



Islamabad POST

Thursday, December 30, 2021

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Pakistan's Diamond Jubilee to be marked in befitting manner

Detailed News On Page-01

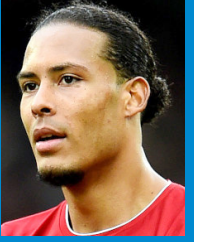
Palestinian president visits Israel's Gantz

Detailed News On Page-07



Liverpool need to improve ahead of Chelsea clash

Detailed News On Page-06



Briefs

PM Khan summons cabinet meeting

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Bowing down to the tough conditions laid out by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), Prime Minister Imran Khan has summoned a meeting of the federal cabinet on Thursday (today) to finalise the mini-budget. The meeting with PM Imran Khan in chair will be held tomorrow at 12 in the noon to approve Finance (Supplementary) Bill 2021. Following the approval, the Finance Amendment Bill 2021 will be unveiled in the National Assembly.

Book a literary treasure

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain Wednesday highlighted importance of developing book reading habit, saying it was a great source that took readers to scientific, literary and poetic treasure. In a message on the launching of Book Study Programme titled "Tadabbur" here at the ISA, he said all societies attained progress in each and every sector by developing the habit of book reading. Although, he said, with the advent of digital media, new trends were being adopted to get instant access to a trove of information through social media, but book was still a great source of knowledge.

No ruler could curb challenges

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: Jamaat-e-Islami Emir Sirajul Haq has said the so-called democratic and military regimes have equally failed to address the challenges confronting the nation for decades. Majority of the political parties were either one-man show or the properties of families and they came to power by deceiving the general public with different slogans, he said while talking to journalists in Faisalabad on Wednesday.

Govt urged to review move

Opp vows to resist mini-budget

Opp. parties say country cannot afford any further price hike; resolves to oppose the move come what may

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The opposition on Wednesday took the government to task over its plan to table the supplementary finance bill [mini-budget] in the National Assembly. A day earlier, the federal cabinet had deferred the approval of the supplementary finance bill which was scheduled to be tabled in Wednesday's session. Speaking on a point of order, PPP MNA Raja Pervez Ashraf said that everyone in the House as well as people from different walks of life were concerned over reports that the government was planning to introduce a money bill or a mini-budget. "Inflation, unemployment and the shortage of gas and other commodities have already wreaked havoc on the people of the country. Now, if a mini-budget or money bill is in the offing, which would

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Mini-budget: Several items to get expensive

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The mini budget which will be tabled in the Parliament Thursday will result in several items getting expensive as the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government plans to roll back tax exemptions worth Rs350 billion. Along with the mini budget, the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Autonomy Bill will also be presented. A senior cabinet minister told SAMAA TV that the federal cabinet is scheduled to meet Thursday to approve the mini-budget.

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan chairs a meeting to review preparations for Diamond Jubilee 2022 of Pakistan. - DNA

Rashid dismisses talk of Sharif's return

Says "unnecessary hype" being created

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed on Wednesday dismissed talks in political circles of PML-N leader Nawaz Sharif's purportedly planned return to Pakistan as "useless chatter", saying that such a development would make "no difference" to the government. Speaking to the media in Rawalpindi, Rashid said "unnecessary hype" was being created around Sharif's return, adding that it was unfortunate for Pakistan that people "who spent most of their life here eventually leave the country instead of loving it". Rashid said that his offer of a one-way ticket to Pakistan for Sharif was still up for grabs.

Foreign policy must respond to trends: FM

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi Wednesday said that Pakistan's foreign policy must respond adequately to the shifting trends and must navigate through this external environment to ensure the security of Pakistan's sovereignty, territorial integrity and independence, and advancement of development agenda. The foreign minister, addressing the passing out ceremony of Foreign Service Probationers, said for the first time, Pakistan had re-oriented the thrust of its diplomatic efforts towards economic benefit and prosperity of the masses. "Economic Diplomacy is not just a buzzword, but a blueprint to leverage our diplomatic assets in the service of our development agenda. We have put in place a

Continued on Page 06

'Fifth wave may hit Pak by mid February'

Most of the Omicron cases are 'asymptomatic', which indicates that it could be spreading silently

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan may experience the fifth wave of Covid-19 in the mid of February 2022 with daily detection of around 3,000-4,000 cases per day as community transmission of Omicron variant of the SARS-CoV-2 or Coronavirus has begun in the major cities of Pakistan, especially in Karachi, Lahore and Islamabad where so far 75 people were found infected with the Variant of Concern (VoC), officials warned on Tuesday.

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KSA makes masks, social distancing mandatory

NEWS DESK

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia has announced that wearing masks and following social distancing guidelines will be mandatory in all indoor and outdoor events and activities from 07:00 a.m. on Thursday,

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Covid-19 failed to halt the CPEC development

Chinese envoy lauds govt's commitment towards CPEC

DNA

ISLAMABAD: China's National Development and Reform Commission Director-General Ying Xiong said on Wednesday that the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was enjoying "smooth operation" despite the severe impact of the coronavirus pandemic that hit the world in December 2019. The Chinese official made these remarks while addressing an award ceremony held by the Chinese Embassy in Islamabad to recognise the outstanding work of the staffers for the development of CPEC. Ying said despite Covid-19, the CPEC construction projects did not stop and added that neither the Pakistanis faced layoffs nor the Chinese workforce was withdrawn due to the pandemic.

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Calls for transparency PM unfurls incentives for exporters

Imran directs to develop a portal which could cater to complaints of the exporters

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: "We have to develop an ecosystem and a culture that can increase exports and decrease our dependence on imports", said Prime Minister Imran Khan while chairing a meeting on developing an export culture in the Country. "We need resilient exporters who will be rewarded with national civil awards as per their performance in increasing exports", he added. The Prime Minister directed Ministry of Commerce to develop a portal which could cater to complaints of the exporters. He also directed them to act as a catalyst for the achievement of sustained growth in exports. Moreover, the Prime Minister directed all the departments concerned to develop robust policies and transparency by using technology. Earlier Advisor to Prime Minister on Commerce Abdul Razzak Dawood apprised the Prime Minister that this year they have achieved a record growth in exports after 10 years of stagnation. He added that it is high time to bring in impetus to further increase our export target.

Pakistan's Diamond Jubilee to be celebrated

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday called for holding Pakistan's Diamond Jubilee Celebrations in a befitting manner to highlight the country's distinctive identity, culture and unique location. "On the occasion of country's 75th independence anniversary, there is a need to tell youth about the aim Pakistan's creation and the true message of Allama Iqbal," Imran Khan said while presiding over a meeting held here to review the preparations for Pakistan's Diamond Jubilee Celebrations 2022. Federal Ministers Ch. Fawad Hussain, Shaikat Tarin, Special Assistants to PM Dr. Shehbaz Gill, Shahzad Nawaz and senior officers attended the meeting. The prime minister said that Pakistan had been bestowed by Almighty Allah with all kinds of blessings, which required to be highlighted. Minister for Information and Broadcasting Ch. Fawad Hussain briefed the prime minister in detail about the preparations for Pakistan's Diamond Jubilee. - APP

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US reports record infections as Europe sees surge - Page 08

CDA to establish landfill site in district Rawalpindi

He said currently fifteen hundred employees were working for cleanliness and over nine hundred persons would be recruited soon

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Ali Muhammad Khan Wednesday said the Capital Development Authority (CDA) was in process for signing of MoU with Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) for establishment of Landfill Site in District Rawalpindi for disposal of garbage.

During question hour in the Senate, the minister said that for the purpose, some 400 Kanals would be allocated for permanent solution of garbage of the federal capital.

The Directorate of Sanitation, CDA was providing sanitation services in the municipal limits of Islamabad like Zone-I as the Zone consisted of residential sectors, commercial areas etc, he added.

He said the Sanitation Directorate has also extended its services for secondary collection of garbage from rural areas of Islamabad by using / stretching available resources.

The minister said the volume of solid waste generated within the municipal limits of Islamabad ranges between 550 to 600 metric tons per day. The waste generated was mixed type of solid waste and includes municipal /

kitchen / green / domestic waste, commercial, building material and other scrap, he added.

To resolve this long outstanding issue, the CDA has decided to dispose off the entire garbage at Waste Containment Site located in Sector I-12, Islamabad. A site measuring 600' x 1200' 132 Kanals in Sector H-16/3 has been allocated for temporary sanitary landfill site. Ali Muhammad said that the CDA was taking substantial steps for recycling solid waste in Islamabad and one thousand garbage trolleys and two hundred skips have been placed in different areas for waste collection in the capital city.

He said currently fifteen hundred employees were working for cleanliness and over nine hundred persons would be recruited soon.

To another question, he said traffic police in Islamabad was taking strict measures against the violators and the safe city cameras were also active in this regard and E-Challans are issued to violators.

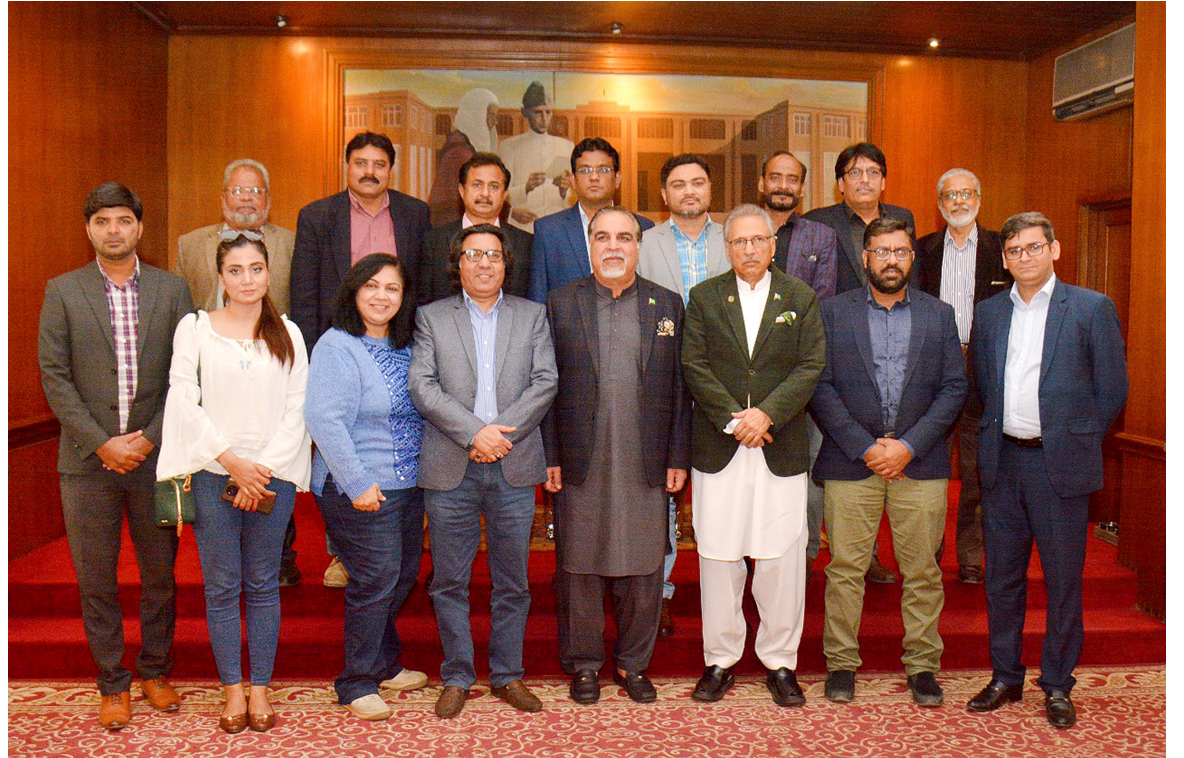
Responding to a question on Naya Pakistan Housing Program (NPHP), the minister said the program was launched by Prime Minister Imran Khan in October 2018 and a total of 2,003,940 applications have already been received in two phases. The minister said the applications

were scanned and digitized using data entry operators and franchise networks while the NADRA charged Rs. 250 per application. Of which Rs. 50 was allocated to advertisement/information campaigns, on NAPHDA's directions.

To a question, the minister in order to cope with the issues related to unhygienic injections being injected to cows and buffaloes, Livestock and Dairy Development Department was running awareness campaign targeting dairy farmers so as to aware them about the side effects of the Oxytocin whose residual parts in some extent come in the milk in small ratio causing some unwanted effects like abortion in women and early onset of puberty.

He said the steps have been taken by the Islamabad Administration to make sure that milk being sold in Islamabad was free from adulteration / contamination.

Assistant Commissioners and Food Inspectors in ICT were regularly visiting respective areas to keep vigilance. The minister said the Establishment of ICT Food Authority is under process. Special Campaign against unhygienic milk started by Deputy Commissioner, ICT and 28650 liters of milk have so far been discarded.



KARACHI: Governor Sindh Imran Ismail hosted lunch in the honour of newly elected body of Karachi Press Club (KPC) at Governor House. President Arif Alvi also graced the occasion. – DNA

NTU holds bi annual seminar over Knowtex

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: At National Textile University, bi annual seminar over Knowtex, a funded project by Higher education commission of Pakistan took place.

The principal investigator, Dr Yasir Nawab explained the details and shared the news of heading in right direction with audience and participants.

This project would be a new life line for textile sector of Pakistan and will play its vital role in growth of textile sector, in addition to its positive impact over economy of the country. Dr Sheraz Ahmed, Dr zameer ul hassan, Dr abher rashid, Dr sajjad, Dr salma farooq, Dr talha hamdani, Dr muneer ashraf and Dr hafsa jamshaid explained different topics regarding their work packages related to Knowtex and shared the development. Website of Knowtex was inaugurated at the occasion.

Three drug dealers arrested with over two kg narcotics

PESHAWAR: The Excise, Taxation and Narcotics Control department on Wednesday seized about two kilograms of narcotics and arrested three accused in three separate actions.

According to a spokesperson of the department, operations had been launched in various regions including Abbotabad, Mardan and Peshawar as per directives of the director general excise, taxation and narcotics control department.

During the first operation, he said the department's personnel conducted a raid at Jahrian Chowk near Pine Hills School new city Abbotabad and arrested a drug dealer namely Muddasar Khan after recovering 408 gram ice-drug from his possession.

Similarly, the excise, taxation and narcotic control department's personnel recovered 1200 gram hashish from a passenger van at Haji Camp bus terminal and arrested the accused.

The narcotics control police also recovered 6000 gram hashish from a vehicle and arrested the accused. Cases were registered against the accused and they were shifted to relevant excise stations for further investigation. – APP

No violation to be tolerated in approval of buildings plans: DC

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Deputy Commissioner Ali Shahzad has said that relevant laws and public interest should be focused in the approval of maps of commercial buildings and no violation would be tolerated in this regard.

He said this while presiding over a meeting of the District Planning and Design Committee, which was at-

tended by officials from the Traffic Police, Metropolitan Corporation, FDA and other departments.

The Deputy Commissioner said that the maps for construction of commercial buildings and applications for approval for use of the land concerned on commercial basis should be cleared in accordance with the land ownership issues, revenue records and prevailing conditions and obstacles in the flow of traffic should under

consideration for the approval of the establishment of the institutions.

During the meeting in some areas the cases of commercial use of lands and maps for setting up of petrol pumps and educational institutes were discussed in detail. During the meeting 12 cases were presented and 7 were approved including 5 patrol pumps and one school and clinic each were approved.



Incumbent govt practically delivering: CM

Rs 360bn district development package would usher in an era of development

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar on Wednesday said the incumbent government practically delivered instead of making hollow claims.

He expressed these views during meeting with Punjab Labour Minister Ansar Majeed Niazi and chairman Chief Minister complaint cell Sargodha division Hassan Inam Paracha at his office. Different matters including the construction of Bhera-Malakwal and Salam-Bhalwal-Sargodha roads along with giving district status to Bhalwal came under discussion.

The chief minister announced to visit Sargodha soon and said that the work was in progress to carve out new districts and tehsils on administrative grounds, adding that the prospect of giving district status to Bhalwal would also be contemplated. Usman Buzdar explained that Rs 360 billion district development package would usher in an era of development. Alongside,

Traffic police launch awareness campaign

FAISALABAD: City traffic police on Wednesday launched an awareness campaign to control wheelie on new year night.

In this connection, awareness about the anti-wheelie campaign and RASTA App were being displayed at all important main roads in the city.

A spokesperson for the traffic police said the objective of awareness campaign was to spread the message of traffic police to citizens for the safety of lives. He said that traffic education unit of traffic police was holding awareness programmes on a daily basis. Reflectors were also being pasted on rear sides of the vehicles to avoid accidents during fog and smog.

He said that citizens could contact the traffic police helpline 1915 for seeking guidance about traffic situations in the city. – APP

FDA related problems being addressed on priority

FAISALABAD: Faisalabad Development Authority (FDA) Chairman Chaudhry Latif Nazir MPA said the problems of people related to the department were being redressed on priority basis.

Talking to a citizens delegation at his office here Wednesday, he said the performance of staff were being strictly monitored for the provision of speedy relief to people. He assured the delegation that their applications would be entertained without lapse of time and staff concerned had been issued necessary directions in this regard.

He said that special measures were being taken for the development of FDA city. He said that a police post was also being set up in FDA for provision of security cover to residents, parks are being renovated besides installation of street lights and ensuring cleanliness in the housing scheme. He said the Traffic Engineering & Transport Planning Agency (TEPA) was also being made active to address the traffic issues on scientific lines. – APP

Open court held for sports associations, players

PESHAWAR: The district administration of Lower Dir on Wednesday held an open court to address grievances of the sports associations and players of various categories. The event was arranged in light of the provincial government's directives and it was presided over by Deputy Commissioner Aun Haider Gondal.

The ports Khuli Kachehri also attended by Abdul Wali Khan, Additional Deputy Commissioner Ibrar Khan, District Sports Officer, Naadeem Khan Finance Secretary Football Association, Haji Rozamin Khan President Cricket Association, Yousaf Khan President Hockey Association, Malak Shah Naseem Khan (G.S Hockey Association) Mr. Khalid Shah, President Basketball Association, Malak Ziaul Haq Senior Voice President (Basket Ball), Mairajul Haq President Tag of War Sikandar Shah (G.S), Muhammad Faraz Khan (G.S Wali Ball Association), Azmat Hayat President Badminton Association, Abdul Khaliq, G.S Foot Saal Association, Saeedullah, Imranullah Takur, Sohaib besides elected representatives and players of various categories. Deputy Commissioner stated that the main purpose of this khuli Kachehri was to seek amicable solutions to the issues related to sports. – APP

IGP directs action against aerial firing on new year night

The IG Punjab directed that those found in the sale and purchase of drugs, especially ice (meth) and sheesha should be arrested throughout the province

LAHORE: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Rao Sardar Ali Khan on Tuesday directed supervisory officers to maintain law and order on eve of New Year night across province. He directed all RPOs, CPOs and DPOs to wreak crack down on those involved in making, buying and selling flammable substances in all districts.

Rao Sardar Ali Khan said that one wheeling, aerial firing and hooligans should be put behind bars on New Year's night. He said that strict action should be taken against the workshop owners who were causing noise and environmental pollution by removing silencers of motorcycles, vehicles and Ching Chi rickshaws on New Year's night.

The IG Punjab directed that those found in the sale and purchase of drugs, especially ice (meth) and sheesha should be arrested throughout the province. He directed to intensify operations against manufacture, sale and purchase of poisonous liquor.

The IGP directed the police of all districts to run an awareness campaign among the

citizens before the New Year night and said that the citizens should be made aware of other violations including aerial firing, one wheeling, fireworks and the punishments to be meted out to them.

Rao Sardar Ali Khan directed that special squads should be formed in Lahore, Rawalpindi, Multan, Faisalabad and Gujranwala and other major cities on the eve of New Year's night for taking action against law breakers. He issued these instructions in a letter to all RPOs, CPOs and DPOs of the province. Instructing the officers, IG Punjab said that those who would block roads, spoiler of peace and manhandle families do not deserve any sympathy and strict legal action would be taken against such accused, he added. He directed the traffic officers of all the districts that the traffic police should formulate special plans to maintain flow of traffic on main highways of major cities on eve of New Year Night and also deploy additional personnel to control traffic on major highways. – APP



ISLAMABAD: PPP Central Secretary Information and former Deputy Speaker National Assembly Faisal Karim Kundi and member CEC and former MNA Syed Akhonzada Chitan are holding a press conference in Islamabad. – DNA

Cadet College Petaro holds Parents' Day

ISLAMABAD: The 59th Parents' Day was held at Cadet College Petaro on Wednesday where Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi graced the occasion as Chief Guest.

While addressing the ceremony, the Naval Chief appreciated the services of Cadet College Petaro for provision of quality education, infrastructure facilities, faculty and character building of the cadets in a learning conducive environment, said a Pakistan Navy press release.

The Admiral also gave away the prizes to the award winners and appreciated their performance in academics and various co-curricular activities.

During the ceremony, an impressive show including March Past and PT, Gymnastic, Karate and Horse Riding was put up by the cadets.

An exhibition of club activity was also arranged; wherein, cadets rigged stalls displaying their skills and abilities.

The Chief Guest visited the exhibi-

tion and appreciated efforts & talent of the cadets.

Earlier in his welcome address, the Principal of Cadet College Petaro, Commodore Mushtaq Ahmed presented the Annual Report of the College and highlighted excep-

tional performance of cadets in the domains of academics, sports and co-curricular activities. He mentioned the progress of development works and ongoing projects at the college.

The ceremony was attended by

Chairman Board of Governors Cadet College Petaro and Commander Karachi Rear Admiral Mian Zakirullah Jan, military officers, senior officials of Sindh Government, Parents of cadets and other dignitaries. – APP



SERVICES



Namaz Timings

Fajr.....	05:43 am
Zohr.....	12:10 pm
Asr.....	03:30 pm
Maghrib.....	05:08 pm
Isha.....	06:37 pm



Hotels & Restaurants

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



Airlines

Turkish Airlines.....	8494949
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Islamabad Metropolitan

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

Wasa Water Tank

Rawalpindi.....	0331-5022125
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Business community urged to promote trade with Lebanon

Talking to the business community ICCI, Pakistan's Ambassador-designate to Lebanon Salman Athar said that the business community should explore ways and means for enhancing trade and economic ties between Pakistan and Lebanon

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Ambassador-designate to Lebanon Salman Athar on Tuesday said that the business community should accelerate efforts to tap the Lebanon market for promoting trade and exports. Talking to the business community here at Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI), he said that the business community should explore ways and means for enhancing trade and economic ties between Pakistan and Lebanon, said press release.

He said that Pakistan can export a wide range of products to Lebanon and assured that he would extend them all possible cooperation for enhancing business relations with Lebanon. Salman Athar said that the current Government of Pakistan was focusing on trade diplomacy to strengthen



the economy and a proactive approach was needed to explore new opportunities in foreign markets for exports promotion. He said that due to the Covid situation, he would try to arrange online meetings between the business communities of Pakistan and Lebanon so that they could

interact and explore new avenues of mutual collaboration. He said that both countries have good potential to cooperate in construction, tourism, power, education and many other sectors for mutual benefit. Speaking at the occasion, President, ICCI, Muhammad Shakeel Munir, briefed

Salman Athar about the prospective areas of trade and economic cooperation with Lebanon. He said that Pakistan could export many products to Lebanon including marble & granite, mangoes, pharmaceuticals, surgical instruments, leather & sports goods, textile products,

carpets, pink salt and emphasized that the Pakistan Embassy in Lebanon should play role to identify business leads and share such information with trade bodies in Pakistan so that the business community could capitalize on them. He underscored the importance of cooperation

between the countries in order to increase bilateral trade and investment. He said that Lebanese investors should also be apprised of the opportunities of investment and JVs in various sectors of Pakistan's economy. He expressed full confidence in Salman Athar to initiate engagement between business communities of both sides and assured him of his support to improve trade ties between the two countries. Senior Vice President IC- CI, Jamshaid Akhtar Sheikh, former Senior Vice President, Muhammad Naveed Malik, Muhammad Shabbir, Akhtar Hussain, Saeed Khan, Ch. Ashraf Farzand and others also spoke at the occasion and highlighted many areas for promoting trade cooperation with Lebanon. They said that both sides should encourage frequent exchange of trade delegation to expand and deepen the business and investment relations.

Christian youth urged to get higher education

ISLAMABAD: National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) minority member Manzoor Masih said that Christian youth should get higher education and play their role in the development of Pakistan.

He was the chief guest at an event organized by the Youth Development Association (YDA) to distribute rations to deserving people. On this occasion, he said that Christmas gives message of peace, love, charity, goodness, equity and justice. He said that majority of Pakistan's youth. Therefore youth, especially Christian youth, should get higher education and play their role in the development of Pakistan. "I appreciate and congratulate the Chairman of the Youth Development Association for distributing the gifts among needy people.

YDA Chairman Sebastian John, Director Rubina Bhatti and Chaudhry Ashraf Farzand also addressed the event. - DNA



ISLAMABAD: National Commission for Human Rights (NCHR) minority member Manzoor Masih distributing food hampers among needy people. - DNA

Exhibition of "Quaid K Funkar" held at PAC

RAWALPINDI: In connection with the celebrations of Quaid-e-Azam Day, a group painting exhibition titled 'Quaid k Funkar' was organized under the auspices of Punjab Arts Council to nurture new talents and honor senior artists. The exhibition was inaugurated by Naheed Manzoor and Director Arts Council Waqar Ahmad. Aftab Ahmed Changezi, Ashir Sidhu, Hanif Khan, Muhammad Afzal, Shabbir Ahmed Zia, Samuel Bhatti, Masood Al Hassan, Samiha Khaliq, Balqis Abdullah, Ayesha

Nusrat, Sidra Azam, Abdul Wahab, Haider Ali, Alshiba and Mahnoor Tanveer's works were kept on display in the exhibition. The exhibition included calligraphy, paintings, & sculpture having different medium. Addressing at the inaugural ceremony, Naheed Manzoor said that artists are our identity, who uses their creativity to introduce Pakistani culture at national and international level. It is our duty to appreciate the efforts of the artists. Director Arts Council Waqar Ahmad said that as per the

vision of Chief Minister Punjab Sardar Usman Bazar and Minister for Culture Khayal Ahmed Kastro work is being done on priority basis for the welfare and development of artists. Registration of artists across the province is one such link. Punjab government has also announced to issue health cards to all the artists. Punjab government is also providing financial support to thousands of artists. The exhibition will be open to the public till January 2, 2022. - APP



CTP forms traffic plan ahead of 'New Year Night'

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The City Traffic Police (CTP) Rawalpindi on Wednesday released a comprehensive and organized traffic plan for New Year Night to contain one wheeling and car drifting incidents that jeopardize public life and property. As per the directives of Chief Traffic Officer Rawalpindi, the Duty Officer Traffic Headquarters has issued a comprehensive and systematic traffic plan for the convenience of the citizens regarding New Year Night, said a news release.

Following the directives of Chief Traffic Officer Rawalpindi Teymour Khan, Duty Officer Traffic Headquarters Muhammad Waseem formed seven special squads to prevent one wheeling and car skating on the occasion of New Year Night and provide all traffic facilities to the citizens and prevention of one wheeling for all tsehsils including Rawalpindi. On the occasion of New Air Night, 250 traffic police personnel would perform special duties including 12 DSPs, 44 Inspectors, 139 Traffic Warden and 55 Traffic Assistants.

HEC holds Workshop for Reviewers of MS/ PhD Programmes



ISLAMABAD: The Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) of Higher Education Commission (HEC) organized a one-day capacity building workshop for Postgraduate Programme Reviewers and Subject Experts with the aim to develop a resource of Master Reviewers. Thirty reviewers from across the country attended the event held in Islamabad. QAA evaluates performance of higher education institutions in the country and review MS/PhD and PhD programmes of universities to ensure quality of these programmes, as well as fulfilment of minimum standards and guidelines. Dr. Shaista Sohail, Executive Director HEC graced the opening session as chief guest. She said that HEC is committed to facilitate universities and its reviewers. She hoped that the workshop will enable reviewers to understand overall dynamics of external evaluation, comprehend the framework required for effective postgraduate programme review, and prepare a meaningful postgraduate programme review report.

Mr. Nasir Shah, Director and In-Charge QAA said, "The training will help improve the effectiveness as well as quality of the programme review process". The participants thanked HEC for holding the workshop and hoped that it would enable them to comprehend the framework required for effective Postgraduate Programme Review. - Agencies

Importance of integrity of the Muslim World

AROOPA MALIK

IN this world, where war and terror are so prevalent, the sole purpose of humanity is the eradication of terrorism from the planet Earth. In fact, peace is the most desired thing in this world specifically in the Muslim world where the terrorism index is higher than the rest of the world. The main reason behind this plight of countries like Syria, Iraq, Libya and many others, is not mainly the invasion of Western forces in those areas but the lack of harmony and trust among all the Muslim states. And there is no doubt that the situation would have been different if the whole Muslim nation were on the same platform and if there was no such thing as the Iran-Saudi conflict.

Hiding your mistakes by playing blame games is not any solution, rather a sign signaling your failure in policy making. The world has its eyes open and is better aware of the activities of the US in the Middle East. But the part of Muslim states in this whole scenario seems bigger than that of the US or West as staying quiet on injustices is more unjust than doing them.

It is not that steps to resolve this were not taken by the Islamic countries. Different countries (not affected by the policies of USA) raised their voices against the ill treatments of US but all were muted. Obviously, this would not have happened if those voices had come through a strong source. And it was only possible when all the Muslim states were on one platform and under the same banner. The Islamic Military alliance es-

established in 2015 showed a ray of hope at the beginning but since the alliance is dominated by Sunni Muslim countries and does not include Shia majority Countries like Iran and Iraq, it has been called as sectarian coalition by some critics. Simultaneously, it does not concern some other aspects of utility that include trade and economy. As it is not only peace that a nation opts for in order to achieve the goal of development and prosperity of its people. Peace in a society cannot be achieved until it's people are prosper enough to not get involved in terrorist activities and rather work together for the betterment of a society as a whole. And the pursuit of improved economy with a peaceful society would not have been that tough for the Muslim world if they had done it through mutual collaboration. And this

collaboration demands more than just a military alliance. There is no doubt that the Muslim world, be it Saudi Arabia and UAE, Jordan, Iran or Baluchistan of Pakistan, is enriched with natural resources. Abundance of these resources such as oil and gas reserves and petroleum in these states has made the world an appreciator of them. That is why the west cannot get its eyes off of oil enriched countries. And the US seeks to improve relations with Saudi Arabia and not with Iran, as it is in its core interests to have both of them as opponents to each other. The world is better aware of the consequences if the Islamic world is free of conflicts and disputes. Collective economy of the Islamic world is something that may benefit the Muslim ummah, the most. Countries like Indonesia, Turkey,

Saudi Arabia, Iran and UAE, are on the top in the list of Muslim economic powers, and stand at a good position when compared to the rest of the world. Hence, there is no doubt that a collective economic program will help the whole Muslim nation to solve its problems related to economy and overcome the poverty of the Muslim world. And the world will think of Muslims as the independent units rather than the US dependent third world countries. It is so wondering that just a call of being united by the Muslim world would be a big jolt to the Western world. So, why not to answer the world by using the bullet of 'Unity' that would hit them harder than just bashing them.

- The writer is studying BS Political Science at International Islamic University

Universal Health coverage vital

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Sehat Sahulat Program is expected to contribute to poverty alleviation besides improving access to indoor health services and reduction of financial barriers to access health service. Moreover, the improved equity would lead to social development, peace, cohesion, and stability. Mr. Muhammad Arshad, Chief Executive Officer, Sehat Sahulat Program was speaking as panelist at webinar 'Universal Health Coverage & Social Health Insurance in Pakistan,' organized by Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI).

Mr Arshad elaborated further that the main aim of introducing Sehat Sahulat Program was to reduce 'catastrophic health care expenditure. Currently, 650 billion rupees per annum are being spent every year on health sector out of which 450 billion rupees are available for other social activities, he added.

Universal Health Coverage Coordinator at the Ministry of National Health Services Regulation and Coordination, Dr Muhammad Khalid, informed the participants that the Universal Health Coverage is part of government commitment towards SDG 2030 and relevant SDGs are 3.8.1 and 3.8.2.

Meeting reviews progress on PSM, HEC transactions

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Privatisation Mohammed Mian Soomro and Federal Minister for Energy Hammad Azhar chaired a meeting here to discuss matters related to the transaction of Pakistan Steel Mills (PSM) and Heavy Electrical Complex (HEC). It was briefed that the transaction of Pakistan Steel Mills was at advanced stage along with the status of corporate actions to be completed prior to the revival of PSM. The major focus was on the availability of utility connections to the newly formed subsidiary of PSM, its liabilities towards Sui Southern Company and issuance of NOC from Sui Southern Gas Company Limited, which is mandatory for seeking approval for scheme of arrangement (SOA) from SECP. Sui Southern was asked to take up the matter in its Board meeting and issue the requisite NOC so that the process of privatisation/revival of PSM could be completed without hindrance in stipulated time. The matter regarding the extension of the validity of type testing licence for HEC by Power Division was also discussed. Soomro said that this extension would incentivize the potential buyer(s) of HEC and also would provide them a ground to start manufacturing the transformers without any break. It was proposed that the subject matter would be taken up with NTDC and after exhausting this option it would be taken to CCoP for clear directions, before the bidding date of HEC, he added. - Agencies

Cold, dry weather likely in most parts

ISLAMABAD: Cold and dry weather in most parts of the country during next 24 hours. However, cloudy weather with light rain/light snow is expected in north-western Balochistan. Frost is likely to occur at few places in Pothohar region during morning hours. Dense Fog is likely to prevail in upper Sindh, plain areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab during night/morning. Continental air is prevailing over most parts of the country. Minimum temperature recorded in (°C): Leh -15, Kalam -13, Astore -10, Skardu -09, Gupis -08, Gilgit, Hunza, Kalat -07, Quetta -06, Malam Jabba -05, Dir, Rawalakot, Bagrote, Parachinar, Pulwama, Baramulla -04, Drosh, Anantnag, Shupian -03, Murree, Zhoib, Chitral, Srinagar -02, Mirkhani, Kakul and Balakot -01. - APP

Briefs

CII Chairman
grieved
over Tutu's
demise

ISLAMABAD: Council of Islamic Ideology (CII), Chairman Dr. Qibla Ayaz on Wednesday expressed his deep sorrow and grief over the demise of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, a Nobel Peace prize laureate, who helped end apartheid in South Africa. In his condolence message, CII chairman said Archbishop Tutu was the voice of the oppressed all over the world in general and in South Africa in particular. His death has created a huge vacuum for justice seekers around the world.

Qibla said the anti-apartheid icon devoted his whole life for holding dialogue among the followers of different religions, ethnically diverse groups and for a life of mutual respect and tolerance. The Nobel Peace Prize and numerous such international awards, was a testament to Tutu's peace efforts. Tutu's anti-apartheid struggle and his efforts for independence of South Africa has gone down in history. — APP

AIOU launches
dengue
awareness
campaign

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University has launched a nationwide awareness campaign through its regional network to increase awareness about dengue virus and precautionary measures in the light of Government of Pakistan's directives. Posters and banners containing instructions and precautionary measures against dengue virus have been displayed at notice boards of all the regional offices including the main campus of AIOU. Special measures have been taken to ensure spraying and cleanliness of the university and AIOU residential colony on the instructions of the Vice Chancellor, Prof. Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum. According to Director Student Affairs, Rana Tariq Javed, an awareness campaign on precautionary measures against dengue is in full swing and a dengue awareness walk will also be organized in the coming week.

IRSA releases
24111 cusecs
water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 24111 cusecs water from various rim stations with an inflow of 32725 cusecs.

According to the data released by IRSA, water level in the Indus River at Tarbela Dam was 1430.35 feet, which was 38.35 feet higher than its dead level of 1,392 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 16900 and 10000 cusecs respectively. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1119.65 feet, which was 69.65 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet whereas the inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 5714 and 4000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa and Sukkur was recorded as 14286, 22184, and 21515 cusecs respectively. — APP

OIC moot demonstration
of Pak-Saudi trust: Envoy

Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz, Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman and Foreign Minister Amir Faisal bin Farhan, to Pakistan's stance on Afghanistan made the relations between the two countries clear to the world

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to Pakistan Nawaf Saeed Al-Maliki Wednesday said the successful hosting of OIC foreign ministers' council summit on Afghan issue in Pakistan was clear demonstration of trust and love enjoyed by Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

Talking to Special Representative to the Prime Minister on Interfaith Harmony and Middle East, Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi, the ambassador said Pakistan and Saudi Arabia were enjoying deep rooted brotherly relations.

Pakistan Ulama Council (PUC) Chairman Hafiz Tahir Ashrafi thanked the leadership of Saudi Arabia and the government for



successful holding of the emergency meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Council of Foreign Ministers, and extending optimum cooperation for Afghanistan by Saudi.

The support and cooperation of Saudi leadership, led by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz, Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman and Foreign Minister Amir Faisal bin Farhan, to Pakistan's stance on Afghanistan made the relations between the two countries clear to the world.

Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mahmood Ashrafi said that Pakistan and the nation considers the security, safety and defense of Saudi Arabia as the security, safety and defense of Pakistan and strongly condemns the continuous attacks on Saudi Arabia by Houthi rebels.

APHC, others
denounce HR
abuses in IIOJK

ISLAMABAD: The All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC) and other Hurriyat leaders and organizations have expressed grave concern over the gross violation of human rights by Indian troops in the territory.

The APHC spokesman in a statement issued in Srinagar condemned the violation of the rule of law and set parameters of justice at the hands of Indian police authorities and other paramilitary forces in the territory.

He out-rightly rejected the press briefing of the Indian police authorities in which they declared the four civilians killed by Indian forces in a fake encounter in Hyderabad area of Srinagar, last month, as militants. He termed it a vain effort by the India police to mop up the blood stains from its killer face. "People of Kashmir know the truth. They cannot be hoodwinked by political

gimmicks and white lies nor have they any trust in the so-called probing commissions under the cover of the occupied authorities," he said.

The spokesman expressed his dismay over the biased legal system of India against the oppressed people of IIOJK.

He said when the bogey of Indian justice system turns to Kashmir it has a unique modus operandi to bail out convicted criminals one by one as was done in the tragic rape and murder case of Aasifa Bano, an eight-year-old girl of Kathua.

The spokesman said the killing of Altaf Ahmad Butt, Dr Mudasar Gul and Aamir Magray, in a fake encounter is one of the thousands such extrajudicial murder cases and the probing kangaroo Commissions, so the families of the said victims had no expectations from the killer occupation forces of India. — APP

Riverine ecology conservation
in Indus Delta imperative

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam Wednesday said the present government was working on reviving the riverine ecology in the dying Indus Delta which was imperative for national survival amid increasing climate change impacts.

Addressing a day-long National Climate Change Conference on "Climate Action & Adaptation: Way Forward for an Ecologically Sustainable Pakistan" organized by Strengthening Participatory Organization (SPO), the SAPM said it was a very timely topic as Pakistan at the forefront of climate change and among top 10 countries affected due to climate change, adding, "We are also part of the continuously affected top three countries list along with Haiti and Philippines which is not a good merit".

Amin said the Ministry of Climate Change was working to prepare a strategic short, medium and long term adaptation plan. However, the prime minister has directed him to start focusing on riverine ecology, he added. "River Indus has sustained civilizations for over past 5,000 years but it has become questionable that will it sustain for another 50 years," he underlined. The



highest forum level approval from the prime minister was received for "Living Rivers Initiative" along with all chief ministers on board to revive the dying ecology of Indus River, he told.

"It will be a nature based solution including wetlands, riverine forests, local communities and we have 4-month timeline to work out a comprehensive framework for project execution," Amin said.

The SAPM mentioned that the multi-lateral environmental partners were also excited to chip in the endeavor as it was necessary to identify gaps and then manage funding accordingly. "Our future existence depends on this ecology and how this ecology adapts to climate change is important. It will have all public and private partners on board," he concluded.

He emphasized that the underpass and overpasses were not the real development which should be done in harmony with nature preservation. "Our donor agencies have asked us that they have linked the future grants with green implementation and progress so no successive government can change this direction of the present government and will be bound to invest in nature based solutions," the SAPM told the participants while responding their queries.

SPO CEO Arifa Mazhar in her welcome remarks said the SPO was working on climate change adaptation and intended to work in addressing water scarcity issues including proposed interventions for water scarce areas and community development.

She informed that the SPO was working as a disaster risk reduction, management and preparedness institution that also responded to 2010 floods. Chairperson SPO Senator (R) Javed Jabbar welcomed the participants and guests and also moderated the opening panel discussion of the conference. The conference had multifaceted panel discussions engaging women, transgender women, experts, government officials and environmentalists to discuss climate action interventions and way forward to make the country a disaster resilient state.

Chaudhary Fawad visits
Board of Investment

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhary Fawad Hussain visited Board of Investment (BOI) in Islamabad on Wednesday.

He was given briefing about the performance, new initiatives and reforms introduced by the board. He also held meetings with Minister of State and Chairman Board of Investment Muhammad Azfar Ahsan and Secretary Board Farina Mazhar.

During the meeting, they discussed facilitating the small and medium enterprises by the Board. Appreciating the Board of Investment's performance, the Minister for Information assured it of his ministry's full cooperation.

Film "Karakoram
Highway" released

ISLAMABAD: The premier of the film "Karakoram Highway: where Men and Mountains Meet" highlighting KKH, an emblem of Pak-China friendship, was released here on big screen. According to Gwadar Pro, the premier of the documentary film was arranged at The Arena Cinema in Bahria Town with a full house of audiences.

The film highlights the sacrifices made during the construction of KKH, which is a gigantic 1300 kilometers project and often considered as the 8th wonder of the world.

The film is produced by Delirium Film Productions Inc. in association with the Frontier Works Organization (FWO), one of the major science and technology commands of the Pakistan Army. The hour-long documentary highlights the importance of KKH, which is an overland route connecting the brotherly couriers of China and Pakistan.

About 692 Pakistani and 108 Chinese lost their lives during the construction of the project. The film is based on some of the events recorded during that period. In the film, former Pakistani military officials who were part of the projects recount what they saw during the construction of the project. Lt. General (retired) Javed Nasir, Major General (retired) Sahib Uddin Bukhari, Major General (retired) Muhammad Afsar and Brigadier (retired) Iqbal Ahmad are amongst those former officers of Pakistan Army who share their stories in the film. Renowned Pakistani author and novelist Mustansar Hussain Tarar highlights the historical background of KKH and the changes the projects brought to the locals. The documentary also highlights how the project mainstreamed the people of the northern area.

"The purpose of the documentary is to tell our people how KKH was built; how many difficulties and hardships were encountered during the construction of the project; and what were the challenges in completing the 8th Wonder of the World," said FWO Director General, Major General Kamal Azfar. — APP

Hunerkada
announces
admissions

ISLAMABAD: Hunerkada College of Visual and Performing Arts has announced admission in Fashion and Design courses.

Hunerkada announced registration in 3, 6 months & 1-year programme.

The classes would be conducted from Monday to Thursday, said a statement. Director of Hunerkada Amina Shah, said that Hunerkada is one of the oldest art institute in capital city that offered degree and short-term courses in Fine Arts and Design and has produced over 300 graduates in last decade. It has also trained more than 3,000 young enthusiasts in its short courses.

For further details, interested students can visit 217-B, Margalla Road (North) F-10/3, Islamabad. — APP

Vaccination
only weapon
to fight
Omicron

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Secretary on National Health Services Regulations and Coordination Dr. Nausheen Hamid Wednesday urged the public to get vaccinated, get a booster shot and follow public health guidelines as new variant of Omicron cases were significantly increasing in the country.

"Vaccination and booster jabs are only weapons to fight against new variant of Omicron", she stressed while talking to a private news channel.

She explained according to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) the overall nationwide case tally of the Omicron variant of coronavirus has reached 75, adding, Karachi has reported 33 omicron cases, 17 cases were reported in Islamabad, 13 in Lahore and 12 cases of Omicron were detected in people coming from abroad.

She said that health authorities are conducting contact tracing to control further spread of omicron variant in the country, adding, in big cities the test facility of Omicron available. — APP

10 more
diagnosed
with corona

RAWALPINDI: 10 persons were diagnosed with coronavirus during last 24 hours, raising the tally of confirmed cases to 36,510 in Rawalpindi district.

As per the latest data released by the District Health Authority here on Wednesday, the total infected had reached to 36,510 from Rawalpindi district.

Five were reported from Rawalpindi Cantt, one from Kahuta, two from Potohar Town, one from Rawal Town and one from Taxila among the new patients.

"Presently 21 confirmed patients were admitted to four city facilities including four in Benazir Bhutto Hospital, three in Fauji Foundation, one in Attock Hospital Rwp and 13 in Rawalpindi Institute of Urology," the report said.

District Health Authority further updated that 35,214 patients had been discharged after recovery. In addition, the report informed that 61 corona positive patients were in home isolation.

The report further said that 4,365,283 people, including 44,547 health workers, had jabbed themselves against the lethal coronavirus across the district since the vaccination administering drive launched on March 10. — APP

RCCI urges for acceleration
of safe city project

KHAYAM ABBASI

RAWALPINDI: A delegation of the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) led by President Nadeem Rauf called on CPO Rawalpindi Sajid Kayani. The delegation included group leader Sohail Altaf, Senior Vice President Asim Malik and Vice President Talat Awan. Talking to the delegation, CPO Sajid Kayani said that the top priority of the

police is protection of life and property of the citizens. Safe City is an important project and all possible efforts are being made to complete it as soon as possible.

CPO welcomed the RCCI suggestions for the elimination of crime from the city. While accepting the invitation, CPO said, "I will visit the Chamber soon and reiterate his resolve to address the issues of the business community on priority basis". On this occasion, the President of the

Chamber Nadeem Rauf briefed the CPO on the ongoing activities of the Chamber. He said that the Safe City project was essential for the city and it should be completed as soon as possible.

He said that we have received positive feedback from traders and also we have noticed that traffic congestion on various Chowks and Crossings has been improved and suggested that certificates of appreciation should be given to the officers who have shown high performance.

He lauded holding daily "Khuli Ketchery" by CPO and added that it will help in reducing crime rate.

The Rawalpindi Chamber is grateful to the Rawalpindi Police for setting up a Police Khidmet Markaz at Chamber premises. Members, especially women members, have been facilitated in various services, mainly, registering FIRs, registering tenants, obtaining driving licenses and acquiring character certificates etc.



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Ph: 051-2261960, 051-2266165

Resuming football

AFTER several meetings, the Ministry of Inter-provincial Coordination (IPC) and the Pakistan Football Federation (PFF) Normalisation Committee have agreed in principle upon the roadmap presented by the latter to complete the election process of the country's football governing body in eight months' time after it is handed over to the PFF headquarters. It is very encouraging to see the roadmap being finalised given that it was a major demand from the IPC ministry which was looking to speed up the resolution of the long-running dispute in the PFF—which was further exacerbated when Pakistan was suspended by FIFA in April. The suspension came about due to an unfortunate set of events where the PFF headquarters were taken over from the Normalisation Committee by the court-elected PFF President Ashfaq Hussain. Thankfully, this chapter is behind us now and the federal government is eager to get the FIFA suspension lifted.

With everything now in place, the hope is that the elections are held within the constitutional time-frame in a transparent manner in order to avoid any future grievances and internal tussles. As it is, sports other than cricket barely receive any patronage in this country, and it is unfortunate to see such issues pose even more hurdles. Because of this suspension, it has been a difficult time where the footballing talent in Pakistan has suffered. The football culture in Pakistan—particularly in places like Gilgit Baltistan, Balochistan, and Lyari—is extremely promising and we must work to facilitate the growth of the sport. The PTI government's Kamyab Jawan Programme has struck a partnership with Global Soccer Ventures (GSV) to groom local talent. We need many more similar initiatives because there is a lot of untapped potential. What is required is substantial investment in infrastructure and a structured system for the players to rise through, alongside facilities such as grounds, floodlight, and other equipment to ensure that aspiring young players can be provided with a viable pathway for pursuing a career in the sport.

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Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

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

US DEMOCRACY'S SEVEN DEADLY SINS



Suicide prevention

THE past few years have seen a rise in discussion and awareness of the importance of good mental health, and the need to enact sensitive and intelligent policies to tackle the increase in mental health problems. Even suicide, a topic usually taboo, highly stigmatised and misunderstood in Pakistani society, was taken up as a topic of discussion in the parliament. Suicide and its decriminalisation were discussed by the Senate, where Senator Shahadat Awan of the PPP, moved a criminal laws amendment bill proposing to amend the Pakistan Penal Code (PPC) and the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) to abolish punishment for those making attempts to commit suicide, on the plea that this was done by people suffering from mental disorder who deserved medical treatment, not punishment.

It is certainly a sign of progress that this was being discussed by the parliament of Pakistan, when our government has unfortunately not shown the most sensitive approach towards mental health issues. With quotas for disabilities being routinely ignored, mental health institutions do not receive the requisite training and sensitive language has often been disregarded by parliamentarians themselves.

Suicide decriminalisation is a complicated issue, which requires a highly nuanced conversation by experts. There are arguments on both sides—yet everyone should come with the same goal of decreasing the suicide and suicide attempt rate. The statistics and scholarly studies however show that the proponents of the bill may have stronger arguments—globally, suicide is a mental health and medical issue, not a criminal one. Criminalisation of suicide can increase the taboo and stigma on suicide attempt survivors, which can increase their risk of a second attempt.

The World Health Organisation's Comprehensive Mental Health Action Plan (2021-2030) has decriminalising suicide as an important target, seeking to end criminalisation, reduce stigma and ensure that there are sufficient services available for those that need them. Nevertheless, it is time for the Senate to have a healthy debate on this issue. As seen by the rise in mental health problems and the suicide rates, our laws and public health policies are not doing enough to counter this social tragedy and need to be updated.

Afghanistan is a symbol of Western hubris

Ibrahim Al Marashi



The term definitely re-emerged after the fall of Kabul to the Taliban in August 2021, even invoked by US President Biden. However, while “graveyard of empires” appears to have been bandied about since time immemorial

THE Soviet failure several decades ago has given rise to a mistaken view of Afghan history that persists today. The Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan on December 24, 1979, but was ultimately defeated by the Afghan mujahidin, leading to the USSR to withdraw almost a decade later in February 1989. The anniversary of this day, decades later, warrants reflection, as for Afghans it is the juncture that marked the beginning of their woes which continue to the present day. In popular imagination, it was Moscow's defeat in Afghanistan that proved to be one of the final nails in the coffin of the USSR. This event contributed to Afghanistan's image as the “graveyard of empires”.

However, the invocation of this aforementioned

cliche is misleading, even offensive, portraying Afghans as savages and denying them and their nation, historical agency. Rather than being a vacuum that sucks in empires to die, Afghanistan is a symbol of the hubris of Western empires. On the other hand, throughout history it has been a vibrant part of past regional empires and even the birthplace of others, such as the Mughal Empire. In 1841, occupying British troops supporting a regime friendly to London's interests sparked an Afghan revolt, precipitating their withdrawal. As the British forces withdrew through the rugged snow-covered mountain passes of Afghanistan, they were constantly harassed by Pashtun Ghilzai warriors. Out of more than 16,000 people who made up this foreign contingent, only a few survived to tell the tale of the massacre. The British-backed government of King Shuja Durrani collapsed without foreign support. The tribal members of the Ghilzai confederation who took part in the attack against the British would join an organisation years later that would continue resisting foreign occupation - the Taliban. One can imagine a British colonial officer in colonial India, in a pith helmet, drinking a gin and tonic, coining the term the “graveyard of empires” after this fiasco. Perhaps, one of the officials in the US Reagan administration boasted in 1989 that Afghanistan proved to be the graveyard of the Soviet Empire.

The term definitely re-emerged after the fall of Kabul to the Taliban in August 2021, even invoked by US President Biden. However, while “graveyard of empires” appears to have been bandied about since time immemorial, the term to describe Afghanistan was actually only coined relatively recently. Following 9/11, a former CIA official used it when attempting to dissuade the US from invading the nation. That article was published in the journal Foreign Affairs, the same journal that led to terms such as the “clash of civilisations” entering our political lexicon. The fact that this term is of recent coinage does not in and of itself negate this popular trope. Rather, the historical record demonstrates Afghanistan has been an essential part of empires since antiquity. Afghanistan was part of the first empire that achieved super-

power status, the Achaemenids, from 550 to 330 BC. Its predominant faith, Zoroastrianism, most probably had its origins, or at least flourished in the Afghan Helmand basin. Afghanistan was not a graveyard for Alexander the Great, and the area witnessed a hybrid flourishing of Hellenic and local cultures. Nor was it a graveyard for the early Muslim empire under the first four caliphs or the later Umayyad Empire. Ghazni, in today's Afghanistan, served as the capital of the Turkic Ghaznavid Empire from 977 to 1186, while Herat served as the base of the Timurid Empire from 1370 to 1507. In 1504, Babur, a Timurid prince, seized Kabul and turned it into his base for failed expeditions in Central Asia. Twenty years later he marched southwards, establishing the Mughal Empire that would rule over most of the Indian subcontinent until the British dissolved it in 1858. It was British interests in India, protecting its northern flank from Russian expansion, which ultimately led to the aforementioned failed expedition to shore up King Shuja.

In the British, Soviet, and American cases, their efforts in Afghanistan failed due to an imposition of foreign cultures or models of rule. The three failed because they pursued their own interests without any kind of consideration of local culture. For example, Biden in his speech justifying the American withdrawal in August 2021, said: “Our mission in Afghanistan was never supposed to have been nation-building. It was never supposed to be creating a unified, centralised democracy.” However, that was the elusive American objective for two decades. One of the major factors undermining both the Soviet and American experiences in Afghanistan was their attempt to create a centralised system of governance based in Kabul where decentralisation would have suited the nation better. Rather than a graveyard of empires, Afghanistan served as a lesson in Western imperial hubris. History demonstrates that the events on December 24, 1979, did not usher in another episode where Afghanistan would become a graveyard for another empire. Rather, that day marks when Afghanistan became a graveyard for Afghans.

Courtesy: TRT World

An insight into cognition-emotion interplay of aging brain

Zahra Ali Khan



Emotion regulation refers to promotion of helpful emotions while managing harmful emotions appropriately regulating one's feelings in favor of successful social...

EMOTIONS play a central role in terms of memory, experience, perception and regulation throughout human life from the moment we are born until we die; they draw attention to what is important to be remembered and noticed, and guide decisions and actions. Older adults consider their personalities and attitudes to have become stable by the time they reach late adulthood by the virtue of wisdom. Objects and places become more valuable in late adulthood than they have been earlier. This tendency to cling to familiar places and possessions may become problematic as it can lead to compulsive behaviors.

CHANGES IN THE BRAIN ELICITING EMOTIONAL RESPONSE

An enormous deal of research seems to be available on diseases associated to aging, there is few evidence on the molecular biology of the aging brain. In part of the reduction of the size of the brain, molecular changes are also due, as well loss of Brain plasticity; which is the ability of the brain to change the structure and function. If a person does not show an action or activity to retain information and cannot decide which one to keep, the brain eradicates the space for it. This may lead to loss of memory, deteriorating intellectual functioning and mobility, and much a much higher rate of getting disease. Age is a major risk for resulting in or pertaining to progressive loss of neurological functional and loss or nerve cells.

CHANGES IN MEMORY

During late adulthood, many changes in mind of persons in late adulthood are due. Typically, memory degenerates. Older aged adults seem to have a hard time in remembering, retaining, and attending to information. Procedural memory (memory used to perform particular actions and processes and most frequently resides below level of conscious awareness) tends to remain same whereas working memory (memory system that actively carries many several pieces of transitory information in brain where it can be manipulated) sharply declines, in contrast to procedural memory. When tasks are complex and become difficult to perform, the reduction in the working memory seems to be evident.

COGNITIVE IMPAIRMENTS

Cognitive changes in older population vary from individual to individual and are complex. There is a sharp decline in the response speed, both motor and neural. Some researchers contend that working memory is the central element underlying the poorer performance on cognitive tasks by the elderly persons. Intellectual variations in the late adulthood do not essentially result in the reduction of ability. However fluid intelligence does decline, which is the ability to solve problems, see and use patterns and relationships). Crystallized intelligence (the ability to use accumulated information to make decisions and solve problems) has been shown to slightly rise over the entire lifespan. Percentages show that forty to sixty percent of cognitive performance upon given remedial trainings could be reversed.

EMOTION-REGULATION IN AGING FROM A BRAIN-BEHAVIOR PERSPECTIVE

Emotion regulation refers to promotion of helpful emotions while managing harmful emotions appropriately regulating one's feelings in favor of successful social interactions may become particularly relevant in old age, given increased dependency and social loss. There is behavioral evidence that older compared to young adults show improved emotion-regulatory capacity. Despite normative declines in various functional domains, improved emotion-regulatory capacities may contribute to high levels of life satisfaction in aging.

SOCIAL SUPPORT

Research studies show increase in longevity as a result older adults' today show possibility of acquiring and maintaining relationship much longer than during any other time in the modern history. Nurturing long-term family relationships can be both gratifying and perplexing. Over the decades developed peaceful relationships can be thoroughly enjoyed by people in their middle and older adulthood however younger adults may feel some strain while looking after their ailing grandparents, parents or other relatives; others also report satisfying relations with their elders.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE OF DEPENDENT ELDERLY PERSONS

As people enter late adulthood there is high potential for neglect, and physical and emotional elderly abuse of dependent persons. It can take any form from withholding medications or food to not replacing bed linens to not providing appropriate hygienic environment. Physical abuse may consist of striking, punching, kicking, shoving, shaking, whereas emotional abuse may be of verbal threats, swearing, and insults. Abuse commonly occurs at home and sometimes in institutions; the typical victim is in poor health and shares his space with someone else, could be a person's spouse, children or grandchildren.

ENSURING SAFETY FOR OLDER ADULTS

Both abusers as well as the victims require some form of treatment, be it individual, group or a family therapy. The main goal is to ensure the safety of dependent older adults who are frail in health and have been victimized. Licensed professionals such as clinical psychologists are obligated by law to report identified cases to the concerned authorities.

EGO INTEGRITY VERSUS DESPAIR IN CLINICAL PRACTICE

In utilizing the psychosocial stages of development as a framework for clinical evaluation, the clinician is able to provide more quality interventions essential to advancing and resolving the stages of development. Knowledge of the changes encountered during late adulthood provide a platform for clinicians to understand their clients as well as provides a foundation for more effective interventions for clients who are currently in the ego integrity versus despair developmental stage.

PRIORITIZING EMOTIONAL GOALS

Older adults are required to prioritize emotional goals and the key players in improving the quality of life are the adults themselves. Exercising, reducing stress, not smoking, limiting the use of alcohol, consuming more fruits and vegetables, and eating less meat and dairy, older adults can expect to live longer and more active lives. Regular exercise is also associated with a lower risk of developing neurodegenerative disorders, especially Alzheimer's disease, and Parkinson's disease.

CONCLUSION

To assist in the promotion of ego integrity, reminiscence therapy has been deemed a beneficial intervention to improve life quality and to conserve mental health. Interventions such as group socialization and group activities serve as a means of reminiscence therapy and support the idea of ego promotion. The presence of family members also serves as an intervention strategy that promotes ego integrity. The ability to reconnect through socialization and activities when one may be stagnant provides an opportunity to resolve some of the tasks that were not completed in previous stages and assists in providing balance between the integrity versus despair dichotomy.

Email: zahra.ali.khan@outlook.com

EU is in denial on rising migrant deaths

Ranvir S. Nayar

The EU has also adopted the controversial policy of funding the navies of war-torn countries such as Libya, asking them to act as its watchdog, and arrest migrants caught at sea and return them to Africa. The Libyan coast guard has intercepted almost 24,000 migrants in the Mediterranean and taken them back to Libya

MORE than 160 migrants died when their boat capsized off the coast of Libya this month as they were trying to reach Italy. Last week, at least three migrants drowned and dozens were lost at sea after a boat carrying almost 50 people sank off the Greek Cyclades islands.

A few years ago reports such as these would make headlines across the world and especially within the EU. Recently, however, incidents involving migrants have passed unnoticed, as the EU seems to have insulated itself against the humanitarian disasters playing out on its doorstep, or even within its territories. The EU seems to be pretending that migrants no longer exist, or that their tragedies no longer matter. Migrant deaths are now a daily occurrence in many parts of the world, but nowhere as starkly as the EU. After a slight dip in 2020, mainly due to the border closures resulting from the global

pandemic, migrant movements and accompanying disasters picked up in 2021.

A UN report earlier this month said that at least 4,834 migrants have died in 2021 while attempting to cross borders. The death toll this year is more than 600 higher than in the previous 12 months, the report said, while a total of 45,843 migrants have died in attempted border crossings since 2014.

A fair share of these deaths occurred in and around the EU, as the region continues to be one of the most attractive parts of the world for migrants, partly because of its location – it is close to some of the most impoverished and conflict-ridden countries in Africa, as well as Asia and the Middle East.

Almost 28,000 deaths, or over 60 percent of the toll since 2014, resulted from drowning and a large percentage of these took place in the Mediterranean Sea, a favorite route for migrants, as well as people smugglers. According to the International Organization of Migration, a UN body, more than 23,000 migrants have died in the Mediterranean. Migrants have also died of suffocation in trucks, perished from exposure on Europe's frontiers, or been run over or shot.

While Europe witnesses a rising number of migrant deaths, it has stopped keeping figures on the fatalities or, indeed, any data related to the issue, the UN body says.

Indeed, in recent years, despite daily incidents at its borders and thousands of migrants knocking on its doors, the EU has chosen not only to look away, but also has become complicit in the deaths, cutting back or even ending search-and-rescue operations in the waters around its borders. Moreover, it has withdrawn naval boats from zones in the Mediterranean and Atlantic Ocean.

The EU has also adopted the controversial policy of funding the navies of war-torn countries such as Libya, asking them to act as its watchdog, and arrest migrants caught at sea and return them to Africa. The Libyan coast guard

has intercepted almost 24,000 migrants in the Mediterranean and taken them back to Libya. Human rights organizations have condemned this practice, saying that it not only endangers the lives of migrants, but also exposes them to torture at the hands of the Libyan forces.

UN officials estimate that about 31,500 migrants were intercepted and returned to Libya in 2021, compared with almost 11,900 migrants the previous year, according to the IOM. About 980 migrants died in 2020, the UN agency said.

The main reason behind Brussels' inhumane stance on migrant deaths seems to be the rise of far-right parties in most EU countries. Indeed, the political discourse in many nations now is driven by far-right leaders. For instance, with the French presidential elections due in April 2022, far-right parties appear to be dictating the mood of the nation, while left-wing parties are nowhere to be seen. The picture is much the same in the Netherlands, Austria, Italy and Switzerland. The mass influx of migrants in 2015-16 – after then German Chancellor Angela Merkel took the politically courageous, but humane, approach of opening German borders to migrants fleeing war in Iraq and Syria – has been blamed for the rise of the far right in Europe. Since then, most politicians have preferred to look the other way, even as thousands of migrants continued to die on their watch or on their borders.

This inhumane attitude has cost almost 50,000 lives in under seven years, and it is time the EU put an end to these needless deaths. It is, of course a herculean task for any country to curb migration, especially in a world that has never been as unequal as it is today. However, the least Europe's leaders can do is boost rescue operations and offer shelter for migrants already on their territory. The migrants may not be European citizens, but that does not reduce the value of their lives. This basic principle should be respected in letter and spirit, and not just given lip service as has become the norm.

Courtesy: Arab News

Briefs

Rashakai SEZ to attract foreign investors at Expo 2020 Dubai

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: While the Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) is all set to participate in the Expo 2020 Dubai and showcase its investment potentials, Rashakai Special Economic Zones (SEZs) will be one of the attractions for foreign investors, Gwadar Pro reported on Wednesday.

In January 2022, KP will showcase tourism, agriculture, industry, mines and minerals, energy, infrastructure, information technology, SEZs to potential investors at Pakistan Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai. CEO of KP-Board of Investment & Trade (KP-BIOT) Hassan Daud Butt said that through the Expo they are not only attracting investments but also promoting culture and tourism of the province. "We have prepared policy framework, investment strategy, industrial policy, digital policy. We are going to showcase these policies, our potentials and natural endowment and resources," he said in a video message.

Rashakai SEZ, a project under the umbrella of China Economic Corridor (CEC) could be one of the attractions for the foreign investors and Pakistani diaspora. The Rashakai SEZ, which is spread over an area of approximately 1,000 acres of land, is located at Nowshera KP.

Hong Kong pro-democracy news site closes

AGENCIES

HONG KONG: A vocal pro-democracy website in Hong Kong shut down Wednesday after police raided its office and arrested six current and former editors and board members in a continuing crackdown on dissent in the semi-autonomous Chinese city.

Stand News said in a statement that its website and social media are no longer being updated and will be taken down. It said all employees have been dismissed. The outlet was one of the last remaining openly critical voices in Hong Kong following the shuttering of the Apple Daily newspaper, which closed after its publisher, Jimmy Lai, and top editors were arrested and its assets frozen.

Police raided Stand News' office earlier in the day after arresting the six, including popular singer and activist Denise Ho, a former board member, on charges of conspiracy to publish a seditious publication. More than 200 officers were involved in the search, police said. They had a warrant to seize relevant journalistic materials under a national security law enacted last year.

Czech Republic reports bird flu outbreaks

PRAGUE: The Czech Republic has started disposing of 80,000 laying hens after the country reported an outbreak of bird flu of the H5N1 type at a poultry farm in Libotenice last week.

Out of the 188,000 birds from the farm, located some 60 kilometres north of Prague, more than half of them died over the Christmas holidays, followed by an additional 8,000 since December 27. Veterinarians estimate that they will cull the rest of the poultry and destroy around one million eggs by Wednesday. According to the State Veterinary Administration, this is one of the largest outbreaks in the history of the country. "This is, I think, the largest outbreak that actually arose in the country, as there were originally around 200,000 animals intended to be put down," said veterinarian Lenka Hanusova at the State Veterinary Administration. The H5N1 subtype of the disease, potentially transmissible to humans, was confirmed at the farm on December 23. — APP

Israel approves measures to improve ties with Palestinians

Benny Gantz met with Abbas at his private residence in a Tel Aviv suburb late Tuesday night. It was the first time Abbas met an Israeli official inside Israel since 2010. The two discussed security coordination

FOREIGN DESK

TEL AVIV: Israel's defense minister approved a raft of measures aimed at improving relations with Palestinians on Wednesday following a rare meeting with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in Israel. Defense Minister Benny Gantz met with Abbas at his private residence in a Tel Aviv suburb late Tuesday night. It was the first time Abbas met an Israeli official inside Israel since 2010. The two discussed security coordination between Israel and Abbas' Palestinian Authority (PA), which administers pockets of the occupied West Bank. Gantz's office said he approved "confidence-building measures," including the transfer of tax payments to the PA, the authorization of hundreds of permits for Palestinian merchants and VIPs, and approving residency status for thousands of Palestini-

ans in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Israel collects hundreds of millions of dollars worth of taxes on behalf of the PA as part of the interim peace agreements signed in the 1990s. The tax transfers are a key source of funding for the cash-strapped Palestinians, but Israel has withheld funds over the PA's payment of stipends to thousands of families that have had relatives killed, wounded or imprisoned in the conflict. Israel says the payments incentivize terrorism, while the Palestinians say they provide crucial support to needy families. Israel has approved residency for some 9,500 Palestinians and controls the Palestinian population registry. Over the years, its policies have left an estimated tens of thousands of Palestinians without legal status, severely limiting their freedom of movement, even within the occupied territories. Israel granted legal status to some 4,000 Palestinians in October.

During the meeting at Gantz's home in the central town of Rosh HaAyin, the two discussed the "importance of creating a political horizon" to bring an end to the decadeslong Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Palestinian official Hussein al-Sheikh said. The last round of peace talks collapsed in 2014. The pair also discussed "the tense conditions on the ground due to the practices of settlers" as well as "many security, economic and humanitarian issues." "We discussed the implementation of economic and civilian measures and emphasized the importance of deepening security coordination and preventing terror and violence — for the well-being of both Israelis and Palestinians," Gantz said on Twitter, according to Reuters. Their talks mark the highest-level public meetings between Abbas and an Israeli minister since Israel's new government was formed in June. But few see prospects for a resumption of peace talks with Israel's coa-

lition government headed by hawkish Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, who opposes Palestinian statehood. His government has shown no interest in reviving peace talks, which broke down more than a decade ago, but has said it wants to reduce tensions by improving living conditions in the West Bank. Recent months have seen a surge in violence by Israeli settlers against Palestinians in the West Bank and Palestinian attacks on Israelis in occupied East Jerusalem and the West Bank. The Palestinians seek an independent state in the West Bank and Gaza with a capital in East Jerusalem. Israel captured those territories during the 1967 Middle East war. The Palestinians have limited self-rule in the West Bank. Israel annexed East Jerusalem, a move not recognized internationally, and in 2005 pulled out of Gaza, which is now controlled by the Palestinian resistance group Hamas.

Germany to donate 75mn Covid vaccines

WEB DESK

BERLIN: Germany is planning to donate 75 million COVID-19 vaccine doses to low- and middle-income countries next year, the country's development minister said on Wednesday. Speaking to local media, Svenja Schulze said that Germany made significant contributions to the UN's vaccine platform COVAX this year, without undermining its own vaccination campaign. "But we can't stop there. Next year, we are planning to donate at least 75 million vaccine doses," she told Redaktionsnetzwerk Deutschland (RND). The government's initial pledge for 2022 is about 25% less than what the country donated to low- and middle-income countries this year.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has repeatedly called on rich nations to donate more COVID-19 shots to the COVAX platform to ensure that lower income countries are not left behind in the global fight against the coronavirus.

Germany has donated or contractually guaranteed over 100 million doses to COVAX this year, but so far less than half of them reached their destinations, due to operational and logistical issues.

Around 53 million doses are currently being distributed or prepared for dispatch, according to the German Foreign Ministry.

Turkey hands over lead VJTF to France

BRUSSELS: Turkey handed over the lead of NATO's highest-readiness military force to France on Saturday, the military alliance announced on Wednesday.

France will take over the leadership of the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force (VJTF) as of Jan. 1, 2022, NATO said in a press statement. "The Very High Readiness Joint Task Force is a substantial contribution to our collective defense, and France's leadership is a strong display of commitment and capabilities," NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said.

"At a time of unprecedented security challenges, there must be no misunderstanding about NATO's resolve: We stand together to defend and protect all allies," he added.

The VJTF is the highest readiness element of NATO's 40,000-strong response force which enables troops to be deployed within days. It was created in 2014 in response to the Russian aggression against Ukraine and the crises in the Middle East.

The leadership of the high-readiness force rotates between countries every year, and several countries provide troops for the multinational force.

In 2022, a 3,500-strong Franco-German brigade will serve as the core of the VJTF, while Poland, Spain, and Portugal will also join the troops. — APP

Global Covid cases up 11% last week

WEB DESK

BERLIN: The World Health Organization says the number of COVID-19 cases recorded worldwide increased by 11% last week compared with the previous week, with the biggest increase in the Americas. The gain followed a gradual increase since October.

The U.N. health agency said in its weekly epidemiological report released late Tuesday that there were nearly 4.99 million newly reported cases around the world from Dec. 20-26. Europe accounted for more than half the total, with 2.84 million, though that amounted to only a 3% increase over the previous week. It also had the highest infection rate of any region, with 304.6 new cases per 100,000 residents. WHO said that new cases in the Americas were up 39% to nearly 1.48 million, and the region had the second-highest infection rate with 144.4 new cases per 100,000 residents. The U.S. alone saw more than 1.18 million cases, a 34% increase. Reported new cases in Africa were up 7% to nearly 275,000. The agency said that "the overall risk related to the new variant ... omicron remains very high." It cited "consistent evidence" that it has a growth advantage over the delta variant, which remains dominant in parts of the world. It noted that a decline in case incidence has been seen in South Africa, and that early data from that country, the U.K. and Denmark suggest a reduced risk of hospitalization with omicron.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates Hamad Al-Zaabi calls on Saudi Ambassador Nawaf Al-Maliki. During the meeting, they discussed issues of common interest between the two brotherly countries and ways to enhance them. — DNA

Uzbekistan, Japan vow to enhance trade ties

NEWS DESK

TOKYO: Uzbekistan diplomats in Tokyo held talks with representatives of Nikkei Inc. Satoshi Shimoda and Miwa Horiuchi to enhance ties with Japanese businesspeople, attract private Japanese companies to implement joint projects in the country, promote information about the favorable conditions created for foreign investors and increase the rating of Uzbekistan in

international rating agencies, reports "Dunya" IA correspondent. During the talks, representatives of Nikkei Inc. noted with satisfaction the growing interest of Japanese businesspeople in Uzbekistan, the reforms carried out over the past few years in the political and economic spheres. It was emphasized that Japanese companies view Uzbekistan as a potentially new promising market for cooperation, and the partners of Nikkei Inc. would like to be constant-

ly informed about the current events in the business environment of Uzbekistan.

Representatives of the Embassy, in turn, familiarized the Japanese side with modern processes in Uzbekistan, the country's potential, as well as the course of implementation of joint projects with Japanese companies.

It was proposed to establish cooperation in the publication of articles on the economy of Uzbekistan, the organization of business forums for a wide range of partners of Nikkei Inc. both in Japan and in Uzbekistan.

For their part, the representatives of the Embassy expressed their readiness to provide comprehensive support to the initiatives of Nikkei Inc. and provide the necessary materials on the ongoing economic events in Uzbekistan.

An agreement was also reached to hold joint business events in 2022 for the business community of Japan — partners of Nikkei Inc.

In addition, representatives of Nikkei Inc. expressed a desire to participate in the international investment forum in Tashkent in March 2022 and to cover it for the Japanese business community in the Nikkei Inc. edition.



Boeing 737 Max: Indonesia lifts ban

JAKARTA: Indonesia has lifted a ban on the Boeing 737 Max, more than three years after the Lion Air disaster that saw the loss of all 189 people on board.

The plane maker saw its best-selling aircraft grounded globally after a deadly crash in March 2019 involving an Ethiopian Airlines 737 Max.

On Monday, Ethiopian Airlines said it will resume such flights in February. The announcements come months after the aircraft returned to service in the US and Europe.

More than 180 countries now allow the use of the 737 Max, with Australia, Japan, India, Malaysia and Singapore lifting their bans this year.

Indonesia's transport ministry said in a statement that the lifting of the ban would be effective immediately, and that it follows regulators' checks of changes made to the aircraft's systems. The ministry also said that airlines must follow airworthiness directives and inspect their planes before they can fly the 737 Max again, adding that government officials would also inspect the planes.

Lion Air, which operated 10 such planes before the ban, did not immediately respond to a request for comment from the BBC. Indonesia's national flag carrier Garuda said it had no plans to reintroduce the plane to its fleet as it focuses on debt restructuring.

The state-controlled firm, which operated just one 737 Max before the plane was grounded, has said it aims to cut its fleet of aircraft from 142 to 66 as part of its turnaround plan. On 29 October 2018, Lion Air Flight 610 crashed into the Java Sea 13 minutes after taking off from Jakarta's Soekarno-Hatta International Airport, killing all 189 passengers and crew.

Less than five months later, Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302, a Boeing 737 Max on its way to Kenya, crashed six minutes after leaving Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa, killing all 157 people on board. — News Desk

Putin's gas weaponization hits a hot spot in Berlin

Russian President Vladimir Putin put the blame for Gazprom's lowered transits on importers in Germany and France and their failure to sign long-term supply contracts

FOREIGN DESK

BERLIN: Germany is pumping Russian gas back into Poland as Gazprom cuts supply to the EU. As Russia plays its hybrid war games with an increasingly divided EU, the new front appears to be the Yamal-Europe gas pipeline.

Yamal-Europe, Europe's longest gas pipeline, usually transports Russian natural gas overland to — rather than from — Germany. Now it has spent the last week sending mainly Russian gas from Germany back to Poland. The purpose? To meet a shortfall as temperatures drop to -10 degrees Celsius (14 F) and Russia cuts gas supplies.

Observers have warned that Russian President Vladimir Putin could use energy as a weapon should the troubled gas pipeline Nord Stream 2 (NS2) go ahead. He is, in fact, already doing so.

On December 21, Russia halted the supply of gas via Yamal-Europe, immediately spooking markets. The wholesale price in the benchmark Dutch TTF contract for January deliveries rocketed to Euro 160 (\$185) from Euro 100 on December 9. High gas demand in Asia is also fed the spike in prices. Consumers in Europe will feel some of the increases in 2022, adding to rapidly rising inflation there. According to the Germany Network Agency, two-thirds of the gas imported

into Germany comes from Russia and former Soviet countries via the Yamal pipeline, which runs across Russia, Belarus, Poland and Germany. Its capacity is 32.9 billion cubic meters of gas per year. In 2020, 23% of Russian gas reached Germany via Belarus and Poland along its 4,107-km (2,552-mi) length.

Worryingly, the gas price on futures markets is also rising. January 2023 prices are up to Euro 90 per megawatt hour, a clear signal that the market expects European gas supplies to be low by the end of this winter and that little gas will come from Russia over the summer to replenish supplies before winter next year.

Putin accuses Germany Russian President Vladimir Putin put the blame for Gazprom's lowered transits on importers in Germany and France and their failure to sign long-term supply contracts. They could, he said, ease the price pressure by ending delays to the Nord Stream 2 (NS2) gas pipeline that runs from Russia to Germany under the Baltic Sea. The pipeline has been caught up in strong geopolitical headwinds.

"They are sawing the branch they are sitting on," he told Russian media. Gazprom is meeting long-term contracts, but has virtually stopped selling gas on the spot market and has not been reserving additional capacity in the pipelines or fully using what it has already

reserved.

Why it is doing this is open to speculation. On the one hand, a sympathetic observer might point to the fact that, with Russia in a cold snap, Gazprom may prefer to keep its gas for domestic needs. The heating season in the European part of Russia began early in mid-September. It has also shifted to a "value-over-volume strategy" that some believe may have tested its ability to maintain pre-existing volumes.

With Poland not continuing its long-term gas contracts with Gazprom after they expire next year, and Ukraine a thorn in Russia's side, it is paramount from the Kremlin's point of view to do what it takes to get NS2 online — and get Germany to stick with its side of the deal. Why book further capacity elsewhere? And why not show the West how much it needs the security of cheap Russian gas? Russian Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said Europe was missing out on additional Russian supplies because of delays to NS2. "European leaders have made mistakes in reducing the use of long-term supply deals," he told Russian state TV channel Rossiya-24. "All problems in Western Europe have been created by themselves and there is no need to blame Gazprom for this. It is better to look in the mirror," he said. And therein lies the rub: For Russia and previous German governments, NS2

was an exclusively commercial enterprise. Now it quite clearly is not.

Poland and Ukraine blame Russia Last week, Poland's government accused Moscow of stopping deliveries via Yamal-Europe, saying Gazprom had engaged in "manipulation."

Ukraine's pipeline operator said on Friday that Russia is sending less gas to Europe via Ukraine than agreed to in the transit contract. Gazprom and Ukraine signed a five-year deal on Russian gas transit to Europe at the end of 2019.

Ukraine has spare transit capacity roughly twice that of NS2, but Gazprom is not using it.

Pure politics "When the Kremlin — that is Putin and his siloviki [hard men] friends in the energy sector — see signs of weakness and political stupidity on part of their perceived adversaries, they simply cannot resist the urge to attack, regardless of the strategic damage to Russian long-term interests," former EU diplomat Albrecht Rothacher told DW.

"First, they don't like the inexperienced and moralizing new German 'traffic light' government, and notably the Greens which — if successful with their climate change policies — would threaten the Russian fossil-based business model," Rothacher said. "Hence, the urge to demonstrate 'who is the wolf in the forest' and teach a

lesson in energy power politics when the winter is coldest in Central Europe and demand highest and when solar panels are deep under snow and the wind is not blowing," he said.

Benjamin L. Schmitt, a senior fellow at the Center for European Policy Analysis, is also unequivocal in condemning what the Kremlin has been doing for months. "This is the Kremlin's energy weaponization against Europe," he said.

Anna Mikulska, from the Center for Energy Studies at Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy, agreed. "Russia has been trying to create difficult gas market conditions in Europe without the need to turn to overt geopolitical actions," she said.

"In a way, each of these elements — storage levels, supply of only contracted volumes and now reverse flows to Poland — are commercially acceptable. But, when combined and given the context of a very difficult and undersupplied gas market in Europe, then one could start having doubts about sensu stricto market dealings by Gazprom," she added.

Germany to blame Germany played a risky game with Russia during a very tricky transition from fossil fuels. "The German exit from nuclear, coal and finally oil plays perfectly into Russia's hands, as renewables are in no position to satisfy increased demand," Rothacher said.

Briefs

Prices of petroleum products likely to go up

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Due to the tough conditions of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the prices of petroleum products likely to go up following the passage of mini-budget to be presented by the government led by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) in the National Assembly on Wednesday (tomorrow). According to sources, the prices of power, gas and petroleum products will increase due to the mini budget that include tough conditions of the IMF, while taxes and duties on more than 1700 items will also be increased in the mini budget and taxes on all imported and luxury items will be increased. Taxes and duties on luxury items, imported diapers, make-up items will be increased and taxes on imported and domestic vehicles will also increase. Sources further said that the total revenue from taxes and duties will be Rs 340 billion and sales tax rate is likely to be raised to 17%, while the tax rate on various items may increase from 5 to 7%. The federal excise duty (FED) on cars likely to increase 2.5 percent and sales tax on tractors is likely to increase by 5%.

German envoy celebrates birthday of Pakistan's shortest man

DNA

ISLAMABAD: German Ambassador to Pakistan Bernhard Schlagheck has visited Pakistan's shortest man Syed Omair's residence in Taxila to celebrate his birthday. On the occasion, the incumbent German envoy also had a video call chat with former German ambassador to Pakistan Martin Kobler where both discussed how to improve the situation of people with disabilities such as Syed Omair whom he termed 'tireless and admirable campaigner'. Earlier, Senator Faisal Javed Khan met with Syed Omair. Omair was overwhelmed and tweeted, "So finally appreciation love respect from my own people big thanks its honor for me bhai big thanks hope to see you again." Azerbaijan Ambassador to Pakistan also visited Omair. Omair later tweeted, "Some people make you feel special when you are around them. They are sunshine for you make you stronger they are blessing for you from almighty Allah thank you so much my dear brothers celebrating my birthday at Azerbaijan Embassy make my day memorable words can't explain your love thanks."

PSL 7: NCOC allows full capacity crowd

SPORTS DESK

LAHORE: National Command Operation Center (NCOC) allowed Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) to host full crowd during the upcoming edition of Pakistan Super League (PSL). As per the NCOC guidelines, only vaccinated spectators would be able to enter the stadium during the league. Spectators and organizers must strictly follow precautionary measures; wearing masks and social distancing must be maintained. The seventh edition of the PSL will take place from January 27 to February 27. The event's 34 matches are set to take place in two legs at Karachi's National Stadium and Gaddafi Stadium Lahore, respectively. If the COVID-19 cases arouse across the country, the NCOC will review the decision in the third week of January.

US reports record infections as Europe sees surge

France, Italy, Greece, Portugal and England have also reported record numbers of daily infections

NEWS DESK

LONDON: The US and several European countries have reported their highest daily rises in Covid cases since the pandemic began, as the Omicron variant spreads. More than 440,000 new cases were recorded in the US on Monday, health officials said. France, Italy, Greece, Portugal and England have also reported record numbers of daily infections. Officials have said the high figures could be due in part to reporting delays over the Christmas period. Studies suggest that

Omicron is milder than the previously dominant Delta variant, but fears remain that the sheer number of cases stemming from the highly infectious Omicron could overwhelm hospitals. The World Health Organization (WHO) has warned that the risk posed by Omicron "remains very high". Poland on Wednesday recorded 794 Covid-related deaths, the highest number in its fourth wave of the pandemic, with more than three-quarters of the victims unvaccinated. In the US, cases recorded by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) rose by 441,278 on 27 Decem-

ber - by the highest number of daily cases ever reported to the agency. The CDC data tracker says US media report the seven-day average rise in infections is now at its highest level since January 2021. A Centers for Disease Control and Prevention spokeswoman told news site Politico that the latest infection figures could be overestimated due to lags in testing and test centre closures over the Christmas period, adding that case numbers would "become more stable after the new year". The health agency has also expanded its travel warnings for parts of Europe, adding Malta, Moldova and Sweden to a list of

countries where travel poses a very high risk of infection. Travellers are asked to avoid these countries under the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Level 4 criteria, which a destination receives if it reports more than 500 cases per 100,000 people. US infectious disease expert Amesh Adalja told the BBC that Omicron could "get round the protection afforded by vaccines" and "affect anybody at will". "So we are going to see cases rise," he said. "The key is to keep this away from high-risk people... we're really going to have to focus on severe cases and hospitalisations."

Overseas Pakistanis a valuable asset

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjani observed that overseas Pakistanis



are a valuable asset for the country's economy as they are contributing millions in the shape of remittances besides projecting the soft image of the country abroad. The Chairman Senate expressed these views in a meeting with office bearers and representatives of overseas Pakistanis from different countries. He said that government is making all out efforts to encourage Pakistani diaspora in different countries towards creation of an enabling environment in the field of trade and investment. He said that investment friendly policies are being framed and more robust approach has been adopted to facilitate investment. He called for diversifying the multifaceted ties with global trade partners for the social and economic development of the country. "Overseas Pakistanis are a vital source of bridging the gap between imports-exports", said the Senate Chairman while emphasizing the role of OPs in national development. He further called upon the diaspora to come forward and work with unison as it a collective responsibility to contribute and work for the national prosperity and growth.



ISLAMABAD: Member of the British House of Lords Lord Daniel Hannan meets Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mehmood Qureshi. - DNA

Need to further boost Pak-UK ties in diverse fields: FM

ISLAMABAD: Member of the British House of Lords Lord Daniel Hannan meets Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mehmood Qureshi at the Foreign Office. During the meeting, various issues including bilateral relations between Pakistan and the United Kingdom, promotion of cooperation in areas of mutual interest were discussed. The Foreign Minister welcomed Lord Daniel Hannan to Pakistan. "There is a deep, multifaceted bilateral relationship between Pakistan and the United Kingdom. Pakistan is committed to further strengthening bilateral economic, trade and political relations with the United Kingdom," Makhdoom Shah Mehmood Qureshi stated. Bilateral trade and economic relations have been further expanded with the Strategic Partnership Agreement between Pakistan and the United Kingdom. The presence of 1.6 million Pakistanis living in UK is a sign of stability in bilateral relations, said Makhdoom Shah Mehmood Qureshi. We intend to celebrate the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and the United Kingdom, Makhdoom Shah Mehmood Qureshi said. "During my recent visit to the UK, I had the opportunity to meet with important British political figures, including the British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss". Lord Daniel Hannan appreciated Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi's recent visit to the UK and his meetings with British political figures. - DNA

China: Public shaming returns amid Covid fears

Images and video of the incident, which took place on 28 December, show four men in hazmat suits and face shields being walked through an area of the city by police

AGENCIES

BEIJING: Police in southern China have been captured on camera parading four alleged offenders through the streets in a public shaming exercise. The four men were accused of smuggling people across China's borders, which are largely sealed because of Covid. They were paraded through the streets of Jingxi city in Guangxi province in hazmat suits. The shaming drew mixed reactions online, including in state-owned media. Images and video of the incident, which took place on 28 December, show four men in hazmat suits and face shields being walked through an area of the city by police. They were carrying placards displaying their names and photos. Some people could be seen watching the event unfold. State-run Guangxi Daily said the disciplinary action deterred border-related crimes and encouraged compliance with epidemic prevention and control. State media have described the current Covid situation in the border area as "severe and complex". China, the country where Covid-19 was first discovered at the end of 2019, has recorded a total of 4,849 deaths and 114,365 cases, with 203 new cases reported on Tuesday. It pursues a strict zero-Covid strategy,

using mass testing and lockdowns to stop outbreaks, and has a vigorous vaccination programme, with 86% of its population now fully jabbed. The shaming parade was met with a mixed reaction on social media site Weibo where a hashtag about it was the top trending topic. Some people said the exercise reminded them of public shamings from hundreds of years ago, while others empathised with the efforts needed to control the virus near the border. "What is more terrifying than parading the street is the many comments that support this approach," one user wrote. The State-owned Beijing News said that "the measure seriously violates the spirit of the rule of law and cannot be allowed to happen again". The Jingxi City Public Security Bureau and local government defended the exercise, however, claiming it was an "on-site disciplinary warning activity" and that there was no "inappropriateness", according to local media. In 2007, a notice from authorities in China banned the parading of prisoners who had been given the death penalty. Public shamings were common during the cultural revolution and are fairly rare now. In 2006, about 100 sex workers and some of their clients were dressed in yellow prison tunics and paraded through the streets.

Govt frames country's first National Security Policy Paper: Senate told

ISLAMABAD: Leader of the House in Senate Dr Shahzad Waseem on Wednesday informed the Senate that the incumbent government under the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan has framed National Security Policy Paper for the first time in country's history. Responding to a point of order raised by Sherry Rehman, he said that in past no government could present such National Security Policy Paper in Pakistan. "The credit goes to Imran Khan who gave such policy paper in the country," he said. Coming hard on the opposition particularly Pakistan Peoples Party, he said the opposition was invited in the Parliamentary committee meeting to share their reservations and other inputs but they refused to attend it. Regarding IMF programme, he said that Pakistan availed many IMF's programmes in past adding that PPP government approached IMF 10-times for bailout package and PML-N for 6-times. Both the past governments of PPP and PML-N acquired loans from IMF but did not pay any heed to structural reforms, he added. - APP

Russia court hits rights group with second ban

MOSCOW: A Moscow court on Wednesday hit Russia's most prominent rights group, Memorial, with a second ban in as many days despite an international outcry. Judge Mikhail Kazakov ordered the dissolution of Memorial's Human Rights Centre, which campaigns against contemporary rights abuses in Russia, at the request of prosecutors. On Tuesday, the country's Supreme Court had ordered the dissolution of Memorial International, the group's central structure which chronicles Stalin-era purges and maintains the network's extensive archives in Moscow. That ruling was slammed by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and EU foreign policy chief Josep Borell, at a time when tensions are already high between Russia and NATO over the Ukraine conflict. The rulings cap a year that began with the jailing of President Putin's top critic Alexei Navalny and signal the end of an era in Russia's post-Soviet democratisation process, which began 30 years ago this month. - Agencies

One killed, two injured in Mir Ali IED blast

PESHAWAR: One person killed and two others sustained injuries in an improvised explosive device (IED) blast occurred in wee hours of Wednesday at Mama Khel area of district North Waziristan, police confirmed. The IED that was planted in a tube-well situated in the jurisdiction of tehsil Mir Ali went off killing one person on the spot while two other received critical injuries. The injured were rushed to DHQ hospital Bannu for treatment. Police team collected the evidences from the site of blast and initiated investigation to arrest the perpetrators. - APP

Independent outlet to close after senior staff arrested

Seven people, both current and former employees, were detained by Hong Kong police for "conspiracy to publish seditious publications"

WEB DESK

HONG KONG: One of the last pro-democracy media organisations in Hong Kong, Stand News, is shutting down after it was raided by police and senior staff were arrested. Seven people, both current and former employees, were detained by Hong Kong police for "conspiracy to publish seditious publications". "Because of the situation, Stand News is ceasing operations immediately," the organisation said in a Facebook post. More than 200 police officers were sent to raid the publication's office. Hong Kong police said in a statement they were authorised to

"search and seize relevant journalistic materials". In a post on Facebook, Stand News said it would no longer be updating its website and would be removing its social media content "within a day". "This morning, the police arrested a number of senior and former senior staff of the company, [and] took many people away to assist in the investigation," the statement reads. It adds that computers and documents were seized from its office and that it would be assisting the police with their inquiry. Those arrested - three men and four women - are aged between 34 and 73 years old. They include the former and acting chief editors of Stand News, Chung Pui-kuen and Patrick Lam, as well as pop star turned de-

mocracy icon Denise Ho, who was a former board member. Other board members Margaret Ng, Christine Fang and Chow Tatchi were also among those arrested. The identity of the seventh person detained has not yet been reported. Chief Secretary of police John Lee said during a press conference on Wednesday afternoon that he supported the police operation against the news outlet and there would be "zero tolerance of behaviour that threatens national security". "Making use of media work as a tool to pursue their political purpose or other interests contravenes the law, particularly offences that endanger national security," he said.

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