

Samana

Saturday, December 04, 2021

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Armenia is failing to honor its pledges under ceasefire deal

A sister publication of **CENTRELINE & DNA News Agency**

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Merkel receives the farewell military honors

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Lebanon's minister resigns to ease crisis

Detailed News On Page-07



Briefs

Ch. Fawad regrets Opp. decision

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Minister Inforfor mation and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hus-

sain said on Friday that the opposition's decision toboycott of the parliament's National Security Committee meeting was regrettable. In a tweet, Fawad said that for the first time in seven decades, a government was presenting its security policy to the parliament. The minister said that this was not a political issue but a matter of national security. He appealed to the opposition to reconsider its decision and attend the meeting in a serious manner. A day earlier, the joint opposition decided on Thursday to boycott the in-camera briefing on the national security issues slated to be held on December 6. Irked by the ruling party's way of bulldozing bills during the joint session of parliament.

Economy on right path: Tarin

DNA



Prime Minister on Revand Finance Shaukat Tarin Friday

said, the country was facing escalation in import bill and inflationary pressure due to surge in prices of imported commodities. "The inflation and import bill are connected and have same cause and that is international commodity prices," the adviser said while addressing a press conference. The adviser said the country was witnessing inflationary pressure due to rise in international prices of commodities which it was importing, citing that the prices of fuel, LNG, coal, steel and edible oil rose in international market and have impact on inflation in Pakistan. Comparing the imports of October 2021 and November 2021, the adviser said that the import bill went up from \$6.3 billion in October to \$7.5 billion in November, showing around \$1.2 billion difference.

Holiday Notice

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

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Blasphemy Allegations

Mob lynches Lankan man; burns corpse

The incident took place on Wazirabad Road in Sialkot, where the workers attacked export manager of a factory

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

SIALKOT: A mob in Sialkot tortured a Sri Lankan man, who was working as a manager at a local factory, to death over blasphemy allegations before burning his body on Friday, police said. Sialkot District Police Officer Umar Saeed Malik identified the man as Priyantha Kumara. The Punjab IG said that police first received information of the incident at 11:26am and officials reached the scene at 11:46am. "We are probing the facts and also looking at the police response, whether there was any sort of delay," he said, adding that the incident was "sensitive and unfortunate".

Meanwhile, the Sri Lankan foreign ministry said that it expected Pakistani authorities to "take the required action to investigate and ensure justice". The incident of Islam but defamed Islam as well as took place on Wazirabad Road in Sialkot, where the workers of private factories attacked the export manager of a factory -

Continued on Page 06

Sialkot incident's perpetrators defame Islam

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Special Representative of Prime Minister on Interfaith Harmony and Middle East, Hafiz Tahir Ashrafi said that he, on behalf of all schools of thought and Mutahida Ulema Council, strongly condemned the barbaric incident of Sialkot in which a Sri Lankan was tortured to death by factory workers.

The perpetrators of this heinous crime did not make any service in the name damaged the laws pertaining to blasphemy and desecration of religions and they also brought bad name for

Continued on Page 06



RAWALPINDI: High Commissioner of Sri Lanka Vice Admiral Mohan Wijewickrama pays a courtesy call to General Nadeem Raza, NI (M), Chairman of Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee at Joint Staff Headquarters. - DNA

"Day of shame": PM, COAS condemn incident

COAS directs all out support to civil administration to arrest perpetrators

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan Friday said that the "horrific vigilante attack" on a factory in Sialkot and the burning alive of Sri Lankan manager was a "day of shame for Pakistan." On Twitter, the prime minister said that he was overseeing the investigations and all those responsible would be dealt with the severity of the law. "I am overseeing the investigations & let there be no mistake all those responsible

DNA

LAHORE: Opposition Leader in National Assembly Shahbaz Sharif has condemned the Sialkot incident. "Utterly horrific & shocking incident in Sialkot today. Such actions must be condemned &

Continued on Page 06

Continued on Page 06

Shahbaz, Maryam condemn 'horrific' Sialkot incident

UAE signs deal for 80 French Rafale fighter jets

This is an outcome of the strategic partnership between the two countries," French presidency

DUBAI: The United Arab Emirates has agreed to buy 80 French-made Rafale fighter jets, officials said on Friday during a visit by French President Emmanuel Macron. "This is an outcome of the strategic partnership between the two countries," a statement from the French presidency said, adding that the UAE also agreed to buy 12 Caracal helicopters. France's Macron meets UAE's 'MBZ' at start of Gulf tour

Meanwhile, French President Emmanuel Macron met Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zaved on Friday at the start of a two-day Gulf tour with some lucrative deals set to be signed including several for Rafale fighter jets. Macron was greeted at the leadership pavilion at Du-



bai's Expo site for talks with Sheikh Mohammed, known as "MBZ", after which they are expected to announce a series of contracts and agreements. "I don't want to reveal the Christmas present" before the meeting, UAE presidential adviser Anwar Gargash told journalists in the build-up to the talks in Dubai.

Macron arrived in the early hours of Friday for a brief Gulf tour where he will also visit Qatar, host of next year's World Cup, before travelling to Saudi Arabia on Saturday. The UAE, which celebrated its 50th anniversary on Thursday, is expected to order dozens of Rafale jets to replace its Mirage 2000 aircraft acquired in the late 1990s.

The Emirates is the fifth biggest customer for the French defence industry with 4.7 billion euros from 2011-2020, according to a parliamentary report. - Agencies



ISLAMABAD: Chief guest Governer Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shah Farman, Ambassador of Romania Nicolae Goia and others cutting cake to celebrate the National Day of Romania. - DNA

'Pak Serbia embassy staff not paid salaries'

Due to nonpayment of salaries for last three months it has become almost impossible for the staff and their families to even survive; account hacked so message fake, says MOFA

CENTRELINE REPORT

BELGRADE: The Pakistan embassy staff in Belgrade, Serbia has complained to have not been paid for last three months. Due to nonpayment of salaries for last three months it has become almost impossible for the staff and their families to even survive.

This message from the staff was posted on the official Twitter account of the embassy. The staff members claimed in the message that they were under huge pressure from the schools in which their children were studying. Due to nonpayment of salaries they

were unable to pay schools fees.
"Is this the new Pakistan we had wished for and for how long we would continue to suffer", the message further said.

Meanwhile, the Spokes person of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said on Friday that the social media pages of the Pakistan Embassy in Serbia have been hacked therefore message posted on these networks do not belong to Pakistan embas-

Pakistan Embassy Ser...

Tweets Tweets & replies Media

Pakistan Embass... 🤣 · 54m The Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts of the Embassy of Pakistan in Serbia were hacked. The messages posted during that period were not from the Embassy of

> Pakistan in Serbia. The accounts now stand restored @ForeignOfficePk Q 215 1 81 ♥ 134 %

Pakistan Embassy Serbia

retweeted

Spokesperson 🖸 ... 🤣 · 2h The Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts of the Embassy of Pakistan in Serbia have been hacked.

The clarification posted by MOFA on Pak Serbian

sy. It is interesting to note that the clarification about the hacking of the Twitter was published by the Pakistan Embassy in Serbia soon after the staff messages were published. Therefore, if the account was hacked then how the Embassy could post the clarification on a hacked account, people were seen asking this question from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

According to some sources, Pakistan High Commission in Dhaka has also raised similar complaints through a letter No MISC/1-4/2021, Dated November 3, 2021, in which the Head of Chancery had drawn attention of the MOFA that due to non availability of funds, staff was unable to pay school fees of children. Similar complaints were lodged by

the staff of few other Pakistani missions as well and after the timely intervention of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs the issue was resolved amicably. There are also certain instances where the Pakistani diplomats were blamed for not paying salaries to their servants, especially the maids.



STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Ambassador of Belarus Andrei Metelitsa called on Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa at GHQ on Friday. According to a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISRP), matters pertaining to mutual interests, potential in defence cooperation, regional security, current situation in Afghanistan & collaboration /

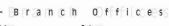
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Turkey keen to launch joint ventures in Pakistan

"More projects are in the pipeline as Turkish businessmen are very near and dear to the Pakistani business community," he said

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD. Turkey is keen to launch joint ventures with the Pakistani private sector which would be beneficial for both countries, said Mr. Ihsan Mustafa Yurdakul Ambassador of Turkey in Pakistan.

Talking to the FCCI (Faisalabad Cham-

ber of Commerce and Industry) President, Mr. Atif Munir Sheikh, he said that a Turkish company had already launched a joint venture in collaboration with Interloop for the manufacturing of cheese in Pakistan.

"More projects are in the pipeline as Turkish businessmen are very near and dear to the Pakistani business community," he said.

> every passing day. He said that productive B to B meetings would be arranged with the interested Turkish groups so that both sides could understand the market

He also appreciated the strategic lo-

cation of Faisalabad and said that M-3

and Allama Iqbal Industrial Estates

were ideal for the establishment of

new industrial units with Foreign Di-

He said that manufacturers could also

export their surplus products to China

and Central Asian states where de-

mand for cheese was increasing with

rect Investment (FDI).

potential of each country. President FCCI emphasized winwin situations during bilateral trade and asked the Turkish Embassy to convince Turkish investors to set up dyes and chemicals manufacturing plants as a joint venture in Faisalabad.

He said that being a textile city we are importing huge quantities of dyes and chemicals which could be manufactured in Pakistan to cater to its pro-



Prices of essential commodities re-fixed

BUREAU REPOT

FAISALABAD: The District Price Control Committee meeting was held at DC office under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Ali Shehzad, in which consultation with wholesalers, retailers, traders and consumer representatives has re-fixed the wholesale and retail prices of various essential commodities. During the meeting, reviewing the current market prices of various essential commodities and fluctuations in their availability rates, the prices of various essential commodities for the general markets were unanimously fixed. According to the detailed the Basin would be sold at Rs 126 per kg in wholesale while the rely, gram white(mota) Rs 175 per kg and Rs 182 per kg respectively White gram(break) at Rs 160 and Rs 166 per kg, black gram(mota) at Rs 120 and Rs 126 per kg, black gram(break) at Rs 114 and Rs 119 per kg, pulse gram(moti) at Rs 123 and Rs 128 per kg. Pulse gram breek Rs 118 and Rs 124 per kg, Pulse mash washed foreign Rs 242 and Rs 248 per kg, Pulse mash unwashed foreign Rs 218 and Rs 224 per kg. Pulse Masoor will be sold at Rs 174 and Rs 179 per kg, pulse masoor(breek) at Rs 187 and 193 per Kg. Rice super basmati (old) at Rs 118 and Rs 123 per kg. Ari rice Rs 55 per kg, milk at Rs 95 per kg, yoghurt at Rs 100 per kg, meat at Rs 950, Beaf Rs. 450 per kg, flour 20 kg bag at Rs.1100,10 kg bag at Rs. 550, open flour at chaki would be sold

weighing 100 grams, khameri roti 8 rupee, naan 120 gram price 10 rupee and coal would sold Rs. 80 per Kg. The prices of fruits and vegetables

will be auctioned in the daily markets while the prices of poultry products will be provided by the Livestock Poultry Association to the Secretary Market Committee at 7 am daily in consultation with the Livestock Poultry Association.

Deputy Commissioner Ali Shahzad said that price control magistrates were active in conducting raids in the markets and there would be no concession from illegitimate profiteers. He directed the PCMs to ensure the price list at every shop. He asked the consumers to register complaint regarding over price at Toll free number 080002345 it would



FAISALABAD: Chairman FWMC Waleed Arshad Dogar chairs a BOD meeting. - DNA

FWMC BoD meeting held

DNA

FAISALABAD: The 55th Board of Directors meeting of Faisalabad Waste Management Company was held under the chairmanship of Chairman FWMC Waleed Arshad Dogar. CEO FWMC Kashif Raza Awan, Technical Directors Romana Tabbasum, Shafaqat Ali, representatives of Local Govt and Finance departments Aslam Nadeem and Iftikhar Ahmad, GM Operation Emad Iqbal Gull, Manager Finance Ahsan Nadeem, Senior Manager Operation Eiaz Bandesha and other members also participated.

During the board meeting the audit of 2019.20, procurement of waste containers and matter of appointment of chief financial officer were approved.

Chairman FWMC also decided to segregate the waste at transfer stations for tried to raise the revenue of FWMC and for this purpose the trial would be started at transfer station near treat backary. Chairman FWMC said that the services of Company should be highly as per the expectation of people and negligency would be not be tolerated.

China packaging machinery Digital Expo 2021 held

More than 40 China domestic high-quality enterprises were selected to participate in the exhibition. The exhibition gathered professional buyers from Pakistan, India and other South Asian countries online

DNA

LAHORE: The "China Plastics and Packaging Machinery (Pakistan) Digital Expo". hosted by the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, was successfully held from December 1 to 3.

More than 40 China domestic high-quality enterprises were selected to participate in the exhibition. The exhibition gathered professional buyers from Pakistan, India and other South Asian countries online. The exhibits covered plastic machinery, rubber machinery, packaging machinery, related auxiliary equipment, various supporting equipment and raw materials, and so on.

The exhibition was widely promoted in South Asian countries in a diversified way, and professional buyers were invited to visit and purchase in the exhibition through precise attraction. In this way it helped enterprises to realize online exhibition and negotiation, making up for the "break point" caused by the suspension of offline exhibition due to the epidemic.

This exhibition offered a new solution for traditional business trade in a new way and further strengthened the supply and procurement docking and aggregation, helping China domestic enterprises to grasp



orders, expand market and increase confidence without leaving home.

During the exhibition, the supply and procurement sides realized instant interactive communication by means of graphics, online text communication, audio and video, which greatly enhanced the exhibition display effect and matchmaking efficiency and was widely praised by enterprises.

The digital exhibition closely followed the market demand of plastics and packaging machinery in China and South Asia, effectively helped Chinese foreign trade enterprises break through the epidemic barrier, created a zero-distance, low-cost and high-efficiency digital communication platform for foreign trade enterprises. This has further promoted the economic and trade cooperation between China and South Asian countries to ensure steady, long-term and solid economic and trade cooperation between China and South Asian countries

Mujahid warned about threat to Hurriyat leader

ISLAMABAD: President Kashmir Youth Alliance, Dr Syed Mujahid Gilani Friday warned about possible life threat to Hurriyay Leader Dr Muhammad Qasim Faktoo as he was facing some serious health issues but deprived of health facilities and no one was allowed to meet him.

He said that Dr. Qasim Fakto had been kept in solitary bounds since last few days in the prisoner's block of Udhampur Jail, which had caused great concern to his family. Hurriyat Leader Ashraf Khan Sahrai, who was martyred during Covid 19, was also kept in the same block, he added. He was addressing a press conference here at National Press Club with Hurriyat Leader Sheikh Abdul Mateen, Secretary General Kashmir Youth Alliance Razi Tahir, Naveed Ahmed, Palwasha Saeeed, Dr Abdullah Khalil, Dr Aamir Zada and others.

Dr Syed Mujahid Gilani urged the International bodies, human rights institutions to raise their voice and play effective role for the prisoners of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

Abdul Mateen Sheikh said that "the Indian government is victimizing Hurriyat leaders including Dr Muhammad Qasim Faktoo, Aasia Andrabi for their political ideology and struggle for the right of self determination". The imprisonment of Hurriyat leaders reflected the extremist mindset of the Indian government, he added. - APP



LAHORE: Ambassador of Azerbaijan Khazar Farhadov and his his wife enjoy Riskshaw ride during heir recent visit to Lahore. - DNA

US CG visits Hub, explores opportunities for US businesses

KARACHI: The United States (US) Consul General Mark Stroh traveled to Hub, one of the largest industrial cities of Balochistan, to explore opportunities for U.S. technologies and businesses in the province and strengthen U.S.-Pakistan economic ties.

The Consul General toured the 1,292 megawatts (MW) HUBCO power plant, which is Pakistan's first and largest independent power producer (IPP), and met HUBCO leadership to discuss plant operations, according to a communique on Friday.

Consul General Stroh then visited Ismail Industries, which produces high-calorie nutritional supplements that are given to vulnerable pop-

ulations to treat or prevent malnutrition in Pakistan and Afghanistan through the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP).

Later, Stroh visited the Gatron-Novatex plant, which exports polyester filament yarn and PET resin to the United States. "I am pleased to have had the opportunity to visit Hub and continue to explore the achievements and opportunities in the decades-long U.S. relationship with Pakistan," commented Consul General Stroh.

"There is vast potential for increased trade and investment between our two countries, and our partnerships in climate change, health, and education promote our mutual prosperity." - APP

Pakistan has potential for speedy growth

The President FPCCI invited the investors of Saudi Arabia to explore Joint ventures in these special zones. Pakistan will facilitate Saudi investors by providing them one window operation

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan desire to further strengthen its trade ties with Saudi Arabia as both countries have great scope to promote trade in many areas. Pakistan has strong strategic, diplomatic and economic relations with Saudi Arabia and cannot forget the financial assistance of Saudi Arabia in the form of oil on credit, construction of educational institutions and on Kashmir cause; this was stated by Mian Nasser Hyatt Maggo, President of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) in a meeting with Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki, Ambassador of Saudi Arabia in Pakistan held at Saudi Embassy in Islamabad, along with Qurban Ali, Chairman Capital Office & Mirza Abdul Rehman Chief Coordinator FPCCI.

Mian Nasser Hyatt Maggo, President FPC-CI while quoting the statistics, he informed that the share of Pakistan in Saudi Arabia's trade is just 1 percent; while in Pakistan's trade is approximately 7 percent stated that Saudi Arabia is an important trading partner of Pakistan and the joint business council between the national chambers of both countries can play a vital role in enhancing

the trade and business activities. He urged on accelerated efforts for activation of trade and economic promotional activities through this platform. He also

underlined the need of exchange of trade He invited the investors of Saudi Arabia delegations, holding of B2B meetings, trade exhibitions and business forums etc. He also emphasizedon enhancement and strengthening people to people contacts. The President FPCCI further highlighted various potential areas for investment in special economic zones of Pakistan under

to explore Joint venturesin these special zones. Pakistan will facilitate Saudi investors by providing them one window operation.

Qurban Ali, Chairman Capital Office & Mirza Abdul Rehman Chief Coordinator FPCCI also emphasized on the enhancement of bilateral trades and investment



and suggested opening of Saudi Arabia EXIM bank branch in Pakistan for trade facilitation. Mirza Abdul Rehman &Qurban Ali highlighted the potentials of bilateral trade in different sectors and also requested multiple entry visa to the genuine businessmen on the recommendation of FPCCI within shortest possible time.

In his remarks, Nawaf bin Said Al-Malki, Ambassador of Saudi Arabia underscored the need of the removal of trade barriers and the promotion of trade through the direct route. He stated that Pakistan and Saudi Arabia both possess huge natural resources which can be utilized for enhancement of bilateral trade relations.

He also informed that there is huge potential in rice, textile, sea food, sports goods, agro-based products and there is a need of direct interaction between the traders of both countries in these commodities.

He said that Saudi Arabia wanted to see Pakistan as a growing economy as it is a very important country for the whole Muslim Ummah. He said that Pakistan has lots of potential for speedy economic growth that should be highlighted more effectively to attract foreign investors.

He urged that the media should focus on projecting the positive things of Pakistan to change wrong perception about it. He said that wrong perceptions about Pakistan in the foreign world needed to be changed to unlock its real economic potential.

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Asr	03:21 pm
Maghrib	04:59 pm
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& Rescue Services.4451122
Motorway Police9266044
Motorway Police9270601-20
Women Police Stations
Islamabad9222596
Rawalpindi9270601-20

Edhi Ambulance	115
PIAFlightInfo	114
PIACargo	.9280979
Railway Inquiry	117
Railway Exchange9	270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi.	.5555489
CAA	9281092



Hospitals

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CMH	5611111
MH	561116
Cantt Hospital.	9270907-11
DHQ	5556311-4
RGH	9290301-7
Holy Family	9290322-7
PIMS	9261170-79
Polyclinic	9218300-09
Shifa Internation	onal.4603666



Denartments

Depui	LIIICIIC
CDA	9221334-43
CDA	9208301-04
Met Office	9250360-6
RDA	5555864
TMA	5770886
Cantonment B	oard 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
RawalTown	5773343

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

Business community's help needed against narcotics

Dr. Syed Kaleem Imam said that the govt is pursuing a zero-tolerance policy for all types and forms of drugs as saving the young generation from the curse of narcotics was its key priority

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Syed

Kaleem Imam, Federal Secretary, Ministry of Narcotics Control expressed his heartfelt gratitude to the members of ICCI for convening at the MNC on such a short notice for a national cause and emphasized the resolve of the Honourable Federal Minister for Narcotics Control, Brig. Ijaz Ahmed Shah to eradicate the menace of drugs from the society with special focus on safeguarding the health and well being of the youth. Dr. Syed Kaleem Imam said that the government was determined to make Pakistan a narcotics free society and business community should extend its cooperation to the government in its war against narcotics to develop a healthy nation.

He said this while talking



Chamber of Commerce & Industry that called on him led by Muhammad Shakeel-Munir, President. Jamshaid Akhtar Sheikh Senior Vice President, Muhammad Faheem Khan Vice President ICCI, S.M.Munir former CEO TDAP, Mian Akram Farid Chairman Founder

Tariq Sadiq, Mian Shaukat Masud, Khalid Iqbal Malik, Muhammad Ejaz Abbasi, Zafar Bakhtawari, Zahid Maqbool, Ch. Waheed ud Din, Sheikh Amir Waheed, Muhammad Naveed Malik, Saifur Rehman Khan, Zia Khalid Chaudhry and others were in the delegation.

Dr. Syed Kaleem Imam said that the government is pursuing a zero-tolerance policy for all types and forms of drugs as saving the young generation from the curse of narcotics was its key priority. He said that the business community could play a key role in curbing the trafficking of narcotics.

He said that to purge the society of narcotics, everyone has to support the government's efforts considering it a collective responsibility. He said that the role of the business community was important in discouraging those involved in drug trafficking. He also briefed the delegation about the various initiatives of his ministry to reduce supply & demand of drugs, prevent their smuggling, organize awareness campaigns, seek international cooperation and arrange the treatment & rehabilitation of drug addicts. Speaking at the occasion,

Muhammad Shakeel Munir, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry lauded the efforts of the government to purge the society from the menace of narcotics and drugs as it posed great dangers to our youth and assured that the business community would extend all possible cooperation to the government to make Pakistan a drug free and healthy nation.

He suggested that the Ministry of Narcotics should organize awareness programs on a regular basis in chambers of commerce starting from ICCI to raise more awareness about this issue in the business community.

ICT to organize Islamabad Women Gala on Dec 4

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Administration would organize two-day Islamabad Women Gala under the theme "Be Pakistani, Buy Pakistani" on December 4. The event would be held at F-9 Park and its entry will be free only for families from Bolan gate F-10.It's simple and easy to "Support Local, Buy Local" because when you shop from small businesses you were supporting a dream. The joy of locally handmade products lies in their uniqueness, high quality and originality. In a world where you can shop anywhere, shop local. Be part of the Islamabad Women Gala and buy amazing handmade stuff to support our Pakistani artisans and businesses. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Defence Attaches of various countries attending the UAE National Day reception. - DNA

RCCI decry on FBR hike in property valuation

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) has termed the move by the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to increase property value as grossly excessive and unacceptable. "The FBR's move of new market value for immovable property of 40 major cities was tantamount to stalling the country's economy and suspending business activities". RCCI President Nadeem Rauf in a statement said that the value of the property has been increased by 100 percent to 600 percent through an SRO. With the proposed increase in taxes and valuation, the registry of 500,000 will now go up to 2.5 million, he added. He said that the purchasing power of the common man has already run out due to high inflation. How to run your own business? Where will you set up your factory?

The Rawalpindi Chamber has always called for devising policy in consultation with stakeholders. The Chamber of Commerce was not consulted by FBR in this move, he said. President Nadeem Rauf further said that FBR's move is also against the government's ongoing New Pakistan Hous ing Project. Construction material has already become expensive. The prices of cement, bricks and sanitary material have tripled in one year. With the proposed SRO, the construction industry will decline, he added.

The business community has been hit hardest by the Corona epidemic. The government should take immediate notice. Chamber President Nadeem Rauf said that the FBR has taken this step to collect more taxes. However, the ground realities are different. According to the FBR's own data, first-quarter revenues exceeded its target. In such a scenario, the imposition of new taxes is unrealistic, he said. - DNA

PAF expresses solidarity on global day of PWDs

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Air Force (PAF) on Friday expressed solidarity with differently abled or special persons on International Day of Persons with Disabilities (PWD) and released a special song to highlight their role in national development and sensitise the masses on conditions faced by them in routine life.

The Directorate General of Public Relations of PAF released the song sung by the country's famous singer Almat Asif for persons with disabilities (PWDs), said a PAF media release.

The lyrics of the song were written by renowned poet Shabbir Nazish and the music was composed by Imran Zaik. The lyrics of the song say, "Hum Bhi Han Pakistan Tum Bhi Ho Pakistan-We are also Pakistan You are also Pakistan", We read and write with heart. – **Agencies**

Exports of services rise by over 24 pc in 4 months

The imports also grew by 25.43 percent from \$649.06 million in last October to 814.09 million in October 2021, the data revealed

ISLAMABAD: The exports of services from the country witnessed an increase of 24.25 percent during the first four months of current financial year (2021-22) as compared to the corresponding period of last year, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported.

The exports of services during July-October (2021-22) were recorded at \$2122.19 million against the exports of \$1708.04 million in July-October (2020-21), showing growth of 24.25 percent.

The services' imports also rose by 27.33 percent by growing from \$2485.15 million last year to \$3164.33 million during the period under review.

Based on the figures, the services' trade deficit widened by 34.10 percent to

\$1042.14 million during the first four months of the current year as compared to the deficit of \$777.11

million last year. Meanwhile, on year basis, the services' exports during the month of October 2021 grew by 23.14 percent to \$532.07 million against the exports of \$432.07 million during

October 2020. The imports also grew by 25.43 percent from \$649.06 million in last October to 814.09 million in October 2021, the data revealed.

On month-on-month basis, the exports from the country witnessed a decrease of 6.49 percent when compared to the exports of \$568.99 million in September 2021. However, the imports increased by 11.66 percent when compared to the imports of \$729.08 in September 2021, the data

revealed. Meanwhile, the merchandize exports from the country witnessed an increase of 26.68 percent during the first five months of the current fiscal year (2021-22) as compared to the corresponding months of last year, according to PBS data. The exports from the country stood at \$12.344 billion during July-November (2021-22) against the exports of \$9.744 billion recorded during July-November (2020-21), showing growth of 26.68 percent. The imports during the months under review also went up by 69.17 percent by growing from \$19.468 billion last year to \$32.934 billion in July-October (2021-22). - APP

Sania chairs consultative clinic on food subsidy reform

"The use of a digital platform in this program will enable us to track utilization of subsidy by each beneficiary at product and geography level which will provide much needed transparency in process"

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has recently introduced a targeted food subsidy programme, "Ehsaas Rashan Riayat" to compensate for prices increases in the food items which would affect the poor. To learn from the experiences of other countries, an international consultative clinic on food subsidy reforms was convened by the World Bank to inform the design of Pakistan's targeted commodity subsidies reforms.

Senator Dr. Sania Nishtar, SAPM on Social Protection and Poverty Alleviation chaired the event. Speakers and experts from Washington, Cairo, Jakarta, Islamabad

and Karachi joined the clinic. At the event, Dr. Sania was joined by Stefano Paternostro, Practice Manager, Social Protection and Jobs Global Practice, South Asia Region, the World Bank; Ugo Gentilini, Global Lead, Social Assistance, Global Practice, World Bank; Dr. Ibtissam El-Gaafarawi. Advisor to the Minister of Supply and Internal Trade Minister and Professor at the National Center for Social and Criminological Research, Egypt; and Dr. Elan Satriawan, Chief of Policy Working Group in TNP2K, Indonesia. Lire Ersado, Human Development Practice Leader for Pakistan, the World Bank moderated the event. Other participants from the World

Bank were Melis Guven, Amjad Khan, Gul Jamy, Zaineb Majoka and Ali Qureshi.

Giving an overview of the programme, Dr. Sania said, "Learning from international precedents and pilot learning, the Ehsaas Rashan Riayat will enable small and medium Kiryana stores as well as government owned Utility Stores to disburse subsidies to the poorest families. Ehsaas and National Bank of Pakistan (NBP) have developed mobile point of sale Android application that is integrated with a central Ehsaas subsidy platform, and which enables processing of subsidies against the CNIC of a beneficiary through a real-time verification process."

"The use of a digital platform

in this program will enable us to track utilization of subsidy by each beneficiary at product and geography level which will provide much needed transparency in the process. Participating Kiryana store owners will be required to open bank accounts which will help further increase financial inclusion and will help increase scale of digital transactions in Pakistan", she further added.

The World Bank provided a brief overview of key issues on cash vs in-kind transfers and illustrated pathways of reform charted by select international country experiences. Egypt highlighted recent evolution in the structure of its near-universal food subsidies, including ration cards, Baladi

Bread and laid out operational innovations and challenges stemming from reforms. Indonesia detailed the country's journey from large scale price subsidies for commodities, "Rastra" to electronic voucher transfers including their pilot to scale-up. Participants appreciated Pakistan's digitally driven Ehsaas Rashan programme that is meant to grant a subsidy of Rs. 1,000 a month to Rs. 20 million low-income families on the purchase of certain food items including flour, cooking oil/ghee and pulses. They highly lauded that the first of

its kind technology-led, targeted subsidy disbursal programme will make beneficiaries and storeowners more digitally adept.

China supports Pak efforts regarding CPEC

ISLAMABAD, Dec 3 (APP): Ambassador of China to Pakistan Nong Rong on Friday said China was committed to work with Pakistan to promote high quality development of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) in timely manner.

On his official twitter handle, the envoy said that China highly appreciated Prime Minister Imran Khan for his determination and leadership in steering the development of CPEC. "China will work hard with Pakistan to promote high-quality development of the CPEC in a timely manner, for more benefits of the two peoples", he added. - APP

ANF seizes 9 kg heroin, 7 kg opium, 3.3 kg hashish

ISLAMABAD: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) in two different operations in Lahore had seized about 9 kilograms of heroin, 7 kilograms of opium, and 3.3 kilograms of hashish.

According to a spokesperson, the force raided the house of an accused Babar located at Railway Road seized 4 kg of heroin and 30 bore pistol along with 6 rounds. In another operation, the force near Jallo Park Lahore has seized 5kg of heroin, 7kg of opium, and 3.3kg of hashish from the house of Malik Usman.

As per information, the accused Malik Usman is the residence of Faisalabad and used the house in Lahore for the drug business. Raids are being carried out to arrest accused Malik Usman. The spokesperson said, both the suspects were under surveillance of the ANF intelligence for some time. He said that both the accused were involved in the smuggling of drugs from Peshawar to Lahore. A case has been registered against accused Babar and an investigation is underway. - APP

1st European Film Festival to be held on Dec 8

ISLAMABAD: First European Film Festival in Pakistan would be held from December 8 at five different cities including Islamabad.

In a statement Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) said that the Arts Council is delighted to present First European Film Festival Pakistan 2021 in collaboration with Olomopolo media.

In this regard, the first European Film Festival would be held on December 8 in Islamabad at PNCA. Similarly, the second event would be held at Faisalabad on December 9 at Storia Art Gallery, Peshawar, Sethiyan Di Haveli on December 10, 11 Dec Karachi, District 19, December 11 and Lahore, Olo Iunction on December 12. Entry would be free into the festival. - APP

CDA seal 17 commercial buildings at Ghauri Town

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Capital Development Authority (CDA) Friday sealed 17 commercial buildings at Ghauri Town over violation of building by-laws. The operation was carried out by building directorate (South), jointly participated by Islamabad Capital Administration Territory (ICTA) and federal capital police, a news release said. The authority also served notices to several under construction buildings for carried out illegal construction work at the area. As per Islamabad Master Plan, it was mandatory for the owners to obtain written permission from the building control department for residential and commercial constructions. Strict implementation orders have been issued by the federal apex agency to the department concerned for taking stern action against the violators in accordance with the CDA rules and regulations 2005 in Islamabad.

Saturday, December 04, 2021

Briefs

21 corona cases reported in 24 hours

RAWALPINDI: One more patient died while 21 others were diagnosed corona positive during last 24 hours, raising the tally of confirmed cases to 39,328 in the district.

As per the latest data released by the District Health Authority here on Friday, the total infected cases included 36,304 from Rawalpindi and 3024 from other districts.

Among the new patients, five case were reported from Rawal town and Taxila, two each from Rawalpindi Cantonment, Potohar Town, Kallar Syeda, and Attock, while one each reported from Murree, Chakwal and Islamabad.

"Presently 25 confirmed patients were admitted to five city facilities, counting 11 in Fauji foundation hospital, eight in Institute of Urology, four in Benazir Bhutto Hospital and one in Attock and Bilal hospitals," the report said.

District Health Authority updated that 37,980 patients had been discharged after recovery including 34,962 from Rawalpindi and 3009 from outside districts. In addition, the $report\ informed\ that\ 215$ were quarantined, including 111 at homes and 104 in the isolation centres.

The report added that 3,708,866 people, including 43,937 health workers, had jabbed themselves against the coronavirus across the district since the vaccination administering drive launched on March 10. The positivity rate was recorded at 1.26 per cent during the last 24 hours in the district, it added. - APP

SMEDA to organize CRM training on December 8

ISLAMABAD: Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SM-EDA) is going to organize one-day workshop on "Customer Relationship Management (CRM)" for profitable business growth on December 08 (Wednesday). The session is being organized by SMEDA under National Business Development Program (NBDP) for SMEs, to extend non-financial advisory services to small and medium business, according to sources in the authority.

The training program provide information about introduction to CRM, CRM in business markets, building customer relationships, economics of CRM, CRM and its application in different industries and CRM implementation process and precaution related to CRM implementation. The session would be attended by small business owners and their staff, emerging and entrepreneurs and all those desirous of improving knowledge on the subject. -APP

Ground breaking of Golra Morr underpass

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Spe cial Initiatives Mr. Asad Umar performed ground breaking of construction of vehicular underpass at Golra Chowk here today. Senior officers of Ministry of Communications (MOC), National Highway Authority (NHA) and Local administrations were also

present. Golra Morr underpass is located at the crossing point of GT Road (N-5) with local Capital Development Authority (CDA) road between Golra and Haji Camp in a congested area of Rawalpindi. The proposed underpass will provide easy access from Islamabad to new developing sectors of the Capital Development Authority (CDA).

The underpass will help discipline traffic at this point and smooth flow of traffic will be ensured. The underpass will be completed at cost of more than Rs. 71 Crore and will be completed in one year period.

PWDs deserve right to be mainstreamed in education

President Alvi said persons with disabilities needed utmost care and a welcoming attitude, beginning right from their homes and families to the schools and places of work

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Friday said Persons With Disabilities (PWDs) deserved access to all opportunities, particularly mainstreaming in education and employment.

Addressing an event organized to mark International Day of Persons with Disabilities here at the Aiwan-e-Sadr, the president said offering an inclusive and accommodating environment to such persons was the collective responsibility of the state and society. Begum Samina Alvi, representatives of organizations working for PWDs and and a large number of children with physical and mental impairments attended the event themed 'Leadership and participation of persons with disabilities towards an inclusive, accessible and sustainable post COVID-19 world'.

President Alvi said persons with disabilities needed utmost care and a welcoming attitude, beginning right from their homes and families to the schools and places

He said among the four categories of disabilities - visual, hearing, wheel-chair bound and mental, the persons with either of the first three impairments had the same intellectual capacity as normal people and needed the opportunity to study in the main-

At workplace, he said, there was a need to build an effective system to support such employees including fulfillment of job quota, incentives, and special job descriptions as per needs. The president emphasized giving

stream educational system.

practical skill-set to persons with disabilities to ensure their financial self-reliance.

This was not a matter of charity, but the empowerment of persons with disabilities, he said adding that Pakistan needed to develop an inclusive culture to accommodate such persons in all spheres of life.

Dr Alvi said around 400,000 PWDs got themselves registered under Prime Minister Imran Khan's initiative of socio-welfare assistance for two million such persons, thus needed to create awareness among the masses for their self respect and dignity. He said the government required

commitment of the society to ensure a better place for them and to offer them a conducive environment for their mobility, learning, and work needs.

Later, President Alvi interacted with the children with disabilities and appreciated their performances including songs, dances, and tableaus presented before the audience.

Speaking on the occasion Federal Minister for Human Rights Dr Shireen Mazari said the day for persons with disabilities was commemorated the world over including Pakistan calling the need to provide them an enabling environment as equal citizens.

She said the government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf had proudly formulated a legal framework to ensure the rights of PWDs.

She mentioned that by next month, a list of departments not

fulfilling job quota reserved for PWDs would be sent to the Prime Minister Office seeking penalty against them. She said her ministry had launched a special mobile application as a platform for parents of disabled children to get information about centres pertaining to physiotherapy, arti-

ficial limbs, and others. Also, a one-window facility has already been established at Chak Shahzad, Islamabad to facilitate disabled persons.

She said the Phoenix Braille system as a pilot project had been set up at higher education level as an assistance mode for visually impaired in research and writing. Work was underway to mainstream the children with minor disabilities at public and private schools, she added.

For the next census, she mentioned that two questions based on Washington queries had been forwarded to Planning Commission for the better data collection of persons with different abilities. Syed Muhammad Ali Shah, head of German non-governmental organization CBM in Pakistan said the organization was contributing to the society for ensuring that PWDs were taken on board as their due right.

A group of children with disabilities, clad in white robes and Rumi caps, presented dance of 'whirling dervishes' to the tune of Sufi music. Other children presented a tableau on the country's folk songs, which was highly applaud-

reform solution

and communicate with each other. - APP

Dengue claims two more lives in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: Dengue fever claimed two more lives in Islamabad; however no new case was reported in the last 24 hours from the federal capital.

Islamabad health authorities said that there are 4611 dengue cases in Islamabad already under treatment.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, only 18 cases were reported across the province including 16 from provincial capital Peshawar in the last 24 hours taking the tally to 10420 in the province.

There are 5640 dengue patients in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). – APP

Activists urge for equal rights of PWDs

ISLAMABAD: Social activists Friday on 'International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2021' stressed for respecting the equal rights of specially-abled persons and underlined the need of an inclusive culture that embraces persons with disabilities so that they can equally participate in

the society.
President, Special Talent Exchange Program, Islamabad, Pakistan Muhammad Atif Sheikh, while talking to PTV news, called upon government departments, civil society, philanthropists and media to make concerted efforts for ensuring active and full participation of people with disability in the mainstream of national life. He stressed the need to change societal norms through intensive media awareness campaigns to remove the stigma attached to disable persons.

He said no doubt present government has taken a number of initiatives to systematically address the challenges that special persons were facing but there is still a long way to go, adding, media can play a pivotal role for encouraging special persons to play their role in every walk of life according to their talent.

Every year, the International Day of Persons with Disabilities is observed with a particular theme.

This year, the theme for International Day of Persons with Disabilities 2021 is 'Leadership and participation of persons with disabilities toward an inclusive, accessible and sustainable post-COVID 19 world', he mentioned. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Women attending UAE National Day reception in Islamabad. - DNA

99,168 FIRs registered against electricity pilferers in three years

ISLAMABAD: Power Distribution Companies (DIS-COs), operating across the country, have registered around 99,168 First Information Reports (FIRs) against the electricity pilferers after the incumbent government launched a massive anti-theft drive to reduce the electricity line losses in 2018. "From 13-10-2018 to 11-10-2021 all Power Distribution Companies (DISCOs) registered 99,168 FIRs, charged Rs 8,083 million, out of which recovered Rs 5,498 million from the pilferers," according to an official document avail-

To reduce the line losses, the government took stringent measures to make the power sector efficient, which include construction of new grids and up-gradation of existing grid stations, augmentation of power transformers and replacement of undersize conductors, installation and replacement of defective capacitors and undersize conductors of 11 KV Feeders besides old and defective meters & transformers, augmentation and addition of distribution transformers, The DISCOs increased the surveillance to control theft and reduce line losses by launching a vibrant anti-theft drive and deputing night watchmen, besides ensuring billing accuracy through Mobile Meter Reading

Dr Fehmida, Dar sign MoU to uplift youth in sports

for Inter Provincial Coordination (IPC) Dr Fehmida Mirza has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Special Assistant to the PM on Youth Affairs Usman Dar for the uplifting and encouragement of the youth in sports.

"The MoU is aimed for working with coordination (IPC & Youth Affairs) for the promotion and encouragement of youth in sports. Sports in the country are damaged and the youth is held hostage.

It is important that the government provides opportunities to youth for their upbringing," she said while addressing a press conference along with Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Youth Affairs Usman Dar here on Friday.

Director General Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) Col (R) Muhammad Asif Zaman and Higher Education Commission (HEC) Director Sports Javed Memon were also present on inces were also being upgraded. "All

the occasion. She said the 2021-2022 was declared a sports year and we had planned a number of activities for it. "Some activities are underway in the provinces while some will be carried on with the universities. We want to regain the lost glory in our games of hockey, squash etc," she said and added that youth should come to the grounds and indulge themselves in

healthy sports activities. To a question, she said when she took over there was no structure of sports governance and she head downed the mafias who were damaging the games. "After the 18th amendment sports and its resources were gone to the regions and the Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) cannot promote and regulate sports without the regions," she said.

She said the facilities here at the Pakistan Sports Complex and in prov-

provinces should have a sports minister as to give top priority to the games. We won't let anyone spoil the future of the vouth even if we have to bring in coaches from abroad we would do it. We have also kept an hockey astro-turf for Muzaffarabad,"

She said the issue of the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) with the International Football Federation (FIFA) would also be resolved soon. 'For the first time FIFA wants to sit and work with us (government). The normalization committee will sit with us and discuss the election process of Pakistan Football Federation," she said.

Speaking about athlete Arshad Nadeem, the minister said ministry and PSB has and would support him at all levels and were proud of him for displaying superb performance at the Tokyo Olympics. - APP

Kitchen items' prices ease 0.48%

ISLAMABAD: The Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI) based weekly inflation for the week ended on December 2, for the combined consumption group, witnessed decrease of 0.48 percent as compared to the previous week, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported Friday.

The SPI for the week under review in the above mentioned group was recorded at 167.36 points against 168.16 points registered in the previous week, according to the PBS data. The food commodities that contributed in decline in weekly inflation included tomatoes, the prices of which decreased by 16.57 percent on Weekon-Week (WoW) basis. Other food commodities that witnessed decline in prices included onions (7.74%), chicken (7.68%), (2.43%), sugar (1.51%), eggs (1.43%), chilies powdered (0.88%), potatoes (0.67%), wheat flour (0.58%), gur (0.45%) and garlic (0.29%). On Year-on-Year basis, the commodities that witnessed decrease in prices includ-

(20.08%), tomatoes (17.45%) and chicken (2.05%). Meanwhile, the commodities that witnessed increase on WoW basis, included bananas (3.82%), pulse Masoor (2.60%), pulse Mash (2.26%), pulse Moong (2.10%), cooking oil 5 litre (1.95%), wash-

ed onions (37.63%), pulse

Moong (26.88%), potatoes

ble ghee 1 kg (1.44%). Meanwhile, as compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 18.35 percent.

ing soap (1.80%) and vegeta-

The weekly SPI with base year 2015-16=100 is covering 17 urban centers and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups. - APP

Govt to launch 'Kamyab Jawan Sports Drive'

Dar said games for male included football, cricket, hockey, badminton, boxing, handball, judo, squash, table tennis, volleyball, weightlifting and wrestling. For young females, the games would be badminton, cricket, football, hockey, boxing, handball, judo, squash, table tennis, and volleyball

ISLAMABAD: The wait for 'Year of Sports' (2022) is over as the government is all set to launch 'Kamyab Jawan Sports Drive' here on December 6 to revive sports culture for producing national heroes.

Prime Minister Imran Khan will officially inaugurate the Kamyab Jawan Sports Drive at Jinnah Stadium Sports Complex, Islamabad on December 6, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Youth Affairs Muhammad Usman Dar announced while addressing a news confer-

ence here on Friday. Flanked by Minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination Dr. Fehmida Mirza, the SAPM said his department had signed an agreement with the IPC ministry to materialize the initiative, aimed at promoting the sports at grass root level. He said this would be the biggest sports programme in the country's history that would eventually enable active participation of the youth in the healthy physical activities.

Under its first phase, he said 12 different games for male and 10 for female would be arranged across 25 regions under the talent hunt programme. The age bracket for both would be 11-25 years, he

Usman Dar said games for male included football, cricket, hockey, badminton, boxing, handball, judo, squash, table tennis, volleyball, weightlifting and wrestling. For young females, the games

league under the program. The SAPM said the final pool of talent from league would be given a chance to get trained and dewould be badminton, cricket, veloped in world class 12 sports football, hockey, boxing, handball, academies and high-performance judo, squash, table tennis, and volcenters to be built in 12 universi-

He said after conclusion of the

games, the selected pool of talent

would then compete in a national

levball, he added.

up in various varsities including Bahauddin Zakariya University, Punjab, University of the Punjab, Lahore, University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences, Lahore, University of Agriculture Faisalabad, University of Karachi, Sindh Agriculture University Tandojam, Benazir Bhutto Shaheed University Lyari, University of Peshawar, Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, International Islamic University, Islamabad, Quetta University and Karakoram International University, Gilgit Baltistan for promoting hockey, weightlifting, wrestling, hand ball, football, judo, boxing,

squash, volley ball, cricket, athletic games and skiing, respectively, the SAPM noted. He said a high-performance cen-

ties under the program. 12 sports academies would be set tional level. The Prime Minister's Kamyab

tre was being established at NED University Karachi which would work as a movement analysis lab. Usman Dar said Prime Minister Imran Khan had given clear instructions to produce national heroes through this platform who would represent the country in different games at interna-He said PM Imran Khan was keen to empower the country's youth

through gainful employment and meaningful engagement.

Jawan Programme was a flagship initiative of the present government under which six schemes have been launched including Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme, Skills for All, Youth Green Movement, Kamayab Marakiz and others. - APP

Omicron: World needs to calm down

LOBAL markets saw its worst day in more than a year, oil prices tumbled nearly \$10, and countries hastily closed their borders as panic gripped the world in the past two days after the World Health Organisation (WHO) expressed its concern over a newly-discovered coronavirus variant, which it has named 'Omicron'. We still do not know much about Omicron. It was first discovered in South Africa but subsequently moved to other Southern African countries and a few others outside the continent. The WHO said that the new variant "may be more transmissible than other forms" such as the Delta variant, responsible for the massive spike in Covid-19 cases earlier this year. "Preliminary evidence" suggests there is an increased risk of "reinfection", WHO officials said. The news led to fears that Omicron, like Delta, could lead to a surge in infections, eventually resulting in a setback to a world that eagerly hopes to return to normality as cases declined and vaccination succeeded relatively in checking the virus. The panic, seen at the weekend, could also deal a significant blow to the still-fragile global economic recovery.

But is this massive panic attack justified? We are not sure. Two main things lead to the prevailing anxiety. The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell almost 1,000 points, the worst decline in more than 13 months. Omicron could have very well been just a trigger to sell off in a market that has been overpriced for months. The Dow and other indices have for months been ripe for a correction because they have been more than 30 per cent overvalued for a good part of this year. Secondly, the WHO was superfast this time to raise an alarm about the still-unknown variant. Let us not forget that WHO was criticised heavily last year for its slow response to the initial Covid-19 outbreak. The first cases were reported in November 2019 but WHO officials only acknowledged the serious nature of the virus four months later. Determined no to repeat last year's disastrous mistake, WHO seems to want to be ahead of the curve this time. Meanwhile, caution is the key. Not panic. People need to keep their guard up – continue to wear your face mask, avoid as much as possible crowded places and watch out for symptoms. And don't forget your booster shot.

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 02 Issue: 177 Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960 Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad



EU's global gateway

HE EU has announced an international infrastructure plan called "Global Gateway," which aims to mobilise 300 billion in public and private infrastructure investment. As per the details, the plan is said to be global in scope where the EU plans to adapt to the needs and strategic interests of different regions. This initiative is being perceived as a challenge to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) which will stand out because of "high quality, reliable standards and high level of transparency and good governance." The above phrase appears to be more of a marketing rhetoric to set this initiative apart on the basis of abstract values which rarely translate into anything tangible. In essence, this project is an attempt to get a piece of the pie given the growing economic influence of China. We have witnessed other such values-based propositions in recent times by the US and other competitors of Beijing, but those initiatives are primarily driven by parochial security interests as opposed to focusing on the development of regions such as the Indo-Pacific. Not only does China have a head start in this area, but the scale of its ambition and investment remains unmatched. China's spending on the BRI is almost three times as much compared to the Global Gateway clocking in at 1000 billion. Reports suggest that the EU's ambitions will heavily bank

on leveraging private sector spending as well as public investment, while seeking spending from EU member states. It remains to be seen how this initiative takes shape going forward, but at this point in time it is hard to draw any definitive conclusions regarding the extent to which the plan is focused on countering China's rise.

Some policy experts in Europe have warned the EU against making this about competition with China and crowding out Beijing's investments. No one wins from such a zero-sum approach that has been adopted by actors such as the US. The Global Gateway could be an opportunity for countries like Pakistan in the region, provided that it promotes competitive coexistence will all the stakeholders.

The US signals Democracy Summit won't change policy

James Dorsey

Mr. McGurk said that the United States had drawn conclusions from "hard lessons learnt" and was going "back to basics." Basics, Mr. McGurk said, in a nod primarily to Iran but potentially also to Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, entailed dumping "regime change policies"

HE United States has signalled in advance of next week's Summit for Democracy that it is unlikely to translate lip service to adherence to human rights and democratic values in the Middle East into a policy that demonstrates seriousness and commitment. In a statement, the State Department said the December 9-10 summit would "set forth an affirmative agenda for democratic renewal and to tackle the greatest threats faced by democracies today through collective action." e State Department said that in advance of the summit, it had consulted with government experts, multilateral organisations, and civil society "to solicit bold, practicable ideas" on "defending against authoritarianism," "promoting respect for human rights," and fighting corruption.

Of the more than 100 countries alongside civil society and private sector representatives expected to participate in the summit, only Israel is Middle Eastern, and a mere eight are Muslim-majority states. They are Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Albania, Iraq, Kosovo, Niger, and the Maldives. US President Joe Biden has made the competition between democracy and autocracy a pillar of his administration policy and put it at the core of the United States' rivalry with China.

"We're in a contest...with autocrats, autocratic governments around the world, as to whether or not democracies can compete with them in a rapidly changing 21st century," Mr. Biden said. Yet, recent statements by the Pentagon and a White House official suggested that, despite the

lofty words, US Middle East policy is likely to maintain long-standing support for the region's autocratic rule in the belief that it will ensure stability. Popular revolts in the past decade that toppled leaders of Egypt, Tunisia, Yemen, Libya, Algeria, Sudan, Iraq, and Lebanon suggest that putting a lid on the pot was not a solution. That is true even if the achievements of the uprisings were either rolled back by Gulf-supported counter-revolutionary forces or failed to achieve real change.

To be sure, Gulf states have recognized that keeping the pot covered is no longer sufficient. As a result, countries like Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have developed plans and policies that cater to youth aspirations with economic and social reforms while repressing political freedoms. The US appears to be banking on the success of those reforms and regional efforts to manage conflicts so that they don't spin out of control. On that basis, the United States maintains a policy that is a far cry from standing up for human rights and democracy. It is a policy that, in practice, does not differ from Chinese and Russian backing of Middle Eastern autocracy. Continuous US public and private references to human rights and democratic values and occasional baby steps like limiting arms sales do not fundamentally alter things.

Neither does the United States' choice of partners when it comes to responding to popular uprisings and facilitating political transition. In dealing with the revolt in Sudan that in 2019 toppled President Omar al-Bashir and a military coup in October, both the Trump and Biden administration turned to Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Egypt and Israel. While Israel is a democracy, none of the US partners favour democratic solutions to crises of governance. White House Middle East coordinator Brett McGurk signalled this in an interview with The National, the UAE's flagship English-language newspaper, immediately after a security summit in Bahrain that brought together officials from across the globe. US officials led by Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin sought to use the conference to reassure America's allies that the United States was not turning its back on ensuring regional security.

Mr. McGurk said that the United States had drawn conclusions from "hard lessons learnt" and was going "back to basics." Basics, Mr. McGurk said, in a nod primarily to Iran but potentially also to Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, entailed dumping "regime change policies." He said the US would focus on "the basics of building, maintaining, and strengthening our partnerships and alliances" in the Middle East. Mr. McGurk's articulation of a back-to-basics policy was reinforced this week with the publication of a summary of the Pentagon's Global Posture review, suggesting that there would be no significant withdrawal of US forces from the

region in Mr. Biden's initial years in office. The notion of back to basics resonates with liberals in Washington's foreign policy elite. Democracy in the Middle East is no longer part of their agenda. "Instead of using US power to remake the region...policymakers need to embrace the more realistic and realisable goal of establishing and preserving stability," said Council of Foreign Relations Middle East expert Steven A. Cook even before Mr. Biden took office." What Washington needs is not a 'war on terror' built on visions of regime change, democracy promotion, and 'winning hearts and minds' but a realistic approach focused on intelligence gathering, police work, multilateral cooperation and the judicious application of violence when required," he added. Mr. Cook went on to say that a realistic US Middle East policy would involve "containing Iran, retooling the fight against terrorism, to reduce its counterproductive side effects, reorganizing military deployments to emphasize the protection of sea-lanes, and downscaling the US-Israeli relationship to reflect Israel's relative strength." The United States is in good company in its failure to put its money where its mouth is regarding human rights and democratic values.

The Biden administration's reluctance, in line with a long list of past US presidents, to do substantially more than pay lip service to the promotion of human rights and democratic values brings to mind Albert Einstein's definition of insanity as "doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.

President George W. Bush and his then-national security advisor, Condoleezza Rice, acknowledged two decades ago that jihadist violence and the 9/11 attacks were partly the results of the United States' failure to stand up for its values. They bungled, however, their effort to do something about it, as did Barak Obama.

The backlash of failing to heed Mr. Einstein's maxim and recognizing the cost associated with saying one thing and doing another is not just a loss of credibility. The backlash is also the rise of isolationist, authoritarian, xenophobic, racist, and conspiratorial forces that challenge the values in which human rights and democracy are rooted. That raises the question of whether the time, energy, and money invested in the Summit of Democracy could not have been better invested in fixing problems at home. Financial Times columnist Ianan Ganesh nailed it by noting that 'shoring up democracy is almost entirely domestic work." It's a message that has not been lost on democracy's adversaries. In what should have been a warning that hollow declaratory events like the Summit of Democracy are not the answer, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi told last September's United Nations General Assembly: "The United States' hegemonic system has no credibility, inside or outside the country."

Will English Channel tragedy make a difference?

Alistair Burt

Maryam Nuri Hamdamin, for example, was hoping to be reunited with her fiance in Britain. Khazal Ahmed and her children, Mubin, Hadia and Hasti Rezgar, hoped to start a better life in England and to be joined by her policeman husband. Like them, most of those who died appear to be Kurds from Iraq. But the media and conversation in the UK has been sharply polarized. There has been universal horror and sympathy for the loss of life and the circumstances in which it happened, but that is where any agreement ends

HE UK has been both devastated and polarized by last week's tragedy in the English Channel, where at least 27 lives were lost when the dinghy carrying them disintegrated in icv waters. We are devastated because we remember the very public death of baby Alan in 2015 and the photograph of his body on a Turkish beach, which was such a vivid image of the perils facing those who flee across the Mediterranean.

That image put a human face on "the migrant," forcing the world to confront what is not some natural, anonymous phenomenon, but the fate of a person from whom they could not turn away. Similarly, we now know the names of some of the victims who drowned in the Channel last week and something of their lives.

Maryam Nuri Hamdamin, for example, was hoping to be reunited with her fiance in Britain. Khazal Ahmed and her children, Mubin, Hadia and Hasti Rezgar, hoped to start a better life in England and to be joined by her policeman husband. Like them, most of those who died appear to be Kurds from Iraq. But the media and conversation in the UK has been sharply polarized. There has been universal horror and sympathy for the loss of life and the circumstances in which it happened, but that is where any agreement ends.

The human desire to do something to prevent such risk to life at the hands of people-trafficking gangs is reflected in the sharply differing solutions that have been suggested. These range from opening up additional legal routes for immigration to the UK, which would supposedly end the demand for illegal and unsafe routes, to "simple" solutions such as turning boats back at sea, immediately deporting those who arrive back to France, or making arrivals in the UK under such circumstances

illegal, thus denying any possibility of claiming asylum in the future regardless of the legal and humanitarian hurdles that would have to be overcome in pursuing such policies. However, there are more mixed commentaries on the issue than I can recall there being previously, with a greater acknowledgment of the seeming impossibility of being able to address with any success the issues either of migration, which has permeated human history, or of its constant companion, dangerous flight. Our politics does not tolerate "we do not know what to do" as a response for long, but I think that is exactly where destination countries find themselves.

There is an uneasy background to the issue in the UK. There is plenty of evidence of the nation being a welcoming destination for those who come to make their lives here; the anecdotal stories of those seeking a "better life" are not based on a fantasy but on the real experiences of families who are already here and the new lives shared and viewed on millions of phones.

The UK has historically accommodated refugees and asylum seekers but, currently, not as many as some of our European neighbors - and far, far fewer than states that border conflict zones. The number of Channel crossings has been rising sharply, but asylum applications are not at the crisis level experienced 20 years ago.

But facts tend to be swept out of the way in a time of echo chambers and political necessity, wherever you are in the world. In recent years, and today, Europe has witnessed at several border fences crowds of people who have come from countries experiencing a variety of situations, not all of them involving active conflict. These numbers do not appear likely to drop any time soon and, however many are accommodated, if the only bar to be cleared is that a "better life" is available somewhere else, the numbers seeking that will grow exponentially. It is easy to target destination countries and claim that they must do more. In the short and medium terms, some adjustment to legal immigration routes to the UK and the EU would help ease some of the pressure, but it would be a bold advocate who claims that the creation of such routes would solve the issue permanently.

As long as you have a process to which "no" can be an answer, you have a demand for ways to get around that. Both the UK and French political systems fear challenges from the right of the political spectrum should their borders appear to be getting weaker, and are struggling with their bilateral relationship under the pressure created by this issue.

Those who are risking everything not to escape an immediate physical threat but for the promise of "something better" than what they have also tell us much about the states from which they are coming, yet fewer searching questions are being asked of these countries and their leaders. Is there some sense of inevitability about the inadequacy of governance, poor quality of life and lack of opportunities driving away some of the brightest and most determined talent?

Migration is a fact of life and will remain so. Its occasional acute crises will not be solved by exclusive concentration on either end of the chain of movement, but on the legitimate needs and concerns of people on both. Until that is recognized, we will be reading of more human misery

Courtesy: Arab News

Omicron – A Variant of concern

Dr. Nusrat Majeed



The first doctor, Angelique Coetzee, chair South African Medical Association, said that she was first alerted to the possibility of a new variant when patients in her busy clinic in PRETORIA, started to come in early November with covid -19 symptoms that did not make immediate sense

NEW VARIANT WAS REPORTED TO THE W.H.O From South Africa. On 26th November, the W.H.O designated It as a variant of great concern and named it after OMICRON, the Fifteenth Letter In Greek Alphabet-

The variant has 52 mutations. This level of variation has led to the concerns regarding transmissibility, immune system evasion and vaccine resistance. Travel restrictions were imposed by several countries to limit its international spread. There is a global alarm about this highly infectious variant, as the mutations may escape immunity.

How was it detected?

The first doctor, Angelique Coetzee, chair South African Medical Association, said that she was first alerted to the possibility of a new variant when patients in her busy clinic in PRETORIA, started to come in early November with covid -19 symptoms that did not make immediate sense. These were young people of different background with INTENSE FATIGUE, and muscular pain. One of them, a 6 years old boy, reported with a very high pulse rate.

None suffered from a loss of taste or smell. On 18th November, four patients presented with complete exhaustion (tested Covid positive) with normal oxygen saturation, then she informed the country's Vaccine Advisory Committee.

N 24TH NOVEMBER 2021, A About two dozen of her patients turned up, "feeling so tired" they were mostly young, healthy men. Half of them were unvaccinated. She is worried that it could still hit older people with co-morbid conditions like diabetes and underlying heart and lung disease, much harder.

It is the most highly mutated form so far, with 32 mutations on the spike proteins, allowing it to evade existing vaccines and spreads quickly.

It has now been detected in almost every region of the world. In Africa, the number of vaccinated population is only 24 percent. Unvaccinated people act as a reservoir, leading to various mutations. In early November there were cases in Netherlands and Botswana, which went unreported.

Symptoms are atypical or at times a patient may be totally asymptomatic. So, one has to be very careful. Vaccination is a must. People are now talking about Boosters, but it is very important to vaccinate the masses to create herd immunity. Good news for us here in Pakistan is that Sinovac recipients will do well as it is not spike specific.

Severity of disease will depend on number and types of mutations and also the speed of spread. So it is important to observe SOPs. The most important is to build immunity by taking proper diet and exercise like yoga, taking care of adequate levels of vitamin D, B12 and vitamin C.

Briefs

Mob lynches Lankan man; burns corpse

From Page 01 who was a resident of the city - and burnt his body after killing him. Videos shared on social media showed hundreds of men and young boys gathered at the site, with groups of them chanting slogans.

Armagan Gondal, the Sialkot police chief, told the Associated Press that the factory workers had accused the victim desecrating posters bearing the name of Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him). The manager was lynched

by the mob inside the factory, Gondal said, citing initial information. DPO Malik said the victim's remains were sent to a hospital for an autopsy.

Gujranwala RPO Imran Ahmar told reporters that police were carrying out an "in-depth" investigation into the incident, and that details would be shared after collecting complete evidence.

"Action will be taken as per the law against the individuals involved in the incident," he said, adding that it would be premature to comment on the motive before the inves tigation. In a statement issued later in the day, Sialkot police said that officials had begun investigating the lynching.

The statement said that a case had been registered against unidentified people under sections 431 (mischief by injury to public road, bridge, river or channel), 427 (mischief causing damage amounting to Rs50), 149 (unlawful assembly of people), 147 (rioting), 297 (trespassing of burial places), 201 (causing disappearance of evidence of offence, or giving false information to screen offender), 302 (intentional murder) and Section 7 of the Anti-Terrorism Act.

Sialkot incident's...

From Page 01 he added. Pakistan, Ashrafi said that Islam always advocates peace love, fraternity, tolerance brotherhood, and Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him-PBUH) is Rehamat-ul-Lil-Aalameen (benefactor of the entire mankind). Mutahidda Ulama Council, Darul Iftah Pakistan, Interfaith Harmony Council, Ulema and Mashaikh from all schools of thought have strongly condemned this tragic incident. He further said that the main objective of Prime Minister Imran Khan's initiatives like establishment of Re hmat-ul-Lil-aalemeen Authority was to spread the true spirit of Islam and its teachings in the society. He mentioned that Ulema have made very hectic efforts to maintain religious harmony which is evident from the fact that during the last one year, no FIR under blasphemy and desecration of religions laws was registered in Punjab. While, Mutahidda Ulema Council reviewed and resolved 113 such cases in

an amicable manner. "Day of shame"...

From Page 01

will be punished with full severity of the law," he said. The prime minister said that the arrests were already in progress.

Meanwhile, Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa also condemned the incident. "The cold blooded murder of Srilankan Mr Priyantha Kumara by a mob at Sialkot is extremely con demnable and shameful" said the Army Chief. Such extra judicial vigilantism cannot be condoned at any cost. COAS directs all out support to civil administration to arrest perpetrators of this heinous crime and bring them to justice.

The incident took place on Wazirabad Road in Sialkot, where the workers of private factories attacked the export manager of a factory - who was a resident of the city - and burnt his body af-

ter killing him. Videos shared on social media showed hundreds of men and young boys gathered at the site, with groups of them chanting slogans.

UNODC holds workshop for maritime security agencies

The roundtable workshop is being facilitated by an international expert from UNODC's Global Maritime Crime Programme (GMCP)

News Desk

BHURBAN: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) Country Office in Pakistan (CO-PAK) 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 Anti-Narcotics Force (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 region. 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 Pa-

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 to Pakistan - both for domestic consumption and transnational trafficking to rest of the world. He underscored the implementation of countermeasures as envisaged in Pakistan's Anti-Narcotics Policy 2019. In his opening remarks, Mr. Mark Tervakoski, Director

of the U.S. Bureau of In-

ternational Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL), thanked Pakistan for making concerted efforts in curbing the flow of narcotics as the main transit country neighboring Afghanistan. He acknowledged the role played by the ANF and other Pakistani law enforcement agencies. He noted that "there is a need to enhance technical capacity for detecting, deterring and disrupting drug trafficking proactively". He also appreciated the close relationship between Pakistan and the U.S. in their fight against drug proliferation. The roundtable workshop

is being facilitated by an international expert from UNODC's Global Maritime Crime Programme (GMCP). Extensive legal and technical discussions will be held among the ANF, Pakistan Customs, and the PCG, around the existing and emerging challenges of illicit trafficking and smuggling and on forming an integrated response

Shahbaz, Maryam condemn 'horrific'...

From Page 01 discouraged & those responsible be held to account as per law", Shahbaz wrote on Twitter. "It is time we followed our beloved Prophet's (PBUH) message of peace, compassion, love & mercy for all in true letter and spirit!" added Shahbaz.

Meanwhile, Maryam Nawaz also regretted the incident and said that the horrifying incident has broke her heart."The heartbreaking incident in Sialkot has broke my heart. Is this brutality our identity and the future of us and future generations?" Maryam said. "Will this country be considered a safe country? There is no such thing as government. to whom a person asks question?" she added.

Belarus envoy calls on COAS

From Page 01 partnership in Humanitarian measures came under discussion during the meeting. The COAS said that Pakistan values Belarus's role in global and regional affairs and we look forward to enhance our bilateral relationship. Gen Bajwa also emphasized on the urgency for swiftly devising an institutional mechanism for channeling humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan in order to avert a looming humanitarian catastrophe. The visiting dignitary appreciated Pakistan's role in Afghan situation, special efforts for border management, role in regional stability and pledged to play his part for further improvement in diplomatic cooperation with Pa-

Federer must prepare mentally for final match

kistan at all levels.

LONDON: Roger Federer has nothing left to prove as he sets his sights on a comeback next year but the 40-year-old must be mentally prepared for playing his final match, according to one of his former rivals Thomas Berdych. Swiss maestro Federer has not played since losing in the Wimbledon quarter-finals in July and underwent a third knee operation in the summer, saying last month that he was looking at mid-2022 as a likely return date. I

Inevitably, the longer the 20-time Grand Slam champion is away from the Tour the more speculation there will be about his golden career coming to a close.

Long-time top-10 resident Berdych, who retired two years ago aged 34, says Federer will want to come back on his own terms. "He maybe wants to come back on court and maybe make the call and whether he's going to play his last tournament, for his huge fan base around the world, but if he doesn't it's fine," Berdych told Reuters at the Champions Tennis event

in London. - APP Lamine Diack

dies at 88 DAKAR: The former head of global athletics Lamine Diack, who presided over the sport from 1999 to 2015 but was later convicted for corruption, has died aged 88, his family told AFP.

The Senegalese was head

of the International Associa-

tion of Athletics Federations

(IAAF), now renamed World Athletics, the world governing body of track and field, the cornerstone of Olympic sport. Diack, who was also a powerful figure at the International Olympic Committee (IOC), was found guilty of corruption by a French court in 2020 for covering up Russian doping cases in exchange for millions of dollars of bribes. He was sentenced to four years in prison, of which two were suspended, and fined 500,000 euros (\$560,000). The trial in Paris heard that the money was paid in return for "full protection", to allow Russian athletes who

Twenty-three Russian athletes had their doping offences hushed up so they could compete at the 2012 London Olympics and 2013 world championships in Moscow. Because of his age, Diack, a former long jumper, football coach and then businessman and politician who was decorated in the Kremlin in late 2011,

was spared jail. - APP

Sri Lanka beat WI by 164 runs in second Test



SPORTS DESK

GALLE(SRI LANKA): Spinners Lasith Embuldeniya and Ramesh Mendis took all 10 wickets as Sri Lanka demolished the West Indies to win the second Test in Galle on Friday with a session to spare.Chasing an improbable target of 297 to secure their maiden Test win on the island, the visitors lost only two wickets in the first session and looked determined to save the Test match. But in a sen-

sational collapse, they lost eight wickets for 40 runs after lunch to leave them all out for 132 and hand the hosts a 164-run victory. Not a single batsman managed a half-century in the second innings with Nkrumah Bonner's 44 being the highest. Off-spinner Ramesh Mendis triggered the collapse when he claimed three wickets in an over in the afternoon session.

He started off by breaking the 27-run third wicket partnership between Nkrumah Bonner and Shai

Hope when Hope clipped one straight to Suranga Lakmal at square leg. Then Roston Chase was superbly caught by Osada Fernando at short leg. Kyle Mayers survived the hat-trick ball but four balls later edged one to Dhananjaya de Silva at first slip.

It was a first 10 wicket Test for Mendis after he claimed career-best figures of six for 70 in the first innings. He has been the main tormentor for West Indies with 18 wickets in the series. Playing just his fourth Test

dis has been a real find for Sri Lanka, bowling long spells and becoming his captain's most trusted bowler. "One thing Ramesh does is he spins the ball really big," said outgoing Sri Lanka head coach Mickey Arthur after he signed off with a win. "We've just had to work on him being really consistent with his lines and with his lengths — the attacking lines that he's worked on. I just think he's getting his just rewards now. Mendis finished with a match bag of 11 wickets and

was named Player of the Series, while Dhananjaya de Silva - who hit an unbeaten 155 in Sri Lanka's second innings - was declared the Man of the Match. Mendis was well supported by leftarm orthodox spinner Lasith Embuldeniya, who also finished with a five wicket haul in the second innings his fifth in Test cricket. Embuldeniva dismissed Jermaine Blackwood in the last

over before lunch and then came back to polish off the tail as West Indies' troubles with spin continued. Sri Lanka retained the Sobers-Tissera Trophy and moved up to seventh in the ICC Test rankings, with West Indies slipping to eighth.

Shaheen wishes to captain Qalandars in PSL 07

SPORTS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's fast bowler Shaheen Shah Afridi said on Friday that he is looking forward to captaining Lahore Qalandars in the Pakistan Super League (PSL) if given the opportunity. He lauded the management of Lahore Qalandars during a virtual press conference, hailing it as "exceptionally good." "It's thrilling to perform for the Lahore Qalandars, I've been playing with them for a number of years," he said. Meanwhile, explaining the bowling challenges in Bangladesh he said that it is difficult to bowl on a slow pitch. The lanky left-arm pacer noted, "Bowling is good if the bowler is aggressive and strong.

While speaking about attacking batters with bowling partner Hasan Ali, who is also in spectacular form these days, Afridi remarked that Hasan Ali is a fighter, and it feels great to bowl alongside him. He said that he would work hard in the second Test against Bangladesh and win the series. "When the captain gives the hall I strive to perform well and win for the team. I try to give my 100% by bowling strongly," Afridi stated. He added that if a player fails in a match, he should not be deemed a failure, noting that Test cricket is tough. Pakistan cricket team is busy preparing to vanquish Bangladesh in the second Test match of the two-match series starting tomorrow [Saturday] and complete another whitewash over the hosts.



Bhatta to lead Pak in Asian CT

ey team in the Asian Champions Trophy to be played from December 14 to 22 in Dhaka, Bangladesh. The PHF while announcing the team said Bhatta would lead the team while Ali Shan will be his deputy, said a press release issued here. The 20-member squad includes Goalkeepers: Waqar (Wapda), Abdullah Ishtiaq (Mari Petroleum), Fullbacks: Mubashir Ali (Wapda), Ammad Shakeel Butt (NBP), Tazeem ul Hassan (Mari Petroleum), Muhammad Abdullah (Mari Petroleum), Aqeel Ahmed (Mari Petroleum) Halfbacks: Abu Bakar Mahmood (NBP), Moin Shakeel (Wapda), Hamad-ud-Din Anjum (Wapda), Ghazanfar Ali (Mari Petroleum, Azfar Yaqoob (SSG) Forwards: Omar Bhatta (Wapda), Ali Shan (Sui) Southern Gas), Ejaz Ahmed (Wapda), Rana Waheed (Wapda), Junaid Manzoor (NBP), Afraz (Mari Petroleum), Ahmed Nadeem (Mari Petroleum) and M Salman Razzaq (Wapda). The head coach of the team would be Olympian Khawaja Junaid while coaches include Olympian Syed Sameer Hussain (PAF), Ajmal Khan Lodhi (Sialkot), Video Analyst Nadeem Khan Lodhi (Sialkot) and team doctor will be Dr Syed Asad Abbas. - DNA

Ronaldo's 800th goal begins Man Utd revival

News Desk

MANCHESTER: Michael Carrick exited Manchester United with a win as Cristiano Ronaldo surpassed 800 goals for club and country with a double to see off Arsenal 3-2 on Thursday. Carrick was taking charge for the final time as caretaker manager with new interim boss Ralf Rangnick watching from the stands and announced after the match he will leave the club rather than return to his

Russia sweep past Sweden to reach Davis Cup semis we're winning a lot of match-

SPORTS DESK

MADRID: World number two and US Open champion Daniil Medvedev led Russia past Sweden and into a second successive Davis Cup semi-final on Thursday. Medvedev defeated world number 94 Mikael Ymer 6-4, 6-4 to secure the crucial winning point. Russia will on Saturday face Germany for a place in Sun-

day's final with Novak Djokovic's Serbia meeting neighbours Croatia in the other semi-final on Friday. "Madrid feels like home, es," said Medvedev.

"It was a great boost of confidence to beat the home team (Spain, in the group stage). We are winning a lot of matches, we didn't lose a tie in the group.

'Saturday's going to be my first semi-final, so I'm really looking forward to it." Earlier, fifth-ranked Andrev Rublev had battled

back to defeat 171stranked Elias Ymer, the older brother of Mikael Ymer, 6-2, 5-7, 7-6 (7/3). "There's a lot of pressure when you know that you have to win and your opponent has nothing to lose," said Rublev. "They go for it, they go for

their shots and play without fear and in my case I know I have to win so you start to play less aggressive and you start to miss a bit more." He added: "Today was a super tough match. I didn't manage to finish the match when I had a really great chance. "I missed some easy balls and that brings him back to the game and since that moment he raised his level. He started to feel confident and he started to play much better and then it was 7-6 in the third.

PSL 7: PCB announces tournament schedule

SPORTS DESK ISLAMABAD: The count-

down to the Pakistan Cricket Board's marquee event - the Pakistan Super League 2022 - began today when the schedule of the seventh edition of one of the most popular and competitive cricket leagues was announced. Following an opening ceremony, defending champions Multan Sultans will take on hosts and 2020 champions Karachi Kings on Thursday, January 27, 2022, at the National Stadium with the first ball to be bowled at 7pm PKT. 2019 champions Quetta Gladiators will go toe to

toe with 2017 winners

Peshawar Zalmi on the following day on Friday, January 28.

In the first of the six double-headers to be played in the 32-day and 34-match tournament, Multan Sultans will take on 2020 runners-up Lahore Qalandars at 2pm PKT, which will be followed by the Karachi Kings and Quetta Gladiators' fixture that will begin at 7pm PKT on Saturday. Two-time champions Is-

lamabad will be in action on Sunday afternoon when they will lock horns with Peshawar Zalmi, with the evening match to be played between arch-rivals Karachi Kings and Lahore Qalandars. After Karachi, which will host 15 matches from 27

action will shift to the Gaddafi Stadium where the remaining 15 league matches and the four playoffs will be played from 10-27 February. The 27 February final will

be the first time since 2017 when the headquarters of Pakistan cricket will hold the final. National Stadium had staged the finals from 2018 to 2020, while Abu Dhabi was the venue for the 2021 final where Sultans defeated Zalmi by 47 runs.

The PCB has designed the 2022 tournament in such a way that each side will play equal number of matches in Karachi and Lahore, as well as games under natural and artificial lights.

The schedule: Matches from 27 Jan-7 Feb to be played at the National Stadium, Karachi; matches from 10-27 Feb to be played at the Gaddafi Stadium)

27 Jan - Karachi Kings vs Multan Sultans 28 Jan - Quetta Gladiators vs Peshawar Zalmi 29 Jan - Multan Sultans vs Lahore Qalandars; Karachi Kings vs Quetta Gladiators 30 Ian - Peshawar Zalmi vs Islamabad United; Karachi Kings vs Lahore Qalandars 31 Jan - Quetta Gladiators vs Multan Sultans 1 Feb - Islamabad United vs Multan Sultans

2 Feb - Peshawar Zalmi vs Lahore Qalandars 3 Feb - Quetta Gladiators vs Islamabad United 4 Feb - Karachi Kings vs Peshawar Zalmi 5 Feb - Islamabad United vs Lahore Qaland-

ars; Peshawar Zalmi vs Multan Sultans 6 Feb - Karachi Kings vs Islamabad United 7 Feb - Quetta Gladiators vs Lahore Qalandars 10 Feb- Multan Sultans vs Peshawar Zalmi 11 Feb - Lahore Qalandars vs Multan Sultans 12 Feb - Islamabad United vs Quetta Gladiators 13 Feb - Peshawar Zalmi vs Karachi Kings; Lahore Qalandars vs Quetta Gladiators

14 Feb - Islamabad United vs Karachi Kings 15 Feb - Peshawar Zalmi vs Quetta Gladiators 16 Feb - Multan Sultans vs Karachi Kings 17 Feb - Islamabad United vs Peshawar Zalmi 18 Feb - Multan Sultans vs Quetta Gladia tors; Lahore Qalandars vs Karachi Kings 19 Feb - Lahore Qalandars vs Islamabad United 20 Feb - Quetta Gladiators vs Karachi Kings; Multan Sultans vs Islamabad United 21 Feb - Lahore Qalandars vs Peshawar Zalmi 23 Feb - Qualifier (1 vs 2) 24 Feb - Eliminator 1 (3 vs 4)

Winner Eliminator 1) 27 Feb - (Qualifier v Eliminator 2) Final Match timings: Friday's double-headers - 3pm & 8pm Other than Friday's

double-headers - 2pm & 7pm

All single-headers - 7pm.

should have been banned to escape punishment. 25 Feb - Eliminator 2 (Loser Qualifier 1 vs

Business / World



Briefs

South Africa sees spike in child infections

News Desk

JOHANNESBURG: Doctors in South Africa said Friday there had been a spike in hospitalisations among young children after Omicron swept through the country but stressed it was early to know if they were particularly susceptible.

In the week since South Africa alerted the world of the new Covid variant, infections have spread faster than in the country's three previous waves.

The first cluster of cases centred around university students, and then spread quickly among young people who seem to have spread it to older people.

But scientists and health officials said they had seen increasing hospital admissions in children under five, along with higher positivity rates among children aged 10-14.

Wassila Jassat, from the National Institute for Communicable Diseases, said: "We've seen quite a sharp increase across all age groups, particularly in the under fives," referring to hospitalisations.

Azerbaijan, Romania boost trade

DNA

F.C.

BAKU: The trade turnover between Azerbaijan and Romania increased by 52.21 percent in January-October

Azerbaijani Labor and Social

Protection Minister Sahil Babayev made the remarks during the meeting with newly-appointed Romanian ambassador Vasile Soare. The minister stressed that

the Azerbaijani and Romanian presidents' mutual visits and the cooperation documents signed facilitated the development of bilateral re-Babayev stated that during

60 documents on cooperation were signed between Azerbaijan and Romania. He added that bilateral ties are expanding on the basis of strategic partnership.

The parties noted the suc-

cessful activity of Romanian companies in Azerbaiian. They also discussed the activities of the joint Azerbaijani-Romanian commission on trade-economic ties and scientific-technical cooperation. Speaking about Azerbaijan's victory in the Second Karabakh War and the liberation of its territories, the minister noted that large-scale

carried out there. In turn, the ambassador emphasized that Romania is interested in expanding relations with Azerbaijan. He was informed about the social reforms carried out in

the country.

construction work is being

Italian premier seeks EU support

ROME: Italian Prime Minister Mario Draghi said on Friday that Europe should pay more attention to the issue of irregular migration. Speaking at the Mediterranean Dialogues forum in Rome, Draghi said over 63,000 irregular migrants arrived in Italy this year, six times the number in 2019. Stressing that Italy cannot control migration flows alone, he said more participation from all European countries is required in

this matter. The country will continue to support European progress towards collective problem management that strikes a balance between responsibility and solidarity, he said.

On the Libyan crisis, he said Italy supports the reconciliation and transition process in the North African country. He said the forthcoming elections in Libya are of "vital importance for both the Libyans and the democratic future of the country.

Italy's Foreign Minister Luigi Di Maio said the stabilization of Libya is their priority, adding that Libya's leading figures should work to ensure free, fair, inclusive, and reliable elections on Dec. 24. - APP

Armenia fails to honor pledges under ceasefire deal: Bayramov

"Azerbaijan has repeatedly stated its readiness for this and has taken a number of unilateral practical steps in this regard immediately after the end of the conflict. Armenia has not yet responded"

News Desk

STOCKHOLM: Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov has said that Armenia fails to honor its commitments under the trilateral ceasefire deal signed by Azerbaijan, Russia and Armenia on November 10, 2020, the ministry has reported. Bayramov made the remarks at the 28th meeting of the OSCE Ministerial Council held in Stockholm, Sweden. Addressing the meeting, Bayramov spoke about the current situation and future prospects of the post-conflict realities in the region following the 44-day war with Armenia in 2020.

"It is a matter of serious concern that Armenia continues to violate its obligations under the trilateral statements. Armenia must fulfill the trilateral statement of November 10, 2020, and completely withdraw its armed forces from the territory of Azerbaijan," Bayramov stressed. He underlined that the end of the conflict created a unique opportunity for both Armenia and Azerbaijan to move forward on the basis of mutual recognition and respect for each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of international borders.

"Azerbaijan has repeatedly stated its readiness for this and has taken a number of unilateral practical steps in this regard immediately after the end of the conflict. Armenia has not yet responded," Bayramov added. He said that Azerbaijan began active large-

Kerb currency market

KARACHI: Following were the Opening Rates of foreign

currencies in kerb market issued by the Forex Association

U.S \$ (Cash Free Market).. 178.00 178.50

SAUDIA RIYAL......46.80......47.30

UAE DIRHAM 49.00 50.00

EURO 198.50 201.00

UK POUND233.50236.00

JAPANI YEN 1.53438 1.55438

NOK......19.07......19.17

CAD \$ 136.50 138.00



scale construction on the liberated territories after the conflict, which lasted for almost 30 years.

Traces of the occupation are being removed and steps are being taken to return to normal life, Bayramov underlined.

He stated that Armenia has not yet provided full and accurate maps of all mined areas, which slows down the post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction in the liberated lands and seriously hinders the safe and dignified return of IDPs to their homes.

Bayramov stressed that since the signing

of the trilateral statement on November 10,

2020, 180 Azerbaijani citizens, including 71 civilians, as well as journalists and other media workers, have been killed or seriously wounded in mine explosions.

"Additional pressure should be put on Armenia to provide accurate maps of all mined areas in line with its obligations under international humanitarian law," the minister emphasized. Armenia has also failed to fulfill its com-

mitments to locate some 4,000 Azerbaijanis who went missing during military operations in the early 1990s, which is important for healing the wounds of the past conflict, he added.

Bayramov noted that the 28th meeting of the OSCE Foreign Ministers coincides with the first anniversary of the trilateral statement, which defined the parameters for the establishment of lasting peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan. This statement was completed by a trilateral statement signed on January 11, 2021, on unblocking the regional transport communications, he added. He stressed that delays in restoring the economic and transport links in the region must end.

The minister described the restoration of transport communications as confidence-building and post-conflict normalization measures, which will provide broad economic benefits to all stakeholders.

"The soon-to-be-launched Zangazur corridor will serve peace and cooperation in the region and create unprecedented new opportunities for all regional countries," Bavramov said.

The minister underlined that Azerbaijan has restored justice and order by liberating its territories from Armenian occupation that violated international law for three decades. He added that for the first time during the past 30 years opportunities have emerged to achieve peace between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Bayramov labeled the Sochi meeting of the Azerbaijani, Russian and Armenian leaders on November 26 as an important step forward in this regard.

Lebanon minister resigns to ease crisis with Gulf

BEIRUT: The Lebanese minister whose remarks on the Saudi intervention in Yemen's war sparked a row with Gulf countries that exacerbated Lebanon's multiple crises resigned Friday in hopes it would help end the standoff.

Georges Kordahi, speaking during a press conference, said he hoped this decision "could open a window... towards improved bilateral ties" with Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies."The timing is right because I am offering something that could provide Lebanon with an exit" from the crisis, the former information minister said.

Kordahi's resignation has been on the table for weeks and is expected to help end a political and diplomatic quandary that has crippled Lebanon's fledgling cabinet since October.

His announcement coincided with a visit to the Gulf by French President Emmanuel Macron, who has spearheaded international efforts to help Lebanon out of its worst ever economic downturn.Kordahi said the resignation, which he had initially ruled out, became inevitable earlier this week when he met Prime Minis-

ter Najib Mikati. "I understood from Prime Minister Najib Mikati... that the French want my resignation before Macron's visit to Riyadh because it could maybe help them start a dialogue with Saudi officials over Lebanon and the future of bilateral ties," Kordahi told reporters. - Agencies

Australia reports first Omicron cases

SYDNEY: Australia on Friday reported three students at a Sydney school have tested positive for the Covid-19 Omicron variant, the country's first cases of community transmission of the new strain. Health officials said there were 10 additional suspected Omicron cases at the school that are urgently being confirmed, raising the spectre of widespread infection. The cluster comes despite a ban on non-citizens entering the country and restrictions on flights from southern Africa, where the variant was first detected. New South Wales Health said the first case had "no overseas travel history or links to people with overseas travel history" raising

Australia had previously detected several other Omicron cases, but all were found in incoming travellers who quarantined. The entire staff and stu-

the alarm.

dent body at Regents Park Christian School in the west of Sydney have been asked to get tested and isolate.Australia currently records around 2,000 Covid cases a day. For much of the pandemic, the virus' spread had been limited by two years of border closures, lockdowns, aggressive testing and tracing as well as local travel bans.Authorities have expressed confidence that with 87 percent of people over 16 years old vaccinated, the country is well placed to deal with the new variant. – APP

sanctions against Belarus of Pakistan (FAP), here on Friday. - APP Low Rate High Rate

FOREIGN DESK

BRUSSELS: The European Union imposed a new round of sanctions against Belarus on Thursday, targeting among others its national airline and tourism companies in response to the migration crisis at the bloc's borders with the country.

The Council of the EU decided to add 17 individuals and 11 entities to the bloc's blacklist over human rights violations, the EU institutions representing member states announced in a statement.

The fifth round of sanctions target "high-ranking political officials of the Lukashenko regime as well as companies (such as Belavia Airtour operators and hotels that have helped incite and organize illegal border crossings through Belarus to the EU and in this way par-

ticipated in the instrumentalization of migration for political purposes,' the statement said.

European Union imposes new

Prominent members of the judiciary and state-run propaganda outlets were also blacklisted for their contribution to "the repression of civil society, democratic opposition, independent media outlets and journalists," the document said.

The update brings the number of individuals targeted by an asset freeze and travel ban to 183.

In addition, the bloc forbids EU operators to make funds available for a total of 26 Belarusian entities. EU countries bordering Belarus

-- Lithuania, Latvia and Poland -have reported a dramatically growing number of irregular crossings

Over 8,000 people have tried to enter the bloc via the Belarus-EU border so far this year, up sharply from tries through non-military means.

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko of taking revenge against EU sanctions imposed on his regime over human rights violations related to a crackdown on protests against last years' rigged presidential elections and the diversion in June of a Ryanair flight to the capital Minsk and the deten-

The European Union

Pratasevich. According to the EU, the Belarusian regime reached out to potential travelers via seemingly official channels and invited them to Belarus by offering visas and guiding them to the EU border.

tion of Belarusian journalist Raman

NATO and the EU consider Belarus' attack meant to destabilize and undermine security in European coun-

NSA Moeed Yusuf calls on Kazakh President aide

DNA

NUR-SULTAN, KAZINFORM - Assistant to the Kazakh President - Security Council Secretary Asset Issekeshev held a meeting with Pakistani Prime Minister's National Security Advisor Moeed Yusuf, Kazinform cites Akorda. The meeting was also attended by Presidential special representative for international cooperation Yerzhan

The sides exchanged the views on the current issues of regional and global security, current risks in Central and South Asia, prospects for cooperation within international organizations, including peacekeeping. In addition, the issues of bilateral co-

operation in the military and technical sphere, combating drug trafficking, illegal migration, and so on. Various scenario cases of the Afghan situation were also discussed. Issekeshev informed that according to the task of Kazakh President Tokayev humanitarian assistance of five thousand tons



of flour was provided to Afghanistan. During the visit Moeed Yusuf was presented with the areas of digitalization of e-government, telecommunications, educational technology, and other sectors at the Digital Government Office. In conclusion, the sides expressed their commitment to step up cooperation in a wider range of issues to pro-

UNGA urged to investigate Yemen atrocities

AGENCIES

NEW YORK: More than 60 organizations urged the U.N. General Assembly on Thursday to establish an investigative body to gather and preserve evidence of serious human rights violations during Yemen's seven-vear conflict, including possible war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The organizations, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, said the matter is urgent, particularly after the U.N. Human Rights Council voted in October to shut down its investigation into atrocities in Yemen. The Group of Eminent Experts had reported that potential war crimes have been committed by all sides. The Gene-

va-based council's vote was a stinging defeat for Western nations and a victory for Russia, China, Bahrain and other countries.

Yemen has been convulsed by civil war since 2014, when Iran-backed Houthi rebels took control of the capital, Sanaa, and much of the northern part of the country. That forced the internationally recognized government to flee to the south, then to Saudi Arabia. A Saudi-led coalition entered the war in March 2015, backed by the United States, to try to restore President Abed Rabbo Mansour Hadi to power. Despite a relentless air campaign and ground fighting, the war has deteriorated largely into a stalemate and has spawned the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

Russian offensive possible in January

Oleksii Reznikov said Ukraine would not do anything to provoke the situation but was ready to fight back if Russia launched an attack. He said Ukraine was pressing ahead with the construction of two naval bases on its south coast

Foreign Desk

KYIV: Russia has massed more than 94,000 troops near Ukraine's borders and may be gearing up for a large-scale military offensive at the end of January, Ukraine's defence minister told parliament on Friday, citing intelligence

Oleksii Reznikov said Ukraine would not do anything to provoke the situation but was ready to fight back if Russia launched an attack. He said Ukraine was pressing ahead with the construction of two naval bases on its south coast.

"Our intelligence analyses all scenarios, including the worst," Reznikov said. "It notes that the likelihood of a large-scale escalation from Russia exists. The most likely time to reach readiness for an escalation will be the end of January.

Ukraine and its NATO allies have sounded the alarm about Russian troop movements near Ukraine's borders this year, sparking worries that a simmering conflict in eastern Ukraine

could erupt into open war. Moscow has in turn accused Ukraine and the United States of destabilising behaviour and suggested that Kyiv might be preparing to

launch its own offensive in eastern Ukraine, which the Ukrainian authorities strongly deny. The deputy speaker of Russia's upper house of parliament denied Moscow was planning any offensive operation in eastern Ukraine and said Moscow would do all it could to prevent a major escalation in the region, the Interfax news agency reported.

Kremlin's foreign policy adviser Yury Ushakov was also dismissive. "It's nonsense, there is no any escalation. We have the rights to move the troops on our territory," he told reporters. Ukraine has pressed its European Union and

NATO allies this week to prepare a tough package of sanctions to ward off a Russia offensive. Reznikov said Ukraine was pressing ahead with building the naval bases as part of a defence deal with Britain. One base will be located in Ochakiv, to the west of the Crimea peninsula annexed by Russia in 2014, and the other in Berdvansk to the east of Crimea.

"Among the priorities are the missile programme and the development of the fleet," Reznikov told parliament. "We are moving on to the practical stage of building two military bases - in Berdyansk and Ochakiv - and other contracts within the framework of agreements with the United Kingdom.'

Norway calls on NATO to stay away from its border

OSLO: Norway, a NATO member, has called on the US-led military alliance to stay away from its border area near Russia, saying the country's own armed forces will take care of the strategic region. Norwegian Foreign Minister Anniken Huitfeldt said on Friday that Oslo wanted the planes and vessels from NATO allied countries to keep some distance from the country's northernmost areas. "It is important for Norway to be militarily present in our immediate surroundings. But very close to the Russian border, we believe that we do it best ourselves, with Norwegian planes and Norwegian frigates. It is fundamental for us," she told Norwegian newspaper Verdens Gang.

Huitfeldt said that she sought dialog with the United States and Britain about the presence of their vessels and aircraft in the border area. "It is in Norway's interest to take care of these areas on its own, with the Norwegian defense," she added. Norwegian analyst Tormod Heier also said that NATO military presence near the Norwegian-Russian border area did not necessarily increase the nation's security. "Norway is becoming more exposed. At the same time, it is fully dependent on American assistance in case of a crisis situation," he told Norwegian news outlet High North News. "The USA considers Russia a strategic competitor. Norway does not consider Russia a strategic competitor, but rather as a legitimate and natural cooperation partner in the same area in which the Americans want to deter Russia," he said. "This means that Norwegian and American interests

don't always coincide." - APP

Malaysia reports 5,806 Covid cases

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia reported another 5,806 new COVID-19 infections, as of midnight Thursday, bringing the national total to 2,644,027, according to the health ministry.

Some 11 of the new cases are imported, with 5,795 being local transmissions, data released on the ministry's website showed.

Another 47 more deaths have been reported, bringing the death toll to 30,521. About 7.246 patients have been released after recovery, bringing the total number of cured and discharged to 2,551,253.

There are some 62,253 active cases, 511 are being held in intensive care and 266 of them are in need of assisted breathing.

country reported 150,357 vaccine doses administered on Thursday alone, and some 79.2 percent of the population have received at least one dose and 77.8 percent are fully vaccinated. - APP







Share

prices further plunge by

400 points

KARACHI, The share prices at Pakistan Stock Ex-

change in Karachi plunged further on Friday as the

trading began on last business day of the week.The

KSE-100 index was down

Stock Exchange (PSX)

wilted massively when the

benchmark KSE-100 index

crashed by more than 2,100

points. In just one day, the

KSE-100 index dropped by

about four percent as it

could not retain the level of

44,000 and plummeted to 43,211. – **APP**

ECP finalizes

arrangements

for NA-133

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Election

Commission of Pakistan

(ECP) on Friday finalized

arrangements for holding

by-elections on the vacant

National Assembly seat NA

133, Lahore on December 5

in an impartial atmosphere.

According to details, a con-

trol room has been estab-

lished in the office of Re-

turning officer, which would

continue working right from

the start of polling process

Deputy Commissioner and

officers of Police and Rang-

ers would remain present

to deal with any untoward

ECP has also established a

separate control rooms at

provincial and central lev-

els to register and resolve

complaints. The control

room would continue work-

ing from 7 am morning

till compilation of results

on polling day. Provincial

control room, Lahore: 042

99212209; 042 99212620;

Fax: 042 99212209; Email:

incident.

till compilation of results.

by 401 points at 42,832. On Thursday, the Pakistan

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 04, 2021 | WWW.ISLAMABADPOST.COM.PK

Briefs

NAB arrests Agha Siraj from outside SC

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Sindh Assembly Speaker Agha Siraj Durrani was arrested from outside the Supreme Court after the apex court had earlier ordered him to surrender before the National Accountability Bureau (NAB). The orders were given during a hearing of the provincial assembly speaker's plea seeking bail in an assets beyond means case.

A three-member bench, headed by Justice Umar Ata Bandial, was hearing the plea. During the hearing, Justice Mansoor Ali Shah observed that the Sindh High Court rejected Durrani's bail plea on the basis of merit.

"Supreme Court cannot conduct a hearing on this plea without the high court's verdict," he remarked.

"You should have been in jail if the Sindh High Court rejected your bail plea," Justice Sajjad Ali Shah said while addressing Durrani. "Why should the court offer you leniency when you didn't surrender to the police?" he asked.

The apex court ordered Durrani to turn himself in, saying: "First comply with the SHC's order and surrender before NAB and then [the court] will conduct a hearing on this case next week." Meanwhile, the SC also rejected Durrani's request to restrict NAB officials from arresting him from the courtroom

Kremlin says Putin-Biden video next week

WEB DESK

MOSCOW:The Kremlin said Friday that a video call would take place next week between Russian President Vladimir Putin and US counterpart Joe Biden, amid tensions over the conflict in Ukraine.

Kremlin foreign policy adviser Yuri Ushakov told reporters a date had been agreed but would not be announced until final details of the talks have also been agreed.

"We are close to an agreement on a time that will suit everyone," he said, specifying the conversation would take place following Putin's visit to India Monday

Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov earlier told reporters the leaders would talk over "video conference".

Ushakov said the two leaders would discuss "unsatisfactory" bilateral relations as well as "Afghanistan, Iran, Libya, the Ukraine crisis and dialogue on strategic stability".

Omicron spreads in US, Australia

MONITORING DESK

WASHINGTON: The United States and Australia announced their first locally transmitted cases of the Omicron variant as authorities worldwide rushed on Friday to stem the spread of the heavily mutated Covid-19 strain.

The World Health Organization has warned it could take weeks to determine whether Omicron is more transmissible and whether it causes more severe infections - as well as how effective current treatments and vaccines are against it.

The WHO said Friday it had still not seen any reports of deaths related to Omicron, but the new variant, present in more than two dozen countries, has cast recovery into doubt and led to warnings that it could cause more than half of Europe's Covid cases in the next few

A preliminary study by researchers in South Africa, where the new variant was first reported on November 24, suggests the strain is three times more likely to cause reinfections compared to the Delta or Beta strains.

Pakistan reiterates pledge to implement 27 EU conventions

The Pakistan-EU Political Dialogue covered broad range of subjects relating to bilateral relations including the comprehensive implementation of Pakistan-EU Strategic Engagement Plan (SEP)

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The 7th Round of Pakistan-EU Political Dialogue was held on Friday in virtual format. Foreign Secretary Sohail Mahmood led the Pakistan side while Mr. Enrique Mora, Deputy Secretary General of the European External Action Service (EEAS), headed the EU delegation. The Dialogue covered broad range of subjects relating to bilateral relations including the comprehensive implementation of Pakistan-EU Strategic Engagement Plan (SEP), and regional and international developments. Underscoring the commonality of views, the Foreign Secretary stated that EU was a traditional friend and a major political, economic and trade partner of Pakistan. He expressed satisfaction over the positive trajectory of bilateral relations and reiterated Pakistan's resolve to further deepen cooperation with the EU in diverse areas. Highlighting that GSP Plus was a mutually-beneficial undertaking, the Foreign Sec-

retary reiterated Pakistan's commitment to implement the 27 International Conventions covered under the preferential trade scheme. The Foreign Secretary also conveyed Pakistan's position on the new legislative proposals of the European Commission relating to the GSP Plus.

Deputy Secretary General Mora appreciated continued Pakistan-EU engagements, including holding of various dialogues despite challenges of Covid-19 Pandemic. He also stressed the importance of structured Dialogue on migration and hoped that the engagements envisaged under the Strategic Engagement Plan will commence as the Covid-19 situation improves. Mr. Mora informed that he looked forward to the visit of Foreign Minister Qureshi to Brussels for the next round of Strategic Dialogue. He appreciated Pakistan's facilitation in evacuation efforts from Afghanistan for the international community. Both sides stressed the importance of their continued high-level exchanges with regard to the situation in Afghanistan.

The Foreign Secretary shared Pakistan's perspective on Afghanistan in detail. He emphasized the importance of pragmatic approach and positive engagement of the international community with Afghanistan. He also stressed the need for urgent measures to prevent humanitarian crisis and economic collapse in Afghanistan. In this context, he also underscored stressed the importance of releasing Afghanistan's frozen financial assets. The Foreign Secretary appreciated the EU's pragmatic approach of remaining engaged with the Interim Afghan Government and reiterated Pakistan's support to the EU in its engagement with Afghanistan as well as measures to ease the humanitarian situation. The Foreign Secretary also apprised the Deputy Secretary General of Pakistan's international and regional diplomatic outreach on Afghanistan, with particular reference to the six neighbouring countries of Afghanistan and Troika Plus. He affirmed Pakistan's support for EU engagement with relevant mechanisms.

The Foreign Secretary further apprised his

counterpart of the dire human rights and humanitarian situation in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). He underscored that the unabated human rights violations and denial of right to self-determination to the Kashmiri people were major obstacles in relations between Pakistan and India. India must, therefore, undo its illegal and unilateral actions of 5 August 2019 and create an enabling environment for any meaningful engagement. Pakistan and the EU enjoy cordial relations,

underpinned by close bilateral cooperation and commonality of views and regional and global issues including multilateralism, free trade, fight against terrorism, and climate action. The two sides are closely engaged through high-level interactions and increasing collaboration on matters of common interest under the framework of Pakistan-EU Strategic Engagement Plan.

The Foreign Secretary extended invitation to Deputy Secretary General Mora to undertake a visit to Pakistan at his earliest

At least 17 Omicron cases after Oslo party

AGENCIES

OSLO: At least 17 people who caught Covid-19 after a Christmas party with more than 100 guests in Oslo last week are suspected of having the Omicron variant, officials said Friday.

The number is likely to grow as sequencing is carried out on other positive

"So far, 60 people have test-

The Oslo cluster comes as fears rise that Omicron, which South Africa reported to the World Health Organization on November 24, could be more transmissible and more resistant to vaccines than other

ple - all of whom were vaccinated, including one who had recently travelled to southern Africa - had gathered on November 26 for a Christmas party organised by their employer.

"All of them had been vaccinated, none of them had symptoms and they had all done self-tests" before attending the dinner, city health official Tine Ravlo

tests from partygoers.

ed positive (for Covid) with PCR tests, and four with antigen tests," the city of Oslo said in a statement.

"Seventeen are probably Omicron, but that has yet to be confirmed. So far, one case is confirmed to be OmiBetween 100 and 120 peo-

prcpunjabcontrolroom@ gmail.com. The Central control room could be contacted on phone 051-9204402; Fax no 051-9204404 for registering complaints. The complaints could also be registered

> ingisb@gmail.com The ECP has established 254 polling stations and assigned security duties to police, rangers and law en-

through Email: ddmonitor-

forcement agencies. ECP has directed presiding officers to keep their location services on, take picture of form 45 and Whatsapp it to returning officer by taking poling agent on board. In case of non availability of internet, the presiding officer should personally hand over the original form 45 to presiding officer by personally visiting

Merkel receives military honors

MUNICH: At a ceremony torchlight, the Bundeswehr, Germany's federal armed

his office.

forces, said goodbye to Chancellor Angela Merkel. The military

tattoo has become the unofficial farewell ceremony for defense ministers, presidents and chancellors. In a short, earnest speech on Thursday night, Merkel

thanked Germans and called on them to approach life with a "lightness of heart" and be optimistic about their country's future. "Sixteen years as chancellor of Germany were full of events, often very challenging - politically and as a human being," she said.

Multiple crises have shown the importance of international cooperation while tackling the challenges that face the world, she said.

The chancellor added that the "last two years of the pandemic in particular" had shown "how important trust in political leaders, science, and public discourse really is.

Democracy, Merkel said, was also based on trust. "on solidarity, on listening to one another, and also on facts.'

"I would like to encourage you in the future to look at the world from other people's perspectives as well. she concluded. – APP



Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Nadeem Raza and DG Strategic Plans Division Lt General Nadeem Zaki Manj called on Prime Minister Imran Khan. – DNA

China-Pakistan friendship rooted in people: Zhao Lijian

News Desk

BEIJING: Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson, Zhao Lijian Friday said that the friendship between China and Pakistan was rooted in the people of two countries, where it derived its

vitality. Taking the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties as an opportunity, China stands ready to work with Pakistan to continuously carry

forward and build on our friendship, he said during his regular briefing in response to a question asked by APP. He said that the Chinese side was ready to further expand and deepen practical cooperation in various fields, forge a stronger cultural and people-to-people bond, strive for

greater progress in our all-weather strategic cooperative

partnership and build an even closer China-Pakistan com-

munity with a shared future in the new era. Zhao Lijian said that this year marks the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between China and Pakistan. He said that to celebrate this significant occasion, China and Pakistan have agreed to hold over 100 celebration activities. So far more than 120 activities have been held, ranging from high-profile events like exchange of congratulatory messages between the leaders and receptions marking the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplo-

matic ties, to popular activities including essay and painting

Pakistan allows aid carrying Afghan trucks from India

Pakistan took the decision to allow transportation of wheat and life-saving medicines from India to Afghanistan via Wagah border on exceptional basis for humanitarian purposes

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Friday decided to also allow the use of Afghan trucks for transportation of 50,000 MT of wheat and life-saving medicines from India to Afghanistan via Wagah

border to Torkham. Pakistan took the decision to allow transportation of wheat and life-saving medicines from India to Afghanistan via Wagah border on exceptional basis for humanitarian purposes, Foreign Office said in a statement issued here. "This demonstrates the commitment and seriousness of the Government of Pakistan to facilitate the proposed hu-

manitarian assistance," it added. According to the statement, the decision was conveyed to the Charge d' Affairs of India on Friday at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

"The Indian government was also

urged to proceed quickly to take necessary steps to expeditiously undertake the delivery of the humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan," the state-

ment concluded.

Meanwhile, sources while commenting on the subject said that despite Pakistan's decision to allow the transportation of wheat and medicines - also conveyed to Indian Charge d' Affairs on 24 November, India seemed to be deliberately spreading "misinformation" about Pakistani modalities for the shipment of humanitarian assis-

As per the modalities, the sources said that Pakistan proposed that trucks under the banner of the UN's World Food Programme (WFP) should transport the wheat and other essentials from

However, India made a counter pro-

tance via Wagah border.

posal and suggested that the wheat should be shipped either in Indian or

India to Afghanistan.

feasible," the sources said and explained that India was given permission to use Pakistan's land route on exceptional basis. Last month, Pakistan's Cabinet granted permission to arch-rival India to

Pakistani trucks. "This option is not

use its land route to ship wheat aid to neighbouring Afghanistan where millions of people face hunger as a harsh winter sets in. Islamabad will also send aid, the prime minister's office said in a statement, including 50,000 metric tons of wheat, matching the level sent by India. "We have approved to give passage to this 50,000 tons of wheat that India wants to send to Afghanistan," Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry told a news conference after the Cabinet met with Prime Minister Imran Khan in the chair.

"We think the people in Afghanistan should be helped in any way on humanitarian grounds," he said.

Iran nuclear talks set for pause amid 'concern'

Senior diplomats from the E3 group of Britain, France and Germany Friday expressed "disappointment and concern after thoroughly and carefully analysing Iranian proposed changes to the text negotiated during the previous six rounds' as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action,

AGENCIES

contests and gourmet festivals, he added.

TEHRAN: Negotiations in Vienna aimed at reviving the Iran nuclear deal are to be suspended Friday, Iranian media said, as European diplomats expressed "disappointment and concern" at the latest proposals from Iran. The semi-official ISNA news agency said the talks would "most likely" resume on Monday but French President Emmanuel Macron warned there could be a longer break in the talks, which resumed only on November 29 after a five-month break.

Iran said it has submitted two draft proposals for the nuclear agreement, which has been in tatters since the US withdrew in 2018. "After the handing over of the text of the Iranian proposal to the P4+1 group (Britain, China, France and Russia plus Germany) and the European Union, a meeting of the joint committee of the nuclear deal will be held on Friday," said Iran's official news agency IRNA.

"This meeting was requested by the European side before its representatives return to their capitals to review the text proposed

Iran: Nuclear proposals 'cannot be rejected' GENEVA: Iran's chief negotiator has said reimposed punishing sanctions against

the draft proposals his country submitted during talks with world powers aimed at reviving a 2015 nuclear deal "cannot be Representatives of Iran, China, France,

Germany, Russia and the United Kingdom convened this week in Vienna for the seventh round of talks to restore the landmark accord, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The United States, which unilaterally with-

drew from the pact in 2018 when it also by Iran," the news agency added.

Senior diplomats from the E3 group of Britain, France and Germany Friday expressed "disappointment and concern after thoroughly and carefully analysing Iranian proposed changes to the text negotiated during the previous six rounds", which took place earlier this year.

Iran, is only participating indirectly as Iran refuses to hold direct negotiations with it. In an exclusive interview with Al Jazeera in the Austrian capital, Ali Bagheri Kani said on Friday Iran would deliver a third proposal once the first two it submitted the previous day were accepted. "Iran's proposals to the world powers cannot be rejected. They are based on the provisions of the 2015 agreement," he said, adding that all nuclear-related US sanctions should be removed immediately. - Agencies

Emirates, just across the Gulf from Iran, the French president said it "should not be excluded" that this round of talks "does not reopen swiftly"

On Thursday, Iran's lead negotiator Ali Bagheri said the proposals concerned two

And speaking on a visit to the United Arab

main issues facing the 2015 accord known

state television. "Now the other side must examine these documents and prepare itself to hold negotiations with Iran based on these documents." In a telephone call with EU top diplomat well "but slowly on all tracks".

or JCPOA. "The first document sums up the

Islamic republic's point of view concerning

the lifting of sanctions, while the second is

about Iran's nuclear actions," Bagheri told

Josep Borrell, Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said the talks were going

"We think that a good agreement is possible but that requires a change of approach by certain parties who must drop their threatening language and opt for texts focused on cooperation, mutual respect and results," the minister said. However, in comments likely to please his Gulf hosts but anger Iran, Macron said a broader framework might benefit the talks on bringing Washington back into the deal. "I think everyone is conscious of the fact that not talking, not trying to find a new framework on both nuclear and regional issues, weakens everybody and is a factor in increasing confliction," the French president said.