

5. Taliban bring old guard into cabinet, dash hopes for inclusive govt

- The Taliban announced their government on September 7, 2021, with a UN-blacklisted veteran of the hardline movement in the top role, weeks after they swept to power and toppled the US-backed president.

- But as the Taliban transitions from militant force to governing power of Afghanistan, security officials grappled with a growing number of protests against its rule, with two people shot dead in the western city of Herat.
- Mullah Mohammad Hassan Akhund a senior minister during the Taliban's brutal and repressive reign in the 1990s was appointed acting prime minister, a spokesman said at a press conference in Kabul

6. Myanmar shadow govt calls for revolt against military rule

- Myanmar's shadow government, formed by opponents of military rule, on September 7, 2021 called for a nationwide uprising against the junta amid reports of new protests and a flare-up in fighting between the army and ethnic military groups.
- Duwa Lashi La, acting president of the National Unity Government (NUG), said the shadow government was launching a 'people's defensive war' signalling in a speech what appeared to be a bid for greater coordination of armed militias and ethnic forces after months of fighting the military.
- Military spokesman Zaw Min Tun dismissed the NUG's call for revolt. It was an attempt to gain international attention and recognition from the United Nations General Assembly later this month and would not succeed, he said.

7. Trial of accused 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh, four others resumes

- Accused September 11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and four others appeared in court for the first time in more than 18 months on September 7, 2021 as US military prosecutors seek justice two decades after the world-shaking terror attacks.
- Mohammed with a dense, graying red beard strode easily into the courtroom in the US naval base in Guantanamo Bay Cuba, as the nine-year-old trial resumed after a long halt for the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The military tribunal courtroom was packed with prosecutors, interpreters, and five defense teams for Mohammed and alleged co-conspirators Ammar al-Baluchi, Walid bin Attash, Ramzi bin al-Shibh and Mustaf a al-Hawsawi

8. SL seal ODI series against South Africa

- Debutant spinner Maheesh Theekshana claimed four wickets as Sri Lanka hammered South Africa by 78 runs in the third One-day International to clinch the series 2-1 in Colombo on September 7, 2021.
- Theekshana, an off-spinner with a lethal carrom ball, returned figures of 4-37 as the hosts bowled out South Africa for 125 in 30 overs while chasing a target of 204 at the R. Premadasa Stadium.
- The 21-year-old Theekshana made an instant impact with a wicket of his first delivery in international cricket as he sent opener Janneman Malan trudging back for 18.
- Rain then stopped play briefly

9. Olympian Jahangir Butt passes away at 78

- Noted Olympian and member of the 1968 Mexico Olympic gold-winning Pakistan hockey team Jahangir Butt passed away here on September 7, 2021 morning after brief illness and complications at a local hospital.
- He was 78.
- The deceased is survived by widow, a daughter and a son. His eldest son had died while doing his flying hours along with his instructor in the US long ago.

10. Music composer Wazir Afzal passes away

- One of legends of the golden era of Pakistani film music Wazir Afzal passed away in Lahore on September 7, 2021 after a protracted illness. He was 87.

- According to Afzal's close circles, he had multiple medical complexities and was admitted to the Shaikh Zayed Hospital a week before.
- The funeral prayers for the deceased were held at Masjid Khurasaan, Iqbal Town and he was laid to rest at an Allama Iqbal Town graveyard. The funeral was attended by musicians Akbar Abbas, Qadir Shaggan, Khawar Abbas, Moin Butt, Baila Nasir and many others

CSSTimes

September 9, 2021: Current Affairs

1. Govt begins audit of oil refineries, companies

- The government has started the audit of all oil refineries and oil marketing companies (OMCs) to rule out the possibility of irregularities in taxes, product sourcing and transportation costs.
- A senior government official told Dawn the Petroleum Division had asked 25 OMCs and refineries to ensure availability of relevant personal and entire record for examination by the audit teams.
- In the first step, an audit team of the Director General Audit (DGA) of Petroleum and Natural Resources will visit Attock Refinery Limited (ARL) in Rawalpindi and Pak-Arab Refinery Company (Parco) in Multan and all OMCs and officials and depots at Machike, Sheikhpura, next week. This will be followed by visits to other OMCs across the country

2. EU-Pakistan business forum for SMEs launched

- The first ever EU-Pakistan Business Forum for Small and Medium Enterprises was launched on September 8, 2021 which is aimed at boosting trade with countries in the European Union.
- The objective of the forum is to provide opportunities to both EU and Pakistani businesses to work together to become engines of development and partnership and contribute to enhancing bilateral trade.
- The business forum will play a key role in bringing together SMEs from the EU and Pakistan to enhance their export orientation as well as collaboration in technology transfer and promotion of businesses.

3. US says Pakistan role critical for inclusive govt

- The US State Department has urged Pakistan to play a critical role in bringing an inclusive government in Kabul as a lawmaker warned that the United States could re-enter Afghanistan if the situation worsened.
- The statements follow assurances from Pakistan's US and UN envoys that Islamabad, too, wants an inclusive government in Kabul and is willing to work with the international community for achieving this objective.
- 'We have been in regular touch with the Pakistani leadership and have discussed Afghanistan in detail,' a State Department spokesperson told Dawn when asked to comment on Pakistan's role in Afghanistan

4. Climate change has forced animals to alter shapes: study

- Some animals are 'shape-shifting' and have developed bigger tails, beaks and ears to regulate their body temperatures as the planet warms, according to a new study.
- From Australian parrots to European rabbits, researchers found evidence that a host of warm-blooded animals have evolved bigger body parts, which could allow them to lose body heat more effectively.
- Climate change is heaping 'a whole lot of pressure' on animals, said Sara Ryding of Deakin University in Australia, who led the study, in a press release.

5. Taliban urged to ensure security in Afghanistan

- Pakistan on September 8, 2021 urged the new Taliban government in Kabul to ensure security in the war ravaged country and work for meeting urgent humanitarian needs.
- 'We hope that the new political dispensation will ensure coordinated efforts for peace, security and stability in Afghanistan as well as work towards taking care of humanitarian and development needs of the Afghan people,' the Foreign Office said in a statement,

which was Pakistan's formal reaction to the caretaker government announced by the Taliban in Kabul a day earlier.

- 'Pakistan reaffirms its abiding commitment to a peaceful, stable, sovereign and prosperous Afghanistan,' it said

6. Russian minister dies trying to save filmmaker in Arctic

- A Russian minister died while trying to save a filmmaker who slipped from a cliff during training exercises in the Arctic, officials said.
- Emergencies minister Yevgeny Zinichev, who previously served in President Vladimir Putin's security detail, is the first Russian cabinet member to die on duty.
- He was lauded by senior government officials and the Russian leader as a loyal civil servant and a 'hero'. The UK's ambassador in Russia also offered condolences

7. World's largest plant capturing carbon from air starts in Iceland

- The world's largest plant that sucks carbon dioxide directly from the air and deposits it underground is due to start operating on Wednesday, the company behind the nascent green technology said.
- Swiss start-up Clime works AG, which specialises in capturing carbon dioxide directly from the air, has partnered with Icelandic carbon storage firm Carbfix to develop a plant that sucks out up to 4,000 tons of CO2 per year.
- That's the equivalent of the annual emissions from about 790 cars. Last year, global CO2-emissions totalled 31.5 billion tonnes, according to the International Energy Agency

8. Afghanistan's last Jew leaves after Taliban takeover

- The last member of Afghanistan's Jewish community has left the country.
- Zebulon Simentov, who lived in a dilapidated synagogue in Kabul, kept kosher and prayed in Hebrew, endured decades of war as the country's centuries-old Jewish community rapidly dwindled. But the Taliban takeover last month seems to have been the last straw.
- Moti Kahana, an Israeli-American businessman who runs a private security group that organised the evacuation, said on Wednesday that the 62-year-old Simentov and 29 of his neighbors, nearly all of them women and children, have been taken to a neighboring country.

9. Statue of Confederate general removed in US state

- A statue of a Confederate general that became the focus of protests for racial justice was removed on September 8, 2021 in Richmond, the Virginia city that served as capital of the pro-slavery South during the American Civil War.
- The bronze statue of General Robert E.
- Lee, who commanded the Army of Northern Virginia during the bloody 1861-65 conflict, was lifted off its 40-foot granite pedestal as hundreds of onlookers cheered under tight security.

10. China, Japan offer guarded reception for Taliban govt

- China, Germany and Japan offered a lukewarm reception on September 8, 2021 to the Taliban's provisional government in Afghanistan, following the Islamist militants' lightning seizure of Kabul last month.
- Taliban leaders filled all the top posts in Tuesday's government list which had no outsiders and no women while an associate of the group's founder was named prime minister and the interior minister figured on a US wanted list.

September 10, 2021: Current Affairs

1. Educational institutions to remain closed till 15th: NCOC

- Restrictions imposed on educational institutions, gatherings and public transport in 24 districts of the country with a view to curbing the spread of Covid-19 have been extended till Sept 15.
- The National Command and Control Centre (NCOC) through a notification on Thursday night confirmed that educational institutions would remain closed until Sept 15. The restrictions imposed on gymnasiums and public transport had also been extended, said the notification.
- In another important development, the Sindh government while responding to a demand from the traders` community allowed business activities on Fridays

2. CIA director meets Bajwa, ISI chief at GHQ

- Central Intelligence Agency Director William Burns discussed the situation in Afghanistan with Army Chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa and Director General of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Lt Gen Faiz Hamid, the ISPR said on September 9, 2021.
- `Mr William Joseph Burns, Director of Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), USA, called on General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff (COAS), and Lieutenant General Faiz Hamid, Director General of Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI),` the ISPR said in a statement announcing the visit of the CIA chief.
- The ISPR, however, did not mention when the meeting took place. It is believed that Mr Burns had met both Gen Bajwa and Gen Hamid on Wednesday evening. Mr Burns` visit took place a day after the Taliban announced their caretaker government in Kabul.

3. Senate body to vote on two key election bills today

- Voting is set to take place on two key election bills that have raised many eyebrows when the Senate Standing Committee on Parliamentary Affairs meets today (September 9, 2021) for the fourth time in five days.
- Informed sources told Dawn that a clause by-clause discussion had already been done and an understanding reached on unanimous passage of as many as 23 amendments proposed in the Elections Act.
- Nineteen of them are set to be rejected as they were found to be in conflict with constitutional provisions.

4. Nadra launches contactless biometric verification service for banking

- The National Database and Registration Authority (Nadra) has launched contactless biometric verification services for the banking and payments industry, making Pakistan one of the first countries in the world to implement the technology on national level.
- The service was launched during a visit by State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Governor Dr Reza Baqir to the Nadra headquarters here on Thursday.
- Banks will make use of the digital app on smartphones capturing and verifying biometrics of the potential account holders from their homes

5. Pakistan, Qatar ask world to unfreeze Afghanistan`s assets

- Pakistan and Qatar on September 9, 2021 urged the international community not to make humanitarian aid for Afghanistan conditional and unfreeze financial assets belonging to the war-ravaged country.
- The call was made by Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi and his Qatari counterpart Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani at a press conference after their talks.

- 'I appreciated what the foreign minister said in our delegation-level talks and he said on the issue of humanitarian crisis there should be no strings attached, there should be no political conditions attached to avoid that humanitarian crisis and that's a very big statement that you have made and I'm completely in agreement with you,' Foreign Minister Qureshi said

6. School closure has badly hit learning process: UNICEF

- Pakistan is among those South Asian countries where school closures have led to alarming inequities in learning opportunities for children, despite significant efforts by their governments and partners to expand remote learning, according to a new research conducted by Unicef.
- The research conducted in Pakistan, India, the Maldives and Sri Lanka notes that school closures in South Asia due to the Covid19 pandemic have interrupted the learning of 434 million children, Unicef says on September 9, 2021.
- In Pakistan 23 per cent of younger children didn't have access to any device that could support remote learning. Poor and disadvantaged households have been the worst hit, with many families struggling to afford even a single device.

7. Ford to stop making cars in India after suffering \$2bn loss

- Ford Motor Co will stop making cars in India and take a hit of about \$2 billion because it does not see a path to profitability in the country, becoming the latest automaker to leave the major growth market dominated by Asian rivals.
- The US carmaker entered India 25 years ago but still has less than 2pc of the passenger vehicle market having struggled for years to win over Indian consumers and turn a profit.
- Ford said in a statement on Thursday that it had accumulated operating losses of more than \$2 billion in 10 years in India and demand for its new vehicles had been weak.

8. US Navy sets up Gulf drone task force amid Iran tensions

- The US Navy's Fifth Fleet said on September 9, 2021 it launched a new task force in the Gulf incorporating drones and artificial intelligence following maritime attacks blamed on Iran.
- A statement by the US Naval Forces Central Command, or NAVCENT, said the task force would rely on regional and coalition partnerships.
- 'The bottom line on why we're doing this is so that we can develop and integrate unmanned systems and AI as a means to do two things,' NAVCENT commander Brad Cooper said

9. BRICS leaders call for peaceful settlement in Afghanistan

- Leaders of the five-nation BRICS club (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on September 9, 2021 called for settling the situation in Afghanistan through peaceful means.
- The declaration at the virtual summit held through video conference said the leaders also sought an 'inclusive intra Afghan dialogue so as to ensure stability, civil peace, law and order'. While the theme for the summit is 'cooperation for continuity, consolidation and consensus', the focus remained on Afghanistan, NDTV said. The 'New Delhi Declaration' adopted at the end of the summit also emphasised the need to 'address the humanitarian situation and to uphold human rights, including those of women, children and minorities'

10. Senior journalist Rahimullah Yousafzai passes away

- Senior journalist Rahimullah Yousafzai breathed his last after protracted illness. He was 66.

- His son Arshid Yousafzai, who is also a journalist, confirmed that Mr Yousafzai had expired after fighting cancer for over 15 months.
- He was the resident editor of The News International at Peshawar and was also a correspondent of BBC Urdu and Pashto service in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

CSSTimes

September 11, 2021: Current Affairs

1. Nation observes Quaid's death anniversary today

- The 73rd death anniversary of Quaid-i-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah is being observed on Saturday (September 11, 2021) throughout the country with reverence and solemnity.
- To mark the day, various programmes have been planned to shed light on the leadership and personality of the Father of the Nation.
- Born on Dec 25, 1876, Mr Jinnah served as leader of the All India Muslim League from 1913 until Pakistan's creation. He served as the country's first governor general until his death.

2. 50m people in Pakistan fully vaccinated: minister

- Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Asad Umar on September 10, 2021 said more than 50 million people had so far been fully vaccinated against Covid-19 in Pakistan while 20 million had received their first jab.
- On the other hand, 83 patients succumbed to Covid-19 and 3,689 more tested positive in the last 24 hours.
- In a tweet, the federal minister said: 'In the early days of the vaccination campaign we had set a daunting target of vaccinating 7 crore people by the end of this year. Happy to report that 5 crore people have now received at least 1 dose

3. ECNEC approves three projects worth Rs340bn

- The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) on September 10, 2021 approved three development projects at an estimated cost of Rs340 billion with a major tilt towards Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
- Presided over by Minister for Finance and Revenue Shaukat Tarin, the meeting was attended by Planning and Development Minister Asad Umar, Adviser to the Prime Minister on Commerce Abdul Razak Dawood, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Finance Minister Taimur Khan Jhagra and federal secretaries

4. Govt gets \$279m in spectrum auction

- Amid withdrawal of bids by three main players in the telecom sector, Ufone has obtained 9MHz spectrum in 1800-megahertz band for \$279 million, allowing the company to improve its quality of service as well as expand penetration in different underserved areas.
- The Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) on Friday declared Ufone as the sole winner in the auction of additional spectrum 2021.
- Briefing the media on the results of the auction, PTA Chairman retired Maj Gen Amir Azeem Bajwa said Ufone would have to deposit 50 per cent (Rs23.44 billion) of the bid amount in the government treasury within 15 days

5. US to engage with Taliban when it's in America's interest

- The United States would engage with the Taliban when it's in America's interest to do so, although it's not yet ready to recognise the Taliban government.
- At a Thursday afternoon's news briefing, State Department spokesperson Ned Price also said that Pakistan shared concerns of the international community on Afghanistan and wanted to protect the gains of the last 20 years.
- 'There's a distinction ... between broad issues like recognition and legitimacy and practical engagement,' said Mr Price while explaining how the Biden administration plans to engage with the Taliban

6. Russia, Belarus hold massive military drills, spook neighbours

- Russia and Belarus launched massive military drills on Friday, with Nato-member Poland warning of possible `provocations` as tensions rise on the European Union`s eastern border.
- Moscow said 200,000 personnel would take part in the week-long Zapad military exercise in Belarus, western Russia and the Baltic Sea, one of the country`s biggest drills in recent years.
- The defence ministry released footage of rows of Russian warships firing artillery, military jets flying in formation and columns of tanks advancing over rugged terrain

7. Russia completes gas pipeline to Germany, alarms Ukraine

- Russia said on September 10, 2021 it had finished construction of a subsea pipeline to Germany, which could allow it to double lucrative gas exports to Europe via the Baltic Sea while bypassing and cutting off a source of income for political foe Ukraine.
- Although German regulators have yet to clear gas flows, completion of the construction stage of Nord Stream 2 means Russia has boosted its energy exporting capabilities towards Europe both from the north in the Baltic Sea and from the south in the Black Sea, where it operates the Turk Stream pipeline.

8. Kuwaiti royal convicted in Swiss forgery case

- World sport powerbroker Sheikh Ahmad al-Fahad al-Sabah was convicted on September 10, 2021 by a Swiss court in a complex forgery case linked to an alleged plot against his political rivals in Kuwait.
- After just over a week of hearings, the Geneva Criminal Court convicted Kuwait`s Sheikh Ahmad, handing him a 30-month prison sentence, half of it suspended.
- Four other defendants three Geneva-based lawyers and a Kuwaiti aide were also found guilty and handed sentences of up to 36 months behind bars

9. France`s former minister charged over Covid handling

- Former French health minister Agnes Buzyn was charged on September 10, 2021 over her handling of the Covid-19 pandemic after investigators at a special court in Paris concluded there were grounds to prosecute her.
- Buzyn has been charged with `endangering the lives of others`, the prosecutor of the Republic`s Court of Justice said, but not for a second possible offence of `failure to stop a disaster`.
- The former doctor, who will be able to appeal the charge, attended a hearing at the court on Friday, saying she welcomed `an excellent opportunity for me to explain myself and to establish the truth`

10. Lebanon finally gets new govt amid economic misery

- Lebanese leaders agreed to a new government led by Sunni tycoon Najib Mikati on September 10, 2021 after a year of feuding over cabinet seats that has exacerbated a devastating economic collapse, opening the way to a resumption of talks with the IMF.
- The break through followed a flurry of contacts from France which has led efforts to get Lebanon`s fractious leaders to agree to a cabinet and begin reforms since last year`s catastrophic Beirut port explosion, senior Lebanese political sources said.
- There was no immediate comment from the French foreign ministry

September 12, 2021: Current Affairs

1. Pakistan hosts meeting of regional states' spymasters

- Pakistan on September 11, 2021 hosted a meeting of spymasters of some countries in the region on the situation in Afghanistan, a security source said.
- There was no official statement on the meeting, but an intelligence source privately confirmed that the session had taken place.
- The meeting was attended by the intelligence heads from Russia, China, Iran and some Central Asian states.
- 'The hosting of the meeting by Pakistan reflects our sincerity for peace in the region and Afghanistan,' the source said

2. Vaccination of citizens aged 15 and above starts tomorrow

- The National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) will begin vaccinating adolescents in the age group of 15 to 17 years from Monday (September 11, 2021).
- Moreover, like the previous week, this Sunday too will be dedicated to people requiring second dose of the vaccine.
- On the other hand, 3,480 more people tested positive and 82 succumbed to the virus on Saturday.
- Talking to Dawn, Ministry of National Health Services (NHS) spokesperson Sajid Shah said it had been decided to start administering jabs to teenagers in the age group of 15 to 17 years from Monday.

3. PIA plans chartered flights from Kabul

- The Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) on September 11, 2021 said it was keen to resume its regular flight operation to Afghanistan and in the first phase it was making arrangements to operate chartered flights to and from Kabul.
- 'PIA has been approached by a few organisations [in Kabul for chartered flights and it has sought permission [from the government] to operate the flights,' PIA spokesperson Abdullah H. Khan said.
- 'There are still certain arrangements that need to be finalised for operating the chartered flights

4. Pakistani soldier martyred in Sudan

- One Pakistani peacekeeper embraced martyrdom while on duty in the Darfur region of Sudan.
- In a press release on September 11, 2021, the Inter-Services Public Relations identified the soldier as Lance Naik Adil Jan, a resident of Lakki Marwat.
- Adil Jan, a member of Frontier Corps, Balochistan, was part of the UN mission in Darfur responsible for the protection of civilians and facilitating humanitarian assistance. So far, 161 Pakistani peacekeepers have laid down their lives as part of global missions for international peace and stability

5. Pakistan to attend 'Three Brothers' military drills

- Azerbaijan, Turkey and Pakistan will hold joint military drills from Sept 12 to 20 in Baku, Azerbaijan's defence ministry said on September 11, 2021, the first such drills between the three countries.
- The goal of the 'Three Brothers 2021' exercises is to improve cooperation between their special forces and to share knowledge and experience, the ministry said in a statement.
- Turkey and Azerbaijan held joint live fire drills in Baku earlier this year.

6. Talks with IMF for sixth tranche to start by month-end

- Pakistan will start staff level discussions with the International Monetary Fund by end of the current month for the release of sixth tranche under the \$6 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF).
- The IMF board has a scheduled a meeting later this month to conduct its sixth review of Pakistan programme. `Our technical team will start virtual discussions with the IMF technical team on Sept 29, Finance Minister Shaukat Tarin told Dawn.
- He went on to say that a list of issues to be discussed was received from the fund.

7. Morocco`s king names businessman Akhannouch to head govt

- Morocco`s King Mohammed VI named businessman Aziz Akhannouch to lead a new government after his National Rally of Independents (RNI) thrashed the long-ruling Islamists in parliamentary elections.
- The king appointed Akhannouch `head of the government and tasked him with forming a new government`, following Wednesday`s polls, a statement from the palace said.

8. NZ cricketers arrive for first Pakistan tour in 18 years

- The New Zealand cricket team arrived in Pakistan on September 11, 2021 for a limited-over series marking the Kiwis` first international series in the country since 2003.
- They played a five-match One-day International (ODI) series in the country 18 years ago but since then Pakistan have hosted New Zealand in the United Arab Emirates three times because of security concerns of foreign teams.
- New Zealand also had to cut short a tour of Pakistan in 2002, after a bomb blast outside their team hotel in Karachi.
- But in the last six years, Pakistan have hosted Zimbabwe, West Indies, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and South Africa as has the situation improved in the country

9. Indian sports chief takes over as OCA head

- Veteran Indian sports administrator Raja Randhir Singh on September 11, 2021 took over as head of the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) after its former Kuwaiti leader was sentenced to jail in a forgery case.
- Sheikh Ahmad al-Fahad al Sabah, a member of Kuwait`s ruling family, stepped aside as Asia`s top sports official after the Geneva court found him guilty on Friday over a plot against political rivals in the Gulf state.
- Singh, 74, said in a statement he was taking over as interim president as the longest serving member of the OCA executive

10. French abortion film wins Venice Film Festival`s Golden Lion

- A timely film about illegal abortions in 1960s France won the Venice Film Festival`s Golden Lion on Saturday, capping a festival rife with female-focused themes.
- Audrey Diwan`s `Happening` arrives just as the abortion debate is raging again after new restrictions in Texas, and with the MeToo movement starting to make its mark in the film industry.
- `I did this movie with anger, with desire, with my belly, my guts, my heart and my head,` said Diwan, accepting the top prize for her delicately rendered, yet gut-punching drama.

September 14, 2021: Current Affairs

1. PIA runs first flight to Kabul after Taliban takeover

- In its first passenger flight to Kabul since the Taliban reclaimed power last month, Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) on September 13, 2021 took journalists to Afghanistan before bringing back those belonging to World Bank and international news agencies to Islamabad.
- Air Commodore Jawad Zafar, who heads PIA operations, was present on board when the plane touched down in Kabul. PIA flight PK6249 departed from Islamabad International Airport and touched down at the Kabul airport at 9.45am local time, said PIA spokesperson Abdullah Hafeez Khan.
- At Kabul airport, special arrangements had been made by the Afghan Civil Aviation and local PIA staff to restore the services. At Kabul airport, the PIA's logo and flight number were posted after trained airport staff joined their duty and handled the flight.

2. Country reports fewer than 3,000 cases after 50 days

- While the country reported less than 3,000 Covid-19 cases after a gap of 50 days, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Health Dr Faisal Sultan on September 13, 2021 claimed that Pakistan was performing well in terms of vaccination.
- However, he said the pandemic was very much there so the citizens should continue wearing masks as it was one of the best preventions against the virus.
- According to the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) data, 2,988 cases were reported and 67 people lost their battle against the virus in a single day across the country

3. Education body decides not to fail

- All students will be declared pass in the board exams' results and 33pc marks will be awarded to them if they fail in any subject.
- This was decided in the Inter-Provincial Education Ministers Conference (IPEMC) held on September 13, 2021 which was presided over by federal Education Minister Shafqat Mahmood.
- All education ministers of the country were of the opinion that since students had faced difficulties in preparing for their matric and intermediate exams during the Covid-19 pandemic, they should be given concession

4. ITFC to give \$600m for commodity financing

- The International Islamic Trade Finance Corporation (ITFC) a subsidiary of the Islamic Development Bank would make available this month about \$600 million of syndicated loan for commodity financing.
- An official statement said this was conveyed to Pakistan during a virtual meeting between Minister for Economic Affairs Omar Ayub Khan and ITFC Chief Executive Officer Hani Salem Sonbol. 'The CEO ITFC updated that the ongoing syndication is about to complete and \$600m will be available to Pakistan during this month,' the statement said.
- This is part of the \$4.5bn new framework agreement signed by the two sides in June this year to finance oil, LNG and fertiliser imports over the next three years (2021-23)

5. Afghan Taliban close border for pedestrians

- Afghan Taliban suspended the return of Afghan nationals to their country through the Torkham border on September 13, 2021.
- Security officials on Pakistani side of the crossing point, however, said vehicular traffic continued as loaded vehicles from both the sides crossed the border.

- Though the exact reason for restricting movement of Afghans returning to their country could not be ascertained, local sources said hundreds of Afghans aspiring to come to Pakistan had gathered at the Afghan side of the border in the hope that the crossing would reopen for regular pedestrian movement

6. No need for a third jab booster: study

- Vaccines are effective enough at preventing severe Covid-19 that there is no current need for the general population to be given third doses, according to a report in The Lancet published on September 13, 2021.
- Some countries have started offering extra doses over fears about the much more contagious Delta variant, causing the World Health Organisation to call for a moratorium on third jabs amid concerns about vaccine supplies to poorer nations, where millions have yet to receive their first jab.
- But a report by scientists, including from the WHO, concluded that even with the threat of Delta, 'booster doses for the general population are not appropriate at this stage in the pandemic'.

7. Bennett meets Sisi on first visit to Egypt by Israeli PM in a decade

- Israel's Naftali Bennett met Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi on September 13, 2021, on the first visit to the North African country by a prime minister of the Jewish state in over a decade.
- Sisi hosted Bennett in the Red Sea resort of Sharm elSheikh where they discussed 'efforts to revive the peace process' between the Israelis and Palestinians, presidential spokesman Bassam Radi said.
- Security cooperation between the two countries was also discussed at the meeting attended by Egyptian intelligence chief Abbas Kamel and Israel's National Security Advisor Eyal Holata, Radi said.

8. North Korea claims testing long-range cruise missiles

- North Korea said on September 13, 2021 that it successfully tested newly developed long-range cruise missiles over the weekend, the first known testing activity in months, underscoring how the country continues to expand its military capabilities amid a stalemate in nuclear negotiations with the United States.
- The state-run Korean Central News Agency reported that the missiles showed they can hit targets 1,500 kilometres away on Saturday and Sunday. State media published photos of a projectile being fired from a launcher truck and what looked like a missile traveling in the air.

9. US spent \$290m every day in Afghanistan for 20 years

- The United States spent \$290 million every day for 7,300 days on its war efforts and nation-building projects in Afghanistan, says a report compiled by Brown University.
- That's how the United States ended up spending more than \$2 trillion in the last 20 years in Afghanistan, the report by the university's Costs of War project added.
- The report highlighted by several major US media outlets points out that the money helped 'create a tiny class of young, ultra-rich Afghans,' many of whom started as interpreters for the US army and became millionaires.

10. Ramiz elected as PCB's 36th Chairman

- Former Pakistan captain Ramiz Raja was elected unanimously and unopposed as the Pakistan Cricket Board's 36th Chairman for a three-year term in a special meeting presided over by the PCB Election Commissioner Justice (R) Sheikh Azmat Saeed.

- Ramiz, along with Asad Ali Khan, was nominated by the PCB Patron, Prime Minister Imran Khan, on the PCB Board of Governors on August 27 for a three-year term, where they joined Aasim Wajid Jawad, Alia Zafar, Arif Saeed, Javed Kurieshi (all independent members) and Wasim Khan (PCB Chief Executive).
- Ramiz is Pakistan's 18th Test and 12th ODI captain, and played 255 international matches in which he scored 8,674 runs in the period from 1984 to 1997. He has previously served the PCB as its Chief Executive from 2003-2004, has represented Pakistan on the ICC Chief Executives' Committee and presently sits on the MCC World Cricket Committee. He has been a successful broadcaster with world's leading cricket networks and widely regarded as the voice of Pakistan cricket. He is only the fourth former Pakistan international cricketer to head the PCB after Abdul Hafeez Kardar (1972-1977), Javed Burki (1994-1995) and Ijaz Butt (2008-2011).

CSSTimes

September 15, 2021: Current Affairs

1. Imran, Putin agree to coordinate positions on Afghanistan

- Pakistan and Russia on September 14, 2021 emphasised the need for closely coordinating their positions on the developments in Afghanistan.
- The two sides underscored this during a conversation between Prime Minister Imran Khan and Russian President Vladimir Putin.
- The second call from President Putin to Mr Khan within three weeks came in the backdrop of the upcoming Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summit in Dushanbe on Friday (Sept 17). Mr Khan would participate in the summit, while Mr Putin is likely to miss the event because he has decided to isolate himself after Covid-19 cases were detected in his inner circle

2. Pakistan says no recognition till Taliban fulfil promises

- US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has told Congress that Washington wants Pakistan not to offer `any legitimacy` to Afghanistan`s new Taliban rulers until they fulfil their promises to fight terrorism and protect human rights.
- Pakistan`s US Ambassador Asad Majeed Khan, however, assured the international community that Islamabad too is monitoring the ability of the Taliban government to deliver on those promises before extending recognition to it.
- Secretary Blinken made those remarks at the House Foreign Affairs Committee on Monday during his first hearing on Afghanistan since the withdrawal of the US forces while Ambassador Khan offered the assurance in an interview to The Washington Diplomat news paper

3. First of two Airbus A320s acquired by PIA arrives in Islamabad

- One of the two Airbus A320 aircraft the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) had acquired on dry lease from the Bank of Utah, the US, landed at Islamabad International Airport on September 14, 2021 morning.
- The other aircraft is expected to arrive within a couple of weeks, according to a PIA spokesman.
- With the addition of these two Airbus A320s, the national flag carrier`s fleet will increase to 29 aircraft of different brands

4. Islamabad domestic workers bill gets approval of Senate body

- A parliamentary committee on September 14, 2021 unanimously approved the Islamabad Capital Territory Domestic Workers Bill 2021 after substantive amendments to ensure social protection and welfare, including working hours and minimum wages, for the workers.
- The chairperson of the Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights, Senator Walid Iqbal, termed the bill a `pioneer law` for the underprivileged class of society.
- The committee met for a discussion on the bill for the second consecutive day

5. Virus-related restrictions lifted in 18 districts

- While the number of critical patients of Covid-19 has surged to 5,304, consumption of oxygen in the health sector has doubled in last four weeks due to which 66 per cent of the country`s oxygen production has been diverted to health sector.
- On the other hand, the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) on September 14, 2021 lifted coronavirus-related restrictions in 18 districts and decided to reopen educational institutions from Sept 16. However, it decided to continue restrictions in six districts of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) till Sept 22.

- As many as 2,580 more people were infected and 78 could not survive in a single day, according to the NCOC data shared on September 14, 2021

6. Taliban thank world for pledging \$1.2 billion in assistance

- The Taliban on September 14, 2021 thanked the world for pledging hundreds of millions of dollars in emergency aid to Afghanistan, and urged the United States to show `heart` to the impoverished country.
- A donor conference in Geneva on Monday ended with pledges of \$1.2 billion in aid for Afghanistan, which was taken over by the militant group last month in a lightning offensive that took retreating US troops by surprise.
- Afghanistan, already heavily dependent on aid, is facing an economic crisis, with the new authorities unable to pay salaries and food prices soaring

7. Man jailed in US for 53 years over mosque bombing

- A militia group leader, who was convicted of the 2017 bombing of a mosque outside of Minneapolis that `terrorised` the community of Somali immigrants it served, was sentenced on Monday to 53 years in prison.
- Emily Claire Hari, 50, was found guilty in December, after a five-week trial, on five federal charges related to the pipe bombing of the Dar al Farooq Islamic Centre in Bloomington, Minnesota, while worshippers were in the building for morning prayers. No one was hurt in the bombing

8. Russia fines Facebook and Twitter over banned content

- Russia fined Facebook and Twitter on September 14, 2021 for not deleting banned content, adding to a slew of penalties the government has imposed on foreign tech giants.
- Russia has recently been tightening controls over US-based tech companies and last week accused them of interfering in parliamentary polls this weekend.
- A court in Moscow slapped Facebook with five fines on September 14, 2021 totalling 21 million rubles (\$288,000), according to an official Telegram channel. The same court fined Twitter five million rubles

9. Afghan female footballers evade Taliban, reach Pakistan

- Female footballers from Afghanistan along with their families crossed the Torkham border to reach Pakistan on Tuesday night after the government issued emergency humanitarian visas to evacuate them from their country following the Taliban takeover.
- The footballers belonging to the national junior girls team were facing threats from the Taliban due to their involvement in sports. They had been originally due to travel to Qatar, where Afghan refugees have been housed at a facility for the 2022 FIFA World Cup, but were left stranded after a bomb blast at the Kabul airport on Aug 26

10. Malinga quits international cricket

- Fast bowler Lasith Malinga, who led Sri Lanka to victory at the 2014 Twenty20 World Cup, on September 14, 2021 quit T20 Internationals to complete his retirement as a player.
- The 38-year-old, one of the most successful limited over bowlers of all time with his distinctive `sling` action, said he would now devote himself to supporting the next generation of cricketers.
- Malinga, who was dropped for Sri Lanka`s current T20 series against South Africa, had been considering giving up since leading the team when they lost 2-0 to India in January last year

September 16, 2021: Current Affairs

1. Troops from China, Pakistan, two other countries end exercise

- China's armed forces concluded their first multinational peacekeeping exercise on September 15, 2021, showing off their combat prowess with drones and mine-clearing robots while seeking to project a more benign image.
- As the Asian giant modernises and beefs up its military by pumping hundreds of billions of dollars annually into its defence budget, it has also strived to assure other countries that its military is a force for good, not a threat.
- About 1,000 troops from China, Pakistan, Mongolia and Thailand participated in the 10-day exercise at a People's Liberation Army training base in Queshan county in the central province of Henan.

2. Seven soldiers martyred in S. Waziristan gunfight with terrorists

- Seven soldiers were martyred and five terrorists killed during an intense exchange of fire in the Asman Manza area of South Waziristan tribal district on September 15, 2021, said Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR).
- Security forces conducted an intelligence-based operation in Asman Manza area after reports were received that terrorists were present there.
- According to the statement released by the military's media affairs wing, five terrorists were killed in the operation. During the intense exchange of fire seven soldiers embraced shahadat

3. ECC okays Rs44bn financial aid for PIA

- Within first quarter of the new fiscal year, the Economic Coordination Committee (CCI) of the Cabinet on September 15, 2021 approved Rs28 billion supplementary grants to Ministry of Defence and about Rs44bn to Pakistan International Airlines.
- Presided over by Finance Minister Shaukat Tarin, the ECC also allowed 70 million cubic feet of imported gas to two Punjab-based fertiliser plants for the upcoming Rabi season and ordered a review of overall requirements to conclude if urea imports would be required.

4. S. Korea tests sub-launched ballistic missile after North fires two into sea

- South Korea successfully test-fired a submarine launched ballistic missile on Wednesday, becoming only the seventh country in the world with the advanced technology and raising the prospect of a regional arms race.
- The test, supervised by President Moon Jae-in, came hours after nuclear-armed North Korea fired two ballistic missiles into the sea, according to the South's military prompting Washington to brand Pyongyang's action a provocative 'threat' to Asian neighbours.
- South Korea's test is a strategic advance for Seoul. It has been strengthening its military capabilities to counter the threat posed by the North, which is under international sanctions for its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes

5. UN withdraws peacekeepers from African state over sex abuse claims

- The UN will withdraw Gabon's 450-strong peacekeeping contingent from the Central African Republic over sexual abuse allegations, a scourge that has long tarnished UN interventions, Gabon's defence ministry said on Wednesday.
- 'In recent weeks, exceptionally serious acts that go against military ethics and the honour of the armed forces, committed by certain elements in the Gabonese battalions have been reported,' the ministry said

6. Taiwan drills military as concerns grow over China

- The F-16 screeched across the sky on Wednesday before landing on a highway cut through pineapple fields in southwestern Taiwan to refuel quickly and take off again.
- The Taiwanese military exercise envisioned a Chinese attack taking out the island's main airfields, necessitating the use of rural roads as runways to carry on the fight.
- War is not imminent, but as China has grown increasingly assertive in both the East China and South China Seas, Taiwan is stepping up its defence. Across the region, the United States and its allies are deepening military cooperation and strategising over an effective response.

7. UN calls for moratorium on AI systems that threaten human rights

- The UN called on September 15, 2021 for a moratorium on artificial intelligence systems like facial recognition technology that threaten human rights until 'guardrails' are in place against violations.
- UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet warned that 'AI technologies can have negative, even catastrophic effects if they are used without sufficient regard to how they affect people's human rights.'
- She called for assessments of how great a risk various AI technologies pose to things like rights to privacy and freedom of movement and of expression. She said countries should ban or heavily regulate the ones that pose the greatest threats.

8. Macron meets key Gulf ally Abu Dhabi crown prince in historic chateau

- French President Emmanuel Macron on September 15, 2021 held talks with the crown prince of the UAE's Abu Dhabi, Mohammed bin Zayed, one of Paris' closest allies in the Middle East region.
- The two met for a working lunch at the historic Fontainebleau Chateau outside Paris, where the United Arab Emirates has played a key role in restoration works, correspondents said.
- France has close military, political and cultural ties to the UAE. Abu Dhabi has in the last month served as a hub for the evacuation by Paris of French nationals and Afghans from Taliban-controlled Afghanistan

9. \$12m seized from former Afghan officials

- Afghanistan's central bank said on September 15, 2021 that the Taliban had seized more than \$12 million in cash and gold from the homes of former government officials, as a financial crunch threatens the Islamists' rule one month after they took back power.
- Most government employees have yet to return to work and in many cases salaries had already not been paid for months leaving millions scrambling to make ends meet.
- Even those with money in the bank are struggling, as branches limit withdrawals to the equivalent of \$200 a week with customers having to queue for hours

10. IAEA complains to Iran over 'harassment' of women inspectors

- The UN nuclear watchdog on September 15, 2021 condemned as 'unacceptable' incidents involving its inspectors in Iran following a news report that Iranian guards had harassed female agency staff.
- The Wall Street Journal reported on Tuesday that guards at Iran's main nuclear facility, Natanz, physically harassed female International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) inspectors in several incidents since early June. The incidents allegedly included inappropriate touching and orders to remove clothing, the report said, citing diplomats. The United States condemned the incidents. 'Harassment of IAEA inspectors is

absolutely unacceptable and any repeat of such conduct would be of serious concern,' said US Charge d`Affaires Louis L Bono.

- 'The safety and well-being of IAEA inspectors must be one of this Board`s highest priorities

CSSTimes

September 17, 2021: Current Affairs

1. SCO leaders caution against abandoning Afghanistan

- Several regional leaders participating in the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) summit on September 16, 2021 underscored the need for an inclusive government in Afghanistan and concurred with Pakistan that the war-ravaged country should not be abandoned after the Taliban takeover.
- Prime Minister Imran Khan, who is in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, on a two-day visit for attending the SCO summit, met the presidents of Belarus, Uzbekistan, Iran and Kazakhstan on the sidelines of the event on the first day of his trip.
- Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry in a recorded video statement said the focus of discussions between Mr Khan and the regional leaders was on the situation in Afghanistan.

2. Joblessness jumped in 2018-19: labour survey

- The country's unemployment rate jumped from 5.8 per cent in 2017-18 to 6.9pc in 2018-19, the first year of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf in power, according to the Labour Force Survey (LFS) published by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) on September 16, 2021.
- In absolute terms, the number of people actively looking for jobs increased by 0.92 million to 4.71m in FY19 from 3.79m the previous year as the number of the country's total workforce rose to 68.73m from 65.5m during the period under review. It also meant that at least 3.23m people entered the market seeking employment at a time when the national economy's capacity to create new jobs had just started shrinking and the businesses had started laying off their employees owing to the emerging macroeconomic imbalances

3. PHC lifts ban on cattle, poultry supply to Afghanistan

- The Peshawar High Court on September 16, 2021 recalled its stay order against the transportation of the cattle and poultry to Afghanistan and allowed their export.
- A bench consisting of Chief Justice Qaiser Rashid Khan and Justice Syed Arshad Ali took exception to the reports about milk adulteration, especially the mixing of formalin (formaldehyde) chemical into it, and ordered the livestock department and district administrations to `permanently seal` all shops involved in the `heinous` act.
- It directed the federal government to consult the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa livestock department for the improvement of the cattle export policy

4. Pakistan becomes self-sufficient in mung bean output

- Pakistan has become self-sufficient in mung bean production as the first estimate of the crop for 2021-22 records the legume output at 253,000 tonnes against the national requirement of about 180,000 tonnes.
- The self-sufficiency in mung bean a major edible legume in Asia was announced during the annual review and planning meeting for Rabi 2021-22 on Thursday.
- The meeting was organised by the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) for its Public Sector Development Programme-funded project `Promoting Research for Productivity Enhancement in Pulses`

5. Pakistan, China sign MoU to boost tourism

- Pakistan and China on Thursday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in the tourism sector under the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO), establishing

cooperation mechanisms among the SCO tourism cities between the Qingdao Tourism Association and provinces of Punjab and Sindh.

- The MoU was signed during the online China-Pakistan Two-way Tourism Promotion Conference by the Tourism Development Corporation of Punjab MD Muhammad Tanveer Jabbar, Sindh Tourism Development Corporation Muhammad MD Ali Khosa and president of Qingdao Tourism Association Xin Hualong on behalf of their respective sides. The Board of Investment (BoI) facilitated the signing of the agreement

6. Another 4m doses of Covid-19 vaccine arrive

- While several countries have controlled casualties despite being severely affected by Covid-19, Pakistan continues to report a large number of casualties because it has vaccinated hardly 25 per cent of its population, according to an expert.
- On the other hand, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Health Dr Faisal Sultan seems satisfied with the country's performance and says that collective response through the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) served the entire country.
- According to NCOC data shared on September 16, 2021, 3,012 new cases and 66 deaths were reported in a single day. The number of casualties, since the beginning of Covid19, surpassed the figure of 27,000. The number of active cases was 76,581, out of which 5,590 patients were admitted to hospitals as of Sept 16

7. French forces kill IS's boss in African region

- France said on September 16, 2021 that its troops deployed in Africa's Sahel region had killed the head of the militant Islamic State group in the Greater Sahara, who had been hunted for years over deadly attacks on US soldiers and French aid workers.
- Adnan Abu Walid al-Sahrawi formed the ISGS in 2015 after splitting with jihadist linked to Al Qaeda and pledging allegiance to the militant Islamic State group, which at the time controlled swathes of Iraq and Syria.

8. Unicef urges all states to reopen schools

- The United Nations children's agency Unicef has urged education authorities to reopen schools as soon as possible in countries where millions of students are still not allowed to return to classrooms 18 months into the Covid-19 pandemic.
- Schools in around 17 countries remain fully closed, while those in 39 countries remain partially closed, according to a report released by Unicef on September 16, 2021.
- Among those 'almost completely closed' are schools usually attended by nearly 77 million students in the Philippines, Bangladesh, Venezuela, Saudi Arabia, Panama and Kuwait

9. 1.5 C warming limit 'impossible' without major action, says UN

- A new climate change report out on September 16, 2021 shows that limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius will be impossible without immediate, large-scale emissions cuts, the UN chief said.
- The United in Science 2021 report, published by a range of UN agencies and scientific partners just weeks before the COP26 climate summit, said climate change and its impacts were accelerating. And a temporary reduction in carbon emissions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic had done nothing to slow the relentless warming, it found.
- The 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change, struck at the COP21 summit, called for capping global warming at well below 2 C above the pre-industrial level, and ideally closer to 1.5 C

10. SpaceX sends all-civilian crew into Earth's orbit

- A billionaire e-commerce executive and three less wealthy private citizens chosen to join him blasted off from Florida aboard a SpaceX rocket ship and soared into orbit, the first all-civilian crew ever to circle the Earth from space.
- The quartet of amateur astronauts, led by the American founder and chief executive of financial services firm Shift4 Payments Inc, Jared Isaacman, lifted off just before sunset from the Kennedy Space Centre in Cape Canaveral.

CSSTimes

September 18, 2021: Current Affairs

1. Relief as UK takes Pakistan off travel red list

- The United Kingdom announced that Pakistan is being removed from its Covid-19 red list for travel.
- Pakistan is among the eight countries that would come off the red list from Wednesday (Sept 22). The other countries are Turkey, Egypt, the Maldives, Sri Lanka, Oman, Bangladesh and Kenya.
- 'EIGHT countries and territories will come off the red list from Weds 22 Sept at 4am, incl. TURKEY, PAKISTAN and MALDIVES,' UK Transport Secretary Grant Shapps tweeted

2. Pakistan, Tajikistan sign agreements on trade, investment

- Pakistan and Tajikistan on September 17, 2021 signed several agreements and memorandums of agreement for cooperation in diverse areas, including trade, investment, banking, tourism, and information and broadcasting.
- Prime Minister Imran Khan and Tajik President Emomali Rahmon witnessed the signing of agreement papers at a ceremony held at the Qasr-i-Millat here, which followed a one-to-one meeting between the two leaders and talks between their two delegations.
- Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Adviser to the Prime Minister on Commerce Abdul Razak Dawood and Pakistan's Ambassador to Dushanbe Imran Haider and their counterparts from the Tajik side signed the documents on behalf of their respective countries

3. New Zealand deal devastating blow to Pakistan's hopes of staging regular international cricket

- It was like an explosion, the impact so huge that it now jeopardises the immediate future of international cricket in Pakistan.
- New Zealand's eagerly anticipated tour of Pakistan came to an abrupt halt on Friday, roughly 25 minutes before the opening ball of the first of three One-day Internationals was to be delivered at the Pindi Cricket Stadium at 2:30pm.
- The reason: Security concerns expressed by the New Zealand government. But contrary to all expectations and against the run of play, the cancellation of tour that also included a five match Twenty International series in Lahore the first by the Black Caps to this country in nearly 18 years has left many questions unanswered, while it cast grave doubts on England men's team schedule visit to Rawalpindi for two Twenty20 Internationals in October prior to the T20 World Cup, which starts in Oman and the United Arab Emirates

4. UNHCR urges Pakistan to accept new Afghan refugees

- The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, has asked Pakistan to accept the new influx of refugees from Afghanistan, suggesting that if these refugees are sent back due to the lack of documentation, they may be at risk.
- He said these refugees might be from minorities or they might have other issues. Speaking at a news conference on September 17, 2021, Mr Grandi said the future was full of uncertainties and risks, but it was important that 'we in the international community continue to engage with Taliban in order to go forward and save Afghanistan and the region from disaster'

5. SCO asks US to help avert crisis in Afghanistan

- While asking the Afghan Taliban to yield power to a 'more inclusive government', leaders of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) reminded the West in general and the United States in particular that it was their responsibility to help avert a

humanitarian disaster in Afghanistan after ending their 20-year presence in the country last month.

- The fate of Afghanistan dominated the 20th SCO's Council of Heads of State meeting, held in the capital of Tajikistan.
- Pakistan became an SCO Observer in 2005 and a full member along with India in June 2017. Russia, China, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic and Tajikistan are other members of the organisation, which was formed 20 years ago, whereas Iran joined the regional bloc on Friday

6. IMF chief in spotlight over World Bank report on China

- The International Monetary Fund's executive board is reviewing a report prepared for the World Bank that found IMF chief Kristalina Georgieva in her previous senior role at the World Bank pressured staff to change data to favour China, the IMF said on September 17, 2021.
- Georgieva has said she disagrees 'fundamentally with the findings and interpretations' of the independent report, prepared by the law firm Wilmer Hale at the request of the World Bank's ethics committee and issued on Thursday.
- The report found that Georgieva and other World Bank officials applied 'undue pressure' on staff to boost China's ranking in the bank's 'Doing Business 2018' report on nations' business regulations.

7. Taliban replace women's ministry with vice dept

- The Taliban appeared on September 17, 2021 to have shut down the government's ministry of women's affairs and replaced it with a department notorious for enforcing strict religious doctrine during their first rule two decades ago.
- And in a further sign the Taliban's approach to women and girls had not softened, the education ministry said only classes for boys would restart on Saturday in an order for secondary schools to reopen.
- In Kabul, workers were seen raising a sign for the Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice at the old Women's Affairs building in the capital

8. Pentagon apologises after admitting drone strike in Kabul killed 10 civilians

- A drone strike in Kabul last month killed as many as 10 civilians, including seven children, the US military said on September 17, 2021, apologising for what it said was a tragic mistake.
- The Pentagon had said the Aug 29 strike targeted a suicide bomber of the militant Islamic State group who posed an imminent threat to US-led troops at the airport as they completed the last stages of their withdrawal from Afghanistan.
- Even as reports of civilian casualties emerged, the top US general had described the attack as 'righteous'

9. Chinese astronauts return to Earth after 90-day mission

- Three Chinese astronauts returned to Earth on September 17, 2021 after completing the country's longest crewed mission, the latest landmark in Beijing's drive to become a major space power.
- The capsule carrying the trio deployed its parachute and landed in the Gobi desert at 1:34pm local time.
- 'It feels very good to be back,' Tang Hongbo told state broadcaster CCTV after the 90-day mission, a record for China

10. Computing inventor Sinclair dies

- Clive Sinclair, the British inventor and entrepreneur who arguably did more than anyone else to inspire a whole generation of children into a life-long passion for computers and gaming, has died. He was 81.
- Sinclair, who rose to prominence in the early 1980s with a series of affordable home computers that offered millions their first glimpse into the world of coding as well as the adrenaline rush of playing games on screens, died on Thursday morning after a long battle with cancer.
- Though ailing, his daughter Belinda Sinclair said, he was still working on inventions up until last week

CSS Times

September 19, 2021: Current Affairs

1. Argentina plans to buy 12 fighter jets from Pakistan: reports

- Argentina is planning to buy 12 JF-17A Block-III fighter jets from Pakistan, according to reports in the international media.
- The reports surfaced after the Argentinian government proposed a \$664 million allocation in its budget for the year 2022 presented before the national parliament.
- The proposal for allocation does not mean that the deal has been closed because the sale contract is yet to be signed.
- However, it does show that JF-17 is being preferred by Argentina over the various options that have been under consideration

2. Imran begins dialogue with Taliban for inclusive govt

- Prime Minister Imran Khan has announced that he has initiated talks with the Afghan Taliban to persuade them to honour their pledge by forming an 'inclusive government' that represents all ethnicities living in Afghanistan.
- The move, according to the prime minister, will ensure peace and stability in Afghanistan, which is in the interest of not only the war torn country but the entire region.
- On his return from Dushanbe, the capital of Tajikistan where he attended the two-day Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's summit, PM Khan on Saturday said he has initiated a discussion with the Taliban following his meetings with the leaders of Afghanistan's neighbouring countries.

3. Additional tax imposed on non-filer entities

- The federal government has imposed additional sales tax ranging between 5 and 17 per cent on supply of electricity and gas to the nonfiler industrial and commercial entities in an attempt to broaden the taxbase.
- The additional taxation on the industrial and commercial entities that did not exist on tax roll income tax and sales tax was one of the budgetary proposals given by the Pakistan Business Council.
- According to a notification (SRO1222 of 2021), the additional sales tax will be levied on the total billed amount excluding the amount of federal taxes besides the tax payable on supplies of electricity and natural gas to persons having industrial or commercial connections.

4. NCOC reserves Sunday for partially vaccinated people

- The National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) dedicates another September 18, 2021 (today) to the partially-vaccinated people for the third week in a row to facilitate them in getting their second dose of the Covid-19 vaccine.
- On the other hand, the number of daily infections has fallen by 50 per cent during the last over one month.
- It is worth mentioning that though a large number of people have gotten the first dose, it has been observed that some avoid getting the second dose

5. South Africa's Khadija elected IPI executive board chair

- Khadija Patel, the head of programmes for the International Fund for Public Interest Media and former editor-in-chief of South Africa's Mail & Guardian newspaper, has been elected as the 35th chair of the International Press Institute (IPI)'s global executive board.

- 'I'm honoured to be entrusted with this position,' she said. 'And I look forward to steering the IPI through this challenging period of media history. The IPI is a cherished institution and is best placed to bring together the diversity of our industry to forge ahead during a period of significant upheaval'

6. Taliban replace ministry for women with one restricting them

- Afghanistan's Taliban rulers set up a ministry for the propagation of 'virtue and the prevention of vice' in the building that once housed the Women's Affairs Ministry, escorting out World Bank staffers on Saturday as part of the forced move.
- It was the latest troubling sign that the Taliban are restricting women's rights as they settle into government, just a month since they overran the capital of Kabul. During their previous rule of Afghanistan in the 1990s, the Taliban had denied girls and women the right to education and barred them from public life. The Taliban are facing major economic and security problems as they attempt to govern, and a growing challenge by IS militants would further stretch their resources

7. Greece inaugurates its first camp for asylum seekers

- Greece on September 18, 2021 inaugurated the first of five new 'closed' migrant camps, opposed by rights groups who say the strict access measures are too restrictive.
- Barbed wire fencing surrounds the new camp on the island of Samos, which is also installed with surveillance cameras, x-ray scanners and magnetic doors.
- The EU has committed 276 million euros (\$326 million) for the new camps on Greece's five Aegean islands Leros, Lesbos, Kos, Chios as well as Samos that receive most of the migrant arrivals by sea from neighbouring Turkey

8. Three blasts in Jalalabad leave two persons dead

- Two people were killed when three blasts struck the Afghan city of Jalalabad on September 18, 2021, at least one of which targeted a Taliban vehicle, in the country's first deadly attack since the United States withdrew.
- The Taliban stormed to power in mid-August, ousting the government and promising to restore security to the violence-wracked country.
- 'In one attack a Taliban vehicle patrolling in Jalalabad was targeted, a Taliban official who asked not to be named said.'

9. Algeria's former president Abdelaziz Bouteflika dies at 84

- Abdelaziz Bouteflika, who ruled Algeria for two decades before resigning in 2019 as huge protests engulfed the country, has died aged 84, public television announced.
- The former strongman had left office in April 2019 under pressure from the military, following weeks of demonstrations over his bid to run for a fifth term in office.
- After quitting, he had stayed out of the public eye at a residence in western Algiers.

10. Arsenal win again as Liverpool top Premier League

- Martin Odegaard scored his first goal since his permanent switch to Arsenal on September 18, 2021 to further ease the pressure on Mikel Arteta as Sadio Mane helped fire Liverpool to the top of the Premier League.
- Defending champions Manchester City dropped two points at home to Southampton after a 0-0 stalemate while struggling Wolverhampton Wanderers lost their fourth match in five against 10-man Brentford.

September 20, 2021: Current Affairs

1. First batch of 40 Green Line buses arrives in Karachi

- A batch of 40 buses, which will be part of the federal government's Green Line project in Karachi, arrived here from China on September 19, 2021.
- After a gap of 40 years when the tragic death of a girl in a road accident drastically changed its political situation, Karachi is for the first time getting a modern transport system, observed federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Asad Umar while addressing the ceremony held at the Karachi Port Trust about the delivery of the buses that arrived under the Rs27 billion project.
- Mr Umar was apparently referring to the 1985 traffic accident in the city in which Bushra Zaidi, a student, was killed. The incident triggered ethnic violence that lasted for a long time, affecting political situation in Karachi

2. Pakistan participates in Egypt's Bright Star military exercise

- A contingent of Pakistan Army, Navy and Air Force participated for the first time since 2009 in multinational exercise 'Bright Star 2021' at Mohamed Naguib Military Base, Egypt.
- The closing ceremony of the exercise was held at the base and troops from Egypt, United States, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Cyprus, Iraq, Bahrain, Sudan, Morocco, Kenya, Italy, Spain, United Kingdom, Greece, Kuwait, UAE, Tunisia, Nigeria, Tanzania and France participated in it.

3. Pakistan to call for preventing Afghanistan's economic collapse at UN

- Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi arrives in New York on September 20, 2021 (today) for the 76 session of the UN General Assembly during which Pakistan will join the United Nations in urging the world to prevent an economic collapse in Afghanistan.
- 'The situation in Afghanistan is unpredictable,' said UN Secretary General António Guterres in an interview to UN News.
- 'Because of all the different measures and sanctions that exist, there is a risk of completely strangling the economy,' he warned.

4. Kabul municipality orders women workers to stay home

- Female employees in the Kabul city government have been told to stay home, with work only allowed for those who cannot be replaced by men, the interim mayor of Afghanistan's capital said on Sunday, detailing the latest restrictions on women by the new Taliban rulers.
- The decision to prevent most female city workers from returning to their jobs is another sign that the Taliban, who overran Kabul last month, are enforcing their harsh interpretation of Islam despite initial promises by some that they would be tolerant and inclusive. In their previous rule in the 1990s, the Taliban had barred girls and women from schools, jobs and public life.

5. Indonesia retrieves IS fighter's body from jungle

- The bodies of Indonesia's most wanted militant with ties to the militant Islamic State group and a follower, who were killed in a jungle shootout with security forces, were evacuated early on September 19, 2021 to a police hospital for further investigation, police said.
- The military earlier said the militants killed late on Saturday were Ali Kalora, leader of the East Indonesia Mujahideen network that has claimed several killings of police officers and

minority Christians, and another suspected extremist, Jaka Ramadan, also known as Ikrima

6. Johannesburg mayor killed in car accident

- The mayor of Johannesburg was killed in a car accident as he returned from campaigning with South Africa's president on September 18, 2021, just over a month after being elected, his office said in a statement.
- Jolidee Matongo, 46, was returning from a voter registration drive in Soweto township ahead of local elections when the accident happened.
- 'It is hard to comprehend this tragedy, given the vitality and passion with which Mayor Matongo interacted with me and residents of Soweto so shortly before his death, President Cyril Ramaphosa said in a tweet.

7. Museums reopen in Iran after year-long Covid closure

- Iran reopened museums in Tehran and other cities on September 19, 2021 after a more than year-long closure because of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 'Museums in Tehran and other large cities that are no longer red-coded, meaning the risk of contracting the virus was very high, reopened on Sunday,' the director of Iran's museums, Mohammad Reza Kargar, said.
- 'Tourists and visitors are welcome to return while observing (sanitary) measures.' A country with a millennia-long history, Iran has an abundance of 746 museums, including 170 in the capital.

8. Ruling party poised to win Russian polls after Navalny clampdown

- Russians voted on September 19, 2021 in the final stretch of a three-day parliamentary election that the ruling party is expected to win after a sweeping crackdown that crushed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny's movement and barred opponents from running.
- The expected win by the ruling United Russia party will be used by the Kremlin as proof of support for President Vladimir Putin despite malaise over years of faltering living standards.
- The party that backs the 68-year-old leader faces a ratings slump, state pollsters say, but remains more popular than its closest rivals on the ballot, the Communist Party and nationalist LDPR party, which often back the Kremlin

9. Trailblazing tourist trip to orbit ends with Atlantic splashdown

- Four space tourists safely ended their trailblazing trip to orbit on September 19, 2021 with a splashdown in the Atlantic off the Florida coast.
- Their SpaceX capsule parachuted into the ocean just before sunset, not far from where their chartered flight began three days earlier.
- The all-amateur crew was the first to circle the world without a professional astronaut.
- The billionaire who paid undisclosed millions for the trip and his three guests wanted to show that ordinary people could blast into orbit by themselves, and SpaceX founder Elon Musk took them on as the company's first rocket-riding tourists

10. Italian cyclist Ganna retains world time-trial crown

- Filippo Ganna broke Belgian hearts at the road cycling world championships in Flanders as he retained his individual time trial title by beating local favourite Wout van Aert on September 19, 2021.
- On the opening day of the week-long event, the Italian lagged behind Van Aert at both intermediate checks but he managed his effort better on the pancake-flat 43km course to clock 47 minutes 47 seconds.

- Van Aert finished 5.37 seconds behind with another Belgian, Remco Evenepoel, picking up the bronze medal 43.34 seconds off the pace.

CSS Times

September 21, 2021: Current Affairs

1. England call off Pakistan tour, angering PCB

- English cricket officials provoked an angry response from Pakistan after withdrawing their men's and women's teams from a limited over trip to the country next month, citing increasing concerns about travelling to the region.
- The decision taken by the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) on September 20, 2021 came three days after New Zealand Cricket abandoned its men's team's tour of Pakistan following a government alert that warned of a possible attack outside Rawalpindi Stadium.

2. Pakistan restricts operation of Kuwait airlines

- Pakistan has imposed restrictions on the flight operation of Kuwaiti-designated airlines from October 1.
- The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has repeatedly requested the Kuwait's Civil Aviation Authority to allow Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) to resume its flights to and from Kuwait which were suspended due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but to no avail.
- Now the CAA has restricted the operation of one flight each of Kuwaiti designated airlines.
- Kuwait Airways and Jazeera Airways have been operating flights since last month.

3. Imran highlights Pakistan's vulnerabilities at climate moot

- Prime Minister Imran Khan highlighted Pakistan's extreme vulnerability to climate change at a UN-sponsored meeting on Monday as British Prime Minister Boris Johnson reminded rich nations that they had reaped the benefits of pollution and now's the time for them to share their responsibilities as well.
- Mr Johnson, who co-hosted the meeting with UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, urged the leading nations to deliver on their commitments toward a \$100 billion per year climate fund.
- The world's richest economies have already missed a target to raise \$100bn by 2020.

4. US-France row casts shadow over UNGA summit week

- Tensions among Western allies cast a shadow over the start of the UN summit week on September 20, 2021 with France furious over a scuppered mega contract but US President Joe Biden addressing a European grievance by easing Covid travel restrictions.
- Biden arrived in New York on Monday for his first UN General Assembly in hopes of turning the page on the turbulent presidency of Donald Trump and rallying allies in the face of a rising China.
- He is also seeking to step up action on fighting the pandemic and climate change and to forge global unity on Afghanistan, where the Taliban swiftly took control after Biden withdrew US troops last month.

5. Trudeau's future on the line as Canadians vote in pandemic election

- Voters lined up on September 20, 2021 to cast ballots in Canadian elections that are headed for a photo finish, with liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's bid for a third term threatened by rookie conservative leader Erin O'Toole's strong challenge.
- Trudeau called the snap election hoping to parlay a smooth Covid-19 vaccine rollout among the best in the world into a new mandate to steer the nation's pandemic exit, without having to rely on opposition party support to pass his agenda.

- But the contest, after a bumpy five weeks of campaigning, appears set for a repeat of the close 2019 general election that resulted in the one-time golden boy of Canadian politics clinging to power, yet losing his majority in parliament.
- 6. Covid speeding up innovation shift from Europe and North America to Asia: UN**
- The Covid-19 pandemic sped up the shift of innovation from Europe and North America towards Asia, UN world rankings showed on September 20, 2021.
 - The Global Innovation Index 2021, from the United Nations` World Intellectual Property Organisation, showed surging performances by South Korea and China.
 - `The pandemic has accelerated the long-term geographical shift of innovation activities towards Asia, even if Northern America and Europe continue to host some of the world`s leading innovators,` said WIPO.
- 7. Restrictions on work outrage women in Afghanistan**
- Fears were mounting in Afghanistan on September 20, 2021 as the Taliban tightened their grip on women`s rights, slashing access to work and denying girls the right to secondary school education.
 - After pledging a softer version of their brutal and repressive regime of the 1990s, the militants have been stripping away at freedoms one month after seizing power.
 - `I may as well be dead,` said one woman, who was sacked from her senior role at the foreign ministry.
- 8. 107-year-old Japanese twins certified as world`s oldest**
- Two Japanese sisters have been certified by Guinness World Records as the world`s oldest living identical twins, aged 107 years and 330 days, the organisation said on September 20, 2021.
 - The announcement coincided with Respect for the Aged Day, a national holiday in Japan.
 - Sisters Umeno Sumiyama and Koume Kodama were born on Shodoshima island in western Japan on Nov 5, 1913, as the third and fourth of 11 siblings
- 9. The Crown, Ted Lasso win top Emmy awards**
- Royal drama The Crown and feel good comedy Ted Lasso nabbed the top prizes at television`s Emmy awards on Sunday on a night dominated by streaming shows, British talent and rare wins by women.
 - Chess drama The Queen`s Gambit was named best limited series and tied with The Crown for the most wins overall at 11 apiece.
 - The best drama series win for The Crown gave Netflix its biggest prize so far, while Apple TV+ entered streaming`s big league with the best comedy series win for Ted Lasso. Neither Netflix nor Apple TV+ had previously won a best comedy or best drama series Emmy
- 10. India to start home season with New Zealand series**
- New Zealand will return to the sub-continent in November to play three Twenty20 Internationals and two Test matches in India, two months after abandoning their tour of Pakistan over safety concerns.
 - The series against New Zealand will kick-start India`s 2021-22 home season which includes four Tests, three One dayers and 14 Twenty20 Internationals across eight months, the Indian cricket board said in a statement on Monday.
 - The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) listed the itinerary as part of the 2020-21 cycle that will begin three days after the T20 World Cup ends on November 14 in the United Arab Emirates.

CSS Times

September 22, 2021: Current Affairs

1. Another SAPM bites the dust

- In yet another unceremonious exit, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Power and Petroleum Tabish Gauhar on September 21, 2021 announced his decision to call it a day less than a year since joining the government after developing differences with some cabinet members and key stakeholders of the energy sector.
- He is the eighth top leader of the Ministry of Energy (MoE) during the three years of the current government to have eased out amid unending challenges in the troubled sector. The long list includes federal ministers Ghulam Sarwar Khan and Omar Ayub Khan, SAPMs Nadeem Babar, Shahzad Qasim as well as Mr Gauhar and federal secretaries Irfan Ali and Asad Hayauddin.

2. NCOC lifts additional restrictions in six districts

- As the cases of Covid-19 continue to decrease across the country, the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) on September 21, 2021 decided to lift additional restrictions in six districts of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
- However, general non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) will remain enforced across the country till Sept 30. The situation will be reviewed on Sept 28.
- The NCOC had on Sept 4 enforced restrictions in 24 districts of Punjab, KP and Islamabad. The restrictions included a ban on indoor gatherings and intercity transport and closure of educational institutions and indoor gyms. Initially, the restrictions were imposed till Sept 12, but later extended to Sept 15.

3. 1.4m Afghans to get biometric registration cards

- The National Database and Registration Authority (Nadra) has updated details of over half million registered Afghan refugees as part of the countrywide campaign to issue renewed Proof of Registration (PoR) cards.
- The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said in a statement here on Tuesday that some 1.4 million registered Afghan refugees were being verified and issued with new biometric cards through 35 sites and four mobile units.
- UNHCR Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific Indrika Ratwatte visited a DRIVE Centre in Peshawar and was briefed on the process, according to the statement.

4. Internet freedom on decline in Pakistan: report

- An international freedom advocacy group and research organisation has found Pakistan among top 10 countries in the world where internet freedom has been on the decline and raised concerns over the rules proposed by the country that could further damage cyber liberty.
- In its latest report titled `Freedom on the Net 2021: The Global Drive to Control Big Tech`, the Washington based Freedom House came up with details of cyber freedom in different countries around the world and ranked Pakistan seventh among `abusers of internet freedom`.

5. Girls will be allowed to return to schools: Taliban

- The Taliban said on Tuesday that Afghan girls would be allowed to return to schools `as soon as possible`, after the Islamist group faced international anger over their effective exclusion of women and girls from education and work.
- The Taliban's spokesman meanwhile announced the remaining members of Afghanistan's all-male government, weeks after they seized Kabul in an offensive that shocked the world.

- One month after seizing power and pledging a softer version of their previous regime, critics say the Taliban have incrementally stripped away at Afghans' freedoms

6. Trudeau's party wins polls, but fails to get majority

- Canadians returned Liberal Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to power in hotly contested elections against a rookie conservative leader, but he failed to gain an absolute majority, according to preliminary results early on September 21, 2021.
- Trudeau called the snap polls last month, hoping to parlay a smooth Covid-19 vaccine rollout among the best in the world -into a new mandate to steer the nation's pandemic exit and pass his agenda without opposition support.
- But after a bumpy five weeks of campaigning, he appeared set for a repeat of the close 2019 general election, which resulted in the one-time golden boy of Canadian politics clinging to power yet weakened after losing his majority in parliament.

7. France wins EU backing in submarine row with US

- European ministers rallied around France on September 21, 2021 over the US and Australian decision to strip Paris of a submarine supply contract, as the dispute threatened to delay trade talks with Washington and Canberra.
- German Europe Minister Michael Roth said France's diplomatic crisis with the US was a 'wake-up call for all of us' on the importance of uniting an often divided EU on foreign and security policy.
- Europe broke its silence and backed a furious France, which has accused the United States, Australia and Britain of working behind its back to negotiate their AUKUS defence pact and replace Canberra's multi-billion-dollar order of French submarines with a US contract

8. Sudan govt claims foiling coup bid by Bashir loyalists

- Sudan's fragile transitional government said it foiled an attempted coup on September 21, 2021 involving military officers and civilians linked to the ousted regime of longtime autocrat Omar al-Bashir.
- Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok said the coup attempt was the 'latest manifestation of the national crisis', referring to deep divisions threatening Sudan's move towards democracy.
- In a televised speech, he said the plotters had 'made extensive preparations, which were showcased in the security breakdown in cities...blocking of national roads, closure of ports and persistent instigation against the civilian government.' Information Minister Hamza Baloul said later the coup attempt had been thwarted.

9. Suu Kyi goes on trial for incitement

- Myanmar's junta has put ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi on trial for incitement, her lawyer said on September 21, 2021, the latest in a list of charges that could see her jailed for decades.
- Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy were deposed by the military in a February coup that sparked a mass uprising and a brutal junta crackdown on dissent.
- The Nobel laureate, 76, has been under house arrest ever since, with meetings with her lawyers and court appearances her only link to the outside world

10. Tantawi, Egypt's first ruler in post-Mubarak era, dies at 85

- Egypt's Mohammed Hussein Tantawi, who headed the military junta that ruled after president Hosni Mubarak's ouster in the Arab Spring protests, has died at age 85, the government said on September 21, 2021.

- After his stint as Egypt's de facto leader, he was soon sacked by the country's first freely elected president, the Islamist Mohamed Morsi, and spent his remaining years largely out of public view.
- A veteran of Egypt's wars, Tantawi had long served as Mubarak's defence minister and as chairman of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces. He became the acting head of state after an 18-day popular uprising ended Mubarak's rule in early 2011.

CSSTimes

September 23, 2021: Current Affairs

1. Army chief opens centre for air defence management

- Army Chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa on September 22, 2021 inaugurated the Centre of Integrated Air Defence Battle Management.
- `There is a need for greater cooperation, integration and synchronisation to tackle complex and fluid future battlefield challenges,` Gen Bajwa said on the occasion.
- Commander of Army Air Defence Command Lt Gen Hamood Uz Zaman Khan briefed those attending the ceremony on functioning of the newly-built air defence management system

2. Tarin unveils steps to curb imports ahead of IMF talks

- Conceding concerns over heating up of Pakistan economy, Finance Minister Shaukat Tarin on September 22, 2021 announced steps regulatory duties and cash margins to curb imports ahead of negotiations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on the proposed increase in electricity rates to revive the \$6 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF) suspended since last fiscal year.
- Speaking at a hurriedly called news conference along with prime minister`s special assistant Jamshed Iqbal Cheema and Minister of State for Information Furrukh Habib, the finance minister said the government would immediately reduce the prices of vegetable ghee, sugar and wheat across the country by reducing taxes and providing cash subsidies to 40-42 per cent population at the bottom

3. Ministers expose Indian plot to wreck cricket series

- Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Fawad Chaudhry on September 22, 2021 said the frightening alert sent to the Black Caps had generated from a device in India, indicating the conspiracy to sabotage the New Zealand cricket team tour to Pakistan.
- The minister, who came up with facts and figures in detail to expose the Indian conspiracy against the planned ODI series in Pakistan, also disclosed that a similar threat from a concocted email ID was sent to the West Indies cricket board, as its team was scheduled to arrive here in December.

4. 10,800 Afghans approach UNHCR

- The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has said that 10,800 Afghans, potentially in need of international protection, have approached the UN refugee agency in Pakistan since the start of 2021.
- The Afghanistan situation report issued by the UNHCR regional bureau for Asia and Pacific says the majority of Afghan new arrivals approaching the UNHCR in Pakistan and Iran are largely undocumented and a large majority of them interviewed by the UN agency have left Afghanistan for security related reasons.
- The UNHCR border monitors continue to observe the attempted movement of Afghans each day towards the Pakistani border posts, some of whom are currently not able to cross due to lack of valid documentation, the report says

5. WHO team meets Taliban in Kabul, says health system faces collapse

- Not only the adolescents in the age group of 15 to 17 years have responded poorly to the recent government initiative to vaccinate them against Covid-19 but a large number of adults also seem reluctant to get their second jab as health experts find behavioural issues rather than government slackness behind their slow response.

- Less than 25 million people, including overseas Pakistanis who got shots from abroad before getting registered here, have been fully vaccinated against the coronavirus so far, whereas more than 55 million have received only first dose of the vaccine, according to the National Command and Operation Center (NCOC), which has fixed Sundays for only them to complete their vaccination

6. Attackers strike Taliban in eastern Afghanistan, five killed

- Attackers struck Taliban vehicles in an eastern Afghanistan on September 22, 2021, witnesses said, killing at least two fighters and three civilians in the latest violence since the group's takeover of the country in mid August.
- In one attack, gunmen opened fire on a Taliban vehicle at a local gas station in the provincial capital of Jalalabad, killing two fighters and a gas station attendant, witnesses said.
- A child was also killed, they added.
- Another child was killed and two Taliban were wounded in a separate attack a bombing of another vehicle

7. UN frees funds to prevent Afghan health system collapse

- The UN released emergency funds on September 22, 2021 to help prevent Afghanistan's battered healthcare system from collapsing, with the WHO chief warning of an imminent catastrophe.
- UN aid chief Martin Griffiths said he had released \$45million, warning in a statement that 'medicines, medical supplies and fuel are running out in Afghanistan'.
- 'Cold chains are compromised. Essential healthcare workers are not being paid,' he said

8. Air pollution kills 7m a year, says WHO

- The World Health Organisation strengthened its air quality guidelines on September 22, 2021, saying air pollution was now one of the biggest environmental threats to human health, causing seven million premature deaths a year.
- Urgent action is needed to reduce exposure to air pollution, said the UN body, ranking its burden of disease on a par with smoking and unhealthy eating.
- 'WHO has adjusted almost all the air quality guideline levels downwards, warning that exceeding the new... levels is associated with significant risks to health,' it said

9. Afghanistan want to host Pakistan for cricket series

- Newly-appointed Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) chairman Azizullah Fazli said on September 22, 2021 he would visit neighbouring Pakistan later this week to invite the side for a one-day series.
- The war-torn nation has steadily risen in international cricket over the past few years, with stars such as the world's top spinner Rashid Khan, but there have been calls for a boycott of the men's team after the Taliban's takeover last month

10. National T20 Cup begins from today

- Former winners Northern will do battle with Balochistan in the opening fixture of the National T20 Cup which starts from September 23, 2021 at the Pindi Cricket Stadium in Rawalpindi.
- Day one of the 18-match first leg in Rawalpindi will also see the Babar Azam-led Central Punjab taking on defending champions Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, who will be skippered by Mohammad Rizwan. Other four teams have Shadab Khan (Northern), Sarfaraz Ahmed (Sindh), Sohaib Maqsood (Southern Punjab) and Imam-ul-Haq (Balochistan) as their captains.

September 24, 2021: Current Affairs

1. Pakistan, China agree not to alter tariff on power deals

- Pakistan and China on Thursday agreed to keep unchanged the tariff and tax policies relating to power sector contracts and arrest and prosecute the attackers of July 14 Dasu bus tragedy at the earliest.
- The decision was taken at a meeting of the Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). However, it could not finalise arrangements for over \$6 billion Mainline Railway Track (ML-1) and a framework agreement on industrial cooperation pending for a long time.
- The Chinese has been agitating build-up of power sector dues going beyond \$1.4bn (about Rs230bn), creation of a revolving fund for automatic payments and an increase in withholding tax rates after the agreements were signed

2. Pakistan's rank slightly improves among Covid-hit nations

- After remaining among top 30 countries having the highest number of Covid-19 cases, Pakistan's rank has dropped to 31st slot, apparently because of better strategy and policies being followed to deal with the pandemic.
- Meanwhile, First Lady Samina Alvi tested positive for Covid-19 as 2,357 new cases and 58 deaths were reported on September 23, 2021.
- Ms Alvi herself broke the news of catching Covid-19 on social media

3. PM announces dividing South Waziristan into two districts

- Prime Minister Imran Khan has announced bifurcation of South Waziristan into two districts to improve administrative affairs in the volatile merged tribal districts.
- Prime Minister said all possible measures were being taken to improve the living standards of the people of merged districts who had suffered due to prolonged militancy. He expressed the confidence that his government would win the war against mafias and ensure supremacy of the law and Constitution.
- 'If we want to become a great nation, which was the concept [behind Pakistan's creation], we would have to ensure rule of law,' he said, adding that the masses would also have to change their attitude to become a great nation.

4. Anti-terrorist exercise with Chinese troops begins

- The opening ceremony of the Joint Anti-Terrorist Exercise (JATE) 2021 was held at the National Counter Terrorism Centre in Pabbi on September 23, 2021.
- According to a press release issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations, troops from the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) of China and Pakistan Army are participating in the exercise, which is part of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's (SCO) regional anti-terrorism structure.
- Maj Gen Javed Dost Chandio was chief guest at the opening ceremony, The JATE is being conducted to practise and master various drills and procedures involved in counterterrorism operations, including cordon and search, compound clearance, close quarter battle and medical evacuation

5. ECC okays Rs156bn Kamyab Pakistan Programme

- Ahead of upcoming talks with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet on September 23, 2021 approved a reduced Kamyab Pakistan Programme (KPP).
- Presided over by Finance Minister Shaukat Tarin, the ECC meeting also approved payment of Rs131 billion to 11 independent power producers (IPPs).

- It also okayed Rs5bn as internal security duty allowance for personnel of Pakistan Army deputed on western borders and payment of salaries to remaining employees of the Pakistan Steel Mills (PSM) for a few months
- 6. Chinese jets fly near Taiwan to deter it from trade deal**
- China voiced opposition on September 23, 2021 to Taiwan joining a major trans Pacific trade deal as it flew 24 planes, including two nuclear-capable bombers, into the self-ruled island's air defence zone, the biggest incursion in weeks, Taiwanese officials said.
 - Last week Beijing submitted its own application to become a member of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).
 - Taiwan has lobbied for years to join and announced on Thursday that it had officially applied to be part of the CPTPP, which was signed by 11 Asia Pacific countries in 2018 and is the region's biggest free-trade pact, accounting for around 13.5 percent of the global economy
- 7. US envoy to Haiti resigns, slams migrant deportations**
- The US special envoy to Haiti resigned on September 23, 2021 two months after his appointment, denouncing the Biden administration's deportation of Haitian migrants from the US-Mexico border back to their poverty-stricken homeland.
 - 'I will not be associated with the United States inhumane, counterproductive decision to deport thousands of Haitian refugees and illegal immigrants to Haiti,' State Department envoy Daniel Foote said in a scathing letter of resignation.
- 8. World refugee body blasts UK's planned immigration law**
- Britain's proposed law to implement what it calls the biggest overhaul of asylum rules in decades 'undermines established international refugee protection rules', the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) said.
 - Interior minister Priti Patel a prominent supporter of Brexit, where 'taking back control' of immigration was a key campaign issue said the current system was 'overwhelmed'.
 - Instead, she said the proposed new law would be based 'on genuine need of refuge, not on the ability to pay people smugglers'
- 9. Erdogan says relations with Biden off to poor start**
- Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said he felt that relations with his US counterpart Joe Biden had 'not gotten off to a good start' since the latter's arrival in the White House.
 - 'My wish is to have friendly and not hostile relations' with the United States, the state news agency Anadolu quoted Erdogan as saying on the sidelines of the UN general assembly in New York.
 - 'But the way things are going between two Nato allies is currently not too auspicious,' he said
- 10. Asif underlines unfulfilled promise as Northern trounce Balochistan**
- Despite being something of an enigma at the international level, Asif Ali sent out a strong reminder he can be a real force with the willow and the finisher Pakistan had been desperately searching for.
 - The 29-year-old batter, one of the stunning selections on the Twenty20 World Cup-bound Pakistan squad, produced a typical act of belligerence to enable former National T20 Cup champions Northern to launch the third edition with a clinical six-wicket rout of Balochistan in Rawalpindi.

September 25, 2021: Current Affairs

1. PM solicits world support for new Afghan rulers

- Prime Minister Imran Khan on September 24, 2021 made a strong pitch for the world to rally behind Afghanistan's nascent Taliban government for preserving the progress made by the war-ravaged country over the past two decades and preventing it from turning into a safe haven for terrorists.
- Speaking at the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly via video link, Mr Khan said: `There is only one way to go.
- We must strengthen and stabilise the current government, for the sake of the people of Afghanistan

2. Paris Club extends Pakistan's debt payment deadline

- The Paris Club of creditor countries said on September 24, 2021 it was giving Pakistan another extension to service its debt so that it can dedicate its resources to combating the Covid-19 pandemic.
- The country has until December to make the payment, the club said in a statement, without releasing a figure.
- Islamabad `is committed to devote the resources freed by this initiative to increase spending in order to mitigate the health, economic and social impact of the Covid-19 crisis,` the statement said.

3. First consignment of NLC leaves for Turkey, Azerbaijan

- The first consignment of National Logistic Cell (NLC) left Pakistan for Turkey and Azerbaijan through Iran, Adviser on Commerce Razak Dawood announced on September 24, 2021.
- The NLC has started its operations under the Transports Internationals Routiers (TIR) Convention. The NLC is the second operator in Pakistan, and the first in public sector, to begin its operations under TIR.
- It will also be the first time that Pakistan's trucks would move through Iran under TIR. Previously, goods had to be offloaded from Pakistan's trucks and reloaded onto Iran's trucks at the Taftan-Zahidan border

4. US wants Pakistan to coordinate on Afghanistan

- US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has urged Pakistan to coordinate diplomatic engagement while dealing with Afghanistan, says the official US readout of his meeting with Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi.
- The two top diplomats met in New York on the sidelines of the 76th session of the UN General Assembly and later in a tweet, Secretary Blinken said that the talks focused on `bilateral relations and Afghanistan's future`.
- The State Department, however, said that the secretary highlighted the importance of coordinating `our diplomatic engagement` in his meeting with Mr Qureshi

5. Pakistan must abide by HR regimes to qualify for GSP+ after `23: EU official

- The European Commission has adopted a legislative proposal for 10 years (2024-34) to offer new European Union Generalised Scheme of Preferences (GSP) to remove or reduce duties on import of products to promote sustainable development in low income countries.
- Pakistan is the largest beneficiary of the current GSP plus scheme since 2014 -zero per cent duty on several hundred products under the current regulation, which will expire on Dec 31, 2023 and to which the new proposal will become the successor.
- The European Parliament and the Council will now discuss the new proposal

6. Executions, amputations to resume: Taliban prisons chief

- The Taliban's official in charge of prisons and former justice minister of Afghanistan, Mullah Nooruddin Turabi, has said punishments such as executions and amputations will resume in the country though they may not be meted out in public as they were under their previous rule.
- Amputations were 'necessary for security', Mullah Nooruddin told The Associated Press, speaking in Kabul.
- While dismissing outrage over the Taliban's executions in the past, which sometimes took place in front of crowds at a stadium, he said: 'Everyone criticised us for the punishments in the stadium, but we have never said anything about their laws and their punishments. No one will tell us what our laws should be. We will follow Islam and we will make our laws on the [basis of] Quran

7. China's top regulators ban crypto trading and mining

- China's most powerful regulators on September 24, 2021 intensified the country's crackdown on cryptocurrency with a blanket ban on all crypto transactions and mining, hitting bitcoin and other major coins and pressuring crypto and blockchain-related stocks.
- Ten agencies, including the central bank as well as banking, securities and foreign exchange regulators, vowed to work together to root out 'illegal' cryptocurrency activity, the first time the Beijing-based agencies have joined forces to explicitly ban all crypto currency related activity

8. Over 140 killed as Yemeni troops fight Houthis in Marib

- More than 140 rebels and pro-government troops have been killed this week as fighting has intensified for Yemen's strategic northern city of Marib, military and medical sources said on September 24, 2021.
- At least 51 loyalists were killed in the past four days, most of them in clashes in the province of Shabwa and the neighbouring governorate of Marib, multiple military sources said.
- They added that at least 93 Iran-backed Houthi rebels also died in the fighting and from airstrikes by the Saudi-led military coalition backing the government

9. Former CGS Ishfaq Nadeem passes away

- Retired Lt Gen Ishfaq Nadeem Ahmed, former chief of the general staff (CGS) and ex-director general military operations (DGMO), was laid to rest at H-8 Graveyard on September 24, 2021. He was 62.
- According to a family member, Gen Ahmed suffered cardiac arrest at his house in Bahria Enclave on Friday morning and was taken to hospital where he was pronounced dead.
- Chief of Army Staff Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa and a large number of serving and retired army officers were among those who attended the funeral prayers at the H-8 Graveyard

10. Popular TV actor of yore Talat Iqbal passes away in US

- Considered one of the most stylish television actors of his time, Talat Iqbal died in the United States on September 24, 2021.
- The star of several memorable PTV plays, Iqbal was suffering from multiple ailments and the recent death of his daughter Sarah had left him shaken.
- He was on a ventilator in a hospital.
- Iqbal and his wife Sumbal, also a noted actress, were a hugely popular couple on and off screen. Born in Karachi, the actor started his career with Radio Pakistan in 1968. He then moved to the mini-screen and acted in unforgettable PTV dramas such as Shikast-i-Aarzu,

Do Dooni Paanch, Aakhri Chataan, Aabgeenay, Kaif-iBaharan, Karvaan and Ab Dekh Khuda
Kya Karta Hai

CSS Times

September 26, 2021: Current Affairs

1. CPEC panel okays ambitious Karachi coastline plan

- Calling it a `game-changer`, the federal government on September 25, 2021 unveiled an ambitious plan to rebuild Karachi's coastline under the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) with \$3.5 billion `direct Chinese investment` that aims to overhaul city's seaboard with new berths for the port, a new fishery port and a `majestic harbour bridge` connecting it with Manora islands and Sands pit beach.
- The Karachi Coastal Comprehensive Development Zone (KCCDZ) spread over 640 hectares or 1,581 acres on the western backwaters marsh land of the Karachi Port Trust (KPT) leading to revamp one of the oldest city slums Machhar Colony relocating its more than half a million population is an initiative of the Ministry of Maritime Affairs.
- The KCCDZ is the latest addition to CPEC projects aimed at providing Karachi with an ultra modern urban infrastructure zone, placing it among the top port cities of the world

2. Four soldiers martyred in bomb attack

- Four security personnel were martyred and two others injured in a bomb attack on a vehicle of the Frontier Corps in the Khosat area of Harnai district on September 25, 2021.
- The banned Baloch Liberation Army claimed responsibility for the attack.
- Official sources said that the FC vehicle was targeted in the Safar Basharea.
- The FC soldiers were performing their patrolling duty and when their vehicle reached the Safar Bash area the improvised explosive device went off resulting in martyrdom of four soldiers and injuries to two officers.

3. World Bank, ADB prepare climate risk profile of Pakistan

- The World Bank and the Asian Development Bank have jointly prepared a climate risk profile of Pakistan, which projects an increase in the number of people affected by flooding, with a likely increase of around 5 million people exposed to extreme river floods by 2035-44.
- According to the profile, there could be a potential increase of around 1m people annually exposed to coastal flooding by 2070-2100.
- Pakistan faces rates of warming considerably above the global average with a potential rise of 1.3 to 3.9 centigrade by the 2900s over the 1986/2005 baseline

4. Kashmir not India's internal matter, reaffirms Islamabad

- Pakistan on September 24, 2021 firmly rejected India's claim at the United Nations that Jammu and Kashmir was its integral part, saying the Himalayan state was an internationally recognised disputed territory.
- `Jammu and Kashmir neither is a so called `integral` part of India, nor is it India's internal matter,` Pakistani delegate Saima Saleem said in response to an Indian delegate's remarks that by raising the Kashmir dispute in his speech to the UN General Assembly on Friday, Prime Minister Imran Khan had brought in `matters internal to my country`

5. No sales tax on fresh fruit imports from Kabul

- The Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) on September 25, 2021 announced that there will be no sales tax on fresh fruit imports from Afghanistan.
- This concession by the FBR is being appreciated by traders from both sides as a key decision which will certainly promote trade between the two neighbouring countries.
- Besides, FBR Chairman Ashfaq Ahmad during his visit to Torkham border ensured clearance of 1,400 trucks loaded with fruits from Afghanistan which had got stuck. The

FBR chief accompanied by Member Customs Tariq Huda and Member Customs Policy Saeed Jadoon also reviewed the pace and quality of services being provided by Pakistan Customs to facilitate border trade. The customs staff assured him to accelerate the process of 100 more trucks awaiting clearance

6. Taliban hang four bodies in Herat to deter abductions

- Taliban authorities in the western Afghan city of Herat killed four alleged kidnapers and hung their bodies up in public to deter others, a local government official said on September 25, 2021.
- Sher Ahmad Ammar, deputy governor of Herat, said the men had kidnapped a local businessman and his son and intended to take them out of the city, when they were seen by patrols that had set up checkpoints around the city.
- An exchange of gunfire ensued in which all four were killed, while one Taliban soldier was wounded

7. Huawei executive lands in China after deal with US

- Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou returned to China on September 25, 2021 shortly after two Canadians released from prison in China also arrived in Calgary, ending a bitter diplomatic row that has poisoned ties for three years.
- Meng and the two Canadians former diplomat Michael Kovrig and businessman Michael Spavor were detained in a bitter spat critics have called `hostage diplomacy`.
- Meng, the 49-year-old daughter of Ren Zhengfei, the billionaire founder of Chinese telecoms giant Huawei, was granted release in a Vancouver court hearing after three years of house arrest in Canada while fighting extradition to the United States

8. World `better place` 25 years after nuclear test-ban treaty

- Twenty-five years after its adoption, the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty has made the world a safer place, experts say, despite never being ratified and concerns over North Korea.
- The Americans conducted the world's first nuclear test in the desert of New Mexico on July 16, 1945.
- Between then and September 24, 1996, when the treaty opened for signature, more than 2,000 nuclear tests were carried out, says Robert Floyd, head of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test-Ban Treaty Organisation (CTBTO), a UN body. Since September 24, 1996 there have been only about a dozen tests, carried out by India, North Korea and Pakistan

9. UN agency warns of `imminent` famine in Afghanistan

- Afghanistan is at risk of `imminent hunger` with winter approaching and services disrupted by the return to power of the Taliban, a UN official warned in an interview.
- Natalia Kanem, director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), said via video that the situation in the country was dire.
- `It would not be an exaggeration to say` that at least a third of Afghanistan's population of around 33 million is affected by `imminent hunger`, Kanem warned.

10. Pak-India women's rights icon Kamla Bhasin passes away

- She could unassumingly cheer a passionate meeting of India-Pakistan peace activists from the back benches. It would be difficult to tell her own nationality though. She could signal the end of a long night for the region's women from her wheelchair, with rousing poetry when she was ill. But she would clarify quickly.
- The journey was not anti-men, but against patriarchy.
- Kamla Bhasin, who passed away on Saturday at 75 after a short struggle with cancer, would perhaps be best remembered for grafting a slogan that Pakistani women first used

against Gen Ziaul Haq's dictatorship on the body politic of India the universal and unalloyed demand for Azadi, the fight for freedom

CSS Times

September 27, 2021: Current Affairs

1. Russia in sync with China, US, Pakistan on Taliban

- Russia, China, Pakistan and the United States are working together to ensure that Afghanistan's new Taliban rulers keep their promises, especially to form a genuinely representative government and prevent extremism from spreading, Russia's foreign minister said on September 25, 2021.
- Sergey Lavrov said the four countries are in ongoing contact. He said representatives from Russia, China and Pakistan recently travelled to Qatar and then to Afghanistan's capital, Kabul, to engage with both the Taliban and representatives of secular authorities former president Hamid Karzai and Abdullah Abdullah, who headed the ousted government's negotiating council with the Taliban. At a wide-ranging news conference and in his speech afterward at the UN General Assembly, Lavrov said the interim government announced by the Taliban does not reflect the whole gamut of Afghan society ethno-religious and political forces so we are engaging in contacts. They are ongoing.

2. Punjab to launch 'chip designing tools' project in varsities

- The Punjab government, under public-private partnership, is launching a 'Chip Designing Tools' project in the universities of the province, as work has been started in this regard after signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the higher education department and partners.
- Higher Education Minister Raja Yasir Humayun explained the project and discussed related matters with Chief Minister Usman Bazardin a meeting at the latter's office here on September 26, 2021.
- Mr Humayun said the project would not only bring a revolution in the local IT sector, but generate employment opportunities also.

3. FC soldier martyred in gunfight with terrorists, says ISPR

- A Frontier Corps sepoy was martyred and two others were injured in an exchange of fire with terrorists in the Mach area of Balochistan on Sunday, the military said.
- According to an Inter Services Public Relations statement, terrorists targeted a security forces' post in Mach. The FC troops at the post responded promptly.
- During the exchange of fire, Sepoy Irfan embraced shahadat while two other soldiers were injured.
- The ISPR says that Pakistan Army remains committed to defeating such cowardly acts perpetrated by externally-sponsored terrorist elements.

4. Balochistan govt to fill vacant posts via panel instead of NTS

- The Balochistan government has decided to fill thousands of vacancies in several departments through a competent departmental committee on merit instead of the National Testing Service (NTS).
- The decision was taken at a meeting of the provincial government on September 26, 2021. The meeting was convened to discuss recruitment in different government departments on vacant posts. The meeting decided to implement the recent decision of the provincial cabinet on the recruitment policy issue.
- The meeting was presided over by Chief Secretary Mathar Niaz Rana

5. Xi warns of 'grim' situation with Taiwan

- The situation in the Taiwan Strait is 'complex and grim', Chinese President Xi Jinping wrote in a congratulatory letter on September 26, 2021 to the newly elected leader of Taiwan's main opposition party, who has pledged to renew talks with Beijing.

- Taiwan's Kuomintang (KMT) elected as their leader on Saturday former New Taipei City mayor Eric Chu, who said he would rekindle stalled high-level contacts with China's ruling Communist Party.
- China claims Taiwan as its own territory and has stepped up military and political pressure to force the democratically ruled island to accept Chinese sovereignty, even though most Taiwanese have shown no interest in being governed by Beijing

6. Swiss voters say big 'yes' to same-sex marriage

- Nearly two-thirds of Swiss voters backed the government's plan to introduce same-sex marriage in a referendum held on September 26, 2021, with campaigners calling it a historic day for gay rights in Switzerland.
- With results in from 20 of the wealthy Alpine nation's 23 cantons, 64 percent of voters backed the move, on a 52 percent turnout.
- Switzerland was one of the last countries in western Europe where same-sex marriage remained illegal.

7. US allows humanitarian assistance, Quad reaches understanding on Taliban

- The US Treasury Department has issued licenses to facilitate humanitarian aid and financial assistance to the people of Afghanistan, while upholding sanctions on the Taliban.
- 'Treasury is committed to facilitating the flow of humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan and other activities that support their basic human needs,' Andrea Gacki, director of the US Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control said in a statement

8. Merkel's party makes worst showing in polls since WWII

- Germany's Social Democrats came first by a narrow margin in Sunday's national election, projected results showed, putting them in pole position to lead a government for the first time since 2005 and to end 16 years of conservative led rule under Angela Merkel.
- The centre-left Social Democrats (SPD) were on track for 25.5 per cent of the vote, ahead of 24.5 per cent for Merkel's CDU/CSU conservative bloc, projections for broadcaster ARD showed, but both groups believed they could lead the next government

9. 'Ancestor' of Mediterranean mosaics discovered in Turkey

- The discovery of a 3,500-year-old paving stone, described as the 'ancestor' of Mediterranean mosaics, offers illuminating details into the daily lives of the mysterious Bronze Age Hittites.
- The assembly of over 3,000 stones in natural shades of beige, red and black, and arranged in triangles and curves was unearthed in the remains of a 15th century BC Hittite temple.
- 'It is the ancestor of the classical period of mosaics that are obviously more sophisticated. This is a sort of first attempt to do it,' says Anacleto D'Agostino, excavation director of Usakli Hoyuk, near Yozgat, in central Turkey

10. Southern Punjab suffer third straight loss as big guns fail

- Three matches and as many losses, that how's the National T20 Cup logbook mentions against Southern Punjab.
- Number three again figures prominently in the sorry tale of misfortunes for the last season's runners-up as the Twenty20 World Cup-bound trio of Sohaib Maqsood, Khushdil Shah and Azam Khan all failed to fire for the third time on the trot.
- Balochistan, the other side who had not won until Sunday's seven wicket stroll at the Pindi Cricket Stadium in Rawalpindi, humiliated Southern Punjab to the extent of

dismissing them for a paltry 101 the lowest total thus far in the ongoing edition in the 18th over

CSSTimes

September 28, 2021: Current Affairs

1. SC rejects petitions for presidential form of govt

- The Supreme Court on September 27, 2021 rejected a set of appeals seeking immediate holding of a nationwide referendum by Prime Minister Imran Khan to pave the way for presidential system against the prevalent parliamentary form of government.
- A three-judge SC bench headed by Justice Umar Ata Bandial upheld the registrar office's decision to return the four petitions moved by Advocate Sahibzada Ahmed Raza Qasuri, Dr Sadiq Ali, Hum Awam Pakistan chairman Tahir Aziz Khan and Hafeez-ur-Rehman.

2. IMF assured of Pakistan's commitment to programme

- Finance Minister Shaukat Tarin on September 27, 2021 assured the International Monetary Fund (IMF) of Pakistan's commitment to its ongoing Extended Fund Facility (EFF) programme and hoped to successfully complete the upcoming review as well as Article IV consultations.
- During a meeting with the outgoing and nominated resident representatives of the IMF, the finance minister said the government would formally launch the 'track and trace' system for tobacco products on Oct 1 this year. 'This is also one of the requirements under the EFF programme,' an official statement quoted Mr Tarin as saying.
- The minister told the IMF team that reforms were being carried out in the power sector to address the issue of circular debt

3. Miraj Gul appointed NTC's managing director

- Miraj Gul has been appointed the managing director of National Telecommunication Corporation (NTC), MP-1 scale, under the Ministry of Information Technology (IT) and Telecommunication.
- According to the notification issued by the ministry, Mr Gul was appointed on contract basis for a period of three years. He had been serving as the acting NTC MD since the last couple of months.
- He had also served as chief technology officer (CTO) in the organisation.

4. 24pc graduates are jobless, Senate panel told

- The Senate Standing Committee on Planning, Development and Special Initiatives was informed on September 27, 2021 that 16 per cent of uneducated population of Pakistan was unemployed while among the educated population 24pc of graduates were jobless out of whom 40 were female.
- A meeting of the committee, presided over by its chairman Senator Saleem Mandviwalla, however, noted that these figures shared by the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE) were in contrast to the figures given by the government

5. EU, US urge Iran to give access to IAEA

- The EU and the US on September 27, 2021 urged Iran to allow inspectors access to a nuclear site, while Tehran argued the facility was exempt from a recent agreement with the UN watchdog.
- The Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) said on Sunday it had been denied 'indispensable' access to the TESA Karaj centrifuge component manufacturing workshop near Tehran contrary to a Sept 12 agreement with Iran.
- Iran's ambassador to the IAEA Kazem Gharibabadi on Monday rejected the charge.

6. Macron hit with egg during visit to trade fair

- A man pelted French President Emmanuel Macron with an egg while he was visiting a restaurant and hotel trade fair in the south-eastern city of Lyon on September 27, 2021.

- The egg hit his shoulder, but bounced off without breaking.
- The assailant was quickly subdued and removed from the room, with Macron saying he would try to speak with him later.
- `If he has something to tell me, let him come, Macron said at the International Catering, Hotel and Food Trade Fair (SIRHA). `Pil go see him afterwards

7. Two transgender women win seats in German parliament

- Two German politicians from the Greens have made history by becoming the first transgender women to win parliamentary seats in national election.
- Tessa Ganserer and Nyke Slawik stood for the Greens party, which came third in the election, increasing its share of the vote to 14.8pc from 8.9pc in 2017 and is set to play a pivotal role in the building of a new three way coalition government.
- `It is a historic victory for the Greens, but also for the trans-emancipatory movement and for the entire queer community, Ganserer, 44, said, adding that the results were a symbol of an open and tolerant society

8. Afghan envoy cancels address on final day of UN meeting

- Afghanistan`s envoy to the UN pulled out of delivering an address to the General Assembly on September 27, 2021, as the diplomatic marathon that saw 100 leaders defy coronavirus fears to meet in person in New York drew to a close.
- Ghulam Isaczai, who represented president Ashraf Ghani`s regime that was ousted last month, had been due to defy the Taliban with a speech but he removed his name from the list of speakers on Monday.
- The annual high-level meet was also set to end without a speech on behalf of Myanmar, whose envoy has defied the military junta running the country to stay in his post

9. Iran, S. Arabia hold first talks since Raisi`s appointment

- Representatives from Iran and Saudi Arabia have held a new round of talks in Baghdad, two Iraqi officials said on September 27, 2021, in the first such meeting between the regional foes since President Raisi was sworn in in Tehran.
- The meeting held last week discussed pending issues between the two countries according to a previously agreed on roadmap, including diplomatic representation between the two countries, according to one Iraqi official. The official said the meeting was not on a ministerial level, but described the talks as positive

10. Merkel`s farewell turns sour as Social Democrats win polls in Germany

- German Social Democrat Olaf Scholz vowed on September 27, 2021 to strengthen the European Union and keep up the transatlantic partnership in a three-way coalition government he hopes to form by Christmas to take over from Angela Merkel`s conservatives.
- Scholz`s Social Democrats (SPD) came first in Sunday`s national election, just ahead of the conservatives, and aim to lead a government for the first time since 2005 in a coalition with the Greens and the liberal Free Democrats (FDP).
- Scholz, 63, projected a sense of calm assurance when asked whether the close election result and the prospect of prolonged coalition negotiations sent a message of instability in Germany to its European partners.

September 29, 2021: Current Affairs

1. Taliban to `temporarily` adopt monarchy constitution

- The Taliban said on September 28, 2021 they will temporarily adopt Afghanistan's 1964 constitution that granted women the right to vote but eliminate any elements they disagree with.
- The Taliban's acting justice minister issued a statement saying the Islamists planned to introduce a constitution used during Afghanistan's short-lived golden age of democracy, but only briefly and with amendments

2. Pakistani flag taken into space handed over to envoy

- Pakistani flag that was carried to Chinese space station aboard the Shenzhou-12 spacecraft was handed over to the Embassy of Pakistan at a special `hatch-opening ceremony` held here at the China Academy of Space Technology (CAST).
- The national flags of Pakistan and China were sent by the China Manned Space Agency (CMSA) to outer space to commemorate the 70th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries.
- The event was attended by Moin-ul-Haque, Pakistan's ambassador to China, Zhao Xiaojin, secretary of the China Academy of Space Technology, Hao Chun, director general of the China Manned Space Agency, Yang Liwei, deputy chief designer of the China Manned Space Programme, and other leading scientists and experts.

3. Senate body approves bill to ban corporal punishment in capital

- The Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights on September 28, 2021 unanimously approved the Islamabad Capital Territory Prohibition of Corporal Bill, 2021.
- The Senate standing committee met here with acting chairperson Senator Mustaf a Nawaz Khokhar in the chair.
- The Private Member's Bill: `The Islamabad Capital Territory Prohibition of Corporal Punishment Bill, 2021` which had been introduced by the committee chairman Senator Walid Iqbal and Senator Saadia Abbasi in Senate on Sept 27 was deliberated upon in detail

4. Pakistan, UK agree to form working group to strengthen ties

- Pakistan and the United Kingdom on Tuesday agreed to form a joint working group to formulate a strategy for strengthening bilateral ties in multiple spheres, including trade and investment.
- The bilateral ties were discussed during a meeting between Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi and UK Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Women and Equality Liz Truss where in the former put forward a proposal for formation of a joint working group.
- Following the meeting, the foreign minister told the media that the secretary of state had accepted his proposal for a joint working group so that the two countries could mutually assist each other in strengthening bilateral ties.

5. Islamabad in a fix over helping Kabul without recognition

- Pakistan appears to be facing difficulties in providing technical, financial and expert support to the transition government in Afghanistan in the absence of the regime's international recognition despite emerging challenges like food crisis in the war-torn country.
- At a meeting presided over by Minister for Economic Affairs Omar Ayub Khan on September 28, 2021, key stakeholders considered various options to support the new Afghan administration through capacity building and technical expertise under crash

programmes but the major challenge was how to do that without recognition by the world of the Afghan government

6. Pakistani American to head prestigious US physicians` college

- A Pakistani American physician, Dr Omar Atiq, has been nominated as the next president of the American College of Physicians (ACP). He is the only candidate.
- The election, though single-slate, will take place in January 2022.
- Dr Atiq is the first physician of Pakistani descent and only the second international medical graduate to be selected for this position.
- `A proud and historic moment for the Pakistani American community,` Pakistan`s US envoy Asad Majeed Khan said in a tweet.

7. North Korea fires missile into sea as diplomat decries US policy

- North Korea fired a short range missile into the sea on September 28, 2021 at nearly the same moment its UN diplomat was decriing the US`s hostile policy against it, in an apparent return to its pattern of mixing weapons displays with peace overtures to wrest outside concessions.
- The launch, its third round of weapons firings this month, came only three days after North Korea repeated its offer for conditional talks with South Korea. Some experts say the latest missile launch was likely meant to test how South Korea would respond as North Korea needs Seoul to persuade Washington to ease economic sanctions and make other concessions

8. Afghan army collapse took Pentagon by surprise, says US secretary

- US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin told Congress on Tuesday that the Afghan army`s sudden collapse caught the Pentagon off guard as he acknowledged miscalculations in America`s longest war including corruption and damaged morale in Afghan ranks.
- `The fact that the Afghan army we and our partners trained simply melted away in many cases without firing a shot took us all by surprise, Austin told the Senate Armed Services Committee.
- `It would be dishonest to claim otherwise.` Austin was speaking at the start of two days of what are expected to be some of the most contentious hearings in memory over the chaotic end to the war in Afghanistan, which cost the lives of US troops and civilians and left the Taliban back in power

9. Tania to head PCB`s Women Wing

- Former national badminton champion Tania Malik has replaced Urooj Mumtaz as the head of Pakistan Cricket Board`s Women Wing, the board announced on September 28, 2021.
- The office had fallen vacant after Urooj, who is also the chief selector of the country`s women`s teams, had stepped down from that post in May.
- Urooj had been given dual roles by the previous PCB management led by former chairman Ehsan Mani but failed to bring a marked change to the women`s game in Pakistan.

10. NBP edge Wapda to complete hat-trick of CNS hockey titles

- A hat-trick of titles for National Bank of Pakistan. Another runners-up finish for Wapda.
- NBP continued their domination of the CNS All-Pakistan Hockey Tournament, emerging winners yet again at its third edition, after a come-from-behind 2-1 win over Wapda in an exciting final at the Abdul Sattar Edhi Stadium on September 28, 2021.

September 30, 2021: Current Affairs

1. Controversial poll reforms bills sent to joint session of parliament

- National Assembly Speaker Asad Qaiser on September 29, 2021 referred seven bills, including two controversial electoral reforms bills and the one to provide right of appeal to Indian spy Kulbhushan Jadhav, to the joint sitting of parliament after approval of the motions by the house amid the opposition's boycott.
- The seven bills had been passed by the National Assembly but could not sail through the opposition-dominated Senate within the stipulated 90-day period. The government, which enjoys a majority if the two houses combine together, now intends to get the bills passed from the joint sitting of parliament under Article 70 of the Constitution

2. Most loans under CPEC at commercial rates: report

- A substantial chunk of Chinese development financing under the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) consists of loans that are at or near commercial rates as opposed to grants, according to a report released on September 29, 2021 by Aid Data, a US-based international development research lab.
- Shedding light on Beijing's global development programme, the report said Chinese loans under CPEC constitute 95.2 per cent and 73pc of total commitments in energy and transport sectors, respectively.
- China committed \$34.4 billion in development finance to Pakistan between 2000 and 2017. Islamabad is the seventh largest recipient of Chinese overseas development financing with 71 projects worth \$27.3bn currently under way

3. NCOC decides to relax curbs in eight cities

- The National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) on September 29, 2021 decided to relax restrictions in eight cities after they achieved the target of vaccinating 40pc of their population. However, not a single city of Sindh is among them.
- Speaking at a press conference, Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Asad Umar said the NCOC had observed the situation in different cities, and since the restrictions were to remain in effect till Sept 30, it was decided not to extend them further

4. FO rejects references to Pakistan in draft US legislation

- The Foreign Office on September 29, 2021 reminded the US of the importance of continued security cooperation with Pakistan and said a legislation introduced in the US Senate for sanctioning Afghan Taliban and their foreign backers was detrimental to bilateral relations. Sustained security cooperation between Pakistan and the United States would remain critical in dealing with any future terrorist threat in the region. Such proposed legislative measures are, therefore, uncalled for and counterproductive, the FO said in a statement on the bill introduced by 22 Republican senators.
- The proposed legislation seeks a report from the Secretary of State about Pakistan's alleged involvement with Taliban from 2001 to 2020 leading to its takeover of Afghanistan and suspected support for Taliban's offensive in Panjshir Valley against the resistance fighters. The bill calls for imposing sanctions on Taliban and the foreign governments that helped the militant group topple the Ghani administration.

5. Pakistan, Russia to strengthen military ties

- Pakistan and Russia on September 29, 2021 agreed to strengthen their bilateral military cooperation.
- The agreement was reached during the third round of Russia-Pakistan Joint Military Consultative Committee (JMCC) meetings held here. Defence Secretary retired Lt Gen

Mian Mohammad Hilal Hussain and Russian Deputy Defence Minister Col Gen Alexander V. Fomin led their respective sides at the talks.

- The JMCC was set up in 2018 as the top bilateral forum on defence cooperation.

6. North Korea claims testing hypersonic missile

- North Korea has successfully tested a new hypersonic gliding missile, state media reported on September 29, 2021, in what would be the nuclear-armed nation's latest advance in weapons technology.
- Tuesday's launch was of 'great strategic significance', the official Korean Central News Agency said, as the North seeks to increase its defence capabilities a 'thousand-fold'.
- Hypersonic missiles move far faster and are more agile than standard ones, making them much harder for missile defence systems on which the US is spending billions to intercept

7. Afghan doctor wins Nansen refugee award

- The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) announced on September 29, 2021 that a 29-year-old Afghan refugee doctor, serving local communities and refugees in Pakistan, has won this year's regional Nansen Refugee Award in the Asian region.
- UNHCR's Nansen Refugee Award has been given to Dr Saleema Rehman in recognition of her outstanding service and commitment to Pakistanis and refugees in the country.
- It also acknowledges her contributions as a refugee to Pakistan, particularly the unwavering dedication towards her patients during the Covid-19 pandemic.

8. Bouden named Tunisia's first woman premier

- Tunisia's president on September 29, 2021 named geologist Najla Bouden as the country's first ever female prime minister-designate, to form a government with limited executive clout after the president seized wide-ranging powers two months ago.
- Bouden, a university lecturer and political unknown, will take office after President Kais Saied on July 25 sacked the government of Hichem Mechichi, suspended parliament, lifted MPs' immunity and took over the judiciary.
- His moves followed months of political deadlock in the face of a pressing economic crisis.

9. Wasim Khan steps down as PCB chief executive

- In a significant change of guard at the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB), Wasim Khan on September 29, 2021 stepped down as chief executive the third notable change witnessed in the new regime headed by newly elected chairman Ramiz Raja.
- A few days after Ramiz's name was nominated by PCB's patron-in-chief Imran Khan as member of the BoG earlier this month, a clear message that he will be the next chairman, head coach Misbah-ul-Haq and bowling coach Waqar Younis tendered their resignations.
- More changes are expected in the coming days, which is nothing but a tradition that repeats whenever a new PCB chief comes in.

10. Ruthless Sindh blow away Balochistan for third win

- Shahnawaz Dahani reminded the national selectors in resounding fashion on September 29, 2021 that he deserves to be in the 15-man Pakistan squad rather than being a travelling reserve for the upcoming Twenty20 World Cup.
- The fast bowler spearheaded Sindh's swift demolition act of Balochistan with a rich bag of four wickets as the Sarfaraz Ahmed-led team opened a two-point gap at the of leaderboard by cantering to a ruthless 77-run victory, their third on the trot, after the tournament resumed at the Pindi Cricket Stadium in Rawalpindi following a two-day break