



Islamabad POST

Thursday, December 16, 2021

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

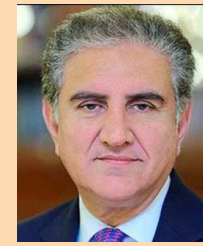
Price Rs. 20

Italian archaeologists all praise for Pakistan for it's full support

Detailed News On Page-08

'Pakistan not interested in joining camps'

Detailed News On Page-01



Shaheen moves up at No. 3 in test rankings

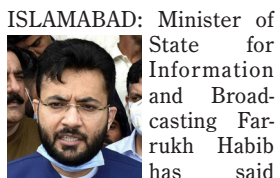
Detailed News On Page-06



Briefs

PM Imran concerned about Pak future

DNA



ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Farrukh Habib has said Prime Minister Imran Khan has been taking steps for the betterment of the country and future generations irrespective of political considerations. Addressing a workers convention in Islamabad today [Wednesday], Farrukh Habib said the government has abolished the class education system and implemented a uniform education system across the country.

ADB's report a wake-up call

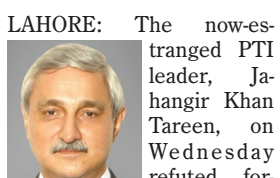
DNA



LAHORE: Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Vice President and Senator Sherry Rehman has said that ADB's inflation forecast should be a wake-up call for government. The catastrophic government continues to blame "global prices" for inflation. Sherry Rehman in a tweet said, "Regional inflation figures tell a different story, government take notice and think everything is fine. Inflation in Pakistan has alarmingly raised to 11.5% while in India it is 4.48% and in Bangladesh it is 5.7%."

Tareen rejects Wajihuddin's claims

DNA



LAHORE: The now-stranded PTI leader, Jhangir Khan Tareen, on Wednesday refuted former PTI member, retired Justice Wajihuddin Ahmed's statement about the former's alleged role in bearing most of Prime Minister Imran Khan's monthly household expenses. Tareen, seeking to set the record straight, issued a statement on Twitter. He said that he ought to tell the truth regardless of the status of his relations with Prime Minister Imran Khan.

Engaging with Afghans crucial: PM

PM Khan chairs meeting of Apex committee on Afghanistan; urges int'l community to support Afghanistan

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday warned the international community that repeating the mistake of isolating Afghanistan would be disadvantageous for the world. The prime minister made the comments as he chaired the second meeting of the Apex Committee on Afghanistan, with Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry, Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid, Planning Minister Asad Umer, Advisor on Finance Shaukat Tarin, Advisor on Commerce Abdul Razaq Dawood, Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa, National Security Adviser Dr Moeed Yusuf, and senior civil and military officers, a statement by the Prime Minister's Office said. The prime minister urged the international community to support the vulnerable people of Afghanistan, vowing that Pakistan would support the Afghan people in every possible way to avert a humanitarian crisis, the statement said. The Ashraf Ghani-led government in Afghanistan was overthrown in mid-August, and since then, the country is facing a severe

Continued on Page 06

'Afghan crisis will strengthen terrorists'

ANSAR BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi on Wednesday said by holding the meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Pakistan was fulfilling its responsibility to timely warn the world that its inaction on Afghanistan would lead to a big humanitarian crisis. "Pakistan wants the world to realize that a humanitarian crisis and economic collapse of Afghanistan is inevitable if the world continued to show apathy towards the grave situation," he said in a statement ahead of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, being held in Islamabad on December 19. The foreign minister urged the international community to understand that any chaos and "anarchy in

Continued on Page 06

Omicron spreading at fast rate, warns WHO

Dr Tedros says he is concerned that not enough is being done to tackle the variant

NEWS DESK

GENEVA: The new coronavirus variant Omicron is spreading across the globe at an unprecedented rate, the World Health Organization (WHO) has warned.

Cases of the heavily mutated variant have been confirmed in 77 countries. But at a press conference, WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said it was probably in many others that had yet to detect it. Dr Tedros said he was concerned that not enough was being done to tackle the variant.

Continued on Page 06

15m Sinovac doses arrive

NEWS DESK

BEIJING: The Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has transported fresh consignments of 15 million doses of Sinovac Covid-19 vaccines by five special flights from the Capital International Airport Beijing to Islamabad. The national flag carrier launched special flights

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi ahead of OIC moot in Pakistan, co chaired a meeting with Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry, focusing on drawing global media attention to the dire humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. — DNA



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan chairs meeting of the Apex Committee on Afghanistan. Army Chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa also attended the meeting. — DNA

POL prices cut by Rs 5 per litre

The new prices will be effective from today

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The government slashed the prices of petrol and high speed diesel by Rs5 per litre on Wednesday in an effort to provide relief to the people. Shortly before the announcement was made, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister for Political Communication Dr Shahbaz Gill had taken to Twitter to say that the public would soon receive "good news" about petrol prices.

According to a handout issued by the Finance Division, the government decided to revise existing prices "in view of the declining price trend of petroleum products in global market[s] and [to] transform the impact to the masses". The new prices will be effective from Dec 16 (Thursday). According to the notification, the new price of petrol is Rs140.82 per litre while high speed diesel will sell for Rs137.62 down from Rs145.82 and Rs142.62, respectively. Meanwhile, the prices of kerosene and light diesel oil (LDO) were decreased by Rs7 and Rs7.01 per litre, respectively. The new price of kerosene is Rs109.53 per litre and that of LDO is Rs107.06 per litre.

US Congress passes Omar's legislation

DNA

WASHINGTON: The House voted 219-212 to pass Democratic Rep. Ilhan Omar's legislation to create a special envoy to combat Islamophobia, a week after progressives introduced a separate resolution to strip Republican Rep. Lauren Boebert of her committee assignments following her anti-Muslim comments calling the Minnesota Democrat a terrorist. The bill would address the rise in incidents of Islamophobia worldwide and still needs to pass the Senate before it could go to President Joe Biden's desk to be signed into law.

Continued on Page 06

New US envoy for strong trade ties with Pak

Donald Blome was briefing the US Senate Committee during his confirmation hearing



STAFF REPORT / DNA

ISLAMABAD: US Ambassador-designate to Pakistan Donald Blome has declared that Washington wanted to build strong economic and trade ties with Pakistan which would be in the US interest. Briefing the US Senate Committee during his confirmation hearing, Donald Blome said under its geo-economic policy the US wants to enhance economic and commercial relations with Pakistan. The envoy expressed his conviction to work for Pakistan's

Continued on Page 06

'Pakistan not interested in joining camps'

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Amid rising tensions between China and the United States, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi has said that Pakistan does not want to become part of any camp and wanted to concentrate on its economic and social issues. In a conversation with Voice of America (VoA) Urdu, the foreign minister urged the US not to push the world towards another cold war through its actions against Beijing. The comments by the foreign minister came days after Pakistan skipped a democracy summit hosted by the US president. China and Russia were not invited to this summit.

Qureshi said that it will not be easy for Pakistan to maintain a balanced relationship with Washington and Beijing due to the US policy of going after China. "The United States is [also] ignoring India's missteps to keep China in check," he added. "The world needs to save itself from the cold war mentality," the FM said.

Asian WOK
by Monal
OPEN FOR ALL

MONAL SQUARE PESHAWAR
For reservations:
091 7242224-5
0301 1189124-5
@ asianwokpeshawar

Monal Square, adjacent Peshawar Services Club, Sahibzad Gul Road, Peshawar

Continued on Page 06

Inside...

DC Faisalabad urges to achieve targets of anti-polio campaign — Page 02

Pakistan an attractive market for investors: Kazakh envoy — Page 03

ICCI calls for promoting entrepreneurship in youth — Page 04

'Democracy' summit exposes US decline — Page 05

21st Asian Individual Squash C'ship kicks off — Page 06

Germany warns Russia of 'high price' over Ukraine — Page 07

Italian archaeologists all praise for Pakistan for full support — Page 08

Russia's Putin, China's Xi hail ties amid tensions with West

Xi said that the Russian president "strongly supported China's efforts to protect key national interests"

CENTRELINE REPORT

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping, have held a video meeting, as friction persists in both countries' relations with the West.

In their opening remarks at the virtual summit on Wednesday, Putin and Xi hailed relations between Russia and China, with the Russian leader declaring them "a proper example of interstate cooperation in the 21st century". "A new model of cooperation has been formed between our countries, based among other things on such principles as not interfering in internal affairs [of each other], respect for each other's interests, determination to turn the shared border into a belt of eternal

peace and good neighbourliness," Putin said. Xi said that the Russian president "strongly supported China's efforts to protect key national interests and firmly opposed attempts to drive a wedge between our countries."

"I appreciate it very much," the Chinese leader said. Putin also said that he plans to meet with Xi in person in Beijing in



February and attend the 2022 Olympics. "As agreed, we will hold talks and then take part in the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympic Games," Putin said. Tensions between Russia and Western countries have escalated in recent months over a Russian military build-up near the border with Ukraine. The Ukrainian government has accused Moscow of massing tens of thousands of troops in preparation for a possible large-scale military offensive. The Kremlin denies it plans to invade and says the West is gripped by Russophobia. Earlier on Wednesday, Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said the two leaders would discuss tensions in Europe and "aggressive" rhetoric from the United States and NATO.

DC Faisalabad urges to achieve targets of anti-polio campaign

The DC said that even in the last two days of the campaign, the duties should be carried out diligently and in case the children are not at home, they should inquire about them

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Deputy Commissioner Ali Shahzad has said that during the catch-up days of anti-polio campaign, teams should go door to door and complete the target of vaccinating the children left behind for any reason so that there would be no obstacle in achieving desired targets. He said this while reviewing the anti-polio campaign. ADC HQ Muhammad Khalid, CEO DHA Dr. Kashif Mehmood, ACs and other officers were also present on the occasion. The Deputy Commissioner said that even in the last two days of the campaign, the duties should be carried out diligently and in case the children are not at home, they should inquire about them. He said that the guest children should also have 100 percent coverage even if they belong to any area. He urged the Assistant Commissioner Sadar and Secretary RTA to visit the General Bus Stand regularly and closely monitor the campaign and said that challans should be issued to the non-cooperat-

ing buses. He urged all the officers of the district administration to supervise the polio campaign and durable monitoring of the campaign was being carried out in which there would be no concession from the negligent staff. CEO briefed on the implementation of the campaign and the goals achieved.

FESCO to take steps to avoid tripping
Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO) will take proactive steps to avoid tripping during the foggy season. In this connection, field staff were directed to wash/clean the disc insulators on a top priority basis. This was stated by Chief Executive Officer (CEO) FESCO Engineer Bashir Ahmed while presiding over a review meeting of Grid Station Operation (GSO) and Grid Station Construction (GSC) at FESCO headquarters here Tuesday. He directed the GSO and GSC staff to complete maintenance and repairing work at all grid stations in the FESCO region for provision of uninterrupted power supply to consumers during the upcoming summer season. He further said that both directorates should make joint efforts to complete

different development projects at grid stations and warned that there should be no compromise on quality because distribution and supply system was the backbone of the company.

He directed to escalate the tendering process, purchase of material for the maintenance and civil works at grid stations. Earlier, Superintending Engineer (SE) GSO Muhammad Shabbir and Project Director GSC Faisal Raza Marth briefed the CEO about the performance of their directorates and told that maintenance, up-gradation of grid stations and construction of transmission lines was in full swing while cleaning/washing of the disc insulators was being made for smooth electricity during hazy and smoggy season. They said that extension and up-gradation of panels at Jhang road, Chinot road, Millat road and value addition city would be completed till March. The meeting was attended by General Manager Operations Muhammad Saleem, Chief Engineer Operations Ghulam Farooq, Chief Engineer Development Rana Ayub and other concerned officers.

KP Govt raises-up special police squad

STAFF REPORT

PESHAWAR: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Government has raised a special patrolling squad of police titled as Abbabeel Squad with the aim to further improve overall law & order and effectively prevent street crimes in the provincial capital through effective and smart policing. Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan formally launched the Abbabeel Squad in a function held here in Police Line on Wednesday. Initially, the squad will consist of 800 specially trained police personnel and 200 customized motorbikes for round the clock patrolling throughout the city. The distinctly uniformed Abbabeel Squad will be equipped with modern communication devices, body cameras, drone cameras and other technological gadgets for smart surveillance. The squad will be connected to a central control room through a wireless communication system. The entire city has been divided into 100 different beats for patrolling purposes, and two-rider squads will simultaneously be patrolling each beat. Later 800 more personnel and 200 more motorbikes will be added to the Abbabeel Squad. Addressing the launching ceremony as chief guest, Mahmood Khan congratulated the senior police officials for raising the special squad adding that this was the need of hours due to the city's growing population



and rising rate of street crimes in the city.

He said that this special squad would have a great impact on the overall law and order situation in the city and will be helpful to effectively prevent street crimes. He said that it was also desperately needed to maintain the law and order situation during the upcoming local bodies elections.

The chief minister said that in the next phase, Abbabeel Squad would be rolled out to divisional headquarters and district headquarters as well adding that this was another important step of the provincial government after launching of Asaan Insaaf Marakaz and Police Madadgar to improve policing in the province.

While lauding the role of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Police in the war against terrorism, maintaining law and order and protection of citizens in the province, the chief minister said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa police officers and officials have rendered great sacrifices and offered their lives to protect the citizens during the war against terrorism. "Government and people of this province are proud of their police", he said and hoped that police would continue to serve the citizens with the same spirit and enthusiasm in future as well. The chief minister assured that the provincial government would extend its all-out support to police for the purpose. He urged upon senior police officials to introduce a mechanism of reward and punishment to make "Abbabeel Squad" a successful and an effective force adding that officials with good performance be rewarded and officials with poor performance should be held accountable, he remarked.

CS for achieving vaccination target

PESHAWAR: Chief Secretary Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shahzad Bangash Wednesday directed deputy commissioners, health department and other line agencies to achieve the target of corona vaccination through comprehensive strategy. Presiding over a meeting here to review progress on corona vaccination, he also directed the district administration and health department to prepare a micro plan and expedite the vaccination campaign, especially vaccination of children at education institutions above 12 years of age.

The chief secretary expressed annoyance over district administrations for not achieving the target of a second dose of corona vaccine and directed them to achieve the vaccination target. Speaking on the occasion, Secretary Health told the meeting out of the 35.5 million population of the province, the population of children over the age of 12 is 24.7 million who were eligible for corona vaccination. — APP



RAWALPINDI: Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed cutting Christmas cake at a ceremony held by Christian community. — DNA

Pakistan to eradicate malnutrition through Agri-research: Fakhar

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research, Syed Fakhar Imam on Wednesday said that through agriculture research and introducing innovation, Pakistan can eradicate the shortage of essential nutrients in the country.

"We need a knowledge economy, where it is essential to introduce new dimensions through reforms in various sectors of the country so that Pakistan can become a modern developed country," the minister said. He was speaking to the media workshop "Addressing Zinc Deficiency through Biofortification of Zinc Wheat" here.

The workshop was jointly organized by HarvestPlus, PANA and National Fortification Alliance at the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulation and Coordination. The workshop was attended by a large number of journalists, representatives from various government departments, civil society organizations and United Nations agencies.

Addressing the occasion, Fakhar Imam said the government also has sent the young people abroad for good univer-

sity education like China and other developed countries so that new dimensions can be introduced in various fields and quality food can be provided in the country. The Minister said that Pakistan is currently the largest country with a young population not only in the region but as whole in the world and its young population needs



a balanced and healthy diet, which the government is focusing on.

"We focused on food and crop production but did not focus much on quality food and seeds, that's why there is a shortage of basic food ingredients in children and adults in the country today," he said.

Fakhar Imam said that 7.8 billion people of the world are currently suffering from food shortage and other prob-

lems in which Pakistan, a country of 222 million people, is also facing these issues, on which the government is working hard. "The basic ingredients of food, including zinc, iron and other vitamins, are essential components of our diet and are essential for a healthy life," he said. He added the media and related institutions must make people aware of this so that this important issue can be addressed.

The Minister said that there are 45000 villages in Pakistan, where people are not aware regarding this sensitive issue of human life and there is need for more work in this area, adding that the private sector should cooperate with the government in this regard.

"We need to improve food production as well as its quality," he said.

He said that genetic engineering has now made great strides in seeds Bio-fortification, which can overcome these problems. He said that more than 1.6 million metric tons of biofortified wheat grain production is expected with the current crop at the time of harvest, Biofortification is progressing well in Pakistan. Syed Fakhar said that micronutrient deficiencies are widespread in Pakistan and have profound effects on immunity, growth, and mental development of children.

Safe City Project for Peshawar underway: CM Mahmood

DNA

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan Wednesday said that progress on the Safe City Project for Peshawar was underway adding that suitable land has already been identified and a project management unit has been established for the purpose.

Talking to media during the launching ceremony of the Abbabeel Squad here at Police Lines, he said that the current inflation was not only a problem of Pakistan rather it was a

global phenomenon. However, he said that the incumbent government under the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan was taking result-oriented steps like Rathan Card, Kissan Card and Sehat Card initiatives to extend maximum relief to the general public. Responding to another question about local bodies' election, Mahmood Khan said that he and his cabinet members being in power could not run election campaigns, but on the other hand opposition people were free of such limitations and they are running campaigns for their candidates openly.

Child health mela held at Children Hospital

FAISALABAD: The child health mela was held at Children Hospital here Wednesday. Medical Superintendent Dr Habib Buttar inaugurated the event while Dean Prof Dr Hina Ayesha was also present.

An awareness seminar about diabetes in children was also held on the occasion. The parents were sensitized about precautionary measures and daily food for safety from diabetic disease. The speakers told the parents to especially focus on the health and food of the children suffering from diabetic.

The awareness was also provided about liver and intestine diseases and given necessary tips to save the children from these diseases. — APP



HYDERABAD: Members of civil society holding candle light vigil in memory of Shaheed children of APS outside press club. — DNA Photo by Jan Ali Laghari

Universities' role stressed for making country economically strong

PESHAWAR: A renowned researcher Dr. Dawood Mamoon has underlined the need for taking tangible measures to promote research culture to effectively utilize indigenous resources and economically make the country Asian Tiger. "Pakistan has traditionally been a consumer economy to modern technologies and its path to becoming an Asian tiger is stalled with lack of capacity to generate a process of learning and creating indigenous supply chain that is utilised to build modern technologies to bring efficiency to local industry and production," Prof. Dr. Dawood Mamoon who is currently serving as director Offices of Research, Innovation and Commercialization (ORIC) at Superior University observed while talking to APP.

In this regard, he added, the consolidated efforts by each university to improve the re-

search culture in Pakistan especially in emerging and new technologies may create an environment whereby innovation takes place that provides better context to the local needs of Pakistan's technology path and may align national industrial development with international needs.

He was of the view that the educated human resource would be utilized into different sectors of the economy that were the direct beneficiary of the local innovation landscape providing new technologies to the doorstep of the industry efficiently and cheaply.

Replying to a question, Dr. Memon, who got PhD degree from Erasmus University, Netherlands, said the technology gap that was prevalent in countries like Pakistan when compared to US, EU and China, had been a matter of concern to the government of Pakistan, across

the political spectrum and irrespective of the ruling polity.

Currently, he opined, the services sector that represented well developed and educated human resource had traditionally been contributing to demand driven economic prosperity of Pakistan especially since early 2000s when financial liberalisation and regulatory decentralisation took place.

Pakistan's services industry blossomed with a steep facilitation of financial and regulatory services to the population bringing demand driven economy to higher economic growth patterns.

However, with weak local supply chains representing traditional instead of modern technologies for Pakistani industrial and agricultural sectors hampered the trajectory of economic progress of the country. — APP

Government of Pakistan
PAKISTAN ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
Plot No. 42, STREET No. 6, SECTOR H-8/2
Islamabad

PUBLIC HEARING

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA) REPORT OF THE PROJECT "DEVELOPMENT OF SECTOR E-12, ISLAMABAD"

All stakeholders interested/affected persons and the general public is informed by this notice that the Federal Agency (Pak-EPA) has admitted application of Mr. Muhammad Zahid Nazir, Deputy Director Sector Development Division-I, Capital Development Authority (CDA), Islamabad for accord of Environmental Approval.

All stakeholders, interested/affected persons and the general public are invited to submit their comments for/against the grant of Environmental Approval. The comments should be submitted to Director (EIA/Monitoring) within a period of 15 days from the date of issuance of this notice.

The detailed documents of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report submitted by Mr. Muhammad Zahid Nazir, Deputy Director Sector Development Division-I, Capital Development Authority (CDA), Islamabad is available at the following locations for general public review during the office hours.

- Green Library
Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA)
Plot # 42, Street # 06, Sector H-8/2
Islamabad.
- Mr. Muhammad Zahid Nazir
Deputy Director, Sector Development Division-I
Capital Development Authority (CDA)
Office No. 55, Old Navel Complex, G-6 Markaz, Islamabad.

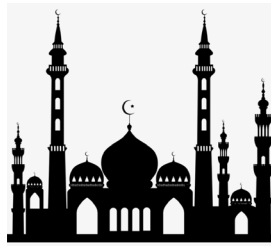
A public Hearing will be conducted at 11:00 A.M on 18-01-2022 at Jinnah Convention Center, Islamabad. All stakeholders interested / affected persons and the general public are invited to attend the public hearing or send their comments.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT

Director (EIA/Mont) Pak-EPA Plot # 42, Street # 6, Sector H-8/2 Islamabad. Phone No. 051-9250716 Fax No. 051-9250715 Email: pakempa@environment.gov.pk Website: www.environment.gov.pk	Muhammad Zahid Nazir Deputy Director, Sector Development Division-I Capital Development Authority (CDA) Office No. 55, Old Navel Complex, G-6 Markaz, Islamabad. Phone # 051-9253182
---	---

PID (I) No. 4021/21

SERVICES



Namaz Timings

Fajr..... 05:36 am
Zohr..... 12:03 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



Emergency

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



Enquiry

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



Hospitals

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



Departments

CDA.....9221334-43
CDA.....9208301-04
Met Office.....9250360-6
RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3



Complaints

Water Tanker Service
E-7, F-10 & F-11.....9204654
G-5, G-6, G-7, G-8.....9203883
G-9, G-10, G-11, G-12, H-8.....9266316
Wapda Islamabad.....9217579
Wapda Rawalpindi 111-309-309

Islamabad Metropolitan

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

Wasa Water Tank

Rawalpindi.....0331-5022125

Pakistan an attractive market for investors: Kazakh envoy

Yerzhan Kistafin says that Pakistan can enhance exports in the areas of pharmaceuticals, garments, value-added textiles, leather items, furniture, auto parts, ceramics, fruits, vegetables, pharmaceuticals and surgical instruments, as they have a great potential in Kazakhstan, he said

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan Yerzhan Kistafin has said that Pakistan is an attractive market for foreign investors, while it's several sectors of economy like leather, shoe, textile, steel, food, pharmaceuticals and agriculture, have great potential for joint ventures with the private sector of Kazakhstan. He was addressing a meeting of All Pakistan Business Forum, held here in connection with to discuss the proposed launch of 'Kazakhstan Pakistan Trade & Economic Window' (#KPTW). APBF Secretary General Khurram Niaz Khan gave a detailed presentation on various aspects and features of #KPTW. Beside APBF President Syed Maaz Mahmood, the meeting was attended by APBF board members, including FPCCI



ex-regional chairman Manzoor Malik, APBF Lahore Board President Amir Munir, M. Naeem Chaudary, Yaqoob Saifi and senior officials of Embassy of Kazakhstan in Pakistan. The Ambassador appreciated the efforts of APBF to launch the KPTW, calling for exploring untapped trade potential through the 'Kazakhstan Pakistan Trade

& Economic Window' to become a key trading partners. He said the launch of Kazakhstan Pakistan Trade & Economic Window will prove to be a very beneficial for the business communities of both countries, having a positive and long-term impact on the economy of two countries. The APBF is an open platform for all the business community that is very

impressive while tourism can prove to be a great opportunity for both countries, bringing the people of both countries together, he added. He said that Kazakhstan companies have keen interest to establish partnership with the businesses in Pakistan. He also intended to ink an MoU with the APBF for further close working and to enhance bilateral trade and

investment opportunities between the two countries. Mr Yerzhan Kistafin said that Pakistan can enhance exports in the areas of pharmaceuticals, garments, value-added textiles, leather items, furniture, auto parts, ceramics, fruits, vegetables, pharmaceuticals and surgical instruments, as they have a great potential in Kazakhstan, he said. Speaking on

the occasion, APBF President Syed Maaz Mahmood said that we are having a favorable trade balance with Kazakhstan as our exports stood at 79.7 million dollars in 2020-21 as compared to meager imports from Kazakhstan which were just 2.5 million dollars. This puts the total volume of trade at around 82 million dollars, which needs to be enhanced further.



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's ambassador designate to Saudi Arabia Khurram Amin Rathore calls on Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research, Syed Fakhar Imam. – DNA

Pak skipping US democracy summit a wise step: Zafar

ISLAMABAD: Secretary General, United Business Group Zafar Bakhtawari has termed Pakistan's decision not to participate in the US-hosted virtual summit on democracy was a wise step and said that the moot carried not a democratic but political agenda. "The agenda of the summit was to form an Asian-NATO alliance and participation of Pakistan was to be harmful rather than beneficial", said in an exclusive interview with INP on Wednesday. He said the decision will have a positive impact on Pak-China growing mutual ties. As this decision has further brought the two neighborly counties further close to each other. Zafar Bakhtawari pinned

hoped that the upcoming foreign ministers' summit of Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) on Afghanistan will definitely draw positive consequences not only in the war battered Afghanistan but also in the region. He said Afghanistan under the current circumstance cannot be kept in an isolation, adding if situation in the neighboring country deteriorates, Pakistan will not be able to withstand its effects. He said it should be the efforts of all the participants countries specially, Pakistan to bring back peace in Afghanistan. He said at present the Cold War has started in the World and the globe is being divided into two blocks, one block including countries

like China, Russia, Turkey and Iran and other consisting of G-11 countries, including Britain, Canada, Japan and India. This mean another NATO-style alliance is being formed in the region for specific purpose. He added that the summit on Democratic did not have the support of the republics because it had political agenda. That way China, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates stayed away from this summit, he added. Replying to a question, he said Afghanistan cannot be left alone under the prevailing circumstances, Afghanistan is a neighboring country of Pakistan and out fall of any situation brings a direct impact on Pakistan. – DNA

RCCI resents hike in SBP's interest rate

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce & Industry (RCCI) on Wednesday showed strong reservations for increasing 100 basis points in the interest rate by the State Bank of Pakistan taking it from 8.75 percent to 9.75 percent. The RCCI President Nadeem Rauf in a statement said that it is very surprising that SBP who as per best practices reviewed its monetary policy after two months but this time it reviewed less than a month period. RCCI chief urged the government to withdraw the hike as it would increase the credit cost of commercial banks, ultimately have a bad effect on the growth of industrial activities and create more difficulties for the SME in its efforts aimed at reviving the economy. – DNA

Australia supports gender-sensitive media workshops

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Australian High Commission and the Center for Excellence in Journalism (CEJ) organised online training workshops for media professionals on gender-sensitive reporting on violence against women. This is the second year running that the Australian High Commission has supported these training workshops with CEJ. This is closely tied to the international campaign 16 Days of Activism to End Violence Against Women. The workshops aim to provide training to journalists on reporting on violence against women and raise awareness of violence against women by encour-

aging gender-sensitive reporting. Speaking at the first workshop, Australia's High Commissioner to Pakistan Dr Geoffrey Shaw highlighted that promoting gender equality and the rights of women and girls is central to Australia's development, economic and bilateral co-operation with Pakistan. "Gender-based violence is a shared challenge. There has been an alarming increase in violence against women since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. The media has an important role in ending violence against women. Through reporting, the media can help to challenge traditional social and cultural norms and attitudes that condone violence against women," he added.

Minorities demand end to forced conversions, abductions



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Minorities Alliance, regret the decline of the Prohibition of forced conversion Act 2021 presented in the Parliamentary committee formed by the Prime Minister of Pakistan. According to MAP, an estimated 1000 minorities under age girls are abduction, raped, converted and forced marriages annually in the country that is unacceptable at all. Federal Government must ban must take serious action against the crime and abuse of Child right. Minorities alliance Pakistan demand protection of minor girls. MAP demands for legislating the following. 1. The state must build this narrative that the abductor and rapist is missing using the name of religion for their own interest to ride the punishment of these crime. 2. Under 18 children are not considered to make their decisions, the children could be easily molested, enticed and misgued for a small treat of a chocolate. 3. MAP demand the prosecution of the Ali Azhar the rapist of ARZOO RAJA. Mohammad Saleem the rapist of Aiana 3 years old and the arrest of culprit Shahid Ali the rapist of Mehaik 13 years old. – DNA

Sino-Indian border clashes an outcome of Indo-US partnership

Ambassador Kiani was of the view that the China-India standoff in Galwan signified the importance of border demarcations in the region

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD, December 14, 2021: Former diplomat Ambassador Shahid Masrur Gul Kiani linked the Sino-Indian border clashes in Ladakh to the compulsions of the Indo-US strategic partnership aimed at containment of China. Ambassador Kiani argued that Modi government got unnecessarily carried away by its alliance with the US, which, according to him, had laid to rest any claims of India with regard to its non-alignment. He was speaking at an event organized by the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) here on Wednesday. Ambassador Kiani was of the view that the China-India standoff in Galwan signified the importance of border demarcations in

the region which was not realized even by seasoned Indian politicians like Jawahar Lal Nehru. "There is a British saying that good fences make good neighbours," he said. Ambassador Kiani shared that Chinese premier Zhou Enlai had proposed to India to let China keep Aksai Chin in exchange for China accepting Indian control of the southern slopes of the Himalayas in April 1962. The proposition, according to Kiani, was rejected by Nehru and the 1962 Sino-Indian war took place in October the same year. To the contrary, Kiani maintained that Pakistan exhibited wisdom when it entered into a border agreement with China in March 1962 to avoid any misunderstanding between the two brotherly neighbouring countries.

Ambassador Kiani stated that while the Chinese were very clear on the demarcation of the 3,440 km-long border with India, it was the Indian leadership which was confused about it. He added that the clashes between the Chinese and Indian forces in March 2020 were the result of a build-up of tensions between the two states since May 2019 when the Chinese objected to Indian construction on the Chinese side of the border without informing the Chinese. Kiani opined that diplomatic protocol demanded that activity along the undemarcated border should have been notified to the Chinese side but since India had ulterior motives it clandestinely conducted construction activities with a mala fide intention.

Engineering & Healthcare Show, 2022 PAKISTAN

Pakistan Engineering & Healthcare Show 2022

February 25th - 27th, 2022 at Expo Center, Lahore

PRODUCTS IN FOCUS

- Steel & Iron
- Construction material
- Surgical instruments
- Sports Goods
- Musical instruments
- Automotive
- Cosmetics
- Pharmaceutical

- Electrical Fan/home appliances
- Furniture & mattresses
- Rubber & its products
- Plastic & its implements
- Stationery & paperboard
- Cookware & Cutlery
- Mobile devices,
- Chemicals

- Safety Equipment
- Gems & Jewelry
- Packaging
- Agriculture machinery & its implements
- Electrical machinery including pumps, motors transformers, generators
- Handicrafts
- Marble & Minerals

PARTICIPATION FEE Rs.50,000/- for 12sqm shell scheme

PARTICIPATION FEE Rs.3,000/- for per sqm raw space (minimum 12sqm)

10% Early Bird Discount on Full Payment by 30th December 2021

Last date to apply: January 5th 2022

For information and inquiry please contact:

Sana Khokhar Assistant Manager Tel: 021-99202182 sana.khokhar@tdap.gov.pk

Urooj Shafi Assistant Director Tel: 021-99206805 urooj.shafi@tdap.gov.pk

Omar Hussain Bajwa Assistant Director Tel: 021-99202701 omar.bajwa@tdap.gov.pk

Trade Development Authority of Pakistan Block A, 3rd Floor, Finance & Trade Centre Shahrah-e-Faisal, Karachi-75350 www.tdap.gov.pk

PID (K) 1626/21

Briefs

NUMS
Green Youth
Movement:
VC NUMS

RAWALPINDI: Vice Chancellor of National University of Medical Sciences (NUMS) Lt Gen Syed Muhammad Imran Majeed HI (M), (Retd) Wednesday termed climate change a threat to the global security, saying, it was impacting all fields of life.

The Vice Chancellor made his brief remarks after going round different stalls, set up by university students after launching ceremony of the Green Youth Movement (GYM) at NUMS PWD Campus here to raise awareness for contributing towards a greener Pakistan.

He said the kind of awareness, required to be raised in minds of the people was that, it was not only the responsibility of the Government alone but also us all, to get involved in green movement. GYM is a wonderful initiative with a much greater outreach in the society as it involves students and stresses upon the need to adopt environment-friendly habits.

The climate change relates to plants, and if right kind of plants are grown in right type of organic environment, it would have lasting impact on human health, said the Vice Chancellor. — APP

IRSA releases
82291 cusecs
water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) Wednesday released 82291 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 39527 cusecs.

According to the data released by IRSA, water level in the Indus River at Tarbela Dam was 1441.97 feet, which was 49.97 feet higher than its dead level 1392 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 25200 and 48000 cusecs respectively.

The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1127.45 feet, which was 77.45 feet higher than its dead level of 1050 feet whereas the inflow and outflow of water was recorded a 4036 and 24000 cusecs respectively.

The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa and Sukkur was recorded as 43745, 37731 and 29010 cusecs respectively.

Similarly, from the Kabul River a total of 2800 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 7491 cusecs released from the Chenab River at Marala. — APP

“Jinns
Asleep”
to open at
Lok Virsa

ISLAMABAD: A solo exhibition “Jinns Asleep” by self taught artist Tamkeen Nadeem would be held at the National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage (NIFTH) - Lok Virsa Art Gallery on Thursday.

Executive Director of Lok Virsa Talha Ali Kushvaha said that NIFTH Art Gallery is a new venue for Pakistan's youth to showcase their talent. Tamkeen's work is inspired by the folklore and myths of cultures around the world, and will be on display from December 16 - 22 at NIFTH, Art Gallery inside Lok Virsa.

He said he encourages all upcoming and young artists to come see this beautiful exhibition of miniature paintings.

Tamkeen Nadeem is a self-taught artist living in Islamabad. She received her Masters degree in Mass Communication from Kinaird University, Lahore. Tamkeen worked in advertising for 11 years, after which she launched her own social business CHARU, committed to empowering farmers by bringing rare and indigenous produce of Pakistan to global markets. She also illustrated a poem, Shakarparian, about a spiritual hill located in Islamabad. Tamkeen works as a consultant for non-profits and social businesses.

Talking to APP, Tamkeen Nadeem said she never thought about becoming an artist, but she continued to paint everyday. “My paintings celebrate the diversity and the abundance of our planet,” she added. — APP

ICCI calls for promoting
entrepreneurship in youth

Young entrepreneurs from ICCI and Islamabad Women Chamber of Commerce also participated in the Entrepreneurship Gala 2021 to showcase their products

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Muhammad Shakeel Munir, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) has called upon the government to make more conducive policies for promoting entrepreneurship in youth that will enhance their self-employment and pave way for sustainable economic growth of the country.

He said that the government has launched Kamyab Jawan Program, which was a laudable initiative as it would create many new opportunities for youth in business and other fields. He stressed that the commercial banks should also come up with low cost business loan schemes for youth to facilitate them in launching business start-ups.

He said this while speaking as Chief Guest at a two days Entrepreneurship Gala 2021 organized by the Iqra University, Islamabad. Muhammad Shakeel Munir along with Dr. Muhammad Islam, Vice President, Iqra University Islamabad, Ms. Naila Ansari President Islamabad Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry and



others visited various stalls put up by the students in the Gala and appreciated their efforts. He gave the students many useful tips for becoming successful entrepreneur.

He said that by becoming entrepreneurs, they would not only achieve a prosperous career for themselves, they would create jobs to others and make useful

contribution towards the economic development of the country. He lauded the efforts of Iqra University for providing quality education to students in various disciplines.

The basic objective of the Entrepreneurship Gala was to raise awareness among the students and individuals about self-employment, business opportunities and how to

be an entrepreneur to create jobs for others instead of job seeker. The students came up with multiple unique business ideas for presentation in the event. Young entrepreneurs from Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Islamabad Women Chamber of Commerce also participated in the Entrepreneurship Gala 2021 to showcase their products.

Dr. Muhammad Islam, Vice President, Iqra University Islamabad, Ms. Naila Ansari President Islamabad Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry and others also spoke at the occasion and appreciated the students for coming up with innovative business ideas to solve various issues of the society.

38,111 Covid
patients
recovered in
Rawalpindi

RAWALPINDI: As many as 38,111 COVID-19 patients had been discharged after getting treatment from the district's health facilities, out of which 35,090 Rawalpindi's residents and 3021 from other districts.

According to data shared by the district health authority here Wednesday, nine more cases have arrived during the last 24 hours, including four from Rawalpindi Cantt, three from Kallar Syedan, and one of each patient has arrived from Taxila and Potohar town.

The report said that 19 confirmed patients were admitted to three city hospitals, including 11 in the Institute of Urology and four in Fauji foundation hospital and Benazir Bhutto Hospital.

“One patient is on a ventilator in critical condition, seven stable and 11 on oxygen support,” the report added. In addition, it updated that 39,444 patients had been reported so far since the pandemic, 36,410 belonging to Rawalpindi and 3034 from the outside district. — APP

ITP holds
farewell for
outgoing
police officer

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) Wednesday arranged a farewell ceremony in honor of Inspector Nazir Ahmed who got retired after completion of his services.

The ceremony was attended by SSP (Traffic) Muhammad Omar Khan while SP Traffic Muhammad Sarfraz Virk, ASP Traffic Ayesha Gull among other senior officials of the department, a news release said. Speaking on the occasion, SSP urged the force to perform duties efficiently and to deal with the citizens in a polite way to win public trust.

Eulogizing the services rendered by Inspector Nazir Ahmed, he said retirement was part of the service as those join the service had to retire one day. “Today is a great day for Nazir Ahmed as he is retiring with great honor after 40 years of service,” he remarked. — APP

IGP for ensuring
friendly police
ecology

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Muhammad Ahsan Younus has directed all police officials to address public complaints on priority and ensure friendly police ecology through professional attitude.

It was stated by him during an ‘Open Court’ especially held on Wednesday with the purpose to listen issues of policemen and citizens. The IGP listened to eight former police employees and 20 citizens and directed to resolve their issues. The complaints of policemen were related to department while citizens' complaints were about delay in registration of FIRs, change in investigation, monetary disputes, dacoity, theft, kidnapping and others. The IGP marked the applications to the police officials and gave them timeframe to resolve the issues of citizens. Islamabad police chief directed police officials to check the record of vehicles at Excise and Taxation Office, Islamabad and hand over them to their owners. 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. — APP



ISLAMABAD: Ladies posing for a group photo on the occasion of Independence Day of Kenya. — DNA

Govt unveils SME
policy to promote
inclusive growth

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Industries and Production, Makhdoom Khuro Bakhtiar unveiled the Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Policy here on Wednesday, with special focus on promoting around 5 million businesses through facilitation in registration, streamlining of taxes, access to credit and provision of land.

The minister announced the policy during a press conference here. He was flanked by Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Fawad Ahmed Chaudhry. Bakhtiar said that this was for the first time that the policy comes with a proper implementation mechanism.

He said, the policy was made in 2007 but only in papers and asserted that this time it was being introduced with implementation mechanism under the supervision of National Coordination Committee with proper deadlines of tasks. The minister said that there were around five million SME businesses in the country including one million in manufacturing sector in the shape of different enterprises.

The minister said that SME sector was playing crucial role in promoting inclusive economic growth in addition to providing 78 percent of employment (if agriculture is excluded) and promoting exports.

Elaborating various initiatives of the policy, the minister said that the policy was not only directional but many of its initiatives have already been implemented.

He said that the policy has relieved the businessmen of regulatory burden by either excluding the condition of obtaining No Objection Certificate (NOC) or have minimized its requirements.

He said, anyone interested in starting new business will not have to go from pillar to post for obtaining the NOC or involving any inspector. — APP

German CG stresses to sustain
skills development pace

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Consul General of Germany Mr. Holger Ziegeler, while assuring continued support of his country for technical and vocational education and training in Pakistan, has urged the government and private sector to ensure sustainability of their joint efforts and achievements in skills development as it would open more job opportunities as well as lead to economic stability.

He expressed these views at a ceremony ‘Showcasing of TVET Reforms in Sindh and Balochistan’ organized by the donors-funded TVET Sector Support Programme (SSP) to highlight the programme's achievements of decade-long efforts in Pakistan.

The TVET SSP is collaborated with the federal government to bring reforms in the TVET sector since 2011. Launch of TVET Policy, National Vocational Qualification Framework, competency-based training approach and engagement of private sector in the reform process are the key paradigm-shifts brought by the government in the past 10 years with the support of TVET SSP.

The programme has been commissioned by the German Ministry for

Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and is being implemented by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH in collaboration with the National Vocational and Technical Training Commission (NAVTC), provincial Technical Education and Vocational Training Authorities (TEVTAs) and large number of private sector organizations.

The Germany diplomat said that he sees great potential in not only relying on jobs but also entrepreneurship models and development of small and

medium level enterprises for people to benefit from economic opportunities in Pakistan.

“We hope that the TVET SSP continues to bring change in the lives of people of Pakistan and will ensure sustainable growth for the society and the economy of Pakistan,” he remarked.

Besides the German Consul General, Country Director GIZ Pakistan Mr. Tobias Becker, Ms. Iris Cordelia Rottzoll, Head of TVET SSP, Chairman NAVTC Syed Javed Hassan and all the stakeholders of TVET SSP attended the event.



Week long entrepreneurial drive started at IIU

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The week long entrepreneurial drive of the Faculty of Management Sciences (FMS) of the International Islamic University (IIU) kicked-off here at the Faisal Masjid Campus on Wednesday.

The drive is featuring workshops, series of talk with industrial experts and entrepreneurs, business plan competition with participants of 200 universities across Pakistan, innovative ad competition and a number of networking and interaction opportunities between students and industrial experts.

Addressing the inaugural session of the Entrepreneurial summit, Special Assistant to Prime Minister on CPEC Affairs, Khalid Mansoor apprised about the details of the objectives and road map of the next 15 years of CPEC project. He shed light on the improvement in the energy sector through CPEC and said that in the second phase of the project, 5300 megawatt capacity has been achieved and work is also going on 3500 megawatt energy project.

He told that special importance has been given to the renewable energy resources and projects. He informed about 820 kilometer optic fiber cable and added that the completion work is in process on the biggest airport in Gwadar. He briefed the participants on the measures being taken by the government to facilitate the investors. He said that the industrial cooperation segment of CPEC holds great potential and significant work was underway to make full use of it.

The SAPM said that he will provide maximum cooperation to IIU youth to play role in the project. Project Director, National Incubation Centre, Pervez Abbasi opined that world is changing fast as it is the age of technological advancements and incubations. He added that National incubation centre is dealing with hundreds of startups of thousands of students

to encourage the entrepreneurial and the projects which are compatible to the needs of hour. He said it is not easy for any country in the world to accommodate 10 lac graduating students through jobs, therefore, there is a need to think out of the box and being an entrepreneur is the key to success. Addressing the students, he said his centre will be fond of expanding university's incubation centre and project in

virtual technology, artificial intelligence and gaming industry shall be highly encouraged.

Rector IIU, in his speech said that country is facing youth bulge, these are high times to guide youth to be involved in entrepreneurial projects so that they may become job providers instead of being job seekers. He said 56 million youth can play a vital role in economic stability.

Appreciating the summit, he said it's a great networking opportunity of interaction between industry and academia. “We can bring Pakistan out of difficult times through talented entrepreneurs and universities must play due role in this regard” he said.

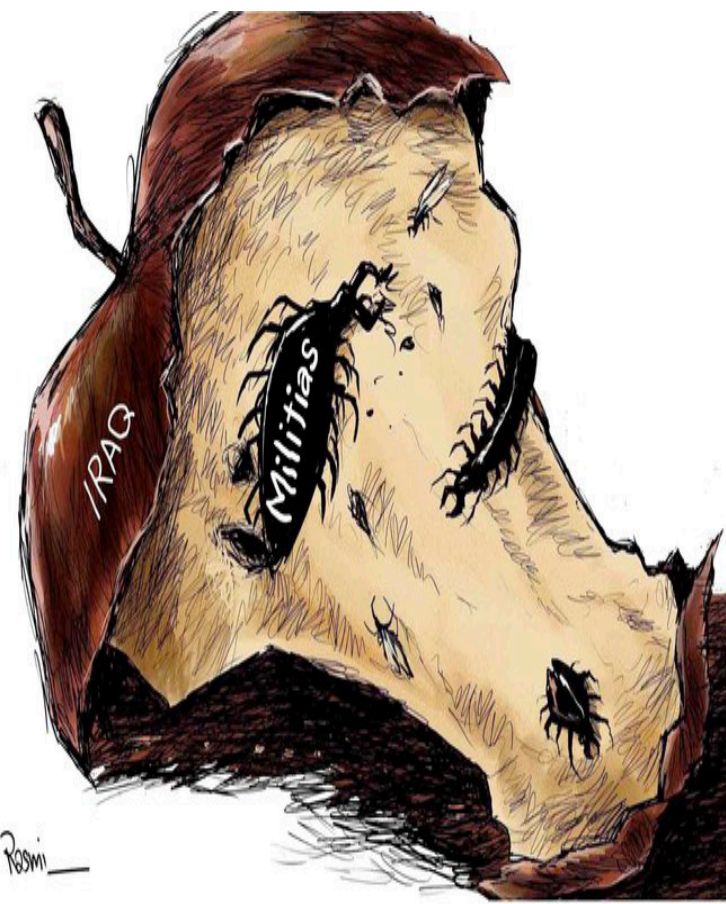
He said universities should work in the light of the needs of society with research, innovation and promotion of entrepreneurship.

On the occasion, Vice President, Administration and Finance, Prof. Dr. N. B. Juman in his vote of thanks hailed the efforts of Faculty of Management Sciences and also thanked the distinguished guests for sharing their thoughts to the university students.



Bringing substantive equality

THE historic Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, passed in 2018, granted legal recognition to transgender persons and prohibited discrimination against them in several spheres, including in educational institutions and services. However, when Muhammad Nawaz alias Ashi Jan, a member of the transgender community, tried to apply to universities, the admission forms of the colleges/universities mentioned “male” and “female” options in the gender column, but did not mention “trans-person”. This has made its way to the Lahore High Court, with the latest development taking place on Monday, when the Court issued a notice to the Punjab government for a valid response. When the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2018, was passed, it was rightly hailed as a remarkably progressive legislation, ahead of many countries to give legal recognition and choice of identity to transgender persons. However, many also raised concerns that the law was not enough—due to a lack of penalties in the law, there is no genuine incentive for the citizens to follow the law, and no infrastructure or concrete punishments in place to enforce it. Three years since the passing of the law, the shortcomings of the law are more evident. The statistics do not show any conscious effort of government departments to follow the law and make recruitment trans-friendly. Trans people are still harassed, assaulted and murdered at alarming levels. The government has initiated some good projects—such as the first-ever State school for transgender children, taught by transgender teachers. Yet these examples are far too few. It is unfortunate that issues of implementation of law have to be taken up by the court, instead of the government. To mark the international day of human rights, the National Database and Registration Authority has launched a drive to get transgender persons registered across the country, to compensate for the low registration statistics of the community. The government must realise that in order to truly bring substantive equality and to empower a community can only improve if all essential spheres, like education, employment, law enforcement, are made more inclusive.



‘Democracy’ summit exposes US decline

Sun Chenghao

The democracy model the US boasts of could give rise to trouble and disorder if transplanted to other countries given their distinct national and social conditions and public opinions. History teaches us lessons the hard way. A govt that chooses a political and development path against the will of its people will eventually end up...

US President Joe Biden has striven to re-activate “traditional value-oriented diplomacy” and made it one of his diplomatic tools to reshape the United States’ relations with its allies and reclaim its global leadership since his inauguration in January. The “Summit for Democracy”, a first-of-its-kind meeting, is a typical example of what Biden calls value-oriented diplomacy. What the seeming hustle and bustle of the summit have revealed is only the decline of democracy in the US and its hypocrisy and impatience to prove to the world that it remains the “beacon for the globe”. The so-called democracy summit, which concluded on Friday, was held at a time when the democratic system the US takes pride in is teetering on the verge of collapse. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exposed the vulnerability of the US democratic system, which separates the three branches

of the government legislature, executive and judiciary focuses on bipartisan politics and democratic elections, and emphasizes the importance of checks and balances on power, the right to vote, and the freedom of individuals. The systemic maladies US-style democracy has developed have made it impossible for the US to call itself the “beacon of democracy” or the “land of freedom”. First, the checks and balances of power have turned into “veto politics” with each branch of the government using its veto right to set up policy barriers, seriously compromising decision-making efficiency. Which has resulted in collisions between the US Supreme Court and the federal government, and discord between the Congress and the federal government on many occasions. For example, during the Donald Trump administration, the federal government and the judiciary were locked in a tussle over immigration policy. Second, bipartisan politics has developed into a bipartisan dog fight. Cooperation between the Democrats and Republicans is rare while differences on a series of issues including expenditure, immigration, abortion and gun control have widened. And that is true for all administrations, including the Trump and Biden administrations. Recently, the expenditure plan Biden proposed was affected by not only bipartisan game playing but also the differences within the Democratic Party. Which shows the tensions and extent of US political polarization. And third, the democratic elections have turned into money politics. Ostentatious interest groups pick and endow their respective politicians while the super political action committee makes it hard to track and closely monitor the election funds. Ordinary people in general are unable to run for election. Against this background, the 2020 presidential election smashed the spending record with \$14 billion, more than two times that in the 2016 election. More important, people in the US were

forced to suffer because of the erroneous policy response to the COVID-19 pandemic of previous president Trump and the federal government in 2020 thanks to the astute calculations of US politicians and election politics-influenced governance logic. Trump even tried to instigate a domestic split, and fuel anti-foreigner sentiment to repeat the “victory in chaos” drama of 2016. Worse, the turmoil in Capitol Hill in January was a slap in the face for US-style democracy and the scar it left has not yet healed. In a poll conducted by Harvard Kennedy School covering 18-29 years old in the US, about 52 percent of the respondents said they believe democracy in the US is either “in trouble” or “failing”, with only 7 percent saying they view the US as a “healthy democracy”. But some politicians, still lost in the miasma of the “beacon of democracy”, insist on continuing to make rules on universal values by hosting meetings such as the “democracy” summit. Washington’s irresistible urge to set up “democracy camps” on its own is indeed an insult to democracy. The US has turned its style of democracy into a weapon, which it wields against other countries and uses to implement its own plans, creating chaos and devastating people’s lives around the world in the process. The democracy model the US boasts of could give rise to trouble and disorder if transplanted to other countries given their distinct national and social conditions and public opinions. History teaches us lessons the hard way. A government that chooses a political and development path against the will of its people will eventually end up creating lawlessness and entropy. In the final analysis, democracy must be people-centered, aimed at solving people’s real problems, while the form of democracy the US preaches goes against this goal and will be consigned to the trash bin of history, because history is always forward-looking.

— Courtesy: China Daily

Joe Biden’s growing foreign policy quandary

Maria Maalouf

The Biden administration should work gradually and methodically to change the situations surrounding many of these old and new foreign policy dilemmas, whether by stopping the damage Hezbollah is doing to Lebanon and Syria or drafting regional and bilateral treaties...

AS US President Joe Biden nears 11 months in the White House, two views have emerged of his administration’s foreign policy. The first emphasizes his vision to draw the attention of the world to the new challenges facing humankind, such as cybersecurity and the protection of the environment. The second is to bring an end to many of the old problems he inherited from his predecessors, such as the conflict in Syria, the dispute between Russia and Ukraine, and other regional disputes. According to the many statements issued by members of Biden’s foreign policy team, the focus on these two tracks of diplomacy will help America formulate foreign policies that can help it stand up to the growing power of China, which is undermining US influence all over the world. So far, Biden has not been able to deliver on the foreign policy tasks that he defined as being the priority.

As Politico magazine stated last week: “The new president’s team has doggedly tried to push forth with its agenda: Biden has made a pair of trips to Europe to strengthen ties with allies and pledge cooperation to combat climate change. On Monday, the White House announced a diplomatic boycott of the upcoming Olympics as a protest to human rights abuses in China. And the president on Thursday launches a two-day Summit for Democracy meant to rally free nations, which has already drawn the ire of Beijing.” There are many mistakes the Biden administration has made that have hampered its chances of foreign policy successes. First, Biden introduced his two foreign policy goals as being conflicting. Instead, he should have established a link between them. For instance, if he is interested in raising global awareness about the safeguarding of the environment, he should do so alongside China. The exclusion of the most populous nation in the world throws doubts on efforts to protect the environment, since China emits more carbon dioxide than any other country on the planet. Biden sounds as though he is incapable of solving the many old and new problems in world politics. For example, he has not been able to shake off accusations that he could have prevented the return to power of the Taliban in Afghanistan. And he has not persuaded Russian President Vladimir Putin to end cyberattacks by Russian hackers. Moreover, Biden gives the impression that he is not capable of dealing with Iran as far as its nuclear program is concerned. He has to conclude the ongoing negotiations with Tehran in a satisfactory way. Otherwise, nations around the world will perceive American foreign policy as being too hesitant to confront Iran’s nuclear ambitions, which could be harmful to the national security of many Arab countries, especially those in the Gulf. A good nuclear deal with Iran could boost the credibility of the Biden administration and help it overcome a thorny issue. This would allow it to devote more time and resources to target

new US foreign policy goals. On the environment, he must do more than gather up a few good suggestions. There is a need to motivate more countries to do more to tackle climate change. Currently, not enough nations are committed to protecting the environment. There also has to be a candid admission that there are many problems that are difficult to resolve. The gravity of this theme should spur other nations not to back away from cooperation with the US in order to settle such matters. This approach to foreign policy can avoid aggravating these disputes. Certainly, it is impossible for the US to solve the world’s problems alone. The Biden administration must realize that there are limitations on what it can accomplish with its foreign policy. Worldwide problems tend to last longer than a single US presidential administration. Importantly, Biden should not demand that every country abide by its concept of democracy. Nations apply the principles of democracy in different ways according to their historical conditions and contemporary circumstances. The Biden administration should work gradually and methodically to change the situations surrounding many of these old and new foreign policy dilemmas, whether by stopping the damage Hezbollah is doing to Lebanon and Syria or drafting regional and bilateral treaties that can make it obligatory for nations to thwart cyberattacks against other states. Finally, the Biden administration must ensure there is an incentive for other countries to join America in its challenge to China. What can they gain from the standoff between Washington and Beijing? Biden already has a very tough task in terms of US foreign policy. And if the Democrats lose their majority in the two houses of Congress in the legislative elections next November, Biden will probably not be able to pass any new laws related to America’s foreign policy challenges.

— Courtesy: Arab News

Hypocritical comments

WITH three policemen have been killed in an attack in Srinagar in IIOJK, the Indian Defence Minister is strangely thumping his chest complaining about how Pakistan has funded and carried out proxy wars against India. Such antics are expected but they are becoming a nuisance to deal with now. It is not Pakistan but India—as proven by multiple reports and dossiers—that has been perpetuating a state of violence and terror in Kashmir and this very fact is being recognised across the world. Minister Rajnath Singh started by claiming that the partition was a mistake and Pakistan has tried its level best to pollute the national environment in India by trying to break it apart. More provocative statements were made according to which our government was accused of sponsoring terrorism within India, which is ironic considering how the BJP regime has been treating the disputed region of Kashmir. Such provocative and accusatory statements are not only a part of the same strategy employed by India time and time again but, they are clearly unfounded as well. Pakistan has presented multiple reports—including a dossier last November that details the degree to which India interfered within Pakistan to gain an advantage in Kashmir—and highlighted the atrocious human rights abuses that are being carried out IIOJK. Countless people have been martyred every single day since India laid siege to the region and unlawfully imposed authoritarianism. We have also been highlighting the issue on international platforms like the UN and OIC meetings so that the matter does not fade into significance and now, our cause to bring about freedom in Kashmir is gaining momentum. As we respond to the comments by highlighting exactly how preposterous they are, we must also further expose the Indian state for its terrorist acts in IIOJK. Each opportunity we have to mention the plight of the Kashmiris, we should take so that we are able to garner enough support and backing to force India back into its own borders.

For sustainable mountain tourism

Munir Ahmed



The sustainability of nature-based mountain tourism is likely to be threatened in the wake of the worst climate impact. The Covid-19 has already shown its impact on mountain tourism. The governments need to take immediate steps to revive the tourist destinations to ensure safe and consistent livelihood for the mountain communities

THEME of this year’s International Mountain Day was Sustainable Mountain Tourism. The theme was set to create awareness about the importance of sustainable tourism as a backbone for the economic sustainability of the people living in the mountain. Responsible tourism can play a key role in the sustainability of the sector without much stress on the natural habitats and mountain ecosystem. The community based nontraditional sustainable tourism models in mountains can contribute to creating additional and alternative livelihood options and promoting poverty alleviation, social inclusion, as well as landscape and biodiversity conservation. It is a way to preserve the natural, cultural and spiritual heritage, to promote local crafts and high value products, and celebrate many traditional practises such as local festivals. According to the UN statistics, mountain tourism attracts around 15 to 20 percent of global tourism. Tourism, however, is one of the sectors most affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, affecting economies, livelihoods, public services and opportunities on all continents. In mountains, the restrictions of the pandemic have further compounded the vulnerabilities of mountain communities. Climate change is another red alert for the life, livelihood and tourism in mountains that has badly affected the mountain valleys. Deforestation and degradation has played havoc to many parts of the mountains. Pakistan’s case is evidence to the disaster continuously being done despite all vigilance of authorities. Post pandemic strategies and the climate crisis can be seen as an opportunity to rethink mountain tourism and its impact on natural resources and livelihoods, to manage it better, and to harness it towards a more resilient, green and inclusive future. The subnational governments in Pakistan have to play a proactive role in taking care of their mountains. Two measures are very important to support the federal government policy frameworks that were developed with the consultation of the subnational governments. The foremost is to stop the housing and timber mafia from deforestation to changing the

land-use for constructions. Secondly, the governments shall implement and letter and spirit the nature conservation and afforestation to restore the mountains’ actual environment. Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOF) is a major phenomenon in Pakistan’s main range of mountains. A Green Climate Fund (GCF) worth \$37 million is being implemented in ten valleys of Gilgit-Baltistan by the federal government with the technical support of UNDP Pakistan. All the interventions were planned in consultation with the provincial government and the community groups. Somehow, the project has yet to come up with some significant outcome. The GLOF phenomenon, however, cannot be stopped by the interventions planned in the project until the provincial government takes up necessary measures to put a halt on the causes enhancing the GLOF activity in the region. Precautionary measures shall also be taken before any disaster happens. Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam has already warned that “the glacial lakes leading to floods had increased five times during the past three years due to massively increasing global warming.” It would increase the threat to sustainable mountain tourism too. But, we shall hope that the expansion of national parks in the northern areas along with a high altitude corridor linking all national parks at 14,000 feet would allow nature to be a bulwark to climate change. The community based tourism approach and mechanisms were developed to manage the facilities created in the Central Karakoram National Park (CKNP) when it was reestablished under the Pakistan-Italy Debt Swap Agreement (PID-SA). A comprehensive management plan was also developed and approved by the respective authorities. The need is to use that plan to develop sustainable mountain tourism based on nature conservation. The same may be replicated in other parts and provinces of the country. In a panel discussion organised by the Devcom-Pakistan, the experts have urged the authorities to think about the nontraditional business models for sustainable mountain tourism. It is indeed pertinent for the economic sustainability of mountain tourism that needs transformation from the conventional snow and ice based adventure sports and tourism to contemporary innovative business models. Mountain cultural festivals, visits to heritage sites, mountain biking competitions and jeep rallies will work from now onward after the deterioration of mountain ecosystems. The sustainability of nature-based mountain tourism is likely to be threatened in the wake of the worst climate impact. The Covid-19 has already shown its impact on mountain tourism. The governments need to take immediate steps to revive the tourist destinations to ensure safe and consistent livelihood for the mountain communities. Many companies engaged in mountain tourism have gone bankrupt during the pandemic. Soft loans and grants could help them restore their businesses. Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic has severely impacted mountain tourism by disturbing the supply chain while climate change has devastated the mountain ecology and culture. Many of the Pakistani companies have already closed their businesses. Government shall come up to support them to revive their businesses. On the other hand, we see mushroom growth of small tour operators that have no experience of the business and knowledge of the terrain. Some of them have met with accidents too. They need to be trained for a safe and sustainable tourism business.

— The writer is a freelance journalist and broadcaster, and Director Devcom-Pakistan. He can be reached at devcom.pakistan@gmail.com and tweets @EmmayeSyed

Briefs

Engaging with Afghans crucial: PM

FROM PAGE 01

financial crunch, with their foreign assets frozen. According to the statement, the premier highlighted that Pakistan has already committed to immediate relief of in-kind humanitarian assistance worth Rs5 billion, which comprises food commodities including 50,000 metric tons of wheat, emergency medical supplies, winter shelters, and other supplies. He also said that humanitarian organisations wishing to work from Pakistan to support efforts in Afghanistan should be facilitated and that Islamabad had already committed to being the air and land bridge for humanitarian support to Kabul. The Apex Committee was briefed that as per directions of the prime minister, the facility of a free COVID-19 vaccination for all Afghans entering Pakistan from land borders is being continued. Moreover, the process of obtaining a Pakistani visa has been simplified for Afghans. "Participants of the Apex Committee again expressed concerns about the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Afghanistan and emphasised that Pakistan will not abandon Afghans in their time of need," the statement said.

‘Afghan crisis will strengthen terrorists’

FROM PAGE 01

the wake of the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan would lead to the strengthening of terrorist organizations." "All the efforts and foreign investment of 20 years in Afghanistan besides the loss of innocent lives will prove futile with the rise of a new wave of terrorism," he said. Qureshi recalled that during his meetings with his counterparts in New York and the recent meeting with the High Representative of the European Union, Josep Borrell in Brussels, he discussed in detail that Afghanistan would be facing a tough situation if the EU did not take any action. He said the situation would not only affect Pakistan, but other countries of the region including Iran and Tajikistan, and even Europe. He said urgent steps by the United Nations, International Monetary Fund, and World Bank were the need of the hour. He mentioned that several ambassadors who had served in Afghanistan including Ryan Crocker, former Commander of ISAF Forces General John F. Campbell, Commander US Central Command and Director CIA General David Petraeus, and Secretary State for Economic and Business Affairs Ambassador Earl Anthony Wayne were of the view that international sanctions on Afghanistan should be reviewed immediately.

New US envoy for strong trade ties with Pak

FROM PAGE 01

digital economy and intellectual property protection, besides promoting transparent and vast investment in the country. The diplomat said the US wants to build better mutual and bilateral relationships between Pakistan and India, adding, "The region cannot afford any other conflict," he added. "Being an ambassador in Pakistan, safe evacuation of American citizens from Afghanistan will be my priority," he said, adding the US diplomatic mission in Pakistan would strive for a stable and all-inclusive government in Afghanistan. "I will make sure that Afghanistan does not turn into a safe haven for extremists," he said. About the US assistance to Pakistan to overcome Covid pandemic, Blome said the US has donated 100,000 masks and 25,000 personal protection equipment to Pakistan, besides giving 27 million vaccination doses and 200 ventilators.

21st Asian Individual Squash C'ship kicks off

Pakistan Squash Federation (PSF) is organizing the 21st Asian Individual Squash Championship for Men & Women which will conclude on 19th December

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's top squash players get victories against their opponents to enter into the second round of 21st Asian Individual Squash Championship here at Mushaf Squash Complex Islamabad. Pakistan Squash Federation (PSF) is organizing the 21st Asian Individual Squash Championship for Men & Women which will conclude on 19th December. The Men's event has a draw of 32 players whereas the Women's event has 16 players' draw. Apart from Pakistan, a group of international players, officials and referees from Hong Kong,

Iran, Kuwait, Malaysia, Qatar, Singapore & Sri Lanka are participating. In Men event, there are 04 players from Hong Kong, 04 from Kuwait, 04 from Malaysia, 06 from Pakistan, 02 from Qatar and 04 from Sri Lanka whereas, in Women event, there are 04 players from Hong Kong, 04 from Malaysia, 06 from Pakistan and 02 from Sri Lanka are participating in the championship. Vice Chief of the Air Staff Air Marshal Syed Noman Ali, HI (M), was the chief guest in the opening ceremony of the championship while number of players, officials and squash enthusiasts were also present during the event.



The opening match was played between Mr Israr Ahmed from Pakistan and Falah Muhammad from Kuwait. Mr Israr Ahmed won the match with a game score of 4-11, 11-8, 8-11, 16-14, 11-9 (45 Min). Detailed results of 1st round matches are appended below.

Men Event: Ng Eain Yow (MAS) got Bye, Farhan Zaman (PAK) bt Revindu Laksiri (SRI) 11-5, 11-6, 11-9 (15 Min), Mohammad Syafiq Bin Mohd Kamal (MAS) bt Ammar Al-Tamimi (KUW) 9-11, 5-11, 11-6, 11-2, 11-4 (52 Min), Muhammad Asim Khan (PAK) got Bye, Syed Azlan Iqbal S Amjad (QAT) got Bye, Lau Tsz Kwan (HKG) got Walk Over against Shariff Hakeem (SRI), Tayyab Aslam (PAK) got Bye, Yuen Chee Wern (MAS) got Bye, Lee Ho Yin (HKG) bt Hussain Alzattari (KUW) 11-6, 11-6, 11-2 (16 Min), Mohammad Addeen Drakie Bin Bahtiar (MAS) bt Shamil Wakeel (SRI) 11-5, 11-8, 11-6 (29 Min), Yip Tsz

Fung (HKG) got Bye, Leung Chi Hin Henry (HKG) got Bye, Amaad Fareed (PAK) bt Mohammad Alkhanfar (KUW) 12-10, 11-8, 11-8 (39 Min), Nasir Iqbal (PAK) bt Methmal Wood (SRI) 11-6, 11-8, 11-2 (19 Min) and Abdullah Mohammed Al-Tamimi (QAT) got Bye. **Women Event:** Liu Tsz Ling (HKG) bt Noor Ul Huda (PAK) 11-4, 11-3, 11-3 (19 Min), Noor Ainaa Amari Binti Amapandi (MAS) bt Zynab Khan (PAK) 11-6, 11-2, 11-0 (11 Min), Aifa Binti Azman (MAS) bt Fathoum Al-Sadeen (SRI) 11-5, 11-5, 11-4 (12 Min) and Tong Tsz Wing (HKG) bt Saima Shaukat (PAK) 11-5, 11-3, 11-0 (17 Min).

US weighs new sanctions against Myanmar

WEB DESK

KUALA LAMPUR: The United States' top diplomat says President Joe Biden has invited Southeast Asian leaders to a summit to discuss the crisis in Myanmar and is weighing tougher sanctions against the country's military following its power grab in February. Antony Blinken made the comments on Wednesday during a trip to Malaysia, where he described the 10-member Association for Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) as "essential to the architecture of the Indo-Pacific region". "We very much look forward to having a special summit with ASEAN next year," he said. ASEAN has been leading diplomatic efforts to resolve the crisis in Myanmar, a country that has been in turmoil since the military overthrew a civilian government led by Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi on February 1. The power grab prompt-



ed protests and pockets of armed resistance that were met with violent suppression. Blinken said the situation in Myanmar in the 10 months since the coup had "gotten worse" with mass arrests and violence against protesters. "I think it's going to be very important in the weeks and months ahead to look at what additional steps and measures we can take individually, collectively to pressure the regime to put the country back on a democratic trajectory," he said. As well as discussing the crisis in Myanmar, Blinken said the proposed sum-

mit with ASEAN was also expected to cover issues such as the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, investment and infrastructure. The US secretary of state is in Malaysia on the second leg of a three-nation trip to Southeast Asia, aimed at shoring up relations amid Washington's growing rivalry with China. In Jakarta on Tuesday, he said the US will expand its military and economic relationships with partner countries in the Indo-Pacific to ensure the region remains open and accessible. Blinken's Ma-

laysian counterpart, Saifuddin Abdullah, said Biden's summit invitation would be discussed when ASEAN foreign ministers meet on January 19. He also called on the regional bloc to act, saying ASEAN must do some "soul searching" about its policy towards member Myanmar. Blinken was asked specifically about potential sanctions on Myanmar's state-run oil and gas sector but did not mention the possibility in his response. He did, however, say that the Biden administration is looking "very actively" at designating continuing repression against Myanmar's Rohingya Muslim population as a "genocide". He repeated demands for the Myanmar military to release all of those who had been "unjustly detained," including democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, allow unhindered humanitarian access to areas in need of assistance, end violence against protesters and restore Myanmar "to its democratic path".



Japan's 'Monster' Inoue retains titles

SPORTS DESK

TOKYO: Japan's unbeaten "Monster" Naoya Inoue defended his WBA and IBF bantamweight titles on Tuesday with an eighth-round technical knockout win over unheralded Thai challenger Aran Dipaen in Tokyo. Fighting at Ryogoku Kokugikan - the home of sumo - Inoue wore Dipaen down with a series of punishing shots before dispatching him with a vicious left hand. The bout, Inoue's first in Japan for around two years, was widely seen as a stepping-stone towards an attempt at unifying all four bantamweight belts next year. But the 28-year-old was

made to work hard for his win over Dipaen, who absorbed a series of heavy body blows with little visible impact. "He used to be a Muay Thai fighter and he brought that toughness," Inoue said of Dipaen, who went into the fight with a 12-2 record. "I started to wonder whether my punches were having an effect - that's how tough he was." Inoue took his unbeaten record to 22-0, with 19 wins by knockout. After hammering away on Dipaen's body, Inoue finally put the challenger away with a big left that sent him down to the canvas. "The fight didn't go as everyone was expecting, but it was good to fight in Japan again after two years," Inoue said.

Malan surpass Babar to become No. 1 batsman

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani Skipper Babar Azam was unable to hold-on to the top spot as England's Dawid Malan was back to number one in the latest MRF Tyres ICC Men's T20 Player Rankings among batters. Malan was back to number one as Babar was unable to stay put on the top spot after two matches of their series against the West Indies, said a press release issued here. However, Pakistan's Haider Ali has gained 86 slots to reach 98th position after scores of 68 and 31 while the rankings for bowlers see spinner Shadab Khan back in the top 10, moving up five slots to ninth position. Meanwhile, Pakistani fast bowler Shaheen Afridi has attained career-best position in bowling in the latest Test Player Rankings. Shaheen headlines the bowling rankings in the latest weekly update for men that is carried out on Wednesdays and includes the second Test between Bangladesh and Pakistan, which Pakistan won by an innings and eight runs to clinch full ICC World Test Championship points from the series. Shaheen has continued his ascent with three wickets in the match while off-spinner Sajid Khan has zoomed up 52 places to 49th after a 12-wicket haul that won him the Player of the Match award. Mohammad Rizwan (up five places to 18th) and Fawad Alam (up seven places to 20th) have moved up in the batters' list after their useful half-centuries. For Bangladesh, Shakib Al Hasan scored 33 and 63, advancing eight places to 35th. He has also gained one slot to reach fourth place among all-rounders, overtaking Ben Stokes along with India's Ravindra Jadeja, who is now third in the list. - DNA

Shaheen moves to No.3 in Test Rankings

DNA

LAHORE: Australia batters Marnus Labuschagne and Travis Head have gained from their fine performances in Brisbane, attaining career-best positions in the ICC Men's Test Player Rankings, as has Pakistan fast bowler Shaheen Afridi after the Dhaka Test. Labuschagne's first innings 74 in the first Test against England has lifted him two slots to a career-best second position while Player of the Match Travis Head's pacy 152 has helped him gallop 16 places to 10th in the list. Labuschagne's previous best ranking was third while Head's best was 17th. Fast bowler Haris Rauf is up three places to 19th while Mohammad Nawaz has gained 29 slots to reach 54th position.

Lewis Hamilton receives knighthood

AGENCIES

LONDON: Britain's seven-times Formula One champion Lewis Hamilton received a knighthood for services to motorsport on Wednesday, days after losing out on what would have been a record eighth title in the last lap of the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix. Hamilton holds the record for most race wins with 103, and is tied with Germany's Michael Schumacher on seven drivers' championships. The 36-year-old Briton, the sport's only Black driver, was made a Knight Bachelor by Prince Charles in a ceremony at Windsor Castle, outside London. Hamilton is the fourth Formula One driver to receive the



honorary title of "Sir" in Britain after the Australian Jack Brabham, Stirling Moss and Jackie Stewart, and the only one to have received the award while still racing. Other sports stars who have been knighted while still active include

former Tour de France winner Bradley Wiggins, former Olympic 5,000 and 10,000 metres track gold medalist Mo Farah, twice Wimbledon tennis champion Andy Murray and former England cricket captain Alastair Cook.

Russia's Putin, China's Xi hail...

FROM PAGE 01

"The situation in international affairs, especially on the European continent, is very, very tense right now and requires discussion between allies," Peskov said, referring to Moscow and Beijing. "We see very, very aggressive rhetoric on the NATO and US side, and this requires discussion between us and the Chinese." Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said the meeting was expected to "further enhance the high-level mutual trust between the two sides". Al Jazeera's Katrina Yu, reporting from Beijing, said the summit would enhance the already high level of trust between the two countries. "The strength of this bilateral relationship seems to be based on two things ... It's extremely practical," Yu said, referring to the mutual investments and trade ties. They also value each other "enormously when it comes to the diplomatic side of things," she said, noting the "common criticism" that they have received from the US and Europe.

US Congress passes...

FROM PAGE 01

The legislation was previously sitting in the House Foreign Affairs Committee for months but was voted out of committee last week as House Speaker Nancy Pelosi faced increasing pressure from members of her own party to take aggressive action against Boeert for her racist remarks. Debate for the legislation was interrupted Tuesday night following objections made by Democrats against GOP Rep. Scott Perry of Pennsylvania, who insulted Omar during his remarks. Democratic Rep. Kathy Castor, who was serving as chair of the session, ruled that Perry's comment "impugns the patriotism or loyalty of the member of the House" and ruled his remarks "not in order." Debate continued shortly after Castor's ruling.

Omicron spreading at fast rate...

FROM PAGE 01

"Surely, we have learned by now that we underestimate this virus at our peril. Even if Omicron does cause less severe disease, the sheer number of cases could once again overwhelm unprepared health systems," he said. The WHO's latest data suggests the variant - first detected in South Africa in November - can better evade existing vaccines and carries a higher risk of reinfection, leading the organisation to say the level of risk remains very high. A number of countries have introduced travel bans affecting South Africa and its neighbours following the emergence of Omicron, but this has failed to stop it from spreading around the world. In news conference, Dr Tedros reiterated concerns about vaccine inequity, as some countries accelerate rollouts of a booster shot in response to Omicron.

15m Sinovac doses arrive

FROM PAGE 01

PAK-6852, PAK-6853, PK-6856, PK-6857 and PK-6858 respectively and airlifted fresh consignments of Sinovac vaccine from December 10 to December 15, PIA Country Manager Qadir Bux Sangi said on Wednesday. He added that a PIA special flight PK-6858 carrying 3 million doses of Sinovac Covid-19 vaccines left the Chinese capital for Islamabad. Last week, Pakistan Ambassador to China Moïnu Haque had thanked China for standing by Pakistan during testing times, including the fight against Covid-19. "The vaccine campaign which is going [on] in Pakistan, the 90 per cent of it is being done through vaccines provided by China," he said. In a recent statement, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson remarked that the China-Pakistan joint fight against the Covid-19 pandemic had achieved positive progress and set a good example for the world.

We turned our ancestors' dream into reality

While addressing the solemn event dated to the 30th anniversary of Kazakhstan's Independence, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev extended his heartfelt congratulations on that historic occasion



DNA

NURSULTAN: 30 years ago we've turned our ancestors' dream into reality, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev said Wednesday. While addressing the solemn event dated to the 30th anniversary of Kazakhstan's Independence, the Head of State extended his heartfelt congratulations on that historic occasion. According to President Tokayev, by proclaiming its independence Kazakhstan turned the dream of the ancestors into reality. Kassym-Jomart Tokayev also emphasized that the independence is the most sacred, valuable and treasured thing for Kazakhstanis.



The Independence Day is a great holiday, it is the pinnacle of our centuries-long fight for our statehood and the symbol of the Kazakh people's perseverance, President Tokayev added. Earlier it was reported that the solemn event with the participation of President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev dated to the 30th anniversary of Kazakhstan's Independence had started in the Kazakh capital. The country opened a new page in its history on 16 December 1991 by attaining the status of an independent state. The same day First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan-Elbasy Nursultan Nazarbayev signed the constitutional law. On state independence of the Republic of Kazakhstan.



The Independence Day is celebrated in line with the laws of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Our country has reached serious achievements in the development of regions, transport infrastructure, and social sphere. 13 thousand km. of roads and 2,700km of railroads have been built, said Tokayev at a solemn event dedicated to mark the 30th anniversary of independence of Kazakhstan. He added that Kazakhstan has attracted over direct foreign investments worth \$370bn. «Kazakhstan is ahead of all post-Soviet countries and some East European countries in terms of DFI per capita. Kazakhstan's international reserves hit over \$90bn, said Tokayev.



Earlier it was reported that a solemn event celebrating the 30th anniversary of independence of Kazakhstan with the participation of President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev kicked off in the Kazakh capital, Nur-Sultan. Notably, this year marks the 30th anniversary of independence of Kazakhstan. The country opened a new page in its history on 16 December 1991 by attaining the status of an independent state. The same day First President of the Republic of Kazakhstan-Elbasy Nursultan Nazarbayev signed the constitutional law «On state independence of the Republic of Kazakhstan. The Independence Day is celebrated in line with the laws of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Briefs

UK inflation
hits decade
high

AGENCIES

LONDON: Consumer prices in the United Kingdom are rising at their highest rate in over a decade as a result of soaring energy costs and blockages in the supply chain, official figures showed Wednesday, a day before a highly anticipated interest rate decision from the Bank of England. The Office for National Statistics found that inflation rose by 5.1% in the year to November, up dramatically from October's 4.2% with widespread surging prices across a raft of goods and services, including for fuel, energy, cars, clothing and food. The increase was more than the 4.8% consensus of economists' forecasts and takes inflation to its highest level since September 2011. Around the world, countries are recording multiyear high levels of inflation. The United States saw its inflation rate spike to 6.8% in the year to November, the highest level in nearly 40 years. In the 19 countries that use the euro currency, the rate hit 4.9%, the highest since record-keeping began in 1997. The latest spike in the U.K. is likely to ramp up pressure on the central bank to raise interest rates Thursday, with inflation running at more than double the bank's target of 2%.

UK top court
rejects gender
neutral
passports

LONDON: Five judges at Britain's Supreme Court on Wednesday rejected a legal challenge against a government policy not to allow gender-neutral passports. Christie Elan-Cane, who does not identify as either male or female, argued that Britain's passport application process was "inherently discriminatory". Individuals only have a choice of "male" or "female" on the application, with no option to put "X" for "unspecified" – an alternative introduced in several other countries. But the Supreme Court unanimously dismissed the appeal, ruling that a person's identity could be confirmed using the form and checking it against other official documents. That included birth, adoption or gender recognition certificates, said judge Robert Reed in the ruling. "It is therefore gender recognised for legal purposes and recorded in those documents which is relevant," he added. The case was brought on the grounds that the government breached legal rights to a private life and not to face gender or sex discrimination. – APP

Poland
introduces
new Covid
restrictions

WARSAW: Poland on Wednesday introduced new restrictions on the numbers of people allowed in restaurants, hotels and theatres as the Covid death toll hit its highest level since April. The new limits of 30 percent of maximum capacity do not apply for people who have been vaccinated, putting the responsibility for checking vaccination status on business owners. Legislation allowing employers to verify whether employees have been vaccinated or had a recent test showing they do not have Covid-19 is also making its way through parliament. The health ministry on Wednesday reported 669 Covid deaths in Poland in the last 24 hours – the highest level since April. "The overwhelming majority are unvaccinated people," government spokesman Piotr Muller told private broadcaster Radio Zet. "The only scientific solutions that are known at the moment are to vaccinate and react quickly when you get sick," he said. The health ministry has said it would also like to introduce mandatory vaccination for health workers, teachers and the military from March 1 but the cabinet is divided on the issue. – APP

Germany warns Russia
of 'high price' over Ukraine

Moscow repeatedly said that it has "no plans to invade or attack anyone" but also expressed concern about the prospect of a full-blown conflict in eastern Ukraine

NEWS DESK

BERLIN: German Chancellor Olaf Scholz warned Russia on Wednesday that it would pay a "high price" if it attempts to invade Ukraine. In his first address to the parliament after being sworn in as Germany's new chancellor, Scholz said European states are united in support of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. "We are following the security situation on the Russian-Ukrainian border with great concern," he told lawmakers and said he will travel to Brussels later Wednesday to join other EU leaders to discuss the latest developments in the region. "Let me repeat what my predecessor said," Scholz said, recalling former Chancellor Angela Merkel's earlier warnings to Moscow. "Any violation of territorial integrity will have a price, a high price. And here we will speak with one voice with our European partners and our transatlantic allies," he added. The Social Democrat politician called on Russia to refrain from escalatory actions and reiterated that European countries are ready for a "constructive dialogue"



with Moscow.

Russia has recently amassed tens of thousands of troops near Ukraine's border. The move has prompted concerns among European states that Russia could be planning another military offensive against its ex-Soviet neighbor. Moscow repeatedly said that it has "no plans to invade or attack anyone" but also expressed concern about the prospect of a full-blown conflict in eastern Ukraine. Germany and its European allies are accusing Russia of trying to destabilize the country by providing military support to the separatist forces in Ukraine's eastern regions.

NATO, Georgia agree to
remain ready against Russia

BRUSSELS: NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg and Georgia's Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili agreed Wednesday on the need to remain vigilant against Russia's destabilizing activities and to avoid escalation of tensions. The NATO secretary-general and the Georgian leader held talks in Brussels about the security situation in Eastern Europe, including Russia's military buildup in and around Ukraine and its destabilizing activity in the Black Sea region. "We agreed on the need to remain vigilant and to avoid escalation," Stoltenberg said, warning that "any future Russian aggression would come at a high price and have serious political and economic consequences for Russia." He also repeated his previous stance on Georgia's and Ukraine's possible NATO membership, pointing out that the two countries had "the right to choose their own alliances, and Russia has no right to dictate that choice." Stoltenberg promised that NATO would continue its support for Georgia in developing its defense capabilities with maritime support, joint exercises, and information sharing. He also thanked the country for contributing to NATO's mission and efforts in Afghanistan in halting international terrorism, as well as participating in the evacuations. Garibashvili said he was looking forward to further cooperation with NATO, noting that NATO membership was "a top foreign and security policy for Georgia" that is supported by "the absolute majority" of Georgian people. Later on Wednesday, he will join leaders from the 27 EU members and the Eastern Partnership countries, including Azerbaijan, Ukraine, Moldova, and Armenia, at the summit of the joint initiative. – News Desk



BRUSSELS: Azerbaijan's President Ilham Aliyev had joint meeting with President of European Council Charles Michel and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan. – DNA

Baku, Yerevan hold
EU-led meeting

NEWS DESK

BRUSSELS: Azerbaijan President Ilham Aliyev and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan agreed to hold further talks to delimitate and demarcate the state borders of the two countries and start the railway transportation with each other on Dec. 14. The decisions were taken in a trilateral meeting held by the president of the European Council, Charles Michel, in Brussels. "The common aim of all three leaders is to build a South Caucasus that is

secure, stable and prosperous for the benefit of all people living in the region," the council said in a statement published following the meeting. "Ilham Aliyev and Nikol Pashinyan agreed to have planned launch of negotiations on the delimitation and demarcation of the state border between Armenia and Azerbaijan," the statement said. The European Union will make available an "expert mission/consultative group" to support the border issue by providing technical assistance to both countries.

Libya's election
faces uncertainty

CAIRO: Libya's presidential election, meant to help unify the nation after a decade of civil war, is supposed to take place in just over a week, but calls are mounting for a delay. Either scenario – holding the vote on time or postponing it – could turn into a destabilizing setback. The vote, scheduled for Dec. 24, is to choose Libya's first president since the ouster and killing of longtime dictator Moammar Gadhafi more than a decade ago. For nearly a year, the election has been the lynchpin of international efforts to bring peace to the oil-rich North African nation, and supporters fear a dangerous void if it is not held on schedule. But critics warn that going ahead with the vote now could throw the country into new violence. They say Libya remains too bitterly divided among armed factions that are likely to reject any victory by rivals in the election. The presence of some of Libya's most polarizing figures in the race – including one of Gadhafi's sons – only makes it more explosive. Nearly 100 people have announced their candidacies, but the election commission has still not announced a final list of candidates because of legal disputes. It should have announced the list earlier this month. The rules governing the election are also in dispute, with western Libya politicians accusing the east-based parliament of adopting them without consultations. Libya plunged into chaos after Gadhafi's death during a 2011 uprising backed by a U.S.-led NATO military campaign. Control splintered among a myriad of armed militias. For years, the country was split between rival administrations in the east and the west, each backed by militias and foreign governments. The current political process emerged last year after the latest round of brutal fighting. In April 2019, the eastern-based military commander Khalifa Hifter launched an offensive aimed at capturing the capital, Tripoli, and bringing down the U.N.-recognized government based there. Hifter was backed by Russia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates. Turkey and Qatar responded by stepping up support for pro-Tripoli militias, supplying them with advanced weapons and providing troops and Syrian mercenaries. After 14 months of fighting, Hifter's offensive collapsed. After a U.N.-brokered cease-fire in October 2020, a grouping of Libyan factions called the Political Forum drew up a road map that led to the creation of an interim government to run the country until the Dec. 24 election. – Agencies

Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan develop
foreign trade relations

DNA

BAKU: Economy Minister's Advisor Masim Mammadov has said that Azerbaijan's foreign trade relations with Uzbekistan are developing dynamically. He made the remarks at the opening ceremony of the "Made in Uzbekistan" exhibition on December 15. "First, it is worth emphasizing the visit to Azerbaijan of representatives of Uzbek companies, who are here for the first time. The development of economic relations, according to this model, began in 2010. At such exhibitions, we mutually present our goods both in Uzbekistan and in Azerbaijan," he said. Stressing that Azerbaijan always supports such events aimed at strengthening economic relations, Mammadov added that it also allows opening new jobs, expands cooperation between private companies and helps find new sectors for cooperation. Counselor to the Uzbek embassy in Azerbaijan Makhumadzhan Baturaliyev said that Uzbekistan aimed to further develop a mutually beneficial partnership with Azerbaijan. The current exhibition will become a significant event in the promotion of bilateral trade and economic ties, he said. "I would like to wish our business circles successful negotiations and effective signing of contracts," Baturaliyev added. The acting head of Azerbaijan's Export and Investment Promotion Foundation (AZPROMO), Yusif Abdullayev, said that the foundation was always ready to support bilateral cooperation. He emphasized the need to create new non-competitive mechanisms for the export of goods to the markets of third

countries. "Azerbaijan is known for oil and gas, but we consider it extremely important to promote non-oil exports. Last month, we took part in the negotiations of the ministers of economies of the Turkic-speaking countries, discussed current challenges and upcoming steps to develop bilateral cooperation," he said. It should be noted that representatives of more than 80 Uzbek companies have visited Azerbaijan within the framework of the "Made in Uzbekistan" brand. The main goal of this exhibition is to strengthen and establish sustainable cooperation on export-import and economic relations between Uzbekistan

and Azerbaijan. The representatives of Uzbek companies operating in the agricultural, machine-building sector and a number of others visited Azerbaijan. Besides, it is planned to hold B2B meetings, as well as discuss mutual investment in the economies of both countries. It should be noted that the volume of trade turnover between Azerbaijan and Uzbekistan increased by 13 percent to \$80 million last year despite COVID-19. Presently, 195 Azerbaijani enterprises are represented in Uzbekistan, 69 of which have joint capital and 126 of them have 100 percent Azerbaijani capital. The trade turnover between the two countries amounted to \$84.7 million in the first 10 months of 2021.



'Belarus' bid to destabilize EU completely failed'

"In just a month, no more than 3,500 migrants have been returned safely from Belarus to Iraq," Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission, said at a European Parliament's plenary session in Strasbourg, France

FOREIGN DESK

BRUSSELS: With thousands of Iraqis denied entry into the European Union, the "autocratic" Belarusian regime's attempts to destabilize the EU have "completely failed," the bloc's top official said on Wednesday. "In just a month, no more than 3,500 migrants have been returned safely from Belarus to Iraq," Ursula von der Leyen, president of the European Commission, said at a European Parliament's plenary session in Strasbourg, France. The EU blames Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko for orchestrating an ongoing crisis that has seen thousands of asylum seekers stranded since last month in the border zone between Bel-

arus and its EU neighbors Poland, Latvia and Lithuania. It accuses Belarus of launching a hybrid attack as revenge for EU sanctions by inviting "tourists" from countries that are the main sources of migration to the bloc. "The autocratic (Lukashenko) regime's attempt to destabilize our member states has completely failed because our union reacted robustly and with great solidarity and unity," von der Leyen asserted. The EU has ramped up sanctions targeting high-ranking Belarusian officials and tourism companies, including national flag carrier Belavia, bringing the total number of blacklisted individuals and entities to 183 and 26, respectively. In addition, the bloc also agreed with countries of origin and transit, as well as air operators, to stop flights to Belarus and take



back their citizens. Von der Leyen said the orchestrated border crisis ties into a broader bid to destabilize democracy in the EU and its neighbors, which includes actions such as Russia's massive military buildup in and

around Ukraine and threat to cut gas supply to Moldova. The top EU official warned Moscow that the bloc is ready to employ "unprecedented measures with serious consequences" if it attacks Ukraine. "Our response to any further aggression may take the form of a robust scaling up and expansion of existing sanctions," she said. "We are ready to take additional unprecedented measures with serious consequences for Russia." Von der Leyen called on Moscow "to de-escalate, to pursue diplomatic channels and to abide by its international commitments." Senior EU officials have repeatedly voiced support for Kyiv over recent months as Moscow moves thousands of troops toward Ukraine for the second time this year.

The EU has been applying restrictive measures since the Ukrainian crisis of 2014 that saw Moscow lend support to separatist forces in eastern Ukraine, a policy it has maintained in the past seven years. The bloc accuses Russia of not fully implementing the Minsk agreements meant to establish peace in eastern Ukraine. Currently, 188 people and 48 entities are on the bloc's blacklist for violating Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty, along with separate economic sanctions on the Russian finance, energy and defense sectors. On Monday, the EU blacklisted Russian paramilitary company Wagner Group for human rights violations and intervening in conflicts around the world, including Ukraine.

Chinese
'adventure'
could be
'suicidal'

WEB DESK

TOKYO: Former Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has urged China not to provoke its neighbours or seek territorial expansion, saying that any Chinese military adventure could be "suicidal". Abe, who stepped down as premier last year but is still influential as head of the largest faction of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, made the comment in a video message at a security forum. "An adventure in military affairs, if pursued by such a huge economy like China's, could be suicidal to say the least," Abe said on Tuesday. "We must urge them not to pursue territorial expansion and restrain from provoking, often bullying, their neighbours because it should harm their own interests."

China claims almost all the energy-rich waters of the South China Sea, where it has established military outposts on artificial islands. That claim has been declared as without legal basis by the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague – a ruling that China has refused to recognise. Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam also have claims to parts of the sea. In the East China Sea, China claims a group of uninhabited Japanese-administered islets. The dispute has plagued bilateral relations for years and fueled more tensions between neighbouring countries.

Turkish FM
meets UAE
VP in Dubai

NEWS DESK

DUBAI: Turkey's foreign minister on Wednesday was received in Dubai by the vice president of the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Mevlut Cavusoglu, who is in the Gulf country for an official visit, met with Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, who is also the ruler of the Emirate of Dubai. "Will further develop our economic and commercial relations with UAE," Cavusoglu wrote on Twitter, sharing photos from their meeting. Turkey's ambassador to Abu Dhabi, Tugay Tuncer, and Turkish Consul General to Dubai Mustafa Ilker Kilic were also present at the meeting. Turkey's top diplomat arrived in the UAE on Monday for an official visit at the invitation of Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, his UAE counterpart. "At the meetings to be held with the UAE authorities during the visit, various dimensions of our bilateral relations will be discussed, and views will be exchanged on regional and international issues," the Turkish Foreign Ministry said in a statement on Monday. On Tuesday, Cavusoglu met with Turkish businesspeople in Dubai.

Navalny
daughter
urges EU
to confront
Putin

PARIS: Jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny's daughter on Wednesday urged the EU to stand up to Russian President Vladimir Putin, as she collected a rights prize on behalf of her father. "Although coming here is amazing, it is also probably exactly how mine and my family's worst nightmare looks like," Daria Navalnaya told the European Parliament as she picked up its annual Sakharov Prize. Navalny – Putin's highest-profile domestic opponent – has been behind bars since returning to Moscow in January from Germany, where he was recovering from a poisoning attack with a Novichok nerve agent that both he and the West blame on the Kremlin. "I don't understand why those who advocate for pragmatic relations with dictators can't simply open some history books," Navalnaya, a 20-year-old student at Stanford University in the United States, told lawmakers. "It's very easy to understand the inescapable political law: the pacification of dictators and tyrants never works." – APP

Briefs

SC to give verdict in sacked employees' case

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan will announce its verdict in sacked employees' case on Thursday after receiving the recommendations from the government.

The Supreme Court (SC) has deferred the verdict in a review petition filed in sacked employees' case which was going to be announced Wednesday. The government submitted its recommendations to the top court regarding the plan for restoring the employees.

In the recommendations, the government stated to restore employees from Grade 1 to 7 and conduct tests of Grade 8 to 17 employees within three months. It has been recommended to give permanent employment to those who have passed the Federal Public Service Commission (FPSC) test.

In its response, the government stated that the parliament has powers to make a decision ineffective. The past services of the employees will be considered as ad-hoc based employment and the matters related to the retired or deceased employees will be considered as the previous affairs. Moreover, the deceased employees and their relatives will not get the pension.

ECP seeks lawmakers' assets statements

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) Wednesday asked the all the members of the Senate, national and provincial assemblies to submit statements of assets and liabilities for financial year 2020-21 by December 31.

According to an official of ECP, the commission, on the first day of January each year will publish the names of members who failed to submit the requisite statement of assets and liabilities within the period specified under sub-section (1). He said the submission of yearly statements of assets and liabilities including their spouse and dependent children as on the preceding 30th day of June on Form-B is a mandatory requirement under Section 137 of the Elections Act, 2017.

The Commission, through an order, will suspend the membership of a parliamentarian of national, provincial assemblies or Senate on January 16, who fails to submit his statement of assets and liabilities. — APP

German court sentences Russian man for life

DNA

BERLIN: A court in Germany has sentenced a Russian man to life in prison for shooting dead a Georgian of Chechen ethnicity in a Berlin park two years ago.

The court found Vadim Krasikov guilty of gunning down Zelimkhan Khangoshvili at close range in August 2019.

Judges said the Russian state had ordered the murder, which it denies.

Wednesday's verdict could damage already strained relations between Germany and Russia.

Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock described the murder as a serious violation of German law and sovereignty.

She said Russian ambassador Sergei Nechayev had been summoned and told that two members of his embassy staff were now unwelcome in Germany.

In an earlier statement Mr Nechayev said the verdict was a "politically-motivated decision".

Khangoshvili - who lived for a time under the name Tornike Kavtarashvili - was shot dead in Berlin's Kleiner Tiergarten park on 23 August, 2019.

Italian archaeologists all praise for Pakistan for full support

Prof Luca Maria Olivieri, the Director of the Italian Archaeological Mission in Pakistan says a number of excavations done in past few years

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Prof Luca Maria Olivieri, the Director of the Italian Archaeological Mission in Pakistan has thanked Pakistan government and KPK authorities for extending full support during the excavation work in Swat and other areas.

Talking to media people at the residence of the Italian Ambassador, Prof. Luca further said, the Italian Archaeological Mission in Pakistan started sondages at Bir Kot ghwandai in 1977 when Prof Giorgio Stacul discovered the earliest sequence of the site with important discoveries of a typical painted pottery of Chalcolithic period. It was only later that the signs of the old city of bastion of the city of Bazira were discovered. From the year 1990 to 1992 south-western corner of the old city were dug out. From 1993 to 1995, survey of the entire area was conducted, he added.

He further said from the year 1998 till 2000 excavations on the upper top of Bir kot ghwandai were carried out. In this work the Hindu Shai temple and other relics ranging from Bronze Age till the Ghaznavid period were discovered. During years 2004 to 2007 fieldwork on the rock painting sites was conducted in the Kandak and other areas by the Italian Archaeological Mission. The excavation work was resumed in 2009 which continues till date. During



ISLAMABAD: Prof Luca Maria Olivieri, the Director of the Italian Archaeological Mission in Pakistan, Ambassador of Italy Andreas Ferrarese, Secretary Ministry of Culture and National Heritage posing for a group photo. — DNA

this period twenty one excavation seasons have been carried out. While talking about work in Swat he said in the year 2014 work under the Joint Italian Archaeological Mission was conducted in Abba Sahib-chinah, Amluk-dara, Balo Kalay/Gumbat, Bazira, Saidu Sharif I, Jahanabad, and in the Ghaznavid mosque at Udegram. The excavation brought to light the

Shahi Vishnuite temple in its entirety. As it is known, of the temple remains only the podium, the related floors, conspicuous part of the decoration with pilasters with pseudo ionic capitals, remarkable examples of the original marble decoration of the Turki Shahi period. The professors said that at the end of the month of October, a series of robbers' pits in the central zone

of the ancient city was explored and it revealed a very important Buddhist monument, preserved despite the robbers vandalism. At the sides of the monument there is a minor stupa a cell and the podium of a monumental pillar. Prof Luca further told that during an excavation in Nov 21 in north-west of the main urban exposure of Barikot, we discovered a row of

graves of unknown age and other archaeological features. These graves contain pottery shards and other rare finds which could date back to the Indo Greek and Saka Parthian period. At the end of the excavation more than 2200 objects inscriptions, ceramics, ornaments, iron weapons, stone tools were found, restored and handed over to the KP govt, he added.

SC orders HEC to shut down illegal university campuses

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Wednesday ordered the Higher Education Commission (HEC) to shut down illegal campuses of private universities across the country.

Two private universities had set up illegal campuses in Lahore and Karachi. The students had approached the court against the HEC for not issuing degrees from these illegal campuses. The apex court stated that the HEC should provide degrees to the students who pass out of illegal campuses a special arrangement and ensure a uniform implementation of HEC policies across the country.

"There should be no compromise in providing quality education to the youth of the country," the court maintained.

The court added that the federal and provincial governments should fully cooperate in maintaining the standards of the HEC.

The SC was then asked if private universities could set up sub-campus outside their boundaries, as the HEC had previously clarified that universities were not allowed to set up campuses outside their boundaries.

The court remarked that the HEC had on several occasions issued alerts to private universities for setting up illegal campuses and was of the view that the cooperation of federal and provin-

cial governments is essential in eradicating illegal activities.

However, federal, and provincial governments did not cooperate with the commission.

The students' lawyer, Ali Zafar, said that the court had ordered the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) to take action against private universities. When students went to the Lahore High Court (LHC) for their degrees, the high court declared the campuses of private universities illegal, Zafar stated.

Justice Umar Bandial remarked that the HEC has its own powers and that NAB does not need to investigate the matter. Justice Bandial added that the LHC gave an appropriate decision.

PAF pays tributes to 1971 War martyrs

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Air Force (PAF) on Wednesday paid tribute to the martyrs of 1971 War for their unprecedented courage, sacrifice and their war heroics.

The PAF's Directorate General Public Relations released a short documentary film based on 1971 Pak-India war heroes Flight Lieutenant Ghulam Murtaza Shaheed, Tamgha-i-Jurrat and Flight Lieutenant Javed Iqbal Shaheed, Tamgha-i-Jurrat, said a news release. The documentary highlighted the heroic and fearless deeds of the valiant sons of Pakistan who achieved the great status of martyrdom by sacrificing their lives for the sake of their beloved homeland.

The film narrated that Flight Lieutenant Ghulam Murtaza Malik was born on Nov, 1941 in Rawalpindi and got commission as navigator in PAF in January, 1966. His first appointment was in the historic No. 6 Squadron of PAF at Chaklala Airbase where he became part of the newly inducted C-130 aircraft's first aircrew member.

Later, after successful accomplishments joined B-57 Bomber aircraft as operational navigator. During the 1971 Indo-Pak War he was deputed at PAF Base Masroor as part of No.7 Squadron. This Squadron was deployed at PAF Base Mianwali due to the war risk and was tasked to attack and neutralize enemy air bases; among those was the Amritsar Base.

It had huge significance for Indian Air Force (IAF) due to its geographical and operational importance and PAF was well aware that this base would be used to attack Pakistan and it was necessary to destroy this base. Flight Lt (Shaheed) Javed Iqbal as pilot and Flight Lieutenant (Shaheed) Ghulam Murtaza Malik as its navigator were selected to accomplish this task. However, this pair of valiant warriors had earlier made three successful attacks at the enemy inflicting heavy blows. On Dec 5, 1971, in the evening these two sons of the soil took flight towards their target. After evading enemy fighter jets and radars, when these daring air fighters reached Amritsar, the entire air field was drowned in darkness.

Before the enemy took stock of the situation or held of its positions the B-57 aircraft started flurries of bombs at the runway. The antiaircraft guns of the enemy turned their fire at these PAF falcons. Without bothering the heavy fires, the two brave hearts returned for the second attack to destroy tarmac and succeeded in completely destroying. Unfortunately, this time they got hit by the ack-ack (anti-aircraft gun-fire) of the enemy guns. The pilot was unable to control the plane where both of the crew members decided to eject. Unluckily, the parachute of Flight Lieutenant (Shaheed) Javed Iqbal did not open and he perished on the spot.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan chairs a meeting to review progress on Ravi City and Central Business District. — DNA

Karzai 'invited' Taliban to stop chaos

Hamid Karzai, who was the country's president for 13 years after the Taliban were first ousted in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, refused to leave

AGENCIES

KABUL: The Taliban didn't take the Afghan capital — they were invited, says the man who issued the invitation.

In an Associated Press interview, former Afghan President Hamid Karzai offered some of the first insights into the secret and sudden departure of Afghan President Ashraf Ghani — and how he came to invite the Taliban into the city "to protect the population so that the country, the city doesn't fall into chaos and the unwanted elements who would probably loot the country, root shops."

When Ghani left, his security officials also left. Defense minister Bismillah Khan even asked Karzai if he wanted to leave Kabul when Karzai contacted him to know what remnants of the government still remained. It turned out there were none. Not even the Kabul police chief had remained.

Karzai, who was the country's

president for 13 years after the Taliban were first ousted in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, refused to leave.

In a wide-ranging interview at his tree-lined compound in the center of the city where he lives with his wife and young children, Karzai was adamant that Ghani's flight scuttled a last-minute plan focused on the Taliban's entry. He and Abdullah Abdullah, the government's chief negotiator, had been working with the Taliban leadership in Doha on a negotiated agreement to allow the militia to enter the capital under controlled conditions. The countdown to a possible deal began Aug. 14, the day before the Taliban came to power. Karzai and Abdullah met Ghani, and they agreed that they would leave for Doha the next day with a list of 15 others to negotiate a power-sharing agreement. The Taliban were already on the outskirts of Kabul, but Karzai said the leadership in Qatar promised the insurgent force would remain

outside the city until the deal was struck.

Early on the morning of Aug. 15, Karzai said, he waited to draw up the list. The capital was fidgety, on edge. Rumors were swirling about a Taliban takeover. Karzai called Doha. He was told the Taliban would not enter the city.

At noon, the Taliban called to say that "the government should



stay in its positions and should not move that they have no intention to (go) into the city," Karzai said. "I and others spoke to various officials and assurances were given to us that, yes, that was the case, that the Americans and the government forces were holding firm to the places (and) that Kabul would not fall."

By about 2:45 p.m., though, it became apparent Ghani had fled the city. Karzai called the defense minister, called the interior minister, searched for the Kabul police chief. Everyone was gone. "There was no official present at all in the capital, no police chief, no corps commander, no other units. They had all left."

Ghani's own protection unit's deputy chief called Karzai to come to the palace and take over the presidency. He declined, saying legally he had no right to the job. Instead the former president decided to make a public, televised message, with his children at his side "so that the Afghan people know that

we are all here."

Karzai was adamant that there would have been an agreement for a peaceful transition had Ghani remained in Kabul.

"Absolutely. Absolutely. That is what we were preparing for, what we were hoping (along) with the chairman of the peace council to go to Doha that evening, or the next morning, and to finalize the agreement," he said. "And I believe the Taliban leaders were also waiting for us in Doha for the same ... objective, for the same purpose."

Today, Karzai meets regularly with the Taliban leadership and says the world must engage with them. Equally important, he said, is that Afghans have to come together. War has dominated Afghanistan for more than 40 years, and in the last 20 years "Afghans have suffered on all sides," he said. "Afghans have lost lives on all sides. . . . The Afghan army has suffered. Afghan police have suffered, the Taliban soldiers have suffered."

Winter vacation from Jan-end

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) has unanimously decided that winter vacation in the educational institutions will be held at the end of January. The NCOC clarified that winter vacation will continue however in the areas still receiving snowfall.

The NCOC has consulted and discussed the proposal before taking a decision with all the provinces in the Inter-Provincial Education Ministers Conference. Sources in the NCOC divulged that vaccination drive among schools will also go ahead and there will be no break in it.

During the meeting, the recommendations collected from the provincial ministers were reviewed. The participants agreed on the closure of educational institutions in areas where heavy snowfall takes place. Pertinent to note that Federal Education Minister Shafqat Mehmood just a day earlier tweeted that the federal and provincial secretaries. Earlier, all provincial and federal education ministries had decided to hold winter vacations in educational institutions from December 25 to January 5. However, final decision in this regard was to be taken by NCOC.

'Vaccination alone' cannot halt Omicron: EU agency

STOCKHOLM: The EU health agency ECDC on Wednesday warned that vaccinations alone would not stop the rise of the Omicron variant of the novel coronavirus, and said "strong action" was urgently needed.

"In the current situation, vaccination alone will not allow us to prevent the impact of the Omicron variant, because there will be no time to address the vaccination gaps that still exist," Andrea Ammon, director of the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), said in a statement.

The agency meanwhile also raised their risk assessment for Omicron's impact on public health from "high to very high" to "very high."

The agency called for strengthening and reintroduction of "non-pharmaceutical interventions," such as mask-wearing, hand hygiene, distance working and prevention of crowds in public spaces. "It is urgent that strong action is taken to reduce transmission and alleviate the heavy burden on health care systems and

Lithuania's diplomats leave Beijing

DNA

BEIJING: Lithuanian diplomats in China returned to Vilnius for consultations, according to the Foreign Ministry. Vilnius called back its diplomats in response to Beijing's efforts to downgrade its embassy.

Lithuania's top diplomats in Beijing left for Vilnius on Wednesday amid worsening bilateral relations with China over Lithuania's decision to develop diplomatic ties with Taiwan. According to a statement on the website of the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry, the country's "Charge d'affaires ad interim in China, Audra Capiene, returns to Vilnius for consultations."

Reuters reports all 19 Lithuanian Embassy personnel and dependents left Beijing and were on a plane to Paris. A diplomatic source said they left due to "safety considerations" in response to "intimidation."

Foreign Minister Gabrielius Landsbergis confirmed the diplomats' departure in a press briefing. He responded to a question about the reports of Lithuanian diplomats facing pressure in China, "Uncertainty creates various possible interpretations."

Landsbergis added, "I want to say very strictly that this is not the closure of the embassy."