



Islamabad POST

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Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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World should send humanitarian aid to help Afghanistan

Detailed News On Page-07

Fazl wants to derail the entire system

Detailed News On Page-01


China welcomes Taliban decree on women

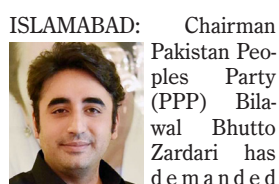
Detailed News On Page-08



Briefs

Sialkot tragedy a test case

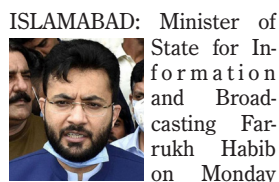
SAIFULLAH



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has demanded punishment for the perpetrators of Sialkot tragedy without delay and said that if the family of Sri Lankan citizen, Priyantha Diyawadanage, did not get immediate justice, this will bring the country into disrepute internationally. Chairman PPP said that today the EU as well as the whole world is questioning about the measures taken by us against those who spread hatred, adding that the Sialkot tragedy has put the nation's image at stake.

PDM wants to harm solidarity

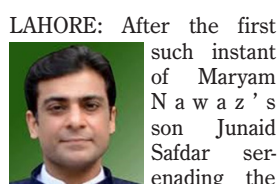
MAHNOOR ANSAR



ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Farukh Habib on Monday called out the multi-party opposition alliance-Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) for giving a call of an anti-inflation march in Islamabad on the Pakistan Day (March 23). "March 23 has historical significance and is celebrated by the whole nation as Pakistan Day. Those who have announced protest march on this day, actually want to harm national solidarity," the minister said in a series of tweets. He said the alliance had no public agenda and only wanted to save their ill-gotten money.

Hamza shows off singing skills

ABID RAZA



LAHORE: After the first such instant of Maryam Nawaz's son Junaid Safdar serenading the audiences at his own Nikah ceremony, his uncle and the Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz senior leader Hamza Shabbaz has also taken to the mic and sung to the pre-reception guests. The video shows Hamza singing 'Hame tum se pyar kitna' and 'Suhani chandni raatein' at the pre-wedding event of Safdar happening whose marriage is later this month.

Govt mulls strategy to curb violence

The decision to implement the strategy came during a meeting chaired by PM Imran Khan

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The federal government has decided to implement a comprehensive strategy to curb violence after a mob lynched a Sri Lankan national in Sialkot. The foreigner, Diyawadanage Don Nandasri Priyantha, was working at a factory in Sialkot. Hundreds of people, including workers from the factory, had tortured him to death last week and later burnt his body over blasphemy allegations. The decision to implement the strategy came during a meeting chaired by Prime Minister Imran Khan in Islamabad, where the overall security situation in the country came under review, a statement from the PM's Office said. Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry, Interior Minister Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed, Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa, National Security Advisor Dr Moeed Yousaf, Chief Minister Punjab Sardar Usman Buzdar, senior military and civil officers were in attendance. "The meeting expressed serious concern over the cruel act of killing of Sri Lankan national Mr Priyantha Diyawadanage in Sialkot and expressed the resolve to bring the perpetrators to justice," the statement said. The participants of the meeting were of the view that individuals and mobs cannot be allowed to take the law into their hands and such incidents cannot be tolerated, the statement said. "Therefore, a comprehensive strategy shall be implemented to curb such incidents and strict punishments to all the perpetrators shall be ensured," the statement said.

COAS, DG ISI call on PM Imran

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa and newly appointed Director-General of Inter-Services Intelligence (DG-ISI) Lieutenant General Nadeem Ahmed Anjum on Monday called on Prime Minister (PM) Imran Khan. The high-level meeting discussed the country's overall situation and security-related issues, said Inter-Services Public Relations. Lieutenant General Nadeem Ahmed Anjum assumed charge as DG ISI on November 20. A handout released from the PM Office had said that PM Imran Khan has approved the appointment of Lt. General Nadeem Anjum as new DG ISI after meeting with COAS General Qamar Javed Bajwa that was part of a consultative process over the appointment of the new DG ISI. On October 06, the ISPR announced that Lieutenant general Nadeem Anjum, an erstwhile Karachi Corps Commander, has on Wednesday been posted as 25th Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) chief after his predecessor Lt Gen Faiz Hameed was posted Peshawar Corps Commander.

'Sialkot incident will not harm friendly ties'

Pakistan and Sri Lanka are friends and will remain friends: Lankan high commissioner



ANSAR M BHATTI

COLOMBO: Sri Lankan High Commissioner Mohan Vijay Vikrama has assured that the Sialkot lynching will have no impact on the two countries' amicable relations. "Pakistan and Sri Lanka are friends and will remain friends. I assure you that this incident will not affect our relations," said the Sri Lankan high commissioner. The Sri Lanka's high commissioner praised the Pakistani government's support and thanked the Pakistani people for their sympathies and

Body of Priyantha flown to SL

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: The body of foreign national Priyantha Kumara, who was brutally lynched by a mob in Sialkot on Friday, has flown to his home country on Monday. Earlier, the body of Priyantha Kumara was shifted to the airport for departure, while the immigration process was completed. Higher officials of



LAHORE: Ambassador of Bulgaria in a meeting with Speaker Punjab Assembly Ch. Pervaiz Elahi. – DNA

'Anti-inflation march' on Pakistan Day: PDM

PDM Chief Fazl ur Rehman says PDM would decide when is the right time to submit resignations

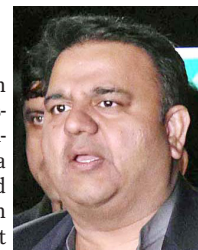


SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) on Monday decided to hold an anti-inflation march in the Federal Capital on March 23 – Pakistan Day – in light of the "government's failures" on several fronts. PDM chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman, addressing a press conference after a summit of the party chiefs, said: "People from across the country will gather in Islamabad. A huge protest will be held in the [capital] against inflation." PDM's provincial chapters will hold meetings to prepare for the march, he said. In Punjab, Opposition Leader in the National Assembly Shahbaz Sharif will call a meeting. Fazl will hold a meeting in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pashtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PkMAP) President Mahmood Khan Achakzai in Balochistan, while JUI-P President Shah Owais Noorani will hold a meeting in Sindh. "A seminar will also be held. But before that, I will meet the lawyers' committee – Supreme Court Bar Association and Pakistan Bar Council – and hold consultations," he said. The PDM chief said the seminar's date will be finalised after consultations not only with lawyers but civil society, business, and other communities as well so that they can be taken into confidence over the alliance's motives.

Fazl wants to derail the system: Fawad

KHAYAM ABBASI



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain Monday lashed out at Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) Chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman for giving call to hold [anti-inflation] march in Islamabad on the Pakistan Day. "March 23 is the most important day for the people of Pakistan. The day is meant for uniting the nation, not to divide [them]," the minister said while talking to the media after the multi-party opposition alliance-PDM announced an anti-inflation march on the Pakistan Day. Fawad believed that the PDM's date and policy for the march was not final. Maulana had a track record of changing his policies in the past, he added. The opposition had every right to launch the march and hold discussion on inflation, but there had been some reservations over behavior of Maulana Fazlur Rehman who wanted to derail the system so that he could get some political leverage, he said,

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PM warns of climate change impacts

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan chaired 4th meeting of the PM's Committee on Climate Change on Monday. The meeting was briefed that air pollution problems started from November, which was the driest month, that affected most areas of Punjab. Moreover, violations of the Indus Water Treaty has adversely impacted the bio-diversity of Indus River Basin in Pakistan.

The Prime Minister emphasized on urgent long-term planning for urban areas where environmental issues including loss of green cover, sewerage treatment, solid waste management and air pollution need immediate solution. The Prime Minister stated that climate change adaptation measures are required to

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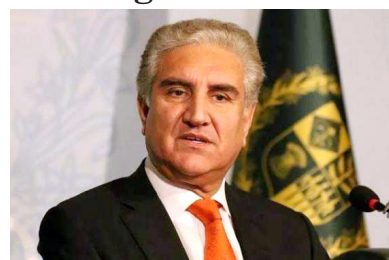
FM apprises UNSC of IIOJK situation

Qureshi has drawn attention to the recent spate of extra-judicial killings and illegal detentions

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi has addressed a letter to the President of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and the UN Secretary-General to apprise them of the continuing grave situation in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

In his letter, the Foreign Minister has underscored the deteriorating human rights and humanitarian situation in IIOJK and the persistent threat to international peace and security posed by India's provocative and irresponsible rhetoric as well as its track record of orchestrating 'false flag' operations. He has called for the settlement of the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the



Security Council which guarantee the Kashmiris' right to self determination through the democratic method of a free and impartial plebiscite conducted under the auspices of the United Nations. The Foreign Minister has drawn attention to the recent spate of extra-judicial killings, arbitrary arrests and illegal detentions in IIOJK. The UN human rights machinery, independent NGOs and

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Kazakh, Uzbek Presidents vow to strengthen bilateral ties – Page 07

PM Imran Khan launches Kamyab Jawan Sports Drive – Page 08

Pakistan tightens travel restrictions

NCOC bans inbound travel from Category C countries amid Omicron threat

CENTRELINE REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) has banned all inbound travel from Category C countries after the detection and emergence of Omicron variant cases, said a statement on Monday. The country's nerve centre for Covid response, the NCOC, said the forum reviewed the current global situation of the pandemic and revised the policy for categorisation of air travel and the Cat C list. Countries in Cat C are as follows: Croatia, Hungary, Netherlands, Ukraine, Ireland, Slovenia, Vietnam, Poland, South Africa, Mozambique, Lesotho, Eswatini, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Namibia. The NCOC said 'essential' travel from the above-mentioned countries would require an exemption certificate from the government's exemption committee with health protocols in place. The health protocols would entail one to be fully vaccinated, with all passengers,

Pakistan reports 336 new Covid cases

DNA

ISLAMABAD, Pakistan reported 10 more coronavirus deaths and 336 new cases that emerged during the last 24 hours, showed the data released by the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) on Monday morning. According to the statistics released by NCOC, after the addition of 10 new deaths, the toll has now surged to 28,777, which represents a ratio of 2.2 percent. The positivity ratio of the coronavirus cases in Pakistan reaches 0.78 percent, as 336 new coronavirus cases emerged in the last 24 hours after

conducting 42,944 tests. It takes the total cases tally to 1,287,161. The number of active cases in the country is 11,920 with 862 patients in critical condition. There were 858 more recoveries recorded in the last 24 hours as the number of total recovered cases reached 1,246,464 with a 96.8% recovery rate. Punjab, the most populous province of the country, has reported 66 new cases in the last 24 hours, taking the provincial tally to 443,519 with 4,334 active cases. In Punjab, 4 more patients died of coronavirus as the death toll reached 13,041. With 749 new recoveries, 426,144 patients have recovered from the virus in Punjab so far.

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Army Helicopter crashes in Siachen

DNA

RAWALPINDI: A Pakistan Army Aviation helicopter crashed in Siachen, resulting in the martyrdom of both pilots, said Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR). According to the ISPR, the helicopter was flying in the Siachen region, when the incident occurred resulting in the martyrdom of both the army pilots. The martyred personnel were identified as Pilot Major Irfan and Co Pilot Major Raja Zeeshan. Meanwhile, the rescue teams have reached the area to retrieve the remains of the martyred pilots. In July 2019, at least eighteen people including five crew members embraced martyrdom and twelve civilians were injured after a Pakistan Army Aviation aircraft on a routine training flight crashed in Rawalpindi. According to the ISPR, the aircraft crashed in built up area resulting into 12 fatal civilian casualties.

Italian CG presents ‘Order of the Star’ to Mariapaola Sfilio

This award ‘Order of the Star’ is presented to individual expatriates and to foreign nationals who work-in extensively for preservation and promotion of Italian prestige abroad, promoting friendly relations and co-operation with other countries and ties with Italy

DNA

KARACHI, Italian Consul General in Karachi, Mr. Danilo Giurdanella presented the knighthood of the ‘Order of the Star’ to Mrs. Mariapaola Sfilio, an Italian national living in Karachi for last 35 years.

She was awarded by the Italian government for her social services in the field of education to the Pakistani deaf and differently abled children.

This award ‘Order of the Star’ is presented to individual expatriates and to foreign nationals who work-in extensively for preservation and promotion of Italian prestige abroad, promoting friendly relations and co-operation with other countries and ties with Italy.

This prestigious award was presented to Mrs. Mariapaola Sfilio by the Italian Consul General in Karachi His Excellency, Mr. Danilo Giurdanella, during the Gala Night of 06th Edition of Italian Cuisine Week, which started 22nd November 2021 and went on till 28th November 2021.

2021. This year’s i.e. 06th Edition of Italian Cuisine Week concluded on 28th November 2021 with the Gala Night and with the theme ‘To explore the Extra Ordinary Italian Taste’. During Italian Cuisine Week, Italian foreign missions all over the world collaborate with their partners to promote Italian culinary traditions, local sustainable agri-food products and exports by organizing promotional activities like workshops, seminars and tastings.

06th Edition of Italian Cuisine Week was brought to us by The Consulate of Italy in Karachi in collaboration with Gerry’s Group, Emirates, Casinetto, Saltage Steakhouse, HBL, IDC and Avari Towers. The event featured sampling of Italian Artisanal Cheese by the guests with the cheese expert, Antonio Fracchiolla followed by an exclusive menu prepared by Chef Samuele Crestale, featuring delectable recipes from the Italian Cuisine.

The Consul of Italy in Karachi, Mr. Danilo Giurdanella welcomed the

guests to the Cuisine Week Gala dinner. The Italian Cuisine Week is about sharing food with people. It is about caring for the world; for people’s health and for the future of humanity. It is not a coincidence that this year’s theme of Italian Cuisine Week is “raising awareness and enhancement of food sustainability”. He further added, long-term sustainability of our environment and food security is a problem we have to tackle together.

Mr. Akram Wali Mohammad, Group Chairman Gerry’s Group and the lead sponsor for the evening thanked the audience for their participation. The President Italian Development Committee (IDC), Mr. Aarj Iqbal presented the vote of thanks on behalf of the Consulate of Italy and also briefed the audience regarding role of IDC in enhancing bilateral trade and commercial projects in collaboration with the local and Italian companies under the patronage of the Consulate of Italy in Karachi.



FAISALABAD: Deputy Commissioner Ali Shahzad checking the cleanliness in city early in the morning. – DNA

DC checks cleanliness in various areas of city

The DC visited Warispura and other areas and while inspecting the presence of waste workers said that the cleaning process should be completed in the city before the commencement of normal life

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Deputy Commissioner Ali Shehzad went to various areas to check the cleanliness situation and inspected the cleaning operation on the roads and streets in the morning. CEO Faisalabad Waste Management Company Kashif Raza Awan and other officers of the company were also present. The Deputy Commissioner visited Warispura and other areas and while inspecting the presence of waste workers said that the cleaning process should be completed in the city before the commencement of normal life. He said that more steps should be taken to raise the standard of cleanliness so that the city looks clean and beautiful in all respects as per the expectations of the citizens.

He directed to disposed off garbage in a save manner and said that the attendance of waste workers should

be monitored regularly. He asked the residents of areas about the presence of Waste workers and performance of them and on some complaints.

He went to parks of the area and checked the cleanliness situation and directed to provide best atmosphere to the public.

He also distributed awareness pamphlets among citizen regarding precautionary measures adopted against smog and said that avoided to burn the waste so that clean environment should be made. He said that district administration was active against smog and anti measures are being implemented besides precaution but the public role cannot be ignored in this regard therefore there cooperation is necessary.

CEO FWMC briefed about cleanliness plan and implementation.

Urea to be provided through CNIC
Deputy Commissioner Ali Shehzad took immediate notice of complaints

of farmers against fertilizer dealers in some areas for not selling urea fertilizer to farmers without Kissan card and urged the Assistant Commissioners and Agriculture Department to provide fertilizer to farmers only through National Identity Card. No further complaints should be received in this regard.

He directed the Assistant Commissioner Jarawal particularly to strictly prohibit the dealers of the grain market selling urea fertilizer by demanding kissan card from the farmers and oblige the dealers to provide fertilizer to the farmers only on the identity card.

He said that in future on such complaints would be answerable by the Department of Agriculture and Assistant Commissioners.

He said that urea fertilizer should be sold at a fixed price of Rs.1768 and make sure that a zero tolerance policy is adopted in this regard.

Strategy evolved for detection of crimes on scientific lines: RPO

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: Two-pronged strategy has been evolved with a focus on prevention and detection of crimes purely on scientific lines, said Imran Mahmood, Regional Police Officer (RPO), Faisalabad.

Addressing a function in FCCI, he said that for first-time crimes mapping has been introduced in addition to the classification of crimes. “This data is analyzed and preemptive steps are being taken with abrupt changes in Police patrolling”, he added.

About detection of crimes, he said that it has been further divided into two parts. “Immediately after the commitment of a crime, suspects are being identified, investigated and challaned so that they could be

convicted from the competent courts.

Regarding “abduction for ransom” cases, he said that only one such incident was reported during the last four months. “We took it as a challenge and have successfully traced the culprits and hopefully, they will be arrested very soon. He said that Punjab Police has introduced a comprehensive system of “Khadmit Markiz which has lessened the burden on the Police station up to 80% as people are getting 14-15 different Police related services through this innovative intervention. He said that now only accused, complainant and persons required in investigation have to visit police stations. Highlighting the importance of “Khadmit Markiz”, he said that its presence should be extended up to the sub division level to facilitate the masses.

Cotton godown gutted

FAISALABAD: A cotton godown was reduced to ashes in the area of Jhang Bazaar police station.

Police spokesman said Monday that fire erupted in the warehouse of a local cotton factory situated at Insaf Road during wee hours due to short-circuiting.

The fire engulfed the entire surroundings and burnt precious cotton present in the godown.

Receiving information, fire fighters of Rescue 1122 rushed to the spot and brought the fire under control after hectic efforts. However, no loss of life was reported in this incident. – APP

Army organises free medial camp

PESHAWAR: Pakistan Army on Monday organised medical camp at Dawagar, North Waziristan to provide free medical care facilities to people.

Doctors of the Army Medical Corps provided treatment to more than 250 patients in a free medical camp. On the occasion, medicines were distributed among patients free of cost and basic medical tests were conducted.

Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Minister for Relief and Rehabilitation, Iqbal Muhammad Wazir appreciating the efforts of Pakistan Army in development and promotion of socio-economic activities in the region said that Army Medical Corps was providing best healthcare facilities to local people at their doorstep in remote areas by organising such camps.

He said that provision of medical facilities to the tribesmen was the top priority for which all available resources were being utilized. – APP

Over 4.57mln people vaccinated

DNA

FAISALABAD: Over 4.57 million (4,574,247) people have so far been vaccinated against COVID-19 in the district. District Health Officer Dr Ataul Mun'im said on Monday 3,023,787 citizens were injected first dose while 1,487,485 were administered the second dose of vaccine.

He further said that 38,398 health workers were also given first dose while 24,577 received the second dose of vaccine. He said that sufficient stock of coronavirus vaccine was available in the district. As of now 251,559 first doses and 167,706 second doses were in the stock in Faisalabad.

He said that 37 vaccination centers and 20 mobile vaccination camps were operational in Faisalabad where registered people were being vaccinated.



LAHORE: Provincial Minister for Human Rights and Minority Affairs Ejaz Alam, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Maulana Tahir Ashrafi and other officials departing the body of Sri Lankan citizen Priyantha Kumara to Colombo. – DNA (News on Front Page)

Increased Pak-Russia engagements vital: Envoy

He talked about the teaching of Urdu and Pashto languages in Russia and stressed for a group of experts for translation from Russian language

STAFF REPORT

PESHAWAR: Consul and Director, Consulate General of the Russian Federation Karachi Andrei G. Fesyun here Monday called for increased people to people contact between Pakistan and Russia to strengthen the cultural, economic and political relations between the two countries. Addressing a one-day conference on “Pakistan-Russia Cultural, Educational and Economic Relations” held at Area Study Centre of University of Peshawar, he underlined the importance of increased people to people contacts and importance of synergies and cooperation between Russia and Pakistan in the changed regional and global scenarios.

He talked about the teaching of Urdu and Pashto languages in Russia and stressed for a group of experts for translation from Russian language.

He said Russian and Pakistani banks have developed good relations, adding that the relations shall be strengthened from the top when the leaders of the countries visit each other.

Russian envoy also discussed the importance of regional integration in context of Afghanistan. He expressed his fears regarding terrorist groups with transnational agenda and drugs in Central Asia and Russia.

The conference was jointly organized by Area Study Centre (Russia, China and Central Asia) University of Peshawar and Consulate General of the Russian Federation, Russian Centre for Science and Culture, Karachi.

Addressing on the occasion, Prof Dr Shabir Ahmad Khan, Director Area Study Centre focused on changes in Russian foreign policy as well as shift in Pakistan foreign policy.

In the post-Soviet era Russia has changed the India-centric policy in South Asian context and there is clear shift in policy

towards Pakistan he said adding that Pakistan has also reversed the Frontier Policy inherited from the British and now Russia is a strategic partner.

He said future integration of Russia-Central Asian-Afghanistan-Pakistan to South Asia, Arabian Sea and beyond will guarantee long term engagement between Pakistan and Russia.

He said a historical convergence between Russia and Pakistan has developed on Afghanistan and both the countries have aligned their approaches for sustainable peace and development of the region.



Govt to deliver in all sectors including sports: Gill

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Political Communication Dr Shahbaz Gill on Monday said that the country’s economy was strengthening and the government would deliver in all sectors including sports.

Addressing to the media person here, he said it was the vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan to mobilize the youth of the country and the credit went to Usman Dar for its materialization.

He congratulated the sports journalists for their active role and said promotions of sport activities were equally important for any nation and its development. Nations felt proud

owing to various sports, he said.

He said sports activities helped created healthy environment for competition among the youth and he was proud of the youth who were participating in the mega sport event. He lauded the efforts of entire team of Kamyab Jawan Programme under Usman Dar for organizing such mega sport event after decades in the federal capital.

Taking about yesterday’s by-poll in Lahore, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Political Communication Dr Shahbaz Gill said the turn-out remained only 18 per cent and 82 per cent voters opted to stay away from the process as only PPP and PML-N nominated candidates were in the run for NA 133 seat.

Court defers indictment of Shaukat Aziz

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD, An accountability court on Monday deferred the indictment of former Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz in a case related to illegal appointments until January 5.

The indictment was deferred as the co-accused has filed an acquittal plea in the case after the promulgation of the NAB amendment ordinance. Defense lawyer in his arguments before the court stated that the acquittal plea is currently under trial in the high court. “The NAB has sought time in the HC and the court will take up the case on January 17,” he said.

The lawyer of the accused pleaded with the accountability court to defer the indictment until the judgment of the HC. However, the court rejecting the plea deferred the indictment until January 5. NAB had filed a reference against Shaukat Aziz, who served as Pakistan’s prime minister from 2004 to 2007 - over misuse of powers during his tenure as prime minister.

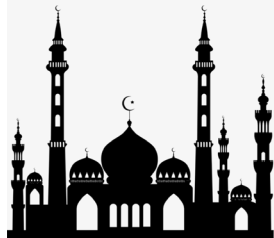
Court puts off Ashiyana Housing case till Dec 13

LAHORE: An accountability court in Lahore has adjourned the hearing of Ashiyana Housing scandal case till Dec 13 as the National Accountability Bureau has failed to submit its response in the court. PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif and former LDA DG Ahmad Cheema appeared before the accountability court on Monday.

During the hearing, the anti-graft watchdog could not submit its response to the acquittal applications of Shehbaz’s co-accused Bilal Qadwai and Imtiaz Haider.

In its reference, the NAB accused Shehbaz and other government officials of incurring a loss of billions of rupees to the national kitty due to their wrongdoings. – APP

SERVICES



Namaz Timings	
Fajr.....	05:30 am
Zohr.....	11:59 am
Asr.....	03:21 pm
Maghrib.....	04:59 pm
Isha.....	06:28 pm



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



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Turkish Airlines.....	8494949



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Rawal Town.....	5773343

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

PRCS commemorates Int'l Volunteer Day

Chairman PRCS, Abrar ul Haq, Vice Chairman, Asif Bajwa, Member Managing Body, Brig (Rtd.) Abdul Hadi, Secretary General, Dr. Adeel Nawaz, PRCS staff, representatives from ICRC and IFRC, volunteers

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) on Monday celebrated International Volunteer Day under the theme “Volunteer Now for Our Common Future”, to recognize tireless work and efforts of volunteers all across the globe. International Volunteer Day, which falls on December 5th every year and marks the contributions of millions who volunteered for our common future! Every day, volunteers dedicate time and effort to ensure the inclusion of those often left behind, drive climate action and advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). On the event, Chairman PRCS, Abrar ul Haq, Vice Chairman, Asif Bajwa, Member Managing Body, Brig (Rtd.) Abdul Hadi, Secretary General, Dr. Adeel Nawaz, PRCS staff, representatives from ICRC and IFRC, volunteers, students



from various institutions and representatives from media houses were present. To highlight the importance of the role of youth as agents of change, A Red Talk Session was held. The panelists of the talk included representatives from PRCS, ICRC and IFRC who shared their views on the theme of IVD celebration

and upon the contribution of volunteers as an essential component to eradicate poverty, hunger, illiteracy, mitigate disasters, and achieve SDGs, which will contribute to prosperity of Pakistan at large. Speaking on the occasion, Chairman PRCS said that volunteers could play an effective role in mitigating the

sufferings of the vulnerable communities through their engagement in different humanitarian issues, be it the blood donation, disaster response, distribution of food and non-food items among deserving families, provision of psycho-social support to communities, awareness drives on health issues, promotion of health

and hygiene practices, cleanliness drives, and climate change initiatives etc. Chairman PRCS awarded mementoes to the Red Talk panelist. Best Youth Club Award was presented to Hassan Abdal Cadet College for rendering exceptional humanitarian services throughout this year. Similarly, certificates

were awarded to volunteers to recognize their commitment for selfless service to the needy, in times of COVID. Abrar ul Haq said that encouraging, recognizing and promoting volunteerism is an important part of creating a more equal and inclusive future for communities and worldwide. Followed by the celebration of International Volunteer Day, a press conference was held to discuss PRCS COVID response interventions and future initiatives. Chairman in the conference briefed the media on PRCS contribution in Mass Vaccination drives. PRCS has administered more than 500,000 vaccinations in the centre and through door-to-door vaccination campaign. PRCS has provided 200,000 COVID-19 vaccines to government of Pakistan and 2 lac more vaccines will be provided soon. Similarly, the Society has provided over 19000 hygiene kits to the communities in 16 different districts of Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan chairs a meeting of Climate Change Committee. –DNA

Restaurants sealed over SOPs violations

RAWALPINDI: The district administration under a campaign launched on the directives of Deputy Commissioner Rawalpindi, Muhammad Ali to check violations of Corona Virus Vaccine, Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), has sealed four restaurants and a shop and imposed fines amounting to Rs 115,000 on the violators. According to a district administration spokesman, Assistant Commissioner (AC) Cantt, Nusheen Israr conducted crackdown against violations of SOPs and sealed a restaurant and a shop. She also imposed fines amounting to Rs 45,000 on the violators. Similarly, AC Saddar sealed three restaurants and imposed fines amounting to Rs 70,000 on the rules violators. He informed that the traders and the residents had also been advised to get vaccinated from their nearest

centers as soon as possible. He said, the raids would continue and action in accordance with the law would be taken against the violators. He informed that the DC had directed the Assistant Commissioners and Magistrates to remain in the field and ensure strict implementation of the SOPs and other preventive measures issued by the government to contain spread of corona virus. The DC urged the citizens to adopt all possible precautionary measures against corona as implementation of SOPs was inevitable to control spread of the virus. Necessary action was also being taken against the violators, he said adding, the new Covid variant was the fastest, fittest and most formidable version of the coronavirus that causes Covid-19 for which special precautionary measures should be adopted by all the citizens. – APP

Afghan Education delegation visits HEC

Executive Director HEC Shaista Sohail welcomed the delegation and briefed them about key initiatives and different programs of HEC

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Eight-member Afghan delegation from Higher Education Ministry of Afghanistan, headed by Alhaj Molvi Abdul Baqi Haqqani, acting minister of Higher Education along with Dr. Lotfullah Khairkhwah, deputy minister of Academic Affairs, Dr. Osama Azizi Chancellor of Kabul University on Monday visited Higher Education Commission Pakistan. Executive Director HEC

Shaista Sohail welcomed the delegation and briefed them about key initiatives and different programs of HEC. The delegation also visited NAVTTC where the chairman Syed Javed Hassan received them and gave the delegation detailed briefing about initiatives of the commission.

The delegation also visited National Curriculum Council Pakistan where they were given a briefing on Single National Curriculum and its objectives. Later, the delegation visited Directorate General of Religious Education where it was welcomed by DG Gen. (R) Qamar who briefed the delegation

about the reforms of madaris initiative of the incumbent government under ministry of Federal Education & Professional Training. During their visit to National Rehmatail Alameen Authority, newly appointed chairman NRA Dr. Ijaz Akram briefed the delegation about the objective of creation of this authority. The Afghan delegation will also visit Allama Iqbal Open University and Islamic International University Islamabad today (Tuesday).

RCCL organizes global entrepreneurship week

The prime objective of Global Entrepreneurship Week was to help students to become job creators rather than job seekers

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCL) organized the Global Entrepreneurship Week here on Monday at Chamber house. Asim Malik, Senior Vice President, in his address said that youth is the future of Pakistan. With 140 million people below the age of 30, Pakistan is one of the youngest countries in the world and one of the fastest-growing economies in Asia. The gap between industry and academia needs to be bridged. The prime objective of Global Entrepreneurship Week was to help students to become job creators rather than job seekers. During



Entrepreneurship Week, students from different universities and colleges have the opportunity to participate in training workshops and seminars so that young people can

adopt innovative ideas and ideas in starting their own business. Young people can play their role in the development of the country by using their talents and ideas

in the right direction. He recommended that youth should equip themselves with technical skills. He said that through e-commerce and SMEs and business start-ups,

one can turn the economy around. Information technology, artificial intelligence and e-commerce are emerging sectors and we need to move forward with a focus,” he said. Irfan Wahab, Chief Executive of Telenor, said that information technology is currently the fourth industrial revolution. Digitization, automation and freelancing are fields where there are endless opportunities. Khushaal Zamindar, the agriculture service for small scale farmers provides location-specific weather forecasts along with contextual agronomic advisory for every farmer’s relevant crop mix and tips for livestock management. In his address, Dr. Shumail Dawood emphasized on social entrepreneurship and said that we have to work hard to empower ourselves.

Rashid inaugurates first-ever plastic road

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed Monday inaugurated Pakistan’s first-ever eco friendly plastic road in Islamabad. Talking to media, he said the construction of plastic road would decelerate the spread of pollution in the region. He said the initiative was aimed at reducing impact of environmental pollution caused by plastic waste. Rashid said the concept would not only be utilized in Islamabad but would also be replicated in other cities of the country. He appreciated Capital Development Authority (CDA) Chairman Amer Ali Ahmed for initiating plastic road project in the federal capital. To a question about the Sialkot tragedy, the interior minister said government would not tolerate extremism at any cost. He underscored the need for speedy trial of the accused persons in Sialkot incident.

Exhibition “Silver Linings” opens

DNA

ISLAMABAD: National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage (NIFT-H) Lok Virsa on Monday opened a two-week solo exhibition titled “Silver Linings” by Arif Mahmood. The inauguration ceremony was attended by Executive Director Lok Virsa Talha Ali and other senior officials of the department. A large number of art enthusiasts were also present on the occasion. The Karachi-born artist has made two more additions to his poetic series of photographs Silver Linings. The artist has been collecting photos of shrines and mosques since the beginning of his career as a photo-journalist, said a press release issued here. In Silver Linings, he explored the timelessness of the Sufi experience. This compilation consists of his work from 1988 to 2020. Arif Mahmood’s Silver Linings is an introspective journey that he took after the death of his mother, who was a seasoned traveler of the mystical path. The exhibition i beings held at NIFT Art Gallery. COVID-19 pandemic SOPs to be strictly followed, masks were mandatory.

IESCO secures 7803 dangerous points so far: CEO

ISLAMABAD: Chief Executive Officer of Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) Dr Muhammad Amjad Monday said that as many as 7803 dangerous points out of identified 8,680 had been secured so far. He said that IESCO’s field formations and consumers had identified 8680 points of wires, curves and weak power poles passing near the houses. The operation teams secured 7803 such points with a total cost of Rs 1.22 billion, he said in a statement issued here. He said protecting the lives of consumers and line staff from electrical accidents was our first responsibility. The IESCO chief instructed the line staff to take all precautionary measures before or during working on the line and to ensure the use of all safety T&P in all cases. He also requested valued customers to report such dangerous wires to the concerned SDO office or Central Complaints and Monitoring Cell IESCO Islamabad on phone numbers 051-9252933-6 and avoid constructions under or near electrical installations as the slightest mistake could endanger human life or lead to lifelong disability. – APP

Briefs

Expert urges public not to be misled by rumors

ISLAMABAD: The nation must not be misled by rumors about Covid-vaccines on Social Media and get vaccinated to ensure "victory" in the prolonged battle with Covid-19, expert said.

Professor Dr. Javed Akram vice-chancellor of the University of Health Sciences (UHS) and a Member Scientific Task Force on Covid-19 Dr. Javed Akram talking to a private news channel said that the omicron mutation has already been found in dozen of countries, however, if more people get their vaccination on time the variants like omicron or other mutations could slow down dramatically.

"Rumors and propaganda spread over social media platforms have been fueling misconceptions about the vaccine and have accelerated refusals to vaccines across the country," he added. "With more population immunized, we can control the impact. It is my appeal to the public to get vaccinated and follow SOPs," he added. He once again made it clear that the approved vaccines were safe, hence, the public should not hesitate from getting themselves vaccinated. — APP

IT ministry working to provide quality services

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication was taking several initiatives for the provision of quality broadband services and working on USF's 43 projects worth over Rs29 billion to achieve goals.

An official of the ministry said that under the present government, the USF has shown a 100% increase in its productivity since inception, with 6 projects in the first year, 12 projects in the second year, and 25 projects in the third year."

He said that Pakistan Software Export Board (PSEB) was taking steps to establish software technology parks across the country to facilitate freelancers.

He said the Ministry of IT was committed to enhancing connectivity and improving digital infrastructure to facilitate the common man. He said the Ministry was fully committed to increasing IT exports and the steps were being taken in that regard.

He said, "The ICT export remittances, including telecommunication, computer, and information services have surged to the US \$ 2.123 billion (largest exporter in services sector & highest net exporter with the US \$1.573 billion in net exports) at a growth rate of 47.43% during FY 2020-21 in comparison to the US \$ 1.440 billion during FY 2019-20." The Information Technology (IT) related exports have witnessed a 39.26 percent growth in the first four months of the current financial year. — APP

Protest in Shopian

ISLAMABAD: Locals especially women staged a protest and blocked the road against installation of 'Smart Meters' in Shopian town, in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir. The protesting women created a human chain and blocked the traffic to attract the attention of the authorities against the anti-people act, Kashmir Media Service reported. "Our power projects have been taken away from us and now we are being forced to pay hefty sums of money for using our own electricity," one of the agitated protesters said.

The protesters said that for the installation of smart meters they are being charged huge money and if these smart meters will be installed, they will go bankrupt and will suffer badly. "We have already suffered a lot in wake of prevailing situation. It has become difficult to earn a living these days and now they want to put extra burden on us by installing these smart meters," the protesters told media men. The protesters demanded that the installation of the smart meters be immediately stopped in the district. — APP

Water conservation critical to avert looming crisis: Alvi

The conference themed 'Needs for sustainable water management in a climate crisis for the Indus Basin' was organized by the Ministry of Science and Technology through the PCRWR, IWMI, and CGIAR's Water, Land and Ecosystems Program

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Monday said Pakistan's increasing vulnerability to climate change required urgent action on the management of water resources and for an improved system of its conservation at national and local levels.

Addressing at the international conference in connection with Pakistan Water Week, the president said it was the responsibility of both the government and citizens to save water through resilient and sustainable solutions.

The conference themed 'Needs for sustainable water management in a climate crisis for the Indus Basin' was organized by the Ministry of Science and Technology through the Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (PCRWR), International Water Management Institute (IWMI), and CGIAR's Water, Land and Ecosystems Program.

The event brought together academics, government officials, and policy experts to discuss the serious threat of water scarcity in Pakistan by 2035 and to lay emphasis on the linkage between water and food security.

President Alvi said climate change was the key factor affecting the reliability of water resources across the globe and raising concerns about the future of water availability in countries including Pakistan.

He stressed simultaneous steps to address the issue of water management, such as the policy on water-pricing to inculcate a responsible approach among the masses to save the valuable commodity.

He emphasized the practices to reduce water consumption including drip irrigation instead of flood farming, water recycling, and reallocating water for more valuable uses. Dr Alvi said for ages, water had been the lifeline of ancient civilizations, may it Mehr-



garh, Harappa Mohenjodaro, presently in Pakistan that became extinct after the river changed its course.

Similarly, he said, today's Indus Water Basin and the country's large aquifer needed attention for the formation of a regulatory framework for groundwater use.

He said the melting of glaciers due to global warming could lead to incidences of severe droughts and extensive floods in Pakistan. He said some areas of Pakistan particularly Balochistan had already started facing increased water scarcity with a critical need for climate adaptation in the water sector.

Dr Alvi said the government had made solid progress in achieving key principles defined under the National Water Policy and called for an integrated approach among provinces for its complete implementation.

The president extended utmost support of his office to the policies aimed at ensuring improved water governance and sustainable groundwater management.

Federal Minister for Science and Technology Senator Shibli Faraz said water conservation and management was an issue of major concern for the government in view of the depletion of groundwater resources.

He said managing the vast resources of Himalayan glaciers and the country's fourth-largest aquifer was a big challenge to restore the ecosystem for the benefit of people.

To improve water governance, he said, data sharing was important and mentioned that PCRWR and Capital Development Authority had signed a Memorandum of Understanding on artificial groundwater

recharge, making Islamabad the first with such arrangement. Simi Kamal, member IWMI board of governors said IWMI was providing assistance to the government of Pakistan through data analytics for making choices about agricultural water management, develop water solutions and policy development. Director General IWMI Mark Smith said Pakistan was facing critical water challenges and expressed confidence that the event would catalyze dialogue on the urgency for water security in view of the diminishing water resources.

He suggested effective and coherent water governance from federal to community levels, guidance from data and digital information and experimenting diversity in water systems through nature-based solutions. — APP

NSU to train technical staff for mobile units

ISLAMABAD: National Skills University (NSU) was aiming at training the technical staff for the upcoming multinational mobile phone production units in Pakistan.

Talking to APP here on Monday Dr. Arslan Ahmed, Head of the Department of Electrical Engineering & Technology said that several multinational companies would start their production in Pakistan and NSU had started certificate courses to fulfill the gap of technical personnel.

He said that any candidate who had passed 8th grade would be eligible to apply for the certificate course. "University is offering free certificate course in collaboration with National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTTTC)", he informed. He maintained that the courses which are not in collaboration with NAVTTTC would have affordable fees because NSU was a degree awarding institute itself.

He said that starting salary of technicians was around 60 to 80 thousand and NSU was also planning to sign memorandums of understanding with mobile manufacturing companies after which jobs would be offered to the candidates right after completion of the course.

He said that two batches had already completed their certification and the graduates were successful in getting the jobs and setting their workshops. — APP

UPBC condemns incident of Sialkot

DNA

ISLAMABAD: UK Pakistan Business Council Monday condemned the barbaric act of violence resulting in tragic death of a Sri Lankan factory manager working at Sialkot. Chairing a condolence meeting here the UPBC Chairman Mian Kashif Ashfaq urged the government and the law enforcement agencies to launch crackdown on all the perpetrators and inciters involved in the ugly incident and bring them to justice.

To express solidarity with the Sri Lankan nation and the family of the deceased Priyantha Kumara Diyawadan a condolence meeting was held here at UPBC office which was attended by scores of leading exporters and importers.

Expressing solidarity with the bereaved family, Mian Kashif Ashfaq said December 03 would go down as a dark day in the history of Sialkot that always showed tolerance and religious harmony.

He said there was no room for fanaticism and violence in society and this gruesome lynching was absolute clear and vivid negation of teachings of Islam that the miscreants involved in such wicked act did not belong to any religion, caste or creed. Mian Kashif Ashfaq said the incident did not represent the industry's usual environment neither it defines the people of Sialkot. He hoped the export-based city would rise from this and continue to portray a positive image of Pakistan. — APP

IRSA releases 88908 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) Monday released 88908 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 39299 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in the Indus River at Tarbela Dam was 1457.24 feet, which was 65.24 feet higher than its dead level 1392 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 20100 and 48000 cusecs respectively. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1140.15 feet, which was 90.15 feet higher than its dead level of 1050 feet whereas the inflow and outflow of water was recorded a 8291 and 30000 cusecs respectively.

The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa and Sukkur was recorded as 53910, 49175 and 31525 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from the Kabul River a total of 3400 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 7508 cusecs released from the Chenab River at Marala. — APP

Govt to encourage, protect foreign investments in country

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Federal Secretary for Board of Investment (BOI) Fareena Mazhar on Monday said the government is committed to encouraging and protecting foreign investments in the Country.

The Board of Investment organized an online Investment Promotion seminar to apprise the potential foreign investors on investment policies and potential in Pakistan, said a press release issued here. The theme of the seminar was Investment opportunities in education and innovation in technologies.

The Seminar was attended by many foreign investors and overseas Pakistan through physical participation.

Due to travel restrictions because of the pandemic, arrangements were made for the participants to attend the seminar on zoom. The participants expressed interest on the existing opportunities in Pakistan and the policies by the Government to attract investment in the emerging technologies.

Special Technology Zones Authority (STZA), NUST, Evamp and Sanga, UAE, Lenovo, Ecoclean, Aviation Complex Kamra also participated in the seminar.

Secretary BOI, Ms. Fareena Mazhar informed the audience that there are 22 approved SEZs in Pakistan and four of



them have state-of-the-art facilities and business ecosystems ready for investment as Early Harvest projects.

"Board of Investment, Islamabad, as the premier investment promotion agency of Pakistan, is leading the Pakistani Regulatory Modernization Initiatives (PRMI) which is a key initiative of the Pakistani Government for the modernization and regulation of local business through technological interventions for providing a conducive business environment in the country," said Ms. Mazhar while informing the audience about BOI.

The Secretary apprised the audience on the Information Technology (IT) sector being one of the fastest growing sectors of Pakistan, contributing around 1 percent to the GDP of the country at about \$3.5 billion.

She added that it doubled in the past

couple of years, and experts expect it to grow further at 100 percent in the next two to four years to \$7 billion.

"Pakistan's IT market is full of qualified people who are equipped to cater the needs of the market at relatively low costs," said Ms. Mazhar.

Further elaborating on freelance development, the Secretary BOI shared that the country has been ranked at number four for freelance development in the world and digital growth in Pakistan is going through a rapid evolution. The Secretary also informed that Pakistan developed its first National Science, Technology, and Innovation Policy in 2012 and innovation, ever since, has been properly documented as being a long-term strategy for driving economic growth by the Government of Pakistan.

Highlighting the digital landscape of Pakistan, Ms. Fareena shared that according to US Technology Giant, GOOGLE, Pakistan is becoming a 'DIGITAL-FIRST COUNTRY' and paving new opportunities for businesses to digitally engage with consumers.

In terms of incentives, Pakistan offers zero Income Tax on IT / IT enabled services (ITES) exports till June 2025, 100 percent foreign ownership of IT & ITES companies, and 100 percent repatriation of profit to foreign IT & ITES investors, she added.

Nearly half workforce of Pakistan comprises of women: Kashmala

ISLAMABAD: Federal Ombudsman for Protection Against Harassment Kashmala Tariq Monday said that nearly half the workforce of Pakistan comprised of women and often felt were barred from fully contributing to society and economic prosperity, due to harassment faced by them.

Addressing PIA employees in an awareness session organized under the theme of "16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence" she said it was every female's right that she was provided with opportunity to work freely and without fear of being harassed as male members of our society were provided. She apprised the audience about the provisions of Workplace Harassment Act 2010 in the minds of women who were the victim of harassment at workplace to stand against harassment. While speaking on the occasion, she said FOSPAH aimed at facilitating women to work without any insecurities in various public and private sector organizations. She added that it was imperative for both public and private sector organizations to constitute Anti-Harassment Committees comprising three persons that must have one female (at least). — APP



ISLAMABAD: Mahnur Abbas, Admissions Counselor of Azerbaijan ADA University visit Pakistan and gave presentations to the students of different Schools in Islamabad on ADA University's scholarship programs. — DNA

'Kamyab Jawan Sports Drive' much needed initiative

He disclosed that former English footballer Michael Owen was appointed as the ambassador of the newly announced franchised-based Pakistan Football League and he would visit Pakistan in January

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Youth Affairs, Muhammad Usman Dar Monday said 'Kamyab Jawan Sports Drive' was a much needed initiative to engage youth in healthy activities.

Talking to PTV news, he said the drive would provide more sports opportunities to youth and have a long-term impact on Pakistani sports. He hoped that youth with their participation in the drive would break all previous records and local young talent would compete at international games in future.

He said the young generation of Pakistan would establish a positive image of the country at an international level through the sports young talent programme, which would include prominent international sports gurus such as former English footballer Michael Owen.

He disclosed that former English footballer Michael Owen was appointed as the ambassador of the newly announced franchised-based Pakistan Football League and he would visit Pakistan in January. He said that it was right time for country's youth to take part in

sports activities and registered themselves for talent hunt programme, as much as they could. This trend would undoubtedly



transform children into helpful members of society, he said adding that this would be the country's largest sports programme.

While giving details, he informed that the government would establish high-performance centres in 12 colleges under the programme. The professional sports academies would be set up in various varieties levels and a well taught training and coaching facilities would be provided to all participants of this programme on merit. He said the Kamyab Jawan Sports Programme will be launched in two stages with 12 different

games for males and 10 games for female being arranged across 25 regions under the Talent Hunt Programme in the first phase of the initiative.

Hockey, cricket, football, handball, wrestling, weightlifting, squash, volleyball, ski, judo, boxing and athletics, are among the first-phase games, he noted.

He said the programme would ensure an equal opportunity to young males and females of the country to showcase their talent, adding, students aged 15 to 25 would be eligible to participate. — APP

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OIC meeting

As a humanitarian crisis unfolds in Afghanistan, the issue has somewhat gone under the radar recently with the news cycle moving on. While the media's limited attention span is not a new issue, it is concerning in the case of Afghanistan given how dire the situation is at the moment. Pakistan is among a handful of countries that have continued to emphasise the severity of the crisis and have called for continued assistance and engagement. In light of this, Islamabad is planning to host a meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) later this month.

The meeting of foreign ministers from Islamic countries will be held in Islamabad on December 19, with delegations from the European Union and the so-called P5 group of the United States, Britain, France, Russia and China also invited. According to reports, representatives of countries like Germany and Japan will also be invited. It would be extremely encouraging and beneficial if officials from the P5 and other countries partake in this timely dialogue given the increasing instability in Afghanistan. The December 19 meeting in Islamabad would be the largest international gathering on Afghanistan since Kabul fell to the Afghan Taliban on August 15. It is imperative that headway is made on the matter of increasing humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan to deal with the ongoing economic crisis. Given the fact that a high-level delegation from the Taliban has been invited to the meeting, this will allow the new government to present its perspective to the international community while the world could also ask and share their concerns.

Of course, there are serious gaps in governance and issues pertaining to human rights that need to be taken up. However, these matters need to be tackled while engaging with Afghanistan to reduce the suffering of its citizens. Pakistan recently agreed to allow 50,000 tons of wheat to transit through its territory from India to help Afghanistan and has also started supplying free medicines due to a shortage in supplies. However, a lot more assistance is needed on an urgent basis and other actors will need to step up. Waiting on the sidelines is not an option as we cannot afford to repeat mistakes of the past.



Wheat for Afghanistan

THERE cannot be a bigger testament of Pakistan's commitment to the welfare of people living in war-torn Afghanistan plains than it giving a nod to New Delhi's petty demands with regard to the wheat assistance. For the last month, India has been making a pompous spectacle of its humanitarianism; harping on and on about how its administration is losing sleep over the anguish of Kabul. Pakistan was conveniently singled out for deliberately putting the brakes on its mega-shipment of 50,000 tonnes. The reality, however, could not be more different, as has been aptly pointed by Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi. First, there was the dilly-dallying over Pakistan's suggestion of using trucks deployed in coordination with the UN's World Food Programme. Despite being fully aware of the diplomatic tightrope the two countries are treading upon, India wished to force a huge contingent of its trucks down our throats with no concern whatsoever for any damaging development that may unfurl along the way. Are we not swimming in dangerous waters where hawks, especially in our neighbourhood, are already praying day and night for any catalyst that helps them exploit the tinder box? Now that Islamabad has agreed to use Afghan-owned vehicles, dramatically bringing down the cost of the relief project, yet another reservation over drivers has allegedly reared its head. Meanwhile, Kabul has greatly appreciated the government's efforts to facilitate the transport of food donations.

Regretfully, the rest of the world is still too busy with the to-ing and fro-ing of the recognition debate to care about the crisis-in-making. That Afghanistan was an extremely fragile economy, heavily dependent on foreign aid even before the Taliban took over is secret to none. But all warnings about over half of the country—an overwhelming 22.8 million people—falling to acute food insecurity seem to be falling on deaf ears.

As has been said and written repeatedly, all politics over the Taliban could wait until the cold, dark winter ended. With no apparent loosening of the clasp around Afghan funds frozen in American and European lockers, the least these administrations could do was empower the UN (if not other organisations) so that the hapless millions don't go wasting in their quest for bread.

Helping starving Afghans not just OIC's responsibility

Ishtiaq Ahmad



The UN relief agencies and nongovernmental organizations that are providing emergency food supplies and health and education services in Afghanistan can only expand their humanitarian operations if they are exempted from international sanctions against...

IN response to the worsening humanitarian disaster in Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia has taken the timely decision to hold an extraordinary meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, which Pakistan has offered to host, on Dec. 17. As the representative body of 57 Muslim countries, the OIC must come to the rescue of hapless Afghans, especially when the rest of the world has left them at the mercy of winter. But Afghanistan is a global problem that cannot be solved with the expression of Muslim solidarity alone. The scale of the disaster in the war-torn nation

is extremely disturbing: The World Food Program estimates that up to 23 million Afghans — more than half the population — may not have enough to eat by the end of this month. With drought, pandemic and conflict, the food security situation will continue to worsen; hunger will increase and the economy will collapse. The rest is easier to fathom.

Perhaps the most tragic aspect of the unfolding Afghan tragedy is that neither the US and its allies as the country's hitherto intervening powers nor the Taliban as its new rulers are willing to budge from their entrenched positions. The standstill was obvious in the recent Doha talks held between the Taliban and US and EU delegates. The Taliban link international cooperation with sanctions relief and the unfreezing of \$9 billion of Afghan assets. No way, argue the US and EU, unless the Taliban address their human rights and security concerns. Caught in the ensuing quagmire are 38 million Afghans.

Understandably, each side faces a dilemma. The Taliban's power currently rests in the hands of the battle-hardened faction, for whom compromising on issues such as girls' education, inclusive governance and terrorist sanctuaries remains anathema. On the other hand, legitimizing the regime of Taliban hard-liners who are not ready to meet global expectations on these issues bears a political cost for the US and EU. Consequently, the key challenge today is how to expand the scope of the international relief effort in Afghanistan amid the persisting dilemmas of its contending parties.

The UN relief agencies and nongovernmental organizations that are providing emergency food supplies and health and education services in Afghanistan can only expand their humanitarian operations if they are exempted from international sanctions against the Taliban under UN Security Resolution 1988 of 2011. These sanctions also restrict the ability of international financial institutions to fund global relief operations. Therefore, unless this legal lacuna is done away with, Afghanistan's humanitarian woes are likely to worsen.

It is in this grim situation that Saudi Arabia has taken the initiative to involve the OIC in the Af-

ghan emergency. The organization has a network of institutions for this purpose, including the Islamic Development Bank. Pakistan also has a valid reason to host the OIC ministerial session, as it fears grave consequences from the unprecedented Afghan crisis.

In the post-Arab spring period, the OIC has taken a proactive stance on conflicts in the Muslim world, from civil wars in Syria and Libya to Muslim repression in Myanmar and Kashmir. This month's extraordinary meeting in Islamabad will surely come up with tangible pledges of humanitarian aid for the Afghan people. However, the occasion can better serve their cause by also reminding the US and its European allies of their responsibility and suggesting pathways for a viable global response.

Since it was the US that led Afghanistan into its present mess through an unwinnable war, it must now help the UN relief agencies and NGOs extend their humanitarian operations in the country. This can be done by revising UNSC Resolution 1988 to exempt these operations from the sanctions regime. The same relief could be granted to international financiers like the World Bank for the disbursement of Afghan relief funds. This would help mitigate the humanitarian crisis and prevent renewed civil war and future terrorism.

Europe is already facing a daunting migration crisis, which is exposing its claim as a champion of human rights. For now, the Afghan exodus is limited to neighboring countries, with Iran and Pakistan granting only partial access to the incoming Afghan citizens with appropriate visas stamped in their passports. The rest have shut their borders. But, faced with a choice between starvation and migration, thousands of fleeing Afghans risk their lives and are smuggled into these two countries. Many of them will soon be knocking on European doors — a compelling factor for the EU to act now.

The Taliban must also receive a resolute message from the OIC gathering: Respect the teachings of Islam on the rights of women and minorities and the rejection of extremism and terrorism or be ready to be shunned even by the community of Muslims.

Pakistan-Finland ties: A journey of friendship

Zahoor Ahmed



The relations between Pakistan and Finland, which were established in January 1951, have always been characterized by mutual respect, understanding and collaboration

DECEMBER 6 is the national day of the Republic of Finland. On this day, Finns everywhere fly their blue and white flag and bake delicious cakes with blue and white icing. Traditionally, Finnish families light two candles in each window of their homes to signify offering hospitality to wanderers.

While Finland has a harsh climate and small population of 5.5 million, the country is one of the most advanced nations in the world primarily on account of its achievements in the fields of education and innovation. Today, it has a highly industrialized, largely free-market economy with one of the highest per capita output and standard of living in the EU. Finland also ranked at the top of the UN's annual World Happiness Report 2020. It is also world leader in democracy and gender equality. The country became the first European nation in 1906 to give women right to vote and run the Parliament. Finland is blessed with clean air, abundant forests, spellbinding Northern Lights and richest water resources including over 185,000 lakes. The country is one of the least exposed to natural disasters because of its 73% forests and environment friendly quality. The relations between Pakistan and Finland, which were established in January 1951, have always been characterized by mutual respect, understanding and collaboration. This year, the two countries are also celebrating seven decades of their diplomatic ties. To commemorate this landmark, the two Foreign Ministers exchanged letters of felicitation which capture the strength and breadth of Pakistan-Finland relations.

In his letter of felicitation to his Finnish counterpart, Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said the marking of 70 years was an important milestone in the political and diplomatic history of the long-standing and friendly relations. He termed Finland an important development partner of Pakistan and expressed confidence that the collaboration would grow stronger. Finnish Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto in his letter to Foreign Minister of Pakistan said the two sides in recent years witnessed a growing interest towards cooperation in education, Information Technology, digital solutions and sustainable management of natural resources. He mentioned that a number of leading Finnish experts were active in Pakistan particularly in areas of energy and IT sectors. He also said Pakistani textiles, food products and sports goods were well-known and appreciated in Finland. There have also been a number of significant high-level contacts between the leadership of the two countries recently. In September 2021, Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mehmood Qureshi met his Finnish counterpart in New York on the sidelines of the 76th session of the UN General Assembly. The two Foreign Ministers discussed bilateral relations as well as regional and global issues of mutual in-

terest. Earlier in November 2020, the two Foreign Ministers also had a telephonic conversation in which the two sides appreciated the positive developments in bilateral relations and exchanged views on a broad range of subjects including Covid-19 pandemic, Afghan peace process, situation in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu & Kashmir (IIOJ&K), and cooperation at multilateral fora. Pakistan also participated in the Conference on Afghanistan hosted by Finland in 2020. Finland appreciates Pakistan's key role in evacuating people who were on Finland's list from Afghanistan.

Both countries are also regularly holding bilateral political consultations which allow them to review the entire spectrum of bilateral relations and identify opportunities and possibilities for further cooperation in political, economic, trade, investment, education and cultural fields. Pakistan-Finland Parliamentary Friendship Groups have been established in both houses of the Pakistani Parliament and Pakistan-Finland Business Council is operating for many years. Finland has been one of the major historic troop contributors to the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP). People-to-people contacts between the two countries are gradually expanding as well. Since 2015, Pakistan has included Finland in the list of countries with which it permits dual nationality. The Pakistani community in Finland, estimated at around 5000 persons includes a number of outstanding Pakistanis, particularly in the field of ICT, working in Finnish companies and enterprises and each year hundreds of brilliant Pakistani young men and women study at Finnish universities.

Education is key area for collaboration. The National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTEC), Pakistan and Turku Vocational Institute (TAI), Finland signed an MoU in January 2021, which covers training of trainers and job specific trainings, mutual accreditation of technical and vocational training institutes, establishment of joint institutions and exchange of trainers, mutual cooperation in development and implementation of virtual training modules, and blended learning. As a follow up on the MoU on 26 May 2021, the Pak Finnish Institute of Hospitality and Culinary Arts was established in Lahore.

The two countries have also started cooperation for training of teachers in the world renowned Finnish pedagogical methods for which an MoU was signed on 1 July 2021 between Finnish Global Education Solutions (FGES) and Iqra University School System (IUS). Finland-Pakistan Business Council (FPBC) was established on 31 October 1985 and is one of the oldest Business Councils operating in Pakistan. It has held several Finland-Pakistan Business Summits. Pakistani and Finnish companies have been collaborating in sustainability energy, ICT & telecom, construction, textiles, dairy products, agriculture, paper industry, fertilizers, banking.

Major Finnish companies including Nokia, SSM, Wärtsilä, Stora-Enso and Vaisala are operating in Pakistan. A Finnish company Stora Enso has established a joint venture called Bulleh Shah Packaging Limited with Packages Pakistan. The current bilateral trade volume of USD 90 Million is gradually increasing this year despite Covid. While Pakistani exports to Finland in 2020-2021 grew by 14 % amounting to USD 31.9 Million as compared to 2019-2020 and remittances were up by 29.8% in 2020-2021 as compared to previous year, there is much unexplored potential for further deepening and broadening our economic relations.

I also visited Heureka Science Centre, a leading Science Museum, which has collaboration with the Science Centre recently inaugurated by the President of Pakistan. I had the pleasure of meeting with a number of dynamic Pakistani entrepreneurs, researchers and high professionals based in Helsinki, who are contributing to the Finnish economy but at the same time enthusiastic to play their role in the development of Pakistan. As we celebrate 70 years of our friendship, the future of Pakistan's relations with Finland is bright. We share aspirations for developing these relations based upon innovation, technology and quest for education.

— The writer is Ambassador of Pakistan to Sweden and Finland

Biden administration is enabling India's HR abuses

- Sunita Viswanath
- Rasheed Ahmed
- Peter Cook

Blinken's refusal to designate India as CPC contradicts and is inconsistent with his own position on India. Just seven months ago, he released the US Department of State's global religious freedom report that indicted India for severe religious persecution

ON November 17, United States Secretary of State Antony Blinken named 10 countries on the US government's official list of the world's worst offenders of religious freedom. A notable omission was India. The announcement comes in response to recommendations from the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF), a bi-partisan and autonomous federal panel. For two years in a row, the USCIRF has recommended that India be listed as a Country of Particular Concern (CPC) along with 13 others. Last year, then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo refused to include India on that list. This year, Blinken also did not accept USCIRF's recommendation on India. It is no secret that the US considers India a critical ally. The US Department of State's website says

that "The United States and India have shared interests in promoting global security, stability, and economic prosperity through trade, investment, and connectivity." It adds that India is America's "major defence partner" and the two nations have "deepened cooperation on maritime security, interoperability, and information sharing".

Yet, being a critical ally has not kept Saudi Arabia off the CPC list for years. The Department of State says the kingdom has a "longstanding security relationship" with the US and is its "largest foreign military sales (FMS) customer, with more than \$100 billion in active FMS cases". So why can't India be designated as CPC and targeted sanctioned imposed on its agencies and officials, as USCIRF has recommended, for its considerable human and religious rights abuses? Blinken's refusal to designate India as CPC contradicts and is inconsistent with his own position on India. Just seven months ago, he released the US Department of State's global religious freedom report that indicted India for severe religious persecution. It contained damning reports from the ground implicating members of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government and his affiliates from the 96-year-old Hindu nationalist organisation Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) in the persecution of religious minorities, especially Muslims and Christians. In fact, year after year, the Department of State's candid reporting on India has held no punches. In March, Blinken released a global human rights report recording "significant human rights issues" in India, including extrajudicial killings by the police, torture, arbitrary arrest and detention, violence against minorities, unjustified arrests or prosecution of journalists, and censorship and blocking of websites.

Yet, just weeks after taking office, President Joe Biden chose Modi as one of the world's first leaders to meet. It is ironic that barely days prior to that Biden-Modi virtual meeting, research organisation Freedom House released a report in which it documented India's democracy decline from "free" to "partly free". A week later, Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin flew to New Delhi on his

first foreign visit to discuss "shared goals" with Modi but failed to mention India's human rights abuses. In July, Blinken visited India to claim that "the US and India share a commitment to democratic values; this is part of the bedrock of our relationship and reflective of India's pluralistic society and history of harmony." Again, no mention of India's appalling human rights.

In September, the then US Charge d'Affaires Atul Keshap, an Indian American, met RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat, who holds no government position, but heads India's superstructure of religious persecution and calls for turning India into a Hindu nation. They discussed "India's tradition of diversity, democracy, inclusivity and pluralism". In October, weeks after the Taliban unexpectedly seized Afghanistan, Blinken's second-in-command, Deputy US Secretary of State Wendy Sherman, landed in New Delhi and promptly saluted India and the US as "thriving" democracies. Department of State officials claim that the US "privately" raises human rights issues with India. They point to Biden's invocation of Mahatma Gandhi's "message of nonviolence, respect, tolerance" at his meeting with Modi at the White House in September, and Vice President Kamala Harris telling Modi the US and India should "protect democracies".

This summit's emphasis on human rights can offer the opportunity to state in clear, public, and no uncertain terms the Biden administration's objections to the unacceptable persecution taking place in India so that the Indian government gets the point. We expect the president to be more forceful and less opaque in his criticism given the stated purpose of the conference. America's refusal to clearly say that India's escalating repression contradicts its long-held commitment to the ideals of rights, freedoms and liberties must not continue. Our own credibility as a democracy is undermined if we aid and abet the world's largest democracy in becoming the world's second and most autocratic society after China, which, of course, Blinken has re-designated as CPC.

— Courtesy Al Jazeera

Briefs

‘Sialkot incident will not harm...

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condolences, stating that the incident was unfortunate. Lauding the steps taken by the government of Pakistan, Vikrama said that a large number of people have been arrested since Friday, when the incident took place in Sialkot. "I am sure that the government of Pakistan will take steps to ensure that the family of Priyanta Deyawanda Kumar gets justice. This is a murder. The Sri Lankan government is sure that it [the incident] has nothing to do with Pakistan and Sri Lanka. We have seen that Pakistan has taken immediate action," he added. "We don't need to claim we're friends; Pakistan and Sri Lanka have social, defence, and commerce ties, and this incident will not impact the existing relationship," he said. He said that the remains of a 48-year old Sri Lankan citizen had been sent to Colombo.

Body of Priyantha flown to SL

FROM PAGE 01
the Punjab government were also present at the Cargo Complex of the airport. On the other hand, seven more people have been rounded up on suspicion of their involvement in the spine-chilling Sialkot incident. A spokesperson for the Punjab police relayed that they have so far apprehended 131 people, including 26 suspects who played the central role in the brutal murder of Sialkot factory manager Priyantha Kumara. The arrests were made with the help of CCTV footage and videos collected from social media. The spokesperson said Chief Minister Usman Buzdar and the inspector general of police are monitoring the investigation into the incident.

Pakistan tightens travel...

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Furthermore, passengers from Cat B countries need to have a negative PCR test report (maximum 48 hours prior to departure). The NCO stated that health authorities will also conduct random RAT testing of passengers coming from Cat B countries. "RAT negative cases will be allowed to proceed. RAT positive cases will be quarantined for 10 days. RT PCR test of all RAT positive quarantined passengers will be undertaken on the 8th day of quarantine. In case of a negative result, pax will be allowed to proceed home. However, in case of a positive result, passenger will either undergo additional quarantine period or will be shifted to hospital as per the advice of health authorities." For Category A countries, all inbound passengers need to be fully vaccinated with the same PCR requirement as Cat B and C countries.

‘Anti-inflation march’...

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Fazl said that the alliance had a "unanimous policy" over the resignations of lawmakers from assemblies, but PDM would decide when is the right time to "use this card". Responding to a question about the date of the protest, he said: "We are also a part of the nation. The nation owns the state, and Islamabad is the place to resolve commoners' problem." "First see what happens on March 23 and then wait and watch," he said when asked whether the march would be held for a day or would it continue over a prolonged period. To a reporter's question on boycotting from the assemblies' sessions and seeking PPP and ANP's help, Fazl said matters which are highlighted in the media might not necessarily be discussed in PDM's meetings. All the meeting's participants condemned the Sialkot incident, noting that no card allows anyone to resort to violence and take the law into their hands. "Such incidents should be curbed, and it cannot be appreciated in any manner," he added.

Turkey strives to improve ties with Gulf countries: Erdogan

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan hosted Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan (MBZ), as Turkey and the UAE seek to repair their relations and increase economic cooperation

DNA

ANKARA: Turkey aims to further enhance its relations with all Gulf countries in addition to Qatar, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Monday, before heading to Doha to attend a high-level committee meeting. Speaking to reporters at the airport, Erdogan said Turkey aims to maintain and strengthen its solidarity and unity with all Gulf countries. "We welcome all diplomatic efforts directed toward reopening doors of dialogue and eliminating misunderstandings," Erdogan said. Last month, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan hosted Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan (MBZ), as

Turkey and the UAE seek to repair their relations and increase economic cooperation. The visit by the crown prince, seen as the de facto leader and the force behind the UAE's foreign policy posture, was his first official trip to Turkey since 2012, and the highest-level visit by an Emirati official since relations hit a low as the countries have battled for regional influence and backed opposing sides in conflicts. The crown prince's visit to Turkey was viewed as part of a wider effort by the UAE to recalibrate its foreign policy following an unsuccessful attempt to isolate fellow Gulf state Qatar in 2017. Turkish officials described MBZ's visit as the "beginning of a new era" following years of hostility

World should be sensitive in helping Afghanistan: FM

FOREIGN DESK

DOHA: The international community needs to deliver humanitarian aid to the Afghan people, Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu said Monday, underlining that the sensitivity shown by Qatar and Turkey should set an example. Speaking at a joint news conference with his Qatari counterpart Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani in Doha ahead of the seventh meeting of the Turkey-Qatar Supreme Strategic Committee, Çavuşoğlu said: "The Afghan people need serious humanitarian aid. The international community needs to deliver this humanitarian aid to the Afghan people, regardless of political motives. Qatar's and Turkey's sensitivity should set an example in this regard." Underlining that he is working in coordination with institutions of both countries to deliver additional humanitarian aid, Çavuşoğlu said Turkey has allocated funds that were transferred for providing humanitarian aid. "Turkish Maarif Foundation continues its educational activities. It keeps many of its schools there open and 10 of these are schools for girls," he added.

ity after Ankara blamed the UAE for financing the 2016 coup plotters in Turkey and undermining Turkish interests in Libya. The UAE media also said that the visit will carry the relations between Turkey and Arab countries into a new period. Praising strong relations with Qatar, the president said the two countries signed some 69 agreements in the military, political, economic and cultural spheres, in line with the history of friendly relations. He highlighted that both countries are special in the sense that they have been able to preserve their stance in the face of regional obstacles in the past several years. He said Turkey and Qatar will further enhance ties

with more agreements to be signed on Tuesday following the committee meeting with Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani in Doha. Erdogan will also visit the joint military command headquarters in Doha and speak with soldiers and commanders. Turkey, an ally of Qatar, rushed to support Doha amid the embargo imposed by the UAE and three Arab states in 2017 and has since deepened its military ties with Qatar. The Arab quartet at the time demanded a series of reversals by Qatar, including the expulsion of Turkish troops, but Doha rejected the demands, which it saw as violations of its sovereignty. The dispute was resolved earlier this year with an agreement signed in Saudi Arabia.

Fazl wants to derail...

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expressing hope that the date would be changed. He said people like Nawaz Sharif and her daughter Maryam Nawaz were supporting Maulana as all of them were not part of the system. Those who were part of the system did not support and preach such policies, he maintained. He said in today's meeting of the PDM, those who were part of the Parliament expressed different point of view from those who were not part of the system.

PM warns of climate...

FROM PAGE 01
provide a safe environment for our coming generations. He said that our governments "Clean & Green Pakistan" initiative was launched with our youth in mind and that the responsibility of providing a clean future rests on the shoulders of present generation. The Prime Minister highlighted that Pakistan's contributions to global environmental pollution sources is negligible but the impacts of climate change are huge for Pakistan. He added that "Pakistan is not part of the problem yet we want to be part of the solution". The Prime Minister accorded in-principle approval to the concept plan of "Ecological Restoration of the Indus Basin for a Climate Resilient future". The concept plan comprises of conservation and pollution control measures to be taken in up-stream, Indus plain and down-stream of the Indus River Basin.

FM apprises UNSC of IIOJK...

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the international media have regularly reported on and expressed concerns about the increasing intimidation, harassment and reprisal attacks by Indian occupation forces against Kashmiri human rights defenders, journalists and civil society actors. The Foreign Minister has highlighted, in particular, the recent arrest on trumped-up charges of a renowned Kashmiri human rights activist Khurram Parvez, in complete disregard for basic human rights principles, norms and international law. The Foreign Minister has reiterated that Pakistan is prepared to engage constructively with a view to halting the oppression in IIOJK, avoiding conflict, and realizing a just and peaceful settlement of IJK dispute.

Russia beat Croatia to win third Davis Cup



DNA

MADRID: Russia claimed a third Davis Cup title on Sunday after Daniil Medvedev and Andrey Rublev both won their singles matches to defeat Croatia. Medvedev's 7-6 (9/7), 6-2 victory over Marin Cilic came after Rublev had earlier prevailed 6-4, 7-6 (7/5) over Borna Gojo, giving Russia an unassailable 2-0 lead in Madrid. Croatia's greatest chance would have been in the doubles with world number one pair Nikola Mektić and

Mate Pavić, but they always needed a surprise in the singles to take the tie to the final rubber. Instead, Medvedev and Rublev ranked two and five in the world respectively, held their nerve to make it nine out of 10 victories for Russia's power pair in the tournament. "I can say that for all of us it's very important to win here. It's still the Davis Cup," said Medvedev in a press conference. "We still see Novak (Djokovic) playing. Rafa (Nadal) won it last time. "No matter the format, the best players in the world

are happy to represent their country. It's Davis Cup and we are the winners of it. That's the most important thing." Cilic and Gojo were far from overwhelmed and, with Real Madrid's Luka Modrić supporting in the crowd, they rose to the occasion in a compelling final that in the end turned on two close tie-breaks. Russia has not won the Davis Cup since 2006 and failed to reach a single quarter-final between 2011 and 2018. But Medvedev and Rublev are the leaders of a new generation of talent that could enjoy repeat successes in the future, with Aslan Karatsev and Karen Khachanov also ranked in the top 30. Victory for the men also completes a Russian one-two after the women's team won the Billie Jean King Cup in Prague last month. The last country to do the double was the Czech Republic in 2012. Croatia were no strangers to this stage, this was their third Davis Cup final five years after their 2016 defeat to Argentina and 2018 victory over France. But Russia were firm favourites and it was always going to take something special either from Cilic, the 33-year-old former US Open champion, or Gojo, who is ranked 279th in the world. Cilic had chances in the first set, including a breakpoint on Medvedev's second serve at 4-3 but an aggressive backhand return hit the tape, and instead it went to a tie-break. They changed over with Cilic up 4-2 after a Medvedev forehand skimmed wide but Medvedev won four out of the next five points to create a set point on the Cilic serve.

ITF chief says will not boycott China over Peng

PARIS: International Tennis Federation president David Haggerty said Sunday that his organisation will not boycott China over the Peng Shuai affair as he wants to punish a billion people, not a few. The WTA, which controls the women's game, last week suspended all tours in China amid what its chairman called "serious doubts" about the safety of Chinese players. Peng Shuai, a top Chinese player, was accused of sexual assault by a former boyfriend, Peng Shuai's lawyer said. WTA chair and CEO Steve Simon said the move – which could cost the WTA hundreds of millions of dollars – had the "full support" of the tour's board of directors. However, the ATP, which governs men's tennis, has refused to follow the WTA's example. Now the ITF, the overall ruling body of tennis, has also rejected such a move. "As the governing body of tennis, we stand in support of all women's rights," Haggerty told the BBC. "The allegations (of Peng) need to be looked into, and we will continue to work behind the scenes and directly to bring this to resolution. "But you have to remember that the ITF is the governing body of the sport worldwide, and one of the things that we are responsible for is grassroots development. "We don't want to punish a billion people, so we will continue to run our junior events in the country and our senior events that are there for the time being." Peng, a 35-year-old Wimbledon, and French Open doubles champion have alleged that former Chinese vice-premier Zhang Gaoli, now in his 70s, forced her into sex during a years-long on-and-off relationship. – APP



World reacts to ‘politically motivated’ jailing of Suu Kyi

LONDON: International bodies, countries and rights groups have slammed the Myanmar junta over the conviction and sentencing of ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi to four years in prison, demanding her release. Suu Kyi, 76, has been detained since the generals staged a coup and ousted her government on February 1, ending the Southeast Asian country's brief period of democracy. She has since been hit with a series of charges, including violating the official secrets act, corruption and electoral fraud, and she faces decades in jail if convicted on all counts.

Here are reactions from countries and alliances around the world to Monday's announcement. The UN rights chief Michelle Bachelet has called the trial a "sham"



in a statement on Monday. "The conviction of the State Counsellor following a sham trial in secretive proceedings before a military-controlled court is nothing but politically-motivated," said Bache-

let. The European Union has condemned the junta's jailing of ousted Suu Kyi as "politically motivated" and a "blatant violation of human rights". In a statement from EU foreign policy chief Josep-

Borrell on behalf of the 27 member states, the EU said Suu Kyi's sentence "represents another step towards the dismantling of the rule of law". Association of Southeast Asian Nations' Parliamentarians for Human Rights have called the charges against Suu Kyi and other detained MPs as "nothing more than an excuse by the junta to justify their illegal power grab." "This sentencing is further evidence that, for the sake of its own credibility and future, the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) must hold the line against this illegal takeover. Myanmar's junta is trying to "suffocate freedoms" with its jailing of Suu Kyi for incitement and breaching Covid-19 regulations, Amnesty International has said. – Agencies

PAK vs BAN: Day 3 called off without a ball bowled

DHAKA: The third day of the second Test match between Pakistan and Bangladesh has also been called off due to showers without a ball being bowled in Dhaka. Pakistan remain on 188/2 from the previous day, which also ended earlier after rain halted play. Babar Azam and Azhar Ali remain unbeaten on the crease having scored 71 and 52 respectively. Both batsmen have scored half-centuries after Tajul Islam broke through the Abid Ali-Abdullah Shafique partnership by dismissing both openers. Babar and Azhar stabilised Pakistan's innings and took the attack to the opposition by dispatching bad balls to the boundaries whilst simultaneously managing quick singles. Rain put a damper on day 2 of the Dhaka Test as well, with play eventually being called off Sunday following multiple delays and resumptions. The starting time for the fourth day is 9:30 am (Bangladesh time) with 98 overs scheduled to be bowled tomorrow. – DNA

Barca, Atletico in danger of CL exit

WEB DESK

PARIS: Xavi Hernandez faces his first critical test as Barcelona coach with the club at risk of failing to make the Champions League knockout stages for the first time in two decades. A goalless draw at home to Benfica last month left Barca with their destiny in their own hands, but with a much trickier final game away to Group E winners Bayern Munich. Spanish champions Atletico Madrid have their work cut to secure one of the five unclaimed last-16 tickets after three defeats on the spin, while all four teams remain in the hunt in an unpredictable Group G. AFP Sport looks at what's at stake going into the final round of Champions League group games: Barca finds themselves on the ropes ahead of Wednesday's trip to Germany, but it could have been far worse were it not for Benfica forward Haris Seferovic's glaring miss in stoppage time at Camp Nou. Bayern is one of three teams with a

perfect record in this season's competition, and Robert Lewandowski's perceived Ballon d'Or snub may give the star striker extra incentive to prove a point. Xavi suffered his first defeat as Barca coach on Saturday against Real Betis. He rested key players with a view to the game in Munich, where victory would guarantee Barca go through as runners-up in Group E, extending their 20-year run of reaching the knockout phase. A youthful Xavi was establishing himself as a mainstay of the midfield when Barca exited in the first group stage of the 2000-01 competition. Failure to secure maximum points would open the door for Benfica to pip them to second place, with the Portuguese needing to beat Dynamo Kiev in Lisbon. Porto, AC Milan, and Atletico will battle it out for the second qualification spot behind Liverpool in Group B. Two-time former European champions Porto hold a one-point edge over both rivals ahead of the visit of Atletico. Milan hosts a Liverpool side

that Jurgen Klopp could rotate heavily ahead of a busy festive schedule. Last season's Europa League winners Villarreal, beaten at home by two late Manchester United goals on matchday five, go to Atalanta knowing they will advance at the expense of the Italians if they avoid defeat in Bergamo. Austrian champions Salzburg appeared to be coasting through after accruing seven points in three games, but back-to-back away losses mean they could still miss out. Lille tops Group G with eight points and will progress if they get a point at Wolfsburg. The Germans are last in the section but victory would send them through instead. Salzburg can seal a knockout berth with a draw at home to Sevilla, who in turn would qualify if they win. Eleven clubs are assured of their place in the last-16 draw on December 13, five of which have already clinched the top spot. Erik ten Hag's impressive Ajax will attempt to complete a perfect group stage for the first time in club history at home to Sporting, certain of

second above Borussia Dortmund irrespective of Tuesday's results. Manchester City cannot be caught by Paris Saint-Germain in Group A, while Real Madrid has a two-point lead over Inter Milan in Group D ahead of their Bernabeu showdown. Holders Chelsea, who go to Zenit Saint Petersburg for their final Group H game, will nail down the top spot if they match Juventus' result at home to Swedish outfit Malmö. Ralf Rangnick made a winning start to his spell as United's interim manager and is safe in the knowledge his team will move on as winners of Group F come what may against Switzerland's Young Boys. All third-placed clubs will drop into the Europa League, but a revised format now sees them face the group runner-ups from the second-tier tournament in a play-off round before the last 16. Sheriff Tiraspol, losers of three straight games after shocking Real in September, will continue their European adventure in the Europa League, as will Dortmund and Zenit.

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Briefs

Pope ends visit to Greece

WEB DESK

ATHENS: Pope Francis on Monday wraps up a landmark three-day visit to Greece which has been marked by his calls for better treatment of migrants in Europe and a visit to asylum seekers on the island of Lesbos.

After a last meeting with young people at a Catholic school, the pope is due to leave Athens to return to Rome at the end of the morning. Since his arrival in Greece on Saturday, Francis has met with the head of the Greek Orthodox Church and visited the Mavrovouni tent camp on Lesbos, where he called the neglect of migrants the "shipwreck of civilisation". Following his visit to the migration flashpoint, he celebrated mass for some 2,000 faithful in Athens, where he urged respect for the "small and lowly".

In 2016, Francis visited the sprawling Moria camp on Lesbos, when the island was the main gateway for migrants heading to Europe. His visit to Mavrovouni was shorter than in 2016 but he was warmly welcomed by a crowd of migrants at the camp, which houses nearly 2,200 asylum seekers. People later gathered in a tent to sing songs and psalms to the pontiff, who listened to them, visibly moved. "I am trying to help you," Francis told one group through his interpreter. — APP

Govt releases Rs 936 mln for aviation projects

ISLAMABAD: The government has released Rs 936.046 million during the first five months of the current fiscal year, under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP 2021-22) to execute 17 different projects of the aviation sector. The funds amounting to Rs 3,558.20 million would be spent to advance the projects and improve aviation-related services across the country.

As per the PSDP document, an amount of Rs 11.077 million has been allocated for construction of double-storey Ladies Hostel/ Barrack with the provision of the third storey along with Mess, Recreation Hall and allied facilities at Allama Iqbal International Airport, Rs 37.581 million for construction 2X double-storey Barrack with the provision of the third storey for Corporal to Inspectors and Assistant Director along with separate Mess and allied facilities, Recreation Hall at Quetta Airport, Rs 20 million for construction of Airport Security Force (ASF) Camp at Islamabad International Airport and Rs50 million for construction of Barrack accommodation for ASF personnel along with Mess and allied facilities, Ladies Rest Room MT, Store, Kote Magazine, Quarter Guard and OC Accommodation/Room at Skardu Airport. — APP

Mourners defy curfew to bury 14 civilians

NEW DELHI: Hundreds of mourners defied a curfew Monday to bury 14 civilians shot dead by the Indian army during a botched ambush and confrontation with a crowd angered by the attack. An elite military commando unit shot dead six coal miners returning to their homes in remote northeastern Nagaland state on Saturday, believing they were targeting insurgents.

Another eight people were killed by troops when they were confronted by a furious crowd, with a soldier also killed and a military vehicle set alight. Hundreds of locals carried the victims' coffins to a public ground in Mon district to conduct prayers, ignoring a round-the-clock curfew and internet blackouts imposed after the violence. The mourners were later joined by Nagaland chief minister Nipuih Rio, who has slammed the military over the killings and ordered an investigation. At least two protesters were shot dead on Sunday after an angry crowd attacked and partially set alight an army installation in the region. — APP



NUR-SULTAN: At the Akorda Residence, an official welcoming ceremony was held for the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev who is on a state visit to Kazakhstan. — DNA

Kazakh, Uzbek Presidents vow to strengthen bilateral ties

“Cooperation between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan is based on the desire to use the enormous potential of complementarity. We intend to unite our efforts and find new growth points”, Shavkat Mirziyoyev emphasized

NEWS DESK

NUR-SULTAN: After the main events of the state visit, a briefing was held for the media representatives, reports “Uzbek” media. According to the press service of the head of state, the Presidents expressed satisfaction with the results of the talks, which took place in a traditionally open, confidential and business atmosphere. During the talks, the whole range of issues of further developing the multifaceted, mutually beneficial cooperation between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan in all areas of the bilateral and regional agenda, was considered in detail. President Shavkat Mirziyoyev once again congratulated the people of Kazakhstan on the 30th anniversary of independence. It was emphasized that in recent years, tremendous changes have been taking place in relations between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan based on friendship, good-neighborli-

ness and strategic partnership. The Leader of Uzbekistan noted that today a historic decision has been made – cooperation has been raised to the level of allied relations, which fully meets and proceeds from the long-term interests of fraternal peoples. “Cooperation between Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan is based on the desire to use the enormous potential of complementarity. We intend to unite our efforts and find new growth points”, Shavkat Mirziyoyev emphasized. Satisfaction was expressed with the results of trade and economic partnership, which is a priority area of cooperation. Since the beginning of this year, the trade turnover has grown by almost 40 percent, and a record high of \$4 billion is expected. During the talks, the goal was determined to increase the trade turnover to 5 billion the next year, and in the long term, to bring it to 10 billion. It was noted that to expand the supply of agricultural products, the parties agreed to

create agricultural clusters, wholesale distribution and logistics centers, and to promote the Agroexpress project. The importance of the agreements reached in industrial cooperation and interregional collaboration was emphasized. There are already good examples – the assembly of cars, buses and agricultural machinery in Kostanay, the production of textile products and electrical equipment in Turkistan and Shymkent. Joint projects are being implemented in Uzbekistan in industry, energy, chemistry, construction, banking and others. Following the business events held on the eve of the visit, new investment and trade agreements worth about \$6 billion were signed. “There have not been such indicators yet. And all these are solid agreements that form a good basis for the future”, Shavkat Mirziyoyev said. It is planned to implement projects for the construction of the Uchquduq –Kyzylorda railroad and highway, as well as the Turk-

estan – Shymkent – Tashkent high-speed railroad to expand the potential of the transport and transit sector. The parties agreed to actively promote green energy projects, jointly introduce the latest water-saving technologies, conduct joint forest plantations in the Aral Sea region and work with international donors. Agreements in the spheres of culture, science and education, as well as healthcare and tourism, were also noted. “In the current difficult times, culture and spirituality are gaining even greater importance, having a beneficial effect on the minds and hearts of people, especially the younger generation”, Shavkat Mirziyoyev emphasized. In this regard, during the talks, an agreement was reached on holding regularly the Year of Uzbekistan in Kazakhstan and the Year of Kazakhstan in Uzbekistan. Next year, the first Youth Congress and the Creative and Scientific Intelligentsia Forum will be organized in Uzbekistan.



PARIS: World Cuisine Week held in Paris. Several countries participated. 2 Pakistani cookbook authors Shehar Bano Rizvi and Sayeda Leghari received awards for their books. Pakistani food items were also presented. Cd'A Amjad Qazi met organizers and thanked them for appreciating Pak cuisine. — DNA

Public-private co-op stressed to boost food production

ISLAMABAD: President SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry Iftikhar Ali Malik Monday stressed the need for renewed collaboration and public private partnership to accelerate food production to offset the ever increasing impending threat of food insecurity in the world. Speaking as a chief guest at the annual rice dealers conference held under aegis of Guard Agriculture Research and Services, he said global food security is at a tipping point and large portion of global population is hungry today than 2015. He said the role of public private partnership is improving global food security. He said the prime objective of public private partnership is to use market mechanism to improve Agri food systems, thereby reducing food insecurity and advancing rural development. He said rice is the second most important crop of Pakistan which promise economic prosperity for growers and helps earn billions of rupees through its export. Iftikhar Ali Malik said Pakistan is the 10th largest producer and the 4th largest exporter of rice. He said

Pakistan's export make up more than 8% of the world's total rice trade. He lauded the four decades long efforts of guard Agri research and services division for introducing 11 government approved new varieties of hybrid rice for commercial cultivation. Former President Lahore Chamber of Commerce and Industry Shahzad Ali Malik who is also Managing Director Guard Rice speaking on the occasion said “we are the pioneer in developing extra long grain varieties in Pakistan” and established 5 research stations all over the country in rice growing areas one each at Golarchi, Larkana, Muridkey, Pakpattan and Lahore for conducting latest research in evolving new varieties braving heat resistance, drought and salinity tolerance. He announced “we have also successfully introduced two tomato and chilli each hybrid varieties “and will soon launch in Pakistan after approval from government. “We are again the first in Pakistan for introducing hybrid wheat and conducting extensive trials every year”, he added. — APP

OGRA hears petition for revenue requirement

ISLAMABAD: Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) held a public hearing on Sui Southern Gas Company Limited (SSGC) petition for review of its Estimated Revenue Requirement for the financial year 2021-22 in Karachi on Monday.

“The SSGC has projected a shortfall in revenue requirement of Rs18,399 million for FY 2021-22 and sought an increase in its average prescribed price by 58.42 per MMBTU [Million British Thermal Unit] effective from July 1, 2021, and estimated RLNG [Regasified Liquefied Natural Gas] cost of services at Rs30.48 per MMBTU,” said a news release issued here. After admitting the petition, the authority issued notices on November 23 to all stakeholders for the hearing public hearing, providing an opportunity to all consumers, the general public and stakeholders to participate and give their input and comments on the petition. The hearing was held under the chairmanship of Masroor Khan (OGRA Chairman) and two members [Member-Gas and Member-Oil] by providing ample opportunity to all the stakeholders and reserved their decision which would be passed in due course of time. — APP

Thailand confirms first Omicron case

BANGKOK: Thailand said Monday that the country has found its first case of Omicron variant of COVID-19 after confirming that a U.S. visitor arriving from Spain tested positive. The 35-year-old traveler, flying from Spain by transiting through Dubai, entered with a negative RT-PCR test, but on-arrival test returned a positive result on Dec. 1 and further test result confirmed the presence of the new Omicron strain, the Ministry of Public Health announced Monday.

According to the ministry, the passenger, currently under treatment at a hospital in Bangkok, was asymptomatic, and there has been no high-risk contacts as the patient has taken strict precautions during his trip. On Monday, Thailand reported 4,000 new COVID-19 cases and 22 more deaths during the last 24 hours, raising the total number of infections to more than 2.14 million while that of cumulative fatalities to 20,966, according to the ministry. — APP

Myanmar jungle rebels struggle for cash and guns

FOREIGN DESK

KAYAH STATE: Young anti-coup recruits line up at a secret camp in Myanmar, hands behind their heads and stomachs braced, waiting for a drill instructor to deliver a punch to toughen them up for their fight against the military. Since the February coup, dozens of “people's defence forces” (PDFs) have sprung up across the Southeast Asian country to fight back against the generals' putsch and bloody crackdown. The college dropouts and villagers that fill their ranks have dealt some painful blows to junta troops with guerrilla ambushes and mine attacks against the heavily-armed military. But while analysts say they have surprised the army with their effectiveness, the new militias are short of serious weaponry and – lacking the income from the illegal drug and jade trade enjoyed by more established rebel groups – short of money to buy it.

At the camp hidden in a clearing in thick jungle in eastern Myanmar's Kayah state, Htet Htet struggles with the training regime for recruits to the Karen Nationalities Defence Force (KNDF), one of the new civilian militias. “I can't do push-ups and my hands hurt,” the 18-year-old told AFP in between crawling through the mud and walking on the stomachs of her comrades. “It's very tiring and I even cry sometimes.” She was in limbo after her end-of-school exams were cancelled following the coup, but found new resolve after a cousin was killed fighting against the army, and is now training to be a combat medic.

Indonesia volcano hampering rescue work

The biggest mountain on the island of Java thundered to life Saturday, ejecting a mushroom of volcanic ash high into the sky and raining hot mud as thousands of panicked people fled their homes. At least 15 were killed

AGENCIES

LUMAJANG: Indonesia's Mount Semeru spewed more ash on Monday, hampering the search for survivors as aerial images showed the extent of the devastation unleashed by the volcano's deadly weekend eruption. The biggest mountain on the island of Java thundered to life Saturday, ejecting a mushroom of volcanic ash high into the sky and raining hot mud as thousands of panicked people fled their homes. At least 15 were killed. Aerial photos showed entire streets filled with grey volcanic ash and mud, which had swallowed many homes and vehicles, including whole trucks. Indonesia's national disaster agency said 27 people were still missing. “I'm still hoping my son will be

found... Every time I hear victims have been found, I hope it is my son,” said Maskur Suhri of Sumbawuluh village, who was collecting palm tree sap when Semeru erupted. “There's a very small chance he survived... Maybe it's my son's fate, but I still hope he will be found, even just his body.” Fresh volcanic activity on Monday hampered search efforts, forcing rescue teams to pull out from some areas. “There was a small fresh eruption and it could endanger the evacuation teams,” said rescue worker Rizal Purnama. Dangerous thick plumes of smoke continued to emerge from areas blanketed by the volcanic ash, while rescuers in hardhats tried to dig through the mud to try and find survivors – and recover bodies. Their task was made more difficult as the volcanic debris had started to harden. “It's very difficult... with

simple tools,” Rizal Purnama said. “It is very likely bodies that have not been found are buried under the hot mudflow.” Other rescuers helped desperate villagers salvage their belongings from wrecked homes. Some locals lifted mattresses and furniture on their shoulders while others carried goats in their arms. Officials have advised locals not to travel within five kilometres (3.1 miles) of Semeru's crater, as the nearby air is highly polluted and could affect vulnerable groups. Ash from Semeru travelled up to four kilometres away after the Saturday eruption, Indonesia's geological agency reported. A sand mine company's office in Kampung Renteng village was buried after the eruption, trapping 15 people, according to foreman Hasim, 65, who like many Indonesians goes by one name.

“There's no news from them. Only one operator was rescued, he's now at the hospital with burns,” he told AFP. Hasim said he ran home after the eruption. “It was pitch dark,” he added. “It was only 3 pm but it looked like night.” Rescue officials said some were buried inside their vehicles, with no time to escape. Those who managed to find shelter recounted the horror after the eruption. Suwanti Ningsi and her daughter were trapped for five hours at home after the eruption. “I couldn't see anything, it was just like at night. Everybody was panicking,” said the 42-year-old. “I could only pray... for me and my daughter to be saved.” The Red Cross said it had rushed ambulances, medical teams, more than 65,000 surgical masks – to protect against ash and Covid – and

other emergency supplies to the affected areas. The ash and mud have also polluted the waterways around Mt Semeru, turning them into streams of dark grey sludge. Rain is forecast for the area, which could further hinder rescue work. There is also a risk of the rain causing ash sediment to form a new river of hot lava, the country's top volcanologist Surono told a local TV station. Semeru's last major eruption was in December 2020, which also forced thousands to flee and wrecked villages. Indonesia sits on the Pacific Ring of Fire, where the meeting of continental plates causes high volcanic and seismic activity, and the country has nearly 130 active volcanoes. In late 2018, an eruption in the strait between Java and Sumatra islands caused an underwater landslide and tsunami that killed more than 400 people.

Briefs

Iran says
hopes to
turn page in
UAE ties

TEHRAN: Iran expressed hopes Monday to turn the page in its ties with the United Arab Emirates during a rare visit by a senior official from the Gulf Arab country. UAE National Security Advisor Sheikh Tahnoon bin Zayed Al-Nahyan arrived in the country earlier Monday at the invitation of Ali Shamkhani, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council. His visit also included a meeting with ultraconservative Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi, state media said. The trip was the first of its kind since relations between the two countries were downgraded in 2016. That came after UAE ally Saudi Arabia severed ties with the Islamic republic after protesters attacked Saudi diplomatic missions over Riyadh's execution of a revered Shiite cleric. "Good relations with the countries of the region are one of the priorities of the new government's foreign policy," Raisi said during the meeting, according to the official news agency IRNA. "We therefore welcome the development of relations with the United Arab Emirates," he said. "Relations between two Muslim countries should not be affected by the interference of foreigners," Raisi added. Shiite Iran and the Sunni Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, along with its allies in the six-nation Gulf Cooperation Council, back opposite sides in various armed and political conflicts in the region, most notably in Yemen and Syria. — APP

PIA permitted
to operate
48 weekly
KSA flights

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan International Airline (PIA) Monday obtained permission for more flights to Saudi Arabia. The national airline obtained additional flights with the help of the Pakistani Ambassador to Saudi Arabia General (Retd) Bilal Akbar. PIA Country Manager also called on Saudi Arabia Civil Aviation Authority's high official Ali Rajab for extending the Pakistani airline's flights. In the light of PIA's Chief Executive Officer's directives, the national airline has increased its weekly flights from 33 to 48. As per the PIA schedule, these flights will include 8 flights to Dammam and Madinah each, 9 to Riyadh and 23 to Jeddah. The purpose of the additional flights is to get more Pakistanis back to work after the easing of COVID-19 restrictions. PIA CEO Air Marshal Arshad Malik said the Pakistani airline has always been at the forefront of meeting the travel needs of Pakistanis. Malik said they would get permission for more flights from Saudi Arabia if needed.

Russia
reports first
Omicron
infections

NEWS DESK

MOSCOW: Russia has registered its first two cases of the new Omicron variant of the coronavirus in its nationals returning from South Africa — where the variant was first detected — the country's health agency said on Monday. "Two citizens who returned to Russia from South Africa have been diagnosed with the Omicron coronavirus strain," the Rospotrebnadzor health agency said in a statement. The agency said that all Russians returning from South Africa and its neighbouring countries are tested at the border and placed in special observatories. Any people exhibiting symptoms or testing positive after a PCR test are then quarantined in infectious disease hospitals, Rospotrebnadzor said.

PM Imran Khan launches
Kamyab Jawan Sports Drive

Prime Minister says this talent hunt program is aimed at preparing the youth for international level competitions

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan launched the country's largest sports initiative Kamyab Jawan Sports Drive by lighting the torch at an impressive ceremony at Jinnah Stadium in Islamabad on Monday. A large number of youth from all the federating units attended by the ceremony. Under the Drive, four projects worth four billion rupees have been initiated to keep the youth engaged in extracurricular and sports activities. Speaking on the occasion, Prime Minister Imran Khan said this talent hunt program is aimed at preparing the youth for international level competitions. He said centers of excellence will be established to polish the immense talent of Pakistani youth in different fields. Imran Khan said a new sports policy has also been formulated to rid the old system of mafias. The Prime Minister pointed out that about seventy percent of the country's population is less than the age of thirty years and it has been decided to spread the network of grounds across the country. Play grounds will be established in each union council. He said Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has established three hundred play grounds and in Punjab two hundred and sixty grounds have been established. Imran Khan said the government is also making efforts to provide better education facilities to the youth. He said we have provided scholarships worth forty-seven billion rupees to the deserving students. In her remarks, Minister for Inter Provincial Coordination Fehmida Mirza said under the new sports policy, merit will be



adhered to so that our talented youth can get the opportunities to improve the country's image at the international level. Special Assistant on Youth Affairs Usman Dar said under Kamyab Jawan Program, one hundred billion rupees have been allocated by the Prime Minister to empower the youth and help them start their own businesses. He said ten billion rupees were set aside for

the skill development and so far two hundred thousand youth have benefited from it. Usman Dar expressed the confidence that Kamyab Jawan Sports drive would bring to fore the real heroes in different sports. Kamyab Jawan Sports Drive, in its first phase, consists of 12 games including hockey, cricket, football, handball, wrestling, weightlifting, squash, volleyball, ski, judo, box-

ing and Athletics. Under this drive, sports competitions will be held for young people aged 11 to 25, including women across the country. These competitions will be held at 25 places in all provinces, including Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu and Kashmir. Ten million youth will be selected in these competitions for world class professional training.

Putin heads to India
with eye on ties

NEW DELHI: Russian President Vladimir Putin arrived in India on Monday for just his second overseas trip since the pandemic, seeking to bolster military and energy ties with a traditional ally being courted by Washington. In its efforts to address a rising China, Washington has set up the QUAD security dialogue with India, Japan, and Australia, raising concerns in both Beijing and Moscow. India was close to the Soviet Union during the Cold War, a relationship that has endured, with New Delhi calling it a "special and privileged strategic partnership". "The friendship between India and Russia has stood the test of time," Modi told Putin at a virtual summit in September. "You have always been a great friend of India." It is only the Russian leader's second trip abroad since the coronavirus pandemic began — he skipped both the G20 and COP26 summits this year — after a June summit with US President Joe Biden in Geneva. "It's hugely symbolic," said Nandan Unnikrishnan from the New Delhi-based Observer Research Foundation think tank. "There has been a lot of speculation about the nature of the India-Russia relationship and whether it is fraying because of Russia's closeness with China and India's with the US, but this visit puts all that to rest." Nonetheless Putin has to contend with complex regional dynamics, with tensions mounting between New Delhi and Beijing, traditionally an ally of Moscow, following deadly clashes in a disputed Himalayan region. — Foreign Desk

China welcomes Taliban
decree on women rights

“As a friendly neighbor of Afghanistan, China hopes that the relevant laws and regulations will be implemented, including the protection of basic human rights including the rights of women and children”

WEB DESK

BEIJING: Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian Monday hoped that the latest decree on the protection of basic human rights and rights of women and children issued by Afghanistan supreme leader would be implemented. "As a friendly neighbor of Afghanistan, China hopes that the relevant laws and regulations will be implemented, including the protection of basic human rights including the rights of women and children," he said during his regular briefing held here.

"This is in the interests of the Afghan people and also the common expectation of the international community," he added. Zhao Lijian said the Chinese side had noticed that the leaders of the Afghan interim government issued the latest decree on the protection of women's rights and interests in marriage and family, stating that women were noble and free individuals and could not be used as trading objects. Women's consent must be obtained for marriage and no one should deprive them of the legal rights. It would encourage the cultivation of people's awareness of women's rights, and encourage writers and social activists to publish articles that were beneficial to women's rights, he added. The spokesperson remarked that this was a practical measure taken by the Afghan Taliban to protect the rights and interests of women, and worthy of welcome and encouragement. It may be mentioned here that Supreme Leader of the Taliban, Mullah Hibatullah Akhundzada, on Friday issued a decree regarding the rights of women in Afghanistan. The decree comprised of six elements, which was released by the spokesperson of the Islamic Emirate, Zabihullah Mujahid, stipulated that the relevant institutions must take steps in its implementation.

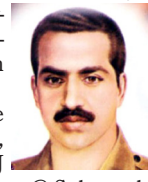
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ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Pakistan Tehreek Insaf (PTI) Central Executive Committee (CEC) led and coordinated by General (r) Naem Khalid Lodhi offering condolences at Sri Lankan High Commission over the tragic Sialkot incident. — DNA

Pak Army pays tribute
to Maj. Shabbir Sharif

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Army has paid tribute to Major Shabbir Sharif Shaheed on his 50th martyrdom anniversary for his gallantry and heroic action exhibited during the 1971 war in Sulemanki sector. "On his 50th martyrdom anniversary, we pay tribute to Maj Shabbir Sharif Shaheed, NH, a most gallant officer who received SJ in 1965 & NH during 71 War for heroic action @ Sulemanki Sector. His supreme sacrifice reminds us that no cause is nobler than defence of the motherland," the DG Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) in a tweet said. Major Shabbir, born on April 28, 1943 in Kunjrat, Gujrat District, was commissioned in Frontier Force Regiment on April 19, 1964. In December 1971 he, being a company commander, 6th Frontier Force Regiment, was ordered to capture high ground near Sulemanki Headworks defended by more than a company of the Assam Regiment supported by a squadron of tanks. Major Shabbir Sharif captured that area, killing forty-three Indian soldiers and destroying four tanks. Major Shabbir Sharif and his men repulsed counter attack by two enemy battalions. On December 6, 1971, he was directly hit by a tank shell and embraced martyrdom. — APP

Sialkot
incident does
not reflect
Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Perviz Khattak on Monday strongly condemned the mob lynching of an innocent Sri Lankan man identified as Priyantha Kumara who was beaten to death and burnt in Sialkot on December 3. The Minister of Defence took to Twitter to express sympathy for the victim and condolences to his family. Khattak on his official handle wrote, "I strongly condemn the brutal victimisation of the Sri Lankan who has been killed. The incident is not a reflection of Pakistan." He underlined that Pakistan denounced extremism in all its forms and manifestation. Khattak vowed, "Those responsible shall be brought to justice." — APP

SC throws
out FBR
plea against
Shehbaz,
Kalsoom

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court has thrown out the appeals of Federal Board of Revenue pertaining to additional wealth tax issued to PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif and Nawaz Sharif's late wife Kalsoom Nawaz. The court declared that both Shehbaz and Kulsoom had submitted their wealth tax from 1994 to 1998 but the FBR sent notices of the additional wealth tax. A three-judge bench of the apex court headed by Justice Umar Ata Bandial heard the case on Monday in Islamabad. The Supreme Court observed that the demand notice must be issued before the issuance of the additional wealth tax notices and the FBR failed to establish in the court that it had issued the demand notice. It further remarked that the additional tax notices were also dispatched after the submission of the wealth tax. The Sharif family had challenged the FBR notices in the Lahore High Court which declared the board's notices null and void. However, the FBR challenged the LHC verdict in the Supreme Court.

Inmates
escape from
judicial
lockup

DNA

LAHORE: Twelve inmates escaped from the district court of Lahore's Model Town on Monday after a scuffle broke out between two groups, police officials said. A total of 166 prisoners from two prisons were brought to the bakshi khana (judicial lockup), where the altercation occurred, SSP Operations Mustansar Feroze said. The police have so far been able to catch two of the escapees, while the official claimed that the rest of the prisoners would be caught by the end of the day. The prisoners broke wooden and steel chairs inside the lockup to make sticks out of them. Later, police opened the gate of the bakshi khana after they heard voices emanating from inside the lockup. In the footage, it can be seen that the prisoners used sticks and tube lights as weapons. A police official was injured after one prisoner pelted a stone at him. People involved in theft, robbery, and drug dealing are among the escapees, the SSP operations said. Two investigations teams have been constituted to probe the officials' negligence in the matter, which will be led by SSP operations, with the police officials saying that the duty officer — who is an inspector — and 12 other officers, who were responsible for their security were not in their positions. It is pertinent to mention here that CCTV cameras were installed in the bakshi khana, however, they were removed later as they had stopped functioning.

Sarwar for global concensus on challenges

Speaking on the conference theme “Meeting the Challenges for a Better World”, Governor Sarwar highlighted that multilateralism, peaceful co-existence to an international system is the only viable way forward to meet global challenges faced by the world

DNA

ISTANBUL: Governor of Punjab, Chaudhry Mohammad Sarwar was the keynote speaker in the opening session of the 12th Bosphorus Summit being held at Istanbul, Turkey. Speaking on the conference theme “Meeting the Challenges for a Better World”, Governor Sarwar highlighted that multilateralism, peaceful co-existence and commitment to an international system based on the UN Charter is the only viable way forward to meet global challenges faced by the world. He added that challenges arising out of the pandemic should be addressed through international cooperation and efforts be made to build a more productive and sustainable economy. The Governor underlined the strong need to address global challenges like climate crisis, inequality among and within nations, the retreat of democracy, xenophobia, intolerance and Islamophobia, unilateralism,

jingoism through collaboration in areas of geopolitics, economy, multilateralism, norms and technology. While elaborating on Pakistan's vision for future, Governor Sarwar highlighted Pakistan's successful Covid response, globally acknowledged social protection initiatives, leadership in climate change

agenda, commitment to be a catalyst for an era of geo-economics in the region and desire for peace and security. He stated that Pakistan seeks to reap the peace dividends of a central geopolitical location for its people, the region and beyond and it is time for the international communi-

ty to reaffirm its collective commitment to multilateralism. He reiterated that just resolution of longstanding issues of Palestine and Kashmir is paramount to international peace and security. Pakistan has always been an ardent supporter of an effective and efficient United Nations system, underpinned by the spirit of cooperative multilateralism and based on its three mutually reinforcing pillars — peace and security, development, and human rights. On Afghanistan, Governor Sarwar emphasized the need for active and effective engagement of international community to stave off humanitarian disaster in the country and bring peace after four decades of war. The summit is being attended by Volkan Bozkir 75th General Assembly President, Behgjet Pacolli Former President of Kosovo, Dr. Abdullah Matouq al Maatouq Special Advisor to Secretary General UN, Bisera Turkovic Minister of Foreign Affairs Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cengiz Ozgencil, ICP Founder and other notables.

