



# Islamabad POST

Thursday, December 23, 2021

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**European Union committed to help Afghanistan people**

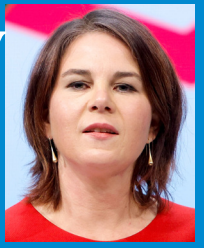
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**Libya's interim Prime Minister resumes duties**

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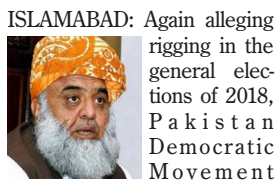
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## Briefs

**PTI to taste defeat in all provinces**

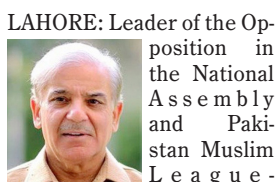
DNA



ISLAMABAD: Again alleging rigging in the general elections of 2018, Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) President and Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman said on Wednesday that those who did that actually had destabilized Pakistan and the constitution. Talking to the media, he predicted that the ruling Pakistan PTI would taste defeat in the local bodies' (LBs) elections in the other provinces of the country as well. "The JUI-F stands for a strong Pakistan and a strong constitution," he claimed.

**Economy is in reverse gear**

DNA



LAHORE: Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President Shehbaz Sharif said on Wednesday that the record trade deficit of over \$5 billion recorded this month (December) showed that the country had 'collapsed' economically. In a statement, Shehbaz Sharif said that the trade deficit of over \$20 billion just in the first five months of the current financial year (FY) was a clear-cut proof of an imbalance between the country's imports and exports. He went on to say that US dollar was exerting pressure on Pakistani rupee.

**Babar reclaims T20I crown**

DNA



DUBAI: In the latest ICC Men's T20I Player Rankings, there is a tie for the top spot of batters between Pakistan's Babar Azam and England's Dawid Malan. Earlier, Pakistan skipper Babar Azam had lost the number one position to the England batter after a poor performance during the Bangladesh series. However, Babar's top-class performance against the West Indies in the third T20I has earned him the tied top spot with Dawid Malan.

## PM hails KP LG polls as a new start

— Says it is the first time in Pakistan's history that the country has an "empowered LG system"

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan, keeping aside all the negativity regarding PTI's defeat in the first phase of the 2021 local government elections in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, said that the KP LG polls are the beginning of a "modern and developed LG system" which is a trait of successful democracies. In an apparent reference to the comments being made about PTI losing the limelight in the KP polls, PM Imran Khan wrote on Twitter that amidst the "noise" over the results of the KP LG polls, "no one realises" that these polls are the start of a modern and devolved local government system. PM said that it is the first time in Pakistan's history that the country has an "empowered LG system". He went on to say that the direct election of tehsil level nazims will improve governance and make future elections. "Amidst the noise over KP LG elec, no one realises these elections are start of modern, devolved LG system as exists in successful democracies," the premier wrote. Pakistani politicians have been having a field day since the ruling party's defeat was made obvious in the first phase of LG polls in KP, with Opposition party JUI-F emerging victorious and PTI failing to bag a single mayor seat out of the four. On Tuesday, PM Imran Khan had conceded defeat, admitting that wrong candidate selection was a major cause for the PTI's defeat.

## 'Pakistan, Norway enjoy excellent ties'

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan Wednesday said that Pakistan and Norway had excellent relations and Norwegians of the Pakistani origin formed a strong bridge between the two countries. He said there was potential for increased collaboration in political, economic and other areas of mutual interest. Referring to Norwegian company Telenor, he said that Pakistan-Norway economic relations were growing. The prime minister was talking to Ambassador of Norway Per Albert Ilsaas who called on him, PM Office media wing said in a press release. The ambassador extended greetings on behalf of the Norwegian prime minister and felicitated the Prime Minister on successful holding of the 17th Extraordinary Session of Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Council of Foreign Ministers (OIC-CFM). The prime minister extended an invitation to his Norwegian counterpart to undertake a visit to Pakistan at his earliest convenience.

## SAARC's role crucial for welfare of region: FM

Qureshi received Secretary General of SAARC, who is on his maiden Pakistan visit



SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi received Esala Ruwan Weerakoon, Secretary-General of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Wednesday. The Secretary General is on his first visit to Pakistan since assuming office in March 2020. Expressing condolences on the death of Mr. Priyantha Kumara, the Foreign Minister stated that entire political leadership, religious scholars and Pakistani

nation had condemned the incident and the Government of Pakistan was determined to take all necessary steps to bring perpetrators to justice. The Foreign Minister reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to the principles and objectives of the SAARC Charter for the welfare of the people of the region, economic integration and regional prosperity. Pakistan believed SAARC could provide a conducive and congenial atmosphere to build economic synergies and transform the quality of life of the people of South Asia.

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Norway Per Albert Ilsaas calls on Prime Minister Imran Khan. — DNA

## US thanks Pakistan for hosting OIC summit

Blinken's statement came following OIC Summit in Pakistan held last week

NEWS DESK



WASHINGTON: US State Secretary Antony Blinken on Wednesday thanked Pakistan for hosting the extraordinary session of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation's (OIC) Council of Foreign Ministers to discuss the situation in neighbouring Afghanistan. "The OIC extraordinary session on Afghanistan is a prime example of our collective determination and action to help those most in need. We thank Pakistan for hosting this vital meeting and inviting the global community to continue cooperating to support the Afghan people," Blinken said.

## PDM leaders meet Friday

DNA

KARACHI: Jamiat Ulama-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief and PDM head Maulana Fazlur Rehman will arrive in Karachi today (Thursday) to chair Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) leadership meeting which will be held on Friday. According to sources, JUI-F chief Fazlur Rehman will chair the PDM Sindh chapter leadership meeting which will be held at the residence of Shah Owais Noorani. Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and leadership of other opposition parties will attend the meeting. The meeting will discuss preparations regarding Islamabad long march, they added. PDM, the multi-party opposition alliance, had announced that it will kick off its long march towards Islamabad on March 23. Maulana Fazlur Rehman announced the date while briefing media about decisions taken in the hours-long meeting held in Islamabad on December 6.

## Japan expands aid to Afghan refugees

The assistance will be provided through WFP, UNICEF and UNHCR

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: In response to the continued humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, Japan has decided to provide additional support of USD 3.72 million to Pakistan. This assistance will support Pakistan to prepare for a potential refugee influx into the country and address the protracted socio-economic challenges among the Afghanistan refugees and the host communities. For the last 40 years, Pakistan has hosted over 1.4 million registered refugees, and the demand for humanitarian assistance have soared since the sudden political turnaround in Afghanistan in August, while the pandemic has not been suppressed. The assistance will be provided through WFP, UNICEF and UNHCR to directly address the humanitarian needs in areas such as healthcare, food and

## UNSC adopts resolution to ease aid to Afghanistan

WEB DESK

NEW YORK: The UN Security Council on Wednesday unanimously adopted a US-proposed resolution that facilitates humanitarian aid to Afghanistan, which is on the verge of economic collapse, while keeping funds out of Taliban hands. The resolution states that "payment of funds, other financial assets or economic resources, and the provision of goods and services necessary to ensure the timely delivery of such assistance or to support such activities are permitted." Such assistance supports "basic human needs in Afghanistan" and is

Continued on Page 06

Continued on Page 06

## Royal Bahraini Naval Commander meets COAS



STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Commander Royal Bahraini Naval Force Rear Admiral Mohamad Yousif Al Asam Wednesday called on Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa here at GHQ and acknowledged the professionalism of Pakistan Armed Forces and vowed to enhance cooperation in various fields.

During the meeting, matters of mutual interest, current security situation in Afghanistan and bilateral cooperation in defence and security fields were discussed, said an Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) media release. Speaking on the occasion, the COAS said, "Pakistan desires to maintain the tradition of bilateral engagement and

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ICCI chief calls for following Quid's vision — Page 04

Palestinian history is being erased — we must reclaim it — Page 05

Astana talks aimed at Syria's territorial integrity — Page 06

China, Germany must work together for world's future — Page 07

Book "The Tajiks in the Mirror of History" launched — Page 08

## EU committed to help Afghan people avert crisis

The EU special envoy says that EU's commitment goes beyond words and is reflected in concrete action and financial support by European taxpayers

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The European Union Special Envoy for Afghanistan, Tomas Niklasson Has appreciated Pakistan and the OIC for organising the important and timely OIC meeting and for inviting the European Union to attend as a special guest. In his address, he said "We have been reminded today about the grave humanitarian, economic and social crises that loom over Afghanistan. Like all countries represented here, the EU does not recognise the Taliban appointed interim government. But we remain committed to supporting the Afghan people as we have been doing for several decades." The EU representative added that EU's commitment goes beyond words and is reflected in concrete action and financial support by European taxpayers. Already in September in Geneva, the

EU pledged 300 M in humanitarian assistance for Afghanistan. Thanks also to generous pledges by EU Member States, the EU stands behind more than 70% of the humanitarian assistance being provided. And the EU welcomes the generous support by neighbouring countries and others, including OIC members. "We have European humanitarian staff present on the ground in Afghanistan working day and night to ensure that our aid reaches Afghans in need through the UN, the Red Crescent and other humanitarian partners. We also stand ready to help to ensure basic services such as education, health and livelihoods (250M) including teachers' salaries in provinces where girls go to school. We refer to this as humanitarian+, and we are exploring how salary incentives to teachers can be delivered outside the government system through the UN," said Tomas Niklasson. He said that EU also welcomes and sup-



ports efforts being made to repurpose funds in the World Bank Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund, to address the liquidity shortage and to facilitate bank transfers into Afghanistan. "While we recognize the need for development assistance to Afghanistan, for such assistance to materialize it will require tangible and consistent action by the interim government in terms of its commitments to its people, to the international com-

munity and to international law. We are engaged in direct dialogue in Doha with the interim government around five EU benchmarks, which closely relate to the UNSC Resolution 2593 of 30 August, to which we are all bound". The EU Special Envoy further said "We also underline the importance of an inclusive and representative government in terms of ethnicity, political affiliation, faith and gender. This will require processes that allow the Afghan people, men and women, to have a voice. A voice for domestic recognition". "And, finally, Afghanistan must never again become a threat to its neighbours or other countries, or a safe haven for terrorist organizations", he added. The EU special envoy hoped that the interim government will be ready to demonstrate through concrete action its full commitment in all these areas. "Such action, he said, would gradually help to build trust. And may allow partners of Afghanistan to extend their en-

agement and their assistance even further to move beyond humanitarian and humanitarian+ assistance". The successful hosting of the 17th Extraordinary Session of the OIC's Council of Foreign Ministers on Afghanistan drew worldwide applause for Pakistan for making the global community aware to the deteriorating humanitarian and economic situation in the war-torn country. Convened by Saudi Arabia as OIC chair and hosted by Pakistan with 20 foreign ministers, 10 deputy FMs and 437 delegates in attendance, the session decided to establish a Humanitarian Trust Fund under Islamic Development Bank and launch discussions with UN agencies for actions to unlock financial and banking channels for flow of liquidity and assistance. The world leaders, government functionaries, diplomats and analysts termed the meeting of the 57-member Muslim states' body, as a milestone achievement for Pakistan.

# PIA to start flights between Faisalabad and Quetta

President FCCI demanded equal facilities and incentives for all industries so that a healthy and productive competition could be ensured

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) will start two weekly direct flights between Faisalabad and Quetta from March next year, said Mr. Atif Munir Sheikh, President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI). He was addressing a joint meeting of the four standing committees of the FCCI. He said that a large number of businessmen from Faisalabad travel to Quetta in connection with the businesses and purchase of raw material etc. "The road and train travel is very lengthy, time consuming and unsafe", he said and added that it takes many days which is sheer wastage of time. He said that he took up this issue with PIA officials who have assured that from March 2022, PIA will start at least two weekly flights between Faisalabad and Quetta. President FCCI criticized the unexpected concessions accorded to the industrial sector in erstwhile FATA and said that it would have negative impact on the industry already working in other parts of the country. He said that

this disparity has forced a large number of industrial units to close down which would render hundreds of workers jobless.

He demanded equal facilities and incentives for all industries so that a healthy and productive competition could be ensured. He asked Ashfaq Ashraf chairman FCCI standing committee on Foundry to identify the core issues of this sector along with their workable solutions so that these problems could be highlighted and taken up at the Government level. About Pakistan Railways, he said that a fast non-stop Millat train was started between Faisalabad and Karachi which was getting full passenger load but due to unnecessary interference of the influential elements this train has been turned into a passenger train which is discouraging frequent travelers from Faisalabad as it has increased the traveling time. He demanded that this train must be restored in its original shape. He further said that Pakistan Railways was contemplating to start a new fast train between Shorkot and Lahore via Faisalabad. He said that this train may be declared a passenger train between

Gojra to Faisalabad in order to facilitate the workers who are using roads for their daily travel to their working places. Commenting on the increasing accidents on canal road, he said that a joint meeting with Deputy Commissioner, FDA and TEPA will be arranged very soon to remodel this road to avoid rampant traffic accidents. He said that FCCI members should also submit their proposals in this regard so that the dangerous U-turns could be modified with traffic friendly diversions.

He further said that on behalf of FCCI, he has already written a letter to the education department to launch a continuous traffic awareness campaign for students so that they could be made addicted to the traffic rules. The meeting was also attended by Mr. Atta Ullah Chairman Standing Committee on Allied Engineering, Mirza Zahid Iqbal Chairman Standing Committee on Light Engineering and Mirza Hedayat Ullah Chairman FCCI Standing Committee on Railways in addition to the Executive Members Mian Abdul Waheed and Haji Abdur Rauf. They also presented their trade specific problems.



## IGP directs to recover Wajaha Swati

LAHORE: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Rao Sardar Ali Khan on Wednesday said that abducted Pakistani-American woman Wajaha Swati should be recovered safely at the earliest. He directed the CPO Rawalpindi to personally supervise the investigation of the case and said that all resources be utilized for safe recovery of the abductee. Regarding the significant development in the case of Wajaha Swati, the spokesperson of police said that Rawalpindi police had arrested Rizwan Habib, ex-husband of Wajaha Swati named in the case and further investigation was underway. The case was registered at Morgah police station on the complaint of son of abductee. In this regard, Rawalpindi police were working day and night to bring the case to a logical conclusion at the earliest, the spokesman added. Meanwhile, IG Punjab Rao Sardar Ali Khan also took notice of the incident, in which, a civilian was killed in an aerial firing at a wedding ceremony in Rawalpindi. - APP

## DDC approves 33 development schemes

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: The District Development Committee has approved implementation of 47 development schemes of Roads Construction Division, Highways, Local Govt., WASA, FDA and Buildings under Sustainable Development Goals Achievement Program (SAP) IV, CDP III and ADP at a cost of 450 million. A meeting of District Development Committee was held under the chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner Ali Shehzad. Deputy Director Development Rana Tahir gave a briefing on technical and administrative aspects of development schemes under SAP Phase IV and other programs. ADCG Qaiser Abbas Rind, officers of roads, highways, LG and Community Development WASA and FDA were present. The meeting was informed that 41 schemes of LG

& CD, 3 schemes of WASA, 2 schemes of FDA, 3 schemes of DHA building, one each scheme of PHA and Highways would be completed under these programs and in the rural and urban areas carpet construction of various roads and streets, repair and maintenance of rural drainage system, accuracy of sewer system, installation of water filtration plants and other sectors schemes would be completed. The Deputy Commissioner while reviewing the territorial requirement and fidelity of the development schemes said that expeditious departmental measures should be taken on the schemes approved during the meeting so that these projects could be completed expeditiously. Instructing to keep all the relevant rules and regulations in mind in the schemes, he said that any obstacle or problem should be resolved immediately. There will be no compromise on completeness and transparency.



ISLAMABAD: SAPM on Interfaith Harmony Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi along with Maulana Tahir Jameel and Sri Lanka HC Mohan Wijewickrama addressing to media at Sri Lankan High Commission. - APP

## Sindh govt allots land to AIOU

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has already written a letter to the education department to launch a continuous traffic awareness campaign for students so that they could be made addicted to the traffic rules. The meeting was also attended by Mr. Atta Ullah Chairman Standing Committee on Allied Engineering, Mirza Zahid Iqbal Chairman Standing Committee on Light Engineering and Mirza Hedayat Ullah Chairman FCCI Standing Committee on Railways in addition to the Executive Members Mian Abdul Waheed and Haji Abdur Rauf. They also presented their trade specific problems.

AIOU is setting up its campuses or model study centers where there are no formal education institutes and relocating the university campuses from rented houses to its own buildings. In this regard, the Sindh government has approved to provide six acres of land for the construction of AIOU campus building in Hyderabad. According to Director General Regional Services, Inamullah Sheikh, construction work of the campus will be started after acquiring the allotted land in Hyderabad.

## FESCO upgrades RCSC

FAISALABAD: Infrastructure of the Regional Customers Services Centre (RCSC) of Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO) has been upgraded with installation of latest and state-of-the-art IT related equipments in order to ensure best possible facilities to the electricity consumers and expatriate Pakistanis. This was stated by Rana Atif Chairman HR Committee of FESCO Board of Directors (BoDs) while visiting the RCSC here on Wednesday. He said that all resources were being utilized to make this facility customer-friendly so that consumer's complaints could be resolved there and then in addition to further improving overall image of the company. On this occasion, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) FESCO Engineer Bashir Ahmad briefed Rana Atif about different facilities being offered by RCSC and said that a separate counter has been established for special persons, senior citizens and expatriates where the complaints would be attended immediately. - APP

## Ashrafi, Tariq Jameel meet Sri Lankan HC

ISLAMABAD: Special Representative to the Prime Minister on Religious Harmony and Middle East Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi and renowned preacher and religious scholar Maulana Tariq Jameel visited Sri Lankan high commission and apologized for the Sialkot tragedy. Talking to media, after meeting Sri Lankan High Commissioner in Pakistan, Vice Admiral Mohan Wijewickrama, Hafiz Mohammad Tahir Ashrafi condemning the Sialkot incident said that the Sialkot factory management has decided to bear all the expenses of the two children of Priyantha Kumara Diyawadana, a 49 year old, Sri Lankan citizen lynched by a mob on December 3, 2021 in Sialkot. The administration has also given a job to Sri Lankan citizen in the factory. Maulana Tariq Jameel apologized for the incident saying our religion does not allow such barbarity. Our religion does not allow oppression at all. Maulana Tariq Jameel said that Islam's lit-

eral meaning refers to submission, surrender and peaceful reconciliation, especially compliance with divine directives.

Muslims adhere to the Quran and Sunnah and are required to obey these directives. Holy Quran says Whoever kills an innocent person it is as though he has killed all mankind, and whoever saves a life it is as though he has saved all mankind.

The usurer deserves severe punishment and the one who killed the innocent deserves punishment, he said adding they were visiting Sri Lankan High Commission for seeking apology.

The whole Pakistani nation was ashamed for that barbarity. No one has the right to burn anyone. He asked people to follow the teachings of the Holy Prophet (PBUH). Speaking on the occasion Sri Lankan high commissioner thanked both dignitaries for visiting and said that the Sri Lankan government was fully satisfied with the steps taken by the Pakistani government. - APP

## FDPT elects Muzammil Sultan as chairman

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Mr. Muzammil Sultan former President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) and Mr. Junaid Ahmed Baint has been elected unopposed chairman and vice chairman respectively of the Faisalabad Dry Port Trust (FDPT) for the session 2022-23. Chairman scrutiny committee Chaudhry Iqbal Akbar Khan announced that no other trustee had filed nomination papers for the offices and hence they have been declared successful

uncontested. They will take their new responsibilities from January 01, 2022. The other members of the scrutiny committee are Mr. Imran Ahmed Sheikh of Niagara and Chaudhry Shiraz Siddique. Meanwhile Mian Latif founding chairman of the FDPT, retiring Chairman Mr. Mushtaq Ali Cheema and vice chairman Mr. Tauseef Bari congratulated the newly elected office bearers and hoped that this young team will revive dynamism in Faisalabad Dry Port by taking innovative measures to make it hub of import and export businesses in this region.

## 5m vaccinated against Covid in Faisalabad

FAISALABAD: Over 5.276 million people have so far been vaccinated against COVID-19 in the district. District Health Officer Dr Ataul Mun'im said on Wednesday that 3,328,208 people were injected first dose while 1,880,894 administered the second dose of vaccine. He further said that 38,441 health workers were also given first dose while 28,887 received the second dose of vaccine. He said that sufficient stock of coronavirus vaccine was available in the district.

As of now 187,822 first doses and 125,215 second doses were in the stock in Faisalabad. He said that 37 vaccination centers and 20 mobile

vaccination camps were operational in Faisalabad where registered people were being vaccinated.

In order to facilitate the people these centers had been established in various areas of the city including Allied Hospital, District Head Quarters Hospital, Government General Hospital G.M Abad, Faisalabad Institute of Cardiology, Government General Hospital Samanabad, Children Hospital, sports Complex Samanabad, Tehsil Head Quarters Hospital Jaranwala.

## 4 elephants at Karachi suffering from malnutrition

KARACHI: A detailed medical report of four elephants brought to the Karachi zoo and Safari Park from Africa was submitted to the Sindh High Court (SHC) on Wednesday. The report, prepared by a team of four foreign veterinarians under the guidance of Dr Frank Gortez, reads that the medical examination of the elephants was conducted on November 28 and November 29 which showed that they were suffering from malnutrition.

"Out of these four elephants, two had issues with their teeth and gums," says the report and makes it clear that all of them need urgent medical treatment besides good and a healthy diet. "And if this much-needed treatment is not provided to them on time, these elephants may even die," the report warns.

The report also lays stress on the provision of a healthy environment to the animals 24/7. Apart from that it informs that feet-related diseases are one of the major causes of the deaths of elephants the world over. "Their ultrasound tests were also conducted which showed that they were suffering from obesity, and were still gaining weight. - DNA

## FESCO upgrades with latest IT equipment

FESCO has also started receiving online applications for new electricity connections, which would help consumers to file applications while sitting in their homes

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: Infrastructure of the Regional Customers Services Centre (RCSC) of the FESCO (Faisalabad Electric Supply Company) has been upgraded with installation of latest and state-of-the-art IT related equipments in order to ensure best possible facilities to the electricity consumers and expatriate Pakistanis, said Rana Atif Chairman HR committee of the FESCO BOD (Board Of Directors). During his visit to the RCSC here today, he said that all resources are being utilized to make this facility customer friendly so that consumer's complaints could be resolved there and then in addition to further improving the overall image of FESCO.

Engineer Bashir Ahmad CEO FESCO briefed Rana Atif about the different facilities being offered by RCSC and said that a separate counter has been established for special persons, senior citizens and expatriates where the complaints would be attended immediately. He said that FESCO has introduced a mobile app which could be installed on android mobile phones through the app store. He said that consumers could get information about load management schedules, duplicate bills, lodge complaints regarding electric break-

down and get information about bills of previous months. He said that FESCO has also started receiving online applications for new electricity connections, which would help consumers to file applications while sitting in their homes. Later Chairman HR Committee Rana Atif reviewed the working of modern token machines. He also visited different counters and asked

about their scope of work and performance. General Manager Operation Ch Muhammad Saleem, Chief Engineer P&D Itrat Hussain, Director Commercial Khalid Mehmood, Staff Officer Abid Rashid and other officers were also present during this visit.

**CEO FESCO celebrates Christmas ceremony**  
Humanity is the real crux of Islam and in



Pakistan minorities are enjoying all basic and fundamental rights, said Mr. Bashir Ahmad Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO). Addressing a Christmas cake cutting ceremony in FESCO headquarters, he congratulated the Christian community and said that minorities' rights are fully protected as enshrined in the constitution of Pakistan. "Our Prophet Muhammad Peace Be Upon Him (PBUH) also set examples by safeguarding the rights of the minorities", he said and added that in Pakistan all minorities including Christians are allowed to lead their lives in according to their own religious beliefs and this practice is also being implemented in FESCO.

Pastor Sarfraz Shukat also read out a Christmas message. Later Bashir Ahmad CEO FESCO, General Manager Operation Chaudhary Muhammad Aslam and other officials along with Christian employees cut the Christmas cake. Chief Engineer Muhammad Farooq, Chief engineer development Rana Ayub, Chief Engineer P&D Mr. Itrat Hussain, Chief Financial Officer Nazir Ahmad, Director Public Relations Mr. Tahir Sheikh and other officers also participated in this function.

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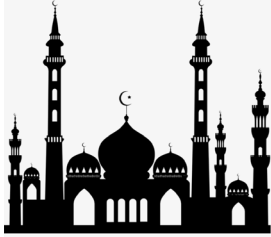
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### SERVICES



#### Namaz Timings

Fajr.....	05:40 am
Zohr.....	12:07 pm
Asr.....	03:26 pm
Maghrib.....	05:04 pm
Isha.....	06:34 pm



#### Hotels & Restaurants

Serena Hotel.....	111 133 133
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## Around \$50mn deals signed at Pak-Uzbek Business Forum

During a question-hour session, Razak Dawood said more than 2,000 business meetings had taken place during the forum

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Commerce and Investment Abdul Razak Dawood on Wednesday informed the Upper House that a Pak-Uzbekistan Business forum was held in July this year at Tashkent for bilateral trade promotion. During a question-hour session, he said more than 2,000 business meetings had taken place during the forum that helped in signing approximately \$50 million agreements and deals, besides 14 other Memorandums of Understandings.

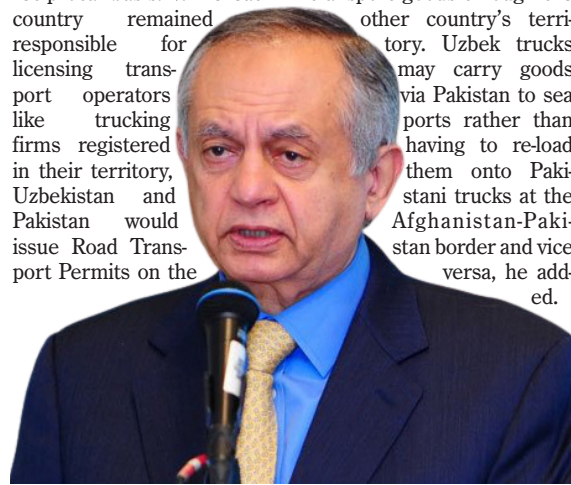
Abdul Razak said besides the business forum, the two sides also signed the agreement between Uzbekistan and Pakistan on Transit Trade (AUPTT) on July 15 this year. About the salient features of AUPTT, he said that transit trade between Uzbekistan and Pakistan would take place along pre-determined routes and only utilizing specified ports and border crossings. The adviser said Uzbekistan and Pakistan were obligated to ensure that suitable infrastructure and personnel were available at border crossings and would provide separate spaces for off-dock terminals and warehousing,

at entry/exit points and other customs notified places, on reciprocal basis. While each country remained responsible for licensing transport operators like trucking firms registered in their territory, Uzbekistan and Pakistan would issue Road Transport Permits on the

basis of which, transport operators would be able to transport goods through the other country's territory. Uzbek trucks may carry goods via Pakistan to sea ports rather than having to re-load them onto Pakistani trucks at the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and vice versa, he added.

He said the Uzbek government would recognize Pakistani driver's licenses and vehicle registration documents, and vice versa while the Uzbek and Pakistani governments would expedite and simplify the process for awarding multiple-entry visas to truck drivers from one another's countries. With the exception of selected perishable items, goods transiting through Uzbekistan and Pakistan would be stored in sealed containers meeting international specifications, the adviser added. He said the Uzbekistan-Pakistan Transit Trade Coordination Committee (UPTTCC), which would

be established under the AUPTT, would be responsible for monitoring and facilitating the implementation of the agreement. Abdul Razak said moreover, as per article 40 (1) of AUPTT, each contracting party would notify the other party in writing regarding completion of its internal legal procedures necessary for the entry into force of the Agreement. As of now, he said the Federal Board of Revenue has notified its rules for the implementation of the agreement. However, Uzbekistan has been requested diplomatically to notify its rules so that the agreement may be operationalized.



### ITP devises strategy for smooth traffic flow

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) has devised a special plan to cope with traffic jams in Capital and also to make special deployment in busy areas of the city for smooth traffic flow. Senior Superintendent of Police (Traffic) Rai Mazhar Iqbal visited various roads on Wednesday including Islamabad Expressway, Murree Road, Sri Nagar Highway and IJP Principal Road. He checked duties of policemen there and directed Zonal SPs to ensure additional deployment at busy points. The SSP (Traffic) said that ITP would come up with a comprehensive plan for smooth flow of traffic to minimise the difficulties being faced by the commuters. He directed for special deployment at various major junctions of the capital in peak hours. He said a modern traffic system would be introduced for convenience of the citizens and they would feel a positive change in the traffic flow. The SSP (Traffic) also stressed upon the personnel of the force to accomplish their responsibilities in a professional manner and work hard for maintenance of better image of the force. He asked to adopt courteous attitude with the public and make more efforts for the equal implementation of traffic laws on roads showing politeness and firm attitude.

### Two drug suppliers awarded sentence

RAWALPINDI: The Additional Sessions Judge Muhammad Afzal Majoka on Wednesday awarded four years and six months imprisonment to one accused in a drug smuggling case. Tahir Mehmood was found guilty of possessing 1270 grams of hashish and was arrested by City police during the current year. After recording evidence of the witnesses and final arguments by the defence and prosecution counsels, the Judge also imposed a fine of Rs 20,000 on the convict besides giving imprisonment sentence. Meanwhile, another District and Sessions Court sentenced an accused Shaukat Ali to four years and six months in prison for having 1370 grams of Charas. The accused was nabbed by Gujranwala Police in 2019 and failed to prove himself blameless. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Assistant Commissioner Islamabad Ms Sidra Anwar, Zafar Bakhtawari, Ahsan Bakhtawari, Waqar Bakhtawari and members of the Christian community cutting cake at a Christmas party hosted by the D Watson Line Club. - DNA

### Christmas cleanliness drive starts

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) on Wednesday kicked off its special cleanliness campaign for Christmas celebrations besides deploying additional sanitary workers. In a statement, Managing Director RWMC Awais Manzoor Tarrar said that a comprehensive plan had been devised on the eve of Christmas. Under the special cleanliness program, all Churches, worship places, and their vicinity were being cleaned, besides the waste containers were also being emptied. The construction material or debris was also being removed from the Churches adjacent areas while water was being sprinkled, Awais said. - DNA

### Five reports of Standing Bodies presented in Senate

ISLAMABAD: As many as five reports of standing committees on Information and Broadcasting, National Health Services, Regulation and Coordination, Railways, Water Resources and Finance, Revenue and Economic Affairs were presented in Senate on Wednesday. The Reports were presented in the House by Senators Faisal Javed, Mohammad Humayun Mohmand, Dost Muhammad Khan, Musadik Masood Malik and Saleem Mandviwalla respectively. Chairman, Standing Committee on Information and Broadcasting Faisal Javed presented special report of the Committee on the seminar for young media professionals from Pakistan organized by the combined efforts of Senate Standing Committee on Information and Broadcasting and Chinese Embassy in Pakistan. Mohammad Humayun Mohmand presented report of the Committee on the Bill further to amend the Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act, 2010 [The Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues (Amendment) Bill, 2021] in the House. Meanwhile, Senator Dost Muhammad Khan on behalf of Chairman, Standing Committee on Railways Muhammad Qasim presented report regarding non-inclusion of Balochistan province in ML-1 project, Senator Musadik Masood Malik Chairman, Standing Committee on Water Resources presented report about details/table of underground water level in every district of Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during the last ten years, ascertainment of decrease in water level in the whole country and the steps taken by the Government to cope with the issue in Senate. Moreover, Saleem Mandviwalla on behalf of Muhammad Talha Mehmood, Chairman, Standing Committee on Finance, Revenue and Economic Affairs presented the report on the Money Bill further to amend certain tax laws [The Tax Laws (Third Amendment) Bill, 2021] in the House. The House also adopted motion regarding the recommendations on the Money Bill further to amend certain tax laws [The Tax Laws (Third Amendment) Bill, 2021], as reported by the Standing Committee on Finance, Revenue and Economic Affairs. - Agencies

### CTO visits RCCI, assures of resolving traffic issues

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Chief Traffic Officer (CTO) Rawalpindi Taimur Khan on Wednesday assured the traders that all efforts would be made to improve the flow of traffic in the city. During a visit to the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI), the CTO said that their suggestions regarding traffic improvement would be implemented while the proposal to ensure smooth

flow of traffic in Saddar area, to ban rickshaw entry from 5 pm to 8 pm was under consideration. Taimur said that the marking of zebra crossings was being developed, and drivers were directed to follow the traffic rules at all intersections. RCCI President Nadeem Rauf, on the occasion, urged for improved traffic management and demanded to build more parking plazas to resolve traffic issues. He said that traffic rules should be strictly enforced, and certifies of appreciation should be given to the wardens who have performed well. Nadeem suggested that a delegation of chambers and traders accompany the CTO to visit the markets and take feedback on traffic flow and solve the issues on the spot. A question and answer session were also held on the occasion, and participants voiced their concerns about encroachments causing traffic blockage in the commercial market, the roadside of Rawal Park and outside Res-

cue 1122 office as the road was occupied by fruit carts, causing severe congestion in traffic and demanding the immediate removal of these carts. It was suggested that the number of traffic wardens at Raja Bazar, City Saddar Road, Committee Chowk, Kachehri Chowk should be increased. The Senior Vice President, Asim Malik, thanked the Chief Traffic Officer for visiting the Chamber and said that such meetings should be held regularly.

### IESCO issues power programme

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Wednesday issued a power suspension programme for Thursday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM. - Agencies

### IT ministry finalizes data protection bill: Amin Ul Haque

The members of the committee appreciated efforts of the Ministry of IT for preparation of the Data Protection Bill. The minister said that the main purpose of the bill was to protect the data of citizens

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Syed Amin Ul Haque on Wednesday informed that data protection bill has been finalized by the Information Technology and Telecommunication Ministry for further approval. While chairing the special Committee on Data Protection, he said, that final draft of the bill will be tabled in Parliament after approval of law ministry and related forums. The meeting was also attended by National Security Advisor Moeed Yousaf, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other stakeholders including trade's representatives. The members of the committee appreciated efforts of the Ministry of IT for preparation of the Data Protection Bill. The minister said that the main purpose of the bill was to protect the data of citizens and to prevent its use without permission. He said that it was an attempt of the ministry to bring the unanimous bill in consultation of the public and other stakeholders. Amin said, "The first priority in the Data Protection Bill is the protection of public and business entities and national security". - DNA

### COMSTech organizes lecture by Prof. Dr. Ariel Silber

ISLAMABAD: COMSTech organized a lecture on "The Role of Amino Acids in the Bioenergetics of Trypanosoma Cruzi" delivered by Prof. Dr. Ariel M. Silber, Department of Parasitology, University of Sao Paulo, online on Wednesday. Prof. Silber talked about Trypanosoma cruzi, and its life cycle and metabolism. He unfolded the very basic fundamentals of mitochondria and its properties as battery. He discussed the contribution of three amino acids: Proline, Histidine, and Alanine. Prof. Silber concluded his talk on answering the question of how we can obtain some numbers of mitochondrial bioenergetics. Coordinator General COMSTech, Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary introduced the speaker to the audience. He

said OIC member states are spread over four continents from north America to Africa, Middle East and Central and South Asia. Prof. Choudhary said that many of these countries are least developed, these are tropical countries and are facing host of problems like illiteracy, lack of medical supplies, healthcare research and huge disease burden. He said, this is the reason that we started this program in collaboration with NTD Network to develop capacity of scientists in this region through the lectures of top scientists of the world. COMSTech, in collaboration with A Global Network for Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTD Network), has launched a virtual lecture series for researchers across the Muslim world. This programme draws



ISLAMABAD: Japanese Ambassador Wada Mitsuhiro called on Federal Minister Syed Ali Haider Zaidi to discuss the development opportunities in maritime sector at Ministry of Maritime Affairs. - DNA

## Briefs

## AFI pays tribute to Quaid-e-Azam

RAWALPINDI: Anjuman Faizul Isam (AFI) Wednesday organized a ceremony in connection with the birth anniversary celebrations of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. Chairman, Begum Qamar Jahan Foundation, Dr Jamal Nasir was chief guest at the function titled 'Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah, a great leader' while President Anjuman Faizul Isam, Dr Riaz Ahmed presided over the program. Senior Vice President, AFI, Mohtarma Fatima Azhar, Chairman Educational Committee of AFI, Muhammad Rafique Chohan, Finance Secretary AFI, Raja Sabir Hussain, Prof. Niaz Irfan, Engineer Muhammad Akmal and others also attended the programme. Dr Jamal Nasir addressing the participants paid rich tributes to Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah for his valuable contribution towards creation of Pakistan, organizing and leading the Muslims to achieve a separate Muslim state in South Asia. He urged the citizens to seek guidance from the lifestyle of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah and work hard, put all energies to transform Pakistan into a model state. — APP

## Five more tested Covid positive

RAWALPINDI: Five more patients were tested positive of fatal coronavirus during the last 24 hours, raising the number of confirmed cases to 39,500 in the district included 36,459 Rawalpindi residents and 3041 from outside districts. Among the new cases, the report said that one of each case has arrived from Rawalpindi Cantonment, Gujjar Khan, Attock, KPK and Islamabad areas. "Presently, 21 confirmed patients were admitted to three city facilities, counting 13 in Institute of Urology, and four in Fauji Foundation and Benazir Bhutto Hospital each," the report said. District Health Authority updated that 38,189 patients had been discharged after recovery, 35,160 with Rawalpindi and 3029 from other districts. In addition, the report informed that 89 were quarantined, including 69 at homes and 20 in the isolation centres. It further updated that 4,216,460 people, including 45,519 health workers, had jabbed themselves against the lethal coronavirus (COVID-19) across the district since the vaccination administering drive launched on March 10. The report said that two patients were on ventilators in critical condition, six stable and 12 on Oxygen support, while the positivity rate was recorded at 0.34 per cent during the last 24 hours in the district. — APP

## EVMs necessary for fair elections: Kanwal

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Secretary for Planning, Development and Reforms Kanwal Shauzab Wednesday said that Pakistan supposed to use Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) as a tool for transparency in electoral system during next general elections in 2023. Talking to a private news channel, she said that PM Imran Khan had already showed his commitment to bring reforms in electoral system by introducing EVMs. She said that during past elections since 1970, the losers always blamed for rigging against the winners. She said that PTI leadership, first time in the history, has solved the problem (rigging) in elections through EVMs system. Replying to a question, she said that PML-N leadership through its fake news propaganda and political influence in the private media houses used to mislead the public, adding, those doing the politics of agitation want to divert public attention from the plunderers. She said that the people are well-aware about the PML-N mafia and thieves who have been exposed. — APP

## ICCI chief calls for following Quaid's vision

Senator Syed Zafar Ali Shah said that Quaid-e-Azam had termed commerce & trade as the life-blood of the economy and had urged for working with honesty & integrity to make Pakistan a hallmark of good standard and quality in the marketplaces of the world

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Muhammad Shakeel Munir, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) has called upon the government to adopt Quaid's vision to make Pakistan a strong economy of the region. He was speaking as chief guest at a ceremony organized by the Islamabad Founder Lions Club at the residence of senior politician and former Senator Syed Zafar Ali Shah to celebrate the birthday of Father of the Nation, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. A cake was cut at the occasion and the importance of Quaid's guiding principles of unity, faith and discipline were highlighted. ICCI President said that implementing the economic vision of Quaid-e-Azam was a key requirement to make Pakistan a self-reliant, progressive and prosperous country. He said that from the very beginning, Quaid-e-Azam had stressed for developing a strong industrial base besides promoting agriculture and other sectors to reduce Pakistan's dependence on others. He emphasized that the whole nation including the business community should follow the Quaid's golden principles to make Pakistan a strong and rising economy. Senior politician and former Senator Syed Zafar Ali Shah said that Quaid-e-Azam had termed commerce & trade as the life-blood of the economy and had urged for working with honesty & integrity to make Pakistan



a hallmark of good standard and quality in the marketplaces of the world. He said the birthday of Quaid-e-Azam reminded us to act upon the Quaid's vision to make Pakistan a prosperous country. Baser Daud, President, Islamabad Founder Lions Club stressed that the government should accord high priority to promoting trade and industry. He said that the government should focus on promoting ease of doing business and take all possible measures to address the key issues of the business community for economic revival of the

country. Jamshaid Akhtar Sheikh Senior Vice President, Faheem Khan Vice President ICCI and others also spoke at the occasion. They said that Quaid-e-Azam had stressed for eradicating the illiteracy and providing the best possible training to technicians, scientists, businessmen and other professionals to produce trained and professional manpower. They urged that the government should pay heed to these principles of Quaid-e-Azam and establish a strong network of

vocational & technical training institutes across the country to produce trained and skilled manpower that would help in putting the country on the path of sustainable economic growth. Sheikh Amir Waheed, Azhar ul Islam, Muhammad Naveed Malik, Khalid Chaudhry, Malik Najeeb, Faizan Shehzad, Malik Rab Nawaz, Shazia Rizwan, Hira Riaz, Malik Shuja, Raja Humayun, Malik Mohsin, Raja Safer, Sheikh Abdul Waheed, Saeed Bhatti, Ashfaq Chatha and others were also present at the occasion.

## ECNEC approves funds for Ring Road project

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The state-of-the-art project Ring Road which has been delayed for 21 years, after the approval from ECNEC, paved the way for laying the foundation stone. Ring Road Rawalpindi will not only reduce traffic flow and environmental pollution from the city but will also usher in a new era of construction and development. 38.6 km long ring road with a width of 360 feet will be constructed according to world standards. This will boost the activities of the industrial and real estate sectors around it. However, the inauguration of these projects will not only strengthen the declining reputation of PTI at the public level but will also bring relief to the more than 7 million population of the Twin Cities. It is reported that preparations for the inauguration of the projects have now started from the Prime Minister's House on December 25. Authorities have completed preparations for the relocation of a few graves and a shrine on the way to Ring Road in Mouza Kalam area.

## PNCA holds events on Quaid Day celebration

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) on Wednesday organized various cultural events in connection with 146th birth anniversary of Quaid-e-Azam Mohammad Ali Jinnah. A painting exhibition, tableau and speech competition were organized aimed to educate youth about the Quaid's vision and his ideology of Pakistan, said a press release issued here. Special events were arranged to highlight and promote ideas and views of the Father of the Nation, particularly on rule of law, the supremacy of the Constitution and upholding of democracy. Around 30 students from various schools participated in the painting competition. A tableau on Quaid Ka Pakistan was also held, in which students paid tribute to Jinnah and the country. They performed on Wattan Ki Matti Gawah Rehna, in front of photographs of notable personalities running in the background. The Quality School Foundation Rawalpindi came in first in the tableau competition. A teacher remarked that the students were very excited to participate in this competition because of their attachment to such events. "In addition to enjoying an extra-curricular activity, it was also a good opportunity for students to learn more about the life of Quaid-e-Azam and his struggle." National Puppet Theater Pakistan National Council of the Arts has presented theme-based puppet shows including the message-Quaid code performances on various socio-economic issues and their solutions. — APP

## PAL to organise Quaid seminar

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Academy of Letters (PAL) will organise "Quaid-e-Azam National seminar" on December 24. Eminent scholar Prof Dr Muhammad Iqbal Chawla will preside over the seminar. Prof Dr Fakharul Islam and Prof Dr Shujah Ahmed will be chief guests on the occasion, said a press release issued here. Prominent scholars Muhammad Yusuf Aziz, Prof Dr Ghulam Qasim Marwat, Dr Wahid Bakhsh Joya will be guests of honour. Chairman PAL, Dr Yusuf Khushk will host the seminar and present welcome remarks on the occasion. Dr Said Muhammad Awan, Dr Samina Yasmeen, Dr Shahzad Qaiser, Dr Muhammad Ishaq Fani, Dr Irum Muzaffar, Dr Siraj Ahmad Somro, Inayatullah Magsi, Dr Humer Naz, Kaleemullah Marwat and Dr Sabahat Jalil will speak on the life and contributions of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah. The seminar would be moderated by Dr Manzoor Ali.



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development, Reforms and Special Initiatives Asad Umar and MNA Ali Nawaz cutting the cake during a ceremony to mark Christmas and new year celebrations. — APP

## PU invites online admissions

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The University of the Punjab on Wednesday advised the students to submit online applications till Dec 30, for new admissions under Ehsaas Undergraduate Scholarship Phase-III Project. The students have been advised to apply through Higher Education Commission (HEC) online application portal <https://ehsaas.hec.gov.pk> to get admission in University of Punjab. The Ehsaas Undergraduate scholarship program was launched by Prime Minister Imran Khan for needy and poor students and all the students with a family income of less than Rs 45,000 per month and studying in the undergraduate programmes across any of the 129 public sector universities recognized by HEC are eligible to apply. BS 1st and 2nd semester students are eligible to apply and the students who are enrolled in morning section's are eligible for Ehsaas Scholarship phase-III. The students who are enrolled in evening sections on self finance basis are not eligible and the students who are taking other scholarship like the Punjab Educational Endowment Fund, HEC Need Based Scholarship or any other are also not eligible for this scholarship. The students who did not fulfill their aim to get more education due to financial problems can apply and get admission under the scholarship program.

## IGP assures to resolve policemen issues on priority

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Muhammad Ahsan Younus on Wednesday met with 170 policemen and assured to resolve their issues on priority. During 'Meet the Force Program' on Wednesday, he interacted with more than 170 officials of different divisions including 12 DSPs, 52 Inspectors, 106 sub-Inspectors and assured to resolve their problems on priority. The IGP said that immediate promotion would be made against all vacant seats and salary would not be deducted of those policemen getting injured during duty. The IGP said that transfer policy would be introduced at all divisions and all posting as well as transfers would be made through it. No transfer would be made before three months and option would be given after this period for getting transfer somewhere else.

The IGP said that purpose of this program is to enhance the coordination among the policemen and officers and discuss their issues. Islamabad police chief directed continuity of all departmental and refresher courses for equipping policemen with modern techniques. He asked the police officials to contact with him in

case of any disease or other issue to him as prompt assistance would be provided through welfare fund. Islamabad police chief assured to stand with those policemen accomplishing their responsibilities in professional manner and honesty while to take stringent action against black sheep as well as poor performers.



## Alvi for grooming of youth in latest technologies

The president emphasised that they would have to change the approach and attitude to brace the latest transformations in the realms of science and technology

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has underscored that skilled and well-equipped youth graduates in the fields of latest technological innovations including wave technology and chip manufacturing could fulfill country's future requirements. He was addressing at the concluding session of the 1st International Conference on Microwave, Antennas and Circuits arranged by the National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST). He stressed upon imparting of quality education at the universities level, besides enhancing the enrollment of graduates in the higher studies to meet the ever-increasing demands of the technological and industrial market. The president emphasised that they would have to change the approach and attitude to brace the latest transformations in the realms of science and technology. "Besides, further enhancing the quality of education at the univer-

sity level, we should focus on increasing the number of graduates in the higher studies to meet the requirements of the local market as well as the global market craving for skilled people," he added. The president said the research should be made in such a way that could be applicable practically to the market consumption.

He observed these were the basic pillars upon which a country's foundation for future progress would depend. The decisions of the academic, political and national leadership also played important role in setting the direction of nations, he opined. The president further stressed upon enhancing the number of stu-

dents pursuing higher education and said that the current ratio of 10 percent should be proportionally increased to fill the vacuum. "Without sacrificing quality, we shall have to increase the numbers of graduates proportionally with all the available tools," he added. Dilating upon the significance of cyber technology, he highlighted

the latest development in chip designing and manufacturing. The president said that the world had taken a paradigm shift in the technological and industrial revolutions, therefore, Pakistan should jump on this fast-paced train with quality trained youth bulge. Pakistan being the fifth most populous country of the world was blessed with immense talented youth bulge who could take edge in the latest technologies, setting the country on the course of rapid progress and prosperity, he added. The president also gave away awards among the researchers for their best research papers over microwave, antenna and circuits technologies. On the occasion, Rector NUST Lieutenant Gen. (ret'd) Javed Mahmood Bukhari and Principal RIMMS Dr. Hamid Mahmood Cheema also spoke on the occasion and highlighted the importance of the conference and exchange of academic and research papers. — APP



## Iran-Saudi rivalry

**T**HE Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) holds potential for being a source of strength for Pakistan to bring to the front pertinent foreign policy issues. Unfortunately, due to a lack of unity and internal skirmishes, the OIC has often failed to make use of that influence. Hosting the OIC this year served as an opportunity for Pakistan, not just to build upon its own regional alliances and highlight the problem of Islamophobia that unites all countries of the OIC, but also, to smooth out the disagreements and misunderstandings that exist. From that angle, there were certainly some successful developments. According to the information ministry, Prime Minister Khan separately met OIC Secretary-General Hissien Ibrahim Taha, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, Iran's Foreign Minister Dr Amir Hossein Abdollahiyan and Malaysian Foreign Minister Dato Sri Saifuddin Abdullah. The Iranian Foreign Ministry has also confirmed that the Iranian Foreign Minister Dr Amir Hussain and Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal Bin Farhan Al Saud met.

On the surface, it does not appear to be a major development. The foreign ministries of all countries are also downplaying this—Pakistan's Foreign Office, while acknowledging the meeting, has not given further details. Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Saeed Khatibzadeh confirmed the meeting, however, termed it as informal and brief, and said there is no progress in negotiations between Iran and Saudi Arabia. However, the impact this can hold for Pakistan if it is to adopt a mediator role between Iran and Saudi Arabia should not be underestimated. This is the sort of role we can play if we use our diplomacy for regional peace. It is a matter that is particularly pertinent to Pakistan, being strong allies of Saudi Arabia, and neighbours to Iran, and an end to this rivalry would be beneficial for all.

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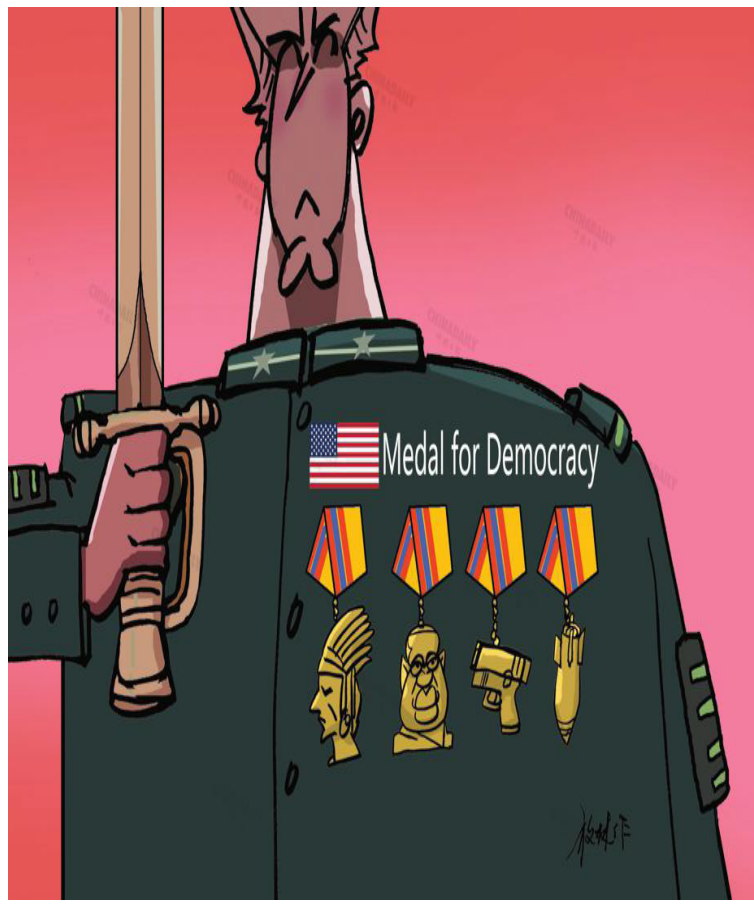
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## Foreign currency regulations

**I**T was reported this week that the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has made amendments to its regulations regarding the purchase of foreign currency, binding all exchange companies to ensure that no individual shall buy foreign exchange of more than \$10,000 per day and \$100,000 per calendar year. These amendments have been introduced to improve documentation and transparency and to further strengthen the foreign exchange regulatory regime.

Given the pace at which the rupee was losing its value, this was an important decision to take. Even though the authorities increased the interest week recently to lower demand, that in and of itself is not sufficient as a measure to bring things under control. It made sense for the SBP to step in considering how substantial amounts of foreign currency was being purchased for speculative gains leading to excessive demand in the open market. Due to this, a large number of people who need foreign currency for reasons such as travel, education, medical needs, etc, are being adversely affected. This decision has had an immediate calming effect on the currency as well as the rupee gained 50 paise to end steady at 180 per dollar in the interbank market on Monday. Now that the demand will be curbed to some extent following these measures, we can only hope for some stability in the forex market in the coming days.

Given the severity of the situation, perhaps the authorities could also consider increasing taxation on online and card payments made to international vendors. Of course these are hard decisions, but there are few options at this moment; most of the goods or services under this category would not be considered essential. While the government continues to downplay the inflationary crisis, the fact is that Pakistan does find itself in a relatively exceptional position. The status quo is unsustainable and the disadvantaged among us continue to bear the brunt. Extreme measures are indeed the need of the hour.

## Palestinian history is being erased — we must reclaim it

Ramzy Baroud

Walid Khalidi, one of Palestine's leading historians, has been aware, along with many others, of these massacres for decades. In his seminal book "All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948," he refers to Al-Burj, writing that its only claim to existence now is "one crumbled house on the hilltop"

**A**N investigative report by the Israeli newspaper Haaretz on the 1948 massacre of Palestinians is a must-read, particularly for those who consider themselves Zionist or who, for whatever reason, support Israel. "In the village of Al-Dawayima ... troops of the 8th Brigade massacred about 100 people," the newspaper reported, though the number of Palestinian victims later grew to 120. One of the soldiers who witnessed the horrific event testified before a government committee in November 1948: "There was no battle and no resistance. The first conquerors killed 80 to 100 Arab men, women and children. The children were killed by smashing their skulls with sticks. There wasn't a house without people killed in it." The Haaretz report of nearly 5,000 words is filled with painful details, including stories of elderly Palestinians who were unable to flee the invasion and ethnic cleansing of historic Palestine (1947-48), and were lined up against various walls and massacred; of an older woman who was shot

four times at point-blank range; of other elders crammed inside a home and shelled by a tank; and of many Palestinian women raped.

Quite often, historians refer to the way Palestine was ethnically cleansed of its native inhabitants by making this typical assertion regarding Palestinian refugees: "Those who fled or were expelled from their homes." The use of the word "fled" has been exploited by supporters of Israel, who claim that Palestinians left of their own accord. It was Haaretz that, in May 2013, reported on how Israel's founding father and first prime minister, David Ben-Gurion, fabricated that very history in order to protect Israel's image. Document number GL-18/17028, which was found in the Israeli military archive, shows how the story of the fleeing Palestinians — supposedly at the behest of Arab governments — was invented by the Israelis. Sadly, as the newspaper's latest revelations prove, Palestinians who chose to stay, due to disability, age or illness, were not spared and were massacred in the most horrifying way imaginable. But something else struck me about the report: The constant emphasis by delusional Israeli leaders, then, that those who carried out the numerous grisly murders were but a few and that they hardly represented the conduct of an entire army. Note that the "army" referred to here are Zionist militias, some of which operated under the title of "gang."

Moreover, much emphasis was attached to the concept of "morality," for example, "Israel's moral foundations," which, according to those early "ethical Zionists," were jeopardized by the misconduct of a few soldiers. "In my opinion, all our moral foundations have been undermined and we need to look for ways to curb these instincts," Haim-Mosh Shapira, then-minister of immigration and health, was reported by Haaretz as saying during a meeting of the government committee. Shapira, a voice of reason and ethics in Israel at the time, was not questioning Israel's right to be established on the ruins of colonized — and eventually destroyed — Palestine. Nor was he questioning the killing of tens of thousands of Palestinians or the ethnic cleansing of hundreds of thousands during the Nakba. Instead, he was protesting the excess violence that followed the

Nakba, when the future of Israel and the destruction of Palestine had been assured.

This branch of "humanistic" Zionism, that of selective and self-serving morality, still exists today. As odd as that may seem, the editorial line of Haaretz itself is the perfect manifestation of this supposed Zionist dichotomy. Needless to say, few Israelis, if any, have been held accountable for the crimes of the past. More than 70 years later, Palestinian victims still cry out for a justice that continues to be deferred. One might find this conclusion a bit harsh. Zionist or not, one may protest that, at least, Haaretz has exposed these massacres and the culpability of the Israeli leadership. Such assumptions are highly misleading, however.

Walid Khalidi, one of Palestine's leading historians, has been aware, along with many others, of these massacres for decades. In his seminal book "All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948," he refers to Al-Burj, writing that its only claim to existence now is "one crumbled house on the hilltop." This is not the first time an Israeli admission of guilt, though always conditional, has validated Palestinian victimization. In other words, every Palestinian claim of Israeli misconduct, though it may be verified or even filmed on camera, remains in question until an Israeli newspaper, politician or historian acknowledges its validity. Our insistence on the centrality of the Palestinian narrative becomes more urgent than ever, because marginalizing Palestinian history is a form of denial of that history altogether — the denial of the bloody past and the equally violent present. From a Palestinian point of view, the fate of Al-Burj is no different from that of Jenin, that of Mirun no different from that of Beit Hanoun, and that of Deir Yassin no different from that of Rafah — in fact, the whole of Gaza.

Reclaiming history is not an intellectual exercise but a necessity, with intellectual, ethical, political and legal repercussions. Surely, Palestinians do not need to rewrite their own history; it is already written. It is time that those who have paid far more attention to the Israeli narrative abandon such illusions and listen to Palestinian voices, because the truth of the victim is a wholly different story from that of the aggressor.

— Courtesy: Arab News

## Are Arab militias losing their usefulness for Iran?

James M. Dorsey

"That decision is an Iraqi one," said Qais al-Khazali, the leader of Asaib Ahl al-Haq or Khazali Network, in a television interview days later. "Iran isn't the way it used to be, with 100% control over the militia commanders"

**I**RANIAN support for Arab militias has long threatened Iran's detractors, unable to develop an effective counterstrategy. Now, the tide may be turning. A string of events suggests that the usefulness of at least some of the militias in Lebanon, Yemen, Iraq, and Palestine is waning as their popularity diminishes and relations with Iran encounter headwinds. The militias' changing fortunes and Iran's seemingly reduced influence challenges fundamental strategic and defence concepts embraced by the Islamic Republic since the clergy-led revolution toppled the US-backed Shah in 1979.

"The overall picture is that Iran's expansion peaked in 2018 and has since entered a new phase, in which Tehran has not suffered any strategic military set-backs but is hitting a wall. Iran's biggest fundamental problem is that a majority of its allies ... frequently succeed in armed confrontations. Yet they are subsequently incapable of ensuring political and economic stability," said Middle East scholar Guido Steinberg. Add to that, almost 43 years later, Iran is a revolution that, not unsurprisingly, has gone off the

rails. Beyond widespread corruption and economic mismanagement, Iran has lost its initial pan-Islamic ecumenical revolutionary appeal to Shiites and Sunnis alike. Instead, Sunni Muslims today perceive it as a Shiite and Iranian nationalist force. To be clear, Iran is not about to dump its non-state Arab allies. They remain too strong a military force to defeat and valuable leverage of Iranian regional power in Lebanon and Iraq even if they may be past the peak of their shelf life. Moreover, groups like Lebanon's Hezbollah and the Gaza Strip's Hamas could force Israel to fight on two if not three fronts were Israel to strike against Iranian nuclear facilities.

As such, the strategy to build an outer defence line in Arab countries populated by local actors has paid off handsomely. Hezbollah has become the most powerful political and military force in Lebanon, a player in the Syrian civil war, and a model for militias elsewhere. Hamas has ruled the impoverished Gaza Strip since 2007 while the Houthis have stymied the Saudi war machine, if not, for all practical purposes, defeated the kingdom in an almost seven-year-long devastating war. Iraqi militias are a force unto themselves. More troublingly, militias like Hezbollah and Iranian-backed groups in Iraq have become increasingly identified with corrupt regimes that have responded violently to mass protests demanding wholesale change. Protesters have taken the predominantly Shiite Muslim militias to task for promoting a sectarian rather than a national identity that transcends religion and ethnicity.

An alliance of Iranian-backed Shiite militias emerged as the biggest loser in last October's Iraqi elections. The Fateh (Conquest) Alliance, previously the second-largest bloc in parliament, saw its seats drop from 48 to 17. Moreover, claims by Hamas in Palestine and the Houthis in Yemen that wars, foreign intervention, and blockades prevent them from delivering public goods and services are wearing thin. Compared to past military conflagrations, last

May, an 11-day war with Israel failed to move the needle on Hamas's popularity impaired by allegations of corruption and mass unemployment. Meanwhile, Iran's ambassador to the Houthis in Yemen, Hasan Irlu, a close associate of General Qassem Soleimani, the powerful leader of the Iranian Revolutionary Guard's expeditionary Quds Force, who was killed in an American drone strike in Baghdad last year, was reported to have died of Covid-19 while in transit in the kingdom en route to Iran. Iranian officials blamed his death on a Saudi refusal to allow an Iranian aircraft to pick up the ambassador in the Yemeni capital of Sana'a and fly him directly to Tehran. Mr. Irlu "was evacuated in poor condition due to delayed cooperation from certain countries," said Iranian foreign ministry spokesperson Saeed Khatibzadeh. Saudi Arabia this week bombed Sana'a airport after Mr. Irlu's evacuation.

Houthi officials said that Mr. Irlu's illness provided an "opportunity" for the rebels to demand his departure. They said the group had complained to the Iranian leadership about Mr. Irlu's failure to coordinate with the rebels in his meetings with tribal and political leaders. Similarly, Esmail Qaani, Mr. Soleimani's successor as commander of the Qods Force, encountered pushback when he met in July with pro-Iraqi militias in Baghdad. Mr. Qaani sought to ensure that they would refrain from attacking US targets in the runup to renewed nuclear negotiations in Vienna. "Iran isn't the way it used to be, with 100% control over the militia commanders," said an Iraqi Shiite political leader. That is a realization that has yet to take root in Tehran, and once it does could have far-reaching consequences for Iranian policies and posture. Initially, Iran's cost/benefit analysis is likely to conclude that the benefits of support for non-state Arab militias continue to outstrip the cost.

The question is, for how long.

— Dr. James M. Dorsey is an award-winning journalist and scholar and a Senior Fellow at the National University of Singapore's Middle East Institute

## US policy dilemma in Afghanistan

Syeda Hudaisa Kazmi

President Joe Biden despite being an advocate of retaining a limited presence in Afghanistan, followed the footprints of his predecessor. The Taliban did not win because they defeated the Americans. Taliban won because Americans withdrew from Afghanistan. The war that Americans lost and Taliban won was not lost or won on military grounds. It was a political contest that has been won politically by Taliban. Taliban did not use violence or military tactics to push Americans outside Afghanistan. They went on conquering one region after the other without much resistance

**T**HERE is only one decisive victory: the last." These are the words of famous military strategist Clausewitz. The United States spent \$1 trillion, almost two decades, and claimed to have achieved the primary purpose in Afghanistan that was defeating Al-Qaeda yet the end for Americans cannot be regarded as a "decisive victory". It is true that the initial goal of the United States was to defeat Al-Qaeda but it soon realized that the problem is not Al-Qaeda alone. When the Taliban refused to hand over Osama Bin Laden to Americans, the Taliban had already shown which side they have chosen. Now the Taliban were a problem too.

Taliban were also apparently defeated after the toppling of their government in the aftermath of 9/11 but now stability in Afghanistan became a challenge for the world. The power vacuum that was created in Afghanistan could have provided space for terrorist groups to rise and threaten the US again. The US being the custodian of moral principles, democracy, and good governance took up the role of a responsible hegemon.

The goal shifted from defeating Al-Qaeda to defeating the Taliban to state-building and nation-building in Afghanistan. The end goal was noble, the means were not. State-building and nation-building are not possible through external factors. It does not necessarily require huge resources and boots on the ground. The political change must come from within. The problem lied in internal weaknesses. The US injected an abundance of resources in the hope of establishing democracy, forming a stable government, ensuring fair elections, framing a strong constitution, and promoting peace and security. However, it failed to understand that money cannot ensure these factors. The abundance of foreign resources resulted in a corrupt government and the democratization of a tribal nation became a problem. For Afghans, tribal identities mattered more than the national identity under a democratic system.

The resources were not reaching the common people. There was a weak judiciary. Violence could not be contained. The govern-

ment lost its legitimacy in the eyes of the public. All these factors made many people feel wistful about Taliban rule.

Another pertinent factor that was at play was the game of narratives. The failure of the US in Afghanistan was not an abrupt event. It has started long ago and ironically the United States was aware of it but never acknowledged it. For the American people and the entire world, they projected the narrative of inching closer to success day by day but the reality was far from it. In the guise of this constructed narrative, the US kept on making miscalculations one after the other. The first miscalculation was to invest so carelessly in Afghanistan without any check on where the money was going. The second miscalculation was to withdraw from Afghanistan in haste.

The US withdrawal was not due to military limitations, the purpose of peace in Afghanistan, or the people of Afghanistan. It was because of domestic issues of the US. The failure of the US in Afghanistan can be attributed to its "imperial overstretch". The biggest challenge that the US faced in Afghanistan impacted its domestic situation as well as maintaining a balance between its resources and national security commitments. When the idea of withdrawal was floated by President Donald Trump, he did not care about the aftermaths on regional security and the people of Afghanistan.

President Joe Biden despite being an advocate of retaining a limited presence in Afghanistan, followed the footprints of his predecessor. The Taliban did not win because they defeated the Americans. Taliban won because Americans withdrew from Afghanistan. The war that Americans lost and Taliban won was not lost or won on military grounds. It was a political contest that has been won politically by Taliban. Taliban did not use violence or military tactics to push Americans outside Afghanistan.

They went on conquering one region after the other without much resistance. The Afghan army trained by Americans and well equipped surrendered in the face of weakly equipped Taliban. The local population welcomed the Taliban rule. It was a political victory for Taliban attributed to the loss of faith in the Afghan government and the political will of the US to provide for Afghan people.

There was a battle of narratives and the only thing that mattered was that whose narrative is stronger. Unites States and the Afghan government projected Taliban to be hardcore extremists who would revert the country back to the Stone Age. On the other hand, Taliban kept on emphasizing the nature of corrupt Afghan government. In the end, the Taliban narrative was strong enough to defeat the other narratives.

It is true that the US managed to attain its initial goals but what about the goal that it created itself over the period of time? What about the reconstruction and state-building in Afghanistan? Is the world ready to work for the goodwill of Afghan people and peace in the country? For once will anyone think sincerely about peace in Afghanistan? Whether it was corrupt government or narrative building, the Taliban are a reality now.

The international community needs to find a way to deal with them. The façade of establishing peace in Afghanistan for the past twenty years has taught one very important lesson that violence does not end violence. There should be a political solution to bring peace and stability in Afghanistan. The actors who have stakes in Afghanistan should forget about pursuing their national interest and focus on rebuilding peace in the region. It looks convenient to contest your enemy in a foreign land but people of that country are suffering. The flagbearers of protection of human rights should now play their role carefully. Although the world is not ready to fund the Taliban government until they qualify on certain merits, yet controlled financial aid can be poured into the country through different organizations to primarily assist the Afghan people. The major powers should truly take calculated and responsible steps in order to bring peace to Afghanistan.

— Author is an Islamabad based writer who focuses on South Asian Politics and Afghanistan.

## Briefs

## SAARC's role crucial for welfare of region: FM

FROM PAGE 01

The Foreign Minister recalled the important and constructive role played by Pakistan in realizing the true potential of SAARC and making it a useful organization for regional cooperation and mutual benefit based on the principle of sovereign equality. He reassured the Secretary-General of Pakistan's strong support for regional cooperation and urged him to accelerate the pace of SAARC process.

The Foreign Minister reiterated Pakistan's commitment for hosting the SAARC Summit when the artificial obstacles created in its way would be removed.

The Secretary-General SAARC thanked the Foreign Minister for sharing his views on different SAARC related issues and assured to make concerted efforts to strengthen cooperation among Member States so as to realize the full potential of SAARC.

## Japan expands aid to Afghan refugees

FROM PAGE 01

nutrition, protection, education, water and sanitation for the Afghan refugees and their host communities in Balochistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Punjab and Sindh provinces.

On 20 December, the Government of Japan officially announced its plan to contribute a total of approximately USD 109 million to address the escalating humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan and the affected neighboring countries. The above-mentioned USD 3.72 million assistance is part of this plan.

## UNSC adopts resolution to ease...

FROM PAGE 01

"not a violation" of sanctions imposed on entities linked to the Taliban, it adds. The international community has struggled over how to avert a humanitarian catastrophe amid an economic meltdown in Afghanistan since the Taliban swept back to power in mid-August, prompting the United States to freeze \$9.5 billion in assets belonging to the Afghan central bank.

An earlier US resolution had sought to authorise case-by-case exemptions to sanctions, but that was blocked by veto-wielding permanent Security Council members China and Russia. "Humanitarian aid and life-saving assistance must be able to reach the Afghan people without any hindrance," China's UN Ambassador, Zhang Jun, said in a tweet Monday. The decision to limit the scope of the resolution to one year, which was not part of the first draft, aims to satisfy Washington's European allies, who, like India, had criticised the absence of any deadline and called for strict control over the destination of aid.

## Royal Bahraini Naval Commander meets COAS

FROM PAGE 01

wish for long term and multi-domain enduring relationship with Bahrain. "On Afghanistan, the COAS stressed upon the need for global convergence and sincere efforts to avert a looming humanitarian catastrophe. He underscored the importance of peace and reconciliation initiatives in Afghanistan.

The visiting dignitary also appreciated Pakistan's role in Afghan situation, special efforts for border management and role in regional stability.

## Astana talks aimed at Syria's territorial integrity

The 17th round of the international meeting on Syria kicked off in Kazakh capital Nur-Sultan on Monday with the attendance of representatives of the sides, as well as the guarantor countries Turkey, Russia, and Iran

## FOREIGN DESK

ANKARA: A day after the latest two-day round of Syria talks kicked off in Kazakhstan, the parties of the Astana Process expressed their "strong commitment" to Syria's political unity and territorial integrity, Turkey's Foreign Ministry said on Wednesday. The 17th round of the international meeting on Syria kicked off in Kazakh capital Nur-Sultan on Monday with the attendance of representatives of the sides, as well as the guarantor countries Turkey, Russia, and Iran. "At the meeting, latest developments in the political

process, situation in Idlib, humanitarian aid and counter-terrorism issues were discussed," the Turkish ministry said in a statement. Ambassador Selcuk Unal, the Turkish Foreign Ministry's director-general responsible for Syria, represented Ankara at the meetings, while the Russian delegation was led by Presidential Envoy for Syria Alexander Lavrentiev and Iran's by Ali Asghar Khaji, a senior aide to Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian. The Syrian regime joined the meeting with a delegation headed by Deputy Foreign Minister Ayman Susan and the opposition with a delegation headed by Ahmad Tuma.

Syria's neighboring Iraq, Lebanon, and Jordan are also taking part in the meetings with observer status, along with UN special envoy for Syria Geir Pedersen. During the talks, the Turkish side first met with the UN Special Delegation to Syria. Underlining that the parties "emphasized the importance of maintaining calm" in the de-escalation zone in Idlib, a northwestern province of Syria, the ministry also announced that they "agreed to make further efforts to improve the humanitarian situation on the ground." "The Parties underlined that illegitimate self-rule initiatives under the pretext of fighting terrorism are

unacceptable," it said, also expressing "grave concern" over the "increasing attacks and oppression against civilians by separatist structures in the east of the Euphrates." "In this context, our determination in the fight against the PKK/YPG terrorist organization was emphasized." According to the statement, the participating sides also declared their commitment to "advancing the political process in accordance with UN Security Council resolution 2254." "In this context, they called for holding the seventh round of the Constitutional Committee as soon as possible with a constructive approach by the Syrian

parties," it said. As the return of Syrian refugees was also a point of discussion at the meeting, the officials "underlined the importance and priority of facilitating the return of internally displaced persons and refugees to their original places of residence in a dignified, safe and voluntary manner," according to the ministry. A working group on the release of detainees/abductees, the handover of bodies, and identification of missing people also convened on the sidelines, it said. "Mutual release of some detainees on 16 December as part of the sixth project of the Working Group was welcomed. It was agreed to continue such ac-

tivities and cooperation," added the statement. Earlier, Iran's Foreign Ministry unveiled plans to host the next round of the Astana meeting on the Syrian crisis in its capital Tehran, without giving an exact date. Syria has been ravaged by a civil war since early 2011 when the Bashar al-Assad regime cracked down on pro-democracy protesters with unexpected ferocity. The Astana peace process to end the conflict was launched in January 2017 at the initiative of Turkey, Russia and Iran. Meetings of the Astana guarantors also contribute to the advancement of the UN-led diplomatic process in Geneva.

## Bencic, Jabeur positive for Covid-19 after Abu Dhabi



PARIS: Olympic tennis champion Belinda Bencic and Tunisian Ons Jabeur have tested positive for Covid-19 after competing in the Abu Dhabi exhibition, both confirmed on Tuesday, a day after Rafael Nadal an-

nounced he had also tested positive. Former men's world number one Nadal's Spanish coach Carlos Moya,

45, also announced on Tuesday he had tested positive on his return from Abu Dhabi. Jabeur replaced US Open champion Emma Raducanu after the Briton withdrew from the event after a positive test. World number ten Jabeur said that despite being vaccinated she was "experiencing strong symptoms" and would be recuperating in her native Tunisia. "I hope to overcome the virus quickly and get well soon," Jabeur added on Twitter. "Unfortunately and even though I am fully vaccinated, I recently tested positive for COVID-19," 23rd-ranked Swiss Bencic also said on Twitter. "I am currently isolating and taking all precautionary (measures) to get through this as best as possible as I am experiencing quite severe symptoms (fever, aches, chills). "While the timing is not ideal - as I was in the final stages of my preparations for the Australian Open swing - I will make my way to Australia as soon as I am cleared and past the isolation period." The Australian Open begins on January 17 in Melbourne. Moya, winner of the French Open in 1998, said in a series of tweets he had been experiencing: "Fever, headache, sweating, pain all over the body, chills. I hope the worst is over." - Agencies

## US concerned over Turkey's drone sales to conflict-hit Ethiopia

## AGENCIES

ISTANBUL: US authorities have taken issue with Turkey over its sales of armed drones to Ethiopia, where two sources familiar with the matter said there was mounting evidence the government had used the weapons against rebel fighters. Washington has "profound humanitarian concerns" over the sales, which could contravene U.S. restrictions on arms to Addis Ababa, a senior Western official said. The year-long war between Ethiopia's government and the leadership of the northern Tigray region, among Africa's bloodiest conflicts, has killed thousands of civilians and displaced millions. A State Department spokesman said U.S. Horn of Africa envoy Jeffrey Feltman "raised reports of armed drone use in Ethiopia and the attendant risk of civilian harm" during a visit to Turkey last week. A senior Turkish official said Washington conveyed its discomfort at a few meetings, while Ethiopia's military and government did not respond to detailed requests for comment. Turkey, which is selling drones to several countries in Europe, Africa and Asia, has dismissed criticism that it plays a destabilising role

in Africa and has said it is in touch with all sides in Ethiopia to urge negotiations. Last week the United Nations agreed to set up an independent investigation into rights abuses in Ethiopia, a move strongly opposed by its government. Tigrayan rebel forces said on Monday they were withdrawing from some northern regions after government advances and, in a letter to the UN, called for a no-fly zone for drones and other hostile aircraft over Tigray. The U.S. State Department clamped down in May on exports of defence products for Ethiopia's armed forces. In September, the White House authorised sanctions on those engaged, even indirectly, in policies that threaten stability, expand the crisis or disrupt humanitarian assistance there, though there has been no indication of any such imminent action against Turkey. The U.S. Treasury, which has broad economic sanctions authority under that executive order, declined to comment on whether sanctions could apply to Turkey. The senior Turkish official said the foreign ministry examined how the drone sales might impact U.S. foreign policy as part of 2022 budget planning.

## German RT channel goes off air after Russia row

FRANKFURT: The German-language channel of Russian state broadcaster RT was taken off air Wednesday for not having a valid satellite license, German regulators said, in the latest escalation of a media spat between the two countries. Germany's MABB media watchdog said RT DE had neither requested nor been granted a broadcasting license in the country. European satellite operator Eutelsat confirmed it had suspended the channel at the request of German regulators, "effective as of today". The move comes less than a week after YouTube blocked a third German-language RT channel, angering Moscow. RT DE said the latest attempt to block its broadcasts was "illegal" and the result of political pressure from Berlin, at a time of diplomatic tensions between Germany and Russia. It says the channel is headquartered in Moscow and has a Serbian license for cable and satellite transmission, which RT says allows it to be broadcast in Germany under European law. Germany's MABB regulatory authority however considers the Serbian license insufficient because RT DE "is in German and aimed at the German market". - APP

## Kenya bans unvaccinated from public places

NAIROBI: People in Kenya will have to show proof of Covid-19 vaccination to use public transport or enter government offices, the health ministry said Wednesday, ignoring a court order against the measures. The proportion of Kenyans returning a positive Covid test has soared recently, from 1 percent in early December to almost 30 percent now, smashing previous records as fears grow over the infectiousness of the Omicron variant. In the last 24 hours, 3,328 people have been diagnosed with Covid-19 out of 11,197 tests - a key indicator of the spread of the virus in a country where access to tests is limited and overall infection figures can be unreliable. The East African country announced last month that it would impose tough restrictions on unvaccinated people from December 21 but a Nairobi court last week suspended the order pending the hearing of a case filed by a businessman who called the measures "tyrannical". But on Wednesday, senior health ministry official Mercy Mwangangi said the restrictions were now in force. "In public places, all persons must show proof of vaccination for admission for example into national parks, game reserves, hotels, bars as well as use of public transport," she said. "In the event of non-compliance, action shall be taken, which may include the withdrawal of the licence of the institution." - APP

## Tunisia introduces compulsory vaccine passes

TUNIS: Compulsory vaccination passes aimed at limiting the spread of Covid-19 came into force in Tunisia on Wednesday, despite some popular opposition and criticism from rights group Amnesty International. Only those presenting a vaccination pass and their national identity card are now able to access cafes, banks, shopping centres and state institutions. Dozens of people protested in central Tunis on Tuesday and Wednesday against the measure, which was decided by President Kais Saïed in October with the aim of speeding up the country's vaccination campaign and limiting the spread of the virus. On Tuesday, Amnesty International urged the authorities to suspend application of the decree, saying it contained provisions which violate human rights. "The Tunisian authorities must not implement the new decree-law until they have amended it to ensure the vaccine pass requirements do not violate international human rights law by needlessly threatening the livelihoods of Tunisians by inflicting unduly harsh penalties for non-compliance". - APP

## Top players entered next round of Serena Tennis C'Ship

## AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Top seeding players entered into the second round of on going Serena Hotels National Ranking Tennis Championship here at PTF Complex, Islamabad organized by PTF on Wednesday. A total number of 22 matches were played on the third day and following are the results are given below: Men's Singles (First Round): Sami Zeb Khan btIrsrarGul 6-2, 6-4; Waqas Malik btFaizanFayyaz 7-5, 6-2; Saqib Hayat btJibrannulHaq 6-4, 6-3; Hamid IrsarbtNameerShamsi 7-5, 6-2; NofilKalembt Farman Shakeel 6-2, 6-3 Boy's U-18 Singles (First Round): Hasheesh Kumar btRaahimVeqar 6-0, 6-2; Azan Shahidbt M. Ibrahim Saqib 6-2, 2-6, 6-4; Mahatir Muhammad btZaeemGhafoor 6-1, 6-2; Kamran Khan bt Azan Sajid 6-2, 6-0; M. Zaryab Khan bt Zalan Khan 7-5(ret); Ladies Singles (First Round): Sarah MahboobbtMahnoorSuhail 6-0, 6-0; NidaAkrambtAzeenaAleem 7-6(5), 6-2; UshnaSuhail w/o Sara Pervez; SheezaSajidbtOreenJasia 6-2, 6-2; MeheqKokhar w/o Amara Khan; Noor Malik (Wapda) w/o Aesha Rao; Natalia Zamanbt Mariam Mirza 6-0,6-1; AsifaShahbaz bt SeherAleem 6-4, 6-3 Men's Doubles (First Round): Yousaf Khalil / Heera Ahsiqht Ahmed Asjad / Talha Bin Asif 6-2, 6-3; Shahzad Khan / Usman EjazbtNameerShamsi / Imran Bhatti 6-1, 6-3; Hasheesh Kumar / Mahatir Muhammad bt Abbas Khan / Tahir Ullah 6-3, 3-6 (10-6); Ahmed Kamil / Ibrahim Omer btEjaz Ahmed / AsadUllah 6-2, 6-4 (10-8)

## AHC: India beat Pakistan 4-3 to bag bronze

## DNA

DHAKA: India outclassed Pakistan by 4-3 in the thrilling third-place encounter to achieve a bronze medal in the Men's Asian Champions Trophy 2021 in Dhaka. Both Pakistan and India were edged out from the tournament after South Korea thumped Pakistan by 6-5 in the first semi-final and Japan beat India by 5-3 in the second. In the interesting bronze medal match, India started the game in an attacking style as Harmanpreet Singh scored the goal in just the second minute of the match, as Pakistan's Afraz

brought things level in the 10th minute. Though, the second quarter went goal-less as both teams ended the first half with one goal each. Pakistan's Rana put his team 2-1 ahead by scoring the goal in the 33rd minute, as India's midfielder Sumit once again equalised the match. The last ten minutes of the game were full of intense hockey as both teams displayed some attacking hockey, and India's Varun put them 3-2 ahead in the 53rd minute, while Akashdeep doubled the lead three minutes later. Pakistan's Nadeem brought hope by scoring in the 57th minute to make it 4-3, but India suc-



cessfully defended their lead as they clinch the important match against arch-rivals Pakistan to achieve a bronze medal.

The final of Men's Asian Hockey Champions Trophy 2021 will be played between South Korea and Japan today.

## Ramiz gives good news to cricket fans in Pak

The PCB chairman spoke about Pakistani leg-spinner Yasir Shah, who was named in the FIR of a minor's rape. Without taking his name, Raja said that the PCB has a "no tolerance policy" in such matters and that an investigation is underway to uncover the truth related to the case

## NAZIR SAYAL

KARACHI: Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chairman Ramiz Raja Wednesday said he would not "rest" till Pakistan does not become a world-class team and beats Australia at their home turf. The former Pakistan captain and PCB chairman was addressing a press conference in Karachi with newly-appointed CEO Faisal Hasnain. Raja spoke on a wide range of issues, including the dismal attendance during the recently-held Pakistan-West Indies series, the need for

permanent coaches and team selection. The PCB chairman said that the team was on an impressive trajectory but acknowledged that "more work needs to be done." "Pakistan has to improve its fielding a lot," he noted. "I have been working at the PCB for the past three months yet it feels like 30 years have passed. I now realise that holidays are a huge blessing." Raja spoke about his performance so far as the PCB chairman, saying that he raised his voice at the Asian Cricket Council after New Zealand and England withdrew from the Pakistan tour.

"I said during the meeting that if any Asian country is mistreated, everyone should raise their voices against it," he disclosed. The former Pakistan cricketer said that he did not have any "final opinion" when it comes

to coaches. "We would be trapped if we roped in coaches for long-term contracts. We need specialists, not coaches," he added. The former Pakistan cricketer said that it would be better if coaches were em-

ployed at the basic level to groom future stars, adding that no decision had been taken to either appoint a local or foreign coach yet. The PCB chairman spoke about Pakistani leg-spinner Yasir Shah, who was named in the FIR of a minor's rape. Without taking his name, Raja said that the PCB has a "no tolerance policy" in such matters and that an investigation is underway to uncover the truth related to the case. Ramiz Raja said that the players representing Pakistan are on ambassadorial positions, adding that they have been trained who to pick and socialise with. He said that the players' sal-

aries have been increased so that they can stay in five-star accommodations where there are no distractions. "Each player earns Rs50 to 60 lac per month," he disclosed. However, he stated that the PCB plans to invite scholars to give players lectures on morality. "We have invited Mustansar Hussain tarrar and Ashfaq Ahmed to talk to players on how to handle fame and [educate them] that making money should not be their focus. We need to work on them more," he added. Additionally, Chairman PCB, said that the media made headlines on the case prematurely.



## Briefs

Turkey  
arrests US  
diplomat

## AGENCIES

ANKARA: Turkish authorities have arrested an American diplomat working for the U.S. Consulate in Lebanon for allegedly providing a fake passport to a Syrian national, Turkey's state-run news agency reported on Wednesday.

The Anadolu Agency said the suspect, identified by his initials D.J.K., was detained at Istanbul Airport on Nov. 11, and was later formally arrested on suspicion of selling the forged passport to the Syrian national for \$10,000.

Anadolu said the Syrian was detained for questioning after he attempted to travel to Germany on the false passport, which was in D.J.K.'s name.

Police later determined through an examination of security camera footage, that D.J.K. gave him the passport at the airport and the two also exchanged clothes. Police also seized an envelope containing \$10,000 from the diplomat, the report said.

The American was jailed while the Syrian was released pending possible proceedings for falsifying documents, Anadolu reported.

The U.S. Embassy in Ankara would not comment on the report. There was also no immediate comment from the U.S. Embassy in Beirut.

Libya's  
interim PM  
resumes  
duties

## NEWS DESK

TRIPOLI: Libya's interim Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibeh has resumed his duties, amid an expected postponement of the country's presidential elections, according to a Libyan government source on Wednesday.

"Dbeibeh resumed his duties on Tuesday after a suspension for participating in the polls," said the source, who preferred to remain unnamed. In November, Dbeibeh assigned his duties to his deputy in order to take part in the country's presidential elections, slated for Dec. 24.

The move comes amid reports about a possible postponement of the polls. Earlier on Wednesday, Libya's High National Elections Commission proposed postponing the presidential elections for one month, to be held on Jan. 24, 2022.

Libyan rival parties have been in disagreement over the voting timetable for the presidential and parliamentary elections to be held simultaneously or one after the other.

Libyans hope that the upcoming elections will contribute to ending an armed conflict that has plagued the oil-rich country for years.

Dozens feared  
missing after  
Myanmar  
landslide

## WEB DESK

YANGON: Dozens of people are missing after a landslide hit a town in the Southeast Asian country of Myanmar on Wednesday. The incident occurred in the Hpakant township in the northern Kachin state at around 4 a.m. (2130GMT Tuesday night). "More than 100 vendors and prospectors are missing," the Irrawaddy news website tweeted.

It was the second landslide since last Sunday. "The landslide left over 80 people missing, and the rescue operation is being carried out," U Kyaw Min, a village administration office official, told Chinese Xinhua News.

It said the landslide occurred at a jade mining site. Dozens of rescuers are working to recover people missing in the landslide, including those who may have drowned in a nearby lake.

The township is prone to landslides, with 174 people killed in a major catastrophe last July.

## China, Germany must work together for world's future

"Both China and Germany are defenders of multilateralism and contributors to global development," he said, calling for them to boost cooperation to "find practical solutions to problems concerning the shared future of mankind"

## FOREIGN DESK

BEIJING: China and Germany are "defenders of multilateralism" who need to work together for the "shared future of mankind," the president of China said in a Tuesday phone call with Germany's new chancellor.

President Xi Jinping told Chancellor Olaf Scholz that China and Germany "need to work together to meet challenges and make new contributions to global governance," according to a statement by the Chinese Foreign Ministry.

"Both China and Germany are defenders of multilateralism and contributors to global development," he said, calling for them to boost cooperation to "find practical solutions to problems concerning the shared future of mankind."

"Both sides need to seek settlement of regional hotspot issues through dialogue, uphold and strengthen the principle of democracy in international relations, and firmly oppose all forms of hegemony and Cold War mentality," Xi said, using a term Beijing has repeatedly used to denounce the US' moves to build alliances against China. "Only when countries develop together can there be true development," he stressed. Xi told Scholz that Beijing hopes Germany will continue to play a positive role in stabilizing China-EU ties and "inject stability and positive energy into the relationship."

"China and the EU are two major independent forces in the world with broad strategic consensus and common interests," he said.

Emphasizing that China greatly values its relations with



Germany, Xi said cooperation between the two countries remains a "bellwether" of collaboration between China and Europe. Relations between China and Germany have shown "ample vitality, endurance, resilience and potential," and the two countries should "embrace a global vision" as they strive further to strengthen their ties, the statement quoted Xi as saying.

Scholz said he was ready to enhance friendship and cooperation between Germany and China, according to a brief press release by the German government.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry's statement said the German chancellor expressed willingness to work with Beijing to uphold multilateralism in international affairs. He said the two sides have developed strong trade and investment relations along with "close cooperation in confronting such global challenges as climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic, and close communication on such regional affairs as the Af-

ghan issue and the Iranian nuclear issue."

Scholz said Germany wants to work with China in the spirit of mutual respect and trust to bolster their strategic partnership, strengthen practical cooperation in such areas as clean energy, digital economy and services, and promote EU-China relations in a constructive manner.

Beijing and Berlin "should chart the general course of bilateral relations from a strategic perspective," the Chinese president said. "Both China and Germany are major countries with important influence. A sound development of bilateral relations not only serves the fundamental interests of the two countries and the two peoples, but also contributes to world peace and stability," he added.

Xi stressed the need to "actively promote mutually beneficial cooperation in a practical manner."

"The economies of China and Germany have benefited a lot from each other's development. China has been Germany's largest trading partner for five consecutive years, and bilateral economic and trade cooperation has kept growing against the pressure of the COVID-19 pandemic," he said.

Xi called for the two sides to "actively explore new areas of cooperation such as new energy and green and digital economy, and unleash the growth potential of trade in services."

"China welcomes German enterprises to leverage advantages and seize the new opportunities brought by China's opening-up ... China believes that closer cooperation between China and Germany within the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative will benefit Belt and Road countries and promote connectivity of the Eurasian continent," he said.

EU to launch  
legal action  
against Poland

BRUSSELS: The EU announced on Wednesday it is launching legal action against Poland for ignoring European Union law and undermining the independence of its national judiciary.

EU economy commissioner Paolo Gentiloni said the infringement proceedings targeted Poland for breaching the primacy of EU law and for deciding that certain articles of EU treaties were incompatible with Polish laws.

The step escalates a long-running feud between Warsaw and Brussels over Poland's perceived backsliding on EU democratic norms.

Brussels is already withholding approval of coronavirus recovery funds for Poland over the row.

Poland's Deputy Justice Minister Sebastian Kaleta hit back by calling the EU announcement "an attack on the Polish constitution and our sovereignty".

Legal action from Brussels was expected given persistent defiance from Poland's Constitutional Court to the European Court of Justice (ECJ).

The ECJ has already ruled against Poland for implementing a mechanism to lift the immunity of judges in the Constitutional Court and to sack any not deemed acceptable by the parliament dominated by the governing populist Law and Justice party.

The European Commission is also upset over a 2019 Polish law that prevents Polish courts applying EU law in certain areas, and from referring legal questions to the ECJ.

Gentiloni told a media conference the Polish moves "breached the general principles of autonomy, primacy, effectiveness and uniform application of Union law and the binding rulings of the Court of Justice".

The European Commission, he said, considers the Polish Constitutional Court "no longer meets the requirements of an independent and impartial tribunal established by law, as required" by a fundamental EU treaty.

He said Poland had two months to respond to a formal letter setting out the grounds of the infringement procedure. — APP

## Ambassador Sajid Bilal calls on Sheikh Al-Azhar Al-Sharif



## DNA

CAIRO: Ambassador Sajid Bilal called on His Eminence Ahmed El-Tayeb, Sheikh Al-Azhar Al-Sharif today. The Ambassador briefed the Grand Imam on the importance of the 17th Extraordinary Session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) held in Islamabad on 19 December 2021 on the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan.

The Ambassador informed that besides Foreign Ministers and representatives from the OIC Member

States and Observers, special invitees from the UN, International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and P-5 countries, Germany, Italy, EU and Japan also participated in the meeting. The Session reflected Pakistan's abiding commitment and consistent efforts to promote peace and stability in Afghanistan and the continued well-being of the Afghan people, the Ambassador noted. A fund in the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) has been established to invite contribution from countries to provide humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people.

In addition, the Ambassador briefed the Grand Imam about the launch of Paigham-e-Pakistan Book, a compilation of Fatwas by Pakistani Ulemas, promoting tolerance and debunking extremist ideologies. The book is translated in Arabic by Al-Azhar University and the foreword has been written by His Eminence, the Grand Mufti of Egypt.

Shiekh Al-Azhar Al-Sharif praised the outcomes of the 17th Extraordinary Session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers and welcomed the efforts of Pakistan in bringing peace in Afghanistan and the region.

## US urges Russia to stop 'inflammatory rhetoric'

## FOREIGN DESK

WASHINGTON: Following Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu's remarks about the situation in eastern Ukraine, US Department of State Spokesperson Ned Price called upon Russia to stop 'inflammatory rhetoric.'

"Contrary to statements from the Russian Defense Minister, Russia and its proxies are responsible for escalating tensions, not Ukraine or the United States," he said in a Twitter post. "We call on Russia to stop using false, inflammatory rhetoric and take meaningful steps to de-escalate tensions to provide a positive atmosphere for discussions."

The spokesperson did not specify what statements he was referring to. Russian Defense Minister Army General Sergey Shoigu said at the ministry's enlarged board meeting on Tuesday that more than 120 mercenaries from private US military companies were detected in the towns of Avdeevka and Priazovskoye in the Kiev-controlled areas of the Donetsk Region. They are setting up firing points, plotting military operations and training radical armed groups. According to Shoigu, canisters with unknown chemical substances were delivered to the town of Avdeevka and the village of Krasny Liman.

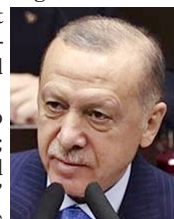
Pentagon spokesperson John Kirby was quoted as saying by Politico that

"those statements by Minister Shoigu are completely false." Additional measures to control the ceasefire along the contact line in Donbass have been in force since July 27, 2020. However, the situation in Donbass has been escalating since late February 2021, with shootouts reported from the contact line quite frequently and casualties reported on both sides, including among civilians. The situation further escalated after October 13, when Ukrainian security service captured an officer of the Lugansk People's Republic (LPR) mission to the Joint Control and Coordination Center. DPR and LPR accuse Kiev of deliberately provoking escalation of the conflict.

## Erdogan hails new economic program

ANKARA: Measures being taken by the government to shore up the Turkish lira will benefit each and every one of Turkey's 84 million people, the country's president said on Wednesday.

"The winner here is not only those who have money in the bank or the exporter; this is for the entire country, each and every one of our 84 million citizens," Recep Tayyip Erdogan said in an address to the Justice and Development (AK) Party's parliamentary group. New mechanisms to protect the lira unveiled by Turkey this week include a system to compensate lira depositors for foreign currency fluctuations, while encouraging citizens to move towards Turkish lira-based assets. The fresh measures come in the wake of rising prices and exchange rates as the government pursues its "new economic model," which emphasizes opposition to high interest rates. — Agencies



## Azerbaijan, Georgia ink military co-op plan

The cooperation plan was signed at the end of a Baku-based meeting between the two countries' military delegations

## DNA

BAKU: Azerbaijani Defence Minister Zakir Hasanov and his Georgian counterpart Juansher Burchuladze have signed a bilateral cooperation plan for 2022, the Defence Ministry reported on December 22.

The cooperation plan was signed at the end of a Baku-based meeting between the two countries' military delegations.

Addressing the meeting, Hasanov noted the high level of Azerbaijani-Georgian cooperation and stressed its role in ensuring regional security, as well as the two countries' development.

He underlined the importance of joint drills. Hasanov described the Eternity-2021 computer-assisted trilateral joint command-staff drills held in Georgia as a clear example of friendship and unshakable cooperation between the two nations. Furthermore, the defence minister informed his counterpart



about the work carried out on Azerbaijan's liberated territories following the 44-day war with Armenia in 2020.

In turn, Burchuladze described his visit to Baku as a clear example of the high level of Azerbaijani-Georgian relations and emphasized the need for such meetings for expanding future cooperation.

He congratulated Azerbaijan on the victory in the 44-day war and underlined the importance of establishing peace in the region.

It was stressed that the friendly ties between the Azerbaijan and Georgian leaders played an important role in the development of bilateral relations. The sides exchanged views on the work done to develop bilateral, as well as trilateral joint military cooperation with the participation of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey.

They also focused on the prospects for further military cooperation, joint military drills, arranging working meetings and other issues of mutual interest.

Balkan  
stability  
crucial for  
Europe

## NEWS DESK

BELGRADE: Stability in the Balkans is extremely important for the region, Europe, and the world, Turkey's parliament speaker said on Wednesday.

"Lasting peace and stability in the Balkans is of great importance not only for the region, but also for Europe and the world," Mustafa Sentop said, addressing a joint news conference with Ivica Dacic, the head of Serbia's parliament.

For his part, Dacic said Turkey's stabilizing role in the region was "very important," adding: "That's why Serbia wants to develop fraternal and friendly relations with Turkey and seek common interests, as well as serve as a link for pursuing common interests with Bosniak Muslims in our region."

After the joint press conference, Sentop left a message in the guest book in the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia and visited the assembly premises.

Earlier in the day, Sentop was received by Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic. "We will never forget that you called our president right after the treacherous coup attempt on July 15 in 2016," said Sentop, referring to the defeated 2016 coup organized by the Fethullah Terrorist Organization (FETO) in Turkey.

Dozens  
missing after  
migrant boat  
sinks off

## AGENCIES

ATHENS: A massive search and rescue operation was underway on Wednesday off the Greek island of Folegandros, after a dinghy carrying migrants sank, with an unknown number of people missing, the Greek coast guard said.

The coast guard said it had rescued 12 people, including children.

But there were conflicting reports about exactly how many people had been on the boat, with some survivors putting the number at 32, while others said as many as 50 were on board, a coast guard official told AFP.

Four coast guard vessels, two Navy and air force helicopters, a military transport plane, five nearby ships and three private vessels were all taking part in the search and rescue operation, the coast guard said.

The operation began late Tuesday, after the coast guard received information that a vessel carrying migrants had run into trouble and had started taking on water, south of the island.

Those rescued - seven Iraqis, three Syrians and two Egyptians - were all transferred to the hospital on the island of Santorini.

Nearly one million people, mainly Syrian refugees, arrived in the EU in 2015 after crossing to Greek islands close to Turkey.

Scores of refugees and migrants have drowned in the Aegean Sea trying to make the perilous crossing.

EU, UK  
reach fishing  
deal on their  
shared stocks

LONDON: After months of wrangling, the European Union and the United Kingdom announced Wednesday that they have struck a fishing deal on their shared stocks - though environmentalists said fish will continue to be overexploited under the new post-Brexit rules.

The agreement is separate from the spat between France and Britain over licenses for French fishermen to operate off the U.K.'s crown dependencies of Jersey and Guernsey, which hug the French coast. Wednesday's decision reverts back to last year's trade deal between France and the U.K., and sets catch quotas and rights for about 100 shared fish stocks in each other's waters.

"Thanks to goodwill and a constructive approach on both sides, we were able to reach an agreement that provides certainty for EU fishermen and women going forward," said Minister Joze Podgorsek of Slovenia, which holds the EU presidency. — APP

**Briefs**

**US donates 5 mln more Pfizer doses to Pakistan**

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: United States has shipped five million more doses of Pfizer COVID-19 vaccines to Pakistan to continue its shared efforts to combat COVID-19. According to a press release on Wednesday, this donation brings the total number of COVID-19 vaccines provided by the U.S. government to the Pakistani people to more than 32.6 million. These Pfizer vaccines are part of the 500 million Pfizer doses the United States purchased this summer to deliver to 92 countries worldwide, including Pakistan, to fulfill President Biden's commitment to provide safe and effective vaccines around the world and supercharge the global fight against the pandemic. Pakistan has received more U.S. vaccine doses than any other country in the world, and the US has already delivered more than 300 million doses of the COVID-19 vaccine worldwide. The United States has also provided \$69.4 million in COVID-19 assistance through our partnership with the Government of Pakistan. Since the start of the pandemic, the United States has worked together with Pakistan to improve infection prevention and control, enhance patient care, expand laboratory testing, disease monitoring, and case tracking in all districts, and support front-line healthcare workers. To accelerate our efforts in combating Covid-19 with the emergence of the Omicron variant, Secretary of State Anthony Blinken on December 21 announced an additional \$580 million in assistance will be channeled to our multilateral partners.

**'Pakistan, Bahrain enjoy cordial ties'**

DNA

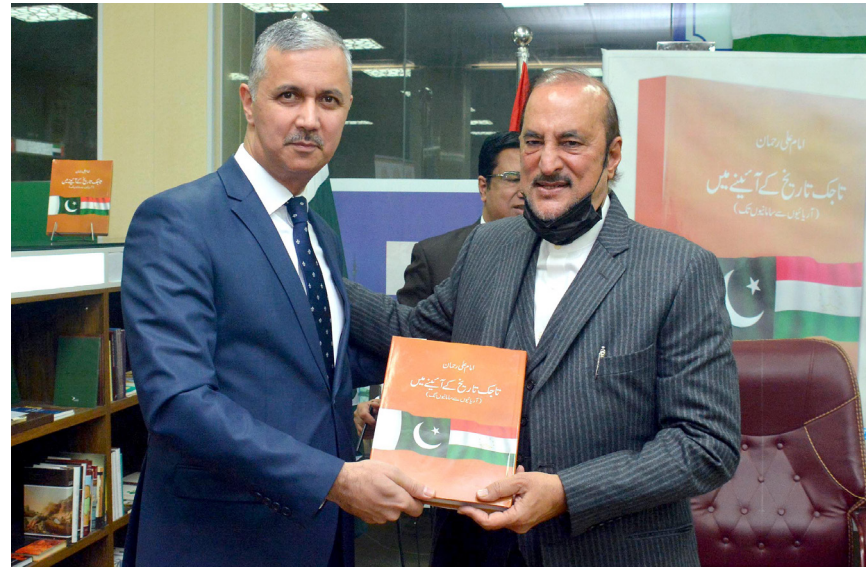
ISLAMABAD: Commander Royal Bahrain Naval Force (RBNF) Rear Admiral Mohammad Yousef Al Asam called on Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force (PAF) Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu and commended the professionalism of PAF and acknowledged its rising indigenous capacity in aviation industry. During the meeting, both the dignitaries discussed matters of professional and mutual interest, said a PAF news release. The Air Chief said that Pakistan and Bahrain enjoy long-standing religious, cultural and historical bonds which were manifested through strong ties between both the air forces. The Air Chief reiterated his resolve to further enhance the existing bilateral cooperation between the two brotherly countries.

**Book "The Tajiks in the Mirror of History" launched**

Ismatullo Nasredin, Ambassador of Tajikistan to Pakistan stated that Pakistan and Tajikistan share many common interests including our history, culture & cooperation in regional forums



ISLAMABAD: Advisor to the Prime Minister Dr. Babar Awan addressing the ceremony.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Tajikistan Ismatullo Nasredin presenting a copy of the book to Advisor to the Prime Minister, Dr. Babar Awan.

**STAFF REPORT**

ISLAMABAD: A Book Launch Ceremony of "The Tajiks in the Mirror of History" was jointly organized by the Embassy of the Republic of Tajikistan and the Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS), Islamabad at the National Library of Pakistan. This book is authored by Emomali Rahmon, President of the Republic of Tajikistan, and was translated and published in Pakistan by CGSS and the University of the Punjab, Lahore. Chief Guest of the occasion was Zaheer ud Din Babar Awan, Federal Minister for Parliamentary Affairs/Advisor to PM, Government of Pakistan. He appreciated the efforts of the Embassy of Tajikistan and CGSS. Highlighting the importance of bilateral ties between Tajikistan and Pakistan he stated that Tajikistan and Pakistan have many commonalities including our culture, history, religion & commonalities in language as well. He was of the view that this book will prove to be a milestone in enhancing bilateral ties between Pakistan and Tajikistan. Ismatullo Nasredin, Ambassador of Tajikistan to Pakistan stated that Pakistan and Tajikistan share many common interests including our history, culture & cooperation in regional forums. This book will allow Pakistani readers to be better acquainted with Tajik history & culture. He stated that the book covers all the important aspects of Tajik history, culture, and struggles. He appreciated the role of

CGSS and the University of the Punjab, Lahore for translating the book in Urdu and publishing it in Pakistan, this way all the information will be reaching a wider audience in Pakistan. Mr. Khalid Taimur Akram, Executive Director, CGSS stated that this book will potentially contribute to the pool of Knowledge for Pakistan, it will help our students and faculty members to understand the socio-economic and political dynamics of Tajikistan. Such initiatives are great steps towards enhancing academic cooperation and people-to-people contacts. Mr. Ashfaq Ahmed Gondal, Former Federal Secretary of Information and Broadcasting & Vice President CGSS (Federal Region) stated that Pakistan and Tajikistan share cultural and historical roots we also share a common religion. He emphasized that both countries have several MoUs and agreements in various fields, and now is the right time to materialize these agreements for better connectivity, collective success, and strengthening our partnership in various sectors. Dr. Fouzia Hadi Ali, Director, Regional Integration Center, University of Punjab, Lahore shared her views on the visionary leadership of his Excellency Emomali Rahmon, President of Tajikistan. She highlighted that President Rahmon is known to be a visionary leader due to his effective strategies and structural reforms. He has the vision to promote regional cooperation and economic integration for all allies.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Tajikistan Ismatullo Nasredin, Advisor to the Prime Minister, Dr. Babar Awan, Khalid Taimur Akram, Executive Director, CGSS attending the event. - DNA photos by Shahid Raju

Mr. Raja Javed Iqbal, Director, National Library of Pakistan. Islamabad highlighted that the National Library of Pakistan has strong ties with libraries in Tajikistan. He shared that Pakistan has sent several books to libraries in Tajikistan that show our commitment and will to promote relations with our counterparts in Tajikistan. He also stated that multiple copies of the book will be kept in the National Library of Pakistan for students, academicians, and researchers to

read and know about Tajikistan and its rich history and culture. The book launch ceremony was moderated by Ms. Maryam Raza, Research Executive, CGSS, and was attended by 100 participants including worthy ambassadors and diplomatic community from the embassies of Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Germany, Belarus, and United Arab Emirates. It was also attended by academicians and students from various universities of Pakistan.

**Turkey authorises use of own vaccine**

NEWS DESK

ISTANBUL: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Wednesday announced the emergency use approval of Turkey's first domestically-developed coronavirus vaccine. Turkovac in June entered Phase III trials involving 40,800 participants in Turkey. No official data about its efficacy have been released. But the health ministry's coronavirus advisory board member Ates Kara told Turkish media that it was "very successful" and could be "a little better in comparison with other inactivated vaccines". "No individuals vaccinated with Turkovac have had a severe form of Covid-19 requiring hospitalisation or intensive care so far," Kara was quoted as saying last weekend. Developers said the Turkovac vaccine works along the same scientific principles as China's Coronavac, which Turkey has been using since the start of the year. Turkey has administered at least two shots to 85.6 percent of its adult population, officially recording 80,000 Covid-19 deaths. Hosting a major summit of African leaders, Erdogan last weekend pledged to send 15 million vaccine doses to countries in the world's poorest continent, calling the low vaccination rates there a blot on humanity. "We will be pleased to share this vaccine with all humanity," he said Wednesday in televised remarks.

**US official, Israeli PM discuss Iran nuclear talks**

FOREIGN DESK

TEL AVIV: United States National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan met Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, calling for a "common strategy" as world powers continue to negotiate a new nuclear agreement with Iran. Bennett meanwhile warned during the Wednesday meetings that negotiations in Vienna on Iran's nuclear programme had "profound ramifications" for Israeli security. Bennett's government has remained firmly opposed to continuing international efforts to revive the 2015 accord that saw Iran agree to curbs on its nuclear activities in exchange for sanctions relief. Former US President Donald Trump withdrew from the agreement in 2018, and instead began a campaign of "maximum pressure" sanctions against Tehran, who in turn flouted commitments under the deal. Sullivan said on Wednesday his visit to Israel had come at "a critical juncture". "It's important that we sit together and develop a common strategy, a common outlook, and find a way forward that fundamentally secures your country's interests and mine," Sullivan said, according to an Israeli government statement.

**PTI decides to investigate defeat in KP LG polls**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) has decided to conduct investigation into party's defeat in the first phase of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa local government elections. According to sources, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Mehmoond Khan presented a report to Prime Minister Imran Khan regarding violations of the party policies. The report was compiled from Peshawar, Mardan, Swabi, Bannu, Dera Ismail Khan and other districts. The ruling party has decided to prepare a charge sheet against members who supported opponent candidates in the elections. Show cause notices will also be served to the MNAs and MPs. Earlier on Tuesday, Prime Minister Imran Khan said his party had paid the price for "mistakes" in recent local elections and he would personally supervise future strategy for his side's campaign after a PTI candidate lost a coveted mayoral seat in a province the premier's party has ruled since 2013. Local elections were held in 17 districts of Pakistan's north-western Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province on Sunday.



ISLAMABAD: Commander Royal Bahrain Naval Force (RBNF) Rear Admiral Mohammad Yousef Al Asam calls on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force. - DNA

**Embassy to support Pak companies in Romanian market: Diplomat**

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan's Ambassador to Romania Zafar Iqbal has said that Pakistan Embassy in Romania has been extending all possible facilitation and support to Pakistani companies to explore Romanian market for trade and export enhancement, emphasizing the need for focusing on value addition of their products to achieve the desired results. While talking to the meeting of All Pakistan Business Forum (APBF) held here, the diplomat said that Romania is an important country of Eastern Europe but it was still unexplored by the business community of Pakistan, saying that many Pakistani products were reaching Eastern Europe after value addition by third country due to which Pakistan was losing real value of its exports. The meeting also discussed different business opportunities, besides launching a web portal of 'Romania Pakistan Trade & Economic Window' (#RPTWE) to promote bilateral relations of Pakistan and Romania. Beside the address of Ambassador of Pakistan to Romania, the virtual meeting was at-



tended by APBF President Syed Maaz Mahmood, General Secretary Khurram Niaz Khan, Asim Shahzad Sheikh, Saad Hameed and Areeq ur Rehman. Dr. Zafar Iqbal said that embassy is making full efforts to further enhance and expand bilateral cooperation between Pakistan and Romania in many areas of mutual interests. Under the vision of the prime minister we are working for the promotion of trade relations, particularly establishing linkages between the business communities of the two countries, he said and added that our focus is on attracting foreign investment as Pakistan offers enormous opportunities in this regard. He said data and information were very important for business promotion and assured that he would share information with the APBF about rising opportunities in Romanian market for Pakistani products so that businessmen could capitalize on them. Speaking on the occasion, APBF President Maaz Mahmood said that Pakistan and Romania were enjoying good relations that should be translated into growing trade and economic relations.

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