



Islamabad POST

Friday, December 03, 2021

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Price Rs. 20

Iran says nuclear deal within reach; depends on West's goodwill

Detailed News On Page-08

Local bodies elections through EVMs

Detailed News On Page-01

Azerbaijan to ensure peace in South Caucasus

Detailed News On Page-07



Briefs

Taliban are my brothers

DNA

KABUL: Former Afghan President Hamid Karzai has said that the Taliban are his brothers and we should stay here and make Afghanistan better. While speaking to BBC, he said, "This is our country, this country belongs to us. We are the son of the soil, we should not leave." He said we should stay here and make it better. "I would like to ask on all those Afghans who have left, to come back and build it," he added. During my time in office, I call the Taliban our brothers.

PM Khan's remarks appreciable

DNA

BEIJING: Prime Minister Imran Khan's positive remarks on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) fully demonstrated that Pakistan attached high importance to friendship between the two countries and a comprehensive cooperation, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin said on Thursday. "China has noted that for some time that PM Imran Khan has made positive remarks on CPEC. This fully demonstrates that the Pakistani side pays high importance over the friendship between our two sides and a comprehensive cooperation," he made these remarks during his regular briefing.

Another promise fulfilled

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting, Faruk Habib on Thursday said Prime Minister Imran Khan gave some nine million overseas Pakistanis their voting rights to fulfill the promise made before the general elections 2018. In a meeting with the PTI UK senior leadership, the minister said the previous governments would love to receive remittances from the overseas Pakistanis, but did not want to give them their voting rights.

PM tells PAC to expose corruption

PM Imran says the committee is mandated to protect the taxpayers' money and eradicate corruption

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan has reiterated that he will not compromise on his 'anti-corruption drive' and directed the ruling party lawmakers to expose the wrongdoings of the incumbent and past governments. According to media, the premier made these remarks in a meeting with MNAs Riyaz Fatyana and Noor Alam Khan in Islamabad on Thursday, who are members of the National Assembly's Public Accounts Committee (PAC). They briefed the premier on PAC's performance and added that the committee headed by, opposition MNA Rana Tanveer Hussain, only looked into the audit papers and corruption cases could not be concluded due to the weakness of investigating agencies like NAB and the FIA. The premier also urged the PAC members to expose anyone who try to burry corruption and asked not to back down from the anti-corruption policy. He also directed the PAC members to bring the corrupt under the rule of law. According to sources, the government's members of the PAC members alleged that the bureaucracy was not serious on the issue of corruption. While directing the treasury benches members to ensure their attendance in the PAC meeting, PM Imran said the committee was mandated to protect the taxpayers' money and eradicate corruption.



– Directs maximum relief to common man

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan says the government is taking all possible measures to provide maximum relief to the common man. Chairing a meeting on Ehsaas Rashan Programme in Islamabad, he said being cognizant of the sufferings of people due to inflation, we are extending subsidy to the deserving people on essential commodities. The Prime Minister directed the authorities concerned to speed up the registration process of Karyana Stores to benefit maximum number of poor households under the programme. He also directed to involve district government authorities to raise awareness among Karyana Stores and the potential beneficiaries in this regard. The Prime Minister was apprised that under the programme, a monthly subsidy of one thousand rupees on flour, ghee and pulses will be given to twenty million households that have their monthly income below fifty thousand rupees. He was also briefed that the programme will be launched across the country on the 15th of this month. Registration of Karyana Stores under the programme is in progress, and more than 15000 Karyana Stores have been registered so far.

Local bodies elections through EVMs: Fawad

– Says govt to provide funds for EVMs, elections to ECP



ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Fawad Chaudhry on Thursday said that local bodies elections will be held through electronic voting machines (EVMs). Talking to media persons after meeting of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) core committee, Fawad Chaudhry said that

Continued on Page 06

Opposition to boycott national security briefing

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Opposition parties have decided to boycott the upcoming in-camera briefing of the national security committee to be held on December 6, citing the government's "dictatorial" behaviour as its reason. A press release by Parliament's united Opposition stated that parties that are part of the Pakistan Democratic Movement anti-government alliance have always treated issues involving the constitution, law, national security and general public with seriousness and attached importance to them. The media release said that not only did the Opposition parties and their leaders attend briefings on these issues,

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi along with the Ambassador of UAE Hamad Al Zaabi and other members of diplomatic corps cutting a cake to commemorate 50th National Day of UAE. – DNA

50th National Day of UAE

'Pakistan-UAE relations brotherly, unbreakable'

FM Qureshi felicitates UAE leadership and people on 50th National Day

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi has said that Pakistan and UAE enjoy brotherly warm relations. He was addressing a ceremony to commemorate 50th National Day of United Arab Emirates. The Foreign Minister said, "Today, we are not only celebrating the Golden Jubilee of the unification of United Arab Emirates but also 50 years of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and UAE. I bring warmest greetings from the leadership of Pakistan for UAE leadership". He said that Pakistan and UAE have excellent fraternal relations underpinned by a shared heritage and multifaceted cooperation. "The tremendous progress achieved by UAE would not have been possible without the visionary leadership of the Founding Father of United Arab Emirates, His Highness Late

UAE keen to solidify ties with Pakistan: Amb. Alzaabi

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of UAE Hamad Alzaabi has said on 2 December 2021, the UAE celebrated the 50th anniversary of the union of the seven emirates. This occasion marks a sincere reflection of the federation's journey rich in monumental events and achievements, building on the foundation that was first laid down by the late Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan and his brothers, the fellow founding fathers. (Detailed news on Back Page)

Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan," said the Foreign Minister. Qureshi said that successive leaders of UAE have risen to the high standards set by His Highness Sheikh Zayed and have strengthened and diversified relations with Pakistan. "Pakistan-UAE relations were reinvigorated after election of Prime Minister Imran Khan. Repeated visits by him and His Highness Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan generated new momentum in our bilateral ties". Qureshi said that Pakistan and UAE have also been working closely at international fora. "We congratulate UAE on its election to the United Nations Security Council for the term 2022-23 and for hosting COP28". Qureshi lauded UAE on successful inauguration of Expo Dubai. "In the golden jubilee of UAE's foundation, we rejoice in its great achievement of successfully holding Expo 2020.

Continued on Page 06

Indian diplomat summoned

Spin given to Gurdwara incident slated

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A senior diplomat from the High Commission for the Republic of India was summoned to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and conveyed Pakistan's categorical rejection of the mischievous spin given by India to an isolated incident involving an individual at Gurdwara Darbar Sahib. It was conveyed to the Indian diplomat that the incident was swiftly addressed and clarified. The Government of Pakistan accords highest primacy to the rights of the minorities.

Continued on Page 06

Macron labels Johnson 'a clown': Report

Macron apparently described his dealing with the prime minister as "a circus"

NEWS DESK

PARIS: The French president has reportedly called British PM Boris Johnson "a clown" and said it was a shame to see such a great country, which France could cooperate with, run by a knucklehead. According to the weekly satirical newspaper Le Canard Enchaîné, French President Emmanuel Macron made some highly controversial and undiplomatic remarks about British Prime Minister Boris Johnson during a meeting in Zagreb in late November. Le Canard Enchaîné claimed on Wednesday that Macron said Johnson is apologetic for the way he acts in public and



his stance on fishing licenses for French trawlers and the submarine deal which saw a French manufacturer lose a \$40 billion contract with Australia. "In private, he tells me he's sorry he acts like he does, conceding he has first and foremost to accommodate public opinion."

Continued on Page 06

Inside...

Buzdar honors DC on his best performance in RED campaign – Page 02

ICCI strongly opposes hike in property valuation by FBR – Page 03

UNESCO brings leaders together for achieving SDGs – Page 04

Britain is exploiting refugees to fuel right-wing nationalism – Page 05

COAS attends closing event of 41st PARA central meet – Page 06

Azerbaijan aims to ensure peace in South Caucasus – Page 07

UAE keen to solidify ties with Pakistan: Amb. Alzaabi – Page 08

US, Russia warn each other of confrontation

Antony Blinken told Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on Thursday that "if Russia decides to pursue confrontation, there will be serious consequences"

NEWS DESK/DNA

MOSCOW: The Kremlin voiced concern Thursday about a possible escalation of fighting in a separatist conflict in eastern Ukraine as the U.S. issued a strong warning to Russia to stay away from Ukraine. Ukrainian and Western officials have worried about a Russian troop buildup near Ukraine, fearing it could herald an invasion. But Moscow has insisted it has no such intention and accused Ukraine and its Western backers of making up the claims to cover up their own allegedly aggressive designs.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken warned Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov at their meeting in Stockholm on Thursday that "if Russia decides to pursue confrontation, there will be serious consequences," adding that "the best way to avert a crisis is through diplomacy." Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov



said in Moscow that "the Ukrainian authorities' aggressive and increasingly intensive provocative action on the line of contact" gives grounds for concerns about a possible flare-up of hostilities. He



said that recent statements from Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and other Ukrainian officials indicate that

Continued on Page 06

Turkish foreign minister urges diplomacy

NEWS DESK

ANKARA: The Turkish foreign minister on Thursday urged diplomacy to resolve the crisis in Ukraine. "The crisis in Ukraine should be settled through diplomacy. The Minsk agreements and compliance with int'l law are important," Mevlut Cavusoglu said during his address at the 28th meeting of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) Ministerial Council in Stockholm, Sweden. Turkey will not recognize the illegal annexation of Crimea, Cavusoglu reiterated, expressing Ankara's concern about the human rights violations against the Crimean Tatars. Longstanding tensions

over Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 have been exacerbated by Russian-backed separatists in the eastern border region of Donbas, along with the recent Russian military buildup decried by the West. Amid the buildup, Russia has accused Ukraine of provocations, a charge Kyiv denies. The Minsk agreements were signed to stop the ongoing conflict between the pro-Russian separatists and the Kyiv administration. The agreements included a cease-fire in the region and prisoner exchange while also allowing Kyiv to make a constitutional amendment that would give Donbas a special status. The pro-Russian separatists, on the other hand, were supposed to withdraw their weapons from the Ukraine-Russia border.



FAISALABAD: Divisional Commissioner Zahid Hussain chairs a meeting. – DNA

Commissioner orders upgrading THQ hospital

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Divisional Commissioner Zahid Hussain has directed that the up gradation of Tehsil Head Quarter Hospital Jaranwala from 60 to 100 beds should be completed till 31 December and concerned departments should show pro-active approach in this regard.

He directed this order while reviewing the up gradation of THQ hospital THQ. Deputy Commissioner Ali Shahzad, Director Development Dr. Naveed Iftikhar Aulakh, CEO DHA Dr. Kashif Mehmood, DD Development Rana Tahir and officers of building department were also present. Divisional Commissioner asked the building department to expedite the work and additional force should be utilized in this regard. He said that at the low level the services of health was necessary therefore the up gradation of THQ is necessary.

Meanwhile Divisional Commissioner chaired a Divisional Coordination Committee meeting and approved the two schemes while chairing a Divisional Development Working Party meeting Commissioner approved two schemes of highways in district Chiniot, one each scheme of Public Health Engineering in Faisalabad and Jhang and one highway scheme in district Toba Tek Singh. He said the departments to start work on these schemes.

Earlier development review meeting was also held and Commissioner directed the

Dollar hits record high against rupee

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The value of US dollar reached an all-time high against the rupee again on Thursday, soaring to Rs176.65 in the interbank market during intraday trading. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the dollar appreciated by Rs1.35 against the rupee at around 2:15pm to reach a new high in the interbank market against the backdrop of a steep rise in Pakistan's trade deficit.

In the open market, the greenback's selling rate was recorded at Rs177.50 and buying rate at Rs177 at around 3:40pm.

Exchange Companies Association of Pakistan General Secretary Zafar Paracha attributed the record decline in the rupee's value to the delay in the arrival of funds from Saudi Arabia as part of a recently revived support package and the country's rising import bill.

World Diabetes Day observed

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Islamic Medical Association (PIMA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa chapter and Prime Foundation observed "World Diabetes Day" at Kuwait Teaching Hospital (KTH).

Experts of various medical fields including endocrinology, juvenile (child) diabetes and pregnancy induced diabetes attended the event and discussed different aspects of disease and the measure needed for prevention of ailment. According to International Diabetes Federation (IDF), 400,000 died of diabetes in the country during 2021. The IDF claimed that Pakistan had the third highest number of population living with diabetes in the world, after China and India.

Meanwhile, Dr. Sobia Sabir Ali, the renowned endocrinologist of Prime Foundation informed that audience that diabetes was fast spreading in our country affecting almost every fifth person. – APP

NCOC discusses oxygen production

DNA

ISLAMABAD: National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) morning session on Thursday discussed the epidemic curve chart data, national vaccine strategy and disease prevalence across the country.

The forum was briefed about COVID positivity ratio, disease prevalence, number of deaths and new admissions. The forum discussed in detail, the city-wise Covid-19 vaccination process across the country and the forum agreed upon taking strict measures regarding obligatory vaccination regime.

District wise vaccination targets were reviewed and all-out efforts are being made to engage provinces to achieve the set vaccination targets. The forum also discussed the total number of vaccine administration, procurement and balance of vaccine. NCOC stressed upon the provinces to speed up the vaccination process amid rising trend of Omicron variant across the globe as vaccination is the only way to prevent the spread of new Covid variant.

The forum also discussed the current status of oxygen production and distribution process across the country. NCOC suggested installation of oxygen plants in various parts of country with special focus on far flung areas which have logistic issues.

SBBWU celebrates Foundation Day

PESHAWAR: Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Women University (SBBWU) Peshawar on Thursday marked its 17th Foundation Day wherein Federal Minister for Climate Change Zartaj Gul specially participated as chief guest. Zartaj Gul distributed commendation certificates to the high achievers of staff members and faculty of the university for the year 2020 and 2021. Sharing her remarks she said girls were capable to transform society and it was our aim to prepare them for coming challenges and to make them career oriented individuals.

Addressing on the occasion the Vice Chancellor the varsity Prof Dr Razia Sultana said the university's Research Innovation Commercialization had signed seven Memorandum of Understandings with different organizations to collaborate with the University for the research and exchange programs. – APP

UNODC begins a roundtable workshop

DNA

BHURBAN: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Country Office in Pakistan (COPAK) began a five-day roundtable workshop for the maritime law enforcement agencies at the Pearl Continental Hotel Bhurban on November 30th. The workshop aims to strengthen national action against drugs trafficking and smuggling of contraband items through Pakistan's coastal areas and maritime domain. The participating law enforcement agencies included the ANF, Pakistan Customs, and the Pakistan Coast Guards (PCG).

Welcoming the participants to the inaugural session, Dr. Jeremy Milsom, Representative UNODC COPAK, highlighted the existing and emerging trends in drug trafficking, human trafficking and migrant smuggling (HTMS), and smuggling of other contraband items. Originating from Afghanistan, they create governance and security challenges in Pakistan and the wider re-

gion. He emphasized the need to improve interagency and regional cooperation to effectively respond to these challenges, especially in the backdrop of recent political developments in Afghanistan. He explained that the workshop seeks input from the participating law enforcement agencies to embed international best practices into Pakistan's maritime law enforcement procedures. "In this sense, the workshop will contribute towards the creation of a maritime working group, within the frameworks of Pakistan's Inter-Agency Task Forces and Working Groups on counter-narcotics, HTMS and anti-smuggling."

In his opening remarks, Dr. Syed Kaleem Imam, Federal Secretary, Ministry of Narcotics Control, highlighted Pakistan's role as the first line of defense against the massive flow of opiates and its derivatives, synthetic drugs, and new psychotropic substances to Pakistan – both for domestic consumption and transnational trafficking to rest of the world.

Buzdar honors DC on his best performance in RED campaign

He expressed hope that other deputy commissioners, CEO Health and Vaccinations teams of other districts will also give their best performance in next phase to get top positions

SAQIB MUSHTAQ

LODHRAN: CM Punjab Sardar Usman Buzdar honored Deputy Commissioner Captain (R) Shoaib Ali with Award on Government level for his best performance in 21 day special Reach Every Door (RED) campaign. A Special event was held in CM Office in honor of the officers and staff with significant performance in Corona Vaccination Drive.

In the event Provincial Minister Health Punjab Dr. Yasmeen Rashid, Spokesperson Government Punjab Hassaan Khawar, Secretary Health Punjab Imran Sikandar Balouch were there. CM Punjab praised the performance of Deputy Commissioner Lodhran Captain (R) Shoaib Ali and his team on meeting the corona vaccination target. Department of Primary and Secondary Health Care had selected 12 districts upon their performance in Reach Every Door (RED) campaign. CM Punjab Sardar Usman Buzdar appreciated the efforts of Deputy Commissioners and CEO Health of Lodhran, Pakpattan, Narowal, Bhakkar, DG Khan, Gujrat, Toba Tek Singh, Qasoor, Mandi Bahauddin, Chakwal, Jehlum and

Khanewal. CM Punjab in his address said that with the grace of Allah Punjab is on top of the list in achieving the targets of Corona Vaccination. dedication of Vaccination Teams and efforts of administrative officers are making it possible to achieve set targets. He expressed hope that other deputy commissioners, CEO Health and Vaccinations teams of other districts will also give their best performance in next phase to get top positions, he said that information department, population department, schools education, Auqaaf, I & CO also gave their best performance. CM Punjab announced the commencement of RED's second phase, in the second phase more than 20 million citizens will be vaccinated with Corona Vaccination. He told that second phase will continue till 31st of December and directed high performing officers and Field Staff of first phase to continue with the same energy in the second phase.

Deputy Commissioner Lodhran Captain (R) Shoaib Ali appreciated the efforts of CEO Health Sajjad Akhtar, District Focal Person Corona Virus and Vaccination Lodhran Amir Bashir and their whole team and Health De-

partment. On directions of CM Punjab Sardar Usman Buzdar Revenue Public Facilitation Courthouse was held in Computerized Land Record Center Lodhran under the supervision of Deputy Commissioner (R) Shoaib Ali, at this time Deputy Commissioner heard the complaints of people regarding revenue matters and issued orders on spot for their resolution.

At this time Additional Deputy Commissioner Azoba Azeem, Assistant Commissioner Lodhran Syeda Amina along officers from Treasury Department were there.

Deputy Commissioner (R) Shoaib Ali said that on directions of Government of Punjab Revenue Public Facilitation Courthouse are being equipped with modern needs. He added that in all three tehsils of district on first two working days of each month courthouses are resolving their problems on their doorsteps.

He said that on directions of CM Punjab Usman Buzdar Rural Revenue Centers were established and its reach is spread across Patwar Circles, he added that with these steps people would not have to visit the offices on Tehsil and District Levels.



Regularization Commission to cover all constructions & existing living

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: The constructions and existing residential on government land under regulation act is in the interest of the people of Sindh and we want to form a commission headed by a retired judge. Saeed Ghani said the regularisation Commission will cover all over province.

Sindh Minister for Information and Labor Saeed Ghani and Sindh Health Minister Dr Azra Pechuho in a joint press conference after the Sindh Cabinet meeting on Thursday. They said that the Sindh Cabinet has raised the marks of election instead of 65 marks to save the future of Sindh students.

The property tax which was earlier collected by the Sindh government was then levied on the local council. One committee will be chaired by the Secretary Law and the other will be chaired by the Development Board.

The mayor and chairman are ready to talk with the opposition on secret ballot, transfer of health and education centers in the province and others on local government law. There is no objection to discuss anyone.

At present in Sindh we are not in favor of any lockdown and the number of Corona cases is under control at present. The new variant requires people to wear masks, use sanitizers and ensure social distance.

On the occasion, Information Secretary Abdul Rashid Solangi was also present on the occasion.

Provincial Minister Saeed Ghani said that the ministers and secretaries of the concerned departments gave a briefing on the development works of the three departments in the Sindh cabinet meeting. In the meeting, two committees have been constituted to collect property tax which is collected by the Sindh government with the help of Excise and Taxation Department and its share is given to DMCS.

Which will submit its report to the Cabinet in 15 days, after which a decision in this regard will be taken. He said that Sindh Cabinet has also approved SEF Service Rules, Dow Medical and University Act 2004 and allotment of 200 acres of land to Pakistan Army. He said that in today's cabinet meeting keeping in view the concerns of Sindh students regarding medical admission policy and in view

of the situation arising out of shortage of doctors in Sindh and further shortage in next four years.

In order to save the career of Sindh students, the selection standard is 50 marks instead of 65 marks.

Health Minister Dr. Azra Pechuho said that the federal government has given the test of admission to students of medical and dental colleges to inexperienced institutions. This was not even in the PMC Act. The decision was against their principles. In order to save the career of Sindh students, we have increased the selection criteria to 50 marks instead of 65 marks. He said that after the 18th amendment, the provinces have the power to make admission and policies but the federation was constantly interfering in it.

He said that last year also 400 seats remained vacant in dental colleges, while medical colleges admitted children from other provinces and they should become doctors and go to their respective provinces and Sindh province where there is already severe shortage of doctors, where there should be at least one doctor in 350 beds, there is only one doctor for every 3500 patients in Sindh.

CTP launches crackdown on underage drivers

FAISALABAD: CTP has launched a crackdown on underage drivers in Faisalabad. A spokesman for the CTP said on Thursday that underage drivers were not only putting their own lives on risk but also causing serious threat to the lives of other road-users. Therefore, on special direction of CTO Tanveer Ahmad Malik, the traffic police initiated a vigorous campaign against the vehicles being driven by underage drivers. – APP

Belgium keen to fortify trade ties

SCCI Senior Vice President Sheikh Zohaib Rafique Sethi said Belgium and Pakistan had always enjoyed most cordial relations in the past

NEWS DESK

SIALKOT: Ambassador of Belgium in Pakistan Philippe Bronchain has stressed the need for making all-out efforts to strengthened mutual trade ties between Pakistan and Belgium. He said that Belgium was keen to boost trade ties besides enhancing mutual trade volume between the two countries.

He was addressing a meeting of Sialkot exporters at the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI), here on Thursday. SCCI Senior Vice President (SVP) Sheikh Zohaib Rafique Sethi, Vice President Qasim Malik, Trade Commissioner Embassy of Belgium in Pakistan Abid Hussain also attended the meeting.

Belgium Ambassador Philippe



Bronchain promised his full cooperation to ensure easy access of Sialkot exporters to his country's trade markets and to European Union (EU) markets through Belgium as well.

He appreciated the projects completed under Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry and promised his full cooperation in

providing facilitation in promotion of business, trade and investment opportunities in Sialkot.

SCCI Senior Vice President Sheikh Zohaib Rafique Sethi said Belgium and Pakistan had always enjoyed most cordial relations in the past. Both should exchange trade delegations and hold exhibitions frequently in order to enhance B2B linkages and bilateral trade.

SCCI Vice President Qasim Malik highlighted the potential of 'Made in Sialkot' products.

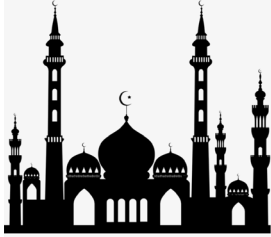
He said that the embassy of Belgium had always cooperated with exporters of Sialkot and played a role as a gateway to European Union (EU) market.

Furthermore, the business community of Belgium should also explore joint ventures and business opportunities in Pakistan.

Available in following cities

ISLAMABAD
Qamar News Agency
03105460372RAWALPINDI
Asim News Agency
03435802610PESHAWAR
Zarbagh News Agency
03005412069FAISALABAD
Ishfaq Mughal
03007689850JEHLUM
Iqrash News Agency
03005412069KHARIAN
Ijaz News Agency
03068863870SARA-I-ALMAGIR
0300 5428178

SERVICES



Namaz Timings

Fajr..... 05:27 am
Zohr..... 11:57 am
Asr..... 03:21 pm
Maghrib..... 04:59 pm
Isha..... 06:27 pm



Hotels & Restaurants

Serena Hotel.....111 133 133
Marriott.....051-2826121
Monal.....0334-5421812



Airlines

Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

Rescue (Police).....15
Bomb Disposal.....15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance..1122 & Rescue Services.4451122
Motorway Police.....9266044
Motorway Police..9270601-20
Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596
Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115
PIA Flight Info.....114
PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Enquiry.....117
Railway Exchange 9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi..5555489
CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

CMH.....5611111
MH.....5611116
Cantt Hospital...9270907-11
DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International.4603666



Departments

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
G-5, G-6, G-7, G-8.....9203883
G-9, G-10, G-11, G-12, H-8.....9266316
Wapda Islamabad...9217579
Wapda Rawalpindi 111-309-309

Islamabad Metropolitan

Corporation.....9209224
Potohar Town.....9209224
Rawal Town.....5773343

Wasa Water Tank

Rawalpindi.....0331-5022125

ICCI strongly opposes hike in property valuation by FBR

Shakeel Munir said that the growth of over 50 industries depended on the construction sector and new valuation of FBR would damage the business of all construction related industries

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The business community including realtors in an emergent meeting held at Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) strongly opposed the new market value determined by FBR for immovable property of 40 major cities of the country including Islamabad vide its SRO 1548(I)/2021 dated 1st December 2021 as it would render a big blow to the business activities of property and construction sector and foil all efforts of the government to revive the economy. Addressing the meeting, Muhammad Shakeel Munir, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry said realizing the vital role of property and construction sector in the economic development of the country, the Prime Minister had offered an attractive construction package, which boosted the business and economic ac-



activities across the country. However, unprecedented hike in the market value of immovable properties by FBR unilaterally without consulting with stakeholders that would cause a severe blow to the business of property and construction sector and create lot of unemployment besides weakening the overall economy. He said that in 2019 a Committee including representatives of private sector was formed at FBR level to determine the market

value of property, but FBR has bypassed the said Committee in determining new market value. He said that depreciation of rupee, high interest rate, rising inflation, increase in prices of POL and utilities tariffs have already affected the business activities and this decision would cause a big slump in the economy. Shakeel Munir said that the growth of over 50 industries depended on the construction sector and new valuation of FBR would damage

the business of all construction related industries. Giving an example, he said that compared to property valuation of 2019 in Islamabad, the market value of immovable property has been increased in F-8 Sector by over 127 percent, E-11 Sector by over 163 percent, E-7 Sector by over 164 percent and F-7 Sector by over 283 percent, which was totally unjustified. He said that this move would cause significant outflow of capital from the country and discour-

age new investment in the property and construction sector. He urged that the FBR should immediately withdraw its SRO of new market value and engage all stakeholders including ICCI into the consultation process to arrive at a consensus decision on new valuation of properties. He said, posing confidence in the policies of the current government, many foreign investors have made investment in Pakistan's construction sector,

but FBR's new property valuation has created great concerns in them about their future due to which FDI would be badly affected in the country. He appealed to the Advisor PM on Finance and Chairman FBR to call an urgent meeting of stakeholders including ICCI to find out a consensus solution of this important issue. Speaking at the occasion, Muhammad Masud, Convener, ICCI Real State and Developers Committee said that PM's construction package has attracted investment of billions of rupees in the property sector due to which many big construction projects have been started in the federal capital. However, he said that FBR's new market value of property has disappointed all major investors of construction and they have been compelled to reconsider their investments in Islamabad. He urged that FBR should urgently withdraw its SRO 1548(I)/2021 and consult with stakeholders to resolve this issue.

CCOE directs to ensure gas supply in winter

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Cabinet Committee on Energy (CCoE) on Thursday directed the Petroleum Division to ensure maximum supply while ensuring implementation of a demand management plan as already approved by the Cabinet. The directions were issued in a meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Energy (CCoE), held here under the chairmanship of Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives Asad Umar. The Petroleum Division presented the projected natural gas supply in the country for the winter. During the meeting, Petroleum Division presented different policy options for management of the gas supply side during winter 2021-22. The meeting was informed about the efforts to enhance the natural gas supply during the meeting. The Committee also considered the summary presented by the Power Division on the implementation of CCoE decisions. It was informed in the meeting that all new renewable energy (RE) projects would participate in the open competitive bidding process to ensure the least cost procurement of renewable electricity. The CCoE approved the summary and recommended expediting the bidding process in the meeting. The chair further directed the Power Division to inform the CCoE in the next meeting of a detailed roadmap with milestones for the establishment of RE projects, including the potential locations and details of the competitive process be presented. CCoE also reviewed the circular debt report October 2021 submitted by the Power Division. The committee appreciated the sustained reduction in the accumulation of circular debt. It was informed that the performance of the DISCOs was continually improving.

Digitization of land vital for improvement: Arif Alvi



KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Chief Guest President of Pakistan Dr. Arif Alvi attended the closing ceremony of Pakistan International Property Exhibition and Convention organized by Pakistan Associ-

ation of Exhibition Industry. Digitization of land records is essential for the country - economic activities of the country were not much affected during the Covid. Pakistan faced the covid Challenges with the best strategy. Pakistani economic model

was adopted by different countries - Pakistani investors also invested in Dubai and due to lack of education most Pakistanis are forced to work abroad - government offers to develop the construction sector With Special Package. He appreciated the invest-

tors in the construction sector and said that it is our valuable asset and such construction exhibitions cover more than 60 sectors - Chairman Pakistan Association of Exhibition Industry Khurshed Barlas said that the aim of our association is to promote the economy and tourism of the country and to bring Made in Pakistan products all over the world. Former Chairman Trade Development Authority of Pakistan SM Munir, Group Leader RCCI Sohal Altaf, Chairman RDA Raja Tariq Mehmood Murata, President Federation of Rates Sardar Tahir Mehmood, government officials and more than 60 owners associated with the construction sector were present. President of Pakistan also Distributed shields to stall holders at the end of the event.

RCCI urges govt to strengthen Rupee against dollar

RAWALPINDI: President Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industries (RCCI) Nadeem Rauf on Thursday said figures were encouraging during November, however, Ministry should take steps to the Rupee dollar. In a issued here, expressing grave concern over the stock market crash, he said that "The 100 Index lost more than 2,000 points in just one day, has badly affected the sentiment of investors and urged the government to take immediate steps for restoration of the investor's confidence". Nadeem asked the government to ensure the supply of cheap raw materials, providing a conducive environment for promoting local industry and SMEs to increase domestic exports. He said that the rates of income tax, sales tax, regulatory duty and other taxes should be reduced to decrease the cost of production. President Nadeem Rauf said that as the oil prices had decreased in the international market, the government should immediately pass on the relief to the masses to reduce inflation. "Policymaking should be done in consultation with stakeholders," he added. - DNA

Court adjourns reference against ex-sec

ISLAMABAD: An Accountability Court (AC) on Thursday adjourned hearing till December 20, on a reference against ex-secretary interior pertaining illegal allotment of plot owned by National Police Foundation (NPF). The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) couldn't file its comments against acquittal pleas of the accused and requested the court to grant more time in this regard. AC-II Judge Muhammad Azam Khan heard the reference lodged by NAB against allotment of plot allocated for the families of martyred. The accused had filed pleas challenging admissibility of reference under fresh amendments in NAB ordinance. They added that the case didn't fall under jurisdiction of accountability court after amendments. The court adjourned further hearing till December 20. - APP

Police arrest accused for carrying arms, weapons

RAWALPINDI: Police on Thursday arrested an accused and recovered huge cache of arms and ammunition from his possession and confiscated a motorcycle. A police spokesman said they recovered seven Kalashnikovs, three 12 bore rifles, one pistol of 30 bore and a large quantity of bullets and magazines were recovered from possession of the accused namely Gul Sher. Police registered a case and started investigation. The action against the accused was taken by Station House Officer Suddar Biruni, in-charge Chowki Raniyal and his team headed by Assistant Superintendent of Police Suddar Division Saud Khan. City Police Officer (CPO) Athar Ismail appreciated performance of police team and directed that strict action would be taken against outlaws. - APP

CDA Chairman visits new one window

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Chairman of the Capital Development Authority visited the new one window and inspected the operational work. The Director Revenue and the Deputy Director Revenue were immediately removed from office due to absent from duty. On this occasion, the CDA management said that no negligence will be tolerated in all the efforts made for the convenience of the people. Furthermore, the CDA management has said that working in a new environment requires more efforts and dedication. Officers and employees will have to change their attitudes. Un-

der One Window, all staff are now working under one roof in the new environment, which will increase efficiency. Furthermore, incentives will be given to officers and employees who will perform well. Meanwhile, The Capital Development Authority (CDA) has also expedited the development process and laying of sewerage line in Sector I-11. The construction of drains, streets, bridges and other development works were under process in the sector, said a news release. The CDA has started the development works on the direction of Chairman Amir Ali Ahmed and on the request of I-11 Allottees Welfare Association.



RAWALPINDI: Murree Brewery sponsored the "Smog Awareness Walk" in collaboration with EPA Rawalpindi and District Administration, Rawalpindi at ARL Biodiversity Park. Assistant Commissioner (Cantt) Mrs. Nooshen Israr along with Deputy Director EPA Mr. Muhammad Rafique addressed the walk. Mr. Waqas Ahmad (Environmental Manager), Mr. Khurram Bashir (Auditor Quality Assurance) and Mr. Muhammad Humayun (FSO) from Murree Brewery participated in the walk to raise awareness about Smog impacts. - DNA

USC ensures food security by providing fit products

USC procures sugar, rice and pulses by floating tenders following Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) rules as per government standards. The aim of doing procurement through following PPRA rules is to ensure transparency and accountability

DNA

ISLAMABAD: During Covid-19 pandemic, despite curtailed working hours and employees of Utility Stores Corporation of Pakistan (USC) being vulnerable to the pandemic, USC ensured uninterrupted supplies of essential commodities via its wide spread network of retail outlets. As a matter of fact USC did not spend any amount on account of COVID-19 funds as ECC of the cabinet converted Rs 10 billion into Rs. 7.7 billion as general subsidy and Rs. 2.3 Billion for the automation of USC.

It is worthwhile to mention here that under the Prime Minister's Relief Package, USC has successfully served over 90 million households since January, 2020 by providing subsidy on 5 essential commodities namely wheat flour, ghee, sugar, rice and pulses. During these testing times USC has also assisted Government of Pakistan in regulating prices of essential commodities in open market. USC procures Ghee/ Oil from Pakistan Standards and Quality Control Authority (PSQCA) recommended manufacturers and maintains high level quality of edible Ghee/ oil. Thus, USC as-



Utility Stores Corporation

sure that no bad quality Ghee/ Oil is procured. USC procures sugar, rice and pulses by floating tenders following Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (PPRA) rules as per government standards. The aim of doing procurement through following PPRA rules is to ensure transparency and accountability. Thus, USC assures high quality food products to its consumers and effective quality controls, standards and mechanisms are being adopted to ensure good quality of products. Moreover, USC is providing good quality wheat flour as per human consumption standards after carrying out laboratory tests. For better quality controls, USC is in the phase of Enterprise Resource Planning system (ERP) implementation. In

its first phase 90% of Point of Sales (POS) machines have been deployed and installed in USC outlets. The first phase will be live by December 31, 2021. In the second phase warehouses, supply chain management and human resource management modules will be automated and connected to datacenter which will strengthen systems, bring transparency and improve decision making through timely and quality data management. USC is committed to providing high quality and hygienically fit products and better services to its customers.

Briefs

NUMS holds awareness seminar on Dengue

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Pro Vice Chancellor Academics National University of Medical Sciences (NUMS) Maj Gen Saleem Ahmed Khan (Retd) here on Thursday emphasized the need to raise awareness of dengue, saying, role of university students could work as a catalyst in checking its spread across the country. He was speaking at a seminar on "Awareness and Stop the Transmission" of the dengue which was organized by NUMS Department of Public Health at its PWD Campus here Thursday. He said the students had a great potential and talent in running such campaigns as they had ably demonstrated through their presentations and small documentaries today. The students gave a "wonderful presentation and everything was done excellently", he added. Lauding efforts of the Faculty and the students, he said, their campaign would further bolster efforts of the concerned authorities in creating awareness about dengue as precautionary measures could help prevent its spread. He congratulated Faculty members and students of Public Health, Multidisciplinary Sciences and Social Sciences & Humanities for being active in dengue awareness campaign.

Rice exports surge over 19pc to \$594.5 mlns

ISLAMABAD: The exports of rice surged by 19.04 percent during the first four months of current financial year (2021-22) as compared to the exports of the corresponding period of last year. At a time when rice exports of the country were on escalating trend, the production of the rice crop has also been estimated at over 9 million tons during current season as compared to the output 8.4 million tons of same period of last year. Pakistan exported rice worth \$594.528 million during July-October (2021-22) against the exports of \$499.442 million during July-October (2020-21), showing growth of 19.04 percent, according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). Among the rice commodities, the exports of Basmati rice increased by 27.44 percent as these surge from \$161.654 million last year to \$206.013 million during the current year. The exports of other rice commodities also grew by 15.02 percent by going up from \$337.788 million last year to \$388.515 million during the current year, the PBS data revealed. - APP

4,133mln released for IT projects

ISLAMABAD: The government has so far released funds amounting to Rs 4,133.128 million during the current fiscal year to execute Information Technology and Telecommunication projects under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP 2021-22). The federal government has allocated 9,361.06 million for the ongoing and new schemes of the Information Technology and Telecom Division in the public sector development program for the financial year 2021-22. Rs 7,050.000 million were allocated for ongoing schemes and Rs 2,311.056 million were earmarked for the new schemes for the Telecom Division. For new schemes, the government has allocated Rs 400 million in the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP 2021-22) for the establishment of an IT park in Karachi, Rs. 365.528 million for hybrid power solution Solarization for remote sites in AJK, Rs. 365.528 million for hybrid power solution Solarization for remote sites in Gilgit-Baltistan, Rs 160 million for national centers of Research innovation and Entrepreneurship in AAI and allied technologies (NCRIE-AI) feasibility study and Rs 100 million for raising smart capital through the private trading market at PSK (PSEB). - APP

UNESCO brings leaders together for achieving SDGs

UNESCO is a specialized agency of the United Nations working closely with the government and people of Pakistan since 1958

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Participants at an outreach event "UNESCONNECT" held here pledged to support UNESCO's mission in Pakistan to mitigate climate change, increase access to education, leverage digital technologies to reduce inequalities, and preserve Pakistan's rich and diverse cultural heritage for future generations.

Around 100 stakeholders including government representatives, diplomatic partners, civil society, stakeholders from development and private sector, artists, activists and experts gathered at the event held at a local hotel by UNESCO Pakistan late Tuesday. The event marked UNE-



SCO's 75-year legacy of working to promote peace in Pakistan and across the world through delivering immense contributions in science, education, culture and heritage as well as renewed commitments towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The United Nations Educa-

tional, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations working closely with the government and people of Pakistan since 1958. UNESCO was founded with the mission of contributing to peace and security by promoting international collaboration



through education, science, culture, and information. Speaking on the occasion, UNESCO Representative to Pakistan Ms. Patricia McPhillips stated, "A successful development agenda requires inclusive partnerships. UNESCO believes in a partnership-based approach founded on a sense

of shared purpose and mutual accountability. Together, we want to find newer, better, more sustainable ways to make a difference". UNESCO hosted the event to facilitate meaningful engagement with a diverse range of stakeholders, and highlight the specialized strengths, opportunities, and assets that

UNESCO possesses to support the development agenda 2030 in Pakistan, in the fields of education, culture, science, and information. Internationally acclaimed singer, ArieBzhar enthralled the audience through performing traditional folk songs and Sufi poetry along with the musicians on Tabla, flute and Guitar. Renowned journalist, ZarrarKhuuro moderated an open discussion to brainstorm ideas in developing linkages among public, private, and multilateral organizations to address eminent challenges facing Pakistan. The participants eulogized the contribution of UNESCO in building back communities after the COVID-19 pandemic and emphasized on continue its role for the betterment of humanity with consistency.

CPEC's much awaited M-14 motorway open to traffic on Dec 13

ISLAMABAD: The Hakla-Dera Ismail Khan Motorway (M-14), a key section of the western alignment of CPEC, will be open to traffic on December 13, said SajidHussain, project director of the M-14 motorway told Gwadar Pro on Wednesday. A source added that the member motorways of the NHA board had informed the authority's chairman that the motorway was complete in all respects and could be inaugurated even in early December. He added that work was underway on construction of service areas. However, the main work has been finished, he said.

The M-14 motorway is the starting section of the western corridor of CPEC. It connects South KP, South Punjab, Sindh and Balochistan provinces with the M-1 motorway, intersecting the eastern alignment of CPEC at Hakla near Islamabad. The provincial governments of KP and Balochistan are presently purchasing land for the next section of M-14, from Dera Ismail Khan to Zhob district of Balochistan. However, the federal government has already initiated work on modifying the existing two-lane highway from Dera Ismail Khan to Quetta, capital of Balochistan, into a four-lane expressway. This will drastically reduce the distance and travel time between northern and southern parts of the country. The corridor will finally lead to Karachi and Gwadar, thus providing for the shortest route of CPEC. The M-14 motorway has been the most awaited CPEC section in Islamabad, as the expat workers to benefit from this motorway form the largest community in the federal capital. It is very exhausting to travel to Islamabad from southern parts of the country on existing roads. The M-14 motorway will make our travel and life easy, said Siftain Khan, who hails from Dera Ismail Khan and works as an overseas education consultant in Rawalpindi, the twin city of Islamabad. - DNA



ISLAMABAD: Iranian ambassador to Pakistan Seyed Mohammad Ali Hosseini calls on CEO PIA, Air Marshal (R) Arshad Malik. Topics of mutual interest were discussed and agreed on increasing efforts to promote air between Iran and Pakistan. - DNA

Pakistani students achieved highest number of Indonesian scholarships

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Indonesian Embassy hosted an informative gathering for more than twenty awardees of the KNB and other scholarship programs on December 02, 2021 in Pearl Continental Hotel, Rawalpindi. This year total 63 scholarships were awarded to students from Pakistan, in all categories, which was the highest as compared to the previous year. The event was attended by the scholarship awardees, alumni of the KNB and Journalists. Ambassador Tugio congratulated all the students of the Indonesian scholarship awardees and shared the cultural and academic cooperation between Indonesia and Pakistan which needs to be encouraged and promoted to strengthen the ties between the two brotherly countries. H.E Mr. Adam Tugio said Indonesia and Pakistan are blessed with rich cultural heritage and traditions carrying interesting and attractive similarities. Both the countries cherish various traditions and share many similarities from nature to culture and from preserving (Islamic) tra-



dition being two of the most populous Muslim countries of the world, embracing modernity. Ambassador Tugio expressed his excitement knowing majority of the Indonesia's scholarship awardees would study in the best universities in different cities in Indonesia, and reminded that most of universities are on the list of 500 best universities based on QS World Ranking of 2020. He expressed hope for the students that have completed their

study programs in Indonesia, they will not only play a more constructive role in the progress of Pakistan but in many fields which will help further strengthen the friendly relationship between Indonesia and Pakistan. The Minister Counsellor for Information and Social Cultural Affairs of the Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia, Mr. Pramudya Sulaksono highlighted the insights of the Government regulations for foreign students in Indonesia. He also shared imperative details regarding visas and immigration with the students for their understanding. Mr. Wasim Chaudhry, Alumni of KNB Scholarship who has recently graduated from Institute of Technology Bandung, also shared his experiences and association with all the attendees. Two Students who were already enrolled on-campus students pursuing their Ph.D. degrees in Indonesia joined the gathering virtually and shared their tips studying in Indonesia. The event was concluded with a question and answer session, where freshly enrolled students asked various relevant questions pertaining to their degree.

NBF online book shop gains popularity

ISLAMABAD: National Book Foundation (NBF) online book shop is gaining popularity among students and readers that was promoting healthy reading culture to produce quality minds and sharp intellect. An official of NBF Raza Saeed told APP that the Foundation had uploaded its fresh publications on the website and introduced new schemes to ensure the availability of quality books that were appealing to the taste of present-day readers. Saeed said the e-book trend was gaining popularity among the readers as advanced technology ensured easy availability and user-friendly access to the masses. He said this new initiative was fruitful as the readers were able to have access to all important publications with just one click on the website (www.nbf.org.pk). Saeed said the book ordering process was simple and easy, adding, a separate tab has been created to browse books in NBF online Book Shop. The portal developed by NBF has the latest features where a user could add any book to the cart, after adding any book to the cart one could also view one cart any time by clicking the cart icon in the top menu, he added. After the ordering process, the NBF representative would call you for order confirmation and the order would be delivered to the home or any address provided by the user, NBF official told. It may be mentioned here that the NBF is offering a 50 percent discount on all general books published by the Foundation. NBF aims to encourage the proposition of creativity, literacy and to enhance the culture of writing and reading. NBF is working with a mission to ignite a literary cultural renaissance by encouraging all stakeholders of society across the country as well as in foreign countries. The NBF official said the foundation believed in creativity leading to premier quality academic and scholastic resources to masses pertaining to fiction, non-fiction, applied sciences, and pure sciences educational domains, and to disseminate effective professional educational and literary content within the country and across the globe. He said that NBF has a vision of instilling the passion of reading, learning, and writing in the hearts of every segment of the society which is synonymous with instilling the foundations of progress and excellence in the country. - APP

ANF seizes 71 capsules of cocaine

ISLAMABAD: Anti-Narcotics Control (ANF) has seized 71 capsules of cocaine valued at 200,000 US dollars in the international market from a Nigerian national. According to an ANF spokesperson the force conducted an operation at Islamabad International Airport and failed the attempt of the Nigerian national to smuggle 923 grams of cocaine. The accused had hidden the drug in his stomach. The investigation was underway as per the law of the ANF. - APP

Citizens Foundation at Dubai Expo

ISLAMABAD: The Citizens Foundation (TCF), perhaps the largest network of independently run schools in the world, is set to be featured at the Expo 2020 Dubai's Global Best Practices Programme in December 2021. This week as the Expo 2020 Dubai celebrates the Knowledge and Learning Week, we will see many organisations such as TCF highlighting best practices in education to achieve Sustainable Development Goals.

The Citizen's Foundation is a leading non-profit working to provide quality education in Pakistan's most neglected rural and slum communities where we find children, especially girls, out of school. Pakistan is the world's sixth most populous country and has the second-highest number of out-of-school children in the world. These children in Pakistan often face deep-rooted structural inequalities that are most often linked to gender biases, poverty and lack of access to quality schools.

What started as a discussion among 6 friends to correct their country's trajectory, has now become a national movement and a global best practice. TCF has evolved a model to deliver quality education at scale. It runs 1,687 schools in 62 districts across Pakistan. Currently it has an enrollment of 275,000 students, of which nearly 50% are girls.

"When we started TCF we wanted to ensure that girls received an equal opportunity to study. That is why we make sure that all TCF schools are within walking distance to communities. We also hire only female teachers to encourage parents to send their daughters to school," says AteedRiaz, Co-founder and Chairman of The Citizens Foundation. Hiring only female teachers has made TCF one of the largest private employers of women in Pakistan with a faculty of 12,950 women. TCF not only provides transportation to these teachers to and from the schools but also conducts a rigorous training of over 120 hours annually to develop their capabilities and ensure quality education in its classrooms. - APP

People should receive Covid booster shots

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Health expert on Thursday has urged the people for getting the booster vaccine against coronavirus as National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) has approved a booster shot of Covid-19 vaccines for the priority group of healthcare workers and those aged over 50 years in the country. Talking to a PTV news channel, a senior virologist Dr. Muhammad Mukhtar urged the people to acquire their vaccines if they are eligible as quickly as possible, adding, the Omicron variant was spreading fast globally and it is the only way to protect themselves. Booster vaccine shots are more effective which can be measured in several different ways. One is their ability to protect people from mild infections in the winter season, he mentioned. "Vaccination remains the most effective tool to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and to boost the immunity system in the human body," he added. Replying to a question, he said that the COVID-19 virus seems to be more severely affecting people with pre-existing conditions including hypertension, diabetes, cardiovascular heart disease, chronic respiratory diseases, and cancer, however, a positive mindset is vital for reducing stress and inflammation.

KAAP and the Korean Govt's support for Covid

PIMS Hospital Director, Dr. Ilaj Qadeer has thanked the South Korean Government for its continued support towards the government of Pakistan's efforts in overcoming COVID-19. He reiterated the wish to further solidify the cooperation in the health sector between the two countries

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: The Republic of Korea has supported the Government of Pakistan's response in controlling the outbreak and spread of COVID-19. The Korean government has already provided masks, RNA kits, and PPEs (Personal Protective Equipment), worth more than USD 800,000. The healthcare facilities in different localities are still lacking in medical supplies such as beds, wheelchairs, and stretchers. In an effort to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and strengthen the healthcare system of Pakistan, the KOICA (Korea International Cooperation Agency) Pakistan Office and KOICA Alumni Association of Paki-

stan (KAAP) has provided 40 beds, 50 wheelchairs and 50 stretchers in Azad Jammu & Kashmir (Abbass Institute of Medical Sciences Muzaffarabad), Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Civil Hospital Razmak) and Islamabad (PIMS Hospital). PIMS Hospital Director, Dr. Ilaj Qadeer has thanked the South Korean Government for its continued support towards the government of Pakistan's efforts in overcoming COVID-19. He reiterated the wish to further solidify the cooperation in the health sector between the two countries. Mr. Ikram Ul Haq (General Secretary KAAP), Prof. Dr. RizwanTaj (Executive Director PIMS) and Dr. Ilaj Qadeer (Hospital Director) attended the ceremony.



Briefs

US, Russia warn each...

FROM PAGE 01
"the Ukrainian leadership doesn't exclude a forceful scenario." "The probability of hostilities in Ukraine still remains high," Peskov said in a conference call with reporters. Denis Pushilin, the head of the self-proclaimed separatist republic in Donetsk, said on Russian state television that he could turn to Moscow for military assistance if the region faces a Ukrainian attack. Ukrainian officials have denied an intention to reclaim the rebel regions by force. The two ex-Soviet neighbors have remained locked in a tense tug-of-war after Russia annexed Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula in 2014 following the ouster of the country's Kremlin-friendly president and threw its weight behind a separatist insurgency in Ukraine's eastern industrial heartland, known as the Donbas. More than 14,000 people have died in the fighting. President Vladimir Putin has warned NATO against deploying its troops and weapons to Ukraine, saying it represented a red line for Russia and would trigger a strong response. He said Wednesday that Moscow would seek Western guarantees precluding any further NATO expansion and deployment of its weapons near Russia's borders. Blinken said "we have deep concerns about Russia's plans for renewed aggression against Ukraine," adding that "it's a concern that is shared by many in Europe."

Local bodies elections...

FROM PAGE 01
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa local bodies election will be held on December 19 while a new structure for village council will be introduced for Punjab. Fawad Chaudhry has said that the Punjab government has prepared an amendment in the local bodies bill to conduct it through electronic voting machines (EVMs). While sharing matters discussed during the PTI core committee meeting headed by Prime Minister Imran Khan, Fawad Chaudhry said that they are ready to hold elections through EVMs and will even pursue coalition parties to support the bill. "The new amendment will pave way for the local bodies' elections in Punjab province," he said adding that the government would extend any cooperation needed to hold elections through the voting machines. The minister further rejected the impression that EVM would prove costly and said that it would rather make the election process cheaper as the machine would be purchased for a single time and would be used in multiple elections. He further said that the government would provide funds for the EVM and elections to the Election Commission of Pakistan.

Opposition to boycott...

FROM PAGE 01
despite the absence of the prime minister, but also provided recommendations to solve the issues. The Opposition's statement said that the government's dictatorial attitude and their recent move to bulldoze important bills in Parliament prompted it to boycott the in-camera briefing session. The press release stated that it was disappointing that the government was turning Parliament into a "rubber-stamp" institution with its recent actions. The Opposition accused the government of not raising important issues related to external and internal threats and those concerning the common man, adding that it was tackling vital issues through such in-camera briefings. "In reality, it is the government that has practically boycotted Parliament, which is a constitutional and legal forum of the public," said the Opposition's statement. The Opposition said that the prime minister had not attended Parliamentary briefings and sessions, giving an example of a session on occupied Kashmir. The statement added that it indicates how the prime minister does not believe in the democratic spirit of consultation and the importance of tolerating differing opinions.

COAS attends closing event of 41st PARA central meet

The biggest Military Shooting Honour 'The Master at Arms' Trophy was awarded to Lance Havildar Arshad Saddique of 12 Punjab Regiment

DNA

JHELUM: General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) attended Closing Ceremony of the 41st Pakistan Army Rifle Association (PARA) Central Meet at Jhelum Garrison as Chief Guest. The mega shooting event was conducted at Army Marksmanship Unit from 26 October to 1 December 2021. Over 2500 firers from Army, Navy, Air Force, Civil Armed Forces (CAF's) including Rangers, Frontier Corps and Airport Security Force as well as civilians participated in the competition that comprised numerous events involving different ranges and types of weapons. COAS awarded trophies and medals to the winners and runners up in each shooting category. In Inter Formations Competition, Multan Corps came first followed by Mangla Corps. In CAF's category, trophy has been won by Punjab Rangers while Gilgit Baltistan Scouts



were runners up. In Inter Services Matches, Pakistan Army won all the four contests including COAS, Chief of Air Staff (CAS) and Chief of Naval Staff (CNS) Matches. PAF remained runners up in COAS and CAS Matches while Pakistan Navy came second in CNS Match. Pakistan Army won Shotgun, Long Range and Small Bore Trophies in Open National Matches. Pakistan Army also won the Prime Minister 'Skills at Arms' Big Bore National Challenge while Pakistan Navy secured second position. The biggest Military Shooting Honour 'The Master at Arms' Trophy was awarded to Lance Havildar Arshad Saddique of 12 Punjab Regiment. The President's Cup National Challenge Match Trophy was awarded to Havildar Jaffar Hussain of Army Marksmanship Unit. The Prime Minister 'Skills at Arms' big bore National Challenge Match was won by Pakistan Army. The 'Best Shot Match Trophy' was awarded to Lance Dafadar Zulfiqar Khan.

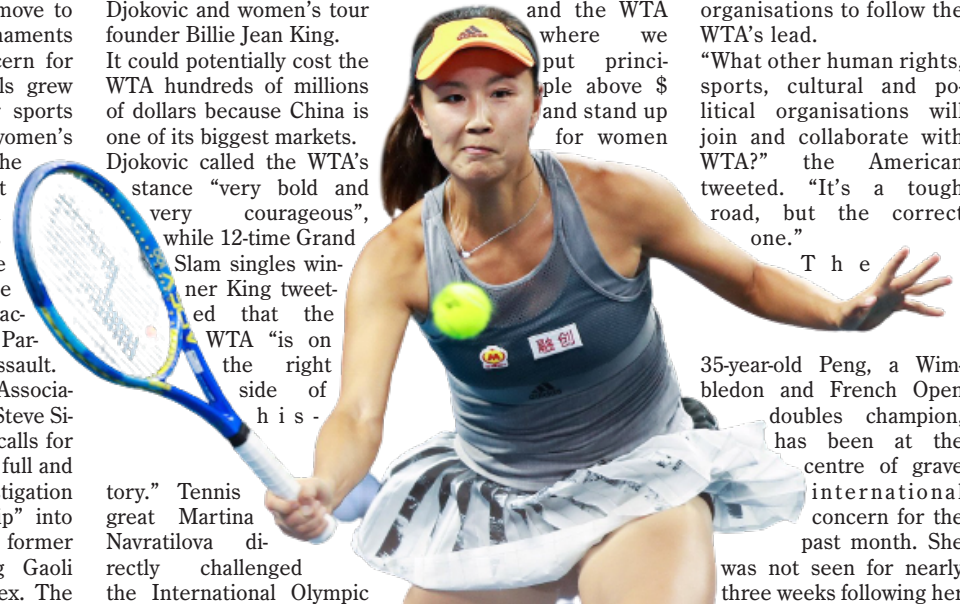
Warholm, Thompson-Herah named World Athletes of the Year

PARIS: Norwegian 400m hurdler Karsten Warholm and Jamaican sprinter Elaine Thompson-Herah were named the World Athletes of the Year on Wednesday for sensational performances at the Tokyo Olympics. Warholm received the men's award for smashing the 29-year-old world record to win the Olympic final in a time of 45.94sec. His performance is widely considered one of the greatest Olympic track performances of all time. Thompson-Herah took the women's award for achieving the sprint double at a second consecutive Olympics. Although her compatriot Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce was the favourite for the 100m coming into the Games, Thompson-Herah beat her to retain the short sprint title she won five years earlier at the Rio Olympics. In the 200m she held off 18-year-old Namibian revelation Christine Mboma to complete an Olympic 'double-double'. In addition to her Olympic triumphs, Thompson-Herah also clocked 10.54sec and 21.53sec over 100m and 200m respectively to move to second on the world all-time lists behind the late Florence Griffith Joyner. "I went very close to the world record so, you know, anything is possible. No spikes hanging up any time soon!" the 29-year-old said at the World Athletics ceremony in Monaco. She said the world championships in Oregon next year were "my next big target" and expressed hope that, unlike the empty stands at the Olympics where spectators were banned because of the Covid-19 pandemic, she would be performing in front of a full house. - Agencies

Tennis stars back 'bold' WTA move to suspend China events

WASHINGTON: Tennis stars threw their support behind the WTA's move to suspend its tournaments in China over concern for Peng Shuai, as calls grew Thursday for other sports to follow suit. The women's tennis tour made the decision over what its chairman called "a very bold and courageous" move, while 12-time Grand Slam singles winner Novak Djokovic called the WTA's decision "very bold and courageous" and "a very bold and courageous" move. "I think the WTA is on the right side of history," Tennis great Martina Navratilova directly challenged the International Olympic Committee to respond, writing on Twitter that "so far I can barely hear you!!!" China will host the Beijing Winter Olympics in February. "This is a brave stance by Steve Simon and the WTA where we put principle above \$ and stand up for women everywhere and particularly for Peng Shuai," added Navratilova. Pam Shriver, another retired tennis

star and now a prominent commentator, urged other organisations to follow the WTA's lead. "What other human rights, sports, cultural and political organisations will join and collaborate with WTA?" the American tweeted. "It's a tough road, but the correct one." The 35-year-old Peng, a Wimbledon and French Open doubles champion, has been at the centre of grave international concern for the past month. She was not seen for nearly three weeks following her allegations on the Twitter-like Weibo that Zhang, now in his 70s, coerced her into sex during a years-long on-off relationship. - DNA



everywhere and particularly for Peng Shuai," added Navratilova. Pam Shriver, another retired tennis

Hamilton looks to extend F1 race as Verstappen eyes title

JEDDAH: Lewis Hamilton will bid to keep alive his hopes of a historic eighth Formula One world title at the inaugural Saudi Arabian Grand Prix this weekend, powered by the new engine that aided his remarkable triumph in Brazil. After consecutive victories in Sao Paulo and Qatar, Mercedes' defending champion seeks to complete a hat-trick, or see championship leader Max Verstappen suffer a setback, on the streets of the high-speed Jeddah Corniche Circuit. If he succeeds and trims the Red Bull driver's eight-point advantage to just one, or even zero, in Sunday's race, the title will be decided by a final winner-takes-all showdown in Abu Dhabi on December 12. But Hamilton knows it is a perilous challenge and that he cannot afford to take any risks. Verstappen will take the title on Sunday if he wins and Hamilton finishes outside the top six. "You just have to be very careful - more cautious than ever before," said Hamilton, stressing the importance of avoiding an accident. "You have to be ready to do whatever you can to avoid a collision even if it means leaving the track," he told Germany's Auto Motor und Sport. "After all, you want to finish the race. If you are too stubborn and defend your position, you will crash." The 36-year-old Briton and Verstappen have collided twice already this year, at Silverstone and Monza, and had several near-misses in a roller-coaster season filled with incidents and arguments. "In Brazil, I made sure to avoid the collision," added Hamilton, referring to his off-track excursion when forced wide by a lunging Verstappen. "I was always very decent in situations like this, I would say. Of course, you don't always get it done perfectly. - Agencies

'Pakistan-UAE relations...

FROM PAGE 01
It is the first ever World Expo in the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia (MENASA) region. In the spirit of our love for UAE, Pakistan has participated enthusiastically in the Expo". Qureshi said that economic and trade ties between Pakistan and UAE are an important part of our bilateral relationship and have been growing steadily. With bilateral trade of over \$ 8 billion, UAE remains Pakistan's largest trading partner in the Middle East and North Africa Region. It is also among the largest foreign investors in Pakistan. Concluding his address, Foreign Minister extended heartfelt facilitations from the people and Government of Pakistan to the people of UAE and its leadership on the Golden Jubilee of their unification.

Macron labels Johnson...

FROM PAGE 01
Macron stated, adding that Johnson has apparently realised that Brexit is in fact a big mess. According to the journal, Macron points to fuel shortages and empty shelves as evidence, although many people have dismissed Brexit as the cause of the supply chain issues. Macron apparently described his dealing with the prime minister as "a circus," noting that they will talk in person, and everything is fine, but then he goes and does something in "an inelegant way." The comment is seemingly a reference to Johnson's publication of a letter addressed to Macron on November 25 in which he outlines a plan to deal with the migrant crisis one day after 27 died in a failed English Channel crossing. Macron concluded that it is "very sad to see a great country, with which we could do a lot of things, led by a clown. A clown or a proud knucklehead? Or both?" Relations between the UK and France have deteriorated to their worst in decades amid rows over Brexit, fishing and the AUKUS submarine pact. France reacted to Johnson's publicized letter last week by withdrawing an invitation to Home Secretary Priti Patel, who was due to meet with her French counterpart in Calais to discuss the migrant crisis. The French move was criticized for being counterproductive.

Indian diplomat summoned

FROM PAGE 01
Sanctity of religious places and revered sites of every community is ensured in Pakistan. The Indian diplomat was instead told to urge the Government of India to investigate the incidents of gross and systematic persecution of minorities in India which continue with impunity and state complicity. Given its systematic marginalization and brutalization of minorities, India has no locus standi to even feign concern for minorities elsewhere. Indian authorities must focus on ensuring effective protection of their own minorities and places of worship from repeated instances of desecration, hate crimes and mob lynching.

Real Madrid go seven points clear

LONDON: Karim Benzema applauded Real Madrid's fans after they chanted "Karim, Ballon d'Or" as his goal against Athletic Bilbao on Wednesday sent Madrid seven points clear at the top of La Liga. Benzema's 20th goal in 24 games this season proved the difference in a 1-0 victory at the Santiago Bernabeu that puts Madrid firmly in charge of the Spanish title race, even after only 15 games played. "We're on a good run and I like the atmosphere right now in the team," said Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti. A run of seven consecutive wins in all competitions has helped pull Ancelotti's team away from the chasing pack and Benzema, along with the explosive Vinicius Junior, has been instrumental. Ancelotti insisted on Tuesday Benzema had not been "crying" about losing out to Lionel Messi in the Ballon d'Or on Monday, with the Frenchman finishing fourth in the final vote. - APP



ANKARA: Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed and Senator Mushtaq Ahmed visited Pakistan embassy Ankara and met ambassador Syrus Qazi and exchanged views on Turkey-Pakistan relationship. Senators were on an official visit to attend 4th conference of the League of Parliamentarians for Al Quds. - DNA

Security plan for West Indies tour revealed

"The only thing is we and the ECB must walk together because it's important for every board to understand each other, their frustrations, meet the expectations. I think the ECB also understood they committed a mistake by withdrawing, and it was a knee-jerk reaction," Raja added

SPORTS DESK

LAHORE: Rebuilding - this is something cricket in Pakistan has been familiar with ever since the unfortunate terrorist attack on Sri Lanka's cricket team back in 2009. Slowly but surely, through the efforts of various PCB personnel occupying the managerial position, things improved over time; the PSL came back on home soil, World XI match was held, various Test-playing nations traveled to Pakistan including South Africa, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and international cricket was restored to Pakistan. The recovery phase was almost concluded until New Zealand decided to pull out of their tour to Pakistan this year citing a 'security threat'. Following in New Zealand's footsteps, England also confirmed that won't be coming to Pakistan either. This created a lot of controversies and thus tainting Pakistan's reputation on the international stage once again. In order to rectify the situation, the newly appointed Chairman of PCB Ramiz Raja opted to come



on the front foot and refused to accept blame for any potential threat, which was later widely accepted as a hoax. This confrontation saw the Chairman of ECB Ian Watmore leave his position after just 13 months due to immense criticism over the cancellation of the Pakistan tour. After recognizing their mistake, a public apology was issued and the ECB boss Tom Harrison traveled to Pakistan to smooth over the differences and plan future tours. Following their meeting, Ramiz Raja shared his views with the media. "I'm thankful to the England Cricket Board (ECB), as it wasn't easy for them. They were under pressure and we became



emotional when the pullout took place. Everyone saw how Pakistan made its case, and the result is they came here," said the PCB Chairman. "The only thing is we and the ECB must walk together because it's important for every board to understand each other, their frustrations, meet the expectations. I think the ECB also understood they committed a mistake by withdrawing, and it was a knee-jerk reaction," Raja added. After fighting hard to restore the image on the international stage (again), the PCB is looking to ensure a seamless home tour against West Indies. In order to avoid any mishaps or slip-ups, the security for the tour has been increased.

NCOC allows PCB to host 100 per cent crowd

ISLAMABAD: A full capacity crowd at the National Stadium in Karachi will be allowed to watch the matches between Pakistan and West Indies. According to sources, the National Command and Control Center (NCOC) has allowed 100 per cent capacity after the request of the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB). Meanwhile, the decision of allowing spectators in the HBL Pakistan Super League (PSL) season seven will be taken in the third week of December. On the other hand, the tickets sale for the West Indies series are expected to go live from Friday. The most expensive ticket is likely to cost Rs. 1,000 while tickets of Rs. 500 and Rs. 250 will also be available. Children up to the age of 12, who have been vaccinated, will also be able to come to the stadium with their families and enjoy the match. NCOC has directed PCB to follow all Covid-19 protocols for these matches. It must be noted that West Indies are scheduled to arrive in Karachi on December 9 for three-match T20I series and as many ODIs, part of the ICC World Cup Super League. - DNA

According to the sources, over 1500 personnel including 800 SSC Commandos and lady Commandos will be performing security duties during the tour. The security personnel will be safeguarding National Stadium Karachi, Karachi airport, hotels, routes, and other undisclosed areas. Sharpshooters will also be deployed at sensi-

tive areas to ensure extra protection against any threat. The security plan also includes the presence of a specialised command and control team at the National Cricket stadium to maintain the law and order situation in and around the stadium. Shuttle service will be used to transport the spectators to the stadium to further reduce any risk element.

Briefs

Germany agrees new Covid restrictions

AGENCIES

BERLIN: Germany's federal and state governments agreed on Thursday to measures aimed at tackling a fourth wave of COVID-19, including restrictions on the number of people who can meet inside and closures to discos and clubs above threshold case numbers. "We have understood that the situation is very serious and that we want to take further measures in addition to those already taken," Chancellor Angela Merkel told a news conference. "To do this, the fourth wave must be broken and this has not yet been achieved," she said, adding that a nationwide vaccination mandate could take effect from February 2022 after it is debated in the Bundestag and after guidance from Germany's Ethics Council.

4 killed in roadside blast in Somalia

NEWS DESK

MOGADISHU: At least four people were killed and several others wounded in a roadside bomb attack targeting a water hauling vehicle meant for drought victims in Somalia's Lower Juba region on Thursday, state media and police said. The IED was planted by the al-Shabaab terror group on the outskirts of Kismayo, a port city in the region, according to the Somali National Television. The attack came hours after overnight gunfight and mortar shelling in central Somalia resulted in the death of at least two children. The attackers targeted a military base of Djiboutian forces serving under the African Union Mission to Somalia in the town of Beledweyne, the capital of the Hiraa region, 344 kilometers (213 miles) from Mogadishu. "After midnight, al-Shabaab terrorists attacked our security forces base in Beledweyne, but we were able to repulse the attack and inflicted heavy casualties," a security official in Beledweyne told Anadolu Agency. Separately, the country's National Intelligence and Security Agency said it killed at least 12 Somali-based al-Qaeda affiliated terrorists in a security operation in the capital on Wednesday night.

Greece reports 1st omicron variant case

FOREIGN DESK

ATHENS: The first case of the omicron variant of coronavirus has been detected on the Greek island of Crete, Health Minister Thanos Plevris announced on Thursday. Plevris said at a press briefing in Athens that the Greek national has recently returned from South Africa to Chania, on the island of Crete, and that health authorities have taken the necessary procedures to follow his contacts. According to Theoklis Zautis, the head of the National Organization for Public Health (EODY), the man, whose identity has yet to be revealed, returned to the island on November 26 and took a rapid test, which revealed a COVID-19 negative result. However, after the man developed a few mild symptoms on November 29, it was confirmed that he was infected with the virus, and authorities confirmed it was the new omicron variant on Thursday morning. He is currently quarantined, and his contacts have all tested negative, according to officials. Meanwhile, Greek health experts advised that children aged 5 to 11 receive a lesser dose of the vaccine. On Wednesday, the parliament approved the mandatory vaccination against COVID-19 for all adults over the aged of 60. The immunization campaign for this age group will begin this month. Those who are not vaccinated will face a fine of 100 euros each month starting January 16.



BAKU: Minister of Defence Production Ms. Zobaida Jalal held an interaction with Pakistani community members at Pakistan House on 1st December. Minister is visiting Baku for Joint Ministerial Commission. – DNA

Azerbaijan aims to ensure peace in South Caucasus

"Our main goal is to ensure lasting peace. We want to create such an ecosystem that will allow having different formats of cooperation. Transport and trade routes can open in the South Caucasus"

DNA

BAKU: Azerbaijan aims to ensure lasting peace in the South Caucasus region, presidential aide Hikmat Hajiyev has said. He made the remarks during the Peace4Culture Partners Forum 2021 held in Baku on December 2. "Our main goal is to ensure lasting peace. We want to create such an ecosystem that will allow having different formats of cooperation. Transport and trade routes can open in the South Caucasus," Hajiyev said. He noted that the 44-day war and Azerbaijan's victory opened up great opportunities in the South Caucasus. Speaking about the situation on the Azerbaijani-Armenian border, the presidential aide noted that it is stable. "Our servicemen are serving on the sovereign territories of our

country," he said. The presidential aide also spoke about the mine threat issue raised by Azerbaijan before the international community. He stressed that the mass mining of Azerbaijani territories by Armenia was aimed at delaying as long as possible the ongoing reconstruction and the return of former IDPs. "We once again appeal to the international community, it is necessary to increase awareness on this issue. Azerbaijan needs support in de-mining. We ask citizens not to visit the liberated territories without permission," he added. Speaking about the deadly military helicopter crash in Azerbaijan, Hajiyev said that necessary efforts are being made to inform the public in a timely manner about the reasons for the crash. "This is evidenced by our experience during the war, the activities of state communica-



tions on issues related to the activities of the armed forces. In some cases, there is a need for certain serious investigations, inspections," he said. He underlined that one of the main conditions is to provide reliable,

complete information to the public after serious investigations are conducted. "It should be borne in mind that a person's life is concerned in such cases. Families should be properly involved. I would like to note that the Azerbaijani media have shown professionalism. The provision of inaccurate information by the media was prevented. But unfortunately, we did not see this on social networks. It is important that the society, the people working in the media, should be as sensitive to these issues as possible," he added. The presidential aide stressed the necessity to minimize references to the Armenian media, as enough false information is being spread. He noted that the circulation of inaccurate information by the Armenian media is connected with the ongoing processes in Armenia. "Such information is spread in Armenia for local people," he said.



ISLAMABAD: Advisor to PM on commerce & investment Abdul Razak Dawood in a meeting with M Madikiza, High Commissioner of South Africa in Pakistan. – DNA

Pakistan can explore system to increase exports

BEIJING: "With the development of the ICT industry and accelerating technical training for ICT personnel, Pakistan can combine its advantages in software services, explore export channels in system integration services, and use ICT technology to serve the digital transformation and upgrading of traditional fields." This was stated by Wang Lufeng, Dean, Artificial Intelligence and Big Data Dept. of Chongqing Industry Polytechnic College (CQIPC) in an interview to Gwadar Pro. CQIPC has been training ICT talents for Pakistan since 2018, and the third Pakistan ICT middle and senior management training course in 2021 in cooperation with HUAWEI is in full swing. Mr. Wang shared his views on strengthening vocational college cooperation and ICT cooperation between China and Pakistan. "Our college, in conjunction with Huawei Technology Co., Ltd., has innovated the three-dimensional training model of 'skills-management-corporate culture', training new ICT talents who can adapt to technological renewal and corporate culture, and serve export-oriented local enterprises to go abroad, so as to alleviate the shortage of ICT management talents in Pakistan," the dean explained. – Agencies

US defense chief slams China's drive for hypersonic weapons

AGENCIES

SEOUL: America's defense chief rebuked China on Thursday, vowing to confront its potential military threats in Asia and warning that its pursuit of hypersonic weapons intended to evade U.S. missile defenses "increases tensions in the region." U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin's stern comments after annual security talks with South Korea, a top U.S. ally, are a window into one of the Biden administration's top foreign policy worries: How should Washington and its partners contain a Chinese military that is strengthening – both in sheer firepower and in confidence – as it pursues an end of American dominance in Asia? China sees much of Asia as its natu-

ral sphere of influence. But many in the region warn of a pattern of Chinese interference, accompanied by moves to acquire the weapons needed to dominate its rivals. Austin's comments were directed at China's July test of a hypersonic weapon capable of partially orbiting Earth before reentering the atmosphere and gliding on a maneuverable path to its target. Experts say the weapons system is clearly designed to evade U.S. missile defenses, although China insisted it was testing a reusable space vehicle, not a missile. "We have concerns about the military capabilities that the PRC continues to pursue, and the pursuit of those capabilities increases tensions in the region," Austin said about the hypersonic weapons test, using the abbreviation for the

People's Republic of China, the country's official name. "We'll continue to maintain the capabilities to defend and deter against a range of potential threats from the PRC to ourselves and to our allies," he said. The Pentagon released on Monday the results of a global posture review that calls for additional cooperation with allies to deter "potential Chinese military aggression and threats from North Korea." Last month, Gen. Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the United States is also working on hypersonic weapons. But there is worry in Washington that it is lagging behind China and Russia in pursuing these types of weapons. Russia said Monday its navy successfully tested a prospective hypersonic cruise missile.

EU agrees on more sanctions against Belarus

For weeks, thousands of migrants have been stranded in the freezing forests and swamplands of the Poland-Belarus border, as Warsaw has closed the frontier and prevented them from crossing over

NEWS DESK

BRUSSELS: Diplomats of the European Union (EU) have agreed to add 28 individuals and bodies to a list of sanctions against Belarus, repeating claims that Minsk is luring migrants to the border with Poland in retaliation for existing EU sanctions. On Wednesday, senior EU envoys said that they had approved a list of punitive measures against Belarus drawn up by the European Commission. The new targets, according to the

EU ministers, include 17 officials and 11 companies or official bodies from Belarus. The ministers are expected to formally ratify the decision on Thursday. For weeks, thousands of migrants have been stranded in the freezing forests and swamplands of the Poland-Belarus border, as Warsaw has closed the frontier and prevented them from crossing over. The refugees, mostly from West Asia, Afghanistan, and Africa, are trying to enter the EU. Poland has sent armored vehicles and troops to the border, with Belarusian President Alexander



Lukashenko accusing Warsaw of blackmailing his country with the military build-up on the frontier. The crisis escalated last month when hundreds of the asylum seekers tried to enter Poland illegally but were pushed back, often

brutally, by Polish security forces. At least 12 migrants have so far lost their lives since the crisis began in the summer, aid groups say, calling for de-escalation and a humanitarian response to the problem. Minsk has adamantly dismissed the allegation that it has lured the migrants to the border. The European Union has previously slapped sanctions on 166 people and bodies, including Lukashenko himself and two of his sons, over an alleged crackdown on protests over his disputed 2020 re-election.

Separately on Wednesday, the United States said that it too would announce new sanctions against Belarus. "I think you will very soon see a sanctions package that's been coordinated" between the US and the EU, AFP quoted an unnamed senior US State Department official as saying. After Polish police fired tear gas and water cannons at people trying to cross the border last month, Belarus began moving hundreds of the refugees to shelters, offering them their first humanitarian aid in weeks.

Russia says detains three Ukrainian spies

MOSCOW: Russia said Thursday that it had detained three Ukrainian spies – adding that one had been planning a terrorist attack – as tensions spike around Ukraine's conflict with pro-Russia separatists. The FSB domestic intelligence agency did not say where or when it had detained the Ukrainians. It said two of the alleged spies – a father and son – were agents of Ukraine's SBU security service who had "travelled to Russia to collect information and take photographs and videos of strategically important enterprises and objects of transport infrastructure." The pair confessed to having been recruited by the SBU, the FSB said, which offered them a fee of \$10,000. The third Ukrainian, who planned to carry out an attack, "was recruited and acted on the instructions" of a top Ukrainian intelligence officer, the FSB said. "The attack was planned to be carried out by detonating two improvised explosive devices with a total mass of 1.5 kilograms of TNT equivalent," the FSB said in a statement. – APP

Erdogan replaces finance minister

WEB DESK

ANKARA: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has replaced the country's finance minister after weeks of economic turmoil in which inflation soared as the lira plummeted to record lows. The currency has lost more than 40 percent of its value against the US dollar this year, making it the worst-performing of all emerging market currencies. According to a presidential decree issued near midnight on Wednesday, Erdogan accepted the resignation of Lutfi Elvan and appointed his deputy, Nureddin Nebati, as the new finance minister. Nebati, 57, has a bachelor's degree in public administration and a master's degree in social sciences from Istanbul University. He also holds a doctoral degree in political science and public administration from Turkey's Kocaeli University. His predecessor had only been in the role since November 2020, when he was appointed after the resignation of Erdogan's son-in-law, Berat Albayrak. Elvan's year-long tenure was marked by numerous crises. Earlier on Wednesday, the Turkish Central Bank intervened in markets to prop up the nosediving lira, which has lost nearly 30 percent in value against the dollar in just a month.

Bus attack kills 10 oil workers in east Syria

DAMASCUS: At least 10 oil field workers were killed Thursday in an attack on their bus in eastern Syria's Deir Ezzor province, state media reported. "Ten workers at the Al-Kharata oil field were martyred and another was wounded in a terrorist attack on a bus transporting them back from work," the official SANA news agency said, without elaborating. It was not immediately clear who was responsible. But the Islamic State group has regularly claimed operations in the oil-rich province that was once a part of its sprawling proto-state straddling Syria and Iraq. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said an explosive device was used in the bus attack in an area of Deir Ezzor where "IS sleeper cells are active". Al-Kharata oil field lies 20 kilometres (12 miles) southwest of Deir Ezzor city, said the Observatory. Regime forces recaptured it in 2017 after IS jihadists were expelled from the area, the Observatory said. The IS group's self-proclaimed caliphate was declared defeated in Syria in the riverside hamlet of Baghouz in March 2019 following a gruelling US-backed offensive. But the group still attacks government forces from hideouts in the vast Syrian desert, which stretches all the way from the Damascus outskirts to the Iraqi border. – APP

