



Islamabad POST

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Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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Current world order cannot continue while humanity suffers

Detailed News On Page-07

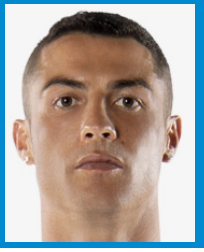
Vaccines only way out of pandemic

Detailed News On Page-07



Ronaldo statue kicks up a fuss in India's Goa

Detailed News On Page-06



Briefs

Norov appointed Deputy FM

DNA

TASHKENT: President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev appointed a new Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan. According to the decree of the President, Vladimir Norov was appointed Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan. On 31 December 2021, Vladimir Norov was presented at the meeting of the Collegium of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs at the capacity of the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. Vladimir Norov has extensive experience in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In 2019-2021, he served as Secretary General of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. From 2003 until 2005, he was the First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs. On December 29, 2004, he was appointed Ambassador to Belgium and returned to Uzbekistan in mid-2006. He was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan on July 12, 2006.

WHO chief optimistic of beating Covid-19

WEB DESK

GENEVA: The WHO chief says he is optimistic that the coronavirus pandemic will be defeated in 2022, provided countries work together to contain its spread. Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus warned against "narrow nationalism and vaccine hoarding" in a new year statement. Dr Tedros sounded a positive note in his speech, noting that there are now many more tools to treat Covid-19. But he warned that continuing inequity in vaccine distribution was increasing the risk of the virus evolving. "Narrow nationalism and vaccine hoarding by some countries have undermined equity and created the ideal conditions for the emergence of the Omicron variant, and the longer inequity continues, the higher the risks of the virus evolving in ways we can't prevent or predict," he said.

Holiday Notice

The offices of daily Islamabad POST shall remain closed on Saturday on account of weekly off therefore there will be no newspaper on Sunday. - Editor

Target achieved in 2021

Vaccination drive going smoothly

Pakistan has administered a total of 156.6 million doses so far: NCOC

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Friday announced it has achieved the 2021 target of vaccinating 70 million people against coronavirus amid rising cases of the new COVID-19 variant, Omicron. The Omicron variant - dubbed as a "variant of concern" by the World Health Organisation - emerged in November to become the pandemic's dominant variant, driving new cases at record rates around the world. In a series of tweets, Chairman National Command and Operation Centre Asad Umar said the federal government has so far procured vaccines worth nearly Rs250 billion. The NCOC chairman highlighted that Islamabad leads the count as it has fully vaccinated 77% of its population, Punjab 51%, Gilgit-Baltistan 46%, Azad Jammu and Kashmir 45%, Balochistan 42%, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa 41%, and Sindh 37%. Umar said 46% of the eligible population has been fully vaccinated and 63% partially vaccinated, adding that the federal government had provided free vaccines to people across every province. Pakistan has administered a total of 156.6 million doses so far, according to the NCOC. Praising the NCOC for coordinating with provincial health authorities and playing its part in helping Pakistan achieve the vaccination target,



World rings in New Year under Covid cloud

NEWS DESK

SYDNEY: The world began ushering in 2022 on Friday after another tumultuous and pandemic-ridden year capped by new restrictions, soaring case numbers, and a slight glimmer of hope for better times ahead. The past 12 months saw a new US president and a new Adele album, the first spectator-free Olympics, and dreams of democracy from Afghanistan to Myanmar and Hong Kong crushed by authoritarian regimes. But it was the pandemic - now entering its third year - that again dominated life for most of humankind. More than 5.4 million people have died since the coronavirus was first reported in central China in December 2019. Countless more have been sickened - subjected to outbreaks, lockdowns, lock-ins and an alphabet spaghetti of PCR, LFT and RAT tests. The year 2021 started with hope, as life-saving vaccines were rolled out to around 60 percent of the world's population, although many of its poor still have limited access and some of its rich believe the jobs are part of some ill-defined plot.

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Jail, London Shahbaz' only options: Fawad

Says Lahore High Court (LHC) requested to conduct daily hearing of Shehbaz Sharif case



STAFF REPORT

LAHORE: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain Friday said that Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Shehbaz Sharif was left with only two options: either to go to London or jail. Talking to the media here, he said that the Lahore High Court (LHC) had been requested to conduct day-to-day hearing of Shehbaz Sharif case so that it could be concluded at the earliest. He said that the media should analyse the witnesses and evidence by covering the LHC proceedings and evaluate whether Shehbaz Sharif was involved in money laundering or not, instead of giving coverage to Shehbaz Sharif's claims or remarks. The minister said that Shehbaz Sharif should not worry as the country was moving in the right direction and people of country fully supported

Continued on Page 06

Imran Khan surrendered to IMF: Shehbaz

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President and Opposition leader in National Assembly (NA) Shehbaz Sharif on Friday lashed out at Prime Minister (PM) Imran Khan and said that he had surrendered to International Monetary Fund (IMF) in economic war. While talking to the press, he said the government says that the burden will not fall on the poor people when in reality, this mini budget will seize the economy's engine altogether. This is the level of brutality and indifference this

Continued on Page 06



LAHORE: Prime Minister Imran Khan distributing Naya Pakistan Health Cards. - DNA

Islamabad POST wishes its readers a happy new year



ISLAMABAD: The management and staff of Daily Islamabad POST wishes its readers, advertisers and well-wishers a very happy new year, with this hope that the new year brings happiness and joy for all and sundry. Daily Islamabad POST has already completed one and half years of its continued publication. The tremendous response, especially from the diplomatic community, has been a real source of encouragement and buck up. - DNA

PM launches Naya Pakistan Sehat Card

The premier says not everyone can take such revolutionary decisions

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Prime Minister Imran Khan has launched the Naya Pakistan Sehat Card for all citizens, stating that each family would be eligible for medical treatment up to one million rupees per year under the universal health coverage programme, media reported. The premier stated that not everyone can take such revolutionary decisions as the PTI did, citing the example of the health card as one. "Today, every family in Punjab will be eligible for a health card," he said, adding that a welfare state is one where all citizens have equal opportunity for growth and prosperity. He said it was in the State of Madina that for the first time in history, the state accepted responsibility for society's underprivileged segment.

Continued on Page 06

Directs to complete public welfare projects

DNA

LAHORE: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Friday directed to provide the required budget for all public welfare projects on priority basis so as to ensure effective public service through timely completion of these projects in good way. He also directed to make more effective public awareness campaign about the welfare-oriented development projects. The prime minister was presiding over a meeting here about the development budget in Punjab.

Continued on Page 06

Petrol price goes up by Rs 4

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has approved an increase in prices of petroleum products. Under the government decision, an increase of Rs 4 per liter in petrol price has been approved. According to media, the new price of petrol has gone up to Rs 144.82. It should be noted that the new prices of petroleum products will be applicable from 12am. The prices of petroleum products are expected to escalate again due to the tough conditions of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the mini-budget. Last month, the federal government had reduced the rates of petrol and high speed diesel by Rs5 per litre "in view of the declining price trend of petroleum products" across the world. The Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (Ogra) had proposed a reduction in prices of petroleum products by Rs8 to 10 per litre. Ogra had recommended Rs10.77 and Rs7.73 per litre reduction in the prices of petrol and high-speed diesel (HSD), respectively. However, the government slashed the price of petrol and HSD by Rs5, kerosene oil by Rs7, and light diesel oil (LDO) by Rs7.1 per litre.

4 soldiers martyred in Mir Ali operation

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Four Pakistan Army soldiers embraced martyrdom in an intelligence-based operation (IBO) Friday in Mir Ali, North Waziristan, confirmed the ISPR. One terrorist was apprehended along with weapons and ammunition," said the ISPR, adding that the four soldiers were martyred during an "intense exchange of fire." The names of the martyred soldiers are: Havaldar Munawar, 40, resident of Bahawalnagar, Sepoy Zaka Ullah, 31, resident of Laki Marwat, Sepoy Farhan, 34, resident of Kohat and Sepoy Sheraz, 30, resident of Abbottabad. In another IBO, two militants were gunned down by security forces while weapons and ammunition were also recovered from the militants. The two terrorists killed during



the IBO have been identified as Shahzeb alias Zakir and Daniyal. "These terrorists were involved in terrorist activities against security forces, target killing and kidnapping for ransom," it added.

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ICCI president shows concerns over mini-budget - Page 04

Israel's big-money smear campaign to demonise Muslims - Page 05

Grave violations surge for children in conflict - Page 06

Vaccines are the way out of pandemic, says Olaf Scholz - Page 07

Pakistan faces daunting challenges as it enters 2022 - Page 08

Pak grateful to OIC states for successful summit

The Foreign Secretary highlighted that high-level participation was not only an expression of the OIC's strong support for Afghan people but also affirmed the OIC's leading role on the issue

ANSAR BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Secretary Sohail Mahmood invited the Heads of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) resident Missions, today, to thank them for the Member States' support to the success of the 17th Extraordinary Session of OIC-CFM hosted by Pakistan on 19 December 2021 on the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan. The Foreign Secretary highlighted that high-level participation by Foreign Ministers and other Senior Representatives, at such short notice, was not only an expression of the OIC's strong support and solidarity for the Afghan people but also affirmed the OIC's leading role on the issue. The Foreign Secretary thanked the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in its capacity as the OIC Summit Chair and other Members for their valuable contributions to the successful outcome. Recalling Prime Minister Imran Khan's



key-note address, wherein he underscored that least immediate action was taken, the "situation in Afghanistan could become the largest man-made crisis of our times", the Foreign Secretary lauded the OIC Member States and the international community for stepping up to the challenge by adopting substantive deliverables during the Extraordinary Session. The Foreign Secretary stressed that these decisions -including the establishment of the Humanitarian Trust Fund; ap-

pointment of an OIC Special Envoy for Afghanistan; revitalization of the OIC Mission in Kabul; creation of the Afghanistan Food Security Program; and initiation of discussions to devise a "roadmap" to unlock financial and banking channels in Afghanistan - were all tangible and concrete steps. "We must build on this momentum", he underscored. The Foreign Secretary stressed that pledges to the Humanitarian Trust Fund by OIC Member States would be impor-



tant to turn "collective commitments" into "concrete actions". Reaffirming Pakistan's abiding commitment to the people of Afghanistan, the Foreign Secretary noted that the first consignment of 1800 metric tons of wheat as part of the Prime Minister's assistance in-kind package worth Rs. 5 billion, was sent to Afghanistan, yesterday. The Foreign Secretary added that Pakistan would continue to work with the OIC to devise practical pathways to assist our Afghan brethren. On the forthcoming

48th Session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, the Foreign Secretary stated that Pakistan looks forward to the participation of all OIC Foreign Ministers at the meeting in March 2022, which coincides with the 75th Anniversary celebrations of Pakistan's independence. The Foreign Secretary stressed that as a founding member of the OIC, Pakistan remains committed to further strengthening fraternal bonds and substantive cooperation within the Muslim Ummah.



KARACHI: Chairman Federal Public Service Commission, Capt (r) Zahid Saeed presenting FPSC annual report to President Arif Alvi at Governors House. – DNA

Training can harness staff's professional skills

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: Training is an important tool to harness the professional skills and overall performance of the officers and the officials said Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO), he was addressing the concluding ceremony of the promotion class for Line Superintends (LS) Second to LS First in FESCO Regional Training Center (RTC).

He said that by providing training we could imbibe new trends in the professional life of the staff, which would certainly yield better results. He said that despite years of experience, the room for further improvement always remains intact and we must continue on job training for our technical field staff. He further said that different courses for the FESCO employees continue round the year which not only help them to improve their skills but also imperative for their promotion to next grade.

CEO directed the instructors to sensitize

trainees to refresh their academic as well as theoretical knowledge with innovative and conscious efforts. He said that this training will help them to deal prudently with their officers, subordinate staff and consumers. He said that present syllabus and practical may be further improved to bring improvement in their skills.

He congratulated the LS who have successfully completed their training to move into the field with renowned commitment to serve the consumers with dedication and honesty; it will not only help in minimizing the problems confronted by the consumers but also play a major role in image building of the company.

Totally 26 Line Superintends participated in the promotion training while Mr Ali Raza secured first position, Rizwan Rafi second and Waqar Younas third. Additional DG (ADMN) Ather Ayub Ch, Executive Engineer (RTC) Nadeem Akbar Kahloon, Deputy Director (Safety) Saeed Raza, Staff Officer Abid Rashid and instructors RTC were also present at this occasion.

Agri sector to be developed on modern lines

PESHAWAR: Director General Agriculture Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Abid Kamal has said that tangible measures would be taken for development of the agriculture sector of South Waziristan by utilizing modern means. He expressed these views while visiting Agri Park Wana, where he had a detailed discussion with local middlemen, fruit and vegetable commission agents and their associations.

DG Tribal Districts Murad Ali, District Agriculture Director South Waziristan Dr Muhammad Anwar Bhattani President of All Pakistan Agriculture Markets Association Malik Shani also accompanied him.

A representative delegation of Wana fruit agents including its president Roshan, Haji Torkhan Zulfir Khan, Lal Mohammad and other commission agents also held a meeting with the visiting dignitary and appraised him of their problems.

He listened to their problems and assured them of resolving them on priority basis. He said that South Waziristan was rich in varieties and vegetables and added there were many opportunities for agriculture.

In view of the rich potential of the area, the DG said effective steps would be taken to develop agriculture and modernize it.

He expressed hope that farmers and other traders would cooperate with the government to efficiently achieve the objective and bring about socio-economic prosperity.

He also appreciated District Agriculture Director Dr Muhammad Anwar Bhattani for his performance and services for the development of agriculture sector of the area. – APP

'Sufi Night' held

FAISALABAD: The Punjab Arts Council Faisalabad division organized a 'Sufi Night' here.

Provincial Minister for CM Inspection team Muhammad Ajmal Cheema was the chief guest. Famous singer Hakeem Muhammad Azeem Mughal, and Muhammad Ihsan Mirza performed on the occasion.

Director Local Government Mian Aftab Ahmed, Director Arts Council Zahid Iqbal and a large number of people from different walks of life were present. – APP

Govt taking steps to stop distortions in tax system

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Federal Board of Revenue Dr. Muhammad Ashfaq Ahmed says tax reforms undertaken by the government are most significant in the history of the country.

Addressing a news conference in Islamabad on Friday, he said government is taking steps to stop distortions in tax system. The Chairman said some of the facts of Supplementary Finance Bill have been misinterpreted by media.

He tax policy reforms were needed for a long time but unfortunately interest groups got some amendments in laws for their own benefits. Likewise the taxes that were shifted from one place to another were also misinterpreted, he said adding some changes were made to amend certain laws relating to taxes and duties through the Finance (Supplementary) Bill, 2021. He was of the view that tax policy reforms were needed for a long time. However, during the previous regimes, whosever interest groups came, they took their self-interested exemptions by making amendments in the laws and then they went away.

Over 5.7m people vaccinated in Faisalabad

FAISALABAD: Over 5.7 million (5,723,399) people have so far been vaccinated against COVID-19 in the district. District Health Officer Dr Ataul Mun'im said on Friday that 3,591,780 citizens were injected first dose while 2,062,789 were administered the second dose of vaccine.

He said that 38,472 health workers were also given the first dose while 30,358 received the second dose of vaccine.

He said that sufficient stock of coronavirus vaccine was available in the district. As of now 209,188 first doses and 139,459 second doses were in the stock in Faisalabad. He said that 37 vaccination centers and 20 mobile vaccination camps were operational in Faisalabad where registered people were being vaccinated. – APP

Long-term strategy imperative to survive in AI era

Rana Fayyaz Ahmad, Vice President FCCI said that new technology is dominating the industrial sector at a much faster pace

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: A comprehensive and long-term strategy is imperative to harvest the benefits of the fourth Industrial Revolution and to survive in the hi-tech robotic and artificial intelligence era, said Hafiz Wasif, Technical Director of "Keyup Technologies", U.K. He was addressing a seminar on "Sustainable Automated Strategies to Implement Industry 4.0" in collaboration with the Research & Development Department of the Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI).

He explained in detail the different phases of the Industrial revolution and said that the world is knocking at the door of the fourth Industrial Revolution as old technologies have become inefficient in addition to losing their efficacy. He said that at the global level robotic and artificial intelligence will soon dominate the Industrial sector but would foment unemployment which is a major cause of concern particularly for the 3rd world countries like Pakistan. He further said that our Industrial sector is still using phased-out machinery which is lacking precision, quality and cost effectiveness. He said that most of the workers employed in this sector are still unskilled or have got negligible on-job training without any theoretical knowledge. He further said that the

efficiency of our engineers and highly skilled workers is also very pathetic. He said that his company will provide cost-effective solutions to these problems and the industrial sector must take initial measures towards the 4.0 Industrial Revolution.

Rana Fayyaz Ahmad, Vice President FCCI said that new technology is dominating the industrial sector at a much faster pace. He said that it is very



encouraging that our youth is fully capable of absorbing these technologies and putting Pakistan on the road to progress and prosperity. He urged that we must train our youth on modern scientific lines so that they could face future challenges.

Engineer Ahmad Hassan, Chairman FCCI Standing Committee on Re-

search & Development and CPEC said that as per Pakistan Engineering Council about 1 lac engineers are unemployed but their capabilities are also below the mark. He said that we must harness their professional, mental, innovative and creative capabilities to make them compatible with the needs of the future.

He also stressed the need to further strengthen Industry-Academia linkages and said that knowledge and technologies created by universities and R&D organizations must be utilized by the industrial sector to bring qualitative as well as quantitative improvement in the overall system. Continuing he said that the machines developed with robotic and artificial intelligence will enhance quality and production but its negative impact will be very horrifying as it will open the flood gates of unemployment. Quoting intellectual debate at the global level, he said that the global intelligentsia was actively working on a new system to dole out stipends to the unemployed families so that their basic and fundamental needs could be fulfilled. He said although Pakistan is far away from this stage, we must prepare ourselves to brace the challenges of 4.0 Industrial Revolution.

Engineer Asim Munir, Khawaja Amjad, Dr. Khurram Tariq, Mirza Muhammad Aslam, Muhammad Naeem and Dr. Habib Aslam Gaba also attended this productive session.



LAHORE: Federal Minister for information and broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain talking to media. – DNA

11 members of Karachi family test Omicron positive

DNA

KARACHI: Eleven members of a family were tested Omicron positive which resulted in their self-quarantine at their home in Karachi on Friday. The 11 members including three women and three men belonging to the same family had contracted Omicron variant Covid-19 in Karachi's District East.

All the people have now been quarantined at their homes while authorities have also collected samples from the people who came into their contact to prevent their further spread of the virus. The infected coronavirus patients are aged between 26 to 77 years old. So far 44 omicrons cases have been detected in the port city of Karachi. As per reports, officials of the Sindh Health Department said they had sent the samples of 20 people infected with COV-

ID-19 to the Dow University for confirmation of the Omicron variant and after analysis, the Dow University confirmed that 11 people of the family, who came in contact with a female member of their family from Lahore, were infected with the Omicron variant.

Experts and health authorities warned and urged people to take precautionary measures, wear masks and get vaccinated with booster dose, if required. Federal Planning Minister and NCO Head Asad Umar said 70 million Pakistanis have been fully vaccinated against coronavirus.

Asad Umar said that the federal government has procured vaccines worth nearly Rs250 billion to make this massive vaccination drive possible. "100 percent of vaccine procurement is done by the federal government, which has provided free vaccines to all citizens regardless of which province they live in," he added.

41 'criminals' arrested

FAISALABAD: Police Friday arrested 41 alleged criminals and recovered drugs and illegal weapons from them in the district during the last 24 hours.

According to police, raiding teams nabbed three proclaimed offenders (POs) and 18 drug-pushers and recovered 0.1-kg hashish and 195 litres of liquor from them.

The police also held eight gamblers and recovered Rs. 21,600 from them. In a crackdown on illegal weapons, police arrested 12 persons and recovered 12 pistols and a number of bullets from them. – APP

Freedom of expression not a 'licence' to malign judges: IHC

These remarks were made in a 12-page ruling authored by IHC Chief Justice Athar Minallah in a contempt of court case against former top judge of Gilgit-Baltistan Rana Muhammad Shamim, senior journalist Ansar Abbasi

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) said on Friday that the affidavit that accused former chief justice Saqib Nisar of manipulating the cases against ex-premier Nawaz Sharif "appeared to be an attempt to influence the proceedings, obstruct and interfere with the due administration of justice".

These remarks were made in a 12-page ruling authored by IHC Chief Justice Athar Minallah in a contempt of court case against former top judge of Gilgit-Baltistan Rana Muhammad Shamim, senior journalist Ansar Abbasi, a resident editor and editor-in-chief of a national daily.

"The questionable contents of the affidavit, the timing, the place of its execution and then its mysterious leak followed by a hasty publication...had likely profound consequences for the proceedings pending before the Court relating to the appeals preferred by the two persons named therein.

"The publication and the contents of the affidavit could be prejudicial to the right of fair trial of the two potential beneficiaries named therein and whose appeals were pending and fixed for hearing on 17-11-2021," the IHC CJ added.

"The notion of the alleged contemnors that a document in the form of an affidavit has evidentiary value even though not part of any judicial record, is misconceived," it said, adding that the most important aspect relates to the right to the fair trial of the two potential beneficiaries, Nawaz Sharif and Maryam Nawaz, named in the affidavit.

"They were the potential beneficiaries and their appeals were fixed for hearing two days after the date of publication i.e. on 17-11-2021. They have not owned the document. The publication could have been considered capable of influencing the outcome of their appeals. Their right to a fair trial was likely to be prejudiced. The contents of the document and its publication had the likely effect of creating a perception of their indi-

rect involvement to pressurize the Court or influence the outcome of the appeals through a 'media trial' without their knowledge or consent."

The "freedom of expression does not license a journalist or a publisher even inadvertently or unintentionally to facilitate influencing of pending proceedings or casting aspersions on judges in the garb of an affidavit which does not form part of any judicial proceedings," Justice Minallah wrote.

"Freedom of expression is not an absolute right and for a journalist it carries with it responsibilities and duties. This Court is mindful of the paramount importance of guarding free press and freedom of expression and it is manifested by its judgments," the ruling further maintained.

However, it said that the rights of litigants are equally important and attempts to interfere with "due administration of justice" are not covered under the freedom of expression. About the decision to frame contempt charges against the accused,

the IHC CJ said that the said law didn't protect the judges as it was aimed to ensure a fair trial. "The sub judice rule i.e. no one should interfere with legal proceedings which are pending, is an established exception to the freedom of expression," he added.

"The alleged contemnors appear to believe that as 'messengers' they have absolute freedom...While jealously guarding freedom of expression and free press, it is the simultaneous duty of the Court to protect...the right to a fair trial of the litigants and their confidence in the due administration of justice," the ruling added.

"Admittedly, the document was not part of any judicial record...no attempt was made by a reputable professional investigative journalist to verify the material facts from the Registrar of this Court, inter-alia, whether the honourable Judge named therein had been performing judicial functions or was on leave and whether he was one of the members of the Bench constituted during the relevant period."

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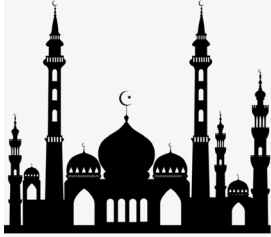
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| Asr..... | 03:35 pm |
| Maghrib..... | 05:10 pm |
| Isha..... | 06:40 pm |



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| Monal..... | 0334-5421812 |



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| | |
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| Turkish Airlines..... | 8494949 |
|-----------------------|---------|



Emergency

| | |
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| Rescue (Police)..... | 15 |
| Bomb Disposal..... | 15 |
| Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad..... | 1122 & 16 |
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| & Rescue Services..... | 4451122 |
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| Cantt Hospital..... | 9270907-11 |
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| CDA..... | 9221334-43 |
| CDA..... | 9208301-04 |
| Met Office..... | 9250360-6 |
| RDA..... | 5555864 |
| TMA..... | 5770886 |
| Cantonment Board..... | 9270151-3 |



Complaints

| | |
|--|-------------|
| Water Tanker Service E-7, F-10 & F-11..... | 9204654 |
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Islamabad Metropolitan

| | |
|-------------------|---------|
| Corporation..... | 9209224 |
| Potohar Town..... | 9209224 |
| Rawal Town..... | 5773343 |

Wasa Water Tank

| | |
|-----------------|--------------|
| Rawalpindi..... | 0331-5022125 |
|-----------------|--------------|

GB CM and MLAs discuss employment, poverty issues

Welcoming the participants and experts, CEO Aga Khan Foundation, Akhter Iqbal, said that it is a great platform for learning about emerging issues related to development of Gilgit-Baltistan and making synergies with government and civil society

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (AKRSP) held two days consultative workshop on "Youth Employability and Poverty Alleviation" for the members of Gilgit-Baltistan Assembly here in Islamabad. The inaugural session was graced by the Chief Minister Gilgit-Baltistan, Khalid Khurshid Khan. In the workshop, an array of expert shared their insights about the emerging issues related to youth employment and shed light on contextual strategies for poverty alleviation in Gilgit-Baltistan. Chief Minister Khalid Khurshid said that in Gilgit-Baltistan there is a strong tradition of making decisions at local level. His government intends to incorporate this local tradition into the local government model to pave the way



for the representation of grassroots level communities in governance structure. Welcoming the participants and experts, CEO Aga Khan Foundation, Akhter Iqbal, said that it is a great platform for learning about emerging issues related to development of Gilgit-Baltistan and making synergies with government and civil society.

The speakers in the workshop emphasized on contextualizing the development plans so that they are more in sync with the issues of Gilgit-Baltistan. They lauded the local communities of Gilgit-Baltistan for introducing a successful model of community participation for other regions of Pakistan. Speaking on the occasion

Dr. Sania Nishtar, Special Assistant on Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety to the Prime Minister of Pakistan, appreciated the proactive approach of the government of Gilgit-Baltistan towards Ahsas initiatives. She said that Ahsas programme has introduced a system for the vulnerable communities in Pakistan,

but there is a need to introduce the programme to the targeted people. A strategic plan was also discussed with members of GB Assembly and Ehsaas Nashonuma and Ehsaas One Window Centres in all tehsils of GB. Malik Amin Aslam, Federal Minister for Climate Change/ Special Assistant to the Prime Minister of Pakistan, shared

government initiatives in tackling climate change. He laid great emphasis on living in harmony with nature instead of fighting with nature. Amin Aslam said that the people of Gilgit-Baltistan know better how to live amicably with nature. He said that since Gilgit-Baltistan is bearing the brunt of climate change, it is imperative to intervene at multiple fronts. Speaking about future of work, the speakers emphasized on digitization of economy and promoting entrepreneurship in Gilgit-Baltistan. This will open up new opportunities for youth employment and economic development of the region. The themes covered in the workshop ranged from community participation, poverty alleviation and prosperity, safety nets, climate change, digitalization, promoting entrepreneurship and responsible tourism to renewable energy.

ITP issues 932,390 fine tickets during 2021

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) issued 932,390 fine tickets to road users on violation of traffic rules during 2021. In a statement issued here on Friday, ITP said that 42,635 vehicles were fined for having fancy number plates while 48,107 fine tickets were issued to motorists for not fastening seat belts, 21,466 for using mobile phones during driving and 145,108 motorcyclists were fined for riding without helmets. Similarly, 13,402 amateur drivers were issued fine tickets while several motorbikes and vehicles were impounded in various police stations of Islamabad over serious violation of traffic rules and not producing documents. As many as 62,500 fine tickets were issued over lane violation, 5724 for parking at wrong place, 16,341 for over speeding, 18,473 for violation of red light, 41,519 for having tinted glasses, 30,260 for obstructing traffic, 74,884 for overloading and 9,190 vehicles for having no registration. Likewise, 9072 public transporters were fined over route-violation, 149,942 motorists for careless driving and 16,402 road users for taking wrong turns, 742 vehicles for off-loading passengers at places other than stops, 1257 for having defective lights, 442 for driving vehicles on one-way, 8229 for driving vehicles on wrong side, 13,402 for driving vehicles without licenses and 36,329 for hindering other traffic. - APP

New Year: Special prayer held for country's security, stability

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A special prayer for the security and stability of the country was arranged at the Faisal Masjid in connection with the New Year after Friday prayer. Dr Muhammad Ilyas, Director General Dawah Academy of International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI) led the Friday prayer. On the occasion of the New Year, he urged worship and prayers for the betterment and peace in the coming year. He stressed that whether it is the beginning of the Gregorian year or the beginning of the Islamic year, at the beginning of each year, Muslims should arrange prayers and worship to please the God Almighty. "Today is the day we need to promote peace, brotherhood and tolerance," he said. On this occasion, Dua for the salvation of the departed souls of mothers of National hero and famous cricketer Shoaib Akhtar, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Malik Amir Dogar and Senator Ayub Afridi was also held. Apart from the bereaved, other prominent political and social personalities including Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser, Railway Minister Azam Swati, Deputy Speaker Qasim Suri, and President Islamic University Dr Hazal Hamood Al-Otaibi also attended the occasion.

DC for accelerating work on digital Girdawari

RAWALPINDI: Deputy Commissioner Rawalpindi, Muhammad Ali on Friday directed all the Assistant Commissioners (ACs) of Rawalpindi district to accelerate work to complete the task of digital Girdawari within stipulated time frame. Presiding over a meeting held here, he reviewed the performance of all the ACs on digital Girdawari and operations against profiteering. The DC said that digital Girdawari started in 1257 mouzas in all tehsils of the district while in 63 mouzas of Rawalpindi and eight mouzas of Gujjar Khan. He directed the ACs to personally visit all the areas in the field to review the process of digital Girdawari. He instructed the ACs of Saddar Rawalpindi and Gujjar Khan to start work of digital Girdawari in all such areas as soon as possible where the process could not be started keeping in view the legal requirements. The DC said that strict measures were being taken against profiteers and 170 profiteers were arrested in the district during Dec 13 to 17 while 11 FIRs were also lodged besides imposing fines amounting to over Rs 1.4 million on the rules violators. - APP

10-KM marathon to celebrate New Year on Saturday

ISLAMABAD: Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad (MCI), Capital Development Authority (CDA) and Islamabad Running Club (IRC) have jointly organized a 10-km run which will be held today (Saturday) at 11 am. This race is being organized to welcome the New Year with great fervor and promote the spirit of healthy living among the citizens. Special guests expected to grace this event are UAE Ambassador to Pakistan, H. E. Hamad Obaid Ibrahim Al-Zaabi, Deputy Commissioner Chakwal Captain (Retd.) Bilal Hashmi, and DC Islamabad Capital Territory Muhammad Hamza Shafiq. In the last month of outgoing year, the organizers opened online registrations but one can also get registered on the spot before the event commences. Talking to APP, a founding member of IRC Bilal Ehsan said, "Currently, we have received 114 registration requests online while 30-40 people have registered themselves with our co-host MCI. 70% of the participants are expected to be from Islamabad while around 30% from other cities." - APP

Chairman CDA visits Literary and Cultural Center

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman, Capital Development Authority (CDA) on Friday visited the Literary and Cultural Center at F-9 Park. CDA officials and renowned artist and painter Jamal Shah were also present on this occasion. Chairman CDA reviewed the progress of the ongoing work on the Literary and Cultural Center. On this occasion Chairman CDA was apprised that the renovation work of the building has been completed and the building will be made fully functional next week. It was further briefed that building will be used as a center for literary activities, including art galleries, archive centers, educational events and other activities. On this occasion, the CDA Chairman directed the concerned departments to organize an art exhibition in the month of January in this building to encourage young artists and provide them with the best platform where they can exhibit their artwork. In addition to highlighting the history of the city of Islamabad, the culture and civilization should also be highlighted so that the new generation can also get acquainted with the history of the city. Instructions were further issued that all these segments included as permanent features of this building. It should be noted that rehabilitation of this building is the series of development works of F-9 Park. After completion of development work of a long unfinished building, it will be made operational next week. Similarly, the two waterfalls in the park which were in bad condition for a long time will also be made functional in January which will further enhance the beauty of the park. - DNA

IESCO issues power suspension schedule

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Friday issued a power suspension programme for Saturday 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 08:00 AM to 04:00 PM, Nawazish Shaheed, Sher Shah Suri, Army Brigade, Rohan Plains Feeders, From 08:00 AM to 05:00 PM, I-11/3, Metro Cash & Carry Feeders, From 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM, AMC, AFIRM, Race Course, Azharabad, Jhangi, EME Complex, P&T Wani, Islamabad Club-1, F-8/2, G-9 Express, Muga, Vanhar feeders and surroundings.

ICT police devise security plan for New Year celebrations

Islamabad police have also appealed the citizens to demonstrate responsibility in their attitude and behave like a member of civilized society

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad police have made an elaborate plan for security on eve of new year celebrations in the city and decided to ensure special deployment to maintain peace and tranquility. Around 2000 policemen would be deployed to ensure fool proof security and keep vigilant eye during possible celebrations on New Year. The plan was finalized during a meeting attended by police high-ups in the Central Police Office, police source said. It was directed to deploy police contingent at important places, shopping centres, main markets for the safety of public on the eve of New Year. Islamabad police have appealed to the citizens to

act like a responsible citizens and refrain from any irresponsible activity on the occasion. It was directed that all police officials would ensure special deployment in their respective areas including shopping centers and main markets for the safety of the public during the night. Police Commandos will be also deployed at different places apart from patrolling by police officials. All Police Stations have been directed to keep fool proof security arrangements in their area of responsibility while special ITP teams have been



made to ensure smooth flow of traffic on the occasion. Traffic police will also coordinate with the city police to maintain law and order and control traffic on the occasion. Islamabad police have also appealed the citizens to demonstrate responsibility in their attitude and behave like a member of civilized society. One-wheeling, aerial firing and fire-works would not be allowed in the city and every possible step would be taken to ensure protection to the lives and property of the citizens, the source said.

Govt urged to review Single National Curriculum

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Educationists and stakeholders at a consultative meeting, while raising reservations over the recently devised single national curriculum (SNC) in the country, have urged the government to review this curriculum by duly incorporating all inputs from stakeholders so that it cater to all diverse communities across the country for better education results. The consultation meeting was organized by Awaz Foundation Pakistan: Centre for Development Services with the purpose to discuss the government's recently devised SNC and provide an opportunity to stakeholders to share their concerns as well as recommendations to ensure that this curriculum is made a representative document across the country. The SNC is believed to be focused on modern education, skills development and technology adopting global trends of education with gender equality and women empowerment. Officials from Pakistan Coalition for Education, Pakistan Private

Schools and College Association, Pakistan Parents Association, Pakistan Teachers Forum, educationists and members of civil society organizations including SAHIL, CRM, GDP, VSO, PAMS, Gain Health, PMHA, PYCA participated in the consultative meeting. Senator and Member Standing Committee on Education, Federal College of Education & Professional Training, Fawzia Arshad also attended the meeting. In her remarks, Senator Fawzia

Arshad appreciated arranging the consultative meeting on this national issue. She assured that the government will extend all support in identifying quick and practical solutions presented by the stakeholders during the consultative meeting. The lawmaker mentioned that the government has engaged private schools and developed the SNC. Senator Fawzia urged Awaz Foundation Pakistan: Centre for Development Services and all

stakeholders to formulate their recommendations on the SNC for betterment of children, parents, teachers and society to ensure quality education. She assured to take up these recommendations with the Federal Ministry of Education and Professional Training as well as Prime Minister of Pakistan to adopt a comprehensive SNC. In his opening remarks, Chief Executive Awaz Foundation Pakistan: Centre for Development Services, Zia-ur-Rehman, explained

about the targets and suggested to find the best solutions in real-life adaptation of SNC. He further shared that feedback/ suggestions on SNC are shared with MoFEPT on their feedback portal. He said that, the meeting is aimed to discuss the solutions and submit the recommendations to the government to ensure uniformity in text books and syllabus for the students from rural and urban areas, private and government schools as well as madaris across the country as Education for all is a fundamental and constitutional right. Discussing the government's adopted SNC, the meeting noted that the illustrations in the textbooks should ensure gender based equal representation and contributions of women in leadership roles should be highlighted at par with their male counterparts. The discussants also suggested that illustrations in textbooks should give reasonable understanding and representation to religious minorities, people living with disability and transgender and without any discriminatory standards of dress code concerning gender.



Briefs

RWU, UoG
sign MoU for
research

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi Women University (RWU) and University of Gujrat (UoG) have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on research collaboration and capacity building of the faculty in online teaching.

The RWU had the privilege to be the sub-campus of UoG, which was recently given the status of the public sector university. Dr Anila Kamal, a renowned professor from Quaid-i-Azam University has been appointed as the founding Vice Chancellor.

At the occasion of MoU signing, Prof Dr Shabbir Atiq, the Vice Chancellor of University of Gujrat reiterated full support of UoG in research collaboration, joint grant proposal submission for funding to national and international donors, and capacity building of faculty in online teaching. The office of research innovation and commercialization (ORIC) representative of both the universities were also present at the occasion.

Director ORIC of UoG Prof Dr Audil Rashid highlighted the key features of this research agreement and briefed about the modalities of MoU for mutual actions set forth.

Dr Bushra Parveen, Director ORIC of RWU discussed the road map of future research initiatives where joint interventions for both the institutions are possible.

Dr Anila Kamal thanked the VC of UoG for his visit to RWU where the MoU signing took place. — APP

Nomad
Gallery,
PNCA to
organize an
art show

ISLAMABAD: Nomad Art Gallery in collaboration with Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) would organize opening ceremony of an art show titled 'The Golden Hour' on January 5.

According to PNCA, Minister for Federal Education, Professional Training and National Heritage Shafiqat Mahmood likely to be the chief guest on the occasion. The art show will feature artwork of fifteen artists from across the country exploring the Northern Areas through their creative originality and technical skills in their chosen mediums. The artwork of fifteen artists including Ali Sajid, Arif Ansari, Ajab Khan, Tariq Mahmood, Bashir Haider, Sadia Arif, Shahzad Siyal, Danish Khan, Shaima Umar, Muhammad Hafeez, Farooq Siyal, Abid Zaman, Qazi Amanullah, Sanobar, and Tahir Bilal would be displayed under the umbrella Studio Ali Sajid and National Artists Association of Pakistan. The exhibition will continue till January 10 from 11:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. — APP

ANF seizes
1070.400 kg
drugs

RAWALPINDI: In two different operations, the Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) on Friday seized 1070.400 kg drugs including 808 kg charas and 261.600 kg opium and 576 liters Acetic Anhydride chemical.

According to an ANF Headquarters spokesman, in a joint operation conducted by ANF Multan and ANF Intelligence, the drugs being smuggled to Punjab from Balochistan were recovered during search of a Shazhor vehicle near Sahiwal bypass area.

Three accused namely Sarfraz Musa, resident of Sahiwal, Muhammad Ramazan r/o Faisalabad and Israr Khan, r/o Okara were arrested during the operation. ANF recovered total 674 packets of charras and 218 packets of opium from the vehicle which were tactfully concealed in LPG cylinders. In another operation, ANF Quetta and ANF Intelligence conducted a raid on Chaman Road in Qilla Abdullah area and recovered 576 liters Acetic Anhydride chemical which is used to produce heroin.

After registration of cases, ANF started further investigations, he added. — APP

ICCI president shows
concern over mini-budget

The government has introduced a mini budget to withdraw sales tax exemptions worth billions of rupees on industrial machinery, pharma sector and imported food items that would increase the cost of production activities and further hike inflation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) has shown great concerns over the presentation of a mini-budget in the national assembly as its passage would hit the growth of many businesses and unleash a new wave of high inflation across the country putting unbearable burden on the common man and causing further slump in the economic activities. Muhammad Shakeel Munir, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that the business community has been demanding of the government to promote ease of doing business and introduce low tax rates to facilitate the better growth of business activities that would help in economic revival of the country.

Contrary to their demands, the government has introduced a mini budget to withdraw sales tax exemptions worth billions of rupees on industrial machinery, pharma sector and imported food items that would increase the cost of production activities and further hike inflation.

He said that the mini-budget has proposed to increase the rates of federal excise duty, income tax and sales tax on services in the federal capital territory that would put more burden on the business community and affect their business activities. He said that the government has also imposed a 17 percent sales tax through the mini-budget on the mining sector that would increase its production cost and affect exports of marble & granite products, which would be

harmful for the economy. ICCI President said that the Finance (Supplementary) Bill 2021 would raise the prices of many essential items including flour, edible oil, medicines, poultry products, infant food, other food items, mobile phones, personal computers, sewing machines, match boxes, iodised salt, red chili etc. This would happen at a time when inflationary pressures were already at record high levels. He said that the withdrawal of exemptions and imposition of duties on raw materials would have far reaching impact on both industry and trade sectors and urged that the government should withdraw the mini-budget in the larger economic interest of the country. Jamshaid Akhtar Sheikh Senior Vice President and Muhammad Faheem Khan Vice

President ICCI said that instead of generating additional tax revenue for the government, the mini-budget would promote smuggling due to price hike that would lead to a negative impact on the local industrial and business activities.

They said that with the further erosion of their buying power, people would prefer to buy smuggled and cheaper items including mobile phones and this situation would keep Pakistan a tech backward country, which would be in sharp contrast with the government's efforts to make Pakistan a digitising economy.

They urged that the government should start consultation with the stakeholders to address the key challenges of the economy and withdraw the mini-budget to save the country from further troubles.



ISLAMABAD: Saudi Arabian ambassador to Pakistan Nawaf Al-Maliki called on Secretary General of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam, former Deputy Chairman of the Senate Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri and Secretary General of Markazi Jamiat Ahle Hadith Senator Abdul Karim Bakhsh. — DNA

296 conferred
degrees at NUST
S3H convocation

ISLAMABAD: As many as 296 undergraduate and postgraduate students of NUST School of Social Sciences and Humanities (S3H) were conferred degrees at the convocation ceremony held at the main campus here the other day.

President and CEO HBL Ltd, Mr Muhammad Aurangzeb, was the chief guest. Others present were Rector NUST Lt Gen (R) Javed Mahmood Bukhari, HI (M), senior management, faculty and graduates.

At his convocation address, the chief guest Mr Muhammad Aurangzeb extended heartfelt felicitations to the graduates on their meritorious accomplishments.

He also bestowed a few life lessons upon them, urging them to mobilize their intellectual and professional prowess to tackle and address current and impending challenges facing the country. He further said that our common goal must be to make our educational institutions centres of excellence, and inspired other national higher education institutions to follow the precedents set by NUST.

Earlier, the chief guest awarded degrees to the graduating students and medals to the distinction holders. — APP

Expert stresses
awareness for
unsafe injection

ISLAMABAD: Health expert on Friday stressed upon the need of launching a public awareness campaign to enhance the capacity of healthcare workers, adherence to injection safety standard operating procedures and the ways to implement such good practices in hospitals as well as in salons. Talking to a private news channel, an infectious disease specialist and microbiologist Prof. Dr. Zarfishan Tahir said that UNAIDS analysis revealed Pakistan is among the countries where ratio of new AIDs cases saw a sharp increase due to unsafe injection practices.

She urged for holding more awareness seminars to educate the community specially youngsters and take care of those affected, adding, HIV can be transmitted by unprotected sex, injecting drugs, reuse of medical needles and syringes, blood transfusion, and organ transplants.

"Social stigma is still a biggest hurdle that prevent people from going to doctors or medical facilities, she said, adding, with education spread of the virus, we will have to change this mindset of society". She further regretted that majority of the healthcare establishments being run by the quacks were in the names of registered medical practitioners were playing with the lives of people without any fear of law and causing HIV increase cases.

She called for imposing a ban on the production of large injection vials by the pharmaceutical companies, saying that quacks, untrained doctors, beauty salons had become a source of spreading HIV, Hepatitis and other infectious diseases to the patients. A recently published report by the UNAIDS, a joint UN programme on HIV/AIDS, has revealed that the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) infections are spreading rapidly in Pakistan as around 25,000 people in the country contracted the virus in 2020, she mentioned. This means 84 per cent increase in HIV patients. Majority of the people infected are drug users who inject themselves, she added.

She said there are over 240,000 people living with HIV in Pakistan. Of these, 160,000 are men and around 38,000 women. The number of registered AIDS patients in the country is around 46,912. The data shows that around 1,600 who were infected with HIV in 2020 were under the age of 15, Specialist added. — APP

Rawal Chowk flyover to be
completed by March 2022

ISLAMABAD: Capital Development Authority's development work on Rawal Chowk Interchange and 7th Avenue Underpass is in full swing as the civic agency is determined to complete the mega projects within stipulated timeframe.

These mega projects (Rawal Chowk Interchange and 7th Avenue Underpass), launched to help control traffic burden on Islamabad roads, are expected to be completed by March 2022 and by June 2022 respectively.

A Spokesman of Capital Development Authority, Syed Asif Raza on Friday said due to increased vehicular traffic it was necessary to develop alternate strategic routes to reduce heavy congestion during peak hours.

"After finalization of the mega connectivity initiatives, special reflectors will be installed to facilitate commuters for identifying their route while travelling to avoid inconvenience," he told APP.

Highlighting the importance of plantation, he said special greenbelts would be made across the underpasses to provide green and serene landscape for the road users. "With an aim to avoid cutting trees CDA transplanted the mature trees from the Rawal Dam Chowk vicinity to other suitable places of the federal capital," he said.

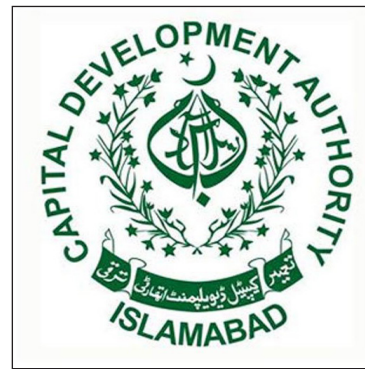
Raza informed that the Chairman Capital Development Authority has directed the concerned formation to ensure high quality of construction work as well as to further expedite

CDA launches work on stone
pitching, sloping nullah

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority has launched the work on stone pitching and sloping of stream (nullah) running down from Margallas and crisscrossing through Islamabad eventually falling into Rawal Lake, Korang Nullah, Nullah Lai and Swan River.

In a written reply to a question in National Assembly, Ministry of Interior said that stone pitching work, up till now, has been executed at I-8/1, I-10, I-9/1, I-8/2, G-6/4, G-6/2, F-6/3, F-6, F-6/4, G-6/4, F-7/3, F-7/4, F-8/2, F-8, F-10/3, G-8, F-10/3, F-6/1, G-11/4 and G-10 etc.

In the first instance works executed at locations by considering the crossing of nullahs under bridges and culverts on both sides up and below the stream, especially the places where waste and garbage were dumped and streams got choked in monsoon season and heavy rains falls. — APP



the pace of the work to reduce public inconvenience.

Meanwhile, when contacted Mustafa Nazir, a commuter was of the view that the federal capital's traffic congestion was becoming a serious nuisance for citizens with an each passing moth and people had

to remain stranded for hours during school and office timings. Nazir said thanks to the civic body which took this important initiative to manage the construction work on these public friendly projects with the sole purpose to facilitate commuters for hassle free travelling and to check traffic jams.

Another commuter, Ayesha Farhat, who travels on Park road to go to her university, said the population boom and rise in vehicles number has shrunk the Federal Capital's passages in different localities and it was imperative to have new underpasses and widening of routes for smooth travelling. She lauded Capital Development Authority and Islamabad traffic police for providing alternate routes to avoid inconvenience for travelers during ongoing construction activity. — APP

Panahgahs ensure shelter, food amid winter

The Panahgahs being managed by Pakistan Baitul Maal provide free shelter to the needy. One shelter home located at Peshawar Mor in Sector G-9 of Islamabad is accommodating 100 people

ISLAMABAD: The Panahgahs, a flagship initiative of Prime minister Imran Khan to provide relief to the homeless and the penniless, is nothing short of a blessing that is providing a huge service to the needy left at the mercy of Mother Nature amid the unforgiving winters.

The Panahgahs (shelter homes) being managed by Pakistan Baitul Maal (PBM) provide free shelter to the needy. One shelter home located at Peshawar Mor in Sector G-9 of Islamabad is accommodating 100 people. The Panahgah, as it is famously called, is well prepared to provide comfortable bedding to the inhabitants. It provides decent bedding – bed sheets and quilts to keep the occupants comfortable.

Upon visit to the facility, an official of PBM briefed APP that keeping in view the freezing cold weather, a geyser had also been installed on the instructions of high ups, to provide warm water to the downtrodden and the destitute. This Panahgah is a men-only facility. The shelter home maintained a computerized record of the occupants and the record was interlinked with the other shelter homes of the city through integrated software. Accommodation is provided on a first come first serve basis without any discrimination. The remaining shelter seekers are taken to other shelter homes located in the city. Responding to the complaints made by the beneficiaries, the official in charge said



that the bed covers were washed and dried on daily basis. However, she added, the inhabitants were hard to reason with and not cooperating to keep the shelter clean and tidy. In fact, she said that the hall presented a messy picture every morning, and it was a Herculean task to clear the mess created overnight. She said that this was a daily routine and appreciated that the cleaners discharged their duties regularly and with honesty.

Addressing the concerns raised by the shelter seekers, she said that she was directed by her senior officers to provide the best care to shelter seekers, adding, "This is what the Panahgah has been established for." She informed that the beneficiaries were given the best possible service and care, but in return she and

her staff were subjected to verbal abuse and even manhandling.

Haseeb Khan, a 71 year old sole earner of bread, was staying here for the past 10 days. He had come here in search of work to provide for his wife and four daughters back in Topi, Swabi. He was pleased with the service and the Panahgah was nothing short of a blessing for him. He acknowledged the fact that the shelter provided him free accommodation and the langarkhana served him three meals a day at a time when it had become impossible for him to afford even one.

However, a few beneficiaries highlighted some concerns as well. Waheed Zaman, a 48 year old guy from Swabi, has been living in the Panahgah from the very day the facility became operational. He said that

the staff of the shelter home needed to pay more attention to its cleanliness. He further said that although one geyser was installed in a bathroom, it did not suffice to meet the needs of all. He also informed of thefts inside the shelter home saying that four mobile phones had been stolen from the facility within one week. He said that even though there were CCTV cameras, the staff refused to cooperate.

Salman, a 17-year old young boy from Peshawar, had come here only recently. He spoke of fixed times for entry and exit into the shelter and said that there was no relaxation when it came to time. He also said that first aid needed to be made available in the shelter home. However, he was pleased with the food being served and said that there was adequate supply of food as he and everybody else at the shelter ate to his full. Ubaidullah, 31 from Lower Dir, had been living in the facility for 7 months.

He complained of irregularities in the langarkhana saying that the staff of the Saylani Welfare separated meat and good quality food for themselves.

Saylani langarkhana working under PBM provides free food to the needy. Pervez Shakir, incharge of the Peshawar Mor branch of the langarkhana said that on average 700 people were served daily. In response to the allegations he said that donations were very rare and the meals came cooked directly from the Saylani head office. — APP

PFC felicitates
newly elected
president
FPCCI

ISLAMABAD: Chief Executive Officer Pakistan Furniture Council Mian Kashif Ashfaq Friday extended felicitation to the newly elected President Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry Irfan Iqbal Sheikh on his landslide victory in the annual election of the apex trade body.

In his congratulatory letter, he said Irfan Iqbal Sheikh, SVP Muhammad Suleman Chawala, and other BMP Vice Presidents Muhammad Jabbar, Shaikat Ali Omerson, Nadeem Qureshi, and Shabbir Hassan success in the nationwide election of the business community reflects their popularity in all chambers and affiliated trade associations across the country.

He said the credit for winning the majority seats in FPCCI is attributed to the dynamic leadership of Anjum Nisar Chairman Businessmen Panel (BMP) and Khawaja Shahzeb Akram who successfully mustered the overwhelming support of chambers and trade associations on the basis of their matchless truly dedicated outstanding performance throughout the country. He said BMP won the FPCCI election consecutively for the third term by clinching the confidence of the business community. — APP

Pakistan
earns \$182m
from travel
services' export

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan earned US \$182.991 million by providing different travel services in various countries during the first four months of the current financial year 2021-22.

This shows the growth of 49.86 percent as compared to the US \$122.110 million same services were provided during the corresponding period of the last fiscal year 2020-21, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

During the month under review, the personal travel services increased by 50.16 percent, from the US \$121.410 million last year to the US \$182.311 million during July-October 2021. Among these personal services, the exports of personal expenditure rose by 164 percent while the education-related expenditure increased by 0.27 percent.

In addition, the other personal services witnessed an increase of 51.25 percent. Meanwhile, the exports of business services however witnessed a decrease of 2.86 percent, from the US \$ 0.700 million to the US \$ 0.680 million, the PBS data revealed.

It is pertinent to mentioned here that the exports of services from the country, witnessed an increase of 24.25 percent during the first four months of current financial year (2021-22) as compared to the corresponding period of last year, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. The exports of services during July- October (2021-22) were recorded at \$2122.19 million against the exports of \$1708.04 million in July- October (2020-21), showing growth of 24.25 percent. — APP

IRSA releases
29209 cusecs
water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) Friday released 29209 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 33749 cusecs.

According to the data released by IRSA, water level in the Indus River at Tarbela Dam was 1430.46 feet, which was 38.46 feet higher than its dead level 1392 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 16400 and 15000 cusecs respectively.

The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1120.10 feet, which was 70.01 feet higher than its dead level of 1050 feet whereas the inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 7140 and 4000 cusecs respectively.

The release of water at Kala-bagh, Taunsa and Sukkur was recorded as 15285, 17298 and 31525 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from the Kabul River a total of 4300 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 5909 cusecs released from the Chenab River at Marala. — APP

LG delimitation

IT is a constitutional requirement for the local government elections to be held timely—according to the Elections Act 2017, new elections must be held within 120 days of the expiry of the tenure of the last local government. Unfortunately, local government elections have been rare and consistently delayed in Pakistan's history. Even with the strengthening of democratic processes in the last few years, there have been several challenges in holding local government elections on time. A consistent hurdle in Sindh, for example, has been the issue of delimitation. However, a significant development in expediting the process took place when the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) government passed amendments to the local government law, the Sindh Local Government Act, 2013. PPP has used its objections to the 2017 Census, and the impact it has on delimitation, as a constant excuse to delay the local government elections. The provincial PPP government in Sindh, despite reminders from the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), did not provide requisite data nor made amendments to the law on the pretext that it had reservations on the official result of the 2017 census. Only after the ECP issued a final deadline to the Sindh government to provide data for holding elections in the province, did the government pass the highly contested and controversial amendments. The amendment might have brought forth the wrath of the opposition parties in Sindh, but it can be said that, finally, the local government elections are in sight, rather than being indefinitely delayed. The ECP is set to start from Friday the delimitation process, is likely to be completed in March of 2022, after which finally the elections can be held, almost two years since the last local government's tenure ended. It is a relief that the necessary process for delimitation has started. Now all stakeholders should oversee this process, which always gives rise to controversies and objections by all political parties involved, carefully but expeditiously.

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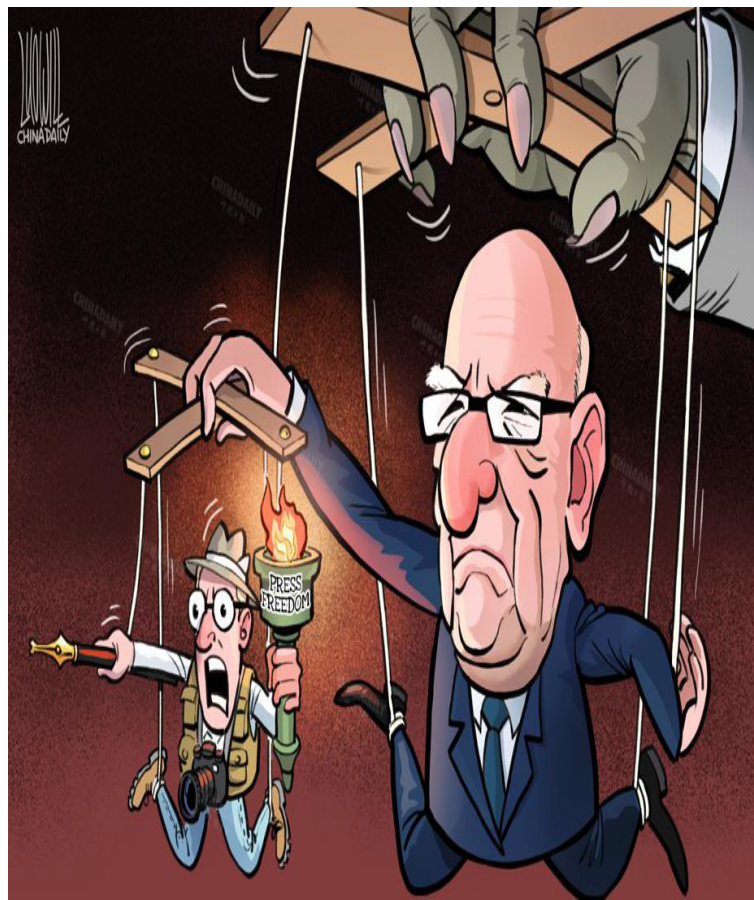
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TMA employee salaries

IT was reported on Thursday that all 25 tehsil municipal administrations (TMAs) in the seven tribal districts haven't paid salaries to their over 1,000 employees for four months. As per reports, the KP Local Council Board had formally requested the KP government several months ago for funds to manage these expenditures, however the matter continued to be pending with the finance department. These revelations are extremely disappointing and it is egregious on part of the government to have allowed this matter to linger on for four months. The situation worsened to such an extent that the employees had been struggling to make ends meet due to the long pay delays. The escalating prices of essential items only further compounded their troubles and it is inexcusable on part of the government to treat employees in such a manner. It comes as little surprise then that labour is taken for granted in the rest of the country as well. These TMAs were established in Mohmand, Bajaur, Khyber, Kurram, Orakzai, North Waziristan and South Waziristan districts following the region's merger with KP, and since they lack revenue generation mechanisms, it is the responsibility of the provincial government to cater to such basic needs. While the local government minister Faisal Amin Gandapur has explained that TMAs in tribal districts are financially weak as ex-FATA has been declared a tax-free zone, this is no justification for depriving employees of their income for four months. These areas of our country have been neglected for too long and such instances will only further the grievances of the residents. If we truly want to integrate tribal regions into KP, the government will have to invest in infrastructure to ensure that local revenue can be generated for the citizens. Serious action must be taken with regards to this negligence to ensure that this does not happen in the future.

China-2022: An overview

Syed Ali Nawaz Gilani



Chinese President Xi Jinping's leadership has been credited with lifting nearly 100 million people out of poverty over the past eight years

CHINA is committed to continue its successful journey in 2022 by celebrating successfully 100 years of Communist Party of China (CPC) the guiding force of today's China and 50 anniversary of return to UNO and overcoming all challenges in 2021. After stepping on the dark side of the moon China announced the eradication of poverty. It has truly surpassed the entire developed world of today. Thanks to China's rapid development this century is being called the century of Asia. On the one hand, the Communist Party of China has successfully implemented its microeconomic policy, beating the United States, Japan, France, Germany, and other major economies. On the other hand, the initiative has taken the modern world by surprise. The G7 countries are now planning to counter China led by the United States, but to provide Europe and the United States with the ideal consensus unity and funding will be required to counter it, which seems impossible due to differences between the countries.

China's economic, military, and space power have been and will continue to be discussed, but today let us take a look at some of its greatest achievements in human history: the complete eradication of poverty. The Communist Party's 2022 plans, the completion of which there will be revolutionary changes in the world in general and in Asia in particular. Recently, the President of China has announced the eradication of rural poverty in his country, which is the worst thing

in the world. Chinese President Xi Jinping's leadership has been credited with lifting nearly 100 million people out of poverty over the past eight years. According to Chinese President Xi Jinping, rural development and prosperity are of paramount importance. Xi Jinping has said that the development gap between urban and rural areas should be reduced so that the low-income population and the people of backward areas can also be developed.

It is important to improve the living conditions in rural areas and promote the well-being of the farmers. The provinces that China has recently conquered against poverty include Xinjiang, Ningxia Hui, Guangzhou, Chuang Province, Si Chuan Province, Yunnan Province, and Gansu Province. Guizhou Province was the last place to achieve the ultimate victory in poverty alleviation. It should be noted that China has set a goal of complete eradication of poverty from the country by 2020. Yes, real steps have been taken to stabilize agriculture and promote rural life. Remember that by the 2022 Congress of the Communist Party of China, many things will have become clear. A decision of the third term of Xi Jinping will also be made.

Chinese President Xi Jinping referred to the 20th CPC National Congress to be held in 2022 as the cornerstone of agriculture. Emphasized the special importance of moving the work forward permanently. Now that China has overcome poverty, it is focusing on agricultural commodities and agriculture. The Chinese president has instructed that since ensuring the supply of basic commodities is an important strategic issue, efforts should be made to protect the grain and protect agriculture. Remember that in the last eight years, China has lifted the last 98.99 million poor rural people living below the current poverty line and removed all 832 poor counties and 128,000 villages from the poverty line. He called for greater efforts to ensure a large-scale return to poverty and sought to secure and consolidate China's significant achievements in the fight against poverty.

Now let us talk about China's economic development and the steps taken by its rivals. However, it is clear that China is facing rivals and challenges in this field. China's Belt and Road Initiative project has been recognized around the world, but the G-7 countries are among the biggest rivals in the sector that want to challenge China's economic strength. There are differences; it makes sense that they will not be able to touch it.

As we know, the group of the seven richest democracies has recently launched an infrastructure plan for developing countries to counter

China's growing influence so that President Xi Jinping's Compete with the multi-trillion-dollar Belt and Road initiative.

The world knows that in the last 40 years, after China's growing economic and military boom, it is looking for a coordinated response to Xi's growing insistence. The United States-led G7 agreed on the need for a joint approach with China on trade and human rights and will use it to mobilize private sector capital in areas such as gender equality and equality.

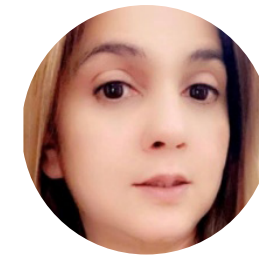
It was not immediately clear how the project would work or how much money would be allocated to it. In contrast, China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) scheme, launched in 2013, includes development and investment initiatives that extend from Asia to Europe and beyond. Many countries have signed agreements with China for cooperation in BRI projects such as railways, ports, highways, and other infrastructure. This route starts from Attock city of Punjab and enters the Dera Ismail Khan City of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Passing through FATA, this route goes to Quetta city of Balochistan. Passing through Quetta, this route goes to Panjgur and from there to its original destination Gwadar. This is the only road that connects China to Gwadar by road. Gwadar is one of the deepest and most important commercial ports in the world. That is why China is investing billions of dollars in CPEC. Abad Motorway M3 is also included in this route. The Lahore to Karachi M5 motorway is also included in the same project, which covers a distance of 1,026 km. The major cities of Sukkur, Hyderabad, and Karachi are on this road. On the other hand, the 635 km Makran Postal Highway connecting Karachi and Gwadar Port already exists. It will open new avenues of development. Whatever the world may say, China has proved that it has emerged as a world power economically, militarily, and culturally. More than the colonial world seeks to gain from the massacre of human beings; China has achieved this by doing business with the world in peace and harmony and by raising flags in the world of science, knowledge, and research.

China has stepped into the moon and space. This iron nation is being praised everywhere, so the anti-China world should also think that it should consider China as a competitive rival instead of an enemy so that instead of spreading more terror in the world should healthily Promote the world trade environment.

— The writer is Secretary-General Pakistan China Friendship Association Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province of Pakistan His email syeed.gilani@gmail.com

RECKONING 2022 — A bird eye view

Huma Arshad



Russia's large military buildup near its border with Ukraine has heightened concerns that Russian President Vladimir Putin sees in his neighbor "unfinished business"

BEFORE the momentous events of 2020 and 2021 shook up the planet, the tectonic plates of culture, society and technology were already shifting and reshaping the world. The pandemic took those changes and accelerated them, exacerbated them, and in some cases, threw them into chaos. As we speed into 2022, one question remains: where are we headed next? It's been more tug-of-war than clean break, but 2021 will mark the year rich countries began extricating themselves from the COVID-19 crisis. With ongoing vaccination challenges in much of the world and the worrying emergence of the Omicron variant, along with supply bottlenecks plus rising inflation and debt, the pandemic continues to exert its relentless push and pull on a beleaguered world. Keeping in mind the global trends few risks have been identified in upcoming 2022 for the world from western world and US perspective. Although a small majority of the world's population has now gotten at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine, some regions are in far better shape than others; in Africa, for example, just 12 percent of the population had received at least one dose as of December. Developed countries have largely failed to protect their weaker and poorer counterparts. The Delta variant, first detected in India and far more contagious than past strains, quickly spread worldwide, overwhelming hospitals in rich countries and even breaching the defenses of those already vaccinated.

The Omicron variant, which was first identified in southern Africa, now appears much more contagious than Delta, although its severity has yet to be fully determined. The longer much of the global population remains unvaccinated, the greater the chance of virus mutations that produce more contagious, severe, or vaccine-evasive variants. Even if vaccination coverage greatly increases, many experts believe we should be prepared to live with an endemic threat from COVID-19. For all the fear of a rising China, its weakness may pose the greatest risk. President Xi Jinping's crackdown first on the tech sector and now on the property sector, which accounts for some 29 percent of China's economy, highlights the fragility of the country's economic system. The concern is that energy shortages, demographic decline, declining growth and productivity, and debt (exemplified lately by the beleaguered property giant Evergrande but running much deeper in a country saddled with total debt that is 290 percent of its gross domestic product) reflect an outdated economic model.

Afghanistan is enduring an unprecedented humanitarian crisis, and possible state collapse looms in 2022. According to the United Nations' World Food Program (WFP), 23 million Afghans faced imminent starvation before the winter forecast to be severe even began. It is difficult for the World Bank and other development agencies to directly assist Afghans due to the country's chaotic payments system and international prohibitions on aiding the Taliban. The United Nations warns that Afghanistan's banking system may be nearing collapse, endanger-

ing humanitarian-relief efforts. The second-biggest casualty from COVID-19—after the more than five million people who have died from it—is the global middle class. Those who have managed to hang on to the middle class in the developing world are poised to confront spiraling economic insecurity due to the political and economic aftershocks of the pandemic, which will continue to range for some time in many of these countries.

Predicting boom/bust cycles in the oil market is always hazardous. There are conflicting forecasts, with the US Energy Information Agency foreseeing a drop from a price of eighty-four dollars per barrel of Brent crude oil this fall to sixty-six dollars per barrel by this time next year, while many private-sector analysts and hedge funds are betting on a prolonged price spike.

Environmental challenges
Global carbon emissions have grown by 60 percent since the Kyoto Protocol was signed in 1997, and the climate-change accord from this year's twenty-sixth UN Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow doesn't assuage concerns about the risks of accelerated climate change or the likelihood of achieving the goal of curbing average temperature rise to less than 2 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. The International Energy Agency has issued a detailed roadmap for reaching net-zero emissions by 2050, which will require an end to new oil and gas projects by next year—along with a tripling of investment in solar and wind energy to \$4 trillion and a quadrupling of investment in smart grids by the end of this decade.

Emergence of a bifurcated world
US has fallen in love with the idea of re-running the Cold War, undoubtedly with the same ending of the West triumphing. Some focus on what's different between the economically anemic Soviet Union and today's omnipresent China—a top economy and major high-tech innovator, along with its status as the world's number-one trading power and capital exporter—should cause the Beltway to rethink the merits of a bifurcated world.

Environmental progress
The COP26 final statement fell short of putting the planet on a path to limit global warming to less than 2 degrees Celsius. But stopping deforestation, slashing methane emissions by 30 percent, and establishing global carbon-trading rules could all have significant payoffs in greenhouse-gas reductions if those pledges from the climate conference are actually implemented over the next decade. The US-China climate accord also announced in Glasgow could help accelerate those goals by, for example, contributing to a push for a 50 percent methane reduction by 2030.

World powers might get united for new AI
AI applications from facial recognition to employment screening are increasingly being deployed across industries and will become ubiquitous during this decade. Yet there are few agreed-upon global rules or standards in this realm. Though AI is a technology dominated by the United States and China, the European Union is seeking to create a regulatory framework that can establish such standards. A draft Artificial Intelligence Act before the EU Parliament and European Commission sets detailed strictures for AI use and commerce based on a hierarchy of risks with job recruitment, critical infrastructure, and law enforcement among those identified as high-risk.

The US, China, and Russia start cooperating in space
The United States, China, and Russia have all added debris to space over the years, and they increasingly see space as a key domain for military competition. Hundreds of thousands of pieces of debris are now hurtling through space at around 15,500 miles an hour, threatening human space flight and the nearly five thousand active satellites in orbit. Our tech-dependent way of life would be imperiled if communications satellites are disabled, and the dangers are only increasing: By one estimate, there could be one hundred thousand satellites in orbit by 2030. No international system of space-traffic control exists, and there is no independent global body providing data on satellite positioning and trajectories. A good first step would be for the United States, China, and Russia to reach some understandings on their moon missions.

Israel's big-money smear campaign to demonise Muslims

CJ Werleman

Nihad Awad, CAIR's national director, said his organisation had accumulated a lot of information on IPT, saying Emerson was "providing assistance to Israeli intelligence" and communicating with the office of then-PM Benjamin Netanyahu

RECENT revelations that an anti-Muslim hate group allegedly paid thousands of dollars to two employees of a Muslim advocacy organisation to undermine American Muslim activists on behalf of the Israeli government are undoubtedly shocking but represent only the tip of the iceberg in what is now a decades-long effort by the Jewish State to harass, smear and threaten pro-Palestinian activists in the United States. On December 15, the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) announced it had fired Executive Director Romin Iqbal for collaborating with the Investigative Project on Terrorism (IPT), which is headed by Steve Emerson, a former journalist and a self-proclaimed expert on Islamic and Middle Eastern terrorist groups. IPT is deemed an anti-Muslim

hate group by the Islamophobia Network because of the way it uses "unsubstantiated threats that portray Muslims as dangerous to accrue funding" and that Emerson has a reputation "for fabricating evidence to substantiate his ravings about Muslim extremism."

Seven days later, another shoe dropped, with CAIR announcing it had discovered a second "spy" within its organisation, one who confessed to having been paid \$3,000 per month over 4 years by IPT to "protect the Israeli government" by spying on a mosque in the US and "record prominent Muslim leaders." "One of Emerson's goals, we were told, was protecting the Israeli government by undermining Muslims engaged in political and human rights activism," said CAIR, while revealing a series of emails between Israeli officials and IPT, including one showing a request for information related to Students for Justice in Palestine, a student advocacy group.

More than that, these are the actions of a rogue and adversarial state, not those of a self-proclaimed democratic ally, but we should hardly be surprised, given the nexus between Zionism and the Islamophobia industry is documented in great detail, starting with a Zionist-funded conference in 1979. The conclave brought together US neoconservatives with Likud Party figures to tie Islam to terrorism in mainstream political discourse, with the aim of tying Palestinian aspirations for liberation to "terrorism" in the minds of American voters, as observed by Professor Deepa Kumar in Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire. When nineteen "Islamic" terrorists attacked the United States on 11 September 2001, pro-Israel groups moved in to capitalise on growing anti-Muslim fears and suspicions by establishing "counter-jihad" organisations, including Campus Watch. Established in 2002 by US neoconservative activists Daniel Pipes and David Horowitz, Campus Watch primarily aims to identify and monitor college professors who openly support Palestinian rights and oppose Israeli government policies.

In 2011, the Centre for American Progress published "Fear Inc: The Roots of the Islamophobia Network in America," which found that seven non-profit foundations donated \$42.6 million to support the spread of anti-Islam rhetoric between 2001 and 2009, showing how a "well-funded, well-organised fringe movement can push discriminatory policies against a segment of American society by intentionally spreading lies, while taking advantage of moments of public anxiety and fear."

These "lies", particularly those that falsely tie Islam as a gateway to terrorism, were weaponised to advance the political interests of the Israeli government and conservative Christian groups and individuals. Last year, the Jewish-American magazine Forward obtained documents showing that Israel's Ministry of Strategic Affairs transferred \$40,000 to US-based Christian Zionist organisation, Proclaiming Justice to the Nations (PJTN), which has been identified as an anti-Muslim hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Centre, a non-governmental organisation that tracks hate crimes in the United States. PJTN's founder and president, Laurie Cardoza-Moore, has falsely claimed that 30 percent of American Muslims are terrorists and are operating "35 terrorist training camps" in the US; that Islam is a "political system of global domination," and that tornadoes can be blamed on former President Barack Obama's "support for a Palestinian state". "The grant to PJTN was part of a broader push by the ministry to support pro-Israel groups fighting BDS in the United States, which has raised questions about whether those groups properly disclosed the support they received from foreign entities," observes Forward.

— Courtesy: TRT World

Briefs

Vaccination drive going smoothly

FROM PAGE 01
Prime Minister Imran Khan thanked the forum for its work. However, the WHO has warned of trying times ahead, saying Omicron could lead to "a tsunami of cases". "This [...] will continue to put immense pressure on exhausted health workers, and health systems on the brink of collapse," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has said.

Pakistan's battle against COVID-19 continues to rage with the added challenge of Omicron spreading, as Islamabad reported 34 Omicron positive cases in a single day today, taking the total toll in the Federal Capital to 64, according to the district health officer.

World rings in New Year under...

FROM PAGE 01
As the year drew to a close, the emergence of the Omicron variant pushed the number of daily new Covid-19 cases past one million for the first time, according to an AFP tally. France became the latest country to announce Omicron was now its dominant coronavirus strain on Friday. In Britain, the United States, and even Australia - long a refuge from the pandemic - the variant's prominence is driving record new cases.

- To party, or not? - Parts of the Pacific nation of Kiribati became the first to welcome in the new year from 1000 GMT.

But from Seoul to San Francisco, celebrations have again been cancelled or curtailed as infections rise.

In Sydney, which in normal times bills itself as the "New Year's Eve capital of the world", the vast harbour where people gathered to watch the city's famous fireworks was notably uncrowded. With tourists still unable to enter the country and many residents fearful of the rapid spread of Omicron, tens of thousands were estimated to have attended, rather than the one million-plus who normally flock to the foreshore.

Imran Khan surrendered to IMF...

FROM PAGE 01
government has shown towards the poor people of Pakistan, said the opposition leader. Shehbaz Sharif further accused Imran Khan and company of increasing inflation in the country. Earlier, the PML-N leader said that economic and political stability feeds directly into national security.

He, in a tweet, said that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) tenure in government has been the worst by way of mismanaging economy and delivering poor governance. Shehbaz added that never before have the citizens been this hopeless about their future and warned that all this has implications for national security.

- Directs to complete public...

FROM PAGE 01
The meeting was attended by Chief Minister Punjab Sardar Usman Buzdar, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Ch. Fawad Hussain, Minister for Education Shafiqat Mehmood, Special Assistant to PM on Political Communication Dr. Shehbaz Gill, Minister of the State for Information and Broadcasting Farrukh Habib, Provincial Finance Minister Hashim Jawan Bakht, Chief Secretary Punjab and other senior officers.

Provincial Finance Minister Hashim Jawan Bakht told the provincial government with the record allocation of Rs.750 billion had presented the biggest ever development budget for Punjab. Chairman Punjab Planning and Development Abdullah Sunbal briefed the prime minister about the required budget for the completion of ongoing development projects in the province in communication, education, construction of roads and health sectors.

Grave violations surge for children in conflict

This year marked a quarter of a century since publication of GraMachel's seminal Impact of war on children report, which urged the UN, int'l community to take action

NEW YORK: Armed conflict, inter-communal violence and insecurity continued to take a devastating toll on thousands of children throughout 2021, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), warned Friday. From Afghanistan to Yemen, and Syria to northern Ethiopia, UNICEF denounced grave violations against young people in both protracted and new conflicts. Last week, four children were reportedly among the victims of an attack that killed at least 35 people - including two Save the Children staff - in Kayah state in eastern Myanmar.

In a statement, UNICEF Executive Director Henrietta Fore said that, year after year, parties to conflict continue to demonstrate a dreadful disregard for the

rights and wellbeing of children. Children are suffering, and children are dying because of this callousness. Every effort should be made to keep these children safe from harm, she added. Data is not yet available for this year, but the UN verified 26,425 grave violations against children in 2020. The first three months of 2021 saw a slight decrease in the overall number of these grave violations but verified cases of abduction and sexual violence continued to rise at alarming rates - by more than 50 and 10 per cent, respectively. Verified abductions were highest in Somalia, followed by the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the countries of the Lake Chad Basin

(Chad, Nigeria, Cameroon and Niger). On the other hand, verified instances of sexual violence were highest in the DRC, Somalia and the Central African Republic (CAR). This year marked a quarter of a century since the publication of GraMachel's seminal Impact of war on children report, which urged the UN and international community to take action. Over the past 16 years, the UN has verified 266,000 cases of grave violations against children in more than 30 conflict situations

across Africa, Asia, the Middle East and Latin America. While these cases were verified through the 2005 UN-led Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism, the actual figures are most likely much higher, according to UNICEF. Afghanistan, for example, has the highest number of verified child casualties since 2005. With more than 28,500 incidents, the country accounts for 27 per cent of all verified child casualties globally. Meanwhile, the Middle East and North Africa has

the highest number of verified attacks on schools and hospitals, with 22 verified in the first six months of the year. In October, UNICEF highlighted that 10,000 children had been killed or maimed in Yemen since fighting escalated in March 2015 - the equivalent of four youngsters every day. UNICEF stated that each day, girls and boys living in areas under conflict endure unspeakable horrors that no human should ever experience. One is the persistent and growing threat of explosive weapons, particularly in populated areas. In 2020, explosive weapons and remnants of war were responsible for nearly 50 per cent of all child casualties, resulting in more than 3,900 children killed and

maimed. Children often fall victim to multiple grave rights violations. Last year, for example, 37 per cent of abductions verified by the UN led to the recruitment and use of children in war - surpassing 50 per cent in Somalia, DRC and CAR &nnbsp; UNICEF is calling for all conflict parties to commit to formal action plans. Since 2005, only 37 of such plans have been signed by parties to conflict, which UNICEF called a shockingly low number given the stakes for children. Ultimately, children living through war will only be safe when parties to conflict take concrete action to protect them and stop committing grave violations, Ms. Fore added. - Agencies

Ronaldo statue kicks up a fuss in India's Goa



DNA

INDIA: A statue of Portuguese footballer Cristiano Ronaldo has caused a stir in the southern Indian state of Goa, with locals accusing officials of insensitivity for honouring a sports star from the region's former colonial power. Protesters with black flags gathered

at the site after the statue was unveiled this week in the town of Calangute. They expressed anger that authorities had shunned Indian sports stars and chosen a player from Portugal, which granted Goa independence in 1961. Micky Fernandes, a former Indian international player who is from Goa, said the choice was "hurtful" and a "hango-

ver" from Portuguese rule. "Ronaldo is the best player in the world but still we should have a statue of a football player from Goa," Fernandes told AFP. Michael Lobo, a local minister with India's ruling BharatiyaJanata Party, told AFP the aim was to inspire young people to excel not just inside the country but internationally. "All the

boys and girls who want to make football a career will get inspired by people like Cristiano Ronaldo," Lobo said. "If you pursue your dream and you're passionate about it then you can reach a higher goal. This is what we have written on the plaque." Most of present-day India gained independence in 1947. But Portugal's then-military dictatorship only relinquished Goa following an invasion by the Indian army and a two-day war in 1961. Portugal's centuries-long influence remains visible in local architecture, particularly the many churches. Many people in Goa have Portuguese-origin surnames. Unlike in most of India, many Goans prefer football to cricket - and many support Portugal in international tournaments such as the World Cup. "I follow (Portugal) too but when we have our own players we cannot put up a statue of someone from outside," Fernandes said. It is not the first time a statue of Ronaldo, 36, has caused an upset. A grinning bust unveiled at Madeira airport in Portugal in 2017 was widely ridiculed as looking like its subject.

Berrettini confident Italy can win ATP Cup

"Obviously their team is different compared to last year for Covid reasons, so it's going to be for sure different match," said Berrettini.

SYDNEY: With two top-10 players in their ranks, Italy are an even stronger side than the one which reached this year's ATP Cup final and they are confident they can go a step further by winning the upcoming edition next month, Matteo Berrettini said. Italy lost to Russia in the championship match at this year's event, which is played in a format similar to the Davis Cup. For the 2022 version they have been drawn in Group B with champions Russia, hosts Australia, and late entrants France. The top team from each of the four groups advance to the semi-finals of the \$10 million tournaments. "I think if it's possible, the team is even stronger this year, so for sure our aim is to get the title," said world number seven Berrettini, who lost to Novak Djokovic at this year's Wimbledon in his first major final. "We know it's going to be a tough job. Every match is going to be difficult, but we believe that we can do it." Besides Berrettini, Italy also has 10th ranked Jannik Sinner and former number nine Fabio Fognini in their squad. World number two Daniil Medvedev will lead Russia's title defense but they have been depleted with fifth-ranked Andrey Rublev and 18th-ranked Aslan Karatsev ruled out after testing positive for Covid-19. "Obviously their team is different compared to last year for Covid reasons, so it's going to be for sure different match," said Berrettini. "But obviously Russia with Daniil, what they've done in the last year, is going to be one of the toughest matches we have to play." After winning the ATP Cup title at the start of the year, the Russian team also claimed the Davis Cup crown and Medvedev said much is still expected of them despite the weakened side. "I like this kind of pressure," the U.S. Open champion said. "It makes you play better. I think it's going to make all of us four guys just play the best tennis that we can." - APP

Stokes a viable option for England captaincy, says Mike Atherton

LONDON: Amid stinging criticism of Joe Root's captaincy in the wake of England's meek surrender in the Ashes series, former skipper Mike Atherton said all-rounder Ben Stokes is a viable alternative to replace the Yorkshireman. Atherton also said coach Chris Silverwood should be shown the door after the series, which Australia have already wrapped up with two matches to spare. Root, who has not won any of his three Ashes series in charge, was reluctant to discuss the long-term future of his captaincy after England lost by an innings and 14 runs in the third test in Melbourne. "There have been so many errors here, from selection to strategy, that the captain has to bear personal responsibility ... This could have been a much closer series had Root got things right on the field," Atherton wrote in The Times. "Root has been a good England captain, and has always carried himself superbly and is an incredible ambassador for the sport, but having done the job for five years and having had three cracks at the Ashes, including two awful campaigns in Australia, it is time for someone else to have a go. "Ben Stokes is a viable alternative, having done an excellent job as a stand-in briefly in the summer. His bowling is starting to wind down, and, as he may not get into England's best T20 side now, he can be given a breather during those matches." - Agencies

3 Pakistani Test players names in team of the year

LAHORE: After the ICC award nominations were announced, Cricket Australia has also jumped in and joined the trend to reveal their team of the year for the longest format of the game. The cricketing board selected three Pakistani players in the final XI which included left-arm middle-order batter Fawad Alam, and pacer duo of Hasan Ali and Shaheen Shah Afridi. Fawad Alam made a comeback to the Pakistan Test team and his performances in 2021 have further cemented his position in the side as he established himself as a consistent source of runs. "After celebrating the end of his 11-year Test exile with a hundred in New Zealand in late 2020, the unorthodox left-hander showed he's a man for all conditions by adding hundreds in Karachi, Harare and Kingston to finish the year as one of only three men to score three or more centuries," wrote Cricket Australia. Alam played 9 matches and scored 571 runs in 13 innings. He averaged 57.10 and scored 2 half-centuries and 3 centuries. On the other hand, Hasan and Shaheen remained one of the most prolific pacer duo from 2021. The pair picked up 41 and 47 wickets respectively. "The third seamer's spot was the most hotly contested in this side, but Pakistan's Hasan Ali gets in ahead of India's Jasprit Bumrah and England pair Jimmy Anderson and Ollie Robinson after a triumphant re-



turn to the Test arena in 2021," wrote Cricket Australia. Although Hasan Ali took 14 wickets against Zimbabwe, his numbers are hard to argue with. He also took a 10-wicket haul in a famous win over South Africa in Rawalpindi. As for Shaheen, he remained as one of the best bowlers across all formats as he proved it in the T20 World Cup, ODI series, and his faultless Test run in 2021. - DNA

Final XI

| | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Rohit Sharma..... | (India) |
| Dimuth Karunaratne..... | (Sri Lanka) (c) |
| Marnus Labuschagne..... | (Australia) |
| Joe Root..... | (England) |
| Fawad Alam..... | (Pakistan) |
| Rishabh Pant..... | (India) (wk) |
| Ravichandran Ashwin..... | (India) |
| Kyle Jamieson..... | (New Zealand) |
| Axar Patel..... | (India) |
| Hasan Ali..... | (Pakistan) |
| Shaheen Shah Afridi..... | (Pakistan) |

Has Premier League turned into one-horse race?

Guardiola, predictably, is refusing to accept the title race is over, hailing the quality of City's challengers. "There are many games to go," he said. "We are eight points in front but there are 54 still to play for and many tough games still to play

DNA

LONDON: Manchester City, Liverpool, and Chelsea looked set for a titanic three-way Premier League title tussle just over two weeks ago but it is now beginning to look like a one-horse race. The three clubs were separated by just two points before matches kicked off on December 14. Fast forward to the end of the month and City are now eight points clear of second-placed Chelsea. Pep Guardiola's men were not at their best at Brentford on Wednesday but did enough to win 1-0 on an evening when injury-hit Chelsea conceded a last-gasp equaliser at home to Brighton. Liverpool lost ground the previous day, beaten by a feisty and committed Leices-

ter side after Mohamed Salah failed to convert a first-half penalty. AFP Sport looks at some of the key factors in the title race heading into the new year. Champions City could streak 11 points clear if they beat fourth-placed Arsenal on Saturday, with Chelsea and Liverpool meeting at Stamford Bridge the following day. They are already overwhelming favourites to lift a fourth Premier League crown in five years and a double-digit lead even in early January could prove too much for their rivals. Guardiola, predictably, is refusing to accept the title race is over, hailing the quality of City's challengers. "There are many games to go," he said. "We are eight points in front but there are 54 still to play for and many

tough games still to play. "I'm not going to believe anyone who says it's already done. The teams we have with Chelsea and Liverpool are more than exceptional."



A disappointed Klopp admitted after his side's 1-0 defeat at Leicester that Liverpool, a further point behind Chelsea, could forget about catching City unless they upped

their game. Sunday's match at Stamford Bridge is surely a must-win now if either side are to have any chance of catching City. Chelsea boss Thomas Tuchel is struggling to cope with the toll on his squad from injury and coronavirus and admits he will use "trial and error" to pick his team to face Liverpool. Wing-back Reece James hobbled off against Brighton with a hamstring strain a day after the club confirmed Ben Chilwell needed knee surgery, which has now taken place. The European champions will sweat on Thiago Silva's thigh issue and Andreas Christensen's back problem - but also on players still suffering the effects of Covid-19, including Timo Werner. One plus point for Tuchel is the return to form of Rome-

lu Lukaku, who made his first league start against Brighton since mid-October after ankle trouble and Covid isolation, scoring for the second consecutive game. But Tuchel admitted he must continue to monitor the Belgium forward's continued recovery. Klopp has also been forced to juggle in recent weeks, with coronavirus depriving him of a clutch of players including Virgil van Dijk, Fabinho and Thiago Alcantara, though until the defeat at Leicester they were on a 10-game unbeaten run in all competitions. Pep Guardiola, by contrast, has relatively minor concerns. Kyle Walker, Rodri and John Stones were all absent from the squad at Brentford but he was still able to name a bench packed with quality.

Jail, London Shahbaz' only...

FROM PAGE 01

Prime Minister Imran Khan-led government. He said the opposition was in a state of confusion, as first it claimed that Nawaz Sharif was returning to the country on his own; however when the government offered them that it would bring him (Nawaz) back, then they backed off. To a question, he said that previous regimes of Nawaz Sharif and Asif Ali Zardari damaged the national economy by getting huge loans, due to which now the government had to pay off these loans of \$55 billion in the next two years.

It has to take loans to return the previous loans, he added. Today, even after paying off huge amounts in loans, Pakistan's economic situation was still stable and growing, he asserted. To another query, Chaudhry Fawad Hussain said that the opposition central leadership had been abducting; so how the government could hold talks with them, adding that Pakistan People's Party and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz should engage in national politics but they did not want to do so.

The PPP had always played the Sindh card instead of strengthening the federation. Now the Sindh government had deprived the people of Sindh from the Sehat card, he said and added that PPP's leadership was afraid of its own workers and was unable to face them. He said the PPP had become unpopular due to its leadership's negative policies. That was why it could organise a public gathering even at a 10-marla space, he added.

He said that victory or defeat were part of electoral process as the political leaders were answerable to people about their political efforts and commitments, adding that the PTI won elections in Sialkot and Federally Administered Tribal Areas.

Earlier, the minister said that Prime Minister Imran Khan had once again expressed his commitment to the people of the country and pledged to make Pakistan a welfare state based on the principles of Riyaasat-e-Medina. He said that the corrupt era of previous governments had ended in Pakistan as now a people-centric government was working to put the country on the way to progress and prosperity. He said the opposition's central leadership did not attend the National Assembly's proceedings while they claimed that 29 members of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf had contacted the PML-N. But, in fact, the whole opposition members were in contact with the PTI and even the PML-N members did not oppose the Supplementary Finance Bill, he added. Fawad said it was an irony that PML-N's leader and former defence minister Khawaja Asif, who was employed in an organisation in Saudi Arabia and getting salary, was telling the PTI government about the threats and challenges to national security and integrity. People have been aware about the real faces of them, he asserted. The minister said that the value of rupee against US dollar strengthened after presentation of finance bill, which would further help in reducing the inflation during the next three to four months, as the international factors causing inflation including commodities and energy products had shown a downward trend.

PM launches Naya...

FROM PAGE 01

The PM stated that while the welfare state model can be seen in contemporary Europe, it is not seen in Muslim countries.

In a dig at the PML-N's mantra of transforming Pakistan into an Asian Tiger, the premier stated, "Asian Tiger is nothing in comparison to the State of Madinah; we are attempting to put Pakistan on a path of prosperity." He stated that now that the government will not spend money on building hospitals because private individuals will build them instead. "We want to ensure that everyone in rural areas has access to health care, and by March 2022, all families in Punjab will have health cards." During his day-long visit to the provincial capital, the prime minister will also chair different meetings on administrative and political affairs, law and order, and development projects.

Briefs

South Africans bid farewell to Tutu

CAPE TOWN: South Africans on Friday took their last chance to pay their respects to Archbishop Desmond Tutu on the eve of a funeral for the revered anti-apartheid fighter.

Since Thursday, nearly 3,000 mourners have filed through Cape Town's St. George's Cathedral before the simple pine casket containing Tutu's remains. Members of Tutu's family hugged and consoled each other as the coffin returned for the second and final day of the lying in state and a band, which included a pre-schooler trumpeter, played in his honour.

The archbishop's successor, Thabo Makgoba, waved a chalice of burning incense over the coffin before pall bearers – Anglican vicars – took the coffin from a silver Mercedes SUV hearse. They slowly walked up the stairs into the cathedral where Tutu had preached for a decade.

The body will spend the night in the cathedral until the funeral, which will be presided over by President Cyril Ramaphosa. Tutu died peacefully aged 90 on Sunday.

His passing unleashed nationwide grief at the loss of the last great hero of the anti-apartheid era, and tributes from world leaders for a man cherished for his righteous anger and humour. – APP

Baku hosts event for children of Turkic world

WEB DESK

BAKU: The International Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation hosted a solidarity event Thursday for children of the Turkic world in Azerbaijan's capital Baku.

The event, organized on the occasion of the Dec. 31 World Azerbaijanis Solidarity Day and New Year Celebration and hosted by the foundation's president, Gunay Efendiyeva, was attended by the head of Azerbaijan's State Committee for Family, Women and Children's Affairs, Bahar Muradova, Turkey's Ambassador to Azerbaijan, Cahit Bagci, representatives of the member states of the Organization of the Turkic States and children.

"The Turkic world is a big tree and Turkic countries are the branches of this tree, while children are its buds," Efendiyeva said while speaking at the event. She emphasized that the Turkic world has always been in solidarity, and the most recent example of this was seen in last year's Karabakh war between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

"I want our children to support each other in the future. Let the children of the Turkic world stand shoulder to shoulder, let the 21st century be the century of the Turkic world," Efendiyeva added.

New cases in California prisons aise alarm

SACRAMENTO: With a new and more infectious coronavirus variant sweeping California, attorneys representing inmates say violations of health orders by prison staff risk a repeat of the outbreaks that killed dozens in the first year of the pandemic.

The most recent statistics show large percentages of employees who are required to be tested twice weekly aren't doing so, and most face no consequences. Corrections officials say they are updating those figures but have not yet provided new data.

Officials are temporarily shutting down admissions to Wasco State Prison in the San Joaquin Valley where there have been more than 150 new infections in the past two weeks. Starting Monday, officials say inmates statewide must be fully vaccinated to have in-person or family visits, unless they have approved religious or medical exemptions. – APP

Vaccines are the way out of pandemic, says Olaf Scholz

"We're at the beginning of a new decade. A new era is dawning. An era that will be successful if we actively shape it. Because we can make a difference if we remain determined and take our fate into our own hands"

FOREIGN DESK

BERLIN: German Chancellor Olaf Scholz will say in his first New Year's speech that bringing the coronavirus pandemic under control "will be a major task in the new year."

In the address, which will be broadcast in full later on Friday night but is released in writing ahead of time, Scholz notes the numerous, growing challenges facing Germany and the rest of the world. "We're at the beginning of a new decade. A new era is dawning. An era that will be successful if we actively shape it. Because we can make a difference if we remain determined and take our fate into our own hands," Scholz says.

He will conclude the address with an appeal: "My great wish for 2022 is that we keep standing together." The pandemic continues to rage, climate change poses an ever-growing risk, hundreds of lives were lost in deadly floods that hit western and southern Germany this summer and tensions along the Russian-Ukrainian border are causing global concern as the



world heads into the new year. But with the turbulent times of the past 12 months, Scholz says Germany can tackle the challenge by working together even in the darkest times.

"These days, some people complain that our society is 'divided.' I'd like to take this opportunity to make very clear that in fact, the opposite is true: our country is standing together."

The coronavirus pandemic is a persistent theme throughout Scholz's speech – with Germany and the rest of the world preparing to enter into another new

year amid record-breaking spikes in COVID-19 cases. "We are all aware that the pandemic is not over yet," Scholz says, noting that the omicron variant has made the situation especially difficult.

"Many of you are wondering what this means for us and what will happen next. I promise you that we will respond to it swiftly and resolutely."

He thanks the German public for adhering to coronavirus rules and urges people to get vaccinated or seek a booster shot. Scholz also says the German government plans to issue 30 million additional

vaccine doses in January alone. "Speed is what matters now. We have to move faster than the virus!" Combating climate change will also be a priority for the German government in the new year, according to Scholz.

"Within less than 25 years, we want Germany to become climate-neutral. To achieve this, we will move forward with the greatest transformation our economy has seen in more than a century."

Within this timeframe, Germany will seek to make itself independent from coal, oil and gas in order to reduce emissions – as well as boost renewable energy sources and infrastructure.

Scholz's new three-party coalition government will also prioritize raising Germany's minimum wage in 2022 to Euro 12 per hour (\$13.60) – up from the current rate of Euro 9.60 per hour. Looking further afield, Scholz says that Germany and the European Union will work together to tackle the mounting foreign policy challenges facing the world.

"International cooperation is important. In a world of what will soon be 10 billion people, we can only make our voice heard if it is

joined by many others," the chancellor says.

When Germany takes over the G7 rotating presidency starting on January 1, Scholz will prioritize making the group "a trailblazer for a climate-neutral economy and a just world."

For Germany, it's the first time in 16 years that another political face is appearing on television screens on New Year's Eve. Former Chancellor Angela Merkel delivered the traditional speech from 2005 until 2020 – a shift that Scholz will nod to in his own address.

Today, we bid farewell to a year that has brought with it a host of changes. One small change is that today I am the one speaking to you on New Year's Eve as your Federal Chancellor." He thanks Merkel for the globally-approved "smooth, amicable" transition of power, saying that it shows the "strength of our society."

While the last year brought difficulties and turbulent changes, the new German chancellor will point to the hope that can be found in people's readiness to help others. "We will be able to master the major changes of our era. If we pull together as a community."

Bahrain appoints 1st envoy to Syria in 10 years

NEWS DESK

MANAMA: Bahrain has appointed its first ambassador to Damascus since it downgraded ties early in the conflict in Syria.

The appointment of Waheed Mubarak Sayyar, reported on Thursday by Bahrain's state news agency BNA, is part of a diplomatic shift in the Middle East as a growing number of Arab countries revive ties with President Bashar al-Assad. Gulf Arab states downgraded or shut their missions in Damascus after the Syrian government used force against the 2011 protests that developed into a war.

Bahrain has said its embassy, and the Syrian diplomatic mission in Manama, have remained operational. Last month, the United Arab

Emirates, which reopened its mission to Damascus in late 2018, sent its foreign minister to Damascus where he met al-Assad. It has called for Syria to be readmitted to the Arab League.

Abu Dhabi began to re-engage with Damascus after the Syrian army won a series of key military victories with the help of Russia and Iran. The UAE was one of several regional states to back rebel groups in Syria, along with Saudi Arabia and Qatar, which have not re-established ties with Damascus.

Oman last year became the first Gulf state to reinstate an ambassador to Syria. Most Gulf countries, at odds with regional rival and Shia powerhouse Iran, seek warmer ties with Damascus, hoping to peel it away from Tehran's influence.



MINSK: Pakistan ambassador to Belarus Sajjad Haider Khan hosted ambassador of Russia Yevgeny Lukyanov, Turkey Mustafa Ozcan, and Sudan Dr. Abeer Yahia. – DNA

Current world order cannot continue while humanity suffers

In his New Year's message, Erdogan emphasized that global powers failed to address the plethora of challenges faced by the world in 2021, particularly the coronavirus pandemic, climate crisis, irregular migration and regional conflicts



WEB DESK

ANKARA: The year 2021 has proven that the current global order that emerged after the World War II cannot be allowed to continue at the cost of humanity's suffering, Turkey's president said on Friday.

In his New Year's message, Recep Tayyip Erdogan emphasized that global powers failed to address the plethora of challenges faced by the world in 2021, particularly the coronavirus pandemic, climate crisis, irregular migration and regional conflicts.

"It is an undeniable fact that today's developed countries are not

as strong as they seem and cannot guide the world through these crises," he said.

Erdogan pointed out that Turkey worked hard to overcome various problems during a "challenging" 2021. He said the Turkish health sector's performance during the pandemic was a shining example of the country's successes, along with its social welfare efforts and steps to enhance security and political stability.

The president reiterated his government's desire to take Turkey to greater economic heights with its new policy model focusing on investments, employment, production, exports and trade.

Investments made by the Justice and Development (AK) Party government over the past 19 years will prove invaluable in their drive to bolster the Turkish economy, he said.

"Our goal is to make Turkey one of the world's biggest economies and we are willing to work together with anyone who shares this vision," Erdogan added.

Australia reports highest daily COVID-19 cases

NEWS DESK

CANBERRA: Australia on Friday reported more than 32,000 COVID-19 cases, its highest single-day tally since the start of the pandemic, local media reported.

New South Wales (NSW) registered 21,151 cases, while Victoria recorded 5,919 cases, according to the ABC News. The new cases across the country spiked from 21,341 on Thursday. The country also reported six fatalities over the past 24 hours. Health authorities have urged the public to follow COVID-19 guidelines while celebrating the New Year. "We know it's been a challenging year for everyone, and we understand people want to come together to celebrate the New Year. We thank the community for their incredible efforts to stay COVID-safe and ask them to continue these behaviours," said NSW Chief Health Officer Dr Kerry Chant in a statement. "But it's important to remember that COVID-19 is active in our communities and people are at an increased risk of contracting COVID-19, particularly in indoor environments," Chant said.

Australia so far fully vaccinated its 91.4% people over the age of 16 while 94.4% have had received single dose, according to the Health Ministry.



Political unrest deepens in Somalia

NEWS DESK

MOGADISHU: A deepening rift between Somalia's president and prime minister has plunged the Horn of Africa country into political crisis.

President Mohamed Abdullahi Mohamed, who took office in 2017, suspended Prime Minister Mohamed Hussein Roble and Naval Forces Commander Abas Amin Ali on charges of "corruption" and "abuse of public land."

The prime minister, however, defied the order, describing the president's decision to suspend him as "outrageous." Somalia's opposition presidential candidates called on the country's president Tuesday to leave office "as soon as possible."

The country was already facing challenges on multiple fronts with a drought, economic troubles and security issues. Moreover, the power struggle of regional and global actors over the country has compounded the crisis.

The Somali president and governors met on Sept. 17 last year and agreed that the presidential election would be held on Feb. 8, 2021 and parliamentary elections on Jan. 1, 2021.

Israeli army kills Palestinian in West Bank

RAMALLAH: A Palestinian youth was killed by the Israeli army on Friday in northern West Bank, the Palestinian Health Ministry said.

In a statement, the ministry said Amir Atef Rayyan from Qarawat Bani Hassan town was shot dead by the Israeli soldiers in Salfit city.

According to the Israeli army, Rayyan was shot dead for allegedly attempting to carry out a stabbing attack. The Israeli army killed 324 Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza Strip from the beginning of 2021 until Dec. 20, according to data compiled by the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. – APP

UN food agency halts work in North Darfur

CAIRO: The World Food Program has suspended its operations across Sudan's province of North Darfur following recent attacks on its warehouses, a decision expected to affect about 2 million local people. A statement released by the U.N. food agency Thursday said all three of its warehouses in the area were attacked and looted. More than 5,000 metric tons of food apparently were stolen, the group said.

Earlier in the week, the WFP said an unidentified armed group had attacked one of its warehouses in North Darfur's provincial capital of el-Fasher. In response, local authorities imposed a curfew across the province. However, the attacks continued until early Thursday, said the statement. Hundreds of looters have also dismantled warehouse structures, WFP added.

"This theft has robbed nearly two million people of the food and nutrition support they so desperately need," said WFP Executive Director David Beasley. "Not only is this a tremendous setback to our operations across the country, but it endangers our staff and jeopardizes our ability to meet the needs of the most vulnerable families."

The agency said it cannot divert assistance from other parts of the East African country to the looted warehouses without compromising the needs of vulnerable Sudanese living outside the province.

Sudan is one of the poorest countries in the world, with nearly 11 million people in need of food security and livelihood assistance in 2022, said the WFP. The agency urged Sudanese authorities to recover the looted stocks and guarantee the security and safety of the WFP operations in North Darfur. On Thursday, the country's state-run news agency reported that a number of suspects were arrested in el-Fasher after they were seen riding trucks and animal-drawn carts loaded with food stocks that were allegedly stolen from the WFP warehouses. SUNA news agency did not say how many were arrested. – Agencies

Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan discuss trade co-op

The landmark event of the year was the State visit of the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev to Kazakhstan on 5-6 December. As a result, a Declaration on Allied Relations between the two countries and a number of other important documents were signed

FOREIGN DESK

TASHKENT: The government delegations of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan held a working meeting in the format of a video conference. The delegations of the parties were headed by the Prime Minister of Uzbekistan Abdulla Aripov and the Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Askar Mamin.

The meeting participants noted that 2021 was full of significant events that strengthened bilateral cooperation. The landmark event of the year was the State visit of the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev to Kazakhstan on 5-6 December. As a result, a Declaration on



Allied Relations between the two countries and a number of other important documents were signed.

In this regard, it was emphasized that the tasks set before the governments will be fulfilled without fail and in full, the Dunyo news agency reported.

During the meeting, the state and prospects of trade and economic cooperation were discussed in detail. The progress in the implementation of joint projects in the field of industry, transport, digitalization, energy and water resources was considered. Particular attention was paid to further strengthening partnerships in education, healthcare, as well as expanding cultural and humanitarian cooperation.

Briefs

Pak made impressive progress in 2021: ADB

ISLAMABAD: Wishing Pakistanis, a happy new year, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) Country Director Yong Ye Friday said Pakistan had made impressive progress in the outgoing year 2021 despite COVID-19 pandemic.

In his video message on twitter, the ADB country head for Pakistan said, "In 2021, Pakistan and ADB achieved historic high level of cooperation with over \$2.3 billion committed so far by ADB."

"This reflects our enduring partnership with Pakistan." He said despite the challenge posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, Pakistan continued to make impressive progress and very robust economic, fiscal and structural reforms.

ADB, guided by its new country partnership strategy looks forward to deepening its support for Pakistan, Mr Ye said adding that, the ADB would continue its support for Pakistan's pandemic related issues through vaccinating, social protection, public sector management, climate resilience, competitiveness and private sector development. "As Covid-19 continues I urge all of you to stay safe and vaccinate yourself if you have not, vaccines do work.. it will reduce chances for infections and possibility of having severe symptoms," he added. - APP

Battle of Chhamb Golden Jubilee held

DNA

RAWALPINDI: A special ceremony was held on Friday to commemorate Golden Jubilee of Battle of Chhamb Indo-Pak 1971 War at Rawalpindi.

The event was attended by Veterans of Chhamb Operation who shared their combat experiences in the face of extremely challenging conditions, said an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) media release. Commander Rawalpindi Corps Lieutenant General Sahir Shamshad Mirza during his address on the occasion, paid rich tribute to the Shuhada (martyrs) and Ghazis (soldiers returned with honour from War) of Chhamb and lauded the courage and resolve of all ranks who participated in one of the most daring operations undertaken by Pakistan Army.

11 Yemeni troops killed in Houthi strike

AL-MUKALLA: At least 11 Yemeni government troops were killed and 17 others wounded on Thursday when an explosion caused by a Houthi missile or drone strike rocked their military base in the southern province of Shabwa, local officials and media reports said.

Soldiers from the Giants Brigades were regrouping inside a military base in the Markha Al-Soufla district when a large explosion ripped through the base, a local government official told Arab News.

"The Giants Brigades were getting ready to advance to other areas in Markha Al-Soufla to defend them against Houthi incursions," the official, who asked to remain anonymous, said.

Local media reports said the explosion was caused by a ballistic missile fired by the Houthis, but other sources said that an explosives-rigged, Houthi-controlled drone attacked the base. On Tuesday night, two ballistic missiles fired by the Houthis landed in Ataq airport in the provincial capital of Shabwa, shortly after the Giants Brigades took charge of the airport from local military units.

The newly appointed governor of Shabwa, Awadh Mohammed Al-Wazer, visited the wounded soldiers in Ataq hospital. - Agencies

Pakistan faces daunting challenges as it enters 2022

As per the data gathered from World Bank, UNICEF, Economic Survey, International Diabetes Federation, UNAID and SBP, Pakistan ranked first among the top 10 countries with the highest external debt of \$127 billion

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan faces the daunting task of reducing the troubles of a massively increasing national debt, waste of national resources, a rapidly growing population, rising unemployment, and inadequate health and education facilities, as it enters the new year - 2022, media reported.

As per the data gathered from World Bank, UNICEF, Economic Survey, International Diabetes Federation, UNAID and SBP, Pakistan ranked first among the top 10 countries with the highest external debt of \$127 billion, out of the 73 states eligible for the World Bank's Debt Service Suspension Initiative. The list of the top 10 countries include: Nigeria, Bangladesh, Angola, Kenya, Mongolia, Uzbekistan, Ghana, Ethiopia,

and Zambia. These are countries next to Pakistan on the list.

With Pakistan raising Rs14 billion worth of loans every day to cover its expenses, the country's domestic and external debt has hiked up to \$280 billion (Rs50,000 billion), which accounts for 94% of its GDP.

Pakistan's sitting government has added Rs20,000 billion during its term with a rising debt of \$127 billion.

The energy crisis and public sector enterprises are causing irreparable damage to the economy. Pakistan's circular debt, an estimated Rs1200-2500 billion, is almost equal to its annual budget.

Pakistan's nominal GDP per capita is \$1,542 and it ranks 181st in the world. As far as purchasing power parity is concerned, it is \$5,964 per capita and according to this standard, Pakistan ranks 174th in the world.

Population explosion is putting pressure on resources and Pakistan is the world's fifth-most populous country with a population of almost 22 million.

Among Asia's 55 most populous countries, Pakistan ranks fourth with a population growth rate of 2%. By 2050, Pakistan's population is expected to rise to 35 million and the country's net growth is negative. This means that the country has failed to generate resources in proportion to a growing population. Of 22 million Pakistanis, 15 million are under 30 years of age, and being jobless they are unable to contribute to the country's growth. It can be gauged from the fact that in 2020, the joblessness rate in Pakistan was 4.65% which is 0.67% higher than in 2019.

This ratio could reach 5% in 2021. According to the Economic Survey 2020-21,

the literacy rate in Pakistan could not exceed 60%. There was a 29.6% reduction in educational expenditures in 2019-20.

The survey said the literacy rate is higher in urban areas than in rural areas. The literacy rate in cities is 74% and in rural areas 52%. According to UNICEF, 59 out of 1,000 newborns die within a year of their birth. In 1971, this number was 139.87. There are many cases of Beta Thalassaemia in Pakistan and its patients are 9.8 million.

Every year, 5,250 children are diagnosed with Beta Thalassaemia. As in the case for diabetes, Pakistan ranks No 3 after China and India. According to UN AIDS, there are 2,000,000 AIDS patients in Pakistan, of which 32% are women and 3% are children. In such a situation, will the New Year give the good news of a reduction in these problems besides a better economy?



SYDNEY: Fireworks erupt over Sydney's iconic Harbour Bridge and Opera House (L) during the New Year Eve fireworks show. - Agencies

Taliban must fulfill promises for recognition: Russia

FOREIGN DESK

MOSCOW: The official recognition of the Taliban government in Afghanistan will depend on progress in their fulfillment of promises, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov told TASS in an interview.

"The issue of official recognition of the Taliban authorities is premature for the time being. The positive decision will depend on evolution of developments in Afghanistan, to be more specific - when the Taliban will fulfill their promises, including the establishment of the inclusive government, and efficient combating of terrorist and drug threats coming from the territory of Afghanistan," the Minister said.

"We will gradually move together with other members of the global community in linkage to that towards exclusion of the Taliban from sanction lists of the UN Security Council, which will create in its turn the basis for official recognition of the new government of Afghanistan," Lavrov added.

Russia delivered several batches of humanitarian aid to Afghanistan in November and December and helped Afghan students to come to Russia for continuation of education, Russian Foreign Minister noted.

Shaukat Tarin presides over ECC of cabinet

KHAYAM ABBASI

LAHORE: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Shaukat Tarin, presided over Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet Friday.

Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Syed Fakhar Imam, Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Asad Umar, Federal Minister for Industries and Production Makhdoom Khuro Bakhtiar, Federal Minister for Energy Hammad Azhar, Federal Minister for Privatization Muhammad Soomro, Federal Minister for Railways Muhammad Azam Khan Swati, Federal Minister for Maritime Affairs Syed Ali Haider Zaidi, Federal Secretaries and senior officers participated in the meeting.

The Aviation Division submitted a summary on the financial challenges of Roosevelt Hotel, New York and request of PIA Investment Limited (PIA-IL) for re-roll

ing of principal amount i.e US\$ 142 Million along with mark-up payments by NBP for further period of two years ending on 31st December, 2024.

PIA-IL is unable to pay the principal amount of the loan and mark-up payments on behalf of RHC due to closing/suspension of RHC, New York. The Economic Coordination Committee discussed and approved the proposal with directions to Aviation Division to prepare a roadmap for the permanent solution of the issue.

The ECC discussed and approved a summary tabled by Cabinet Division on proposals of NAPHDA for revision of customer pricing and mark-up subsidy period under Tier-I of Government mark-up subsidy scheme for low cost housing (for NAPHDA projects) and inclusion of Housing Finance Companies (HFCs) in G-MSS for housing finance with directions that there should be no direct involvement by the commercial banks in NAPHDA projects.

NAB files references against big fish: Chairman NAB

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Justice Javed Iqbal, Chairman NAB has said that NAB had filed references against big fish on the charges of corruption, corrupt practices and money laundering on the basis of solid evidence which were laundered in the names of 'falooda wala', 'chhabri wala' and 'paupar wala etc. The people who are claiming about their innocence in the media should better request the concerned learned Accountability Courts to have hearing of their cases on a day to day basis so that they plead about their innocence where law will take its own course of action. NAB would continue performing its national duties to bring big fish to justice without caring about any baseless media reports and propaganda against NAB as an institution as per law.

He said that NAB is committed to the logical conclusion of white collar mega corruption cases by utilizing all available resources as per law. He said that NAB had constituted a Combined Investigation Team (CIT) to benefit from the collective wisdom of senior supervisory officers.

He said the CIT had the services of director, additional director, investigation officer, legal counsel and experts of the monetary and land revenue department which is lending quality. He



Justice Javed Iqbal, Chairman NAB.

only country with whom China has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for eradication of corruption. The performance of NAB is being reviewed regularly on the basis of a monitoring and evaluation system so that it could be improved further. He said that youth is our future; NAB has signed an MoU with Higher Education Commission in order to aware youth about the ill effects of corruption in universities and colleges at an early age. Under this initiative, NAB has successfully established more than 50 thousands Character Building Societies in various universities and colleges besides constituting prevention committees in consultations with respective provincial and federal government departments in order to assist them to identify and plug loopholes in order to check corruption. He said that as per Gillani and Gallup survey, 59 percent people have shown trust upon NAB. He said that NAB has devised a comprehensive Quantified Grading System in order to further improve the performance of NAB Headquarter and all Regional Bureaus. Under Quantified Grading System, NAB Headquarters and Regional Bureau's are being evaluated on annual and midterm basis at a given criteria which has proved very successful in increasing the performance of NAB. The performance of NAB has been lauded by reputed national and international institutions.

Palestinians alarmed over Facebook 'suppression'

A spokesperson for Facebook's parent company Meta said its policies "were designed to give everyone a voice while keeping them safe on our apps"

MONITORING DESK

JERUSALEM: Palestinian journalists have raised the alarm over what they describe as unjust suppression of their content on Facebook, a claim backed by rights groups but rejected by the social media giant.

On December 4, Palestine TV correspondent Christine Rinawi posted a video on her Facebook account in which Israeli security forces were seen shooting a Palestinian on the ground, killing him. He had just carried out a knife attack on an Israeli civilian.

Shortly after she posted her video, Rinawi, who has nearly 400,000 followers, noticed it had been removed from her account.

This was not her first experience with Facebook's enforcement, and Rinawi said her account had already been restricted after she shared footage of a November attack in Jerusalem.

In both cases, Facebook said it intervened because the posts violated the platform's standards.

A spokesperson for Facebook's parent company Meta said its policies "were designed to give everyone a voice while keeping them safe on our apps." "We apply these policies to everyone equally, regardless of who is posting."

Allegations of pro-Israeli bias at Facebook have simmered for years and were renewed in October when Human Rights Watch, a vocal Israel critic, said the platform had "suppressed content posted by Palestinians and their supporters speaking out about human rights issues in Israel and Palestine."

Palestinian reporters have cited multiple incidents they describe as censorship. One popular online news outlet, Maydan Quds News, may even have to fire reporters after its main Facebook page with 1.2 million followers was deleted, a source who requested anonymity

told AFP. The Meta spokesperson told AFP it has "a dedicated team, which includes Arabic and Hebrew speakers, who are focused on keeping our community safe by making sure we're removing harmful content." It also strives to address "any enforcement

errors as quickly as possible so people can keep sharing what matters to them."

In the midst of a bout of fighting in May between Israel and armed factions in the Gaza Strip - the worst in years - Facebook had acknowledged widescale deletion of



Palestinian posts, ascribing it to a technical bug that it sought to fix. According to Palestinian social media monitoring center Sada Social, 600 Palestinian accounts or pro-Palestinian Facebook posts were restricted or deleted in 2021, a record. The center helped launch a social media campaign called "Facebook Censors Jerusalem." Rama Youssef, a Jerusalem-based journalist who volunteered for the campaign, said Facebook hews to an Israeli point of view and has "double standards."

The Arab Center Washington DC think-tank said the Israeli government also pushes to censor "tens of thousands of posts and accounts" that support a Palestinian point of view. Meta did not answer AFP questions about requests from the Israeli government.

But the company denied accusations of bias, saying its community standards prohibit violence, terrorism, hate and large-scale

criminal activity, as well as posts supporting those subjects.

Israeli officials have also accused various social media platforms, including Facebook, of failing to curb anti-Semitism.

In February, then-diaspora affairs minister Omer Yankelevich presented Facebook, Google, TikTok and Twitter with proposals to beef up the fight against anti-Semitism, saying it was "running rampant" online. Media expert Iyad Al-Rifai of Sada Social said he regularly meets with Facebook representatives to ask for more transparency.

He said the site appeared to target the word "shahid," Arabic for martyr, which Palestinians frequently use to describe people killed by Israeli forces, including those who carried out attacks.

Rifai told AFP that Facebook insisted it is bound by American standards which consider "attackers to be terrorists," not martyrs to a political cause.

South Africa lifts Omicron curfew

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa, where the Omicron variant was detected last month, says its latest coronavirus wave has peaked without a surge in deaths or hospitalisations, enabling the country to lift a nightly curfew for the first time in 21 months. The Omicron variant emerged in November to become pandemic's dominant variant, driving new cases at a record rate around the world.

"According to experts, Omicron has reached the peak, ...with clinical manifestations that have not caused any alarm in the hospital situation," Mondli Gungubele, a minister in President Cyril Ramaphosa's office, said on Friday.

"Based on the experts, the conditions do allow that we lift the curfew," he told a news conference, spelling out a move that the presidency announced the previous evening.

Calls by the hospitality sector for the midnight to 4 am curfew to be lifted had been mounting ahead of the New Year's Eve celebrations, with restaurant and bar owners launching an online petition to lobby Ramaphosa. Many countries outside Africa are tightening restrictions to battle a surge in infections. The minister cautioned "we will monitor the situation on a hour-by-hour basis" and if need be, it would be reinstated, adding "I hope it never comes back." - Agencies

Aiwan-e-Sadr open for public today

ISLAMABAD: The Aiwan-e-Sadr will open its doors to the general public today (Saturday) providing them a rare opportunity to show the magnificent building as well as its beautiful green lawns.

The presidency will remain open for the people from 1300 hours to 1600 hours on New Year Day.

The building was also opened to the public a few times in the past, in pursuance of the government's commitment to open all state buildings to the general public which otherwise used to be considered a no-go area. The people, desiring to visit the Aiwan-e-Sadr have been asked to ensure carrying their COVID vaccination certificates and wear face mask as a pre-requisite for entry.

No visitor would be allowed to carry any electronic device like a mobile phone or camera. - APP

Israel signs \$3 bn deal to buy US mily aircraft

WASHINGTON: Israel has signed a deal with the United States to buy 12 Lockheed Martin-Sikorsky CH-53K helicopters and two Boeing KC-46 refueling planes, the Israeli Defence Ministry said on Friday. The ministry said the deal is worth around \$3.1 billion (Euro 2.73 billion), adding that the procurement is "part of a wider program to strengthen the capabilities of the IDF [Israeli Defense Forces] and preparedness to face current and developing threats."

The deal, signed on Thursday, includes an option to buy six additional helicopters, the ministry statement said. It said the first helicopters were due to arrive in Israel in 2026. An Israeli government committee gave the approval for the purchase last month after the Biden administration also waved it through in July.

The new helicopters will replace the Sikorsky CH-53 Yas'ur heavy-lift aircraft that have been in use since the late 1960s.

The deal comes days after a report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute said that the global arms industry was flourishing despite the COVID-19 pandemic.

Israeli media have speculated that the refueling planes could be crucial for carrying out a long-threatened air strike on Iran's nuclear facilities. Israel, which opposes efforts by world powers to revive Tehran's 2015 nuclear deal, has vowed military action if diplomacy fails. - Agencies