



Islamabad POST

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Novak crowned ITF champion for 7th time

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Iran to export vaccines

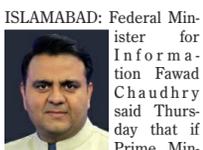
WEB DESK



TEHRAN: Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian announced that Hungary has agreed to accept the visa of Iranian citizens vaccinated with Iranian-made vaccines, and said that the Iranian vaccines will be exported to other countries in the near future. Amirabdollahian while speaking at a joint press conference with the visiting Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Peter Szijjarto underscored that good talks and important agreements were reached between Iran and Hungary. "We signed five documents today. The first document is a cultural one, which was signed between the head of the Islamic Culture and Relations Organization and the Hungarian Foreign Minister on behalf of their country," he said.

PM Imran does not envy money

DNA



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information Fawad Chaudhry said Thursday that if Prime Minister Imran Khan had given any value to money, he would have been a "billionaire" after his divorce from Jemima Goldsmith in Britain, where courts see marriage as a partnership and demand assets of that partnership be shared equally.

Nation pays tribute to APS martyrs

DNA



ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Farrukh Habib said on Thursday the entire nation was paying homage to the martyrs of the Army Public School (APS) tragedy. In a message on the occasion of the 7th anniversary of the incident, he said that the tragedy of APS shook the whole world. The entire nation including the government stood with the families of APS martyrs, he said.

Protest ends in Gwadar after talks

Govt accepts demands; negotiation between the government and Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman took place in the presence of the CM Balochistan

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

GWADAR: After over a month of protests from the people of Gwadar who were demanding their fundamental rights, Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman, the leader of the sit-in, has decided to call off the protest after negotiation with the government. Confirming the development, Balochistan Minister for Planning and Development Zahoor Buledi took to Twitter and wrote that the negotiation between the government and Balochistan secretary-general of Jamat-e-Islami Maulana Hidayat-ur-Rehman took place in the presence of the chief minister of Balochistan, Abdul Quddus Bizenjo. "The negotiation with Maulana Hidayat Ur Rehman in the presence of CM has been successful. Govt has accepted all demands of Maulana 5b and the dharana is to be called off." CM Bizenjo, in a statement, said all the demands of the Gwadar protesters are legitimate, as he mentioned that the government's priority was to provide them opportunities for growth and make basic necessities available for them. Gwadar's citizens had a long list of demands, including shortage of drinking water, the poor state of health and education facilities, and the impact of large trawlers on fishermen's earning potential.

Govt to file defamation suit against Wahjihuiddin

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information Chaudhry Fawad Hussain said on Thursday that the government had decided to file a defamation suit against Wahjihuiddin Ahmed for his baseless claim about expenditures of Bani Gala residence of Prime Minister Imran Khan. Addressing a press conference here, he said that Article 9 of the Constitution gave the right of self-respect and dignity to every citizen but in Pakistan, this right was blatantly violated in both traditional and social media. He said that notices would also be issued to those media houses which telecast the baseless allegations of Justice Wahjihuiddin without any verification. Dignity and honour of the Prime Minister of Pakistan was not safe what to speak of the common man, he said adding that the baseless propaganda was spread about the prime minister's family life and Bani Gala house. He said that Jahangir Tareen had proved to be a gentleman as he had already denied the allegations of Justice (ret'd) Wahjihuiddin.

Any collapse in Afghanistan will affect entire world

Qureshi says world must not repeat the past mistake of abandoning Afghanistan

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi has called for a collective strategy at the international level to address the serious humanitarian situation in Afghanistan. He was briefing media persons about the upcoming extraordinary session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers in Islamabad along with Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain and Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Farrukh Habib. The Foreign Minister warned that any economic collapse in Afghanistan or mass exodus will not confine to the region, but it will affect the entire world. Underlining the need for engaging with Afghanistan, he said the world must not

Continued on Page 06

Arrangements finalized for OIC FMs moot

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: All the arrangements to welcome the foreign delegates of OIC Foreign Minister's extraordinary conference in Islamabad on Sunday have been finalized. The Constitution Avenue and all the prominent places in the twin cities along the route of foreign dignitaries have been decorated. Special teams to receive the OIC foreign ministers and other dignitaries have also been formed. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is the convener of the OIC Conference. Meanwhile, India, which plays the role of spoiler in Afghanistan and is politicizing the miseries of Afghans, has been isolated on all major diplomatic developments on Afghanistan and the region.



RAWALPINDI: Japanese Ambassador to Pakistan, Wada Mitsuhiro, called on Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa at General Headquarters. - DNA

'Pak wants cordial ties with neighbors'

Army Chief was talking to Japanese Ambassador Wada Mitsuhiro

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Japanese Ambassador to Pakistan, Wada Mitsuhiro, called on Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa at General Headquarters in Rawalpindi on Thursday. During the meeting, matters of mutual interest, regional security, the current situation in Afghanistan especially collaboration and partnership in Humanitarian assistance came under discussion, according to a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR). COAS informed the visiting dignitary that Pakistan wants cordial ties with all its neighbours in "pursuit of regional peace and prosperity." He emphasised that peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute is essential for stability in South Asia. The Army Chief said that Pakistan values Japan's role in global and regional affairs and we look forward to enhancing our bilateral relationship. Speaking on the occasion, COAS also underscored the importance of peace and reconciliation initiatives in Afghanistan. The visiting dignitary appreciated Pakistan's role in the Afghan situation, special efforts for regional stability and pledged to play his part for further improvement in diplomatic cooperation with Pakistan at all levels.

PML-N wins PP-206 by-poll

KHANEWAL: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz candidate Rana Muhammad Saleem is leading his rival candidates from ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) by a slight margin in the by-election on PP-206 constituency on Thursday. Polling for the by-poll ended at the scheduled time of 5:00 PM. According to unofficial and unverified initial results, PML-N's Rana Muhammad Saleem is leading with 35,728 votes. PTI candidate Naureen Nishat is currently at second position with 25,638 votes. - DNA

EU leaders weigh new curbs on Russia

The warnings at an EU summit were some of the most direct in recent weeks

MONITORING DESK

BRUSSELS: The European Union is under assault from Russia on multiple fronts and must unite behind new economic sanctions, Baltic and central European leaders said on Thursday, with Lithuania citing a risk of possible Russian military strikes from Belarus. The warnings at an EU summit were some of the most direct in recent weeks as the United States and its NATO allies seek to deter any possible Russian attack on Ukraine and reduce Moscow's margin for surprise. Many NATO allies are also EU member states. "We really are facing a series of attacks. I see them all as associated," Latvian Prime Minister Krisjanis Karins told reporters, listing what he said was the weaponisation of Middle East migrants on Belarus' borders with the EU,

Continued on Page 06

Germany urged to use pipeline threat

NEWS DESK

BRUSSELS: Germany's new chancellor faced pressure from fellow leaders at his first EU summit to include the future of Nord Stream 2 as part of the "massive price" to be paid in the event of a Russian invasion of Ukraine. Arriving in Brussels, Olaf Scholz, who replaced Angela Merkel last week, said his government was committed to protecting Europe's borders, as Nato warned the number of Russian troops being mobilised by the Kremlin was continuing to grow.

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'Will never let down APS survivors,' says PM Imran

PM Imran inaugurates Skardu International Airport

STAFF REPORT/DNA

ISLAMABAD: As Pakistan marked the seventh anniversary of the Peshawar



Army Public School (APS) carnage on Thursday, Prime Minister Imran Khan said the country has "successfully defeated terrorism" and vowed to never "let down the survivors and parents" of

those martyred in the tragic incident. In the deadliest terror attack in the country's history, 131 schoolchildren and 10 other people were martyred when heavily armed militants stormed the school building on December 16, 2014. The attack had shocked the entire nation as terrorists stormed inside the school and fired at children who were attending classes at the time. Recalling one of the darkest days in Pakistan history, the prime minister said in a tweet today that there will be "zero tolerance for violence and those using it as a tool." Meanwhile, Prime Minister Imran Khan on Thursday inaugurated the Skardu International Airport and Jaglot-Skardu road during a day-long visit to the region. The airport in Skardu was previously only operational for domestic flights. However, its status was elevated on December 2 as it began welcoming international flights as well.

Briefs

Seminar for farmers held

FAISALABAD: A seminar was organised for farmers in village Thikriwala near here, under the aegis of the Agriculture Department, here on Thursday.

Deputy Director Agriculture Pest Warning Dr Amir Rasool was the chief guest, while Assistant Director Israr Rasheed and other officers were present.

Amir Rasool gave farmers tips about elimination of insects, controlling diseases, eradication of weeds from crops, etc.

He also distributed pamphlets among farmers and provided them information about different schemes launched by the government for them.

The registration of farmers for Kissan Card was also carried out. — APP

Over 5 mln people vaccinated in Faisalabad

FAISALABAD: Over 5 million (5,008,756) people have so far been vaccinated against COVID-19 in the district. District Health Officer Dr Ataul Mun'im said on Thursday that 3,188,102 citizens were injected first dose while 1,754,801 were administered the second dose of vaccine.

He further said that 38,425 health workers were also given first dose while 27,428 received the second dose of vaccine. He said that sufficient stock of coronavirus vaccine was available in the district.

He said that 37 vaccination centres as well as 20 mobile vaccination camps were operational in the district where registered people were being vaccinated.

In order to facilitate the people these centres had been established in various areas of the city including Allied Hospital, District Headquarters (DHQ) Hospital, Government General Hospital G.M Abad, Faisalabad Institute of Cardiology, Government General Hospital Samanabad, Children Hospital, Sports Complex Samanabad, Tehsil Headquarters (THQs) Hospital Jaranwala, Samundri, Tandlianwala, Chak Jhumra, Sports Complex Chak Jhumra, Sports Complex Jaranwala, Government General Hospital Chak 224-RB, New Building RHC Khurrianwala, New Building THQ Samundri, New Building THQ Tandlianwala, Social Security Hospital Madina Town, Wapda Hospital, Rural Health Centers (RHCs) Mureed Wala, Chak 174-JB, Chak 134-JB, Chak 229-RB, Chak 65-GB, RHC Lundianwala Jaranwala, RHC Khurrianwala Jaranwala, Pindi Sheikh Musa, Kanjwani, Mamukanjan, RHC Chak 400-GB, RHC Chak 153-RB, RHC Chak 374-GB and Chak 469-GB, he added.

He further said that timing of these vaccination centres was 8 a.m to 8 p.m except Sports Complex Samanabad centre which would remain open round the clock. — APP

\$9.5mn "City improvement project" for KP

PESHAWAR: In view of growing population in cities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, a mega development plan called City Improvement Project has been approved with the financial support of the Asian Development Bank to ensure eco-friendly healthy living facilities including drinking water, sanitation and modern urban infrastructure in major cities. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Local Government and Rural Development Faisal Amin Gandapur Thursday directed immediate implementation of this most important mega project of urban development and its early completion.

In this regard, Project Director Wasif Shinwari gave a detailed briefing to the Provincial Minister and apprised him of the progress of the project, adding that Asian Development Bank would provide \$ 7 million loan on easy installments while the provincial government has allocated \$ 500,000 for it while \$ 2 million would be provided through foreign grant. — APP

NAP to help Pakistan become part of global economy

He said that we are bound to protect fundamental rights of workers, children and women in addition to the transgender

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: The National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights will help Pakistan to become a well-integrated part of the global economy by following the different protocols, agreements and conventions ratified by Pakistan, said Mr. Atif Munir Sheikh, President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI).

After participating in the launch of Pakistan's first National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights, he said that this event was organized by the ministry of Human Rights in collaboration with United Development Program (UNDP).

He also mentioned his meeting with host federal minister Madam Shireen Mazari and assured full cooperation to her to make this action plan a total success. He said that we are bound to protect fundamental rights of workers, children and women in addition to the transgender.

He said that adherence to this Action Plan will not only ensure smooth, steady and balanced development of the country but also help Pakistan to create more



space for its exportable surplus in the global markets. He said that the business community is fully cognizant of its responsibilities towards human rights and would cooperate for any legislation to secure the fundamental rights of the workers.

He said that policies framed in

mutual consultation of all stakeholders will not only streamline the implementation process but also help to achieve the desired objectives without any delay. Regarding the speech of Mr. Abdul Razak Dawood, Advisor to Prime Minister on Commerce, he said that out of 27 agreements, 6-7 are

related to the labor and implementation on these would bring more benefits to the workers in addition to enhancing their capacity. Mr. Atif Munir Sheikh President FCCI also welcomed the constitution of the Inter-Ministerial Committee and said that it will coordinate between the con-

cerned ministries and stakeholders which will facilitate them in policy making. He also underlined the importance of labor unions and said that FCCI will collaborate with them in safeguarding the fundamental rights of the workers. Acknowledging the importance of workers, he said that their role is imperative to continue to roll-on the wheel of our industrial sector. "At the same time, industries are also the main source of creating new jobs for the unemployed youth", he added.

Pinpointing some contradictions in International Labor Organization (ILO) related laws, he said that the minimum age for workers in Bangladesh is 14 years while it is 18 years for Pakistan.

He said that such anomalies and distortions must be removed for uniform legislation at the global level. He hoped that the ministries of the Human Rights and Commerce would take on board the chambers to resolve this issue about Faisalabad. Mr. Atif Munir Sheikh said that we are already enjoying the best working relations between the employees and employers as the export sector is strictly following the ILO laws.

UAE to invest \$15 mn in Faisalabad SEZ: Dawood

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to Prime Minister on Commerce and Investment, Abdul Razak Dawood on Thursday informed that United Arab Emirates (UAE) energy group, Brothers Gas' has announced investment worth US\$15 million in Faisalabad Special Economic Zones (SEZ).

The first of the three phase investment will include installation of an Aerosol Propellant Gas (APG) plant, the Adviser Commerce said on his official twitter account here. Adviser said the local manufacturing will help reduce Pakistan's reliance on imported APG. The plant will also enable manufacturing of refrigerant gasses and ADNOC tubes for the first time, he said. Razak Dawood said the actualization of foreign investments is showing a conducive business environment which is supported by friendly government policies. "I appreciate BOI's role in investor facilitation", he said. Adviser also appreciated the team's Krave Mart (E-Commerce store) startup for securing Pakistan's highest \$6 million in pre-seed funding. As I always say, Pakistan needs more young entrepreneurs and local brands, he said. He said that it is very heartening to see that just in one year; our startup ecosystem has garnered such attention. This is the right time to invest and start a business in Pakistan, he said. — APP



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan Mitsuhiro WADA calls on Federal Minister for IT Syed Amin Ul Haque. — DNA

30 held with contraband

FAISALABAD: Police have arrested 30 criminals and recovered drugs and illegal weapons from them in the district during the last 24 hours. Police on Thursday said that raiding teams nabbed eight drug pushers and recovered 1.6 kg hashish and 903 litres liquor from their possession.

The police also held 18 gamblers and recovered Rs 109,610 stake money from them.

In a crackdown against illegal weapons, police arrested four people and recovered three pistols, one rifle and a number of bullets from them.

32 people fined
As many as 32 violators were imposed a total fine of Rs 170,250 for creating pollution in various parts of the city, here on Thursday. A spokesman for local administration said that teams of district government during anti-pollution campaign found two brick-kilns, one industrial unit and 29 vehicles involved in emitting excessive smoke in the air. Therefore, the teams imposed a fine of Rs 100,000 on kiln owners, Rs 50,000 on industrial unit and Rs 20,250, the spokesman added. — APP

Nation will never forget the sacrifices of APS martyrs

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: Deputy Commissioner Ali Shahzad has said that the day of December 16 would always remind the memory of the martyrs of Army Public School.

The nation will never forget the everlasting sacrifices of the children and teachers of Army Public School. He said this while lighting the candles at Lagacy School System and Govt Girls Higher Secondary School Peoples Colony No 1 on the 7th anniversary of APS

students and teachers. MPA Firdous Rai, CEO Education Ali Ahmed Siyan, Director Lagacy School System Muhammad Yaseen, Akhtar Butt and other officers were also present on the occasion. Deputy Commissioner said that Martyrs wrote the history of a safe and peace-

ful Pakistan which is based on the blood of children. He said that little flowers sacrificed their precious lives for a great cause. Deputy Commissioner said that thanks to the great sacrifices of martyrs against terrorism, in the war, the ideal unity and harmony of the entire nation came to the fore.

The great sacrifices of the martyred children gave new impetus and determination to the nation and the ruthless enemy was defeated. Expressing full solidarity with them, he said that every drop of blood of the martyrs is a debt on this soil. The Director School said that the entire nation today is paying homage to the eternal sacrifices of the great martyrs of Army Public School Peshawar.

Today we have to renew our commitment to maintain the unity for which innocent children sacrificed their lives. On this occasion, the children also paid homage to their fellow martyred children while reciting the Quran.



FAISALABAD: Deputy Commissioner Ali Shahzad lit the candle in the memory of APS martyrs. — DNA

CS reviews security arrangements for LG polls

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Secretary (CS) Dr. Shehzad Khan Bangash on Thursday chaired a meeting to review security arrangements for upcoming local government elections.

The meeting among others was attended by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Inspector General Police (IGP) Moazzam Jah Ansari, Secretaries of Home, Local Government, Education, Social Welfare and Population Welfare departments, Provincial Election Commissioner, Divisional Commissioners and Regional Police Officers. Presiding over the meeting, the chief secretary directed divisional and district officers to install cameras on sensitive polling stations. — APP

Dist admin announces holiday on 18th

PESHAWAR: District administration Peshawar has announced holiday on December 18, 2021 (Saturday) due to local bodies' poll in the district.

According to Deputy Commissioner Peshawar, Capt (Retd), Khalid Mahmood, all public and private sector schools and colleges will remain close on Saturday. The decision for closure of schools and colleges was taken to ensure timely completion of the election process. — APP

LCCI urges govt to sustain decision of Corporate Guarantee

LAHORE: Lahore Chamber of Commerce & Industry (LCCI) urged the government to sustain the decision of "Corporate Guarantee" in provisional assessment dispute case instead of Bank Guarantee or pay order.

A spokesman for the LCCI told the media here on Thursday that in various letters written to government functionaries, LCCI President Mian Nauman Kabir, Senior Vice-President Mian Rehman Aziz Chan and Vice-President Haris Ateeq said that federal government had taken a great decision in Tax Laws (Third Amendment) 2021, by introducing "Corporate Guarantee" in provisional assessment dispute cases instead of Bank Guarantee or pay order.

They said that the option of corporate guarantee was already available to some DTRE exporters and

entities registered under Authorised Economic Operators (AEO) Programme, which was a commitment of the Government of Pakistan, under WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement.

The LCCI office-bearers said that the initiative of federal government had been appreciated by the corporate sector, as due to stuck up pay orders/bank guarantees, the industrial importers face severe liquidity crunch and problems in carrying out their operations.

He said the option of corporate guarantee would provide them some financial space to operate their businesses in a more efficient manner.

They said that the said initiative was also appreciated by the Senate Standing Committee (SSC) on Finance & Revenue in its meeting dated 18 November 2021 which

was held to discuss the Third Tax Amendment Ordinance 2021. They said the SSC on Finance had already been endorsed the proposal of adding a new legal provision of corporate guarantees to be given by companies against any disputed import duty.

However, it was being learnt that the federal government was reconsidering this initiative, they said, adding that such move would be a step in reverse direction and would adversely affect the businesses in these difficult economic conditions.

The government should engage other stakeholders to examine the issue and make strict SOPs for its implementation to benefit genuine corporate sector and to address any apprehensions regarding its usage. Any decision taken in haste would have negative consequences for the corporate sector which was already

due to high prices of energy and other industrial inputs, they added. It is pertinent to mention here that it is The World Bank Group's Doing Business project provides a measure of the "Ease of Doing Business" through a set of objective indicators that focus on the impacts of laws, regulations and their enforcement across 190 economies. In the last ranking (2020) Pakistan was placed at 108th position and was recognized as the top reformer in South Asia and sixth reformer in the world.

All countries are assessed against six parameters and one of them is trading across the borders. Due to reforms undertaken FBR, the time taken for processing of imports/exports at ports have considerably decreased thus also bring down cost of doing business. — APP

Special attention being paid to improve police: IGP

LAHORE: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Rao Sardar Ali Khan said on Thursday that police station was the basic unit of police, for which, all available resources were being utilized for further improvement of professional matters.

He expressed these views during a meeting with a four-member delegation from the National Police Bureau (NPB) here at the Central Police Office. During the meeting, detailed discussions were held on reforms being carried out in Punjab Police.

The delegation comprised DIG Saqib Sultan and members of Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights. The IGP said that refresher courses and workshops were being conducted in the School of Investigation. Chung and other training institutes to enhance capacity of investigating officers deployed across the province.

Every possible facility was also being provided to fulfill deficiency of staff, he added. Rao Sardar Ali Khan said that complaints received at the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit (PMDU) and 1,787 IGP complaint centre were being resolved on time. He said that Punjab police had already adopted of reward as well as punishment policy and important steps were being taken to make departmental accountability more effective.

He said that smart and community policing had been adopted to increase confidence of citizens in police so that police may protect lives and property of people as well as resolving problems faced by them in a timely manner.

Talking to the delegation, IG Punjab Rao Sardar said the Punjab police were making full use of information technology with available resources for crime prevention and improvement of service delivery.

At the same time attention was also being paid to close monitoring and inspection of every wing.

Rao Sardar said that Punjab police attached special importance to eradication of crime as well as public awareness about laws, and in this regard various awareness campaigns and programmes were being carried out in collaboration with educational institutions and civil society. — APP

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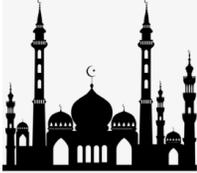
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Complaints

Water Tanker Service	
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G-9, G-10, G-11, G-12, H-8.....	9266316
Wapda Islamabad.....	9217579
Wapda Rawalpindi.....	111-309-309

Islamabad Metropolitan Corporation.....	9209224
Potohar Town.....	9209224
Rawal Town.....	5773343

Wasa Water Tank	
Rawalpindi.....	0331-5022125



ISLAMABAD: Muhammad Ijaz Nuri, Chairman of the Pakistan Council for Social Welfare and Human Rights presenting a souvenir to South Africa's High Commissioner to Pakistan Mthuthuzeli Madikiza. Pir Syed Muhammad Ali Raza Bukhari, Punjab Chief Minister's Provincial Coordinator Chaudhry Tahir Mahmood Advocate and former President of Parliamentary Reporters Association (PRA) Bahzad Saleemi are also present on the occasion. - DNA

South Africa highly values ties with Pakistan: Envoy

The high commissioner was talking to prominent social and religious leaders at the South African Embassy in Islamabad, led by Muhammad Ijaz Nuri, Chairman of the Pakistan Council for Social Welfare and Human Rights

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: South Africa's High Commissioner to Pakistan Mthuthuzeli Madikiza has said that Pakistan is a great country and its people are hardworking and friendly. He said that South Africa attaches great importance to its trade, diplomatic and cultural relations with Pakistan as South Africa is currently a major trading and cultural partner of Pakistan.

The high commissioner was talking to prominent social and religious leaders at the South African Embassy in Islamabad, led by Muhammad Ijaz Nuri, Chairman of the Pakistan Council for Social Welfare and Human Rights, a special advisory body at the United Nations Socio-Economic Council. Prominent spiritual figure and Sajjada Nasheen of spiritual shrine Darbar-e-Allia Basahan Sharif and former member Azad Jammu and Kashmir Assembly Pir Syed Muhammad Ali Raza Bukhari, Punjab Chief Minister's Provincial Coordinator, Department of Housing, Urban Development and Public Health,

Chaudhry Tahir Mahmood Advocate and former President of Parliamentary Reporters Association (PRA) Bahzad Saleemi were also part of the delegation. Speaking to the delegation, the High Commissioner of South Africa further said that South Africa will continue to play its full role in achieving the goals of sustainable development in Pakistan. Talking on the occasion, Chairman Pakistan Council for Social Welfare and Human Rights Muhammad Ijaz Nuri said that it was time to promote inter-faith relations for lasting peace, social development and betterment of human beings.

On the occasion, the High Commissioner of South Africa and the delegation of Pakistan Council for Social Welfare and Human Rights congratulated each other on New Year and Christmas and hoped that the coming year would be a year of progress and happiness for the whole world. A commemorative shield was also presented by the Pakistan Council for Social Welfare and Human Rights to the High Commissioner of South Africa to Pakistan, Mthuthuzeli Madikiza, on the occasion.

Ashrafi for implementing National Action Plan

ISLAMABAD: Special Representative to the Prime Minister on Religious Harmony and Middle East Hafiz Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi Thursday said the solution to national issues and terrorism eradication lies in implementing National Action Plan (NAP) in true letter and spirit. Talking to media, flanked by Christian leaders and notables, he said the government was working to review the National Action Plan as the Prime Minister had already held a meeting in that regard. The previous government used National Action Plan (NAP) only for removal of speakers from mosques, he said adding that the incumbent government would bring major changes in the NAP to eradicate extremism and terrorism from the country. He said the every one living in Pakistan and following country's law were equal citizens and enjoyed equal rights. He added that the non-muslim communities were not alone and as a majority all muslims would stand with them at every forum. No one would be allowed to take the law in their own hands and use the law to serve their own interest and if someone committed blasphemy, he should file case and lodge FIR, and leave the rest to law of the land. As many as 137 blasphemy complaints were received during the current year which were duly addressed and resolved. - DNA

RCCI organizes awareness seminar on Islam and business

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Federal Minister for Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony Dr Pir Noorul Haq Qadri attended a seminar on "Islam and Business, in the Light of Quran and Hadith" under the auspices of Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI).

Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Noor-ul-Haq Qadri in his address lauded RCCI for organizing the seminar on Islam and Business.

He said that our youth needs an Ideological and moral training, fear of God and love of the Prophet must be inculcated in the minds of the young generation, legislation alone will not solve the problems.

He said that the life of the Holy Prophet (PBUH) is the most complete. Before the proclamation of Prophethood, he started his business as a businessman.

The Ministry of Religious Affairs will extend its full support to the campaign



launched by the Chamber to eradicate corruption. We have to promote the tax culture, we are looking for some tricks to hide taxes. Today is December 16 and this evening is the day of a great tragedy. I pray for the parents of the children who were martyred in this tragedy. May Allah give them patience. The tragedy of Sialkot brought bad name and disrepute to Pakistan.

The seminar was also addressed by Dr. Taj Afzar, Deputy Dean, Faculty, Interna-

tional Islamic University, Islamabad, and attended a question and answer session. He said that trade has played an important role in spreading Islam all over the world. Chamber President Nadeem Rauf said that the purpose of the seminar was to create awareness in the sacred profession like trade and to find solutions to these problems in the light of Qur'an and Sunnah. He said that the chamber would continue to hold such seminars on a regular basis to raise awareness.

Executive Director WFP lauds Ehsaas Nashonuma

Congratulates Prime Minister Imran Khan on the success of Ehsaas Nashonuma

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Ehsaas and World Food Programme (WFP) inked a historic Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) today to extend the Ehsaas Nashonuma programme currently from 15 districts to all Tehsils of Pakistan. David Beasley, Executive Director, World Food Programme

and Senator Dr. Sania Nishtar SAPM witnessed the MoU signing ceremony. Country Director WFP Pakistan, Chris Kaye and Secretary Ismat Tahira formally signed the MoU.

Speaking on the occasion, David Beasley stated, "I highly commend Prime Minister Imran Khan's vision and commitment to address the issue of stunting in children across Pakistan. Other

countries can also learn from it." He also congratulated the PM on the success of the programme. "Ehsaas Nashonuma is undoubtedly playing a transformative role to tackle stunting in children and transforming their lives as according to the estimates 40 out of 100 children in Pakistan are stunted", David Beasley lauded further. Dr. Sania termed Ehsaas' partner-

ship with WFP remarkable and thanked the WFP leadership and country team for their assistance in the programme design, roll out and national scale-up. In her remarks, Dr. Sania said, "Prime Minister Imran Khan in his first speech to the nation had highlighted the key issue of stunting and committed to addressing it. Therefore, in line with our PM's vision, Ehsaas rolled out a nutrition con-

ditional cash transfer programme, Ehsaas Nashonuma in partnership with the WFP."

Chris Kaye, Country Director WFP Pakistan assured full support for the national scale-up of the programme. "Across 15 most stunted districts of the country, 50 Ehsaas Nashonuma Centres have already been opened at the district and Tehsil level health facilities in the first phase of the programme and these will absolutely play an important role in building human capital", said Chris Kaye.

Launched by Prime Minister Imran Khan in August 2020, Ehsaas Nashonuma programme delivers conditional cash transfers to vulnerable pregnant women, mothers and children up to two years of age and provides them with cash stipends, specialized nutritious food, immunizations, antenatal and postnatal checkups, and health-awareness sessions. Every quarter girl child gets a higher stipend amount compared to boy child. Principally, Ehsaas Nashonuma is pegged on improving nutrition and health in the first thousand days of life, that is the most critical period in early childhood development, starting at conception and finishing at age of two.

'Govt to provide opportunities to startups'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Science and Technology, Senator Syed Shibli Faraz Thursday said the present government was taking concrete steps to provide opportunities to startups and businesses.

The minister was addressing at the Venture Capital Start-up Conference 2021 arranged by National University of Science and Technology (NUST). The purpose of the conference was to develop a policy framework for venture capital companies.

While addressing the conference, Senator Shibli Faraz said, "Start-up culture in Pakistan is a recent phenomenon and the main hurdle for entrepreneurs is that of financing". "We need to identify those sectors for investment by venture capital companies which can lead to technological development and growth", he said.

The federal minister stated that a policy and framework for venture capital companies has been included as part of the Performance Agreement FY 2021-22 and 2022-23. Moreover, this task is also part of the mandate and responsibility of the Ministry of Science and Technology as per the Rules of Business 1973 as, "Initiate promotional measures for Establishment of venture capital companies for Technological Development and Growth".

MoHR launches NAP on business, HRs

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ministry of Human Rights (MoHR) Thursday organized an event for launching of the first-ever National Action Plan (NAP) on Business and Human Rights with the support of United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Adviser to the Prime Minister on Commerce and Investment Abdul Razak Dawood was the chief guest. Deputy Resident Representative of the UNDP Aliona Niculita, ambassadors of various countries, diplomats, and other dignitaries were also present. Minister for Human Rights Dr Shireen Mazari while giving her remarks said that the government has given top priority to the human rights and Pakistan is the first country in South Asia that has devised and launched such an action plan.

She added that an inter-ministerial implementation committee will be constituted taking all business communities, chambers of commerce and labor unions on board to ensure the through implementation of this NAP in a pre-defined time frame.

OIC moot to adopt clear strategy: Tariq Bakheet

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Assistant Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Tariq Ali Bakheet says the extraordinary session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers to be held in Islamabad on Sunday will adopt a clear strategy to deal with humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan.

Talking to the state media in Islamabad Thursday, the Assistant Secretary General said the OIC meeting, in this regard, will adopt a very important comprehensive resolution. Tariq Ali Bakheet said the forum is very serious and committed to support the Afghan people in this critical time.

He said the OIC moot would adopt a very important comprehensive resolution as the forum was resolved to support the Afghan people in this critical time. He said the conference was going to give the OIC a leading role in helping the Afghan people in order to alleviate their sufferings in terms of humanitarian and medical supplies and assistance in all forms.



Briefs

IGP holds 'open kutchery'

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Inspector General of Police (IGP) Muhammad Ahsan Younus on Thursday conducted 'open kutchery' on 3rd consecutive day and directed police officials to address public complaints on priority basis.

In an 'Open Court' especially held to listen issues of policemen and citizens, the IGP listened to 13 police employees and 19 citizens and directed to resolve their issues.

The complaints of policemen were related to department while citizens' complaints were about delay in registration of FIRs, change in investigation, monetary disputes, dacoity, theft, kidnapping and others.

The IGP marked the applications to the police officials and gave them time frame to resolve the issues of citizens.

The Islamabad police chief directed police officials to check the record of vehicles at Excise and Taxation Office, Islamabad and hand over them to their owners.

He said it was the prime responsibility of the department to provide protection to the lives and property of the citizens and resolve their problems on priority.

He said that citizens at 'Open Court' should be behaved in a respectful manner and their trust on police department to be won through resolving their issues. — APP

PSC to train girls about AI technologies

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Science Club (PSC) in collaboration with Technovation bringing an exciting 12-week program for girls and families to solve real world problems in their communities through using cutting-edge mobile and Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies. The program has been designed for the girls aged between 8-12 years and aimed at providing challenge-based technology education to develop problem solving skills and confidence in learning abilities, an official of PSC told APP.

The program will start from January 22 and held virtually. Technovation Girls program equips young women to become tech entrepreneurs and leaders.

With the support of volunteer mentors and parents, girls work in teams to code mobile apps that address real-world problems.

Under this program, the girls solve problems using AI technology. Through working in teams, the girls find a problem in their community and build an app to help solve it. Along the way, the girls will be able to develop their collaboration, problem solving and leadership skills, the official said. The PSC is a non-profit science society and pursuing the mission to promote scientific research culture in society through interactive and innovative hands-on science activities projects, experiments and science fairs. — APP

Large industry grows 3.56%

ISLAMABAD: Large Scale Manufacturing Industries (LSMI) production grew by 3.56 percent during the first four months of the current fiscal year compared to the corresponding period of last year, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported Thursday. The LSMI Quantum Index Number (QIM) was recorded at 140.50 points during July-October (2021-22) against 135.66 points during July-October (2020-21), showing growth of 3.56 percent, according to latest PBS data.

The highest increase of 2.26 percent during July-October (2021-22) was witnessed in the indices monitored by the Ministry of Industries, followed by 0.88 percent increase in indices monitored by the Provincial Board of Statistics (BOS) and 0.43 percent increase in the products monitored by the Oil Companies Advisory Committee (OCAC). On year on year basis (YoY), the industry declined by 1.19 percent during the month of October 2021 compared to the growth of October 2020, according to PBS latest data. — APP

ICCI calls for focusing on mining and mineral sector

Many countries including China, Italy, Turkey, Spain and Brazil have exploited their mineral sector very effectively for economic development, but in Pakistan this sector has not been given proper attention despite its tremendous potential to promote the economy

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has huge reserves of mines and minerals including the world's second largest salt mines & coal deposits, fifth largest copper & gold reserves, huge reserves of marble, granite, gemstones, chromite, gypsum, iron ore, lead zinc, bauxite etc. and the government should focus on better development of this sector to fully exploit these natural resources for promotion of trade & exports and economic growth. This was said by Muhammad Shakeel Munir, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) while addressing a delegation of All Pakistan Mines and Minerals Association that visited ICCI led by Chairman Mir Behroze Reki Baloch. Beburg Rind, Amjad Rasheed, Sardar Naimatullah Kakar, Sardar Nadeem Hayat, Miss Aalia Ghafoor, Raja Arif Mehmood and others were in the delegation.

ICCI President said that many countries including China, Italy, Turkey, Spain and Brazil have exploited their mineral sector very effectively for economic development, but in Pakistan this sector has not been given proper attention despite its tremendous potential to promote the economy. He said that Pakistan could earn billions of dollars by this sector as India's exports of gems & jewelry were reportedly USD 29 and



Brazil's mineral mines exports crossed USD 36 billion in FY 20. He said that promotion of the mineral sector would bring multiple benefits to the economy as it would improve trade & exports, increase employment & income level, attract more domestic & foreign investment and accelerate economic growth. He urged that the government should address all key issues of the mines and mineral

sector to unleash its real potential for economic development of the country. He assured the delegation that ICCI would take up their highlighted issues at the relevant forums for their redress. Speaking at the occasion, Mir Behroze Reki Baloch, Chairman, All Pakistan Mines and Minerals Association highlighted various issues being faced by the business community of the mines and mineral sector.

He said that the government was giving them no representation in Committees, He said that hundreds of mines were canceled while their approval process was very lengthy, which took a 3-year period. He stressed that the government should focus on improving the regulatory framework as procedural delays were creating hurdles for potential investors. He said that the government's

support was also needed for infrastructure development, technological upgradation, access to finance, human resource development, marketing and constitution of district Review and Monitoring Committee to facilitate the better growth of this sector. He said that the government should ensure dedicated and friendly banking products for mining and processing sub sectors.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan Yerzhan Kistafin calls on Azfar Ahsan, Chairman of Investment Board. During the talks, issues on increasing the investment cooperation between the two countries were discussed. — DNA

Int'l moot on nanomaterial concludes

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The two-day International Conference on "Nanomaterial Modeling and Simulation" concludes today here at Allama Iqbal Open University. A large number of professors and researchers from different universities of Pakistan attended the moot. Chairman, Pakistan Science and Technology Task Force, Prof. Dr. Ata-Ur-Rehman was guest of honour at the inaugural session while Vice Chancellor, AIOU, Prof. Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum presided over the session. Dr. Ata said that two thirds of the population of Pakistan consists of youth and the government needs to do more investment in education and research so that the country can stand in developed countries. Vice Chancellor, Quaid-e-Azam University, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Ali Shah was the chief guest while the former VC of AIOU, Prof. Dr. Mahmood Al Hassan Butt presided over the concluding session of day two. Dr. Ali said that for the development of country, goals have to be changed, youth have to be attracted towards creativity and innovation and the time has come for multi-disciplinary research. We have to think to be safe from situations like global warming. He added that AIOU is emerging as a leading research university under the dynamic leadership of Prof. Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum.

Int'l conference on Arabic Literature starts at NUML

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Two-Day international conference on "Socio-Historical Role of Fictional Narratives in the Development of Arabic Literature" organized by Arabic Department of National University of Modern Languages, (NUML), in collaboration with Center of Arabic and Islamic Studies Sialkot started here on Thursday at NUML. The chief guest of the inaugural session was ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Nawaf Bin Saeed Al Malki, while Dr. Habib Ur Rehman Asim and Prof. Dr. Refaat Aly Mohamed Sayed, Dean Arabic Faculty Asyut-Al Azhar University, Egypt participated as key note speakers. Rector NUML Major General Muhammad Jaffar HI (M) (Retd), Director General Brig Syed Nadir Ali, Pro-Rectors, Deans, Directors, HoDs, faculty members and a larger number of students also attended the ceremony. Speaking on the occasion Nawaf Bin Saeed Al Malki said that Arabic was the language of Quran, and this was the only source to keep Ummah together.

Learning Arabic will give you more understanding of Islam and it is the source of communication among Arabs states for 1500 years.

The ambassador said that Arabic was very vast language learning the language would connect the peoples to the brotherhood and unity among Ummah. He appreciated the role of NUML in promotion of Arabic language and thanked Rector NUML for organizing such a knowledgeable conference.

Prof. Dr. Refaat Aly Mohamed Sayed, Dean Al Azhar University, Egypt in his

speech highlighted the role of historian and literary persons who played key role in promotion of Arabic literature.

Dr. Habib Ur Rehman Asim also highlighted the various aspects of the Arabic literature and beautifully connected them with the thoughts of great poet Iqbal.

At the end, Rector NUML Major General Muhammad Jaffar HI (M) (Retd) thanked the chief guest for sparing time for this conference and thanked the guests and scholars from various countries who are participating in the conference.



13 tested positive for Covid

RAWALPINDI: As many as 13 more patients were tested positive for coronavirus during the last 24 hours in the district, with seven belonging to the Rawalpindi Cantonment area, three from Potohar town, and one each case has arrived from Kallar Syeda, Taxila and Rawal town.

According to the daily situation report issued by the District Corona Management centre on Thursday, 20 Coronavirus confirmed patients were admitted to three city facilities, including 12 in the Institute of Urology and four in Fauji foundation hospital and Benazir Bhutto Hospital each. The report updated that two patients were on ventilators in critical condition, seven stable and 11 on oxygen support.

Around 4,036,861 people, including 44,454 health workers, had so far been vaccinated against the fatal disease out of the total eligible population of 4,225,634 in the district," it informed. District Health Authority added that 38,115 patients had been discharged after recovery out of the total 39,457 tested positive so far, adding 120 were quarantined, including 100 at homes and 20 in the isolation centres.

The report updated that during the last 24 hours, 1,414 samples were collected, out of which 1,401 were declared negative, while the positivity rate was recorded at 0.92 per cent. — APP

IESCO issues power suspension programme

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Thursday issued a power suspension programme for Friday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work.

According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 09:00 am to 2:00 pm Azharabad, P&T Wani, Karial, Gulshanabad, Dhok Noor, 502 Workshop, Adiala, Askari-14, Humayun, Humayun-1, Dhok Awan, Zaraj Housing Scheme, New Rowat, AMC, AFIRM, Race Course, Karial, RCCI, 2,3,4 & 5, Lehtar, Keller City, Fazal Ahmed Shaheed, New Chawah, Nara Motor, Zeeshan Colony, Khanna East, Khayaban Iqbal, Tramri, ISI, Ahipore, F-8 / 3, G-9 Center, I-11/3, H-8, G-11/2, Dargah, Bhara Kahu, Sunny Bank, Cecil, Nimbale, Upper Topa, Pir Sohawa, Tafar-ul-Haq, Liaquat Bagh, Eid Gah, Jamia Masjid, Gawalandi, Gulzar Shaheed, Malikabad, A Block, APHS, Radio Pak, EME Complex, Cheering Cross, Jhangri, Zircon Heights, Siham, Chakra, Range Road, Kashmir Road, Dhok Farman Ali, Chaklala, Kar Chowk, Jail Park. 1, feeders and surrounding areas.

Enhancing girls' education, top priority

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Secretary for Federal Education and Professional Training Wajaha Akram has said that 'enhancing girls' access to education lies at the heart of the Ministry of Education's strategy to improve Pakistan's education indicators.

She was talking at a round table discussion in Islamabad with the members of the Standing Committees of Senate and National Assembly.

This parliamentary roundtable was organized by civil society organizations including CPDI, Pakistan Youth Change Advocates (PYCA) and Pakistan Coalition for Education (PCE) in collaboration with Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services (PIPS). In the closing remarks, Wajaha Akram, Parliamentary Secretary for Federal Education and Professional Training said "The federal ministry is not just aware of the issues but we are very actively working to overcome them despite having very limited resources at our disposal. — APP

Pakistan leading world in facilitating Afghans

While addressing the Afghan participants, Amb. Sadiq stated that Pakistan government has started free COVID-19 vaccination for the incoming Afghans. Around 3,000 vaccines are being administered daily on Torkham and around 8,000 at Chaman

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is making utmost efforts to facilitate the interim Afghan government and the local Afghans in all sectors, it has evacuated around 92,000 people from Afghanistan post August 15, and issues the most number of visas to the Afghans as compared to the rest of the world during this time. These remarks were made by Ambassador M. Sadiq, Pakistan's Special Envoy for Afghanistan, while speaking with the members of Pakistan Afghanistan Core Committee during their ninth meeting, organized by CRSS as part of its track 1.5/2 initiative Beyond Boundaries. While addressing the Afghan participants, Amb. Sadiq stated that Pakistan government has started free COVID-19 vaccination for the incoming Afghans. Around 3,000 vaccines are being administered daily on Torkham and around 8,000 at Chaman. Pakistan is also reaching out to international community to assist Afghans as economic sanctions will result in economic

disaster and further brain drain in Afghanistan. Pakistan is having several discussions with Afghanistan to initiate barter trade between both countries. Pakistan is willing to train the Afghan doctors and paramedics to cope with the current health challenges. He added apart from these CBMs, in order

to resolve the problems faced by Afghans at border crossing points, it is essential to explore the underlying reasons and mitigate them. While promising to resolve the issues impending Afghans' travel to Pakistan, he urged the locals to cooperate with Pakistani officials in order to make their

travel easy and smooth.

Members of the committee put forth many recommendations to Amb. Sadiq, and to Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Establishment Mr. Arbab Shahzad. In order to help Afghan people, the international community needs to find a transitional assistance mechanism to circumvent the issue of recognition of the Taliban regime. Similarly, find transitional framework to regulate Afghanistan's trade and transit trade and link it with humanitarian assistance. International community should support Pakistan to devise a system of health cover for visiting Afghans based on and utilizing its existing health card system's infrastructure in place for its own citizens.

The meeting was also attended by Members of National Assembly Sahibzada Sibghatullah, Shandana Gulzar, Nafisa Khattak from Pakistan, and Members of Parliament Gul Ahmad Kamin, Gulalai Mohammadi, co-chairman PAJCCI Mr. Khan Jan Alokozai, and President ACCI Mr. Yunus Momand from Afghanistan among other prominent people.



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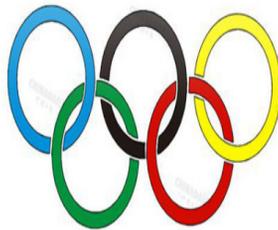
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The Afghan conundrum

WITH the Afghan Taliban swearing up and down for negotiations between Pakistan and Pakistan Taliban before the international community, our proud days of being the mediators ourselves seem like a tale of the yore. But there's more. Pakistan's ambitious ask of the new players in Kabul was to put a leash on Pakistan Taliban's leadership that operated out of Afghanistan. However, as suggested by two deadly attacks on polio vaccination teams, the dragon has once again reared its menacing head. There are high chances of peace, for the umpteenth time, becoming collateral damage to their stinking power plays. Amid the opening act of just as gruesome killing spree, Kabul has also decided to up the ante against its brother-in-arms. Though believing the bond to work wonders was never in line with reality, the other shoe should not have dropped this fast. The recent round of criticism where senior officials denounce Pakistan as an unIslamic system falls perfectly in sync with the long, long list of reservations our western neighbour loves to chew the rag over. If only biting the hand that fed you had an unkempt face! Whether the new conundrum is in a bid to gain domestic legitimacy (the Afghan official position has always been critical of the Durand line) or to continue enjoying the support of the no-questions-asked loyalty of fire branding TTP, things are not as chummy as they may seem to other.

The foreign media very passionately unleashes a hyperbolic campaign to paint the two countries as thick as thieves. However, Afghanistan has always been more interested in being at the receiving end of sweeteners. There can be no two qualms about Pakistan always going out of its way to uproot peace and progress in Afghanistan. But with the long-drawn-out war coming to an end, there is a swirling talk of losing leverage.

So what, if PM Khan remains the only executive wholly committed to the welfare of Afghan masses. May it be arguing for a release of their frozen funds, setting aside its thorny relationship with New Delhi to ensure wheat supplies or hosting the second-largest refugee population, we have always been there to fulfil the brotherly obligations.

Humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan is preventable if we have the will

Shah Mahmood Qureshi



Nearly 22.8 million Afghans face acute food insecurity. According to the World Food Programme, "this winter, millions of Afghans will have to choose between starvation or migration"

THE people of Afghanistan need urgent attention. The humanitarian calamity afflicting Afghanistan is perhaps the worst in the world today. The UN system, which has decades of experience in analysing and managing humanitarian emergencies, has sounded alarm bells. UN Secretary-General António Guterres has called for a "lifeline" to millions of vulnerable Afghans "who face perhaps their most perilous hour", after decades of war and insecurity. Despite the grim

prospects, this calamity is preventable.

Thanks to the generosity of many donors, the United Nations system, international organisations and humanitarian agencies have helped mobilise and supply critical food, medicines and other life-saving supplies.

Despite modest resources and financial constraints, Pakistan is providing humanitarian support of over \$30 million; provided air and land bridge for humanitarian supplies; and facilitated transit trade and cross border movement of Afghans in need.

And yet much more in humanitarian and other assistance is needed.

The UN estimates that over half-a-million Afghans are internally displaced. Nearly 22.8 million Afghans face acute food insecurity. According to the World Food Programme, "this winter, millions of Afghans will have to choose between starvation or migration". Media reports indicate that Afghans, in their thousands, are trying to leave. It is a race against time! The cumulative effects of a protracted conflict, prolonged drought in rural areas, disruption in economic activity in urban areas and the compounding socio-economic impacts of Covid-19 have resulted in serious hardships for the people of Afghanistan.

Humanitarian supplies in Afghanistan face logistical challenges due to harsh winter and remoteness. A fragile governance structure, severe liquidity shortage and financial sanctions present a clear and present danger of an economic meltdown in Afghanistan. The resultant human suffering, while likely, can and should be avoided. Sanctions and assets freeze have crippled the banking system of Afghanistan, impeding transfer of funds for humanitarian purposes and hampering payment of salaries of workers in critical sectors such as public services, education and health. A review and reconsideration of sanctions is essential to save lives, enable basic services and maintain a modicum of public governance. Delays may result in unintended risks of the financial system falling into unregulated money exchanges. Such a scenario may undermine our shared objectives of countering terrorism and

trafficking.

Now is not the time to abandon the people of Afghanistan. Giving in to the temptation to 'move on' from Afghanistan would be catastrophic. It would lead to exactly what the international community wants to avoid, an exodus, further instability and conflict, and the specter of terrorism emanating from the country.

The international community has legitimate anxiety over the state of human rights and the nature of power sharing in Afghanistan. These concerns should be addressed in all their dimensions; civil, political, social, economic and cultural.

Helping Afghans inside the country is also a cost effective and a durable solution. That requires us to not just think of few but all.

Ordinary Afghans are neither responsible for the failures of their former rulers nor should they be penalized for the recent turn of events in the country. Amidst this crisis lies an opportunity to chart a path for Afghanistan that advances peace, security, development and human rights in mutually reinforcing ways.

Such a pathway requires prudent sequencing and prioritisation of actions. The pace of political and diplomatic engagement needs to be enhanced, in tandem with humanitarian and economic assistance.

That is why Pakistan is hosting an Extraordinary Session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers in Islamabad on December 19, 2021, to show solidarity with the Afghan people, and to help establish an effective channel for coordinated provision of humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan. As the second largest intergovernmental organisation after the United Nations, the OIC is well-positioned to lead the way in helping the Afghan people. Pakistan hopes that the OIC member states and the international community will extend all possible support to the Afghan people in this hour of dire need.

We face a proverbial stitch in time saves nine situations in Afghanistan. We cannot afford to wait. The world must act, and act now.

—Shah Mahmood Qureshi is the Foreign Minister of Pakistan. The article first published in *Khaleej Times*.

Violence against women

PUNJAB Gender Parity Report 2019 and 2020, prepared by the Punjab Commission on the Status of Women, revealed some disturbing statistics about the security of women in the most populous province. A whopping 8,797 cases of violence, rape, assault and harassment against women were reported in Punjab in 2020 as compared to 8,767 in 2019. Contrary to public perception that urban areas are safer than rural, the highest number of rape cases in 2020—4,732—were reported coming from the provincial capital, Lahore. Lahore also recorded the highest number of domestic violence cases in 2020.

These statistics must be taken with a grain of salt, considering cases of such nature are highly underreported. The rise in cases may be due to better reporting; it is possible that the number of instances of violence and rape against women was always this high. The statistics must not be taken to mean that other areas, where the cases are reportedly low, have lower incidents of rape, and are safer for women.

There are also other useful takeaways from the report. It is interesting to note that there was an overall decrease of 3.5 percent in domestic violence cases—from 1,158 in 2019 to 1,118 in 2020. This shows that improvement in laws and gender-sensitive training can, somewhat successfully, lead to societal reform.

What is alarming is the rise in certain crimes—honour killings showed an increase of 20 percent in these two years, with Sargodha and Faisalabad reporting the highest numbers of 19 each in 2020. It is useful then to analyse why some changes in law, for example in curtailing domestic violence, are producing better results than changes in the anti-rape laws, which suggest some amendments have been lacking.

These numbers are tragic—but should be used by the government to identify a better approach towards curbing crimes. There have been numerous high profile and gruesome incidents, but the numbers show us that these are in no way isolated. We need to act on this report and figure out why we are failing in protecting half the population.

The Christmas party may take down Boris Johnson

Tanya Gold

There is every sign that the spell Johnson cast over the country is cracking, that people are waking up to the truth of him. The latest polls show the Conservative Party sliding to second place while Johnson's approval ratings continue their descent. It feels a long time since the elections in Dec 2019, when the country gave him an enormous majority of 80 seats

DURING the Covid pandemic, we Britons have developed a tabloid obsession with "saving Christmas," as if it were a beloved pet in danger of being run over.

Yet our Christmas is indeed in peril. The Omicron coronavirus variant, which Prime Minister Boris Johnson said could lead to a "tidal wave" of cases, threatens to upend people's best-laid festive plans. After last year, when the government imposed restrictions on household mixing on the cusp of Christmas, the possibility of yet another fractured Yuletide is close to retraumatizing the nation. Ominously, the Christmas tree the Norwegians give us every year to stand in Trafalgar Square, in thanks for Britain's help during World War II, is notably spindly and bare this winter.

To make matters worse, our responsible queen has been unwell. A royal biographer described her as entering a new phase, as if she were developing an obsession with goth aesthetics. And amid it all, Johnson's government has sunk to new lows of incompetence. The mood is far from merry.

It was very different earlier in the year. The government rolled out vaccines faster than any other country in Europe, and Britain hosted the Group of 7 meeting and a global climate summit in November. Any adverse effects of Brexit could be blamed on the pandemic. Things felt shinier for a while, especially if you didn't look too closely at the rising child poverty figures or the government's plans to curtail protest, criminalise refugees and exert more control over the judiciary. But winter is here. New restrictions, called Plan B, are being rolled out. People in England are advised to work from home, and masks and Covid passes will be mandatory in more places. The rules, as ever under Johnson, feel arbitrary and ill thought out. Work from home, but go to the pantomime; wear a mask in a taxi but not in a pub. And we don't know what further restrictions will be imposed as Omicron spreads. The problem is: Will people follow them when it is likely that Johnson — if the past is any indication — will not?

After all, breaking restrictions is precisely what has landed him in trouble. In December last year, according to multiple sources, there was a party at 10 Downing Street, the prime minister's official residence. At the time, parties were forbidden, and people were dying of Covid-19 in hospitals all over Britain, denied the comfort of their loved ones. That parties should come back to haunt Johnson is ironic, since we liked him for his levity. But levity, in a time of pandemic, is less charming than it once was.

The details of the party have emerged inch by inch. Then last week, a video was leaked in which the prime minister's advisers pondered how to answer media questions about the party. His spokeswoman Allegra Stratton, who has since resigned, giggled as she said, "This fictional party was a business meeting — and it was not socially distanced." They all laughed. And in that laughter, it was horribly clear that Johnson's tendency to surround himself with the inexperienced and entitled leaves a vacuum where a functioning government should be. Stratton was hired to be the voice of his government and to give a daily briefing in the American style. In the end, only one was broadcast — and it was a rehearsal, a fake.

There is every sign that the spell Johnson cast over the country is cracking, that people are waking up to the truth of him. The latest polls show the Conservative Party sliding to second place while Johnson's approval ratings continue their descent. It feels a long time since the elections in December 2019, when the country gave him an enormous majority of 80 seats.

In retrospect, the election campaign was explicitly romantic. Johnson's highest-profile campaign advert was a parody of a scene from the film "Love Actually," in which a man stands outside a married woman's home and tells her, using written signs, that he loves her. (Yes, it's creepy.) The signs in the ad were Brexit-related — "With any luck, by next year we'll have Brexit done" — but the meaning was clear. Johnson was a lover, and the country was seduced. Infatuations die hard but fast. Now two-thirds of the country does not trust him, and half thinks he should resign. The mood in his Conservative Party is, according to one member, "sulphurous." Even cabinet ministers believe he has imposed Plan B to distract from the "party crisis."

Many Conservative legislators, furious at the prime minister, are planning to oppose the new restrictions. A local election on Thursday, caused by the resignation of a corrupt legislator Johnson had disastrously tried to save, might suggest how alienated Conservative voters are. Elsewhere, allegations of corruption continue to mount. There is a long-brewing scandal over the funding of the renovation of Johnson's flat on Downing Street. Last week the Electoral Commission fined the Conservative Party 17,800 pounds, or about \$23,500, for not accurately reporting the donations that paid for the refurbishment — and the government standards adviser is reportedly considering resigning after apparently being misled by Johnson.

If it all seems trivial, then so is Johnson. The country faces serious problems — not just the pandemic and the fallout from Brexit but also an energy crisis, economic stagnation and vertiginous inflation. There is no sign that the prime minister can see, much less solve, them. A brinkman seeing how far he can go, he is too preoccupied with his survival. His address to the nation on Sunday night was a tellingly tired, perfunctory affair. As we watch Johnson's narrative play out, Britain feels like a country put on hold. We don't know whether the prime minister can save himself, let alone Christmas.

— Courtesy: *Gulf News*

China's BRI crown jewel joins the era of defiance and dissent

James Dorsey

Making things worse from China's perspective, a local cleric, a member of Pakistan's oldest Islamist political party, Jamaat-e-Islami, is leading the protests

THE crown jewel of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) increasingly looks like a powder keg that has exploded. Mass protests have for the past month swept Gwadar, a Chinese-dominated Pakistani port city 90 kilometres from the border with Iran that has long been plagued by intermittent protests and Baloch nationalist attacks on Chinese nationals and targets.

Making things worse from China's perspective, a local cleric, a member of Pakistan's oldest Islamist political party, Jamaat-e-Islami, is leading the protests.

Moreover, a breakdown of a ceasefire between the Pakistani government and Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), better known as the Pakistani Taliban, raises the spectre of not only Baloch nationalist but also Pakistani religious militants

further training their sites on Chinese targets. An attack in August, on a bus in northern Pakistan that carried Chinese construction workers is believed to have been carried out by the TTP although it did not claim responsibility. Thirteen people were killed, including nine Chinese nationals. The attack occurred before the conclusion of a since ruptured ceasefire between the TTP and Pakistan.

None of this bodes well for China as it seeks to come to grips with an Islamist regime in Afghanistan that shares a sliver of a border with Xinjiang, the north-western Chinese province. Authorities in Xinjiang are brutally trying to erase any seeds of Islamist thought, Sincize the faith with practices that violate Islamic law and practice, and cull potential ethnic identity or nationalist sentiment among the region's Turkic Muslim population.

Sitting at the top of the Arabian Sea, Gwadar is at the core of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is supposed to link Xinjiang to the Indo-Pacific and allow the People's Republic to circumvent the Strait of Malacca that is fraught with geopolitical, big power rivalry risk. With an investment of somewhere between US\$45 and \$60 billion, CPEC, involving infrastructure, energy, and telecommunications projects, is the single largest Chinese country outlay along the Belt and Road, an effort to make China the equivalent of all roads lead to Rome.

The last month of protests erupted as CPEC-related projects appeared to slow down and differences emerged regarding CPEC between the Pakistani and Chinese governments as questions were being raised in Beijing about the corridor's viability.

Gwadar's predominantly Baloch population has long felt that it has no stake in the city's development. Fishermen, a backbone of the city's traditional economy, were pushed out of their traditional fishing waters replaced by deep-

sea trawlers, some of which are allegedly Chinese-owned.

Locals feel humiliated by multiple security checkpoints at which they repeatedly have to identify and register themselves. The checkpoints were erected to protect the port, Chinese nationals and assets, and Pakistani officials. In addition, many fear that they will be further marginalized with an influx of foreigners.

"Through him, we have got a voice: Gwadar belongs to us, and we no longer want to be ignored," said a local resident.

Few in Gwadar put any faith in Prime Minister Imran Khan's recognition of the protesters' grievances as 'very legitimate' and promise to take them up with the province's political leadership.

Neither Mr. Khan nor his predecessor, Nawaz Sharif, or China have, over the years, sought to ensure that the local population would have a stake in the Chinese-led development of Gwadar. If protests in Pakistan's greater neighbourhood are anything to go by, demonstrators are unlikely to surrender the street unless forced to do so by a crackdown or external factors like the Covid-19 pandemic until they see actions rather than words. In recent weeks, promises by the provincial government to crack down on illegal trawler fishing within 12 nautical miles of Gwadar and handing over control of the border with Iran to provincial instead of national forces failed to end the protests.

"We have no trust in them," Mr. Rehman told a protest rally in late November after the government agreed to meet demonstrators' demands. That message stands almost three weeks later as the protests continue unabated.

—Dr. James M. Dorsey is an award-winning journalist and scholar and a Senior Fellow at the National University of Singapore's Middle East Institute.

Briefs

Marnus, Warner put Australia in control

ADELAIDE: Marnus Labuschagne and David Warner both ground out gritty 95s as Australia seized control of the second Ashes Test on Thursday, surviving an onslaught from veteran English seamers Jimmy Anderson and Stuart Broad. The visitors came into the day-night Adelaide Test on the back of a nine-wicket defeat at Brisbane but confident they could get back into the five-match series. But even with the greatest wicket-takers in English history back in the side they struggled to make inroads with the pink ball as the home team compiled 221 for two by the close. A consolation for England is that the world's premier Test bowler, Australia skipper Pat Cummins, was ruled out less than three hours before the start over a Covid scare.

The tourists did snare an early breakthrough with Broad getting Marcus Harris for three, before Warner and Labuschagne put on 172 for the second wicket. Warner looked destined for his 25th Test century as he began to open his bat, but fell in the nervous 90s for the second Test in a row, caught by Broad off Ben Stokes. Labuschagne almost did the same, also on 95, when wicketkeeper Jos Buttler dropped a sitter off Anderson - much to the delight of the partisan crowd. "A few prayers up there because I don't know how that happened," Labuschagne said of Buttler's costly mistake. - APP

Salah closes in on another record

LONDON: Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp may well be biased, but he has had a front-row seat to witness the incredible form of forward Mohamed Salah - and the Egyptian international could grab yet another record very soon.

If the 29-year-old scores or registers an assist in Thursday's home game against 19th-placed Newcastle - a side he has never failed to score against at Anfield - then Salah will have equalled Jamie Vardy's record of scoring or creating a goal in 15 consecutive Premier League matches.

In October he became the first Liverpool man to score in nine successive games and the hat-trick against Manchester United in the following match left him as the highest-scoring African player in Premier League history, overtaking Didier Drogba's mark of 104 goals. These records can be added on to a whole heap of historical achievements in the red of Liverpool. His 32 goals in 2017-18 remains the highest in a 38-game Premier League season, he is Liverpool's all-time Champions League top goalscorer (33) and became the fastest foreign player to tally 100 goal involvements in the Premier League, to name just a few. - APP

UEFA to launch vaccination campaign

MANCHESTER, England, Dec 16 (Reuters) - UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin has urged players across Europe to get vaccinated as soon as possible against COVID-19 but said it was still a personal choice, for now. UEFA is set to launch a video aimed at players featuring doctors explaining the benefits of vaccinations. "For me, I believe in science and I got vaccinated," Ceferin told a news conference on Thursday. "I think that they should get vaccinated as soon as possible but I still believe, for now, it is a personal choice," he added. "We have to be smart, we have to explain things, people are not stupid, people understand when you explain, in a nice way not judging them, but explaining why vaccinating is good." Ceferin said the video featured only doctors explaining the benefits of the vaccine as well as addressing questions about side-effects. - APP

Pakistan, West Indies ODI series postponed till June 2022

"The West Indies team members, who returned negative results following Wednesday's PCR and today's Rapid Antigen tests, will depart from Pakistan after tonight's match

SPORTS DESK

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) and Cricket West Indies (CWI) have issued a joint statement after five more positive cases were reported in the West Indies camp following Wednesday's PCR testing, raising the total number of positive cases to nine since their arrival in Karachi on December 9.

"On Thursday morning and as part of the PCB COVID-19 Protocols, Rapid Antigen tests were conducted on the remaining 15 West Indies players and six player support personnel. All 21 members of the West Indies touring party returned negative test result. As such, Thursday's T20 International (T20I) proceeded as planned. "However, taking into consideration both the teams' welfare as well as limited



resources in the West Indies side for the ODIs, it has been agreed that the series, which forms part of the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup Super League,

will be postponed and rescheduled for early June 2022. "This will provide the West Indies with an equal opportunity to field their best avail-

able players for the World Cup qualification matches.

"The West Indies team members, who returned negative results following Wednesday's PCR and today's Rapid Antigen tests, will depart from Pakistan after tonight's match. Those who have tested positive will complete their isolation in Karachi before their travel arrangements are finalised to allow them to rejoin their families in time for Christmas celebrations.

"Meanwhile, the Pakistan team members, all of whom have returned PCR negative after Wednesday's tests, will also be leaving the Managed Event Environment after tonight's third T20I.

"The CWI would like to thank the PCB for its excellent series arrangements and appreciates its support in rescheduling the ODI series in June 2022."

Upsets Al-Tamimi in Asian Individual Squash C'ship



AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Nasir Iqbal and Tayyab Aslam are the only hopes left for Pakistan to clinch the championship title as both Pakistani players entered in the quarterfinal round of ongoing 21st Asian Individual Squash Championship here at Mushaf Squash Complex, Islamabad.

Nasir Iqbal (PAK) bt Abdullah Mohammed Al-Tamimi (QAT) 9-11, 11-9, 8-11, 12-10 (56 Min).

Pakistan's big hope and eleventh seed Naisr Iqbal stunned championship second seed Abdullah Mohammed Al-Tamimi from Qatar by 3-2 to cruise into the quarter finals of men's Asian

Individual Squash Championship. Nasir showed his wonderful skills and powerful backhand during 56 minutes of the match in the prestigious championship.

After losing the first game by 9-11 against Abdullah Mohammed Al-Tamimi, Nasir Iqbal fought back by winning the second and third sets by 11-9, 11-9 and then Al-Tamimi won the fourth game by 8-11 to equal the match by 2-2 games. In the decisive game, saw battle between two strong players witnessed the audacious but at the end Nasir won the decisive game by 12-10 to reach in the quarter final round of the championship.

In the others Men's pre quarterfinal round matches Tayyab Aslam who is

also third seed in the championship outclass Israr Ahmad by 11-8, 7-11, 11-2, 12-10 in 45 Minutes match to qualify for the quarterfinals.

Pakistan's Asim Khan missed the easy opportunity to alive in the championship as he lost the close counter against Mohammad Syafiq Bin Mohd Kamal Malaysia by 13-11, 6-11, 11-3, 5-11, 5-11 in 73 minutes match while top seed Ng Eain Yow from Malaysia beat Farhan Zaman from Pakistan by 1-4, 11-4, 11-8.

Match Results: Ng Eain Yow (MAS) bt Farhan Zaman (PAK) 11-4, 11-4, 11-8 (17 Min), Mohammad Syafiq Bin Mohd Kamal (MAS) bt Mohammad Asim Khan (PAK) 11-13, 11-6, 3-11, 11-5, 11-5 (73 Min), Lau Tsz Kwan (HKG) bt Syed Azlan Iqbal S Amjad (QAT) 14-12, 9-11, 11-5, 11-4 (35 Min), Tayyab Aslam (PAK) bt Israr Ahmad (PAK) 11-8, 7-11, 11-2, 12-10 (45 Min), Yuen Chee Wern (MAS) bt Lee Ho Yin (HKG) 11-8, 7-11, 11-6, 11-7 (38 Min), Yip Tsz Fung (HKG) bt Mohammad Addeen Idrakie Bin Bahtiar (MAS) 11-5, 11-9, 11-2 (27 Min), Leung Chi Hin Henry (HKG) bt Amaad Fareed (PAK) 5-11, 7-11, 11-9, 11-8, 12-10 (75 Min), Nasir Iqbal (PAK) bt Abdullah Mohammed Al-Tamimi (QAT) 9-11, 11-9, 11-9, 8-11, 12-10 (56 Min).

Women Event: Ho Tze Lok (HKG) bt Yeheni Kuruppu (SRI) 11-2, 11-0, 11-2 (17 Min), Chan Yiwen (MAS) bt Komal Khan (PAK) 11-5, 11-1, 11-1 (13 Min), Chan Sin Yuk (HKG) bt Anam Mustafa Aziz (PAK) 11-2, 11-1, 11-1 (11 Min) and Rachel Mae Arnold (MAS) bt Noor Ul Ain Ejaz 11-3, 11-2, 11-2 (10 Min).

Djokovic crowned ITF champion for record 7th time

WEB DESK

LONDON: Men's world number one Novak Djokovic has been named the 2021 ITF world champion for a record seventh time while women's number one Ash Barty has picked up her second crown, the International Tennis Federation (ITF) said on Thursday.

Djokovic, who finished the year as number one for a record seventh time, won the Australian Open, French Open and Wimbledon while he fell short at the Tokyo Olympics and the U.S. Open final in his quest for a rare golden slam. The Serb was tied with American great Pete Sampras on six wins for the title first awarded in 1978. Barty, who won her first Wimbledon title this year and a bronze medal at the Olympics in mixed doubles, previously won the award in 2019.

"After such a rewarding year for me, my team, family and fans it is a great honour to be named the ITF World Champion for the seventh time," Djokovic said.

"I am very grateful and proud for the results I've achieved and fortunate I had a chance to compete for the Serbian



national team, too."

Djokovic is tied with Rafa Nadal and Roger Federer on 20 Grand Slams and could make the record his own if he wins next month's Australian Open - a tournament he has won a record nine times. Croatian duo Nikola Pietrangeli and Mate Pavić were named ITF men's doubles world champions after winning nine titles this season, while Barbara Krejčíková and Katerina Siniakova won the women's doubles award for a second time.

"It has been an incredible year for us - Wimbledon, Olympics, nine titles, year end number one and now first Croatian pair ever to be named ITF World Champions," Pavić said.

"It's something special and we're very happy about it."

Real, Barca and Bilbao sue La Liga

MADRID: Real Madrid, Barcelona, and Athletic Bilbao are taking legal action against La Liga over a 1.994 billion euro private equity deal that the administrators of elite Spanish soccer agreed last week, the clubs said.

All but five of the 42 clubs in the top two divisions signed up to the 1.994 billion euro (\$2.24 billion) investment from CVC Capital Partners, the first of its kind in Europe. Four clubs, including the top-flight trio, opted out and one abstained. The deal was "an illegal transaction that causes irreparable damage to the entire Spanish football sector and flagrantly violates the most elementary principles of Spanish sports law and the La Liga statutes," Real Madrid, Barcelona, and Athletic Bilbao said in a statement announcing legal action and published on their websites.

The agreement, dubbed "LaLiga Boost", buys CVC an 8.2% stake in a new company that will get broadcasting revenues and sponsorship rights for 50 years. It commits clubs to allocate 70% of funds for investments to new infrastructure and modernization projects. Up to 15% can be used to sign players, with the remaining 15% for reducing debt. La Liga said it confirmed the legality of the deal. "This decision by Real Madrid CF was a foreseeable reaction, given the Club's history of head-on opposition and appeal against any strategic initiative that represents an advance and a boost for the competition and its clubs," it said in a statement. The CVC deal looked at the risk of unraveling last week when Barcelona, Real Madrid, and Athletic Bilbao proposed an alternative proposal for JPMorgan, Bank of America, and HSBC to jointly lend 2 billion euros in exchange for a fixed annual payment of 115 million euros over 25 years, a document seen by Reuters showed. Barcelona and Real Madrid were also among the driving forces behind a failed plan to launch a breakaway European Super League earlier this year and vowed to continue to try to set it up. - APP

Pakistan record its highest T-20 chase to take series 3-0



NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Pakistan's opening pair Mohammad Rizwan and skipper Babar Azam on Thursday powered the Men In Green to a series sweep as they beat the Green Shirts beat the Windies by 7 wickets.

The Windies had handed an ample 208-run target to Pakistan after skipper Nicholas Pooran decided to bat first in the final match at the National Stadium, Karachi.

But the undeterred openers scored 50+ runs each, leaving the Windies bowlers under pressure. Babar scored 79 runs off 53 balls with the help of nine 4s and two 6s, while Rizwan made 87 runs off 45 balls and smashed 10 4s and three 6s.

Pooran had played a captain's knock as his half-century powered the West Indies to an ample 207-3 total against Pakistan in the third and final T20I.

The decision to bat first proved fruitful for the Windies as their openers - Brandon King and Shamarh Brooks

- gave them a good start against Pakistani bowlers. The openers managed to get 92 runs on the board, as King hit 43 runs - seven 4s and two 6s - off 21 balls and Brooks made 49 runs - two 4s and four 6s - off 31 balls before they were sent packing. After the dismissal of the openers, Pooran came to the ground and managed to pull off an impressive knock as he hit 64 runs off 37 balls, with two 4s and six 6s.

Darren Bravo also kept the score board ticking as he added 34 runs to the Windies' total.

Sarah, Ushna reaches semis of BB Tennis C'ship

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Top national tennis girls Sarah Mahboob, Ushna Suhail, Hania Navaid and Sheeza Sajid reached the semi final round of ongoing Benazir Bhutto Shaheed National Tennis Championship here at Islamabad Tennis Complex (ITC) on Thursday. In Women's singles quarterfinal round Sarah Mahboob beat Meheq Khokhar in straight sets as Sarah Mahboob dominated all the time and entered into the semi final round by winning the match 6-1, 6-1. In the second quarter finals talented Ushna Sohail wins the match on the easy way against Asfa Shahbaz by 6-2, 6-0.

In the third quarterfinal match Hania Navaid beat Mahvish Chishtei by 2-1 after losing the first set by 2-6. She won the match by winning two consecutive sets by 6-3 and 6-0 while Sheeza Sajid got a walkover against Zahra Khan.

In Men's Singles category pre quarterfinals round have also been completed as Barak Ullah beat Shahzad Khan by 3-0 while emerging player Mohammad Shoab out-classed Usman Ejaz 6-0, 6-1.



Yousaf Khalil beat Hasheesh Kumar 6-1, 6-1, Mohammad Abid beat Hamid Israr 6-0, 6-0; Mudasar Murtaza beat Imran Bhatti 6-2, 6-2; Aqeel Khan beat Asad Ullah by 7-5, 6-0; Muzammil Murtaza beat Talha Asif 6-0, 6-1 and Heera Ashiq beat Sami Zeb 6-2, 6-0 respectively.

Men's Doubles Quarter final Round Results: Muzammil Murtaza/ Mudasar Murtaza bt Ahmed Asjad/Talha Bin Asif 7-5, 6-1; Usman Ejaz/Shahzad Khan bt Israr Gul/Irfan Ullah 6-2, 6-2; Aqeel Khan/Mohammad

Abid bt S.Nofil Kaleem/Parbat Kumar 6-2, 6-0, Heera Ashiq/Yousef Khalil bt Hasheesh Kumar/Mahatir Muhammad 6-4, 6-4

Boys U-18 Singles 2nd Round Results: Nalain Abbas bt Asad Zaman 6-2, 6-2; Faizan Fayyaz bt Mohammad Salaar 6-4, 6-2; Mohammad Huzaifa Khan bt Shaeel Durab 6-4, 6-3; Ahmed Nael bt Kamran Khan 6-4, 6-2; Mohammad Talha Khan bt Farman Shakeel 6-2, 6-2; Hamid Israr bt Mohammad Zaryab Khan 6-3, 6-4; Mahatir Muhammad bt Mohammad Hamza Asim 6-2, 6-4

Girls U-18 Singles Quarter Final Round Results: Saher Aleem bt Amara Khan 6-1, 6-0; Amna Ali Qayum bt Zara Khan 6-0, 6-0; Sheeza Sajid bt Shoa Ali 6-1, 6-4, Sara Perwaiz bt Zara Suliman W.O

Boys U-14 Singles Matches: Hamza Roman bt Ihsan Ullah Kabir 4-1, 4-0; Abdullah bt Samer Zaman 4-2, 4-2; Mohammad Ibrahim Ashraf bt S. Hamza Hussain 4-1, 4-1; Zohaib Afzal bt Nabeel Ali Qayum 5-3, 5-4(1); Mohammad Salaar bt Ammar Maqsood 4-0, 4-0; Ali Zain bt Sameer Maqsood 4-0, 4-0, Asad Zaman bt Mohammad Junaid 4-0, 4-0

Girls U-14 Singles Matches: Zara Khan bt Mahrukh Sajid 4-1, 2-4, 4-2; Zunaisha Nour bt Shoa Ali 4-1, 5-3.

Nadal has low expectations for Australian Open

SPORTS DESK

ABU DHABI: The 35-year-old Spaniard plays either Andy Murray or Dan Evans on Friday at the Mubadala World Tennis Championship, an exhibition event in Abu Dhabi.

Nadal has played one event - Washington in August - since early June.

"I know the comeback will be not easy," said the 20-time major champion.

Nadal was hampered by the foot injury at the French Open in June, where he failed to defend his title for the first time since 2016 after losing to Novak Djokovic in the semi-finals.

The problem ruled him out of Wimbledon and the Olympics, although he did return to tour action in Washington at the start of August.

After beating American Jack Sock in his opening match, Nadal lost to South Africa's Lloyd Harris and has not played since. The Spaniard then ended his season to recover from the injury, which he said he had been "suffering" with for a year.

Now he is preparing to return in Abu Dhabi and - providing there are no further setbacks - plans to play in an ATP tournament in Melbourne before the Australian Open starts on 17 January.

"It has been a very tough period of time for me, honestly, so just to be here is great news for me," Nadal said in Abu Dhabi on Thursday. "I really hope the foot is going to get better and better to be again at the level that I want to be. If I am able to play with no limitations, I want to fight again for everything, so that's the goal." On his chances in Melbourne, he added: "It's going to be super difficult for me. If things are going well, I'm only going to play one tournament before Australia and these two matches here.

"I really hope the foot is going to get better and better to be again at the level that I want to be. If I am able to play with no limitations, I want to fight again for everything, so that's the goal." On his chances in Melbourne, he added: "It's going to be super difficult for me. If things are going well, I'm only going to play one tournament before Australia and these two matches here.

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Briefs

No Nord Stream 2 approval: Germany

BERLIN: The approval process for the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline from Russia to Germany is likely to drag into the second half of 2022, German energy regulator BNetzA said on Thursday. German authorities are waiting for the pipeline's Swiss-based "Nord Stream 2 AG" operating company to submit documents to restart the certification process, BNetzA president Jochen Homann told a press conference. The pipeline would then also have to be approved by the European Commission, he said, "which means that decisions on this will not be made in the first half of the year". Nord Stream 2 was completed in September but BNetzA suspended the German approval process in November, saying it needed to become compliant with German law before it could be certified. The Baltic Sea pipeline is set to double supplies of cheap natural gas from Russia to Germany, which the EU's top economy says is needed to help it transition away from coal and nuclear energy. — APP

S. Korea bans gatherings amid virus surge

AGENCIES

SEOUL: South Korea will prohibit private social gatherings of five or more people nationwide and force restaurants to close at 9 p.m., rolling out the country's toughest coronavirus restrictions yet as hospitals grapple with the deadliest month of the pandemic. Prime Minister Kim Bo-kyum said Thursday that the new measures will be enforced for at least 16 days after taking effect on Saturday, saying there's an urgent need to bring the country to a "standstill" with the delta-driven surge overwhelming stretched hospitals and exhausted medical workers. Schools in the densely populated capital Seoul and nearby metropolitan areas, where the virus has hit hardest, will also go back to remote learning after fully reopening in November. The Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency reported 7,622 new cases on Thursday, close to the daily record of 7,850 set a day earlier. That brought the national caseload to 544,117, with nearly 97,000 added in December alone. Most of the transmissions were in the capital region, where officials say more than 86% of intensive care units designated for COVID-19 treatment are already occupied amid a spike in hospitalizations and deaths.

YouTube again blocks RT German

WEB DESK

FRANKFURT: YouTube on Thursday again blocked a German-language channel of Russian state broadcaster RT for breaching user terms, having drawn Moscow's ire in the past with similar shutdowns. Broadcaster RT - previously known as Russia Today - said on its website that YouTube had taken down its newly launched "Auf Sendung" (On Air) channel "without explanation". The 24/7 channel can still be viewed on other platforms, including on the RT DE website. A YouTube spokesperson told AFP that the channel was removed for trying to circumvent its earlier termination of RT's German channels RT DE and Der Fehlende Part. "When a channel is terminated, the uploader is not allowed to use, own or create any other YouTube channels," the spokesperson said. "As a result of this circumvention attempt, the new channel 'RT auf Sendung' was permanently removed for violating YouTube's terms of service." Google-owned YouTube in September issued a warning to RT DE for violating its coronavirus disinformation guidelines and then shuttered two channels for breaching user terms.

There is no greater value than independence: Kazakh Speaker

The new capital was built in the center of the country as well as the holy Turkic city of Turkestan has been actively developing recently

NEWS DESK

NUR-SULTAN: Senate Speaker Maulen Ashimbayev took to his Facebook account to congratulate Kazakhstan on the 30th anniversary of Kazakhstan's independence, Kazinform reports. This historic milestone of our independence we celebrate with the significant achievements. Thanks to the strategic policy of First President of Kazakhstan - Elbasy Nursultan Nazarbayev the systemic development of the country was achieved in all spheres. The most important thing is that our independence State has been fully established," said Ashimbayev. He noted that the international community recognized Kazakhstan as a territory of peace, stability, and accord. Over the years of independence, it has been made possible to advance in studying the history of the country, supporting the national culture and strengthening of the status of the State language. The new capital was built in the center of the country as well as the holy Turkic city of Turkestan has been actively developing recently. The Senate Speaker also stressed that independence also gave an impetus to the development of all the regions of Kazakhstan. Our today's task is to continue this course and further strengthen independence. The policy of President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev aims at ensuring succession and progress. There is no



greater value than independence for our people. It united and mobilized our society. Now it is important to value what we have achieved and further multiply them. In this regard, it is necessary to keep stability and unity of the people as well as actively work for the benefit of the country," noted the Kazakh Senate Speaker.

Kazakh President receives congratulatory letters

NUR-SULTAN: Heads of foreign States and international organizations are sending their congratulatory letters on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of independence of Kazakhstan to Head of State Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Kazinform cites the press service of Akorda. President of Russia Vladimir Putin sent his heartfelt congratulations to the Kazakh Head of State on the Independence Day. The Russian leader underscored the high authority of the country in the international arena. In his congratulatory letter, Chinese Chairman Xi Jinping stressed that over 30 years of independence Kazakhstan has taken a brand new image and makes decisive steps towards entering the list of top 30 countries of the world. US President Joseph Biden noted that he is pleased to join in the celebration of Kazakhstan's thirty-year leadership in securing the peace. Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev commended the ongoing systemic and large-scale reforms in the country. In his letter, Kyrgyz President Sadyr Japarov noted the grandiose achievements and great changes of the country. The Kazakh President also received the congratulatory letters on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of independence of Kazakhstan from presidents of Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Belarus, Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, UAE, Iran, Poland, Finland, Austria, Cuba, Brazil, India, and so on. — News Desk



MOSCOW: Award of 'International Military Cooperation Development' Medal given to Defense Attache (Pakistan) by Russia in a ceremony at ministry of defense for services in enhancing defense cooperation. The ceremony was headed by Deputy Minister of Defense, Colonel General Alexander Fomin. — DNA

Academic forum on China-Pak Sci-tech co-op held

BEIJING: The 6th Academic Forum on China-Pakistan Scientific, Technical and Economic Cooperation under the "Belt and Road" Joint Training Center Initiative with the theme of Inheriting China-Pakistan Friendship and Joining Hands to Create the Future was held online and offline, with more than 200 Chinese and Pakistani experts and scholars participated in it. Department of International Cooperation, China Association for Science and Technology (CAST), Beijing Association for Science and Technology (BAST), Embassy of China in Pakistan, Embassy of Pakistan Beijing, the Beijing Technology and Business University (BTBU) jointly organized the forum. "This year marks the 70th anniversary of the establishment of Pakistan-China diplomatic ties and there has been a renewed focus on cooperation in the fields of higher education and science and technology. Moin ul Haque, Pakistan Ambassador to China highlighted.

The BTBU organizes international forums, trainings and exchanges through two platforms of the "Belt and Road" Joint Training Center jointly established by the Pakistan Study Center of Science and Technology and Economy and the international science and technology organization in Pakistan-the ECO Science Foundation (ECOSF), CEN reported. Dr. Talat Shabbir, China-Pakistan Study Centre (CPSC), Institute of Strategic Studies in Islamabad (ISSI), and Dr. Di Yuna, Executive Director of BTBU PSC, signed the memorandum of academic cooperation on behalf of both sides. Dr. Shabbir emphasized that the construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor has promoted the exchanges and cooperation between the two peoples and improved the economic and living standards of Pakistan. The signing of the agreement is of great significance. — APP

Russian military buildup continues around Ukraine: NATO

The alliance "will strive for a better relationship with Russia" and NATO remained open for dialogue with Moscow within the framework of NATO-Russia Council, a co-op platform created in 2002

NEWS DESK

BRUSSELS: The NATO chief said on Thursday that Russia's "provocative" military buildup continued despite international pressure. "We see no sign that this buildup is stopping or slowing down. On the contrary, it continues," NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg told reporters following his meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. During the meeting, Stoltenberg said, they discussed Russia's military buildup in and around Ukraine that features "tens of thousands of combat-ready troops, tanks, artillery, armored units, drones, a lot of electronic warfare systems." He said the substantial mobilization "has no justification. It is provocative, it is destabilizing and it undermines security in Europe."



Stoltenberg said that the alliance "will strive for a better relationship with Russia" and NATO remained open for dialogue with Moscow within the framework of NATO-Russia Council, a cooperation platform created in 2002.

He, however, reiterated his stance that Russia does not have any say on Ukraine's NATO membership since the decision rests with Kyiv and the 30 NATO allies. Talking about the NATO-Ukraine partnership, Stoltenberg explained that

NATO supported the country with command and control of cyber defenses, and allies provided equipment to strengthen the capabilities of the Ukrainian army through the NATO Agency or bilaterally. He also noted that NATO's cooperation with Ukraine was defensive and it did not threaten Russia in any way. "The aggressor here is Russia that has used military force against Ukraine, illegally annexing a part of Ukraine, Crimea back in 2014, and continues to stabilize eastern Ukraine," Stoltenberg added. In 2014, Russia began to support separatist forces in eastern Ukraine against the central government, a policy that it has maintained for the past seven years. For the second time this year, Moscow reportedly concentrated significant military troops in and around Ukraine last month.

Ceremony held for APS Peshawar martyrs in Ankara

Ambassador Qazi thanked the people of Turkey who were among the first in the world to reach out and express strong solidarity with the people of Pakistan in dark hour of grief

DNA

ANKARA: A commemorative ceremony was held today at Keçioren, Ankara to pay homage to the school children and staff martyred in the brutal terrorist attack on Army Public School (APS) Peshawar in 2014. Ambassador of Pakistan Mr. Muhammad Syrus Sajjad Qazi, officials from Keçioren Municipality and Pakistan Embassy officials attended the event. Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador Syrus Qazi stated that on the tragic day of 16 December 2014, APS Peshawar was attacked by the terrorists, martyring over 140 people including 132 children. He noted that this carnage was one of the most tragic events in our history that had left every Pakistani in utter shock and grief. The Ambassador reiterated that as a nation we pledge never to allow such tragedies to befall on us in future. Ambassador Qazi thanked the people of Turkey who were among the first in the world



to reach out and express strong solidarity with the people of Pakistan in dark hour of grief. "The moral gesture of Keçioren Municipality of planting a tree for each martyr is a source of strength for the grieving families and the Pakistani Nation. This would keep the memory of our children alive in Turkey forever," he underlined. The Ambassador along with Keçioren Municipality officials laid wreath at the memorial of the APS martyrs, followed by prayers for the innocent departed souls. The participants also laid flowers at the memorial. When the heinous APS Peshawar attack happened on 16 December 2014, the people and leadership of Turkey extended spontaneous support to Pakistan and declared a day of national mourning. Moreover, as a show of solidarity, Keçioren Municipality and Youth Wing members of the Justice and Development (AK) Party planted trees, one for each shaheed, at the AK Party Memorial Forest in Keçioren, Ankara.

Inflation a global phenomenon: BoE

ISLAMABAD: Inflation is a global phenomenon which also hit England, said the Bank of England (BoE) on Thursday while highlighting the policy measures being taken by the policymakers to address the issue. Rise in petroleum and energy price was a major cause of inflation in energy and food prices in the United Kingdom and the Bank had taken policy measures to maintain economic discipline in the country which increased interest rate, Director Investment of the Bank of England, Ms Nanet Mui told BBC. She said the Bank of England would ensure issuing policy guidelines for businessmen and households before further rise in interest rate, which would make them aware in advance. It was the policy decision of the Bank of England, she said. According to a BBC report, the inflation rate in the United Kingdom soared to 5.1 percent in the previous month of November, up from 4.2 percent the month before, highest rate for over a decade. It's over two and half times above the Bank of England's target of two percent, the report said. The current inflation rate in the country was driven by record petrol prices, used cars, clothes and food. According to the report, the Retail Price Index was also all-time high at 7.1 recorded in the last 30 years. — APP

France bans most UK travel

AGENCIES

PARIS: France said Thursday that it would ban non-essential travel to and from Britain in a bid to curb the lightning spread of the Omicron Covid-19 variant, which is forecast to become the dominant risk for health authorities worldwide. Countries around the world began urging against foreign travel and also ramping up domestic restrictions to battle Omicron, which scientists believe spreads faster than any other variant even if uncertainty remains over how dangerous it is. Britain has seen case levels explode in recent weeks to record levels amid fears that the variant could cause havoc in the health system as parties and gatherings are planned for Christmas. Starting at midnight on Saturday, travellers will need "an essential reason to travel to, or come from, the UK, both for the unvaccinated and vaccinated... People cannot travel for touristic or professional reasons", the French government said in a statement. added that French citizens and EU nationals could still return to France from the UK, but they will now need a negative Covid test less than 24 hours old, and a blanket quarantine will be enforced upon return to France.

Bosnia police jail 8 for war crimes

FOREIGN DESK

SARAJEVO: Bosnian police on Thursday arrested eight former Bosnian Serb army commanders and soldiers in the 1992 wartime killing of about 100 Bosniaks, including women, children and older people, authorities said. The eight are facing charges of crimes against humanity and war crimes against war prisoners, Bosnian security agency SIPA said. A statement from the Bosnian prosecutor's office said the arrests relate to the 1992 killings in the southern Bosnian region of Nevesinje of around 100 Bosniaks, who are mostly Muslims. The victims included babies and small children from 15 days old to 2 years old, as well as dozens of women and older people. Entire families were killed, along with other victims, the prosecutor's statement said. The remains of 49 people have been recovered so far while the search is underway for the remains of at least 47 more, the statement added. Thursday's arrests came after similar actions were conducted in previous weeks also targeting suspected war criminals.

Briefs

Will bring up human rights: US Indian nominee

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: The United States President, Joe Biden's choice for the next ambassador to India, Eric Garcetti, has said that he will actively bring up human rights if appointed to the position. According to Kashmir Media Service, Eric Garcetti told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that he would also raise the matter of discrimination against Muslims in India, such as through the Citizenship Amendment Act, if confirmed to the position. The Citizenship Amendment Act, passed by Parliament in 2019, allows undocumented migrants from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh to apply for Indian citizenship, as long as they are not Muslims. The Act, criticised for being discriminatory, had triggered protests across India. At the briefing on Tuesday, Garcetti said respect for human rights and strong democratic institutions were key to the relationship between India and the US. He added that he would "respectfully engage" with the Indian government on these matters, The Hindu reported.

Mobile services to be suspended in Islamabad

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Federal government has decided to suspend mobile services in Islamabad for three days starting from Friday (tomorrow) in the wake of the meeting of Council for Foreign Ministers of Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) on Afghanistan. According to sources in the interior ministry, the mobile services will remain suspended in Islamabad from December 17 to 19 and Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) has been issued directives in this regard. Moreover, sources privy to the matter said that the foreign ministry has proposed a public holiday in the federal capital on December 20 in order to ensure a safe movement and foolproof security of the dignitaries, foreign ministers, from multiple Muslim and other countries. On December 04, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi has announced that Pakistan will host the session of the OIC in Islamabad on Dec 19. Shah Mahmood Qureshi, while addressing a press conference today, said that the 17th extraordinary session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers on the Afghanistan situation will be hosted by Pakistan on December 19.

Saudi Arabia dispatches aid to Afghanistan

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia sent two aircraft carrying humanitarian aid to Afghanistan Thursday, state media reported, its first such initiative since the Taliban took control of the crisis-stricken country in August. The Kingdom's state-run King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center (KSRelief) sent more than 65 tonnes of aid, including 1,647 food baskets, the official Saudi Press Agency said. The centre's supervisor general, Abdullah al-Rabeeh, said the Saudi humanitarian air bridge would see a total of six planes deliver more than 197 tonnes of aid to Afghanistan. He said the aid would also be delivered overland on 200 trucks from neighbouring Pakistan. The Gulf Arab countries agreed during a summit in Riyadh on Tuesday to "contribute in mobilising international efforts to provide humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people and to improving their economic conditions". - APP

China to work with Pakistan for CPEC development

The BRI, with the CPEC as a flagship project, utilizes the economic geography and enhances the connectivity of Asia, Europe and Africa, the spokesperson added

NEWS DESK

BEIJING: China stands ready to work with Pakistan to promote the high-quality development of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) so that it will drive growth and benefit people's livelihood, and play a bigger role in promoting regional connectivity and economic integration, a Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson said on Thursday. "The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a pilot project of the Belt and Road Initiative.

China stands ready to work with Pakistan to promote the high-quality development of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)," Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin said in a written reply in response to a comment made by Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi about the BRI and CPEC. Addressing the Margalla Dialogue 2021 organized by the Islamabad Policy Research Institute, an Islamabad-based think tank recently, Qureshi said that the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) will bring prosperity for



people across the world through generating global integration. The BRI, with the CPEC as a flagship project, utilizes the economic

geography and enhances the connectivity of Asia, Europe and Africa, he added. The spokesperson said that as Foreign Minister Qureshi pointed out, the Belt and Road cooperation has removed infrastructure bottlenecks facing many regions along the route. "It promotes connectivity, and makes important contribution to global trade facilitation and economic growth," he added. Wang Wenbin remarked that the CPEC is a pilot project of the Belt and Road Initiative. China stands ready to work with Paki-

stan to promote the high-quality development of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) so that it will drive growth and benefit people's livelihood, and play a bigger role in promoting regional connectivity and economic integration, he added. In his speech, Foreign Minister Qureshi highlighting Pakistan's strategic pivot from geopolitics to geo-economics, the foreign minister said a country like Pakistan situated on the crossroad of South, Central and West Asia will remain accessible to all and reach out to all.



ISLAMABAD: Muhammad Ayub Afridi, Advisor to Prime Minister on Overseas Pakistanis & Human Resource Development (OP&HRD) presenting a souvenir to Suh Sangpyo, Ambassador of Korea to Pakistan. - DNA

Korean Envoy meets PM Adviser Ayub Afridi

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Suh Sangpyo, Ambassador of Korea to Pakistan called on Muhammad Ayub Afridi, Advisor to Prime Minister on Overseas Pakistanis & Human Resource Development (OP&HRD) in his office here the 16th December, 2021 and congratulated him on his appointment as Advisor. Besides bilateral relations of mutual interests, the matters relating to Employment Permit System (EPS) were discussed. While appreciating the Korean government for hiring of Pakistani workers regularly, the Advisor reiterated him to increase quota for Pakistanis under EPS. Besides manufacturing area in which presently Pakistani workers are hired, other sectors like Construction, Agriculture and Fisheries may also be opened under EPS since Pakistan has trained manpower for these sectors. The Advisor requested the Ambassador to include Pakistani workers EPS returnee workers in Korean EPS in Agriculture, Construction & Fisheries sectors. The Ambassador of Korea assured that he will take up these proposals with his government. Muhammad Ayub Afridi, Advisor to PM on OP&HRD thanked the Ambassador of Korea for his gesture and assured him of continued coordination and enhanced cooperation for export of Pakistani workers to Korea.

Queen Elizabeth cancels pre-Christmas lunch

FOREIGN DESK

LONDON: Queen Elizabeth has cancelled a pre-Christmas lunch with her family as a precaution while cases of COVID-19 soar in Britain, a Buckingham Palace source said. "The decision is a precautionary one as it is felt to put too many people's Christmas arrangements at risk if it went ahead. "While there is regret that it is cancelled, there is a belief it is the right thing to do for all." England's chief medical officer warned people on Wednesday not to mix with others unless they have to in the run-up to Christmas after Britain recorded its most daily coronavirus cases since the start of the pandemic. Britain's 95-year-old monarch spent the majority of the pandemic at Windsor Castle to the west of London. Her husband Prince Philip died in April this year after more than seven decades of marriage.



NZ honours Pakistani hero Naeem Rashid

PM Jacinda said the medal, which has only been awarded twice before, was New Zealand's non-combat equivalent of the Victoria Cross

NEWS DESK

WELLINGTON: Two New Zealanders were awarded the country's highest bravery award Thursday for confronting a white supremacist gunman during a 2019 terror attack on Christchurch mosques that claimed the lives of 51 Muslim worshippers. Naeem Rashid, who died in the attack, and survivor Abdul Aziz were awarded the New Zealand Cross for great bravery in a situation of extreme danger for their actions during the March 2019 shootings. Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said the medal, which has only been awarded twice before, was New Zealand's non-combat equivalent of the Victoria Cross. A further eight people, including two police officers who apprehended gunman Brenton Tarrant as he tried to flee the scene in a car, also received bravery decorations. Ardern said the actions of those honoured probably

prevented the death toll from being even higher. "The courage demonstrated by these New Zealanders was selfless and extraordinary, they have our deepest respect and gratitude for their actions on that day," she said. Armed with an arsenal of semi-automatic weapons, Tarrant first attacked Friday worshippers at Christchurch's Al Noor mosque before moving on to the Linwood prayer centre, livestreaming the killings as he went. His victims were all Muslim and included children, women and the elderly. Rashid was in the Al Noor mosque and charged at Tarrant, partially knocking him down despite being shot in the shoulder. Tarrant gunned down Rashid, whose son Talha was also killed, but his actions distracting the attacker allowed several people to escape. Aziz confronted Tarrant when he moved on to Linwood, hurling a credit card payment machine at him and then taunting him to try to draw him outside into a car park.

Political leaders call for implementation of NAP

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Besides demanding for complete implementation of National Action Plan (NAP), the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz and Pakistan Peoples Party leaders have called for revision of the priorities, policies and mindsets to avert terrorist attacks like December 16 incident of Army Public School. Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President and Opposition Leader in National Assembly Shehbaz Sharif on Thursday has said that December 16 will always remain a painful day for the nation, one whose memory bleeds our hearts. In a post on social-networking website, the PML-N leader said, "Have we learned any lessons and corrected our course? When will we sincerely put our heads together for better future

of our children? There are too many questions but too few answers." Meanwhile, PML-N Vice President Maryam Nawaz said that as the nation mourns the martyrs of APS, what we really need is collective introspection. She said, "There's a lot more that we need to do as a state and as citizens to ensure that tragedy like this is never repeated." "Our priorities, policies and mindsets all need to be revised accordingly," she added. In his message, Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has paid glowing tribute to the martyrs of Army Public School Peshawar (APS) and demanded that the beasts who planned, facilitated and carried out the massacre of the innocent children and teachers must be brought to justice. The PPP Chairman said that nation still deepest feels the pain of this great tragedy and everyone is waiting for

justice to the innocent souls. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that his family and party being victim of terrorism itself will continue to raise voice against extremism and terrorism. PPP Chairman demanded for completed implementation on National Action Plan (NAP). He further saluted to those parents and families who lost their loved ones in the APS tragedy and expressed solidarity with them. Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) vice president Maryam Nawaz has said that as the nation mourns the martyrs of APS, what we really need is collective introspection. In a post on social-networking website Twitter, the PML-N leader said, "There's a lot more that we need to do as a state and as citizens to ensure that tragedy like this is never repeated." "Our priorities, policies and mindsets all need to be revised accordingly," she added.

Afghan healthcare 'on brink of collapse'

NEWS DESK

KABUL: The diesel fuel needed to produce oxygen for coronavirus patients has run out. So have supplies of dozens of essential drugs. The staff, unpaid for months, still show up for work, but they are struggling to make ends meet at home. This is the plight of the Afghan-Japan Communicable Disease Hospital, the only COVID-19 facility for the more than four million people who live in the capital, Kabul. While the coronavirus situation in Afghanistan appears to have improved from a few months ago when cases reached their peak, it is now the hospital itself that needs life support. Its predicament is a symptom of the crisis in Afghanistan's healthcare system, which is "on the brink of collapse" and able to function only with a lifeline from aid organisations.

"We face many problems here," said Dr Ahmad Fatah Habibyar, the hospital's administration logistics manager, citing three months of unpaid salaries, shortages of equipment and drugs, and a lack of food. Some of the staff are in such financial difficulties that they are selling their household furniture to make ends meet, he said. "Oxygen is a big issue for us because we can't run the generators," he said, noting the hospital's production plant has not worked for months "because we can't afford the diesel". Instead, oxygen cylinders for COVID-19 patients are bought from a local supplier. And doctors are bracing for more infections that they fear are inevitable with the Omicron coronavirus variant. Without outside help, "we are not ready for Omicron. A disaster will be here," said Dr Shereen Agha, the 38-year-old head of the hospital's intensive care unit.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan Khazar Farhadov met with Maulana Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi, Special Representative of PM of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on Religious Harmony. - DNA

Turkey explores African arms sales

AGENCIES

ISTANBUL: Armed with battle-tested drones, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has been deepening defence ties with African countries ahead of a major gathering of the continent's leaders in Istanbul. The two-day Turkey-Africa partnership summit starting Friday comes fast on the heels of a top-level business forum in October that focused on investment and trade. The next phase of this fast-blossoming relationship is security, experts say, with a host of African leaders looking to buy up military hardware at cheaper prices and with fewer strings attached. Leaders and top ministers from 39 countries - including 13 presidents - have confirmed attendance, with Erdogan set to make a speech on Saturday. Ankara already has a military base in Somalia, and Morocco and Tunisia reportedly took their first delivery of Turkish combat drones in September. Angola became the latest to express an interest in unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) during Erdogan's first visit to the southern African country in October. Turkey in August also signed a military cooperation pledge with Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who has been embroiled in a war with Tigrayan rebels for the past year.

Israeli strike kills soldier in Syria

MONITORING DESK

CAIRO: An Israeli air strike killed a soldier in southern Syria on Thursday, Syrian state media reported, in an attack in a frontier area where Israel has expressed concern about deployments of Iran-backed forces. An Israeli military spokesperson declined to comment on the report. Israel has mounted frequent attacks against what it has described as Iranian targets in Syria, where Tehran-backed forces including Lebanon's Hezbollah have deployed over the last decade to support President Bashar Assad in Syria's war. Citing a military source, Syrian state news agency SANA said "the Israeli enemy carried out an aerial aggression," firing missiles from the Golan Heights, territory Israel captured from Syria in 1967. Syrian air defenses shot down most of the rockets, SANA said. The attack led to "the martyrdom of a soldier and some material losses," it added. In 2019, then US President Donald Trump broke with other world powers by recognizing Israel as sovereign on the Golan Heights, which it annexed in 1981 in a move not recognized internationally.

Country has gone bankrupt: Shabbar Zaidi

ISLAMABAD: Shabbar Zaidi, the former chairman of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), has expressed the belief that the country has gone bankrupt and the government's claims, that the country is doing very well, achieving great success and changing, are all wrong. He shared his thoughts at a recent speech he gave at Hamdard University. But Zaidi later took to Twitter to say that "only three minutes of his speech have been cherry-picked" and circulated. He said he spoke about the solution as well. Using accounting term "going concern" (which assumes that an entity has no plans to liquidate or reduce the size of its operations in any significant way, as per ACCA Thinkhead) as a reference point for the audience, Zaidi said that he believes the country, at the moment, has gone bankrupt. Zaidi added that it is better to accept that a country's economy has gone bankrupt and find solutions rather than deceive people by claiming that it is doing well. - DNA