



Islamabad POST

Saturday, December 18, 2021

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Price Rs. 20

Shaukat Khanum funding allegations 'false, defamatory'

Detailed News On Page-01

Germany grants EURO 13.5m for Tree Tsunami

Detailed News On Page-08



UNGA adopts Pak-sponsored resolution

Detailed News On Page-08



Briefs

Pak plays laudable role in OIC

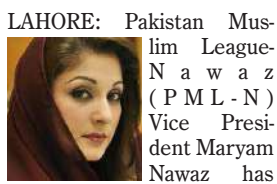
DNA



ISLAMABAD: President Islamic Development Bank Dr Muhammad Sulaiman Al-Jasser has commended Pakistan's role for stability in Afghanistan and bringing in all OIC countries at one platform for this cause through OIC Ministerial conference. Talking to media at Islamabad International Airport on Friday, the President Islamic Development Bank said Pakistan is an important member of OIC and it has extended every possible assistance to Afghanistan. He said all OIC countries hold in high esteem Pakistan's contribution in this regard. Dr Muhammad Sulaiman Al-Jasser said participation of OIC ministers in this conference is an expression of their resolve for peace in Afghanistan and Afghan people will soon get the fruits of peace.

Maryam felicitates workers

STAFF REPORT



LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Vice President Maryam Nawaz has congratulated the workers on the victory of her party in the by-election of Punjab Assembly constituency PP-206 Khanewal. In a post on social-networking website Twitter, Maryam Nawaz thanked Allah and said, "Congratulations on the glorious victory of Shiro Khanewal, the name Nawaz Sharif is enough." In another post, the PML-N leader shared a photo of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and wrote "Congratulations to Rana Muhammad Saleem and PML-N. Congratulations to all the leaders and workers who worked hard." The by-election for the Provincial Assembly constituency PP-206 in Khanewal was held on Thursday and Rana Muhammad Saleem from the Pakistan Muslim Leagues Nawaz (PMLN) had emerged as a winner, according to the unofficial results.

Holiday Notice

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

Inside...

New SME policy to catalyze economic activities: Atif Munir - Page 02

Korean Govt donates 10,000 hand sanitizers to MoCC - Page 03

Time for the world to stand up for Afghans and be counted - Page 04

Russia-China alliance poses a defining challenge for the West - Page 05

Premier League on 'knife edge' as Covid cases rise - Page 06

Uzbekistan, Korea agree to enhance strategic partnership - Page 07

UNGA adopts resolution on right to self-determination - Page 08

Recognizing Taliban govt not on agenda

Qureshi says Pakistan is not asking the world to recognise the Taliban but talk to them to avert the emerging crisis



ALI FURQAN

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan said on Friday that the purpose of OIC Foreign Minister summit is not to recognize the Taliban government, but urging the world to engage with them to avert the emerging crisis. Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi told the media while informing them about the OIC summit that the focus of the conference is the situation in Afghanistan and to be more specific the humanitarian crisis in the neighboring country. He says there is difference in recognition and engagement, Pakistan is not asking the world to recognise the Taliban but talk to them to avert the emerging crisis. He says it would be a good opportunity for the world and Taliban to understand each other's point of view. Foreign Minister says that the suspension of development and

Continued on Page 06

Fawad warns of refugee crisis

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Government said the Taliban takeover of neighboring Afghanistan in August forced about 300,000 Afghans to take shelter in Pakistan and warned that the refugee crisis could aggravate if the international community would not urgently address the rapidly worsening humanitarian situation. "If this number increases, our economy will not be able to bear this burden." Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry said. The minister talking to journalists ahead of the meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) foreign ministers in Islamabad, said, 290,000 Afghans have come to Pakistan since August 15, and this figure accounts to the legal entrants only. Pakistan is hosting the OIC foreign minister's meeting on Sunday to discuss the emerging situation in Afghanistan after the Taliban takeover and the departure of all US and allied forces. The foreign minister's meeting is expected to woo the Muslim countries to extend a helping hand for the struggling Afghans.

Continued on Page 06

Ambassador of Czech Republic meets Army Chief

COAS says Pak values ties with EU countries



DNA

RAWALPINI: Ambassador of the Republic of Czech to Pakistan H.E. Tomas Smetanka called on Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa at GHQ, on Friday. According to Pakistan Army Public Relations (ISPR), the Ambassador of the Czech Republic called on Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa. During the meeting, matters of mutual interest, regional security, and current situation in Afghanistan were discussed. The meeting also discussed mutual cooperation in the provision of

humanitarian aid to Afghanistan. According to ISPR, COAS said that Pakistan values its relations with European Union (EU) countries. "Pakistan is hopeful for the expansion of multilateral relations based on common interests", the army chief added. The Ambassador of the Czech Republic appreciated Pakistan's role in the Afghan situation. The visiting dignitary praised Pakistan's efforts for peace and stability in the region. The Ambassador of the Czech Republic reiterated his commitment to play a role in enhancing diplomatic cooperation with Pakistan at all levels.

US acknowledges Pakistan counter terrorism efforts

Antony Blinken stated that Pakistan has made some important contributions to the Afghan peace process



NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: The annual US report on terrorism has recognised Pakistan's efforts in 2020 to counter terror financing and restrain Indian-backed militant groups from conducting attacks in Pakistan.

Continued on Page 06

Top TTP commander escapes drone strike

NEWS DESK

KABUL: A top leader of the Pakistan Taliban escaped unhurt from a suspected drone strike on a safe house in eastern Afghanistan, the militant group said Friday. The strike on Thursday evening came a week after a ceasefire between the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and the government collapsed, with militants accusing Islamabad of killing its fighters. The TTP - a separate movement but sharing common roots with Afghanistan's new leaders - plunged

Continued on Page 06

DNA



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi receives Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Hisein Ibrahim Taha on his arrival at Ministry of Foreign Affairs. - DNA

Shaukat Khanum allegations false: PM

"It is unfortunate to level baseless allegations against a welfare body," says PM



MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Following allegations regarding Shaukat Khanum Memorial Trust's (SKMT) funding, Prime Minister Imran Khan submitted an affidavit terming all statements issued in this regard as "false and defamatory". The affidavit was shared with the media by the PM's Office after the premier on Friday attended the online court proceedings from his office in the presence of his counsel, Senator Waleed Iqbal. During the hearing, the premier said the decisions on the hospital's investment schemes were made by the expert committee without his interference. The proceedings were carried out by Additional District and Session Judge Muhammad Adnan on the Rs10 billion

Continued on Page 06

No suspension of mobile services

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Mobile services will not be suspended during the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) summit, which will be held in Islamabad for three days from December 17-19, Interior Minister Sheikh Rasheed announced Friday. The OIC's Extraordinary Session of Foreign Ministers will start on December 17. Meanwhile, the federal capital will also enjoy a three-day weekend from

Continued on Page 06

Palestine FM due on Sunday

US, Taliban envoys to attend OIC FMs moot

The first Extraordinary Session was also held in Islamabad, in Jan 1980, also to consider Afghan situation

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Representatives from the United States and Taliban-led interim Afghanistan government would attend the extraordinary session of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) scheduled in Islamabad on December 19. The delegation of the State of Palestine will be high-ranking and will consist of Foreign Minister Dr. Riyad Al-Malliki, his assistant and another diplomat, and he will arrive on Sunday morning. Palestine shall also be on top of the

Continued on Page 06

5000 personnel to stand guard; holiday in Capital

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Government on Friday decided to deploy 5,000 security forces personnel in the federal capital during the OIC Foreign Minister's extraordinary conference in Islamabad. In view of the OIC Foreign Ministers

Continued on Page 06

Ties with US, Europe Russia issues list of conditions

Wants limited NATO role in Eastern Europe

NEWS DESK

MOSCOW: Russia on Friday released a series of demands to the United States and NATO if it is to restore relations. It comes as tensions between the West and Russia have ratcheted up, with fears of a military invasion of Ukraine and continuing hybrid warfare at the European Union's external border with Belarus. The Russian documents were submitted to the US and its allies earlier this week. The publication of unfinished agreements is an unusual move in international diplomacy. An end to NATO military

activity in eastern Europe, including Ukraine, the Caucasus and Central Asia. No expansion of NATO membership, particularly to Ukraine. No intermediate or shorter-range missiles deployed close enough to hit the territory of the other side. No military exercises of more than one military brigade in an agreed border zone. An agreement that parties do not consider each other as adversaries and will resolve disputes peacefully. Neither Russia nor the United States can deploy nuclear weapons outside their national territories.

Continued on Page 06

DECEMBER 2021

Pakistan's Premier News & Diplomatic Affairs Magazine

Find us on:
www.centrelines.com.pk
www.dnanews.com.pl
www.islamabadpost.com.pk

@PostIslamabad/ @Editordnanews

A sister concern of

Islamabad POST

11# Block 18-A, Awan Plaza,
G-8 Markez, Islamabad-Pakistan
Ph: 051-2261960, 051-2266165





ISLAMABAD: Federal minister for information and broadcasting, Chaudhary Fawad Hussain, federal minister for interior, Shaikh Rasheed Ahmad & minister of state for information and broadcasting Farrukh Habib talking to media. — APP

876 women candidates elected unopposed in KP polls

DNA

PESHAWAR: As many as 2,032 candidates have been elected unopposed in 17 districts of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where the local government elections are scheduled to be held on Dec 19. On the general seats, 217 candidates have been elected unopposed while on women seats, 876 females elected without any competition. As many as 285 growers have been elected unopposed on farmers' seats, while 500 candidates on youth seats and 154 on minorities' seats have been elected without facing competition. From Peshawar, 62 have been elected unopposed on general seats; 145 females elected on women seats; 105 on farmers' seats; and 45 candidates have won the election without competition. From Nowshera, 12 candidates have won the election unopposed on general seats; 51 females on women seats; 19 on farmers' seats; 34 on youth seats; and 11 on minorities' seats. From Charsadda, 9 contestants have been elected without any contest on general seats; 55 females on women seats; 30 on farmers' seats; and 9 on minorities' seats. From Khyber district, 24 candidates

have won the election with competition on general seats; 51 on women seats; 18 on farmers' seats; 30 on youth seats; and 12 on minorities' seats. From Mardan, 15 candidates have been elected unopposed on women seats; 1 on farmers' seats; and 5 on youth seats. From Mardan, 9 contestants have won the polls without competition on general seats; 99 on women seats; 38 on farmers' seats; 68 on youth seats; and 15 on minorities' seats. From Swabi, 18 candidates have been elected unopposed on general seats; 84 on women seats; 40 on farmers' seats; 57 on youth seats; and 2 on minorities' seats. From Kohat, 6 contestants have won election without contest on general seats; 61 on women seats; 8 on farmers' seats; 23 on youth seats; and 10 on minorities' seats. From Karak, 9 candidates have been elected unopposed on general seats; 2 on women seats; 1 on farmers' seats; and 1 on minorities' seats. From Hangu, 14 contestants have won the polls without competition on general seats; 24 on women seats; 16 on farmers' seats; and 1 on minorities' seats. From Bannu, 3 candidates have been elected unopposed on general seats; 22 on women seats; 5 on farmers' seats; 11 on youth seats; and 7 on minorities' seats.

Delay in registration of FIR not tolerable: IG Punjab

LAHORE: Inspector General of Police Punjab Rao Sardar Ali Khan has said that delay in registration of FIR is not tolerated in any case, cases should be registered immediately on applications of citizens. He issued these instructions while listening to the problems of the citizens during a Khuli Katchehry (open court) held at Central Police Office here on Friday and giving orders to the officers for redressal. He said that strict action will be taken against those who would delay in the registration of cases without any reason. Rao said that action should be taken on priority basis against the mafias occupying the property and lands of the people and strict

legal action should be taken against such mafias and their facilitators. He said that detailed reports of operations against criminals grabbing public and private property should be sent to the Central Police Office regularly. IG Punjab directed that field and supervisory officers in all districts should hold regular open courts at their offices or public places and senior citizens, disabled and women attending open courts should be heard on priority basis. He reiterated that police are a disciplined force so all officers and personnel must be punctual, adhere to SOPs issued in professional matters and take good care of discipline. — APP

FESCO issues shutdown schedule

STAFF REPORT

FAISALABAD: The Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO) has issued shutdown schedule for Monday due to necessary repair, maintenance and expansion of electricity lines. According to the schedule, the power supply from Dry Port feeder emanating from 132-KV Chiniot Road grid station, Quran Academy Road, Jhumra Road and Hamdard-1 feeders originating from 132-KV Steam Power grid station, Yousuf Abad feeder emanating from 132-KV Nishat Abad grid station, College Road, Lahore Road, Arkana and new Awagat feeders originating from 132-KV Jaranwala grid station, Lalian City feeder emanating from 132-KV Lalian grid station, Pipal Bhatta feeder originating from 132-KV Barana grid station, College Road feeder emanating from 132-KV Chenab Nagar grid station, Amin Abad and Kareem Town feeders originating from 132-KV Factory Area grid station, Shadab feeder emanating from 132-KV Jhang Road grid station, Painsara feeder originating from 132-KV Nia Lahore grid station, al-Mustafa Shaheed feeder emanating from 132-KV Sitiana grid station, Harijanwala feeder originating from 132-KV Sitiana Road grid station, new Sabzi Mandi, FIG, Looma, al-Fareed feeders emanating from 132-KV Thikriwala grid station feeders emanating from 132-KV Tariq Abad grid station will remain suspended from 9:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. whereas Theraj feeder originating from 132-KV Jaranwala grid station will observe load shedding from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. on December 20, 2021.

New SME policy to catalyze economic activities: Atif Munir

President FCCI said that SME is the only hope to offset the ill impacts of corona and for this purpose the Government has taken elaborate and comprehensive measures to incentivize them through policy interventions

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: New SME policy will catalyze the economic activities in addition to helping the young educated and talented youth to start their own businesses instead of running after the jobs, said Mr. Atif Munir Sheikh, President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI). He was commenting on the new SME policy approved by the federal cabinet. He said that according to the statistics more than one million small manufacturers are working in Pakistan and their contribution in growth is above 78%. "These manufacturers have potential to further grow but they have their own financial limitations", he said and added that they were earlier denied access to the capital. "Hence they could not fully exploit their inherent potential", he added. Continuing President FCCI said that SME is the only hope to offset the ill

impacts of corona and for this purpose the Government has taken elaborate and comprehensive measures to incentivize them through policy interventions. He said that in Faisalabad the SME sector was also contributing 80% share in industrial production in addition to creating maximum job opportunities for the bursting population. He appreciated the categorization of the SME sector into low, medium and high-risk industries along with appropriate facilities for each segment. He said that this policy has offered guarantee free loans up to Rs. 10 million but this is not enough in view of rapid depreciation of Pak rupee, hence this limit must be enhanced up to Rs. 20 million. The exemption from NOCs for low-risk industries is also a positive step which would help start-ups to fully concentrate on their businesses instead of visiting offices to get NOCs from different offices. He said that in the

current age of digitalization, it is not a difficult job and the Government could easily manage and facilitate start-ups by saving them from unnecessary bureaucratic procedures and hiccoughs. In this connection, he particularly mentioned the newly introduced "one window operation" and said that its scope must be enhanced to the SME sector. He said that new portals should also be activated so that male and female start-ups could get the required permissions while sitting from their homes. He mentioned special facilities for the females and said that they could enjoy tax-rebate up to 25%. "It will certainly attract women to start their own businesses with this special incentive", he said and added that the new policy will play a major role in transforming our import-based economy to a dynamic export oriented sector. He said that it will also encourage our youth to produce imported items locally in order to discourage the increasing imports.

Virgin Atlantic completes 1st year of operations to Pakistan



DNA

ISLAMABAD: This week Virgin Atlantic celebrates 12 months of flying from UK to Pakistan. Strong demand from Pakistan diaspora visiting friends and relatives has contributed to a successful first year of operations. Virgin Atlantic has established itself as the number one carrier for travel from Pakistan to UK, with award-winning service and a choice of three direct routes. Pakistan was Virgin's first new country to launch during the pandemic, and the first time it has ever flown from Manchester to Asia. Virgin Atlantic has continued operations throughout the last year, even during periods of the tightest travel restrictions, demonstrating the resilience of the Pakistan market. Highlights of the year included carrying both the men's and women's Pakistan Cricket team to UK and beyond for their Caribbean tours in 2021. Virgin Atlantic operates the state

of the art Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner aircraft on all routes from Pakistan, offering the airline's Upper Class, Premium and Economy cabins. Passengers can take advantage of over 1,000 hours of in-flight entertainment, which includes a selection of Urdu films and TV programmes. Virgin Atlantic offers Halal food options for customers along with its award-winning service. Virgin Atlantic offers seamless connectivity via London Heathrow to North America, offering speedy connections to destinations such as New York JFK, Boston and Los Angeles. As well as transporting customers, Virgin Atlantic offers a fast, efficient cargo service. This has enabled trade between exporters and importers in both the UK and Pakistan. The UK is the largest export market for Pakistan in Europe, transporting high volumes of goods such as textiles, apparel and machinery. Passenger safety is Virgin Atlantic's number one priority and the airline has implemented a 'Fly Safe, Fly Well' programme during the Covid-19 pandemic.

GCWU 15th syndicate meeting held

DNA

FAISALABAD: The 15th syndicate meeting of the Government College Women University (GCWU) Faisalabad was held here on Friday. Provincial Minister for Higher Education Raja Yasir Humayon presided over the meeting, while Prof Dr Muhammad Tufail, Vice Chancellor Ghazi University, Dera Ghazi Khan, Prof Dr Talat Naseer Pasha, Vice Chancellor Education University Lahore, Dr Tayyaba Shaheen, Chairperson Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education Faisalabad, MPA Firdous Rai, Sara Hayyat and Qurat-ul-Ain from the HEC participated in the meeting. Vice-Chancellor GCWU Prof Dr Rubina Farooq briefed the participants about the university's annual report (2020-21), research activities, quality education, social services, E-Rozgar center, etc. The minister paid tribute to the Vice Chancellor on the university's performance and appreciated the efforts for development of the university, constitution of basic structure, faculty and administration. The minister stresses on vocational education for grooming the students' abilities through modern education.

CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY Maintenance Division-I

TENDER NOTICE

Sealed tenders are hereby invited on percentage basis on NIT cost from the contractors duly enlisted with Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) in appropriate category and having valid PEC license for the year 2021-22 for work as detailed below:-

S. No.	Name of Work	NIT Cost	Earnest Money	Tender Fee	Date & Time of Receiving of Tenders	Date & Time of Opening of Tenders
1	Repair / maintenance of H. No. 20-H, St. 20, F-6/3	Rs.2,910,257/-	Rs. 87,500/-	Rs.2000/-	12-01-2022 At 11:30 AM	12-01-2022 At 12:00 Noon
2	Repair / maintenance of H. No. 253-F, St. 50, F-6/4	Rs.631,297/-	Rs. 19,000/-	Rs.1000/-	12-01-2022 At 11:30 AM	12-01-2022 At 12:00 Noon
3	Repair / maintenance of H. No. 256-F, St. 50, F-6/4	Rs.476,723/-	Rs. 14,500/-	Rs.500/-	12-01-2022 At 11:30 AM	04-11-2021 At 11:30 AM
4	Repair / maintenance of H. No. 1/3-E, St. 5, G-7/2	Rs.351,977/-	Rs. 11,000/-	Rs.500/-	12-01-2022 At 11:30 AM	12-01-2022 At 11:30 AM
5	Repair / maintenance of H. No. 3/2-C, St. 41, G-7/2	Rs.294,932/-	Rs. 10,000/-	Rs.500/-	12-01-2022 At 11:30 AM	12-01-2022 At 11:30 AM
6	Repair / maintenance of H. No. 3/10-E, St. 49, F-6/4	Rs. 219,186/-	Rs. 10,000/-	Rs.500/-	12-01-2022 At 11:30 AM	12-01-2022 At 11:30 AM

- Tender form / documents can be purchased on cash payment (non refundable) for the works mentioned above from the office of Deputy Director Maintenance Division-I, CDA. Last date for submission of applications for purchase of tender forms / documents is 10-01-2022 at 12:00 Noon. The Tender Documents will be issued to the contractors up to 11-01-2022.
- Application on original letter pad for issuance of tender documents shall accompany the name address(es), signature of the contractor, valid enrollment / renewal of the firm with the PEC, attested copy of CNIC, professional tax certificate, active Income tax and GST Certificate and at least three number of work order in last two financial year i.e. 2019-20 and 2020-21.
- The owner of the firm should submit the application and collect the tender documents by himself. In case of representative, copy of CNIC along with general / special power of attorney attested through respective court must be attached with the application. The attorney holder must be legitimate and should not be the employees of any Government / semi Government institute.
- Earnest money in the shape of call deposit generated only from firms account bearing name of firm in favour of Deputy Director Maintenance Division-I, CDA, from local scheduled bank of Islamabad must accompany with the application. Without call deposit, no application for issuance of tender will be entertained. Cash / cheque will not be accepted.
- Tender for the works mentioned above will be received and opened by Dy. Director Maintenance Division-I, CDA, in his room No.154 Old Naval Head quarter G-6, Islamabad in the presence of contractors or their authorized representatives who care to attend.
- The contractors who are interested to participate in above mentioned tenders, they will have to submit experience certificates of completed works of similar nature during the last two financial year i.e. 2019-20 and 2020-21 while submitting application, otherwise tender will not be issued.
- The contractor will submit the documents as per item No.16 of instruction of tender documents along with their tender, without which tender will be liable for rejection.
- The relative of a tendering authority should not be entertained for participation in the tenders.
- The bid security of all bidders should be deposited in CDA's bank account and same should be returned after the acceptance of the contract with the successful bidder.
- In case the total bid amount is less than 10% below the NIT amount, the bidder shall submit call deposit as performance Security equal to the difference between NIT amount and total quoted amount less 10% of NIT amount. That is required Performance Security-NIT amount- total bid amount-10% of NIT amount. This call deposit shall be in addition to the earnest money for the work and shall be deposited at the time of submission of bids. Bids not carrying the performance security shall be rejected. The performance security of the successful bidder shall be released after completion of the project.
- PEC certificate 2021-22 & Professional Tax Certificate in original will be seen before issuance of tender.
- CDA may reject all bids or proposals at any time prior to acceptance of bid proposals. CDA shall upon request communicate, to any contractor or supplier who submitted a bid / proposal, but is not required to justify those grounds.
- This notice may be seen at CDA Website, www.cda.gov.pk and PPRA Web Site, www.ppra.org.pk

DEPUTY DIRECTOR
Maintenance Division-I

PID (I) No. 4128/21

Sunflower cultivation schedule issued

FAISALABAD: The Agriculture Department has issued schedule for sunflower cultivation in the province and persuaded farmers to bring maximum land under cultivation of the cash crop. A spokesman for the department told APP on Friday, "Sunflower is an important edible oil producing crop and it can help Pakistan slash its import bill of edible oil, which is about Rs 300 billion per annum. Therefore, the Agriculture Department has divided Punjab into three zones regarding cultivation of sunflower crops". He said that growers of Dera Ghazi Khan and Rajanpur should immediately start cultivation of sunflower and complete it till January 31, while the peasants of Bahawalpur, Rahim Yar Khan, Khanewal, Multan, Muzaffargarh, Layyah, Lodhran, Bhakkar, Vehari and Bahawalnagar should cultivate sunflower from 1st to 31st of January. Similarly, farmers of Faisalabad, Mianwali, Sargodha, Khushab, Jhang, Sahiwal, Okara, Sialkot, Gujranwala, Lahore, Mandi Bahauddin, Kasur, Sheikhpura, Nankana Sahib, Narowal, Attock, Rawalpindi, Gujrat and Chakwal should cultivate sunflower crops from January 15 to February 15. — Bureau Report

Food System in Era of COVID-19

NAMRAH SHAHZAD

COVID-19 (COVID-19, created by the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2) is a highly contagious disease that was identified in mid-December 2019 and was declared a pandemic by the WHO on March 11, 2020. (Wuhan, China). Symptoms such as COVID-19 fever usually appear 5-6 days after infection and include cough, sore throat, fever, muscle and body pain and loss of smell or taste in some cases. The consumption of foods rich in vitamins and of functional foods can boost the immune system to help fight off viruses. For instance, Ascorbic acid (vitamin C), vitamin A (retinol, retinoic acid, and B-carotene), herbal and Chinese medicines (ginseng root) have been used to help in the treatment of viral diseases. High levels of urbanization and global trade in trade and travel have contributed to the spread of the virus worldwide. The Global Report on Food Crises 2020 found that 135 million people in 55 countries and territories are facing food insecurity at a "crisis" level or higher. The federal government and the National Accountability Bureau in Pakistan are taking strict actions against wheat and sugar hoarders. Onion and tomatoes exports were officially banned from the end of February un-

til 31 May 2020.

According to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, the Consumer Price Index (CPI) increased by 8.2 percent between May 2019 and May 2020. An analysis of average prices during this outbreak of COVID-19, the price increased were; wheat flour per kilo 13.3 percent, IRRI (regular) and basmati rice 8.8 percent, pulses prices have increased substantially, both beef and mutton 5.3 percent, fresh milk 3.4 percent and the chicken and eggs 28.5 and 20.3 percent respectively. Mango exports are expected to decline by 40 percent this year because of the lockdown of sea and air routes. There has been also a negative effect on cotton producers. According to estimates by the International Labour Organization (ILO), 2.9 million salaried workers are at risk due to the restrictions imposed by government.

Last March, the United Nations allocated US\$2 billion to the COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan, which aims to enable organizations such as WHO, UNICEF, and WFP to reach more vulnerable communities and provide them with food, water and sanitation and vaccines, as well as COVID-19 test kits and medical equipment.

— The writer is the student of
Department of Food Science & Technology
Government College Women University Faisalabad

Students pay tribute to APS martyrs

FAISALABAD: The martyrs of APS, Peshawar were paid rich tribute during a ceremony, held at the Government MC Higher Secondary School Allama Iqbal Road, here on Friday. The ceremony was presided over by Principal Rao Muhammad Iqbal. Educationists, teachers and a large number of students were present. The principal said the martyrs of APS were the heroes of the nation. Their sacrifices would not go waste which united the Pakistani nation at a platform, he said. — APP

Islamabad POST

Available in following cities

ISLAMABAD
Qamar News Agency
03105460372

RAWALPINDI
Asim News Agency
03435802610

KARACHI
Nazir Siyal
03337554016

PESHAWAR
Zarbagh News Agency
03005412069

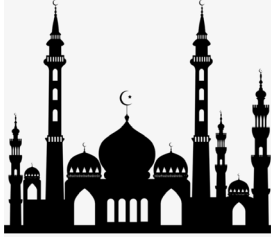
FAISALABAD
Ishfaq Mughal
03007689850

JEHLUM
Iqrash News Agency
03005412069

KHARIAN
Ijaz News Agency
03068863870

SARA-I-ALMAGIR
0300 5428178

SERVICES



Namaz Timings

Fajr.....	05:37 am
Zohr.....	12:04 pm
Asr.....	03:24 pm
Maghrib.....	05:02 pm
Isha.....	06:31 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
-----------------	--------------

Korean Govt donates 10,000 hand sanitizers to MoCC

Ambassador of the Republic of Korea said that Korean Government has been supporting Pakistan in the fight against Coronavirus because public health is the essential and fundamental basis for inclusive development

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Republic of Korea has supported the Government of Pakistan's response in controlling the outbreak and spread of COVID-19. The Korean government has already provided oxygen concentrator, Ventilators, and RATs (Rapid Antigen Test) worth USD300,000 to National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA). KOICA Alumni Association of Pakistan (KAAP) has provided 40 beds, 50 wheelchairs, and 50 stretchers in AJK, KPK, and Islamabad. To mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and strengthen the hygiene response system of Pakistan, the KOICA (Korea International Cooperation Agency) Pakistan Office handed over



10,000 hand sanitizers to the Ministry Of Climate Change (MoCC). The purpose of providing hand sanitizer to the Ministry is to prevent the spread

of infections and decrease the risk of sickness among employees, which will help in creating a safe work environment. Ambassador of the Republic of Korea said that Korean Government has been supporting Pakistan in the fight against Coronavirus because public health is the essential and fundamental basis for inclusive development.

KOICA is also implementing the project with MoCC for Enhancing Water Quality Monitoring System to

Achieve SDG 6 in Pakistan for USD 7.4 Million which is currently under implementation. The major stakeholders of the project are MoCC (Ministry of Climate Change), PHED (Public Health Engineering Department), Punjab & KPK, PCRWR (Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources). Capt. (ret.) Sikander Qayyum, Secretary MoCC has thanked the South Korean Government for its continued support towards the government of Pakistan's efforts in overcoming COVID-19. Mr. Seokwoong Yang (Country Director KOICA) Mr. Irfan Tariq (DG Environment), Dr. Saima Shafique (WASH Cell Coordinator), and Mr. Lee heungsu (Deputy Country Director KOICA) attended the ceremony.

Salt price increased up to Rs13 per kg

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Inflation has made the life of the poor more difficult as now the rates of salt have been increased up to Rs13 per kilogram and prices reached Rs30 to Rs43 per kg. A private television channel reported on Friday that companies have hiked the prices of their branded salt while the rates of exposed salt have also been increased. The channel report said that commonly available salt has now become rare as the exposed salt was being sold at Rs30 to Rs35 per kg in the local market.

Under the present government, inflation is rising sharply with each passing day and the prices of branded salt have gone beyond the purchasing power of the people. A packet of 800 grams of branded salt from different companies has been priced at Rs30-35.

Large industry grows 3.56% in four months

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Large Scale Manufacturing Industries (LSMI) production grew by 3.56 percent during the first four months of the current fiscal year compared to the corresponding period of last year, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported Thursday. The LSMI Quantum Index Number (QIM) was recorded at 140.50 points during July-October (2021-22) against 135.66 points during July-October (2020-21), showing growth of 3.56 percent, according to latest PBS data. The highest increase of 2.26 percent during July-October (2021-22) was witnessed in the indices monitored by the Ministry of Industries, followed by 0.88 percent increase in indices monitored by the Provincial Board of Statistics (BOS) and 0.43 percent increase in the products monitored by the Oil Companies Advisory Committee (OCAC). On year on year basis (YoY), the industry declined by 1.19 percent during the month of October 2021 compared to the growth of October 2020, according to PBS latest data. The major sectors that showed positive growth during July-October (2021-22) included textile (0.91%), food, beverages and tobacco (5.15%), coke and petroleum products (7.33%), pharmaceuticals (6.55%), chemicals (3.14%), automobiles (37.91%), iron and steel products (11.62%), leather products (10.49%), paper and board (9.39%), engineering products (0.81%) and wood products (6.56%).

APDA appries Tarin of car dealers' problems

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Finance and Revenue Shaukat Tarin held a meeting with Mian Shoaib Ahmed, Chairman All Pakistan Car Dealers and Importers Association (APDA) at Finance Division. Federal Minister for Industries and Production Makhdoom Khuro Bakhtiar, Adviser to the Prime Minister on Commerce and Investment Mr. Abdul Razak Dawood, Secretary Commerce, Member FBR and senior officers attended the meeting. Chairman APDA apprised the Adviser that car dealers and importers in Pakistan are facing various problems especially related to imports of cars and sought support of the Government to address these issues. The Adviser Shaukat Tarin appreciated the contribution of car dealers in the economic progress of the country and said that Government is very supportive of adopting all measures that can boost economic activity, generate employment and help in expansion of business activity in the country. The Adviser to the Prime Minister Shaukat Tarin listened their issues keenly and assured the delegation to provide maximum support to them and resolve their issues.

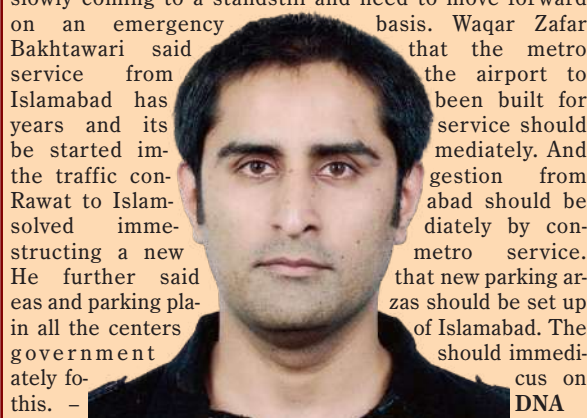
Nong Rong, Zaidi discuss CPEC energy projects

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan, Nong Rong and Federal Minister Syed Ali Haider Zaidi on Friday discussed the CPEC energy projects and Gwadar development in a meeting held at Maritime Ministry. In meeting, they discussed matters of mutual interests of Pakistan and China with the Ambassador Nong Rong. The projects including Karachi Comprehensive Coastal Development Zone (KC-CZ), Solar Panel Installation at Gwadar, the completion of EastBay Expressway and functioning of Pak-China Technical and Vocational Institute at Gwadar were under discussion. Both Minister and Ambassador agreed upon expediting the work on these projects to get the maximum benefits for both the countries, said a press release here. Minister underscored that people of Gwadar would get immense benefits from these projects including huge employment opportunities, quality roads, housing, healthcare as well as educational facilities. Ambassador Nong Rong also emphasized the importance of these projects for the Gwadar by giving example of a Chinese fishing village turning to Mega City with the population of 20 million. He further highlighted the opportunities that would be given to local population for the development of the city to become a Maritime city. Minister Zaidi also discussed the importance of CPEC in the region, connecting the Central Asian Republics to the ports of Pakistan, by giving them access to huge markets. He believe that Pakistan is on the road to become a Maritime Power and the partnership with China plays a pivotal role in achieving this goal. "For me, it's one country, China and Pakistan" stated by Minister while stressing upon the brotherly relationship between two countries. Ambassador invited the Minister in the Embassy of China to further discuss the development and completion of these projects. -Agencies

Metro service should be built from Rawat to Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: General Secretary Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Traders wing Islamabad Waqar Zafar Bakhtari said that traffic and parking issues in Islamabad has made the citizens in terrible pain. Businesses are slowly coming to a standstill and need to move forward on an emergency basis. Waqar Zafar Bakhtari said that the metro service from Islamabad has been built for years and its service should be started immediately. And the traffic congestion from Rawat to Islamabad should be solved immediately by constructing a new metro service. He further said that new parking areas should be set up in all the centers of Islamabad. The government should immediately focus on this. -DNA



Islamabad gives spectacular look as delegates arrive

ISLAMABAD: Adorned with colorful lights, countries' flags, welcoming banners lining the avenues, the federal capital is giving a spectacular look ahead of the extraordinary meeting of the OIC foreign ministers for which the delegates already started arriving. The 17th Extraordinary Meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Council of Foreign Ministers is scheduled to take place on Sunday to discuss the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan. The city administration is on the toes to give the city

a colorful look to welcome the foreign dignitaries as roads and avenues had been re-furnished, medians repainted, and trees illuminated with LED lights. A number of OIC delegates have already landed here to a red-carpet welcome. Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi said that at least 90 foreign delegates had arrived here to deliberate and find a way out of the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. He was speaking to the media at the airport where he also reviewed arrangements for visiting dignitaries and asked the

officials to facilitate the distinguished guests. The security has been beefed up in the federal capital. In order to save the residents from traffic congestion and ensure a safe movement of motorcades, the federal government has announced for Saturday and Monday (December 18 and 20) as local holiday in the city. Foolproof security arrangements had been made to ensure smooth conduct of the moot, being attended by the delegates and foreign ministers from 57 countries, said Minister for Interior Sheikh Rashid Ahmed on Friday while talking to the media.

Weekly inflation increases by 0.55 percent

ISLAMABAD: The prices of various food items went down during the week ending on December 16 as compared to the previous week, according to the Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI) data released by Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) here Friday. According to the data, the food commodities that witnessed decrease in prices on Week-on-Week (WoW) basis included potatoes and tomatoes, the prices of which declined by 15.52 percent and 12.65 percent respectively. The other food products that witnessed decrease in prices included chicken (5.94%), onions (3.94%), eggs (1.69%), gur (1.34%), sugar (1.29%), chillies powdered (0.57%), beef (0.54%), pulse Moong (0.37%), rice Basmati broken (0.20%), mutton (0.15%) and wheat flour (0.04%). Among non-food items, the prices of diesel and petrol went down by 3.48% and 3.40% respectively, the data revealed. The SPI for the week under review in the above mentioned group was recorded at 168.16 points against 167.24 points registered in the previous week. -DNA

Rawalpindi admin carries out 11,068 raids

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi district administration conducted nearly 11,080 raids in seven tehsils of the district to check profiteering, hoarding and other violations while fines amounting over Rs 615,000 were imposed on the rules violators during the last month. This was revealed by Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali while reviewing the performance of Assistant Commissioners (ACs) here at his office. He said that the digitalization of the Girdawari system at the tehsil level was a landmark step of the Punjab government, while the performance of ACs would be checked in this regard. The DC directed the officials to regularly carry out inspections of hospitals and dispensaries and ensure the availability of medicines and other facilities. Muhammad Ali directed them to take appropriate measures to control the spread of smog with the environment department's help and monitor the ongoing development schemes being completed in their respective areas. -DNA

ICCI visits Lankan HC; Presents 1m cheque

Muhammad Shakeel Munir, President handed over a cheque of PKR 1 Million to His Excellency, Vice Admiral Mohan Wijewickrama, as a token to express solidarity with the bereaved family of Priyantha and reaffirmed that justice will prevail and the perpetrators will be punished by the law

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry-ICCI led by Muhammad Shakeel Munir, President paid a visit to the High Commissioner of Sri Lanka in Pakistan and conveyed him condolences on behalf of the business community on a very sad and unfortunate incident of killing of Mr. Priyantha in Sialkot. The delegation was comprised of Jamsaid Akhtar Sheikh, SVP, Muhammad Faheem Khan, VP, Mian Muhammad Akram Farid, Chairman ICCI Founder Group and former President ICCI, Zafar Bakhtari, Chairman

ICCI Diplomatic Committee and former President ICCI. Muhammad Shakeel Munir, President handed over a cheque of PKR 1 Million to His Excellency, Vice Admiral Mohan Wijewickrama, as a token to express solidarity with the bereaved family of Mr. Priyantha and reaffirmed that justice will prevail and the perpetrators will be punished by the law. The President ICCI said that the business community highly condemns this unfortunate incident. He further said that Pakistan is a peaceful nation but such incidents tarnish the soft image of Pakistan, which should not happen in future. Mr. Shakeel Munir said that the Government of Pakistan

has arrested the people who were involved in this incident, however, the Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry would strongly recommend speedy justice and strict action against the culprits. He assured that the business community would extend all possible support to the family of

Mr. Priyantha so that they could pass the rest of their lives comfortably. Mr. Shakeel Munir further discussed matters of bilateral interests and a way forward to promote the trade relations between the two countries. He invited the High Commissioner to visit the Chamber and said that

trading activities should be further accelerated with exchange of business delegations and trade related information. He said that the Chamber is planning to hold various exhibitions and would like Sri Lankan companies to participate in these events. Vice Admiral Mohan Wijewickrama said that though it was a terrible incident and he underlined that this incident will not affected the trade and bilateral relations between the two nations. The Excellency hoped that the Government of Pakistan would take strong actions against the perpetrators and provide justice to the family of Mr. Priyantha. He thanked the business

community for providing financial and moral support. The Excellency informed that in February next year, a Sri Lanka business delegation is expected to visit Pakistan for B2B meetings with the Pakistani businessmen. Speaking at this occasion, Mian Akram Farid, Chairman Founder Group expressed his deep grief with the family and said that the Pakistani nation has great respect for the foreign nationals. He said that Pakistan has established good trade and diplomatic relations with Sri Lanka and hoped that these relations would be further strengthened at government and private sector level.



Briefs

Three new IHC judges take oath

ISLAMABAD: The three new additional judges of Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Friday took oath of their offices and formally started performing duties. IHC's Chief Justice Athar Minallah administered the oath from new judges including Barrister Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan, Arbab Muhammad Tahir and Ms. Saman Rafat Imitiaz during a ceremony organized inside the premises of IHC. The event was attended by a large number of lawyers, judges and other personalities. After the oath taking ceremony, the new judges started performing their duties in their courts. Justice Sardar Ejaz Ishaq Khan and Justice Arbab Muhammad Tahir heard two cases each while Justice Saman Rafat Imitiaz took three cases for hearing this day. The number of judges had reached to nine in IHC after addition of three new judges. — APP

4 more tested positive of deadly corona in RWP

RAWALPINDI: Four more patients were tested positive for the fatal coronavirus during the last 24 hours in the district, with two belonging to tehsil Taxila, while one of each case has arrived from Potohar town and Rawal town. According to the new data issued by the District Corona Management centre on Friday, 20 Coronavirus confirmed patients were admitted to three city facilities, including 12 in the Institute of Urology and four in Fauji Foundation and Benazir Bhutto Hospital. The report updated that two patients were on ventilators in critical condition, two stable and 11 on oxygen support. The report added that during the last 24 hours, 1,334 samples were collected, out of which 1,330 were declared negative, while the positivity rate was recorded at 0.31 per cent. As many as 4,072,298 people, including 44,469 health workers, had so far been vaccinated against the fatal disease out of the total eligible population of 4,225,634 in the district, it informed. — APP

Railway earns Rs200.33 bln in four years

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Railways (PR) has earned around Rs 200.33 billion during the last four years and also significantly decreased its working expenses to transform the organisation into a profitable entity. "PR has earned Rs49.576 bln in 2017-18, Rs54.514 bln in 2018-19, Rs47.588 billion in 2019-2020 and Rs48.652 bln in 2020-21," an official in the Ministry of Railway told APP. The official said that before COVID-19 around 71 pairs of passenger trains were running over the entire network of PR, however due to the pandemic the train operation was suspended on March 2020. He said, thereafter, PR was restoring train operations in phases and up till now as many as 45 pairs of trains had been restored over the entire network. The official said the Babu train was also suspended due to COVID-19 and the train would be restored in near future depending on the resources. However, the rail cars/trains between Lahore and Rawalpindi had been restored. To facilitate the people of Gujranwala, he said that Khyber Mail, Tezgam Express, Awam Express, Jaffar Express, Subak Raftar and Subauk Kharam were observing stoppages at main Gujranwala station. To a question, he said the punctuality ratio of PR passenger trains have improved by 74 percent in year 2020-2021 due to untiring efforts of the management. "With the punctuality of trains and concrete measures taken by the government, over 20 million passengers have been added in the system, which is an ample proof of department's achievement," he added. The punctuality of passenger trains was 71 percent in 2017-18, 70 percent in 2018-19 and only 40 percent in tenures of the previous governments which was now improving day-by-day, he said. — APP

Time for the world to stand up for Afghans and be counted

The Director of the Pak-Afghan Cooperation Forum Brig (Retd) Ishaq Ahmed shared that 600,000-800,000 Afghans were internally displaced in the country, 80 per cent of which were women

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: "Now is the time for the world to walk the talk, stand up for the people of Afghanistan, and be counted," said the Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Mr Ali Muhammad Khan. He gave the remarks while delivering his keynote address at a panel discussion on the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan and international responsibility organized by the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) here on Friday. Mr Ali Muhammad Khan urged the Muslim countries of the world—gathering for the 17th Extraordinary Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Islamabad on December 19—to agree on a way forward for assisting the people of Afghanistan in this time of need.

The Director of the Pak-Afghan Cooperation Forum Brig (Retd) Ishaq Ahmed shared that 600,000-800,000 Afghans were internally displaced in the country, 80 per cent of which were women. He added that 14 million Afghans were going hungry and one-third of its population was facing food insecurity. Brig (Retd) Ahmed also alluded towards the health and banking sector deficiencies of the country. He urged the international community to assist the Afghans in helping themselves by providing them with food and medicines in the short-run but



capacity building in and lifting of restrictions related to international financial transactions for long-term impact. The Director General of the South Asian Strategic Stability Institute (SASSI) University Dr Maria Sultan warned that if Afghanistan would fail as a state in the given circumstances, the international community would be blamed for it. She added that a state failure in Afghanistan would not be because of a civil war or because the Afghans did not want to work for their economic prosperity but because the international communi-

ty failed them by refusing to assist them in helping themselves. Former diplomat Ambassador Asif Durrani termed the upcoming OIC Council of Foreign Ministers' summit as an opportunity for the Afghans to present their case in front of the other Muslim countries of the world. He added that although the Taliban would not be occupying the seat of Afghanistan at the session, they will still have the opportunity not only to engage with the member countries of the OIC but also with the representatives of the five permanent member countries of the

United Nations Security Council as well as the representatives of the EU who were also invited to the summit. Director of Economic Affairs and National Development at the Centre for Aerospace and Security Studies Dr Usman Chohan stated that internal economy of Afghanistan was never strengthened during the 20-year-long presence of US and NATO forces in Afghanistan. He added that 75 per cent of the economy was dependent on foreign assistance even at that time, which resulted in an economic gridlock upon

their withdrawal. The little economic activity that could be generated, according to him, was held hostage to lack of faith in the present and future of the current dispensation in Afghanistan. President IRS Ambassador Nadeem Riyaz thanked all the worthy panellists for their valuable contributions and expressed his hope that the upcoming OIC Council of Foreign Ministers summit would result in something concrete for averting the existing humanitarian crisis and the future economic recovery of Afghanistan.



ISLAMABAD: Buyer watching the old vender garnishing the kabli pulao at Sitara Market. — APP

ECC approves 8% Ehsaas Commission for Kiryana retailers

SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: Today, ECC approved 8% Ehsaas Ration Commission for Kiryana retailers. "Part of the Ehsaas Ration Commission, the 8% special commission for Kiryana retailers is absolutely in accordance with the global best practices," said Senator Dr. Sania Nishtar, SAPM. Adding further, she commented, "This special incentive will also encourage the Kiryana retailers to help the government disburse subsidy in Ration Ration programme." Empowering Kiryana retailers, the Ehsaas Ration Commission will also enable them to shift from cash-based transactions to electronic dealings, open their bank accounts, install small internet enabled devices and compensate for additional time spent on processing. According to an official statement, Kiryana retailers will also benefit from lucky draws every quarter winning—cars, motorcycles, mobile phones and various other prizes and this will be linked to their performance as well. National Bank of Pakistan (NBP) is the executing partner of the government for Ehsaas Ration Ration programme. Currently, the Ehsaas Ration portal (<https://ehsaas-rashan.pass.gov.pk/>) is open to register Kiryana retailers of all scales countrywide. It is mandatory for the Kiryana retailers to have a bank account.

RCCI expresses concern over proposed '360bn mini-budget'

Major chunk of the revenue, around Rs300 billion will be generated by slapping 17% tax at the import stage on nearly 80 items

SHUJAAT HAMZA

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) has expressed deep concerns over the government's proposed money bill to abolish income tax exemptions and impose new taxes, terming it a 'mini budget'. RCCI President Nadeem Rauf in a statement said that the government, in order to meet the conditions of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), is preparing a RS 360 billion mini-budget by imposing 17% sales tax

on about 140 essential consumable and industrial goods, in addition to increasing the income tax rates on phone calls by 50%. Terming it a negative move, he said the mini-budget would further increase the cost of doing business, give rise to inflation for the common man, badly affect the business growth and damage the confidence of potential investors. The prices of goods, includ-



ing milk, cereals, bakery items, meat, chicken, gold, bicycles, cars including electric cars, mobile phones will rise, unleashing another wave of inflation in the country, he added. He said that the major chunk of the revenue, around Rs300 billion will be generated by slapping 17% tax at the import stage on nearly 80 items. The majority of these items are essential goods and do

not fall in the category of luxury goods. He further added that it is very unfortunate that the Government is imposing 17% GST on raw materials of the medicines, this will add more misery and might create hue and cry in the society. Nadeem Rauf said that a 17% sales tax is being imposed on the import of machinery for renewable energy including solar, wind and nuclear power generation. This is contradicting the Government's policy on renewable energy as well as contrary to the global direction.

Capital's leopard family vulnerable to extinction

Leopard's family in their killing spree had killed over a dozen of domesticated animals of different residents of nearby localities situated close to the hills' forest terrain

ISLAMABAD: The growing leopards family in Margalla Hills terrain, reportedly eight now, is vulnerable to extinction not by poachers' guns or natural causes but deliberate poisoning. The carnivore leopard family for its rising food requirements is forced to prey on nearby localities' domesticated animals, exploiting them to a constant threat of deliberate poisoning, a commonly believed tactic by locals in past to protect their livestock. They had reportedly been throwing poison laced meat loaves in the forest to get rid of these large cats. "It's an established fact that in past poison as a deceptive weapon had been used against these predators and threat is imminent until relevant authorities don't come up with a plan to offer compensation to those whose animals are hunted by leopards, said Qudus Abbasi a resident of Shahdara village. Leopard's family in their killing spree had killed over a dozen of domesticated animals of different residents of nearby localities situated close to the hills' forest terrain. The residents, sharing their ordeals with



this scribe and asking to establish a compensation fund, said that a number of their goats and half a dozen cows and calves in recent past have been hunted by wild cats, inflicting huge financial loss to them. "My cow was killed in a radius of just 200 meters from the house suspected by a leopard as the villagers have seen it moving with a pair of cubs nearby our habitations," said Zakir Hussain a local. The mosque's cleric of the same locality, Abdul Rashid, said his only buffalo was

hunted by leopards which was his family's bread and butter and "I cannot afford to buy another as an average one costs Rs 0.2 million". According to information received through RTI, Islamabad Wildlife Management Board (IWMB) had found a body of a leopard in early 2018 which was in deteriorating condition. However, the source of suspected death could not be determined yet and its samples are still laying at their lab. "After that, we had increased our surveil-

lance for the areas and started awareness campaign regarding the importance of wildlife for the ecosystem", said Manager Operations IWMB Sakhawat Ali. He said that board, during the awareness campaign, engaged local community asking their help for the safety of these endangered species. When contacted for IWMB's point of views regarding the compensation of the local's losses occurred due to hunting of their livestock, manager operations said that they had no such mechanism to compensate the losses. He said reciprocally there was no provision in law to fine those who kill them. "When we learn about such incident, we opt to go for First Investigation Report (FIR) in local Police stations against the accused. Sakhawat Ali said that "they engage local community in discussions and volunteer campaigns and officials persuade them in regular meetings, held after every Jumma prayers, that these forests are natural habitat of these animals and we humans have to live with them and protect our flora and fauna for the future generations". — APP

IGP suspends SHO on citizen's complaint

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Muhammad Ahsan Younus conducted 'open kutchery' on Friday to listen public issues and suspended Station House Officer (SHO) Noon police station over dereliction of duties. In an 'Open Court' especially held to listen issues of policemen and citizens, the IGP directed to resolve their issues. The complaints of citizens were related to 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 time frame to resolve the issues of citizens. Islamabad police chief said that it is our prime responsibility to provide protection to the lives and property of the citizens and resolve their problems on priority. He said that citizens at 'Open Court' should be behaved in a respectful manner and their trust on police department to be won through resolving their issues. He said that interaction with people also ensures accountability of the policemen and they should address public complaints on merit by considering them their own issues. The IGP suspended SHO Noon police station for lodging report of lost items as the citizen actually reported about snatching items.

Rupee sheds 05 paisas against dollar

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistani rupee weakened by 05 paisas, against the US dollar in the inter-bank trading on Friday and closed at Rs178.03 as compared to the previous day's closing of Rs177.98. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of dollars in the open market were recorded at Rs180.5 and Rs181.8 respectively. Similarly, the price of the Euro was appreciated by 33 paisas and closed at Rs201.52 against the last day's trading of Rs201.19, the State Bank of Pakistan reported. The Japanese Yen gained one paisa to close at Rs1.56, whereas an increase of Rs0.91 was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs236.96 as compared to its last closing of Rs236.05. The exchange rates of Emirates Dirham increased by 02 paisas to close at Rs48.47 and Saudi Riyal increased by 01 paisas to close at Rs47.44. — APP

Tourism witnesses boost amid rising local tourists

ISLAMABAD: Secretary Tourism, Gilgit-Baltistan, Raja Rasheed Ali on Friday said domestic tourism was increasing in the country as millions of local visitors were visiting scenic northern areas. He made these remarks while taking part in panel discussion here at an event organized by World Wildlife Fund (WWF)-Pakistan, aiming to highlight the biodiversity of the Hindu-Kush, Karakoram and Himalayan region and the impacts of climate change and anthropogenic activities. He said Gilgit-Baltistan government was focusing on improving the livelihoods of the people, making the land cultivable and were using technology to streamline tourism by dividing and diversifying the concentration of tourists in certain areas. He said more than 1.5 million domestic tourists had visited Gilgit-Baltistan during the summer season, which was 30 percent higher than the previous year's figures. Rasheed Ali expressed the hope that more tourists would visit till the end of this year to northern areas. The experts stressed on public engagement in developing policies around sustainable tourism, enhancing the capacity of local communities, sustainable mountain architecture, and the need for trans-boundary collaboration for sustainable tourism. — APP

Supply problems

As expected, the government's rationalisation of gas consumption started causing problems immediately after temperatures started dropping in the country over the past week. The textile industry in Punjab came to a near standstill as the government started its loadshedding and cut off gas on the scheduled date of December 15. Added to this was also a breakdown in the supply of electricity, which essentially brought the whole sector to a standstill.

The original plan was to divide the consumer base into industry and households, where the former would receive gas from LNG supplies exclusively and the latter's demand would be from domestic supply lines. But as it stands, there have been cuts on supply to domestic consumers and no gas at all for the textile industry. This happened even though there was an agreement that gas would be provided to industries in Punjab at the higher rate of \$9 MMBTU, from the original \$6.5 price.

With 70 percent of our textile producers in Punjab, Pakistan could stand to lose around \$30 billion in export revenue if the orders of textiles remain unfulfilled. Not only that, but long-term consequences will also be increased unemployment, alongside losing vendors that will now take their business elsewhere.

We can scarcely afford losing out on exports at a time when correcting the balance has been one of our urgent priorities. It is important for the government to adhere to its promise to industries; producers are willing to pay the premium price, the question of supply however, is still firmly in the government's hands. The onset of higher domestic demand with the arrival of winter is not a surprise, and we were led to believe that a plan to counter this was in place. It is now time for the government to show why the strategy was brought into play.

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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

Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 02 Issue: 189

Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad



Addressing malnutrition

In a workshop titled "Addressing Zinc Deficiency through Biofortification of Zinc Wheat", held by the Ministry for National Food Security and Research Syed, Minister Fakhar Imam highlighted a harrowing statistic. Every year, more than 177,000 Pakistani children die before their fifth birthday due to malnutrition.

This coming winter, there has been a lot of concern expressed at the state of malnutrition in Afghanistan, and the devastation that could happen if US sanctions continue. Yet Pakistan, and indeed most of South Asia, needs to take a look inside its own regions as well, as according to the Food and Agricultural Organisation's overview of Food Security and Nutrition after Covid-19, after Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Nepal are among the countries with very high levels of malnutrition in the world.

Malnutrition, especially of children, is a deep-seated problem, which stems from and seeps into a host of other issues. It is vastly affected by poverty; since the pandemic caused an additional 140 million people to drop into extreme poverty, as estimated by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), it was inevitable that Pakistan would see a rise in malnutrition as well. Malnutrition causes severe health problems, including stunting (low height-for-age) and anaemia. It impacts school attendance and dropout rates as well. It also results in a devastating cycle with a poor economy; poor economic conditions can lead to malnutrition, which impacts the productivity and learning ability of the population, which thus further damages the economy, and as a consequence, inflation.

The right to food security and a basic standard of living is the fundamental right of every citizen, regardless of their position on the poverty line. In October, parliamentarians pledged their support for the enactment of mandatory food fortification legislation to address the alarming levels of micronutrient malnutrition. This campaign for food security must be expanded on an urgent basis.

Russia-China alliance poses a defining challenge for the West

Andrew Hammond

The standoff on the Ukraine border may die down again in 2022, as happened in spring when Russian troops last mobilized there in their tens of thousands, but that is by no means guaranteed. Putin's mission since assuming power almost a quarter of a century ago has been to restore Russia's geopolitical prominence through international gambits such as the annexation of Crimea and the intervention in Syria

Russian President Vladimir Putin had been isolated on Ukraine in a series of major summits throughout December, but that changed significantly on Wednesday when his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping offered his strong support, strengthening an emerging Moscow-Beijing axis. The Chinese premier's alliance with Putin — one of the key factors emboldening Russian foreign policy in recent years — has significant implications not only for geopolitics but also the global economy. With both men potentially in power until well into the 2030s, they may well be seen by future historians as the two dominant figures in international relations in the first three to four decades of the 21st

century. The warmth of bilateral ties is very much driven by the apparent personal camaraderie between the two. Putin, who refused to travel to the G20 or COP26 summits in recent weeks, on Wednesday highlighted his delight at plans to attend the Beijing Winter Olympics next February when much of the West will stage a diplomatic boycott to protest China's human rights record. Xi clearly welcomes Putin's support, saying that "both sides should strengthen coordination and cooperation on international affairs to make louder voices on global governance."

On Ukraine, Xi left no doubt where he stands, saying that he "understands Russia's concerns to work out security guarantees," given NATO's perceived encroachment on Moscow's former territories. He added that "both China and Russia need to carry out more joint actions to more effectively safeguard our security and interests" against the Western powers, and expressed his appreciation that Putin "strongly supported Beijing's efforts to protect key national interests and firmly opposed attempts to drive a wedge between our countries."

The standoff on the Ukraine border may die down again in 2022, as happened in spring when Russian troops last mobilized there in their tens of thousands, but that is by no means guaranteed. Putin's mission since assuming power almost a quarter of a century ago has been to restore Russia's geopolitical prominence through international gambits such as the annexation of Crimea and the intervention in Syria. Putin is also targeting Africa, seeking to restore Moscow's influence in the region that faded after the collapse of the Soviet Union. He is keen to entrench Russia's economic and political foothold in the continent, with bilateral trade having risen significantly in the past decade.

While Putin's foreign policy escapades have — so far at least — generally played well domestically, they have resulted in much frasier relations with the West. A key question in coming years is how the relationship, specifically with the US, will fare under President

Joe Biden, who will remain in office until at least early 2025, but may not choose to seek re-election when he is his 80s.

As last week's Biden-Putin summit highlighted, the most likely outcome is continuing frosty ties. Putin, at 69, may already be thinking ahead to the next US president, hoping for another maverick figure more congenial to his interests, potentially even Donald Trump again. The Russian leader knows that he could yet see out several more US leaders if he wins two more terms of office by which time he would surpass even Joseph Stalin's time in power. Yet, while Putin appears to be firmly entrenched, if not impregnable, numerous challenges remain. The pandemic, for one, has posed a major problem, particularly after a wave of infections in recent weeks.

This underlines that Putin is far from certain to serve till 2036, especially if his political luck finally goes south, fueled by potential foreign policy misadventure or domestic economic travails. To keep his hold in power, it seems likely that Putin will continue to rely on the playbook that has served him well so far — namely, forging a sense of post-Cold War patriotism of which the current build-up in Ukraine may be only the latest example. This could have profound implications, especially given his growing closeness to Xi, who is another potential "president for life." The closeness of their relationship is one key reason the frost appears unlikely to thaw in Russia's relations with the West. In this context, Putin is increasingly asserting Russian power in other areas of the globe from Asia-Pacific to Africa and the Americas, doubling down support for longstanding allies who are Western foes, including Venezuela, Syria, North Korea and Iran. The implications of Putin's long period in office go well beyond the Russian domestic political landscape and Ukraine. The key foreign legacy of his presidency is likely to be a significantly closer relationship with Beijing, which poses a much broader, potentially defining, challenge for the West in the coming decades.

— Courtesy: Arab News

Omicron threatens a dire winter for us all

Nikolay Kozhanov

An excess of oil on the market is already expected in 2022 and according to some estimates, by 2030, there may be up to 10 million excess barrels per day on the market. Attempts by producers to exert pressure on price changes by regulating production volumes are thus increasingly being met with sharp reactions from consumers. But at the same time, expectations of oversupply and high levels of uncertainty in the market are providing producers with certain levers of influence. This change in the power dynamic between producers...

EARLIER this month, the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and its allies, a grouping known as OPEC+, announced their decision to stick with their planned output increase of 400,000 barrels a day in January. The grouping's decision came at a time of heightened concern for producers and consumers and shone a spotlight on the new realities and changing dynamics of global hydrocarbon markets.

On December 2, OPEC+ countries came together at a virtual meeting to decide between two scenarios: continuing to increase their production volume or temporarily freezing it. On the surface, there were many strong motivations for them to opt for the latter option: the expected oversupply in the first half of 2022; the fear that a new strain of coronavirus could further reduce the rate of oil consumption; and the decision by the United States and a number of other countries, including India, China, Japan and South Korea, to release large volumes of oil from their strategic reserves to the market to reduce prices. However, despite hearing strong arguments for a freeze, the cartel decided to hold the line on its current output plan.

There were multiple reasons behind the cartel's decision: First, the current economic development strategies of the key OPEC+ players (and, especially Gulf monarchies) make freezing (or reducing) production quotas an undesirable scenario. In the long run, global oil demand is expected to decline, seriously reducing the incomes of oil exporters and turning some of their oil fields into stranded assets. To avoid this, producers are working to diversify their economies and to make renewable energy a viable part of their economic structures. For now, the only viable source of funding OPEC+ countries have for their diversification efforts is their oil resources, and they are under increasing pressure to turn these resources into cash before the predicted decline in demand and fall in prices devalue them. This means, for OPEC+ countries, the self-imposed output limitations can be nothing more than temporary measures to stabilise the oil market and delay the fall in prices — in the long run, it will always be more beneficial for oil producers to increase production volumes.

Second, the volume of the predicted market oversupply in 2022 remains unclear. Indeed, there is no unanimity among experts on the longer-term prospects of the oil market. While many expect the market to be significantly oversupplied, encouraging greater competition between the players, others warn that continued underinvestment in the oil sector can result in producers significantly failing to meet the demand. This means OPEC+ members are somewhat blindly walking through a minefield, and trying to avoid making wrong choices which could result in significant loss of income and halt their efforts to adjust their economies to new post-hydrocarbon realities. Thus, they are reluctant to reduce production volumes, but they are also not willing to increase them beyond the already established quotas, so as not to bring down oil prices, especially since any period of shortage can easily be followed by a period of overproduction.

Third, OPEC+ members know that even if they commit to holding the line on their current output plan, they may still fail to reach their production quotas. By November 2021, the difference between the nominal production quota and real production in OPEC countries was -390,000 barrels per day. Moreover, under the pretext of respecting each other's production quotas and interests, they refuse to make up for the volumes under-produced by other member states. This has its own logic: under-production supports higher prices which is especially important on the eve of the expected glut of the market in 2022. It also allows producers to limit their cartel's production volumes without aggravating consumers. Another important reason behind the decision by OPEC+ to not freeze production quotas was its fear of angering the main oil-importing countries. These days, oil consumers are gradually increasing their influence over the market. With the progress of energy transition and the expected return of frequent market oversupply, it is increasingly demand, not supply, that is determining the dynamics of oil and gas prices.

An excess of oil on the market is already expected in 2022 and according to some estimates, by 2030, there may be up to 10 million excess barrels per day on the market. Attempts by producers to exert pressure on price changes by regulating production volumes are thus increasingly being met with sharp reactions from consumers. But at the same time, expectations of oversupply and high levels of uncertainty in the market are providing producers with certain levers of influence. This change in the power dynamic between producers and consumers already had a significant consequence. On November 23, US President Joe Biden ordered 50 million barrels of oil to be released from the US strategic reserve to help bring down energy costs. This move was important for multiple reasons.

First of all, with this move, the US openly reclassified itself as not a producer, but a consumer of oil — and it made clear that it is not happy with high prices and limited supply. Of course, the US government has long been influential in determining what happens on the oil market. Since the mid-2010s (if not earlier), however, it was perceived to a greater extent as a producer, not a consumer. Indeed, even when Biden's predecessor, former President Donald Trump, expressed dissatisfaction with moves by OPEC+ to tighten production quotas or criticised the cartel's short-lived price war of 2020, the OPEC+ countries continued to perceive the US primarily as an oil producer.

The US started to act more like a consumer than a producer for the first time earlier this year, when despite the increase in prices, its domestic shale producers abandoned their policy of pumping out as much oil as possible in favour of a more restrained approach to production growth. The current administration tried its best to encourage greater growth in domestic shale oil production but failed to change the minds of producers. By deciding to release significant reserves to decrease prices, the Biden administration showed in clear terms that it is supporting the domestic industry's new stance and that it is now ready to act as a defender of consumer interests.

— Courtesy: Al Jazeera

Can Europe develop soft power with global geopolitical clout?

By Jon Van Housen and Mariella Radaelli

European Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen thinks so. Taking office two years ago with the pledge to lead "a geopolitical commission", she says countries around the world have not had sufficient options in finding investment for big infrastructure projects

It is increasingly clear that force of arms is no longer a viable option for nations to settle disputes — in fact it ever was effective in modern times. Consider the tragic and counterproductive consequences of United States military interventions in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan. With sustainability the watchword today, such sacrifice of life and treasure appears to be utter folly. Global competition continues, however, and is still a hard-nosed endeavour, but the "grand game" is largely played out today in the realm of so-called soft power, which employs economic, intellectual and cultural assets as leverage to influence events and even entire countries. The European Union is signalling that it intends to be one of the world's primary geopolitical centres of gravity through the use of its powerhouse economy, cultural leadership and technical expertise. Last week it unveiled a programme

called Global Gateway, a 340-billion euro programme clearly developed as an alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative and more fully conceptualised than the nascent Build Back Better plan from the United States. Global Gateway intends to offer capital and expertise for infrastructure and other projects in underdeveloped foreign countries. The European Commission is also proposing new measures that would punish those seeking to influence its politics and policies through economic pressure such as trade restrictions, cutting off natural resources or employing boycotts of European products. The bloc's executive branch has put forward an "anti-coercion instrument" to battle what it views as unfair trade pressure, arguing that new tools are necessary because of the "weaponisation of trade for geopolitical purposes".

Long seen as too fragmented and timid in action to provide transformative global leadership, has Europe now entered a new era? European Commission President Ursula Von der Leyen thinks so. Taking office two years ago with the pledge to lead "a geopolitical commission", she says countries around the world have not had sufficient options in finding investment for big infrastructure projects. "When it comes to investment choices, they are currently relatively limited. And the few options that exist too often come with a lot of small print, which includes big consequences, be it financially, politically, but also often socially," she said in announcing the Global Gateway programme last week. Rather than try to lend and build to unduly control other nations or provide large projects for only EU firms, von der Leyen said Europe wants to "show that a democratic, value-driven approach can deliver on the most pressing challenges". She highlighted the EU's priorities of a green economy and digital technology. With existing and some new outreach funds marshalled and repackaged under the umbrella of Global Gateway, the European Commission,

the 27 EU member states and the European Investment Bank would provide about 300 billion euros in public and private funds by 2027, some 60 billion a year. Possible soft power projects the EU could support include green hydrogen, underwater data cables to help close the global digital divide and spending in schools.

Feeling abandoned itself by the US under the previous presidential administration, the EU seems determined to not only strike out on its own but actually lead. On digital governance and climate change, it has already blazed trails well ahead of the US. While it seeks to engage and influence developing nations, the EU also wants to protect itself from coercion in trade or energy supplies. Tariffs on steel and aluminum imposed by the previous US administration "was one of the biggest shocks of the last years that influenced European thinking", said Jonathan Hackenbroich of the European Council on Foreign Relations, who leads a team titled The Task Force for Strengthening Europe against Economic Coercion. Whether such a measure would lessen or heighten trade and political tension is unclear. It would have to be approved by a majority of EU member nations and by the European Parliament to become law, but France, which will take over the EU presidency in January, said in a statement through its trade ministry that the proposed anti-coercion measures fill "a critical gap" and would be a step toward a "less naive trade policy". Sometimes hamstrung by its history and multitude of cultures and agendas, the EU seems determined to sweep away some of the bureaucracy and verbal bluster to take the leading place it deserves as the world's wealthiest economic zone and trader in goods.

It says it can deal a fair hand and give a boost to countries in need, but as parliamentarian Bütikofer says it will need to "walk the talk" and demonstrate those ideals.

Courtesy: Khaleej Times

Briefs

Recognizing Taliban govt not on agenda

FROM PAGE 01
Other foreign assistance and freezing of Afghan assets abroad have exacerbated the situation. He says the situation describes the clear danger of economic collapse. He says the international community should be aware that instability in Afghanistan is leading towards a regional crisis which would also affect the world. Officials informed that all member countries of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) have confirmed their participation at the foreign ministerial level in the upcoming extraordinary session on the current Afghan situation. Along with foreign ministers' senior diplomats from the permanent members of the UN Security Council, including the US, will also join the crucial meeting of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers on 19th December.

On the other hand OIC secretary General reaches Islamabad and reviews the preparations of the session for which parliament hall is designated. Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan will address the opening session of the summit.

Fawad warns of refugee crisis

FROM PAGE 01
This is the first time that the Pakistan official revealed the number of new Afghan displaced people refuting in the neighboring country after the Kabul takeover. Pakistani authorities suspected that thousands of people may have illegally crossed the porous borders into Pakistan, while it is estimated that thousands of Afghans have also fled to other neighboring countries. Of the 2,640-kilometer boundary with Afghanistan, Pakistan has fenced nearly 90% and deployed the army and the Frontier Corps, a militia under the federal interior ministry, to man it. The United Nations had weeks after the Taliban takeover warned that up to half a million Afghans could leave their country before the end of the year.

Pakistan initially refused to allow new arrivals from the war-ravaged country following the collapse of Ashraf Ghani government in August this year and sealed its border crossings. Islamabad's initial response to the influx of refugees was shaped by its worsening economic conditions and security concerns.

US recognizes Pakistan...

FROM PAGE 01
In the report, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken stated that Pakistan has made some important contributions to the Afghan peace process, such as encouraging the Taliban to adopt peace and reduce violence and making more progress toward completing its Financial Action Task Force (FATF) Action Plan in 2020. However, the report stated that Pakistan did not fulfill all of the Action Plan's elements and remained on the FATF's "grey list". Despite acknowledging Pakistan's efforts to combat terrorism in the region, the report claimed that terrorist groups continued to conduct attacks against Pakistani military and civilian targets in 2020.

No suspension of mobile...

FROM PAGE 01
Saturday to Monday, the Islamabad deputy commissioner tweeted shortly after Rasheed presser. In a statement to the media, the interior minister stated that the "historic" OIC summit on Afghanistan will be held in Parliament, and informed that security arrangements had been made with the assistance of the Pakistan Army and other security agencies. However, he said that the interior ministry and chief commissioner of police have decided not to suspend mobile services in the city during the OIC Conference.

Premier League on 'knife edge' as Covid cases rise

"No, we all want the product to continue, I'm desperate to continue the programme myself, but I do think that the welfare of the players has to come first and the supporters has to come first"

LONDON: The Premier League finds itself in a precarious situation due to COVID-19 outbreaks at several clubs and the competition's integrity is at stake when several players who test positive miss games, Newcastle United boss Eddie Howe said on Friday. The Premier League has postponed five games that were scheduled for the weekend due to COVID-19 outbreaks at various clubs. Nine games have been postponed since last week. Newcastle host league leaders Manchester City on Sunday, one of five games scheduled to go ahead, but the visitors are

waiting on a PCR result to see if manager Pep Guardiola has tested positive, with the club cancelling his news conference.

"I think it's probably on a knife edge would be my verdict on it. I think when you start losing players to COVID, then the worry for me is that the competition becomes slightly unfair. I don't think anyone wants to see that," Howe told reporters. "That's the biggest thing people want to see - a fair league. They don't want to see disparity in games and players missing. "No, we all want the product to continue, I'm desperate to continue the

programme myself, but I do think that the welfare of the players has to come first and the supporters has to come first.

"I know that the people in charge of the Premier League will do that. I think there's a lot to consider, it's not an easy decision to make. I'm well aware how complex everything is." The most recent Premier League data on vaccinations from October found that 81% of players had received one dose and 68% were double jabbed - a low percentage compared to the Italian Serie A where 98% of its players have received two vaccinations. - APP

Arsenal boss demands clarity

LONDON: Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta has called for the Premier League to offer more clarity on the games being postponed due to COVID-19, telling reporters on Friday that transparency was essential to maintain fairness. The Premier League has postponed five games that were scheduled for the weekend due to COVID-19 outbreaks at various clubs. Arsenal's trip to Leeds United on Saturday, however, is set to go ahead.

"Well, health-wise I hope we're doing everything we can to protect everybody. (But) we need more clarity on why those games are not being played and what you need to not have a game played so you can maintain the fairness of the competition," Arteta said. "We always want to play when we have the right conditions to do so 100%. But we've been here on the other side of the table where we've had all the arguments in the build up to a football match and ended up playing it."

The Spaniard added that striker Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, who was removed as club captain this week following a disciplinary breach, was not available for selection against Marcelo Bielsa's side.

The Gabon international also missed the midweek league win against West Ham United, a second successive league victory that helped Arsenal move into the top four and put them 13 points ahead of 16th-placed Leeds United. - APP

Australian Open confirms medical exemption process

SYDNEY: Australian Open tournament director Craig Tiley said players applying for a medical exemption to participate in the Grand Slam without being vaccinated against Covid-19 will have their case reviewed by an independent three-person panel. Tennis Australia said the panel would consist of doctors from the fields of immunology, infectious disease and general practice and that the move had been agreed in conjunction with the Victoria Department of Health. Tiley had previously said all players must be inoculated against Covid-19, with the move throwing the involvement of defending champion Novak Djokovic into doubt as the world number one has yet to disclose his vaccination status. "We've worked closely with the Victorian government to establish fair and independent protocols for assessing medical exemption applications that will enable us to ensure Australian Open 2022 is safe and enjoyable for everybody," Tiley said.

"Central to this process is that the decisions will be made by independent medical experts and that every applicant gets due consideration." The Melbourne Park tournament, the first Grand Slam of the year, is due to begin on Jan 17.

Applicants that pass an initial stage will be subject to a second review conducted by a government-appointed panel of medical experts before the application is submitted to the Australian Immunisation Register. All submissions will be confidential, Tennis Australia said. Martin Pakula, Victoria state's sports minister, said the process could set a precedent for other big events. "We are happy there is some rigour around the process, we think it leads to the best possible outcomes," he added. "They want the safest possible event for players and fans. That involves having the most rigorous medical exemption process." - Agencies

BB Shaheed Tennis: Aqeel, Shoaib through to semi-finals

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Top seeds Aqeel Khan, Mohammad Shoaib, MuzammilMurtaza and Yousaf Khalil cruised into the semi-finals of ongoing Benazir Bhutto Shaheed National Tennis Championship here at Islamabad Tennis Complex (ITC) on Friday.

Pakistan number one Aqeel Khan defeated BarkatUllah 6-4, 6-4, while emerging Mohammad Shoaib outplayed HeeraAshiq 6-2, 6-4 in the men's singles quarter-finals. Davis Cupper Mohammad Abid faced upset defeat against talented Yousaf Khalil in straight games as Yousaf also brought a place in the last-four after defeating Abid by 6-2, 6-3, while MuzammilMurtaza overcame MudassirMurtaza 6-0, 6-3 in the last quarterfinal match. Meanwhile, Sarah Mahboob will take on UshnaSuhail in the women's singles final. Sarah Mahboob defeated HaniaNavid 6-0, 6-1 and UshnaSuhail outclassed



SheezaSajid 6-0, 6-0 to reach the final. Men's Singles Matches: Aqeel Khan btBarkatUllah 6-4, 6-4; Mohammad Shoaib btHeeraAshiq 6-2, 6-4; MuzammilMurtazabtMudassirMurtaza 6-0, 6-3; Yousaf Khalil bt Mohammad Abid 6-4, 6-4; Men's Doubles Semi Final Round: Aqeel Khan/Mohammad Abidbt Usman Ejaz/Shahzad Khan

6-0, 6-4; HeeraAshiq/Yousaf Khalil btMuzammilMurtaza/MudassirMurtaza 6-4, 3-6, 10-6 Ladies Singles Semi Final Round: Sarah MahboobbHaniaNavid 6-0, 6-1; UshnaSuhailbtSheezaSajid 6-0, 6-0 Boys U-18 Singles Quarter Final Round: Hamid IsrarbtNalain Abbas 6-1, 6-1; Mohammad Talha Khan btFaizanFayyaz 6-4, 6-2;

Abdullah Adnan btMahatir Muhammad 6-7(5), 6-3, 6-4; Mohammad Huzafa Khan bt Ahmed Nael 7-5, 6-2 Girls U-18 Singles Semi Final Round: Amna Ali QayumbtSaherAleem 6-1, 6-1; SheezaSajidbt Sara Pervaiz 6-0, 6-0 Girls U-14 Singles Semi Final Round: Zunaisha Noor btLalarukhSajid 4-1, 4-0; Amna Ali Qayumbt Zara Khan 4-1, 4-1.

Nasir remains Pakistan's only hope in Asian Squash C'ship

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Promising Pakistani youngster Nasir Iqbal continued his good run in the 21st Asian Individual Men's Squash Championship by defeating sixth seed Leung Chi Hin Henry from Hong Kong to reach the semi-finals at the Mushaf Squash Complex here on Friday.

Nasir now only remains the host nation's solitary hope for the title after TayyabAslam exited from the competition as he missed the easy opportunity against Lau Tsz Kwan from Hong Kong to stay in the championship title. Nasir Iqbal, currently ranked 78 in the world, showed his wonderful skills throughout the match against Chi Henry in a thrilling four-game duel that lasted 45minutes. Nasir got off to a flying start by winning the



first two games by 11-4 and 11-9 against Henry but Hong Kong bounced back in the third game by winning 11-3with eight points difference. In the fourth game Nasir didn't allow his opponent to come back again and won the match by 11-4, 11-9, 3-11, 11-7.

In the second quarterfinals TayyabAslam missed the easy opportunity after winning the first two games against Lau Tsz Kwan from Hong Kong by 11-5 and 11-9 and then Kwan back for an hour and prevailed 11-5, 11-3, 13-11 to reaches in the semi final of the championship. Men Event: Ng Eain Yow (MAS) bt Mohammad Syafiq Bin Mohd Kamal (MAS) 11-6, 11-3, 11-5 (36 Min), Lau Tsz Kwan (HKG) btTayyabAslam (PAK) 5-11, 9-11, 11-5, 11-3, 13-11 (70 Min), Yip Tsz Fung (HKG) bt Yuen Chee Wern (MAS) 11-7, 11-4, 11-5 (23 Min) and Nasir Iqbal (PAK) bt Leung Chi Hin Henry (HKG) 11-4, 11-9, 3-11, 11-7 (45 Min).

Women Event: Liu Tsz Ling (HKG) bt Noor Ainaa (MAS) 11-9, 5-11, 12-10, 11-6 (35 Min), Tong Tsz Wing (HKG) btAifaBintiAzman (MAS) 11-5, 11-9, 8-11, 4-11, 12-10 (50 Min), Ho TzeLok (HKG) bt Chan Yiwen (MAS) 11-5, 14-12, 11-9 (36 Min) and Rachel Mae Arnold (MAS) bt Chan Sin Yuk (HKG) 11-9, 11-7, 11-9 (22 Min). The Semi Finals of the championship would be played on Saturday (today) Liu Tsz Ling will play against Tong Tsz Wing while Ho TzeLok will play against Rachel Mae Arnold in the second semi final in women's category.

In the men's category Ng Eain Yow will play against Lau Tsz Kwan in first semi final while Nasir Iqbal will play second semi final against Yip Tsz Fung.

Australia in box seat against England

ADELAIDE: Australia declared their first innings on 473-9 and then reduced England to 17-2 after a near-flawless evening session to take charge of the day-night second Ashes test on Friday. Stand-in skipper Steve Smith fell agonisingly short of his hundred but Alex Carey smashed 51 and lower-order batsmen Michael Neser and Mitchell Starc produced breezy cameos before they declared their innings.

England lost both their openers cheaply before bad weather brought the second day's play to an early close at the Adelaide Oval. England captain Joe Root was batting on five and Dawid Malan on one with the tourists facing an uphill task to stay alive in the pink-ball contest. Earlier, England brought out the big guns, Jimmy Anderson and Stuart Broad, to open the bowling on a hot and overcast day. Australia began cautiously with MarnusLabuschagne finally clinching his sixth test century after 54 balls in the nervous nineties. - APP

Romanian Halep wins WTA Shot of the Year 2021



SPORTS DESK

LONDON: Romanian tennis star Simona Halep, currently 20th in the WTA singles ranking, won the WTA Singles Shot of the Year for the second time. A passing shot at the Transylvania Open tournament in Romania brought her the award this year.

"Simona Halep's passing shot at the Transylvania Open earned your vote for the 2021 WTA Singles Shot of the Year award," Women Tennis Association announced. According to sports website Hotnews.ro, the other nominees for the 2021 WTA Shot of the Year were Su-Wei Hsieh, Belinda Bencic, Bianca Andreescu, Marta Kostyuk, Garbine Muguruza, Iga Swiatek, Conny Perrin, Camila Giorgi, and Magda Linette. Simona Halep previously won the WTA Shot of the Year in 2018 with a winning shot against Aga Radwanska in Miami.

England drawn against Italy, Germany in Nations League

Portugal, victorious as hosts in the inaugural Nations League finals in 2019, will come up against Spain, Switzerland and the Czech Republic in Group A2. Belgium, who are the top-ranked team in the world, will play neighbours the Netherlands, Poland and Wales in Group A4

WEB NEWS

PARIS: England, Italy and Germany were placed in the same group in the draw for the next edition of the UEFA Nations League on Thursday, a competition in which France will defend their title. Hungary will complete Group A3, the pick of the groups for the competition which will be played between June next year and June 2023.

The draw means England will renew acquaintances with two sides who they faced at this year's European Championship - Gareth Southgate's team defeated Germany 2-0 at Wembley in the last 16

before losing to Italy on penalties in the final. England also played Hungary twice in qualifying for the 2022 World Cup earlier this year, winning 4-0 in Budapest and drawing 1-1 at home.

"It's a good group, it will certainly be fun," remarked Italy coach Roberto Mancini in comments to the Italian Football Federation website. Germany and Italy have met at nine major tournaments, most recently at Euro 2016 when the Germans won on penalties in the quarter-finals. Italy, who must come through play-offs next March to avoid missing a second straight World Cup, are also due to go to London on June 1 to face Copa America win-

ners Argentina in a new intercontinental final. The fixtures are not yet known but Hungary are due to play their next two home UEFA competition games behind closed doors as a punishment following "discriminatory behaviour" by



supporters at Euro 2020, when incidents of homophobic chanting and racial abuse were alleged to have occurred during several of their group games. France won the last edition of the Nations League, beating Spain 2-1 in the final in Mi-

lan in October. The reigning world champions were drawn to face Denmark, Croatia and Austria in Group A1. Portugal, victorious as hosts in the inaugural Nations League finals in 2019, will come up against Spain, Switzerland and the Czech Republic in Group A2. Belgium, who are the top-ranked team in the world, will play neighbours the Netherlands, Poland and Wales in Group A4. The Nations League, introduced to replace meaningless friendly matches with more competitive games, splits all of Europe's 55 member nations into four leagues. Each league contains four groups of four teams except

Top TTP commander escapes drone strike

FROM PAGE 01
Pakistan into a period of horrific violence after forming in 2007. Two TTP sources currently in Afghanistan told AFP that Maulvi Faqir Mohammad was the target of what they described as a drone strike on a compound in Chawgam village, in the eastern province of Kunar bordering Pakistan. "Maulvi Faqir Mohammad was not present at the time... two fighters of the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan were wounded," one source said. The compound was being used as a base by TTP fighters from Pakistan crossing the porous border with Afghanistan, he said.

US, Taliban envoys to attend moot

FROM PAGE 01
OIC ministerial meeting. This was confirmed by the Foreign Office spokesman while detailing the 17th Extraordinary Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the OIC, to be hosted by Pakistan in Islamabad. The first Extraordinary Session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers was also held in Islamabad, in January 1980, also to consider the situation in Afghanistan while the last CFM hosted by Pakistan was in 2007. The session is being convened at the initiative of Saudi Arabia.

5000 personnel to stand guard...

FROM PAGE 01
meeting in Islamabad, the federal capital police has formulated a comprehensive security plan according to which 5,000 security personnel including capital police will be deployed. According to sources, the personnel of Pak Army, Rangers, Special Branch, Traffic Division, Operations Division and Security Division will perform duties. During the conference, the Constitution Avenue will be closed for traffic and the entry of unauthorized persons will be completely closed in the red zone while the security plan will be in place for three days.

Russia issues list of conditions

FROM PAGE 01
Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov told reporters Russia and the West needed to start afresh in rebuilding relations. "The line pursued by the United States and NATO over recent years to aggressively escalate the security situation is absolutely unacceptable and extremely dangerous," he said. "Washington and its NATO allies should immediately stop regular hostile actions against our country, including unscheduled exercises ... and maneuvers of military ships and planes, and stop the military development of Ukrainian territory." Ryabkov said Russia was willing to start talks as soon as Saturday, and proposed Geneva as a venue.

Shaukat Khanum allegations..

FROM PAGE 01
defamation suit filed by Imran Khan against former defence minister Khawaja Asif. Senior PML-N leader Khawaja Asif had hurled allegations of misappropriation and money-laundering in the funds of SKMT during a press conference held on August 1, 2012, at Punjab House and later repeated the "fabricated statement" the same evening during a private television programme. The affidavit stated that PM Imran Khan was the "biggest individual donor of SKMT from 1991 to 2009" and the investments - as opposed to the allegations - were fully recovered by the trust without any loss. It was stated that "fabricated and baseless allegations" were used to undermine the confidence of people in the SKMT. PM Imran Khan, in his comment during the on-line-court hearing, said that the Shaukat Khanum Trust was the only free of charge hospital for the treatment of cancer in the world.

Briefs

Merkel's party chooses Merz as leader

FOREIGN DESK

BERLIN: Members of Germany's biggest opposition party, the center-right Christian Democratic Union of former Chancellor Angela Merkel, have chosen prominent conservative Friedrich Merz as its new leader, the party said Friday.

Merz, making his third run for the CDU's top post, beat two centrist contenders and won a strong mandate — taking 62.1% support in a ballot of the party's membership. A party congress next month will have to sign off officially on the membership vote, but that should only be a formality.

Armin Laschet, the CDU's leader since January, is stepping down after leading the two-party Union bloc to its worst-ever election result in September, winning only 24.1% of the vote. The bloc, which the CDU dominates, was narrowly beaten by the center-left Social Democrats of new Chancellor Olaf Scholz. Merz, 66, has experience of being an opposition leader. He led the center-right group in parliament from 2000 to 2002, when Merkel pushed him out of that job. He left parliament in 2009, later practicing as a lawyer and heading the supervisory board of investment manager BlackRock's German branch.

UK reports record number of corona cases

WEB DESK

LONDON: Fueled by the rapid spread of the Omicron variant, Britain registered a record number of daily corona-virus cases for the second day in a row.

A total of 88,376 new cases were reported, up from 78,610 cases 24 hours earlier, bringing the total number of corona-virus cases in the country to 11,097,851, according to official figures released Thursday.

Another 1,691 Omicron cases have been found in Britain, the biggest daily increase since the COVID-19 variant was detected in the country, taking the total Omicron cases found in the country to 11,708, the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) confirmed Wednesday. The country also reported a further 146 corona-virus-related deaths. The total number of corona-virus-related deaths in Britain now stands at 146,937, with 7,579 COVID-19 patients still in hospital. The latest data came as Susan Hopkins, the UKHSA's chief medical adviser, said every person infected with the Omicron COVID variant is believed to be passing it on to between three and five others on average.

Hopkins told MPs on the Commons health committee that for Omicron, the R value in Britain is between three and five, and the variant is spreading rapidly, doubling in size every two days. The current R value of the Delta epidemic in Britain is estimated to be between 1.1 and 1.2.

12 dead as typhoon batters the Philippines

CEBU: At least 12 people have died in the strongest typhoon to hit the Philippines this year, the disaster agency said Friday, after the storm swept across the archipelago uprooting trees, toppling power poles and flooding villages.

More than 300,000 people fled their homes and beachfront resorts as Typhoon Rai pummeled the southern and central regions of the country, knocking out communications in some areas and tearing roofs off buildings.

Rai was a super typhoon when it slammed into Siargao Island on Thursday, packing maximum sustained winds of 195 kilometres an hour. On Friday, wind speeds eased to 150 kilometres an hour, the state weather forecaster said. — APP

Uzbekistan, Korea agree to enhance strategic partnership

President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, thanking for the invitation, emphasized that openness and mutual respect are a solid foundation on which relations between the two countries have historically been built

NEWS DESK

SEOUL: A solemn ceremony of the official meeting of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan took place at the Cheong Wa Dae residence of the President of the Republic of Korea, in the city of Seoul.

According to the press service of the head of our state, a guard of honor was lined up in honor of the distinguished guest and his spouse. The national anthems of the two countries were played. The solemn ceremony embodied the ancient history and bright modernity of the Land of the Morning Freshness.

The heads of state held talks with the participation of official delegations of the two countries.

President of the Republic of Korea Moon Jae-in, welcoming the distinguished guest, emphasized that Seoul attaches great importance to further development of cooperation with Tashkent in the widest range of areas.

"I welcome the esteemed Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev, my dear brother. Welcome to Seoul. I remember well our online meeting in January this year. This was my first summit, opening the year. Today we are meeting, spending the outgoing year in person. It is especially gratifying that it is with you that my diplomatic schedule for this year began and ends. Korea and Uzbekistan are special strate-



gic partners.

Together, various projects are being implemented in such areas as the production of agricultural equipment and electrical engineering, the power engineering industry and energy, as well as the construction of industrial enterprises.

Several important documents will be signed during your visit. We are ready to join hands with Uzbekistan, in response to global climate change, to develop cooperation in such promising areas as the creation of smart cities, smart farms,

ICT and manufacturing electric cars. In the coming year, we will celebrate the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. I hope that in the new year we will jointly create a new page of prosperity", President Moon Jae-in said.

President Shavkat Mirziyoyev, thanking for the invitation, emphasized that openness and mutual respect are a solid foundation on which relations between the two countries have historically been built.

"I am very glad to meet you.

Thank you for your invitation to beautiful Korea on a state visit and your traditionally warm welcome. The weather is cold now, but the soul of our Korean brothers is very warm. Being here, surrounded by friends, we feel at home. We treat your country and the Korean people in a special way. We have a similar mentality, traditions and moral values.

The implementation of your New Policy made it possible to strengthen the country's leading positions in high technologies, digitalization, innovative and

green development, to reveal the enormous intellectual potential of the talented Korean people", the President of Uzbekistan said.

Our countries have been strategic partners for 15 years. The friendship and political will of Shavkat Mirziyoyev and Moon Jae-in have become powerful incentives to give new dynamics to cooperation between Uzbekistan and Korea.

This is the fourth meeting of the heads of state. In October 2017, Shavkat Mirziyoyev paid his first state visit to the Republic of Korea. In April 2019, President Moon Jae-in paid a return visit to Uzbekistan, within the framework of which a Joint Declaration on a Special Strategic Partnership was adopted. Several new initiatives to further strengthen ties were announced by the leaders during the online summit in January 2021.

This visit to Korea is a logical continuation of intensive dialogue.

The Leader of Uzbekistan emphasized that today the very time requires us to reconsider the priorities of practical partnership in the long term. Cooperation between the two countries must fully respond to the modern challenges of the global economy.

The Republic of Korea is one of the key trade and economic partners of Uzbekistan. The trade turnover and the number of joint ventures have almost doubled in recent years.

Doha committed to boost ties with Baku

BAKU: Qatari ambassador Faisal bin Abdullah Hamad Al-Hanzab has said that his country is committed to strengthening ties with Azerbaijan, Trend reported on December 16. "The high-ranking officials of Qatar and Azerbaijan are greatly interested in the relations between two countries to strengthen the friendship and cooperation in all political, economic and social fields to achieve more prosperity," Al-Hanzab said.

Azerbaijan-Qatar bilateral relations are based on common values, friendship, joint cooperation and mutual interests, and are being reinforced with reciprocal respect and trust, he said. The ambassador stressed that Qatar is taking steps toward a bright and successful future by strengthening political, economic, and cultural connections, as well as boosting trade and investment possibilities for businesses of both nations. Meanwhile, Labor and Social Protection Minister Sahil Babayev reiterated that bilateral relations are developing at a high level and they are based on the principles of friendship and mutual respect.

"The high level of political dialogue is undoubtedly due to the political will and wise foresight of the leaders of the two countries, the great importance they attach to cooperation," Babayev underlined. — News Desk

UBG kicks off second round of FPCCI election campaign

DNA

LAHORE: Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry's The United Business Group (UBG), the largest alliance of chambers and trade associations, Friday kicked off second round of election campaign to further muster support of business community.

UBG vowed to continue serve business community with full devotion and help gear up the economic activities in the country on top priority.

Addressing the 30 members core committee here today, President SAARC chamber of commerce and UBG Chairman veteran trade leader Iftikhar Ali Malik greeted the newly elected UBG candidate Mohsin Maq-

bool Sheikh who returned unopposed Fpcci VP from interior sindh seat which speaks of UBG popularity and evolved new election strategy in the wake of the suspension of name of rival presidential candidate Irfan Iqbal Sheikh from final voter list by the Sindh High Court.

He said UBG since its inception always attached great importance to business community and advocated their cause at all levels without any fear. He said UBG leadership several times took up the burning issues of business community with PM, federal ministers and advisors to PM including Governor Punjab for getting them addressed on top priority.

Iftikhar Ali Malik said leading traders associations throughout the country have also reposed full confidence on

UBG policies which is one of the major breakthrough and success in real term and we will sweep election with a wide margin. He said that always only true democracy prevail in trade politics of UBG and people with integrity have been given responsibilities so that that could contribute to image of FPCCI and resolve issues of the business community.

"We firmly believe in rule of law, promotion of democratic system and strengthening of national economy by safeguarding the interests of traders," he added. UBG patron in chief SM Muneer, UBG president Zubair Tufail, Secretary General Zafar Bakhtawari, Presidential candidate Dr Nouman Idris Butt, SVP candidate Hanif Gohar, Secretary Information Dr Mirza Ikhtiar Baig also spoke.

Amb. Sajjad, Belarusian minister discuss industrial cooperation

DNA

MINSK: Ambassador of Pakistan to Belarus Sajjad Haider Khan held a meeting with the Deputy Minister of Industry of Belarus Mr. Alexandr Ogorodnikov. The meeting was also attended by the Deputy Head of the Economic Relations Department Mr. Anatoly Grynevich. The two sides discussed development of mutual industrial collaboration and noted the positive increase in trade figures during the current year. They also reviewed the ongoing talks regarding establishing a joint venture for tractor manufacturing in Pakistan as well as the opportunity for holding agricultural machinery exhibitions in Pakistan accompanied with demonstrations of the agricultural implements.

The Ambassador briefed the Deputy Minister on the available investment opportunities and benefits in the special economic zones being established in Pakistan under China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The parties agreed to continue consultations for mutually beneficial cooperation between the two countries.



Painting exhibition on Sino-Pak ties held

BEIJING: Chinese and Pakistani students held here a painting exhibition on Sino-Pak friendship of new era, China Economic Net reported on Thursday.

The report says, 2021 is the 70th year since China and Pakistan established diplomatic ties. Students from both countries depicted the precious friendship in their heart via a great many paintings at the 'Art Exhibition of Chinese-Pakistani Students for Celebrating the 70th Anniversary of China-Pakistan Diplomatic Relations'. Displayed at Henan Normal University in China, University of Saragoda and Roots Millennium Schools in Pakistan, Chinese and Pakistani students' paintings impressed people of the two countries a lot. — APP

UNHCR orders int'l probe into Ethiopia abuses

Nearly 10 million people in northern Ethiopia face acute food insecurity, and at least two million have been forced to flee their homes. Humanitarian workers have little access and face hostility. Ethiopia's government has sought to restrict reporting on the war and arrested some journalists

NEWS DESK

NEW YORK: The UN Human Rights Council has voted to launch an international investigation into abuses in Ethiopia, despite protests from Addis Ababa, amid warnings of looming generalised violence.

The 47-member council voted with 21 in favour, 15 opposed and 11 abstentions on Friday to order the establishment of "an international commission of human rights experts on Ethiopia" to probe a wide range of alleged violations and abuses by all sides.

Speaking at the largely virtual one-day session, Nada al-Nashif, the deputy rights chief, said the UN was continuing to receive "credible reports" that all sides in the brutal 13-month conflict have been committing severe human rights violations amid a deepening humanitarian crisis.



Al-Nashif warned that the risk in Ethiopia "of increasing hatred, violence and discrimination is very high", which could lead to "generalised violence, [with] major implications, not only for millions of people in Ethiopia, but also across the region".

Earlier, Ethiopia's government had slammed the decision to hold the special session and has urged countries to vote against the draft text.

"We call on all council members to ... stand against short-sighted interests and refuse the politicisa-

tion of human rights by rejecting this resolution," said Ambassador Zembe Kebede, accusing the Geneva-based body of having been "hijacked" and used as an "instrument of political pressure".

"My government will not cooperate with any mechanisms that may be imposed on it because this is ... a deliberate destabilisation effort." Nearly 10 million people in northern Ethiopia face acute food insecurity, and at least two million have been forced to flee their homes. Humanitarian workers have little access and face hostility. Ethiopia's government has sought to restrict reporting on the war and arrested some journalists. Between 5,000 and 7,000 people swept up under Ethiopia's new state of emergency remain imprisoned, most of them Tigrayans, al-Nashif said.

"Many are detained incommunicado or in unknown locations. This is tantamount to enforced disap-

pearance, and a matter of very grave alarm."

The Ethiopian ambassador said Ethiopia's government had set up an "inter-ministerial task force" in response to the human rights report issued last month, and it has begun work.

A joint investigation by the UN rights office and Ethiopia's human rights commission warned last month that possible war crimes and crimes against humanity had been committed by all sides during the Tigray conflict.

The government-created Ethiopian Human Rights Commission acknowledged in a statement this week that there was "value-added" in encouraging the joint investigation to continue, but said the creation of a new body "is repetitive, counterproductive to ongoing implementation processes, and further delays redress for victims and survivors".

Czech Republic gets new govt

PRAGUE: The Czech president on Friday appointed a new government led by Petr Fiala, a right-winger whose alliance won a general election more than two months ago. "In line with the constitution... the president appointed the members of the new government today," Vratislav Mynar, the head of President Milos Zeman's office, said at the ceremony. Comprising 18 members from five parties, including three women, the government has a 108-vote majority in the 200-seat parliament.

It will have to deal with widespread Covid-19 infections in the EU country, where the pandemic is in full swing.

Fiala's team will also have to tackle soaring inflation and a spike in energy prices, as well as divisions in society caused by the pandemic. His right-wing Civic Democrats narrowly won October's general election in an alliance with the centrist Christian Democrats and the centre-right TOP 09 party. Their Together coalition then teamed up with a centrist alliance of the Pirate Party and the Mayors and Independents movement to form the government. They ousted billionaire populist prime minister Andrej Babis. Zeman, who was expected to oversee the government talks, missed the build-up as he was hospitalized over serious liver problems on October 10, a day after the vote. — Agencies

Belarus jails activist for 13 years over protests

NEWS DESK

MOSCOW: Belarus on Friday sentenced an activist to 13 years in prison for taking part in mass demonstrations last summer, one of hundreds jailed for protesting against strongman Alexander Lukashenko.

Eduard Palchys, 31, was found guilty of organising mass unrest and inciting hatred. He joins a long list of designated political prisoners in the ex-Soviet country, with local rights group Vyasna saying 929 are currently behind bars.

Palchys was arrested in September 2020, shortly after nationwide protests erupted in the wake of a disputed election which Lukashenko claimed he won by a landslide. Belarus's exiled opposition leader Svetlana Tikhanovskaya condemned the ruling and posted a video of Palchys in the defendant's cage in court.

"It was a closed trial, so nobody could see how the regime represses an innocent person," she said. "Eduard's daughter was born when he was already behind bars," she said. She added that "we won't stop until all political prisoners are freed."

Australia, Britain ink free trade agreement

WEB DESK

LONDON: The deal abolishes 99 percent of taxes on exports, saving Australia about \$10 billion and saving Britain about \$144 million a year. Australia and Britain have signed a free trade agreement that will eliminate almost all taxes on exports between the countries.

The FTA was signed on Friday at a virtual ceremony by Australian Trade Minister Dan Tehan in Adelaide and Britain's Secretary of State for International Trade Anne-Marie Trevelyan in London.

Tehan said the deal, which will take effect sometime in 2022, will grow investments and help with the recovery from the pandemic.

"Our economies will be able to operate seamlessly again," Tehan said. "The experiences and opportunities that young Australians and young Brits will be able to get through this initiative is just fantastic."

Trevelyan said the deal showed what Britain can achieve "as an agile, independent sovereign trading nation."

"This is just the start as we get on the front foot and seize the seismic opportunities that await us on the world stage," she said.

Briefs

Ejaz Qureshi appointed new federal ombudsman

ISLAMABAD: The president has appointed Ejaz Ahmed Qureshi as federal ombudsman who has served as Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) chief secretary. Ejaz Ahmed Qureshi, has a Master's degree in Political Science from the University of Punjab and one in Public Policy and Planning from Pennsylvania State University, USA, a press release said on Friday.

He joined Civil Service of Pakistan in 1972 through competitive examination, and held positions of Assistant Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, Commissioner, Commissioner and Provincial Secretary of a number of departments including the post of Additional Chief Secretary (Dev) in KP.

He has been Consul General / Trade Commissioner of Pakistan in Canada and Pakistan's Permanent Representative at a UN Body (International Civil Aviation Organization).

His last few significant assignments include: Chief Secretary KP, Chief Secretary Sindh, Secretary Railways, and Federal Secretary Environment.

He was awarded 'Tamgha-E-Isar' for his outstanding work in the Earthquake of 2005. After retirement, he is working as Senior Advisor and National Child Commissioner in the Wafaqi Mohtasib Secretariat, Islamabad. — APP

Germany must prepare for 'massive' Omicron wave

WEB DESK

FRANKFURT: Germany, battered by a recent rise in Covid cases, must brace for a "massive fifth wave" due to the new Omicron variant, Health Minister Karl Lauterbach said Friday.

"We must prepare for a challenge that we have not yet had in this form," Lauterbach told reporters, adding that even if the variant were "milder" it may make "no difference". Were the virus to be less serious than other variants, this might "keep deaths low for two to three weeks, before the growth of the virus would eat up this advantage," the minister said, underlining that a difficult period ahead was "inevitable".

Germany has reimposed health restrictions following high case numbers, barring unvaccinated people from restaurants and non-essential commerce.

Case numbers have declined slightly but the spread of the more infectious Omicron variant, first identified in South Africa, threatens to send new infections up again.

Governments around the world are scrambling to speed up booster vaccination campaigns to increase individuals' protection against the highly mutated virus.

Japan: Dozens dead in Osaka building fire

OSAKA: At least 27 people are feared to have died after a fire broke out in a building in downtown Osaka, Japan. Police are investigating whether the blaze was started deliberately, public broadcaster NHK said.

They are investigating reports that a man spilled liquid that started the fire. The victims suffered cardiopulmonary arrest, a term often used in preliminary reports before a death is officially confirmed, reports say. Footage showed blackened windows after dozens of firefighters extinguished the blaze on the fourth floor. All of those feared dead were reportedly in a psychiatric clinic on the fourth floor of the building, located in a busy commercial and entertainment district. A man who appeared to be in his 50s or 60s was seen carrying a bag of liquid into the building, before knocking it over near a heater, spilling the liquid and starting the fire, Kyodo News reported. — Agencies

UNGA adopts resolution on right to self-determination

Co-sponsored by 72 countries, the resolution secured the support of all UN member states due to its "universal character of the right to self-determination and its continued applicability in situations of foreign occupation and intervention", the FO said

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York adopted with consensus on Friday a Pakistan-sponsored resolution, titled 'Universal Realisation of the Right of the Peoples to Self-Determination', which "unequivocally supports the right to self-determination for all peoples under subjugation, alien domination and foreign occupation", including those of Indian-occupied Kashmir. According to a statement issued by the Foreign Office (FO), the adoption of the resolution with consensus would provide the people of Indian-occupied Kashmir with hope in their just struggle for self-determination and freedom from oppression

and occupation. Co-sponsored by 72 countries, the resolution secured the support of all UN member states due to its "universal character of the right to self-determination and its continued applicability in situations of foreign occupation and intervention", the FO said. "This annual affirmation by the General Assembly serves to preserve the legitimacy of the freedom struggle of peoples under colonial and foreign occupation," the statement said, adding that the resolution "offers hope that destinies will be decided in accordance with the principles of justice enshrined in the UN Charter, UN resolutions and international law". The conflict and unrest in Indian-occupied Kashmir has intensified since Prime Minister Narendra Modi came to power

in 2014 and won a landslide re-election in 2019. Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party-led government toughened its stance both against Pakistan, as well as, Kashmiri rebels amid rising attacks by Hindu hard-liners against minorities in India, further deepening frustrations among Kashmir's Muslims. The valley has been under a security lockdown since the Indian government stripped Kashmiris of the special autonomy they had for seven decades through a rushed presidential order in 2019. Earlier this month, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi apprised the president of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and UN secretary general of the continuing grave situation in Indian-occupied Kashmir.

In a letter addressed to the president of UNSC and UN secretary general, the foreign minister had pointed to the deteriorating human rights and humanitarian situation in the valley and the persistent threat to international peace and security posed by India's provocative and irresponsible rhetoric as well as its track record of orchestrating false flag operations. The foreign minister had drawn attention to the recent spate of extra-judicial killings, arbitrary arrests and illegal detentions in India-occupied Kashmir. He had also highlighted the recent arrest of renowned Kashmiri human rights activist Khurram Parvez on trumped-up charges, "in complete disregard for basic human rights principles, norms and international law".



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Industries and Production Makhdoom Khusró Bakhtyar in a meeting with Wada Mitsuhiro, newly appointed Japanese ambassador to Pakistan in his office. —DNA

German special envoy to attend OIC moot

ISLAMABAD: Against the backdrop of a worsening humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan and the need of international cooperation and coordination to address the situation, Germany welcomes the initiative of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to call for an Extraordinary Session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers (CFM) hosted by the Government of Pakistan in Islamabad on 19 December 2021.

Upon invitation of the Government of Pakistan, Dr. Jasper Wieck, the Special Representative of Germany for Afghanistan and Pakistan, will attend the conference as "Special Guest". He will also hold bilateral talks with representatives of the government of Pakistan and of other participating countries.

Dr. Wieck: "Thank you to our Pakistani partners for the invitation which is a strong reflection of our joint goal of avoiding a further deterioration of the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. We firmly believe that the OIC is a well suited forum to send a strong signal of solidarity and to play a major role in providing crucial aid for the Afghan people at this critical point in time. International exchange and coordination across continents is essential for assistance, recovery and stability in Afghanistan." — DNA

Punjab announces winter vacations schedule

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Punjab government has announced winter vacations in schools across the province from December 23, defying a National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) decision. The announcement was made by the Punjab Education Minister Murad Raas from his Twitter handle. He announced that all public and private schools of Punjab will remain closed for winter vacation starting December 23rd, 2021 to January 6th, 2022. "Please get vaccinated and follow SOPs issued by the government," the education minister stressed. The announcement came after the Punjab government earlier today assured the Lahore High Court (LHC) that schools will be closed from December 23 to the first week of January. The assurance was made during the hearing of the environmental pollution and smog case in the LHC presided over by Justice Shahid Karim. The lawyer of the government apprised the LHC bench about the closure of the educational institutions in the Punjab province.

The court after adjourning the hearing of the case until December 21, asked the government authorities to present the notification regarding winter vacations. Meanwhile, the decision by the Punjab government was in defiance of the NCOC that earlier in the day announced that winter vacations in all educational institutions will begin from Jan 3, 2022. The decision to this effect was reached during a meeting presided over by NCOC head Asad Umar. Federal Education Minister Shaqat Mahmood and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Health Dr Faisal Sultan were in attendance in the meeting.

"During today's NCOC session, it is decided that Winter vacation in education sector will start from 3rd January 22 apart from Fog / Smog hit districts of Pakistan. Federated units will issue notifications accordingly," the country's nerve centre for Covid response said in a Twitter statement.

In India, churches canceling celebrations due to RSS threats

ISLAMABAD: Many churches in the Karnataka state of India have cancelled their Christmas celebrations following threats from the radicals as the "Saffron Goons" continue to target minorities to pursue their Hindutva ideology. At a time when India would observe Minorities Rights Day on Saturday (December 18) with a so-called resolution to protect their rights, the factual position is that the Christians in many parts of the country were even unable to hold their Sunday gatherings. "We are in a critical situation," Pastor Yellappa, head of an independent church in Gokak, told International Christian Concern (ICC). Hailing from the Belagavi District of Karnataka state, Pastor Yellappa was forced to shut down his house church after his landlord received multiple threats from radicals. — APP

Taliban prepare new Afghan budget without foreign aid

AGENCIES

KABUL: Afghanistan's finance ministry under the Taliban government has prepared a draft national budget that, for the first time in two decades, is funded without foreign aid, a spokesman said.

It comes as the country is mired in an economic crisis and faces a looming humanitarian catastrophe that the United Nations (UN) has called an "avalanche of hunger". Finance ministry spokesman Ahmad Wali Haqmal did not disclose the size of the draft budget — which runs until December 2022 — but told AFP it would go to the cabinet for approval before being published.

"We are trying to finance it from our domestic revenues — and we believe we can," he told state television in an interview shared on Twitter. Global donors suspended financial aid when the Taliban seized power in August and Western powers also froze access to billions of dollars in assets held abroad. The 2021 budget, put together by the previous administration under guidance from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), projected a deficit despite 219 billion Afghanis (\$2.7 billion at the time) in aid and grants and 217 billion from domestic revenue. At

that time, the exchange rate was around 80 Afghanis to the dollar, but the local currency has been hammered since the Taliban's return, particularly in the past week, slumping to 130 on Monday before recovering on Friday to around 100.

Haqmal accepted that public servants are still owed several months of wages, saying "we are trying our best" to make good on overdue pay by year-end. He warned, however, a new pay scale had also been prepared.

The new government's revenue department said last month that it had collected 26 billion Afghanis in the previous two-and-a-half-months, including 13 billion in customs duties. It also announced a new Islamic tax to fund aid projects for poor people and orphans. An Afghan economist, who asked not to be named, said on Friday the new budget would likely end up being only a quarter of that for 2021.

"The Taliban are saying they have more transparency at the border crossings," meaning fewer goods dodge duties than previously, this economist told AFP. But, he said, even if true, maximum revenues would only be about 100 billion Afghanis because the intensifying recession will shrink the tax take to a far greater extent.

Germany grants EURO 13.5 million for TBTP

BTASP will support Pakistan's efforts towards the Bonn Challenge of restoring 350 million hectares of degraded and deforested lands by 2030. The project is part of the German-Pakistan Climate and Energy Initiative, which was launched at COP26

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Mr. Hayaud Din, Secretary of the Federal Economic Affairs Division, and Mr. Sebastian Jacobi, Country Director KfW (German Development Bank), signed the Billion Tree Afforestation Support Project (BTASP) grant agreement on 17 December 2021. Minister for Economic Affairs, Mr. Omar Ayub Khan and Ambassador of Germany to Pakistan, Mr. Bernhard Schlagheck, witnessed the ceremony. The German Ministry of Economic Cooperation & Development (BMZ) has committed EUR 13.5 million grant through KfW. The KP Forestry, Environment & Wildlife Department (FEWD) will be the project implementation agency. Ambassador of Germany to Pakistan, Mr. Bernhard Schlagheck, says: "With BTASP we aim to create a truly long lasting impact of the afforestation campaign. Over a period of six years, BTASP will support the protection and sus-



tainable management of forests across three regions in KP." The project will complement Pakistan's flagship 10 Billion Tree Tsunami Programme (TBTP), including effective management of restored forest landscapes. It

will help improve public service delivery and build institutional capacity through measures such as a nationally replicable Management Information System for FEWD. In addition to ecosystem restoration, BTASP will support local

economy, stimulate green growth and alleviate poverty across 100 villages in KP. BTASP will engage and mobilise communities as key stakeholders through the formulation of Participatory Forest Development Plans. It will also promote

women's economic empowerment and participation in decision making processes. BTASP will develop and strengthen value chains, linking up community-owned nurseries and businesses with markets. This will provide sustainable income opportunities for people relying on natural resources for livelihoods.

BTASP will support Pakistan's efforts towards the Bonn Challenge of restoring 350 million hectares of degraded and deforested lands by 2030. The project is part of the German-Pakistan Climate and Energy Initiative, which was launched at COP26. With the successful signing of the grant agreement for phase 1, the German Government stands ready to commit an additional EUR 20 million for Phase II of the project. With this new phase, Germany will extend its support to the federal Ten Billion Tree Tsunami Afforestation Project (TBTP) and in particular its governance, sustainability and climate aspects.

US has sent 335mn vaccine doses to 110 countries

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: The United States has so far delivered more than 335 million doses of Covid vaccine to 110 countries, a figure matching the US population, a senior White House official told AFP on Friday.

That includes 50 million doses sent out in just the last two weeks, part of a push to send millions more doses around the world in the coming days, the official said, adding: "the pandemic has shown us that no one is safe until everyone is safe." The US president had promised in September that his country would donate a total of more than a billion doses to poorer countries.

At the time Biden said the United States, which has recorded more than 50 million cases of Covid-19, would act as the world's "arsenal" against the virus.

Washington repeats at every opportunity that its vaccines are distributed with "no strings attached," implying that this would not be the case for doses distributed in particular by its great rival, China.

Chinese President Xi Jinping, who denies that he is conducting "vaccine diplomacy", recently pledged a billion doses of Covid vaccine to Africa.

WHO emergencies chief eyes 'brighter future'

GENEVA: After two years at the forefront of WHO's pandemic battle, emergencies chief Michael Ryan remains optimistic humanity will change course and take the steps needed to tame the virus. As concern grows about the fast-spreading coronavirus variant Omicron and surging infection rates, the World Health Organization's second-in-command acknowledged the crisis could plausibly evolve in disastrous directions.

We could face the constant emergence of new and more dangerous variants and waves of infection that repeatedly collapse our health systems. "That's a plausible future if we don't adequately deal with the virus," Ryan told AFP in an interview. But, he said, "I don't see that right now. I see a brighter future."

The 56-year-old epidemiologist and former trauma surgeon insisted that "if we knuckle down now in terms of disease control, ... (and) getting vaccine coverage up," we can move past the pandemic phase.

While the SARS CoV-2 virus that causes Covid is unlikely to go away, he said it could become just another endemic respiratory virus, like the flu. That upbeat outlook may seem to fly in the face of the dire situation on the ground. Covid has officially killed nearly 5.5 million people worldwide, with the true figure likely several times higher. — APP

PMD forecasts cold wave in upper parts

ISLAMABAD: The cold wave will grip upper and central parts of the country during next 24 hours according to the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD). Very cold and dry weather is expected in most upper/central parts of the country and north Balochistan. While dense fog/smog is likely in plain areas of Punjab.

According to the synoptic situation, continental air is prevailing over most parts of the country. During the past 24 hours, cold and dry weather prevailed over most parts, while very cold in upper districts and north Balochistan.

The lowest minimum temperatures recorded during the last 24 hours were Gupis -16 C, Leh -14, Kalat -12, Kalam, Skardu -09, Quetta, Gilgit, Zashore -08, Hunza -06, Dir, Zhob -05, Malam Jabba, Bagrote, Chitral, Drosch, Parachinar -04, Kakul and Srinagar -03 C. — APP