



Islamabad POST

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Blinkon vows more US military presence in Indo-Pacific region

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China vows to continue aiding Afghanistan

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Raducanu pulls out of Abu Dhabi event

Detailed News On Page-06



Briefs

PML-N must submit flats' receipt

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Farrukh Habib on Tuesday asked the Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) to submit receipts of four residential apartments purchased abroad before the court. The leaders of PML-N were continuously playing drama of video-audio clips to avoid hearing of court cases filed against Maryam Nawaz, he said while talking to a private television channel. Various delaying tactics were being used by PML-N during court hearings against Maryam Nawaz, he stated.

Ranatunga lauds PM's efforts

DNA

LAHORE: Former Sri Lanka cricket captain and politician Arjuna Ranatunga on Tuesday wrote a letter to Prime Minister Imran Khan and commended his government for the diligent efforts to deliver justice to the barbaric, violent crime committed against Priyantha Kumara Diyawadana. In a letter to PM, Ranatunga who has played international cricket with Imran Khan, pointed out the close ties between the two countries in both cricket and external affairs. He also extended his gratitude to Imran Khan and his government for the continued support and commitment shown towards Priyantha Diyawadana's family.

Shehbaz slams govt over inflation

DNA

LAHORE: Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Shehbaz Sharif said on Tuesday that the PTI government had given nothing but inflation, poverty and unemployment to the masses. "The present government has been taking revenge from the people for the last three years," he said, adding even those who had hoped that the government would deliver on its promises were also feeling disillusioned now.

Govt ready to provide EVMs to ECP: Fawad

Fawad says ECP should go ahead to issue tender; Rs 700 bn package announced for southern Balochistan



SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Chaudhary Fawad Hussain has said that the government was ready to provide Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), urging the poll body to go ahead and issue tender for the machines. He was briefing media about the decisions taken in meeting of federal cabinet held in Islamabad on Tuesday with Prime Minister Imran Khan in the chair. The government spokesperson said that the ECP should issue a tender carrying all the requirements and conditions needed for holding the next general elections through EVMs. Referring to the correspondence between the ECP and the ministry of science and technology, the information minister said that the government has informed the electoral body that the demonstration of the developed prototype of EVM was given to the commission on April 17 and later to

Continued on Page 06

Pak condemns extrajudicial killing of Kashmiris

ANSAR BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office Spokesperson has strongly condemned the killing of another two innocent Kashmiris by the Indian occupation forces in Srinagar as India continued its unabated extrajudicial killings of Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). In response to media queries highlighted the killing of innocent Kashmiris in fake encounters and staged cordon-and-search-operations by Indian occupation forces in IIOJK. "Resulting from an unrelenting killing spree and egregious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in IIOJK, 19 innocent Kashmiris have been martyred with impunity by Indian occupation forces in the last one month alone," he said. Two Kashmiris were martyred on December 13 in a fake encounter in Srinagar, IIOJK by Indian occupation forces. The Spokesperson said, "The gross and systematic human rights violations by the 'Hindutva inspired' BJP-RSS government in India warrant investigation by UN Commission of Inquiry (COI) as recommended by the Office of

Continued on Page 06

SBP raises interest rate by 100 bps

"Looking ahead, monetary policy settings are expected to remain broadly unchanged", SBP says

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: In line with the market expectation, Pakistan's central bank increased the benchmark interest rate by 100 basis points to 9.75% on Tuesday, to counter inflationary pressures, address the current account deficit, and ensure that growth remains sustainable. "Given rate increases since September and the outlook, the Monetary Policy Committee felt that the end goal of mildly positive real interest rates on a forward-looking basis was now close to being achieved," the central bank said after the meeting.

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Petrol price to be cut by Rs11 per litre

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The government may slash the price of petrol by Rs11 per litre from December 16, sources said Tuesday. The price of diesel is expected to decrease by Rs9 per litre, revealed industry sources, adding that the government will finalise the prices of petroleum products after either raising or lowering the tax rates.

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KARACHI: Pakistani bowler Shaheen Afridi celebrates after taking wicket of West Indies batsman Hayden Walsh during 2nd Twenty20 International Cricket Match between Pakistan and West Indies at National Stadium. - APP (News On Page 06)

Preparations to host OIC FM's moot in full swing

Parliament House has been selected as the venue

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is in high gear to host the foreign ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), with preparations underway in the capital ahead of the main event of December 19. As Pakistan continues with its efforts to uphold Muslim solidarity, the 17th Extraordinary Session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) will focus on the urgent need to avert a humanitarian crisis and the economic collapse of Afghanistan. Islamabad is set to welcome the foreign ministers of OIC countries to discuss

China vows to continue aiding Afghanistan

BEIJING: China will continue to provide emergency humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan to help the Afghan people overcome the current difficulties, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin said on Tuesday. China has been providing support within its capacity to Afghanistan for the country's reconstruction and economic development.

Continued on Page 06

the Afghan humanitarian situation on December 19. (Video by Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan) For the OIC CFM meeting, the Parliament House has been selected as the venue, where the plenary sessions will be held. On December 19, Prime Minister Imran Khan will inaugurate the event, to be attended by the OIC Secretary-General, foreign ministers of the Islamic countries and other international delegates. The representatives from the United Nations system, international financial institutions, foreign and regional organizations and the non-OIC members have also been invited to attend the event.

Continued on Page 06

Army soldier martyred in border attack

RAWALPINDI: A Pakistan Army soldier was martyred in the wee hours of Tuesday when militants targeted a security forces checkpoint along the Pakistan-Iran border in Abdoji sector, Balochistan. "During the heavy exchange of fire, Lance Naik Zaheer Ahmed r/o (resident of) Nushki embraced martyrdom fighting valiantly," confirmed the ISPR. The military's media wing confirmed that the Pakistan Army inflicted losses on the militants, who fled from the area. "Pakistan's security forces remain determined to defeat such acts of inimical elements, aimed at disrupting peace, stability and progress of Balochistan," reads the ISPR statement. - DNA

Sindh govt signs six MoUs at Dubai summit

Bilawal says, "Proud of the six MoUs signed"

NAZIR SIYAL

DUBAI: The PPP-led Sindh government signed six memoranda of understanding (MoU) with various investors for multiple projects in different fields and areas at the Sindh Investment Conference in Dubai on Tuesday. According to a statement on the PPP's Twitter, the projects include initiatives for energy, water, sports and electricity generation from waste. PPP Chairperson Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari and other PPP leaders, including Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah, also attended the ceremony and the agreements were signed in the pres-



ence of the United Arab Emirates' (UAE) minister for tolerance and coexistence, Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan. Speaking on the occasion, Bilawal said, "We are particularly proud of the six

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Whither opposition's long march call

There are certain external factors also that do not want PTI to continue in office for another term. The China factor ostensibly is at the top. I will try to deliberate upon the China factor in detail in future writings

ANALYSIS

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI



THE Opposition parties that have gathered under the banner of Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) have given a long march call for March 23 - a day when the armed forces of Pakistan hold their annual parade in connection with Pakistan Day celebrations. The PDM call therefore seeks to put political parties, sans PPP, and the establishment on a collision course. The Interior Minister Shaikh Rashid Ahmed has requested the PDM to review its decision and have its long march on March 30. The PDM leadership nevertheless does not seem ready to agree to the interior minister's call. According to government ministers the PDM does not have enough support even from its allies for the proposed march neither it really wants to undertake this venture for it needs a lot of resources as well. Secondly, the PPP, which happens to be

one of the largest political parties, is yet to decide whether it should ride the PDM bandwagon. PPP hitherto has played its cards in a smart way by exerting pressure on the government to get some relaxations and at the same time keeping its relevance intact i.e. to be part of the PDM again at a time of its choosing. As regards the long march, it may not yield desired results if it lacks support from all mainstream opposition parties including the PPP. And PPP for the moment does not seem interested in any such move because if the central government goes then PPP will have to lose its government in Sindh as well. And losing the Sindh government means losing a huge clout and maneuvering which is currently available to PPP that may help it get considerable seats in the next general elections. PPP would never like to lose Sindh. It would try to get more and more seats since only then it would be in a position to better bargain for any role in any future set up. In the absence of any deal between the PML N and powers that be, PPP may emerge as a potential stakeholder in the future political scenario. PPP together with PML Q may be an acceptable option to form the next government. When we say acceptable it means acceptable for

powers that be. However as I had pointed out in one of my earlier pieces that PPP and the Establishment co-existence has always been very tricky and difficult. The primary concern about PPP has been its inability of managing the government affairs in a transparent manner. Corruption always ruled supreme during all the PPP tenures. The PTI govt performance also appears to be lackluster because woes of people seem to have multiplied, though the Prime Minister and his team believe the difficult time is over. Pakistan ranked 124 out of 180 countries - dropping four spots over last year - in the newly released Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) by Transparency International, an annual index that ranks countries based on perceptions of public sector corruption. The Punjab Governor Ch. Sarwar recently said, the entire country had been mortgaged with the IMF for just one billion dollars. His statement appears to be sort of no confidence in the economic policies introduced by Shaukat Tareen. Pakistan ranked 124 out of 180 countries - dropping four spots over last year - in the newly released Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) by Transparency International, an annual index that ranks countries based on perceptions of public sector corruption. The Punjab Governor Ch. Sarwar recently said, the entire country had been mortgaged with the IMF for just one billion dollars. His statement appears to be sort of no confidence in the economic policies introduced by Shaukat Tareen. Pakistan ranked 124 out of 180 countries - dropping four spots over last year - in the newly released Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) by Transparency International, an annual index that ranks countries based on perceptions of public sector corruption. The Punjab Governor Ch. Sarwar recently said, the entire country had been mortgaged with the IMF for just one billion dollars. His statement appears to be sort of no confidence in the economic policies introduced by Shaukat Tareen.

who thought it had got a messiah it was waiting for. But their hopes dashed to the ground when Mr. Tareen, like past ministers, started milking revenue through same old methods employed by his predecessors. The reasons were obvious. He was unable to extract money from the big wigs. He was unable to bring to the tax net those who had never paid any taxes or were paying just peanuts. Pakistan's biggest problem happens to be the insufficient tax collection from the big enterprises. The tax evaders would love to pay bribes rather than paying to the government. It is also partially because of the cumbersome taxation system that compels people to resort to tax evasion. The point which I want to make here is that due to lopsided monetary policies of the economic team people would gladly join the Opposition long march only to vent their anger. Govt has only one year to deliver because the year 2023 shall be the election year. In fact the election-cereing will start in the middle of 2022. There is a perception that Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) are being introduced because PTI govt is convinced that people may not vote for it this time. The govt has vehemently rejected all such notions. This perception can only be diluted through performance and

good governance for which government as two full years at its disposal. PML N, which is often blamed for being unable to overcome its internal differences, appears to have reached an internal rapprochement. Stalwarts like Shahid Khaqan Abbasi who had been opposing Shehbaz Sharif's candidature as the Prime Minister in case the party wins the elections, now seem eye to eye with this proposal. Mr. Khaqan announced few days ago that if the party wins Shehbaz Sharif will be the candidate for the prime minister's office. It appears to be a timely move and PML N is going to benefit from this announcement, political analysts believe. Moreover, by this announcement a message has also been conveyed to the powers that be that there is no disagreement within the PML N on the name of Mian Shehbaz Sharif therefore if such powers would like to support Shehbaz Sharif as the next prime minister of Pakistan, PML N leadership would have no issues at all. There are certain outside factors also that do not want PTI to continue in office for another term and earnestly desire to see Shehbaz as the next prime minister. The China factor ostensibly is at the top. I will try to deliberate upon the China factor in detail in future writings.

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Briefs

JI to hold
Save Karachi
March on
December 19

KARACHI: Jamaat-e-Islami (JI) Karachi chief Engr Hafiz Naemur Rehman on Tuesday announced that JI would take out historic Save Karachi March which would also be participated by women and children.

Addressing a press conference here at JI headquarters, he said the march presided over by JI Pakistan Ameer Siraj ul Haq would be taken out in protest against a Sindh Local Government Amendment Bill 2021, aimed at further squeezing the powers and authorities of local government setup in the province.

The JI leader held the presser along with the leaders of JI Women Wing, including Karachi chapter head Asma Safer and said, the masses will continue agitation against the bill and the Save Karachi March from the mausoleum of Quaid e Azam to the KMC building will be the starting point in this regard.

He said that practically the PPP has become a bunch of feudal lords who want to maintain their rule by increasing tensions between the people of urban region and countryside.

He said that the JI leadership hails the Chief of Army Staff for his discussion on the Karachi Transformation Plan and packages announced for the city. — APP

DG Excise
vows to
facilitate
taxpayers

PESHAWAR: The newly appointed Director General Excise, Taxation and Narcotics Control, Mahmood Aslam on Tuesday directed concerned officials that taxpayers should be provided with every possible facility and complete information about taxes.

He issued these directives while chairing a meeting of excise directors held at Directorate General of Excise, Peshawar. Director Revenue, Syed Al-Amin gave a detailed briefing to the Director General on various issues and ongoing reforms in the department.

The director general directed to expedite work on the ongoing reforms, ADP schemes and digitization process. He stressed the need of awareness campaign about the relief on vehicles registration fee that is only one rupee.

He said that work on all pending administrative and legal matters of the department should be started at the earliest and resolve all complaints received about the department on Pakistan Citizen Portal.

The director general said that new rating areas should be included in the tax net instead of imposing additional burden of property tax on people.

UAF organizes
citrus
exhibition

FAISALABAD: The University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF) organized a citrus exhibition at its Institute of Horticulture Sciences, in which, more than 100 varieties of citrus were put on display. The expo was inaugurated by Dean Faculty of Agriculture Prof Dr Amanullah Malik while Prof Dr Jafar Jaskani, Dr Muhammad Azam, Dr Samar Naqvi, Dr Ahmad Sattar, Dr Adnan Younis, Dr Waseem, Dr Fatima, Dr Abbasi and other notables attended the inaugural ceremony.

Prof Dr Amanullah Malik said that in the export season that culminated in April 2021, as many as 460,000 tonnes of oranges were exported, which was 30% higher as compared to the previous season. "Our country was blessed with the fertile land," he said, adding that farmers should get guidance from agriculture scientists to control plant diseases.

Prof Dr Jafar Jaskani said that Pakistan was standing at the 7th number in the citrus production. He said that citrus was playing a significant role in fulfilling the vitamin-C deficiency.

Dr Muhammad Azam said the demand for Pakistani citrus was increasing across the globe, adding that citrus was grown at 200,461 hectares areas this year. — APP



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan chairs meeting of the Federal Cabinet. — DNA

DIG appreciates cooperation
of local philanthropists

"He said that Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) should also come forward and play its dynamic role in settling the family feuds"

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Faisalabad has a unique privilege to have the first ISO certified prison of Pakistan in addition to establishing the first display center for the exhibition of different products made by jail inmates, said Chaudhary Saeed ullah Gondal Deputy Inspector General (DIG) prisons Faisalabad.

Addressing the business community in Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI), he appreciated the cooperation extended by the local philanthropists in upgrading the jail infrastructure in addition to facilitating the prisoners.

He said that a comprehensive strategy has been evolved in collaboration with the business community to transform prisons into reform houses. He said that the TEVTA center has been established to provide much needed skills to the inmates while stitching units have also been working in the prisons. "these would help the inmates to start their own businesses after their release from the jail", he added. Quoting criminal justice system, he said that fundamental human rights could not be usurped and we must provide them their fundamental rights. Emphasizing over the amnesty, compromise and forgiveness in cases of chronic family murder disputes.

"He said that FCCI should also come forward and play its dynamic role in settling the family feuds", he added. He said that during the last six months at least five con-



ducts were released from the prison with the financial help of the business community. He said that a "Sulah" register has been maintained and a complete record of the cases is identified in which decades old rivalries could be settled with mutual consultation of the local communities.

He said that a list of potential cases fit for reconciliation would be shared with the FCCI so that it could also contribute its role in this noble cause. Responding to a question, he said that daily from 7-10 AM reli-

gious classes are organized for the spiritual grooming and consolation of the inmates. He said that at least 40 inmates are enrolled in "Hafiz-e-Quran" class.

Similarly, a "Darood" bank has also been constituted and daily "Darood" is recited for two million times. He said that literacy centers have also been established where educated inmates work as teachers. "They educate their colleagues and in return they are paid a stipend of Rs. 6,000 to 8,000", he added. Chaudhary Asghar Ali Senior Superinten-

dent central jail also paid best tribute to the business community and said that as the jails are behind the walls and hence people remained unaware of its true and productive working, however after visiting it their perception is changed altogether.

Chaudhary Akbar Ali superintendent district jail said that a project has been launched in collaboration with chamber and Lions club to provide water for birds in addition to providing them safe haven for their nests.

Police officers
must ensure justice
without delay

RPO met with nobles of the city and took suggestions about improvement in peace situation in city

SAQIB MUSHTAQ

LODHHRAN: Regional Police Officer Multan Division Javed Akbar Riaz said that Police officers should observe their duties with honesty and responsibility, work on merit and ensure justice without delay.

He expressed these remarks during his visit to District Lodhran while visiting Police Station Jalla Araeen, Police Station City and Police Station Police line and addressing with the Officers and significant personalities during introductory meeting at DPO Office.

RPO Javed Akbar Riaz said that Investigation officers should close cases on merit and during investigation do not deem any aspect ordinary and promote community Policing and take strict action against drug dealing, gambling, kite flying and professional beggars while special campaign for the arrest of wanted criminals should be started.

RPO met with nobles of the city and took suggestions about improvement in peace situation in city, he said that to reduce the crime rate community policing is very necessary and with cooperation of citizens effective solution to the crime is possible. He added that Police is putting its efforts to ensure the safety of public and their belongings by using available resources, Police's

duty continues 24 hours a day throughout the year.

He said that business community should install CCTV cameras at business centers so that in case of any crime criminals can be arrested.

DPO Abdul Rauf Babar gave detailed briefing on peace situation in the district. Earlier DPO Abdul Rauf Babar warmly welcomed RPO Javed Akbar Riaz on his arrival, Police squad paid salute after which RPO visited Martyr memorial and put flowers and said Fateha. He visited the Police Stations and checked cleanliness and building condition and directed to improve the cleanliness system. He also checked impound, front desk and lockups and also checked record of police stations.

He checked the investigative matters of cases in Police stations, he also visited Police Line Lodhran's firing range and Mess Hall and planted a plan in Police Line.

RPO directed to improve the policing system in rural areas and ensure the free registration of cases, challans of serious crimes should be sent to court on time, arrest criminals and recover stolen items and run thorough campaign against organized crimes.

He said that zero tolerance policy should be adapted against corruption, he directed to cost of investigation amount should be provided to officers on time.



FAISALABAD: Chairman Standing Committee/MNA Faiz ullah Kamoka and Deputy Commissioner Ali Shahzad visiting BHU at Jaranwala road. — DNA

MNA, DC
inspects
health
facilities

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: Chairman Standing Committee / MNA Faizullah Kamoka and Deputy Commissioner Ali Shehzad visited the Basic Health Unit at Chak 214 RD Dhudiwala Jaranwala Road. Khalid Hayat Kamoka CEO Health, Dr Kashif Mahmood and others were also present. The Chairman Standing Committee and the Deputy Commissioner inspected the various parts of the building and the land available for the basic health unit and discussed the upgrading matters of BHU. MNA said that upgradation of BHU is essential for providing health services to the common man. He said that upgradation of BHU is also required for the area on which necessary homework should be completed. Deputy Commissioner asked the Health Authority officers to prepare feasibility report and apprised that district administration is fully active to provide best health facilities to the general public.

4856710 people
vaccinated

As many as 4856710 people have been vaccinated against corona so far in which 3158359 were administered first and 1698351 were given second dose. CEO District Health Authority Dr. Kashif Mahmood informed that 4792276 general public and 64932 health care workers have been vaccinated. He further informed that Reach Every Door Corona Vaccination Campaign is underway and yesterday 4590 people of 12 plus age vaccinated. He said that health teams are active in educational institutes, public transport stands, markets, bazars and in streets. He appealed to the citizen to vaccinate themselves besides their family members so they could be safe from corona.

51 new
corona cases
reported in
Punjab

DNA

LAHORE : Punjab Primary and Secondary Healthcare (P&SH) Secretary Imran Sikandar Baloch Tuesday said that during the last 24 hours, 51 new cases of coronavirus were reported from across the province.

In a press statement, he said that 37 positive cases were reported in Lahore, eight in Rawalpindi, two each in Faisalabad and Sargodha, and one each in Okara and Toba Tek Singh. The secretary said that so far the total number of cases had reached 443,947, and 427,734 patients fully recovered in the province. The total number of active cases was 3,164 to date, he added.

In the last 24 hours, no death was reported in Punjab with death toll remaining 13,049. He said that 15,149 tests were conducted in the last 24 hours and a total of 8.61 million tests had been conducted altogether.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Narcotics Control, Brig (r) Ijaz Ahmad Shah presenting souvenir to the Canadian High Commissioner Wendy Gilmon. — DNA

AJKU organizes
workshops for
entrepreneurs

DNA

MUZAFFARABAD: The Indus Entrepreneur (TiE) Islamabad in collaboration with Azad Jammu and Kashmir University's Business Incubation Center and AJK Information Technology Board (AJKITB) organized a workshop to provide an opportunity to the students, alumni, graduates of other universities, and faculty to develop their business ideas into successful products and ventures.

The main purpose of the workshop held at Education Block of the Chellah Campus of the university was to guide, train and mentor aspiring young innovators, idea enthusiasts, and entrepreneurs for the upcoming Startup Competition of Pakistan, Pakistan Startup Cup 2022.

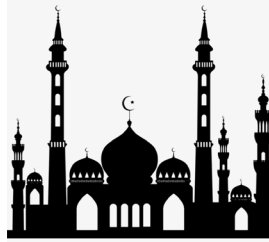
The event was addressed by Dr. Khalid Rafique, Director General Azad Jammu and Kashmir Information Technology Board, Mr. Fakhr of TiE Islamabad, Dr. Wajid Aziz Lone, Head of Business Incubation Center, University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Mohsin Bandy, Director, Business Incubation Center, while National Bank of Pakistan Regional Head Farrukh Jalil, Sadia Rehman and senior officers of TiE Islamabad also spoke on the occasion.

This was the first event of its kind in which a large number of young entrepreneurs from Azad Jammu and Kashmir participated in various sessions with a view to enlisting the help of various institutions of the country for the practical implementation of their business ideas.

Speaking on the occasion Dr. Khalid Rafique, Director General AJK IT Board said we are living through the most exciting and fortunate times in the history of Azad Jammu & Kashmir with rapidly evolving and improving internet connectivity and access to online resources and services. "It is the right time for existing and aspiring young entrepreneurs and investors to come forward and transform their business ideas into actions.

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Qamar News Agency
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Nazir Siyal
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SERVICES



Namaz Timings

Fajr.....	05:35 am
Zohr.....	12:02 pm
Asr.....	03:23 pm
Maghrib.....	05:01 pm
Isha.....	06:30 pm



Hotels & Restaurants

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



Airlines

Turkish Airlines.....	8494949
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Emergency

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Complaints

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Wapda Islamabad.....	9217579
Wapda Rawalpindi.....	111-309-309

Islamabad Metropolitan Corporation

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

Wasa Water Tank

Rawalpindi.....	0331-5022125
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Around 9.6 million families registered in Rashaan program

The program is getting overwhelming response from the public. Ehsaas Rashaan website has had more than 500 million visits over the last month

ISLAMABAD: Over nine million families have registered to seek support under the Ehsaas Rashaan Riayat Program so far. While over 10,000 retail units have also expressed their interest and have registered with the program, an official source revealed. The program is getting overwhelming response from the public. Ehsaas Rashaan website has had more than 500 million visits over the last month. The Ehsaas Rashaan program is being introduced on the direct instructions of the Prime Minister. Under this program, 20 million families with income below Rs.50,000 and those who fall below a certain poverty score will be entitled to receive a discount of Rs. 1000 every month on the purchase of three grocery items: flour, pulses, cooking oil/ghee. The cabinet approved this program in the first week of November and shortly thereafter a communication campaign was launched to solicit applica-



tions for this program. The next phase in this program involves analysis which will be done later this month. Eligible families will receive confirmation of their eligibility status through an SMS from 8171, which is the Ehsaas SMS identity. This is an end-to-end digital program and involves processing of the subsidy through a mobile point of sale which will be downloadable by the Kiryana retailer. The government is encouraging more retailers to enroll in the program. Ehsaas Rashaan Riayat is expected to start accruing benefits from the last

week of December. Families earning less than Rs50,000 a month can register themselves under the programme. Only one member of an applicant family whose cell number is issued on his personal Computerised National Identity Card (CNIC) can enroll his family either through 8171 SMS service or the web-portal. For registration through 8171, the said member of a family can SMS his/her CNIC number to 8171. 'Kiryana' shopkeepers will only be able to register through the web-portal: <https://ehsaasrashaan.pass.gov.pk/>.

The Federal Cabinet has also approved the criteria that deserving families of foreign travelers and government employees with salaries less than Rs31,500 can also benefit from 'Ehsaas Rashaan Riayat.' A monthly subsidy of Rs1,000 will be granted to every eligible family on the purchase of flour, cooking oil or ghee and pulses. A subsidy of Rs22 per kg will be given on the flour, Rs55 per kg on pulses and Rs105 per liter/kg on cooking oil or ghee at the designated Kiryana shops. It is mandatory for both the buyer families and Kiryana shopkeepers to have mobile SIMs issued on their own CNICs to register for this programme. Also, 'Kiryana' shopkeepers need to have their bank accounts with National Bank of Pakistan. The designated 'Kiryana' shopkeepers will download 'mobile Point of Sale' (mPOS) App in their cell phones through which they will be able to deliver the subsidy to eligible buyers. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Muhammad Ahsan Younus listening to public complaints during 'Open Court' held with the purpose to listen issues of policemen and citizens. - DNA

Police to resolve public complaints on priority: IGP

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Muhammad Ahsan Younus has directed all police officials to address public complaints on priority and ensure continuous contact with complainants till resolving their issues. It was stated by him during an 'Open Court' especially held on Tuesday with the purpose to listen issues of policemen and citizens. The IGP listened to eight former police employees and 74 citizens and directed to resolve their issues. The IGP marked the applications to the police officials and gave them timeframe to resolve the issues of citizens. The IGP said that it is our prime responsibility to provide protection to the lives and property of the citizens and resolve their problems on priority. He said that citizens at 'Open Court' should be behaved in a respectful manner and their trust on police department to be won through resolving their issues. He said that interaction with people also ensures accountability of the policemen and they should address public complaints on merit by considering their own issues. Muhammad Ahsan Younus directed all the zonal officers to spare two hours daily to address visitors' issues.

According to the schedule, Zonal SPs and SDPOs would be available for public from 2 pm to 4 pm, while SHOs would ensure their presence at the police stations from 3 pm to 5 pm. The move would not only build public confidence on the force, but eventually promote friendly policing culture among the masses, he said. He said the problems of the citizens should be listened with full attention and resolved on priority basis. No sluggishness would be tolerated in this regard, the IGP warned. - DNA

Govt devises Pakistan's first 'bhang' policy

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Science and Technology has formulated Pakistan's first hemp policy for the cultivation of Bhang for medicinal and industrial use. Under the National Hemp Policy that has been forwarded to the federal cabinet for approval, a regulatory authority will be set up with one-window operation to facilitate investors. Science and Technology

Minister Shibli Faraz in a statement said that the government has been receiving uncountable applications for the cultivation of hemp leaves. In the first phase, he added 100 firms were given licences for the purpose. He said the hemp policy has been formulated in consultation with all the stakeholders, including the education, commerce and anti-narcotics ministries. The minister said boundary walls would be erected around hemp fields and

CCTV cameras installed for their monitoring. He pointed out the policy has been devised for the cultivation of medicinal and industrial hemp. Shibli Faraz expressed the hope that the hemp policy will help cut down on the import of medicines and textile items. In Sept last year, the federal cabinet had green-lighted the issuance of a first licence for medical and industrial use of hemp leaves, locally known as Bhang.

Head of Trade Development Authority resigns

The cabinet in its meeting held in Islamabad had approved TDAP chief's resignation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Head of Trade Development Authority of Pakistan (TDAP) Arif Ahmed Khan has resigned from his post and the federal cabinet has accepted his resignation. Arif Ahmed Khan, who had also served as federal finance secretary, cited personal reasons for his resignation from the TDAP chief executive's post. The federal cabinet in its meeting held in Islamabad on Tuesday had approved TDAP chief's resignation. The PTI government had appointed Arif Ahmed Khan as TDAP's head on August 8, 2019.

Arif Ahmed Khan was a career civil servant with 36 years of experience in public administration. He had served the federal and provincial governments in important positions. Khan holds a Master in Public Policy from Concordia University Canada. Before joining TDAP as chief executive he had served as Secretary, Ministry of Finance, Economic Affairs Division, Ministry of Water Resources, Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Climate Change.

Master Plan Review Commission to work on building by-laws for Zone 4D: CDA

ISLAMABAD: The Master Plan Review Commission would work on building by-laws for Zone 4D of Islamabad, promoting high rise vertical development and ensuring protection of green areas. A meeting of the Islamabad Master Plan Review Commission was held on Tuesday, a news release said. It was decided that the commission would give its proposals to reduce the current housing foot print in Zone Four from 55 feet to 20 to 25 percent. Similarly, in the light of the decision of the Federal Cabinet in August 2021, the Commission would give suggestions for implementation and enforcement of building by laws for regulating illegal housing societies and constructions in suburbs of city. Meanwhile, a meeting was held under the chairmanship Development Authority chairman in pursuance of the President's directions to ensure the provision

of facilities for peoples with different abilities in Islamabad. The meeting was attended by officials of the Presidency, faculty of Architecture Department COMSATS University, representatives of NUST Unimab and National Council of Arts. It was decided that in the first phase, the F-6 Markaz would be made completely peoples with different abilities friendly. After F-6 Markaz, I-8 Markaz and Aabpara Market would be developed on the same pattern. Similarly, provision of facilities for such people in all buildings, markets and other public places would be ensured. On the occasion, the authority's chairman said CDA was taking all possible steps to provide facilities to them. Similarly, provision of other facilities including ramps and toilets for people with different abilities at all parks and other recreational places would be ensured. - DNA

IHC adjourns Zardari's appeal against NAB reference

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Tuesday adjourned hearing till January 19, on an appeal of former president Asif Ali Zardari seeking acquittal in suspicious bank transaction worth Rs8 billion. The chief justice said the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) should have sent this matter to Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) before preparing reference. The FBR had the authority to conduct complete audit of it. He remarked that how the NAB could set aside the income tax laws itself. The bureau had also no powers to dismiss the assessment order of the FBR, he added. Farooq H Naek, counsel of Zardari, said that ex-president had filed acquittal plea before the indictment, adding that the accountability court should have sought NAB's comments first. He said that the matter did not fall in the jurisdiction of NAB. Naek said that his client purchased the property and paid its price in case. The NAB prosecutor said that his department had prepared this reference under Section, 2, 4 and 12 of the Ordinance. The prosecutor said that the top court had ordered the NAB to investigate the fake bank accounts scam. He said that the property worth Rs150 millions was purchased through the fake bank accounts' transactions. The former president had mentioned the price of property as Rs53 million. At this, the court asked that how the NAB could be involved in matter of income tax. Justice Farooq said unfortunately this was a common practice to mention low price of the property across the country. Naek said how it was called fake bank account when the concerned account holder was available. The chief justice remarked that the NAB had option to send the matter to FBR. The court also asked the NAB to review its reference and exclude the figure of Rs53 millions. - DNA

2023 polls through technology: Shibli Faraz

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Science and Technology Syed Shibli Faraz on Tuesday said that Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf (PTI) government is determined to hold general elections 2023 through modern technology. The ECP following the constitution and law of the country would conduct the elections by using EVMS, he said while talking to a private television channel. The government under the dynamic vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan would ensure the next general elections through EVMS for achieving transparency in the system, he added. Shibli said the legislation has already been made, adding that the ECP would take all necessary measures to hold elections in a free and transparent manner. - APP

SC rejects bail plea of housing society fraud accused

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court (SC) on Tuesday rejected pre-arrest bail pleas of Rab Razi Cooperative Housing Society fraud accused. The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) arrested accused Shah Mohammad, Irfan Rasool and Sartajul Haq outside the court premises. A three-member SC bench comprising Justice Umar Ata Bandial, Justice Sajjad Ali Shah and Justice Syed Mansoor Ali Shah heard the case. According to the NAB, on receipt of complaint from the affected allottees against management of M/s Rab Razi Cooperative Housing Society regarding their involvement in corruption & corrupt practices. At the onset of hearing, the NAB Prosecutor said that the accused were accused of fraud of Rs393 million. The accused grabbed more than nine acres of government land and sold it to the people, he added. - DNA

PUBLIC NOTICE

Beware that Muhammad Jalal Uddin S/o. Muhammad Iqbal Uddin died on 12th January 2018. We are the legal heirs of his Plot Number 7468, Sector - T, Phase-I DHA Lahore-Multan Chapter:

1. Muhammad Khalid Jalal (Son)
2. Muhammad Zahid Bin Jalal (Son)
3. Rizwana Waseem (Daughter)
4. Shaqfa Ayaz (Daughter)

Anybody having objections may contact Secretary Defence Housing Authority Lahore - Multan Chapter within 15 Days of the publication of this Notice.



Briefs

PAF pays tribute to heroes of 1971 war

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Air Force (PAF) on Tuesday in a series of its tributes paid homage to the martyrs and ghazis (soldiers returned with honour from the war) of the 1971 War highlighting their chivalrous war heroes. The PAF's Directorate of Public Relations released a short documentary film based on 1971 war deeds.

The documentary underscored the unforgettable role of PAF veterans and soldiers in the 1971 Indo-Pak war who narrated timeless tales of courage and bravery against the enemy.

The documentary also shed light on the renewed pledge that there was no greater goal for Pakistan's armed forces than sacrificing one's life for the defence of the motherland and that the sacrifices of its martyrs would never be in vain.

"These great and everlasting sacrifices of our forefathers will always be remembered in the bold letters of history," it stated.

The documentary narrated that there were 14 Flying squadrons of PAF who participated in the 1971 War. The No.2 Squadron equipped with light flying T-33 Trainer aircraft was led by Wing Commander Ali Asghar Randhawa.

The aircraft keeping in view the War were prepared for ground attacks, where under his leadership the squadron successfully carried out 43 ground attack missions.

Moreover, the No. 5 Squadron was deputized at Sargodha led by Wing Commander Hakimullah and conducted 390 successful combat missions. — APP

11 tested positive of Covid in Rwp

RAWALPINDI: As many as 11 more patients were tested positive of the fatal coronavirus during the last 24 hours in the district, with three belonging to the Pothohar town and Attock each, two from Taxila, while one each case has arrived from Kallar Syeda, Chakwal and Islamabad.

According to the daily situation report issued by the District Corona Management centre on Tuesday, 18 Coronavirus confirmed patients were admitted to three city facilities, including ten in the Institute of Urology and four in Fauji Foundation and Benazir Bhutto Hospital each. The report updated that one patient was on a ventilator in critical condition, seven stable and ten on oxygen support.

Around 3,963,030 people, including 44,438 health workers, had so far been vaccinated against the fatal disease out of the total eligible population of 4,225,634 in the district," it informed. District Health Authority added that 38,105 patients had been discharged after recovery out of the total 39,435 tested positive so far, adding 109 were quarantined, including 90 at homes and 19 in the isolation centres. — APP

PNCA to continue 'Tabla and Vocal' classes

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan National Council of Arts (PNCA) Tuesday announced to continue 'Vocal and Tabla' classes two-day a week (Tuesday-Wednesday) with talented instructors Ahmed Khan and Sarfaraz Anwer.

A PNCA official Masroor Shah told APP, PNCA believes in providing musicians and artists with the platform and inspiration they need to reach their full potential. These classes are open to all citizens, regardless of their age. He stated that the registration process began in each course, adding the registration fee for each course was Rs 1,000. He advised aspiring amateur musicians and artists to uncover their actual potential as musicians and artists. These classes were an effort to promote music of all genres and crafts fields along with polishing the creative skills of the young artists, he explained. — APP

ICCI-PNRA to collaborate for radioactive sources products

PNRA was ready to organize free of cost training of industrial manpower in cooperation with ICCI to ensure production of radioactive free products and commodities

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) and the Pakistan Nuclear Regulatory Authority (PNRA) have agreed to develop close collaboration for controlling the chances of any radioactive activity in industrial units in order to ensure the production of radioactive sources free products and commodities.

This consensus was reached during the visit of a PNRA delegation to ICCI led by Muhammad Rahman, Member Executive, Muhammad Qayyum DG (Licensing & Authorization), Safer Hussain Head Physical Protection & Nuclear Security Directorate-PPSD, Anayat Ullah & Syed Majid Hussain Shah Principle Scientific Officers were in the delegation.

Muhammad Rahman, Member Executive PNRA briefed the ICCI team about the main functions of his organization and said that scrap was important raw material for metal industry which was usually imported from different countries. However, due to the weak regulatory controls over the sources in the exporting countries, there remained chances of intermingling of radioactive sources within the imported scrap metals. He said if such sources remained undetected, their unintended melting has the potential to cause unnecessary radiation exposure to the public, which would have



serious financial, social and economic costs. He said that PNRA intended to develop close liaison with chambers of commerce including ICCI for effective implementation of regulatory requirements in relevant industries to prevent any radioactive sources in production activities. He said that industries should install radiation detection systems to monitor prior or after recycling and assured that PNRA will provide them technical support in selection and procurement of such systems.

He said that PNRA was ready to organize free of cost training of industrial manpower in cooperation with ICCI to ensure production of radioactive free products and commodities. He stressed that industries should develop procedures for notification to PNRA and management of radioactive sources if found through detection mechanisms. Speaking at the occasion, Muhammad Shakeel Munir, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry appreciated the role of PNRA for regulating, controlling

and supervising all matters related to nuclear safety, nuclear security and radiation protection measures in Pakistan. He said that ICCI would cooperate in identifying the industries which required radiation detection equipment. He said that ICCI would also collaborate in execution of PNRA survey strategy in different industries. He said that ICCI would work with PNRA for compliance of regulatory requirements by industries to prevent radioactive sources/radioactive contamination in scrap and metal

products. Jamshaid Akhtar Sheikh Senior Vice President and Muhammad Faheem Khan Vice President ICCI said that PNRA should organize awareness seminars in trade bodies on regular basis to educate and sensitize the business community about the preventive measures of radioactive contamination and this campaign should be started from ICCI. Both sides discussed a range of issues to make industries and businesses free of radioactive contaminants.

37 Sri Lankan students arrive in Pakistan under scholarship

ISLAMABAD: Thirty seven Sri Lankan students, out of a total of 340 students selected for scholarships under Pak-Sri Lanka Higher Education Cooperation Programme of the Higher Education Commission (HEC) have arrived in Pakistan to study at undergraduate and postgraduate levels.

The students have reached Pakistan in two separate groups, comprising 19 and 18 students respectively. Besides, 200 other Sri Lankan students have applied for visas and will join their respective universities in Pakistan soon.

The scholarships are part of the Pakistan-Sri Lanka Higher Education Cooperation Programme. The programme is aimed to further strengthen the relations between the two countries and bring people of both the nations closer.

The selected students will pursue their BS, MS or PhD studies in public sector universities of Pakistan. Scholarships are offered in all major disciplines including Medicine, Engineering, Business Studies, Natural Sciences, and So-



ISLAMABAD: Sri Lankan students selected for scholarships under Pak-Sri Lanka Higher Education Cooperation Programme of HEC have arrived in Pakistan to study at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. — DNA

cial Sciences, etc. HEC, in collaboration with Pakistan High Commission Colombo and University Grants Commission (UGC) of Sri Lanka, held the tests in different cities of Sri Lanka. Over 700 students had appeared in written tests from across Sri Lanka.

All Sri Lankan students, having the minimum qualification required to take admission in undergraduate and postgraduate studies, are eligible for these scholarships. A high school diploma or equivalent is required for admission in BS programmes.

And, for MS programmes, students should have a four-year undergraduate degree or Bachelor's and Master's degree (16 years of education). Similarly, for PhD studies, students should have a Master's or MPhil degree (18 years of education). — APP

Islamabad lacks good transport facility

ISLAMABAD: Director General Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) Farzana Altaf Shah on Tuesday said the federal capital lacked any good transport facility that was imperative to curb increasing vehicular emissions creating smog and the Agency endorsed it for public good. Addressing the public hearing organized by Pak-EPA of Khayaban-e-Margalla Road to be constructed from Grand Trunk Road near Sangani and would culminate at Service Road East Sector D-12 by the CDA, she said the CDA has to address all the concerns of environmentalists, local communities and residents of adjoining areas of the project site. She also demanded a written reply from Director Road North CDA Rana Tariq on extension phases of Khayaban-e-Margalla as initially the first phase from G.T. Road to D-12 would be constructed. — APP

5 poultry traders held, petrol pump sealed

RAWALPINDI: Assistant Commissioner Gujjar Khan and the Civil Defence teams sealed one petrol pump and imposed a fine on others for not having accurate gauges.

According to details, the AC Gujjar Khan Zeb Nasir, while inspecting measurements gauges and rates, imposed a fine of Rs 115,000 on various pumps and sealed one pump for not having valid Form-K.

Meanwhile, during checking of enforcement of government notified rates, AC Suddar imposed Rs 90,000 fine on various petrol pumps in his jurisdiction. The AC city Waqas Sikandari while checking the rates of poultry issued by the district administration in Araya Mohalla, arrested five traders and imposed a fine of Rs 20,000 overcharging. — APP

MD NTC visits NAML

ISLAMABAD: NAML University has invited Managing Director NTC Miraj Gul for inaugural ceremony of "Finance for Non-Finance Manager Course" at NAML Executive Development Center (NEDC).

Rector NAML and his team warmly welcomed MD NTC and showered overwhelming hospitality to the NTC team including GM (A&HR), GM (North) & Director NTC RWP.

The MD NTC has appreciated the efforts of management and faculty towards academic excellence, rural uplift and youth development as NAML.

The MD NTC has interacted with NAML students, visited different NAML Academic Blocks and urged students to play a positive role in the society. — APP

Anti-polio campaign in full swing

RAWALPINDI: The five-day anti-polio campaign, which began in all tehsils and towns of Pindi district entered into its second day on Tuesday. Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Health Dr Faiza Kanwal informed that the immunisation campaign was in full swing. Under the drive, she told APP, that over 430,000 children have so far been administered the polio vaccine. The CEO said that 2964 polio teams, 663 area in-charges, 240 medical officers were participating in the campaign, with observing COVID-19 health guidelines. Dr Faiza said the drive was also being utilized for creating awareness about Covid-19 and anti-dengue preventive measures.

"307 fixed centres have been set up while children coming from outside are being vaccinated at 129 transit points of the district," she added. — APP

MATRC providing free of cost treatment

ISLAMABAD: Model Addiction Treatment and Rehabilitation Centre (MATRC) Hyderabad is providing free-of-cost treatment, boarding, and lodging facilities to drug addicts including females and juveniles.

An official of the Ministry of Narcotics Control said that the Sindh government has allocated a running expenditure of Rs. 15.640 million for the financial year 2020-2021. The center, he said, consisted of 50 beds for patients including male, female, and children addicts.

To a question, he said, two leading treatment and rehabilitation centers, working under the Anti-Narcotics Force, in Islamabad and Karachi have so far treated around 13,200 drug addicts. The center, established in 2005 in Islamabad Capital Territory, has so far rehabilitated 6652 drug addicts. The federal capital center is consisting of a 45-bed hospital and the Karachi hospital has the capacity to accommodate 205 patients including 25 females and juveniles each. Karachi hospital is being managed by the Sindh government. Since its establishment, the Karachi hospital treated a total of 6,548 drugs addicts till Aug 2021. Replying to a question, he said no such hospital has been established in Punjab, Balochistan, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. — APP

Hasina Wajid urged to visit Pakistan and address Parliament

DNA

ISLAMABAD: PM Sheikh Hasina Wajid must pay a much-awaited visit to Pakistan and also address to the Parliament of Pakistan said Dr. Moonis Ahmar, Meritorious Professor of the University of Karachi during a webinar on 'Pakistan-Bangladesh Relations' organized by the Institute of Regional Studies. Dr. Ahmar emphasized that the visit of PM Hasina would usher in an era of positive transformation of mindsets that could lead to a paradigm shift between the two countries.

He was of the view that the past was important to learn the mistakes but one must not be hostage to it. While concluding his talk, Dr. Ahmar called the Bangladesh government to seriously consider doing away with the exaggerations, and polarization in

the textbooks while maintaining a fine balance with their identity, and this could be a great service to the people of both countries, he added. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Mukhlesur Rahman Chowdhry, former advisor to the President of Bangladesh said that there were numerous incidences in the past that spoke volumes about the camaraderie, adding that the people of both counties had fought together for the creation of Pakistan. Mr. Chowdhry was quite optimistic about future relations between the two countries.



PM Imran Khan was quite popular in Bangladesh, his regional peace narrative, and friendly overtures were highly appreciated in Bangladesh, he told the participants.

Mr. Chowdhry also hailed Pakistan's High Commissioner to Bangladesh, Imran Ahmed Siddiqui's efforts for putting the bilateral relations back on track and preparing the ground for PM Hasina's visit.

He hoped that the new year would begin with Bangladesh Prime Minister's visit to Pakistan.

Dr. Sujit Kumar Datta, Associate Professor of the Chittagong University stressed the need to think out of the box and called for since efforts as the challenges still existed in the bilateral relationship.

Nevertheless, if Bangladesh can balance its relations with India and China then balancing Pakistan and India relations was not a big deal, he opined.

KOPIA distributes laptops under technical co-op

The Chairman PARC, Dr. Ghulam Muhammad Ali, appreciated the Government and the People of the Republic of Korea for the support and discussed future bilateral cooperation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The KOPIA (Korea Program on International Agriculture) Pakistan Centre distributed eight laptops to the scientists actively participating in ongoing three Technical Cooperation Projects (TCP's) for successful implementation. The technical cooperation projects include self-sufficiency of virus free potato seed multiplication by Aeroponic Technique, Chilli production and post-harvest management technology development in Pakistan, and establishment of production technology of major fodder crops in Pakistan. A laptop distribution ceremony was held at Community Hall, National Agricultural Research Centre NARC.



The Ambassador of the Republic of Korea H.E. Suh Sangyo lauded the efforts made by the Pakistani scientists and reaffirmed commitment to support Pakistan in achieving self-sufficiency and food security through successful transfer of technology. The Chairman PARC, Dr. Ghulam Muhammad Ali, appreciated the Government and the People of the Republic of Korea for the support and discussed future bilateral cooperation. Dr. Cho Gyoung-rae, Director KOPIA appreciated the dedication of the Pakistani talent working tirelessly for the projects. The event concluded with Director General NARC, Engr. Shamim-Ul-Sibtain Shah's vote of thanks. The Ambassador visited the TCO project sites at the end of the event.

The Afghan conundrum

WITH the Afghan Taliban swearing up and down for negotiations between Pakistan and Pakistan Taliban before the international community, our proud days of being the mediators ourselves seem like a tale of the yore. But there's more. Pakistan's ambitious ask of the new players in Kabul was to put a leash on Pakistan Taliban's leadership that operated out of Afghanistan. However, as suggested by two deadly attacks on polio vaccination teams, the dragon has once again reared its menacing head. There are high chances of peace, for the umpteenth time, becoming collateral damage to their stinking power plays. An organisation that does not bat an eyelid before splashing innocent blood could not restrain itself for long. No more truce, they say. Amid the opening act of just as gruesome killing spree, Kabul has also decided to up the ante against its brother-in-arms. Though believing the bond to work wonders was never in line with reality, the other shoe should not have dropped this fast. The recent round of criticism where senior officials denounce Pakistan as an unIslamic system falls perfectly in sync with the long, long list of reservations our western neighbour loves to chew the rag over. If only biting the hand that fed you had an unkempt face! Whether the new conundrum is in a bid to gain domestic legitimacy (the Afghan official position has always been critical of the Durand line) or to continue enjoying the support of the no-questions-asked loyalty of fire branding TTP, things are not as chummy as they may seem to other. The foreign media very passionately unleashes a hyperbolic campaign to paint the two countries as thick as thieves. However, Afghanistan has always been more interested in being at the receiving end of sweeteners. Setting their eyes on the wide world around, Islamabad is no longer the only option on the table. So what, if PM Khan remains the only executive wholly-committed to the welfare of Afghan masses. May it be arguing for a release of their frozen funds, setting aside its thorny relationship with New Delhi to ensure wheat supplies or hosting the second-largest refugee population, we have always been there to fulfil the brotherly obligations.



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Increasing connectivity

HERE are some exciting developments with regards to the telecommunications and digital industry. The Universal Service Fund (USF) Board, the body established by the Ministry of Information Technology to spread the benefits of telecommunication to all corners of Pakistan, has approved 10 projects worth approximately PKR 11.5 billion to provide high-speed internet service and Optical Fibre Projects. These projects, according to the USF, are geared to provide internet and telecom services to "Top Tourist Destination areas" including Kumrat Valley, Swat, Mansehra, Upper Dir and Abbottabad areas. The projects are also aimed at providing mobile broadband access to un-served and under-served districts of Sindh, Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab provinces, including the Lasbella and Awaran areas of Balochistan. This is definitely an appreciable and highly necessary step. The USF Board has been established for the development of telecommunication services in un-served and under-served areas throughout the length and breadth of the country. Yet its work in its programmes, which include the NG-BSF for National Highways and Motorways, and the Broadband for Sustainable Development Programme, designed to provide telecom services to the unserved Mauzas across the country, was left severely lacking. It must be appreciated that this government has taken the initiative to highlight the cause of increasing connectivity and access across the country. After the issuance of 3G/4G licenses by the Federal government, USF's programmes have been redesigned to include the broadband equivalent data services as a compulsory component, which has made the approval of such ambitious projects easier. However, it is important to note that while this step is good for tourism, tourists are not the main beneficiaries here. The pandemic has demonstrated the urgency of providing access to far-off areas in the country. While more connectivity will lead to higher tourism, the government must balance that with protecting the environment from the adverse impact of tourist inflows as well.

US can only beat China through economic competition

Ishtiaq Ahmad



Finally, more viable alternatives have emerged to overcome the limits of liberal democracy. China's system of political meritocracy has gained particular traction globally, as it is designed with the aim of selecting political leaders with above-average ability to make morally informed political judgments

THROUGH last week's Summit for Democracy, President Joe Biden apparently sought to unite the world to rescue democracy, which is facing a critical crisis. Instead, the online event has set the world apart, with charges that its real intent was to contain China's rise and seek US hegemony. By excluding almost half of the world, the occasion also exposed the Biden administration's rhetoric on multilateralism as conflicting with its resolve for unilateralism. But the US has faced such a credibility gap in its global standing with increasing frequency throughout the last three decades. With the Soviet Union's collapse in 1991, the US could have chosen to partner with the world to achieve global goals. Instead, successive Repub-

lican and Democratic administrations shed their ideological imperatives to dictate to the world — undertaking "humanitarian" interventions in troubled spots with devastating consequences. So much so that even President Barack Obama, despite his liberal credentials, opted for a troop surge in Afghanistan.

With this year's end of this longest war in American history, Biden was also expected to make good on his promises to rebuild a sustainable multipolar world. Instead, no sooner than the US had quit Kabul, he declared China as America's enemy No. 1, rebalancing the country's geopolitical focus from the Arabian Gulf to the Indo-Pacific. A strategy had already been in play for a decade to contain Chinese influence in the South China Sea. The recently announced AUKUS alliance between the US, UK and Australia has taken this proposition to a dangerous level.

From the Cold War to the War on Terror, the US is accustomed to creating global friction along ideological lines, depicting the enemy as "evil" and using democracy as a tool for global supremacy. The Biden administration is treading the same regressive path, except that its current focus is on igniting a new cold war between a world of authoritarian states led by China and a world of democratic nations led by the US.

Will the world at large buy into this ideological farce? Luckily, there are reasons to hope that it won't. To start with, such a binary worldview is inherently problematic, not least due to the enormous risks it entails for future global peace, but also because it defies the very logic of complex interdependence in the age of globalization. Economically, China and the US cannot survive without each other. Beijing has no interest in exporting its economic or political model. Its Belt and Road Initiative also does not have any heinous design except to connect the world through major trade and transportation corridors, which is why 139 countries have joined it and more may be on the way.

Secondly, the blurring of political boundaries across the world through the cross-fertilization of political values, ideas and practices has rendered the classical distinction between democracy and autocracy irrelevant. Even conservative nations are experimenting with major socioeconomic reforms, transcending politics. Elsewhere, politics is consistently evolving in consonance with the relative pace of social change and economic development.

Thirdly, liberal democracy is itself suffering a major credibility crisis, from Europe to America and beyond. In the face of the Jan. 6 insurrection at

the Capitol Hill and constant squabbling over basic electoral reforms since then, the US can hardly make the case for restoring public faith in democracy abroad. Nor can it be the sole arbiter of the world's vast and varied political landscape, with diverse social conditions and cultural traditions. Finally, more viable alternatives have emerged to overcome the limits of liberal democracy. China's system of political meritocracy has gained particular traction globally, as it is designed with the aim of selecting political leaders with above-average ability to make morally informed political judgments. Rooted in Confucian civilization spanning millennia, the system has enabled China to eliminate acute poverty ahead of time and overtake the US as the world's richest economy in terms of net worth amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

These factors create a pragmatic context for course correction by the US, especially in its China policy. The US can draw comfort from the fact it still retains an obvious edge over its global competitors, including China, in terms of military strength, technology and popular culture. Beijing may have surpassed its wealth, but the US continues to play a pivotal role in managing the global economy. Washington must know that opening a new ideological front against China is no panacea for its sluggish economy or dysfunctional politics. Hence, the only way it can beat Beijing is through sheer economic competition, not by pushing its rival into a nonsensical global confrontation that it doesn't want.

For its part, China has emerged as a bright spot on the world map thanks to an unparalleled national effort and is naturally garnering growing global goodwill for its fantastic economic track record. By treating China as a hostile power, bothering it over Taiwan and even boycotting the Winter Olympics in Beijing, the US is losing a great opportunity to draw valid lessons from its miraculous rise and to partner with it for a better world. China's BRI and the US' Build Back Better World make an excellent case for the purpose, with their respective focus on economic development and global governance.

And Biden himself can learn a great deal from his Chinese counterpart, instead of nudging his proud nation on a discredited political notion. President Xi Jinping's idea of "shared destiny" is particularly worth emulating, as it offers a lasting path to world peace by proposing the creation of a global free trade regime, where all countries have equal rights irrespective of their political systems and cultural traditions.

— Courtesy: Arab News

When will Israel stop torturing prisoners?

Zarefah Baroud

The physical and mental abuse and torture of Palestinian children are also disturbingly common. The advocacy organisation DCIP collected the sworn affidavits from 752 child detainees between January 1, 2014, Dec 31, 2019. These testimonies revealed that 95 percent of the children had their hands and feet bound, 72 percent were subjected to physical violence, 21 percent were subjected to stress positions, and 18% were detained in solitary confinement for two or more days

ON June 15, 2016, Israeli forces arrested Mohammed El-Halabi, the director of the Gaza branch of World Vision, a Christian humanitarian aid organisation. Mohammed was accused of funneling money from World Vision to resistance groups in Gaza. Probes conducted both by World Vision and the Australian government found no evidence of any diversion or misuse of funds. Mohammed was nevertheless subjected to 52 days of interrogation and torture. His father, Khalil El-Halabi, testified to the torture his son endured during those months in detention: "Israeli intelligence officers placed a filthy bag over his head and hanged him from the ceiling for prolonged periods." Mohammed was also subjected to sleep deprivation and frequently physically assaulted by the Israeli officers who slapped him, "kicked him, especially in his genitals, and then strangled him until he felt that he was about to die ... At times, they placed him in a small room and played extremely loud music until the pain in his ears became unbearable.

In the summer, they would strip him naked, and then blast him with flashes of hot air. They would repeat the same process in the winter, but with cold air, instead." More than five years later, Mohammed remains in Israeli detention.

For Palestinian detainees in Israel, these experiences are unfortunately far from rare. On the 37th anniversary of the United Nations drafting of the Convention Against Torture (UNCAT), the international community must demand an end to the continuing systemic torture of Palestinian detainees by Israel. The UNCAT was implemented on June 26, 1987, and ratified by Israel on October 3, 1991. Israel's participation might seem surprising in light of the numerous human rights violations it has been accused of during the last few decades, including the use of torture, by well-respected human rights organisations, such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch.

Until 1999, torture was considered a legal means of extracting confessions in Israel, especially for Palestinian "security" detainees. However, once it was made illegal by Israel's Supreme Court, the Israeli attorney general promised to protect any interrogator who continues to use "special means". And indeed, special means continued to be employed as Israel made broad exceptions to this law, most notably in what they call "ticking bomb" scenarios. According to Amnesty International, "Shin Bet operatives have tortured hundreds of Palestinians, citing the 'ticking bomb' scenario."

Not only do these exceptions allow these egregious, yet routine practices to continue without consequence, but they directly violate Article 2 of the Convention. Article 2, section 2, states, "No exceptional circumstances whatsoever, whether a state of war or a threat of war, internal political instability or any other public emergency, may be invoked as a justification of torture." Israel has been criticised by the UN Committee Against Torture for its failure to meet this fixed standard. In addition, the failure of Israeli courts to fully define what they consider torture does not exonerate Israel from its obligation towards the UNCAT's definition of torture. According to the Convention, the term "torture" is defined as:

"[A]ny act by which severe pain or suffering, whether physical or mental, is intentionally inflicted on a person for such purposes as obtaining from him or a third person information or a confession, punishing him for an act he or a third person has committed or is suspected of having committed, or intimidating or coercing him or a third person, or for any reason based on discrimination of any kind, when such pain or suffering is inflicted by or at the instigation of or with the consent or acquiescence of a public official or other person acting in an official capacity." Common forms of physical and mental torture that are often practised by Israeli interrogators and officers, typically on Palestinians during interrogation and while in detention, include painful handcuffing, being held in painful stress positions, and sleep deprivation. There have also been reports and accounts of threats of rape, and actual rape or sexual assault of, mostly, Palestinian women by Israeli prison personnel. Former detainees have also reported being forced to watch the torture of fellow prisoners to frighten them into compliance with the interrogations, or even being threatened with the detention and torture of their family members, which has been carried out on occasion.

The physical and mental abuse and torture of Palestinian children are also disturbingly common. The advocacy organisation Defense for Children International - Palestine (DCIP) collected the sworn affidavits from 752 child detainees between January 1, 2014, and December 31, 2019. These testimonies revealed that 95 percent of the children had their hands and feet bound, 72 percent were subjected to physical violence, 21 percent were subjected to stress positions, and 18 percent were detained in solitary confinement for two or more days.

Many of these abuses are justified by Israel's differentiation between "security" prisoners and criminal prisoners, as well as its broad limits for what is considered a security offence. This permits Israel to practise torture under the guise of neutralising threats to state security. Notably, "security" offences in Israel include the act of stone-throwing, the most common conviction among children.

According to a report by Human Rights Watch, "Israeli authorities have incarcerated hundreds of thousands of Palestinians for what it deems 'security offenses' since 1967, including hundreds at virtually any given time held in administrative detention based on secret evidence without charge or trial for renewable periods that can extend for multiple years."

The classification of "security" prisoner or detainee is particularly significant as it denies that person certain rights typically afforded to other prisoners in Israel. For example, according to the US Department of State's 2020 Country Reports on Human Rights, this classification exempts Israeli interrogators from filming and audio recording interrogations with security detainees, allowing abusive interrogators to evade accountability.

Though the prospect of accountability may seem bleak, there have been recent legislative efforts in the US to produce mechanisms to properly hold Israel accountable, most notably the introduction of Congresswoman Betty McCollum's bill, HR 2590: Defending the Human Rights of Palestinian Children and Families Living Under Israeli Military Occupation Act. As the international community commemorates the adoption of the UN Convention Against Torture, it must also remember the many Palestinians like Mohammed El-Halabi who have been tortured by a country that time and again elides true accountability at the UN.

— Courtesy: Al Jazeera

Will Bosnia be turned into a frozen conflict?

Hamza Karcic

Turning Bosnia into a frozen conflict would mean long-term instability. Most importantly, a full-fledged frozen conflict would hamper Bosnia's objective of joining NATO. Unlike a decade ago when Bosnian Serb officials supported the country's integration with NATO

SOME of the elements in the Bosnia crisis mirror the frozen conflicts of the Nagorno-Karabakh, South Ossetia and Abkhazia. When Bosnian Serb politicians announced their intent to block the functioning of state-level institutions last July, their decision plunged the country into a months-long crisis that is still ongoing. What began as essentially a boycott of state institutions turned into a far more serious assault on Bosnia's sovereignty. Bosnian Serb leader and member of the country's tripartite presidency Milorad Dodik made his statement of intent clear on multiple occasions: to withdraw from state-level institutions and establish parallel centres of power. His recent visit to Russia and the much-anti-

ipated meeting with President Vladimir Putin remains a mystery. While Dodik claims to have met with the Russian leader, there was no photo-op and many question whether the meeting even took place. Analysts who waited for clues were left wondering what the Bosnian Serb leader's future course of action would be.

Last Friday, a special session of the Republika Srpska assembly was held. The members ushered in a process of revoking the decisions of the Republika Srpska of 16 years ago to transfer powers to the state level in the areas of justice, defence and taxation. This means that Republika Srpska is directly challenging the state's powers in these fields and is essentially seeking to strip the state of its sovereignty. New legislation towards this end is to be prepared in the next six months for adoption. This six-month delayed effect tests the waters and takes the measure of Bosnian and international reactions. It also provides the Bosnian Serb leaders with bargaining leverage to potentially extract concessions in exchange for discontinuing the process of secession.

An interesting twist in the current crisis is that Dodik is announcing the steps but is handing over the formal decision-making to the Republika Srpska assembly and the entity-level government. A likely reason is that he wants to both have the pretense of a collective decision but also to transfer responsibility to a collective body and make the imposition of targeted and individualised US or European sanctions on him less likely. Third, prior to attempted secession in the 1990s, there were ethnic, religious and linguistic differences between separatists and the central governments. These differences became more pronounced after the end of the war. A similar pattern emerged in both the Balkans and South Caucasus. Fourth, as in the South Caucasus, new elites have formed in Republika Srpska after the war. Politicians, tycoons, acad-

emics, and many others have vested interests tied to the perpetuation of the status quo.

Fifth, both separatists and the central governments have dug in their negotiating positions. Separatists in the South Caucasus are unwilling to reintegrate into their former homeland while the central governments do not recognise the separatists and are committed to reclaiming their country's territorial integrity. In Bosnia, the undermining of the state institutions by former separatists and their political heirs is the method of choice. To paraphrase von Clausewitz, politics is the continuation of war by other means. Sixth, international institutions are increasingly incapable of dealing with the crisis in Bosnia. While the Office of the High Representative — the top international body tasked with implementing the civilian aspects of Dayton — was a consequential actor in Bosnia in the first post-war decade, the institution is now largely relegated to the margins of Bosnian politics. In the South Caucasus, international institutions have had no result in mediating the conflicts.

Turning Bosnia into a frozen conflict would mean long-term instability. Most importantly, a full-fledged frozen conflict would hamper Bosnia's objective of joining NATO. Unlike a decade ago when Bosnian Serb officials supported the country's integration with NATO, Bosnian Serb leaders are now officially and publicly opposed to it. While Bosnian Serbs and Bosnian Croats have their respective kin-states, it is primarily Bosniaks who are at the forefront of preserving a unified Bosnia. Bosniaks are also the most ardent champions of the country's accession to NATO. Turning Bosnia into a frozen conflict not only undercuts support for NATO enlargement in Brussels but also leaves the Bosniak population in a limbo.

Courtesy: TRT World

Briefs

Govt ready to provide EVMs to ECP: Fawad

FROM PAGE 01
the secretary ECP on November 15. "To our understanding, ECP has approved the machines and the science ministry is ready to supply the machines," he added. The minister recalled that the talk about holding elections via EVM first started in 2012 under PPP's government and, subsequently, the PML-N government directed ECP in 2017 to take practical steps for making it a reality. He said that PTI was taking the world already done by PPP and PML-N forward, adding all the political parties should play a positive role in this regard.

He said all political parties should play their positive role on the issue of electronic voting machines. He said Election Commission of Pakistan should now issue tenders for Electronic Voting Machines. He said Minister for Planning and Development Asad Umar and Minister for Defence Production Zubaida Jalal will visit Gwadar to sort out the issue of fishermen protesting there. The Information Minister said Prime Minister has already taken notice of matter and directed for stern action in this regard.

He said a 700 billion rupees development package has been announced by federal government for southern Balochistan. The Information Minister said federal cabinet has decided to relax visa policy for Afghan nationals. He said prices of essential food items are low in Pakistan as compared to other countries of the region.

Pakistan condemns...

FROM PAGE 01
the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in its reports of 2018 and 2019." He said Pakistan reiterates its call for the international community including the UN to take immediate cognizance of the worsening human rights situation in IIOJK, listen to the voices of the oppressed Kashmiris and help them in their just and legitimate struggle for their right to self-determination.

SBP raises interest...

FROM PAGE 01
Hinting towards the next Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting scheduled to be held on January 24, the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) said that "looking ahead, monetary policy settings are expected to remain broadly unchanged in the near-term". The MPC met for the first time after Pakistan reached a staff-level agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) under the sixth review on November 22, 2021. Tuesday's meeting was one of the two additional meetings that the central bank had scheduled last month when it jacked up its benchmark policy rate by 150 basis points to 8.75%, largely in line with the market expectation, because of risks related to inflation. According to a post-meeting statement issued by the central bank: "Looking ahead, based on this momentum and the expected path of energy tariffs, inflation is likely to remain within the revised forecast range for the remainder of the fiscal year."

Sindh govt signs six...

FROM PAGE 01
MoUs signed before you today, which shows that this conference in the UAE has already been productive". Sharing details about the MoUs, he told participants of the conference that one of the agreements was for setting up a desalination plant in Karachi. "All of you must be aware that Karachi is facing huge water shortages and this is just the start in what we are hoping will be a lot more engagement with the private sector to work with us, to invest with us and to partner with the Sindh government to ensure that we can provide water to the people of the province, and the people in our [provincial] capital," Bilawal added. This, he said, was a "big step" towards the initiative of ensuring the provision of water to Karachiites.

Pakistan beat West Indies by 9 runs in second T20I

Shaheen Afridi took three wickets in an over to finish with three for 26, while Wasim Jnr followed up his Monday's figures of four for 40 with two for 39

SPORTS DESK

KARACHI: Pakistan overcame their batting blip as well as a maiden half-century by Brandon King and a Romario Shepherd came to clinch their seventh successive victory over the West Indies and 19th overall in this calendar year when they won the second Twenty20 International by nine runs that gave them 2-0 unassailable lead at the National Stadium on Tuesday. Pakistan slipped from 86 for two in 11 overs to 141 for seven in 18 overs before a late flurry by Shadab Khan (28 not out of 12 balls) helped them reach 172 for eight after they had elected to bat first. King then struck a career-best 67 in his 13th match and Shepherd scored a 19-ball 35 not out as the two-time former T20 world champions were bowled for 163 in 20 overs after being 85 for two in the 11th over at one stage. King struck six fours and three sixes in a 43-ball 67 and added 54 runs for the third wicket with Nicholas Pooran (26), while Shepherd struck two fours and two sixes.



Fast bowler Shaheen Shah Afridi took three wickets in an over to finish with three for 26, while Mohammad Wasim Jnr followed up his Monday's figures of four for 40 with two for 39. Mohammad Nawaz bagged two for 36 and Haris Rauf scooped two for 40. Shadab Khan remained wicketless, but conceded only 22 runs in his four overs. While this was Pakistan's seventh successive victory over the West Indies since the

2 April 2017 T20I at the Queen's Park Oval, this was also the 2009 T20 world champions' 19th victory in this calendar year. This includes their 10th win in 11 matches since the 24 October 2021 victory over India in Dubai by 10 wickets. However, the victory tested Pakistan's mental toughness as well as abilities to perform with the bat and the ball in pressure situations. Shadab Khan slapped three sixes and a

four as Pakistan added 31 runs off the last 12 balls to reach 171 for eight after they seemed to have lost the plot by slipping to 141 for seven in 18 overs.

Babar Azam suffered his second successive failure when he was run-out for seven, which will see him drop in the ICC rankings when they are announced on Wednesday, before Fakhar Zaman was foxed by Akeal Hosain as Pakistan were reduced to 38 for two.

Mohammad Rizwan (38) and Haider Ali (31) stitched a 48-run third wicket partnership to prepare the side for the assault, but their departures followed by the dismissals of Mohammad Nawaz (1) and Asif Ali (9) limited Pakistan to 124 for six, which became 141 for seven with the departure of Iftikhar Ahmed (32).

Pakistan were 73 for two after the halfway stage, reached 113 for five before adding 59 runs from the last five overs. The West Indies matched Pakistan until their 15 overs when they reached 71 for two after 10 overs and were 112 for four after 15 overs before their efforts were derailed in the 17th over when Shaheen picked up three wickets.

Roma halt mini-slump with Spezia win

ROME: Roma put an end to their worrying recent run of form in Serie A by beating struggling Spezia 2-0 on Monday and gaining ground in the race for European football. Goals from corners in each half from Chris Smalling and Roger Ibanez put Jose Mourinho's side back on track following defeat at Bologna and a home hammering at the hands of champions Inter Milan last weekend.

Roma are up to sixth on 28 points, two points behind Fiorentina who hold the Europa League qualification spot and level with Juventus, in seventh after drawing at Venezia on Saturday. However they are some way from their true objective of Champions League football as they sit eight points behind fourth-placed Napoli, and missing some key players failed to convince at the Stadio Olimpico in Rome. "I was pleased with the goals because we spent 25 minutes working on corners yesterday," Mourinho told Sky Sport Italia. "I'm also pleased with the result but I didn't like the way we played... even when we were two goals ahead I didn't feel like the match was over."



An 11th defeat for Spezia leaves Thiago Motta's team just two points and one place above the relegation zone, despite a spirited display which probably deserved at least a goal. Smalling put Roma ahead with his first league goal of the season in the sixth minute when, completely unmarked at a corner, he casually met countryman Tammy Abraham's headed effort from a corner with a header of his own that Ivan Provedel had no chance of saving. Abraham was also involved when the hosts were unlucky to not double their lead in the 25th minute, the England international cleverly flicking a pass to Matias Vina who then watched his goal-bound effort well

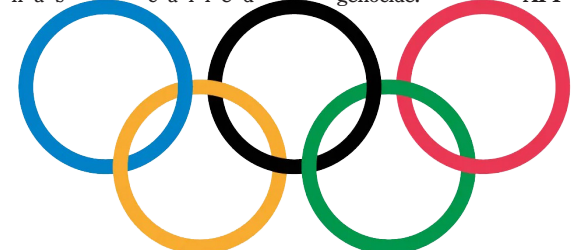
tipped away by Provedel. And after Rui Patricio stopped Arkadiusz Reca from drawing the away side level Abraham was denied his fifth league goal of the season by the bar in first-half stoppage time. The former Chelsea striker met Henrikh Mkhitaryan's fizzing cross with his chest and hit the woodwork for the seventh time this season before Jordan Veretout's rebound drive was kept out by a combination of Provedel and Martin Erlic. However Roma did have their second 10 minutes after the break, following a brief burst of Spezia dominance, when Ibanez met Veretout's corner with a thumping header amid more sloppy set-piece defending from Spezia. - DNA



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan Yezhan Kistafin held a meeting with the Vice-President of the Judo Federation of Pakistan, Ahmad Masood. - DNA

'No regrets in awarding Olympics to China'

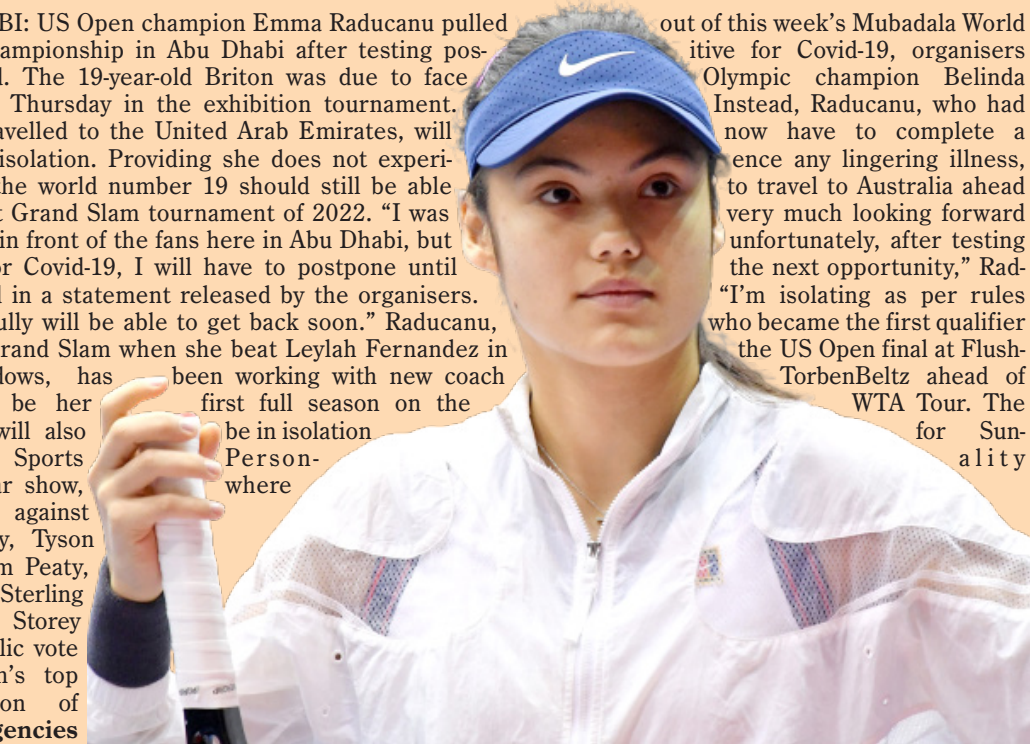
LONDON: International Olympic Committee (IOC) senior member Dick Pound said he had no regrets about China being selected to host the 2022 Winter Games despite the international backlash over the country's human rights record. The United States, Canada, Britain and Australia are among the countries that recently announced a diplomatic boycott of the February 4-20 Beijing Games, which China called "political posturing". "In the sense of having a host country that could organize and put on an excellent Games from a Games perspective, there's absolutely nothing wrong with China," Pound told Germany's Deutschlandfunk radio. "It's a very good and very organized country." Pound reiterated the IOC's stance that it has no role to play in bringing about political change in any country. "You have to be reasonable about the expectations of a relatively small organisation," he said of the IOC. "When we award the Games to a country, we don't do it as an indication that we support the political objectives of that country. It's done on the basis of the importance of the country as a sporting nation and its ability to organise Games at the level that the world now expects." He said China's Olympic Organising Committee has agreed to allow athletes to speak freely during news conferences on issues such as the treatment of minority Muslims in China's Xinjiang region, which US President Joe Biden's administration has called a genocide. - APP



Emma Raducanu pulls out of Abu Dhabi event

ABU DHABI: US Open champion Emma Raducanu pulled out of this week's Mubadala World Tennis Championship in Abu Dhabi after testing positive for Covid-19, organisers announced. The 19-year-old Briton was due to face Bencic on Thursday in the exhibition tournament. Already travelled to the United Arab Emirates, will period of isolation. Providing she does not experience however, the world number 19 should still be able of the first Grand Slam tournament of 2022. "I was to playing in front of the fans here in Abu Dhabi, but positive for Covid-19, I will have to postpone until ucanu said in a statement released by the organisers. and hopefully will be able to get back soon." Raducanu, to win a Grand Slam when she beat Leylah Fernandez in ing Meadows, has been working with new coach Draft Picks: Chris Jordan (Platinum), Lewis Gregory (Diamond), Umaid Asif (Silver), Tom Abell (Silver), RohailNazir (Silver), Mohammad Imran (Wildcard: from Emerging to Silver), QasimAkram (Emerging; Right to Match), Faisal Akram (Emerging), Talha Ahsan (Supplementary), Romario Shepherd (Supplementary).

Instead, Raducanu, who had now have to complete a nce any lingering illness, to travel to Australia ahead very much looking forward unfortunately, after testing the next opportunity," Raducanu said. "I'm isolating as per rules who became the first qualifier the US Open final at Flushing Meadows ahead of WTA Tour. The for Sunday's Sun-ality



PSL 7: Complete squad of each PSL franchise

SPORTS DESK

LAHORE: After a successful draft phase, all franchise owners remained delighted with their franchisees' progress. There were some surprise trades beforehand with Quetta Gladiators from Islamabad United, who secured the services of Azam Khan instead. Shahid Afridi and James Vince also moved to Quetta to further strengthen their team.

MULTAN SULTANS

Retained Players: Mohammad Rizwan (Platinum), RileeRossouw (Platinum), Imran Tahir (Diamond), Mentor, SohaibMaqsood (Diamond), Khushdil Shah (Gold; Brand Ambassador), ShahnawazDahani (Gold), and Shan Masood (Gold).
Draft Picks: Tim David (Platinum), Odean Smith (Diamond), RummanRaees (Silver), Asif Afridi (Silver), Anwar Ali (Silver), Rovman Powell (Silver), Imran

Khan Snr. (Silver), AamerAzmat (Emerging), Abbas Afridi (Emerging), Ihsanullah (Supplementary), and Blessing Muzarabani (Supplementary).

LAHORE QALANDARS

Retained Players: Rashid Khan (Platinum), Shaheen Shah Afridi (Platinum), HarisRauf (Diamond), Brand Ambassador, David Wiese (Diamond), Mohammad Hafeez (Diamond), Ahmed Daniyal (Silver), Sohail Akhtar (Silver), and Zeeshan Ashraf (Silver).
Draft Picks: FakharZaman (Platinum), Abdullah Shafique (Gold), Phil Salt (Gold), Harry Brook (Silver), Kamran Ghulam (Silver), Dean Foxcroft (Silver), Zaman Khan (Emerging), Maaz Khan (Emerging), Samit Patel (Supplementary), and Syed Faridoun (Supplementary).

KARACHI KINGS

Retained Players: Babar Azam (Platinum), ImadWasim (Platinum), Mohammad Amir (Dia-

mond), Mohammad Nabi (Diamond), Joe Clarke (Gold; Brand Ambassador), AamerYamin (Gold), Sharjeel Khan (Gold), and Mohammad Ilyas (Silver).
Draft Picks: Chris Jordan (Platinum), Lewis Gregory (Diamond), Umaid Asif (Silver), Tom Abell (Silver), RohailNazir (Silver), Mohammad Imran (Wildcard: from Emerging to Silver), QasimAkram (Emerging; Right to Match), Faisal Akram (Emerging), Talha Ahsan (Supplementary), Romario Shepherd (Supplementary).



ISLAMABAD UNITED

Retained Players: Asif Ali (Platinum), Hasan Ali (Platinum), Faheem Ashraf (Diamond), Shadab Khan (Diamond; Brand Ambassador), Alex Hales (Gold; Mentor), Azam Khan (Gold), Mohammad Wasim Jnr. (Gold) and Paul Stirling (Silver).
Draft Picks: Colin Munro (Platinum), Marchant de Lange (Diamond), Muhammad Akhlaq (Silver), Reece Topley (Silver), Danish Aziz (Silver), Zafar Gohar (Silver), Mubasir Khan (Emerging), ZeeshanZameer (Emerging; Right to Match), RahmanullahGurbaz (Supplementary), and AtharMahmood (Supplementary).

PESHAWAR ZALMI

Retained Players: Liam Livingstone (Platinum), WahabRiaz (Platinum), Haider Ali (Diamond), Sherfane Rutherford (Diamond), Shoaib Malik (Diamond), HusainTalat (Gold), SaqibMahmood (Gold; Brand Ambassador), and Tom Kohler-Cadmore (Silver).

Draft Picks: HazratullahZazai (Platinum), Usman Qadir (Gold), Salman Irshad (Silver), Arshad Iqbal (Silver), SameenGul (Silver), Kamran Akmal (Silver), Sirajuddin (Emerging), Mohammad Amir Khan (Emerging), Ben Cutting (Supplementary), and Mohammad Harris (Supplementary).

QUETTA GLADIATORS

Retained Players: James Vince (Platinum), Sarfaraz Ahmed (Platinum), Iftikhar Ahmed (Diamond), Mohammad Nawaz (Diamond), ShahidAfridi (Gold; Mentor), Mohammad Hasnain (Gold; Brand Ambassador), and Naseem Shah (Gold).
Draft Picks: Jason Roy (Platinum), James Faulkner (Diamond), Umar Akmal (Silver), SohailTanvir (Silver), Ben Duckett (Silver), Naveen-ul-Haq (Naveen-ul-Haq), KhurramShahzad (Silver), Abdul Wahid Bangalzai (Emerging), Arshad Qureshi (Emerging), Ahsan Ali (Supplementary), and Noor Ahmed (Supplementary).

Petrol price to be cut by Rs11 per litre

FROM PAGE 01

The price of crude oil has seen a decline worldwide recently. The revised prices of petroleum products will come into effect from December 16. On Nov 30, the government had announced to maintain the prices of petroleum products for the December 1-15 period in line with Prime Minister Imran Khan's decision.

"The petrol price will remain unchanged at Rs145.82 per litre, and the price of diesel will remain Rs142.62 per litre as before," the statement had said. "The prices of kerosene oil and light diesel will stay at Rs116.53 and Rs114.07 per litre, respectively."

Preparations to host OIC.

FROM PAGE 01

Earlier on December 18, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi will host dinner for the visiting OIC foreign ministers.

The print and electronic media, both local and foreign, have also paced up their momentum to highlight the importance of the upcoming OIC CFM's Extraordinary Session, being held in the wake of a serious humanitarian situation in Afghanistan. For the facilitation of local and foreign journalists, the government has established two media centres, i.e., at the main venue and at the hotel of stay of foreign media persons.

Pakistan has played an active role for Muslim solidarity being the founding member of OIC since 1969. (Video by Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan)According to UN estimates, 60 percent of Afghanistan's 38 million people face "crisis levels of hunger" and that situation is getting worse every day. The World Food Programme has warned that 3.2 million children are at risk of acute malnutrition. According to UNHCR, 665,000 people have been newly displaced within Afghanistan between January and September 2021 - in addition to the 2.9 million people already internally displaced in that country.

The experts believe that the advent of winter is further exacerbating the situation, which if left unattended, could aggravate a major humanitarian crisis. After Saudi Arabia convened the 17th Extraordinary Session on November 29 on the Afghan situation, the decision of Pakistan to host the event was bound by fraternal bonds of amity and brotherhood with the people of Afghanistan.

China vows to continue aiding...

FROM PAGE 01

Wang described China as a friendly neighbor and sincere friend of Afghanistan, he said in response to a question about China's assistance to Afghanistan during his regular briefing held here. Wang Wenbin said that the well projects inaugurated on Sunday in Kabul will help meet local residents' need for water and improve their living conditions.

The supplies delivered on Monday were part of the humanitarian assistance that China will provide to Afghanistan, which includes over a tonne of grain, necessities of life, medical and winter supplies and COVID-19 vaccines, he noted. He said China stands ready to talk with Afghanistan on cooperation for economic reconstruction as the situation stabilizes in the war-torn nation.

Meanwhile, the second batch of winter supplies donated by China to Afghanistan arrived in Kabul, capital of Afghanistan on Monday. Arsalan Kharoti, the Afghan interim deputy minister of refugees and repatriation affairs, and Chinese Ambassador Wang Yu attended the handover ceremony at a ministry depot. The latest batch includes more than 70,000 blankets and 40,000-plus down coats. The aid brings warmth from the Chinese people to the Afghan people at a critical moment, the Chinese ambassador said. He said that China would continue to donate other aid including food. China, as a good neighbor of Afghanistan, is ready to help the country overcome its current difficulties, he said. Kharoti thanked China for providing the emergency supplies as many Afghan people are experiencing a difficult time.

Briefs

S. Korea marks deadliest day of pandemic

SEOUL: South Korea on Tuesday marked its deadliest day of the pandemic as an unrelenting, delta-driven spread stretched thin hospitals and left people dying while waiting for beds.

Health experts warn that the country's medical system is quickly approaching its limits and that fatalities could worsen if the government continues to be slow and hesitant in tightening social distancing.

The Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency said 94 virus patients died in the past 24 hours while a record 906 were in serious or critical condition.

The 5,567 new infections were the highest yet for a Tuesday — daily tallies are usually smaller at the start of the week because of fewer tests on weekends — indicating the virus has continued to gain speed after the government moderately tightened social distancing last week.

Park Hyang, a senior Health Ministry official, said medical resources are quickly running out in densely populated capital Seoul and nearby metropolitan areas, where around 86% of intensive care units designated for COVID-19 treatment were already occupied. More than 1,480 patients were still waiting to be admitted to hospitals or treatment shelters. At least 17 patients died last week at home or at facilities while waiting for beds. — Agencies

France mulls tighter UK travel rules

PARIS: France said on Tuesday it could tighten border controls to protect against the Omicron Covid variant, which is infecting a huge number of people in Britain. France currently requires a negative Covid test result less than 48 hours old for arrivals from outside the European Union even if they are vaccinated.

But government spokesman Gabriel Attal said officials were "always looking at how we can strengthen our rules at the border". A decision on stricter rules is likely in the next few days, he said.

Britain is being swept by a wave of Omicron infections that the government is trying to stem with a push for vaccine booster shots.

At least one person has died in Britain after contracting the virus mutation and UK health officials say the variant is causing around 200,000 infections each day. Prime Minister Boris Johnson faces a rebellion by his own MPs on Tuesday as parliament votes on new coronavirus restrictions to combat the spread of Omicron. Johnson says tougher measures are urgently needed to prevent a "tidal wave" of infections overwhelming hospitals. — APP

Truck explodes in Haiti, dozens killed

PORT-AU-PRINCE: A truck carrying gasoline exploded in northern Haiti, killing more than 50 people and injuring dozens of others in the latest disaster to hit a country whose troubles deepened greatly this year. The blast occurred late Monday in the city of Cap-Haitien, Prime Minister Ariel Henry said, adding that he was devastated.

"Three days of national mourning will be decreed throughout the territory, in memory of the victims of this tragedy that the entire Haitian nation is grieving," he tweeted.

As dozens of bodies lay near the explosion site, people in the area used buckets to scoop up gasoline from the truck and the street to take back to their homes, Dave Larose, a civil engineer who works in Cap-Haitien, told The Associated Press.

The explosion occurred as Haiti struggles with a severe shortage of fuel and spiraling gas prices that recently forced hospitals to turn away patients, temporarily shut down schools and businesses and prompted the government of U.S. and Canada to urge its citizens to leave while they still could. — Agencies

Afghanistan's crisis needs coordinated global response

"According to UN estimates, about 60%, or perhaps more, of Afghanistan's people, particularly children, are at serious risk of starvation, malnourishment, and lack access to health care and medicines," Muhammad Syrus Sajjad Qazi

NEWS DESK

ANKARA: The dire situation in Afghanistan is probably the largest humanitarian crisis currently unfolding in the world, and warrants an expeditious and coordinated response from the international community, said Pakistan's ambassador to Turkey.

"According to UN estimates, about 60%, or perhaps more, of Afghanistan's people, particularly children, are at serious risk of starvation, malnourishment, and lack access to health care and medicines," Muhammad Syrus Sajjad Qazi said in an interview with Anadolu Agency.

The looming winter season is expected to be particularly tough for Afghans, he warned. "There are multiple factors impacting the lives of the ordinary Afghans, and this situation requires a concerted, quick, very expeditious and coordinated response from the world community," he said.

Qazi said the Afghanistan crisis will be the primary focus during a meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Pakistan's capital Islamabad later this week.

The OIC aims to deliver "a very strong message" urging the international community to work on an individual level and in cooper-



ation "to help contain the worst aspects of this crisis and to reverse it," the envoy said. "Significant pledges" are expected from several countries to boost efforts to mitigate the crisis, he added.

"Pakistan is not a very rich country. But given that we are the immediate neighbors of Afghanistan, we have done our utmost to help our Afghan brothers," Qazi said.

"For instance, in October, we sent about 550 metric tons of food. Our prime minister has recently announced packages of medicines, food and other items, worth more than \$28 million."

Islamabad also allowed India to use its land routes to send aid to Afghanistan, while

also reducing tariffs on a number of Afghan products exported to Pakistan, the envoy added. "All of this is just to show other countries what they can also do for Afghanistan," he said. However, he stressed that aid packages can only offer Afghans fleeting moments of relief, and the country's grave situation requires comprehensive efforts by the international community for a sustainable and long-term solution.

On relations between Turkey and Pakistan, Qazi said the nations have "perhaps the world's best bilateral relationship between two countries that are not geographical neighbors."

Prime Minister Imran Khan was due in Turkey this October for a meeting of the Turkey-Pakistan High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council, but the trip had to be postponed due to the COVID-19 situation, the envoy explained.

Islamabad is working to reschedule the visit "fairly soon," he added.

The two sides have a "very comprehensive" agenda for the meeting, which will build on the Strategic Economic Framework Agreement signed during President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's visit to Islamabad in 2020.

"Advancing on a plan of over 70 specific actions in a time-bound manner, Pakistan and Turkey are expected to include

a mechanism for bilateral engagement in the defense sector, as well as various other fields," Qazi said.

He said the defense sector has emerged as another very important pillar in Turkey-Pakistan relations.

"The sky is the limit. There is no end to the kind of cooperation that can happen between real brotherly countries like Pakistan and Turkey," he asserted. He added that Ankara and Islamabad have almost completed a study on their bilateral trade ties, which will give new impetus to efforts to further bolster their economic relations.

The trade volume between Turkey and Pakistan is currently close to \$1 billion, indicating an incremental progress but "not the kind that the two countries or the two leaders would wish," the diplomat said.

Qazi also pointed out that Pakistan and Turkey "have a very strong tradition of helping each other on various forums on various issues," citing Turkey's stance on the Kashmir issue as an example.

"Similarly, Pakistan supports Turkey's position on almost all international issues, including the issue of Northern Cyprus. We call for a just and equitable solution to that problem," he said.

Source: Anadolu Agency

Belarus jails opposition leader's husband for 18 years

AGENCIES

MINSK: A court in Belarus has sentenced opposition leader Sergei Tikhanovsky to 18 years in prison after he galvanised an unprecedented protest movement against authoritarian leader Alexander Lukashenko last year, state media said.

Following a months-long trial behind closed doors at a detention centre in the southeastern city of Gomel, the court found Tikhanovsky, 43, guilty of organising riots and inciting social hatred, among other charges, state newspaper Sovetskaya Belarus reported.

Tikhanovsky's wife, self-exiled Belarus democracy icon Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, denounced the verdict.

"The dictator publicly takes revenge on his strongest opponents," she wrote on Twitter after her husband was handed the sentence. "While hiding the political prisoners in closed trials, he hopes to continue repressions in silence. But the whole world watches. We won't stop," she added in English.

One of Tikhanovsky's five co-defendants in the high-profile case, veteran politician Mikola Statkevich, 65, was sentenced to 14 years in jail.

Statkevich challenged Lukashenko in elections in 2010 but was sentenced to six years in prison. Released early in 2015, he was barred from contesting the 2020 poll.

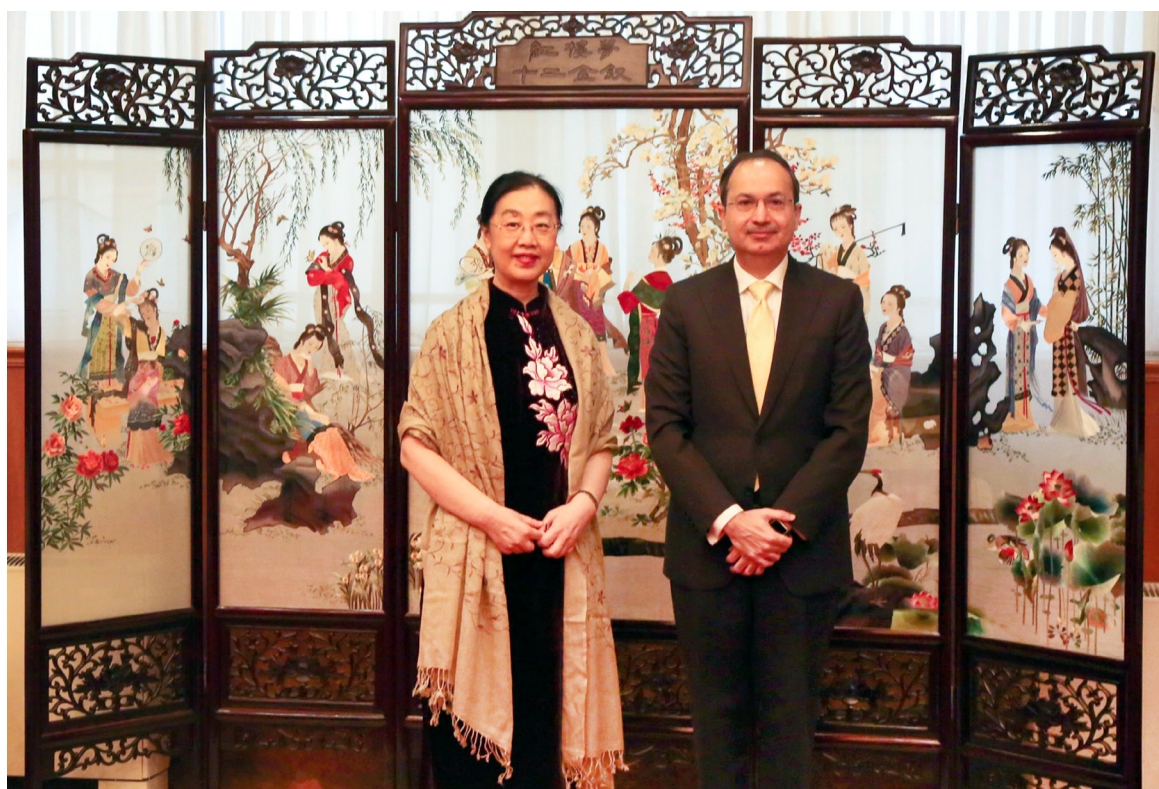
Both Tikhanovsky and Statkevich have been in custody since May 2020. Little was known about the trial which began in June. In power since 1994, Lukashenko has been cracking down on opponents since unprecedented protests erupted after the 2020 election, deemed unfair by the West. Lukashenko's government has jailed or forced to flee all of his prominent opponents.

Tikhanovsky planned to run against Lukashenko in the August 2020 presidential election in Belarus but was arrested and jailed before the vote. His wife Tsikhanouskaya — a political novice at the time of his arrest — took his place in the polls and was widely believed to have won the elections.

Another high-profile co-defendant in the case, 29-year-old Igor Losik, was sentenced to 15 years in prison on Tuesday. He had been arrested last year on the charge of using his popular channel on messenger app Telegram to incite riots.

The three other co-defendants in the case are blogger Vladimir Tsyganovich as well as two activists linked to Tikhanovsky: Artyom Sakov and Dmitry Popov.

Tsyganovich received a sentence of 15 years in prison, while Sakov and Popov were handed 16 years in jail each.



BAKU: Pakistan ambassador to Azerbaijan Bilal Hayee met Ambassador Guo Min of China and discussed bilateral ties and regional situation. — DNA

Blinken vows more US military might in Indo-Pacific

NEWS DESK

JAKARTA: The United States will expand its military and economic relationships with partners in Asia to push back against China's increasing assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Tuesday.

Blinken said the Biden administration is committed to maintaining peace and prosperity in the region and will do that by boosting U.S. alliances, forging new relationships and ensuring that the U.S. military maintains "its competitive edge."

"Threats are evolving, our security approach has to evolve with them. To do that, we will lean on our greatest strength: our alliances and partnerships," Blinken said in a speech in Indonesia, outlining the administration's Indo-Pacific plans.

"We'll adopt a strategy that more closely weaves together all our instruments of national power — diplomacy, military, intelligence — with those of our allies and partners," he said. That will include linking U.S. and Asian defense industries, integrating supply chains and cooperating on technological innovation, he said. Later he signed a series of three agreements with Indonesia's foreign minister, including one that extends until 2026 an existing maritime cooperation pact that among other issues calls for enhanced joint U.S.-Indonesian naval exercises.

"It's about reinforcing our strengths so we can keep the peace, as we have done in the region for decades," he said. He did not elaborate further but the administration made waves earlier this year by agreeing to a pact that will see



Australia produce nuclear-powered submarines. Blinken insisted that the U.S. is not trying to force countries to choose between the United States and China, or seeking conflict with China. But he laid out a litany of complaints about "Beijing's aggressive actions" from "Northeast Asia to Southeast Asia and from the Mekong River to the Pacific Islands."

At a daily briefing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said Blinken's latest comments showed the U.S. was contradicting itself by "playing up the so-called China threat on the one hand while claiming that it has no intention to seek conflict with China on the other."

Wang criticized the U.S. for "frequently sending ships and aircraft to the area to flex muscles and stir up trouble."

Baku, Tbilisi, Ankara ink cooperation accords

Free trade agreements between the three countries are already creating comfortable conditions for the business sector development, Georgia's Economy and Sustainable Development Minister Natela Turnava said

DNA

BAKU: Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey have signed five memorandums and agreements on cooperation as part of the trilateral business forum held in Baku.

The memorandums were signed on December 14 by the heads of the Azerbaijan Export and Investment Promotion Foundation (AZPROMO) and the Georgian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Azerbaijan Chamber of Commerce and the Georgian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, as well as representatives of the Small and Medium Business Development Agency of Azerbaijan, the Coordination Center of the IV Industrial Revolution and the Turkish Metallurgical Industry, Azerbaijan's AzSeKer and Bayburt Grup.

Free trade agreements between the three countries are already creating comfortable conditions for the business sector development, Georgia's Economy and Sustainable Development Minister Natela Turnava said. She stated that today Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey are jointly going through economic recovery as they overcome the COVID-19 pandemic consequences.

"I would like to note that since the begin-

ning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the period of trade between our countries has not stopped, which demonstrated how strong our countries are together," she said.

Turnava added that Azerbaijan and Turkey have been the largest partners of Georgia for many years, in terms of trade and investments attraction.

"Georgia creates an attractive investment climate and supports mechanisms for its partners, such as financing programs, a more simplified tax system," she said.

The acting head of Azerbaijan's Export and Investment Promotion Foundation, Yusuf Abdullayev, said that the foundation will broadly discuss the possibilities of companies from Turkey and Georgia to restore Karabakh.

"We hope that this platform will contribute to the maximum use of the economic potential of our countries. In addition, during the B2B meeting, which will be held today, we will widely discuss the possibilities and potential of companies from Turkey and Georgia in the restoration of Karabakh," he said.

Abdullayev added that the foundation's activities are aimed at developing the export of non-oil products and increasing investments in this sector. Abdullayev noted that exports in this sector have grown by 45 percent since the beginning of 2021.

Speaking at the event, Azerbaijan's Economy Minister Mikayil Jabbarov said that the liberation of Azerbaijani territories had created new opportunities for economic cooperation with Turkey and Georgia. He noted that despite the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic "today we see at the forum not only the heads of the economy and trade ministries of Georgia and Turkey but also businessmen from these countries."

"In 2020, as you know, Azerbaijan liberated its territories from occupation. This created new opportunities for economic cooperation between our countries. This format will contribute to the development of bilateral and multilateral cooperation," he said.

Jabbarov stated that Azerbaijan had received 921 requests regarding participation in the reconstruction of liberated lands. He stressed that the liberation of Azerbaijani lands opened up new realities and opportunities not only for business but also for regional development as a whole.



7 migrants killed in Hungary

AGENCIES

BUDAPEST: Seven migrants were killed and three others injured when the vehicle they were traveling in crashed into a house while fleeing a police stop, Hungarian police said.

The accident occurred just before midnight Monday near the center of Morahalom, a town of around 6,000 people less than five miles from Hungary's border with Serbia. According to the Csongrad-Csanad county police, officers were inspecting the Serbian-registered minivan when the driver attempted to flee the scene at high speed. The vehicle crashed into a house and overturned.

Seven occupants of the vehicle died at the scene while four others, including the driver, were injured.

Police arrested the man and said they will initiate proceedings against him for human trafficking and causing a fatal mass accident.

Indonesia lifts tsunami alert

AGENCIES

JAKARTA: Indonesia lifted a tsunami alert Tuesday following a magnitude 7.3 undersea earthquake that struck off Flores Island, triggering panic in a region prone to fatal quakes but apparently causing no major damage or casualties.

According to the U.S. Geological Survey, the quake hit at a depth of 18.5 kilometers (11.5 miles) under the sea, and was located 112 kilometers (74 miles) north of the town of Maumere, the second-largest on the island in East Nusa Tenggara province with a population of 85,000. After an initial tsunami alert, the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center in Hawaii and later Indonesia's meteorological agency lifted the warning hours after the quake.

National Disaster Mitigation Agency spokesperson Abdul Muhari said residents in East Flores district felt the earthquake strongly. Footage showed people running away from buildings that shook from the impact.

One person was reported injured in East Nusa Tenggara province. The shocks were also felt in Makassar city and Selayar Islands district in South Sulawesi province, across the Flores Sea. The disaster mitigation agency reported a school was damaged in the Selayar Islands. Muhari said that based on sea level observations, minor tsunamis of 7 centimeters (2.8 inches) were detected in Marapokot and Reo areas. Dwikorita Karawati, head of Indonesia's Meteorology, Climatology, and Geophysical Agency, said people along the coastlines on the northern side of Flores should be aware of further quakes and a potential tsunami.

China detects 2nd case of omicron

AGENCIES

BEIJING: China has detected its second case of the omicron variant in a 67-year-old man who tested positive after more than two weeks of quarantine, official media reported Tuesday.

State broadcaster CCTV said the man returned from overseas on Nov. 27 and underwent two weeks of isolation, during which he repeatedly tested negative for the virus.

On Saturday, he flew to the southern city of Guangzhou where he maintains a residence and began another week of self-quarantining at home.

A day later he underwent a routine test and early on Monday, the district health department informed authorities he had tested positive for the virus, the station reported.

Further investigation at the city and provincial level determined he was infected with omicron, it said.

On Monday, authorities announced the first case of omicron in a person who arrived on a flight from Europe earlier this month and tested positive on Thursday while in quarantine. Poland's Health Ministry said Tuesday the traveler was a Polish teenager who flew from Warsaw to China.

Briefs

2 Pfizer jabs give 70% protection from Omicron

WEB DESK

JOHANNESBURG: Two shots of Pfizer's Covid vaccine offers around 70 per cent protection against severe disease from Omicron, according to results of a study published Tuesday in South Africa. The emergence of the highly mutated variant, first detected in South Africa last month, sparked fears that it could cause severe disease, be more contagious or could evade vaccines. Early indicators suggest that it could be more transmissible, but promising data so far has suggested that vaccines still offer protection against Omicron. The latest research out of South Africa suggested that two doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine still offered protection against serious illness. "The double dose of Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine showing 70 per cent effectiveness in reducing risk of hospitalisation," said Ryan Noach, the head of South Africa's leading private health insurance company, Discovery, which co-led the study. Two doses of the vaccine offered 93 per cent protection against earlier variants, according to the companies.

Ghana president slams EU 'vaccine nationalism's

STRASBOURG: Ghana's President Nana Akufo-Addo warned EU lawmakers Tuesday that the bloc's drive to deliver Covid booster jabs could hamper inoculations in Africa, as he slammed travel bans over the Omicron variant. "The unsavoury politics of vaccine nationalism we're witnessing could... potentially derail global efforts made (to contain) the pandemic to date," Akufo-Addo said in a speech at the European Parliament. "We, like the World Health Organization, are worried that the phenomenon of hoarding vaccines will worsen even further, as countries begin to administer booster shots." The Ghanaian leader said the vaccination rate in Africa was lagging at under 10 per cent and that countries were still not able to get vaccines in the "requisite numbers". Richer nations, including EU members, the United States and Britain, are scrambling to administer booster doses after the discovery of the Omicron variant. Experts say a third dose of Covid vaccines offer better protection against Omicron. — APP

Gulf summit set to open in Riyadh

RIYADH: The 42nd Gulf summit is set to kick off on Tuesday in the Saudi capital, Riyadh, following a "prosperous" year of reconciliation between most of the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). During the last year, remarkable agreements were reached on five files, most notably Iran's nuclear program and reforms in Lebanon. Last week's Gulf tour by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman saw the issuance of joint statements that were remarkably similar in terms of their stance on the Iranian nuclear file, its demand for Lebanon's reforms, and its view of the crises in Yemen, Syria, and Libya, the current economically deteriorating position in Afghanistan, and the completion of the approach of the Al-Ula summit declaration. The last GCC summit took place in the Saudi city of Al-Ula on January 5, 2021, which saw Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain, and Egypt agree to restore diplomatic, trade, and travel ties with Qatar, which were cut in 2017. — APP

High power rate, rising prices to bloat inflation

The ADB has estimated that inflation rate in Pakistan is expected to increase following a hike in the electricity prices in the country

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Asian Development Bank has downgraded the growth outlook for the South Asian countries while indicating a high rate of inflation in Pakistan. In its latest report released on Tuesday, the ADB has estimated that inflation rate in Pakistan is expected to increase following a hike in the electricity prices in the country. Besides this, the inflation in Pakistan will also be triggered due to rising prices in the global market, the bank stated in its latest projections. The Asian Development Bank has revised its growth rate for the South Asian countries downgrading it from 8.8% in September this year to 8.6% after renewed outbreaks of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) leading to slower growth in the third quarter. "Developing Asia's steady progress in dealing with COVID-19, through continued vaccination drives and more strategic application of containment measures, helped boost growth prospects in the early part of the year," said ADB Acting Chief Economist Joseph Zveglich, Jr. "However, new outbreaks in the third quarter muted gross domestic product growth, and the advent of the Omicron virus variant is causing renewed uncertainty. Recovery efforts will have to take these developments into consideration."

ADB approves \$200mln loan for irrigation uplift

ISLAMABAD: The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$200 million loan for the uplift of irrigation infrastructure in Punjab to help increase agricultural productivity and enhance food security. The project loan, which is denominated in Japanese yen, will finance the construction of the second branch or Choubara system of the Greater Thal Canal irrigation scheme. The scheme will provide reliable irrigation water supply to 704,000 hectares of land in Bhakkar, Jhang, Khushab, Layyah, and Muzaffargarh districts, making them more agriculturally productive. The government of Pakistan had earlier constructed the Main Canal and the first branch or Mankera system. "Given Pakistan's vulnerability to the impacts of

climate change, it is essential to build irrigation infrastructure for climate-resilient and sustainable agriculture," said ADB Director General for Central and West Asia Yevgeniy Zhukov. "ADB's support will help boost the supply of local produce and promote food security, while increasing economic growth." Zhukov added. Punjab is the main source of food production for Pakistan's growing population, producing a significant portion of the country's wheat, rice, sugarcane, and maize. Because of Pakistan's semi-arid climate, agricultural production is highly dependent on irrigation. Yet, irrigation efficiency remains low due to water shortages, land degradation, and mismanagement of water resources. — DNA

The ADB slashed the growth rate of India for the fiscal year 2021 from 10% to 9.7%. The reduction of 0.3% comes amid supply chain issues that are affecting industry. India's outlook for FY2022 is maintained at 7.5%, as domestic demand is expected to normalize. The bank has further said that

inflation rate in India is expected to hover around 5.6%. The Asian Development Bank has sanctioned a loan of \$200 million to overhaul the irrigation system in Punjab. The money would be spent on the construction of Choubara Canal System. According to the ADB, with the help of Cho-

bara Canal System, water will be provided to different areas in Punjab including Bhakkar, Layyah, Muzaffargarh, Jhang and Khushab. The new canal system will irrigate 704,000 acres of land in five districts of the province, the ADB added. Last week, the ADB approved a \$603 million results-based lending program to strengthen and expand social protection program in Pakistan. A statement issued by the ADB said, "Using conditional cash transfers, the program will support the implementation of Ehsaas, Pakistan's national social protection and poverty reduction strategy." "Under the Integrated Social Protection Development Program, ADB will provide a regular loan of \$600 million and a \$3 million grant from the Asian Development Fund, and will administer a \$24 million grant from the Education Above All Foundation." ADB Director General for Central and West Asia Yevgeniy Zhukov said, "The program marks a significant shift in ADB's strategic engagement in the social protection space in Pakistan in line with Ehsaas priorities." "ADB's support will transition from unconditional cash transfers that provide income support to a mixed-modality approach that focuses more on conditional cash transfers for education, health services, and nutritional supplies that will help reduce inter-generational poverty through human capital development."

Putin wants talks with NATO on security

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin told his Finnish counterpart Sauli Niinistö on Tuesday that he wants "immediate" talks with the United States and NATO over security guarantees, the Kremlin said, as tensions mount over Ukraine.



Putin "reiterated the need to immediately launch negotiations with the United States and NATO in order to develop international legal guarantees for the security of our country," the Kremlin said in a readout of the call. It said Russia's demands included stopping NATO from expanding east and the deployment of weapons in neighbouring states, including Ukraine. Putin also accused the Ukrainian leadership of increasingly using "heavy weapons and attack drones" against pro-Russia rebels in its separatist east. His comments come as the West has for weeks accused Russia of planning an invasion of Ukraine and massing tens of thousands of troops near its neighbour's border. Putin has denied the plans, blaming NATO for heightened tensions in the region and seeking promises from the West that the alliance won't expand eastwards. In a video call last week, US President Joe Biden warned Putin of "sanctions like he's never seen" should Russian troops launch an attack. On Monday, EU foreign ministers met to coordinate what they warn would be an unprecedented economic sanctions regime if Russia attacks Ukraine. — Agencies

Tarin for enhancing cooperation with Iraq in PoL sectors

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Finance and Revenue Shaukat Tarin on Tuesday expressed keen interest in deepening bilateral relations between Iraq and Pakistan, particularly enhancing cooperation in oil and gas sectors, besides boosting the quantum of trade between the two countries. The adviser was talking to Ambassador of the Republic of Iraq to Pakistan, Hamid Abbas Lafta, who had called on him here, according to press statement issued by the Finance Ministry. Special Representative to the PM on Religious Harmony Maulana Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi was also present during the meeting. While extending a warm welcome to the ambassador, Tarin stated that Pakistan and Iraq enjoy brotherly relations based on strong foundations of common history, religion and cultural values. On the occasion, the ambassador highlighted deep historical relations between both the countries and said that Iraq was among the first countries to recognise Pakistan. He further expressed desire to strengthen economic and business cooperation between the two countries. Both the dignitaries discussed various aspects of fraternal relations between the two countries and expressed their satisfaction over the latest developments in the bilateral relationship.



ISLAMABAD: Hamid Abbas Lafta, Ambassador of the Republic of Iraq to Pakistan called on Adviser to the Prime Minister on Finance and Revenue Shaukat Tarin at Finance Division. Special Representative to the PM on Religious Harmony/Middle East Maulana Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi also present during meeting. — DNA

FM for global efforts to address corruption

SHARM EL SHEIKH: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi on Tuesday urged the international community to effectively address challenges of corruption to ensure a better future for people across the globe. In his video message screened at the ninth Session of the Conference of the States Parties (CoSP) to the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) in Sharm el Sheikh, Egypt, the foreign minister said corruption hampered efforts to eradicate poverty. FM Qureshi said corruption was an obstacle in improving the living standards and providing quality healthcare and education to people. He said the COVID-19 pandemic had painfully laid bare the persisting inequalities which were generated and perpetuated by the scourge of corruption. He emphasized to effectively addressing challenges of corruption to ensure a better future for people across globe. About measures taken by the government to prevent and combat corruption, he said, Pakistan had undertaken many steps to build and strengthen robust systems for accountability, transparency, and integrity. He mentioned that Pakistan had supplemented existing legislation to induce transparency and openness in the public sector including facilitating citizens' right to information. — DNA



Chery to launch latest Tiggo SUVs in Pakistan

NAZIR H SIYAL

KARACHI: Chery Automobile Co., Ltd., the number one automobile export company of China has partnered with Ghandhara, a leading name in manufacturing and distribution of vehicles for local production of the latest generation Tiggo Series SUVs. This move is part of Chery's strategy to engage with emerging automotive markets around the world, tailoring brands and products to meet the rising consumer demand. Sales of the first locally built vehicles are expected to begin in Pakistan within the fiscal year 2021-22. Ghandhara's investment of \$10million over the first four years will provide the industry with a much-needed financial boost, as well as help expand a retail network and create job opportunities. Chery will launch with an initial dealership network of 8 dealers across Pakistan and a production capacity of

16,000 units. In their second phase of production, this will be increased up to 32,000 units as their state-of-the-art plant is being built in Karachi's Port Qasim. Chery and Ghandhara will work together to introduce world class facilities in Karachi's Port Qasim. The partners are working closely to have a long-standing relationship, bringing a wealth of local knowledge and experience with the latest engineering technologies. Currently, Pakistan's automotive industry accounts for almost nearly 4% of the GDP. Chery's entry will provide Pakistani customers with a fresh and desirable lineup designed and built with modern engineering & technology. The Tiggo Series is a global model line-up that integrates the latest design, power and intelligent technologies with the processes. What stands out the most is its dynamic appearance, luxurious and comfortable interior, and smart configurations. Charlie Zhang, Chery's executive vice

president said that our entrance in Pakistan's automotive market represents a significant step for China-Pakistan economic growth. Chery will now be locally assembling the Tiggo series with dynamic local partners who have been in this field for the past five decades. He further added "We are confident that, with the close collaboration and support of the Pakistani government, this will deliver sustainable benefits for the national economy, customers, partners and Chery." The Tiggo 4 Pro is a 5-seater SUV with the latest generation 1.5TCl Engine. Its shape embodies a traditional design concept for the family, with a unique combination of Diamond Grille, LED headlights and daytime running lights for its fashionable attitude. Other high-tech features to take you on a journey of technology once you are seated include: 7-inch LCD instrument display, 10.25-inch floating central console panel and an 8-inch air-conditioning touch screen.

UN accuses Taliban of atrocities

NEW YORK: The United Nations says it has received "credible allegations" of extraordinary killings of more than 100 former Afghan national security forces and others associated with Afghanistan's former government since its fall three months ago, with most taking place at the hands of the ruling Taliban. The Taliban took over Afghanistan in a rapid military sweep in mid-August amid a chaotic withdrawal of the United States-led foreign forces from the country. In a speech to the Human Rights Council on Tuesday, Nada Al-Nashif, the UN deputy high commissioner for human rights, said at least 72 of the more than 100 alleged killings were "attributed to the Taliban". In several cases, Al-Nashif added, "the bodies were publicly displayed. This has exacerbated fear among this sizeable category of the population." There was no immediate comment by the Taliban. Moreover, Al-Nashif said at least 50 suspected members of a local affiliate of ISIL (ISIS) known as ISIS-Khorasan Province, ISKP (ISIS-K) an ideological foe of the Taliban — died by hanging and beheading in Nangarhar province alone over the same period. — News Desk

Iran and Europeans trade barbs as talks continue

"Time is running out. Without swift progress, in light of Iran's fast-forwarding of its nuclear programme, the JCPOA will soon become an empty shell," they warned in reference to the formal name of the accord, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action

VIENNA: World powers are continuing private talks in Vienna aimed at reviving Iran's 2015 nuclear deal but disagreements between Iran and the West have kept on spilling into public view. In a tweet early on Tuesday, Iran's chief negotiator wrote that some counterparts still "persist in their blame game habit, instead of real diplomacy". Ali Bagheri Kani added that "diplomacy is a two-way street", suggesting that the three European signatories to the deal — France, Germany, and the United Kingdom — and the United States, which unilaterally abandoned the accord in 2018, lack the political will to reach an agreement. This came shortly after senior diplomats from the so-called E3 said they still have not "been able to get down to real negotiations".

"Time is running out. Without swift progress, in light of Iran's fast-forwarding of its nuclear programme, the JCPOA will soon become an empty shell," they warned in reference to the formal name of the accord, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that diplomacy remained the best option but warned that Washington was "actively engaging with allies and partners on alternatives". After waiting for a year following the US withdrawal and the imposition of harsh sanctions, Iran gradually boosted its nuclear programme and is now enriching uranium up to 60 percent and employing advanced centrifuges. But the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has confirmed that the country does not enrich

uranium to the 90 percent purity required for a nuclear bomb, and Iran has consistently maintained that it will never seek a nuclear weapon. The seventh round of talks to restore the JCPOA in the Austrian capital began on Thursday following a week-long pause. Prior to the pause, Iran presented two documents containing its proposals, which the E3 — which conducts shuttle diplomacy between American negotiators — rejected as incompatible with the terms of the deal. Iran has said it has also prepared a third document on its demands for the verification of sanctions-lifting and guarantees the US would not renege on the JCPOA again, which will be presented after an agreement is reached over the initial two texts. Many bilateral and multilateral meetings have been held in Vien-

na, both at the level of chief negotiators and expert workgroups. Another meeting of the JCPOA Joint Commission could be before the weekend, but no date has been officially confirmed. In a tweet late on Monday, Russia's chief negotiator, Mikhail Ulyanov, said "numerous" issues remained but all sides were working to bridge these gaps. Iran's Foreign Minister, Hossein Amirabdollahian, had a phone conversation with his Russian counterpart, Sergey Lavrov on Monday, in which he urged negotiators to propose more initiatives in the talks. According to Iranian and Russian readouts of the call, Lavrov told him all US sanctions that are "inconsistent with the JCPOA and UN Resolution 2231" which underpins the deal must be removed,