



Islamabad POST

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Calls for genocide in India could lead to civil war: Naseeruddin

Detailed News On Page-07

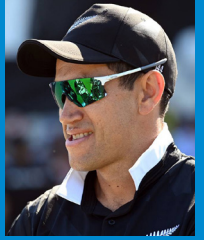
Europe has a "cognitive split" in China policy

Detailed News On Page-08



Bangladesh series Taylor's farewell tour

Detailed News On Page-06



Briefs

COAS lauds doctors, healthcare workers

DNA

RAWALPINDI: 54th Convocation Ceremony of College of Physicians and Surgeons Pakistan (CPSP), was held Thursday at Jinnah Convention Centre, Islamabad. General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) was the chief guest on the occasion, said a statement issued by Inter Services Public Relations. On arrival, COAS was received by Professor Shoaib Shafi, Vice President CPSP. COAS awarded degrees to successful graduates and awarded medals to high achievers. COAS was also conferred honorary fellowship of CPSP.

Pak-China to hold 140 events

DNA

BEIJING: Pakistan and China held about 140 events this year to celebrate and commemorate the 70th anniversary of establishment of their diplomatic relations which remained popular from the beginning to the end, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Zhao Lijian said on Thursday. "This year marked the 70th anniversary. The two sides held a series of events in celebrations and commemoration of this important occasion," he said during his regular briefing held here.

PM Khan has mental disorder

DNA

LAHORE: Hamza Shabbaz stated that even after three and a half years if Imran Khan accuses previous governments for tabling mini budget it can only be because of mental disorders. Opposition leader Punjab Assembly Hamza Shabbaz, in a statement, said that the government is going to approve not only a mini budget rather the economical strangling of the people. Would this mini budget of 350 million rupees further affect the already hiked prices of hundreds of common use items, he asked.

'Mini-budget' tabled in NA amid ruckus

Shaukat Tarin presents the Supplementary Bill; Shahbaz Sharif and Bilawal abstained; "Don't sell Pakistan", says Khawaja Asif

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Amidst the Opposition uproar, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) led federal government on Thursday tabled Finance (Supplementary) Bill 2021 – or the mini-budget in the National Assembly for approval. The Finance (Supplementary) Bill 2021 was tabled by Federal Finance Minister Shaukat Tarin in the lower house amid protest by the opposition members. Govt also tabled the State Bank of Pakistan (Amendment) Bill 2021 in the assembly for approval.

Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Shehbaz Sharif and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari remained absent from today's all-important parliament session. Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser who presided over the session allowed the minister to table the bill. Before the presentation of Supplementary Finance Bill, 2021, Finance Minister Tarin read out the State Bank Bill before the parliament.

Continued on Page 06

PPP's Shagufta Jamani, PTI's Ghazala Saifi trade blows

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Amid the opposition's ruckus in the National Assembly session Thursday, an incident occurred in the Lower House of the Parliament when the finance minister read out the bill, Pakistan Peoples' Party (PPP) MNA Shagufta Jamani had a clash with a member of the government Ghazala Saifi. The federal government has tabled supplementary finance bill (mini-budget) alongside other amended laws in the National Assembly today in which the opposition lawmakers came face-to-face to the government

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Palestinian Ambassador Ahmed Rabai receives Dr. Ibrahim Ramani, the Ambassador of the Republic of Algeria. Palestinian envoy delivered his best wishes for Ambassador Dr. Ibrahim in his new mission. – DNA

Opp making false claims: Habib Lay man to bear burden of only Rs2 bln taxes

Tareen says govt intends to broaden tax net; hopes steps would ensure future growth

ANSAR BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Terming the opposition's rumpus over supplementary finance bill totally unjustified, Finance Minister Shaukat Tarin Thursday said the government had proposed to review tax exemptions of Rs343 billion in the supplementary finance bill, 2021 out of

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Federal Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry presenting a souvenir to Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan Khazar Farhadov. Both sides discussed matters of mutual interest. – DNA

Germany to turn off 3 of last 6 nuclear facilities

The last three nuclear power plants will be turned off by 2022 end

WEB DESK

BERLIN: Germany will pull the plug on three of its last six nuclear power stations on Friday, another step towards completing its withdrawal from nuclear power as it turns its focus to renewables. The government decided to speed up its phasing out of nuclear power following Japan's Fukushima reactor meltdown in 2011 when an earthquake and tsunami destroyed the coastal plant in the world's worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl 25 years earlier. The reactors of Brokdorf, Grohnde and Gundremmingen C, run by utilities E.ON (EONGN.DE) and RWE (RWEAG.DE), will be shut down on Friday after three and half decades in operation. The last three nuclear power plants - Isar 2, Emsland and Neckarwestheim II - will be turned off by the end of 2022.

Vaccination centres to remain closed on Jan 1-2

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) said on Thursday Covid-19 vaccination centres will remain closed across the country on Jan 1 and 2. The country's nerve centre for Covid-19 response said the inoculation drive will resume from Jan 3. The NCOC said 30 per cent of the country's total population and 46 per cent of the eligible population have been inoculated against the viral disease. Amid the growing threat of outbreak of cases of Covid-19 Omicron variant, it urged citizens to get themselves vaccinated as soon as possible and adhere to the SOPs.

Continued on Page 06



End 'negative' behavior, Saudi King tells Iran

"We are following with great concern the Iranian regime's destabilizing policy" says King Salman

CENTRELINE REPORT

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's King Salman urged arch-rival Iran on Thursday to end its "negative behaviour" in the region, after Riyadh accused Tehran of aiding Yemeni rebels in launching deadly attacks on his country. However, the monarch who turns 86 on Friday appeared to soften his hawkish tone towards the Islamic republic,

Continued on Page 06

Iran launches rocket into space

NEWS DESK

TEHRAN: Iran has launched a satellite carrier rocket bearing three research devices into space, according to state media, as difficult negotiations over its tattered nuclear deal with world powers continue in Vienna. The reports on Thursday did not say when the launch was conducted, nor what devices the carrier brought with it.

Continued on Page 06

Fled Kabul to prevent destruction: Ghani

MONITORING DESK

LONDON: Afghanistan's former president has defended his decision to flee the country as the Taliban closed in earlier this year, saying he did it to prevent the destruction of Kabul. The Taliban seized power in August after taking control of the capital.

Ashraf Ghani revealed that when he woke up on 15 August he had "no inkling" it would be his last day in Afghanistan. It was only when his plane left Kabul that he realised he was going, Mr Ghani said on BBC Radio 4's Today programme. He was heavily criticised and accused of abandoning the country at the time. He is now in the United Arab Emirates.

Mr Ghani made the comments in conversation with Gen Sir Nick Carter, the



UK's former Chief of the Defence Staff, who was guest-editing the Today programme on Thursday. As the day started, Mr Ghani recalled, Taliban fighters had agreed not to enter Kabul - "but two hours later, this was not the case". "Two different factions of the Taliban were closing in from two different directions,"

Continued on Page 06

Inside...

Samina Alvi urges students to focus on practical education – Page 02

PAF's heroics during 1971 Pak-India war laudable – Page 03

ICCI for capitalizing on Pak-Afghan trade potential – Page 04

2021: The year of failed political leadership – Page 05

WAPDA "B" annexed Pakistan Women Basketball Tournament – Page 06

Calls for genocide in India could lead to civil war: Shah – Page 07

NAB recovered Rs14 bn only this year, claims chairman – Page 08

Omicron surge: WHO warns of Covid 'tsunami'

The blistering surge was illustrated by a tally of 6.55 million new infections reported globally in the week ending on Tuesday

AGENCIES

GENEVA: A Covid "tsunami" threatens to overwhelm healthcare systems, the World Health Organisation (WHO) said on Wednesday, as record surges fuelled by the Omicron variant dampened New Year celebrations around the world once again. Governments are walking a tightrope between anti-virus restrictions and the need to keep societies and economies open, as the highly transmissible variant drove cases to levels never seen before in the United States, Britain, France and Denmark.

The blistering surge was illustrated by AFP's tally of 6.55 million new infections reported globally in the week ending on Tuesday, the highest the figure has been since the WHO declared a Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020.

"I am highly concerned that Omicron, being more transmissible, circulating

at the same time as Delta, is leading to a tsunami of cases," said WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

"This is and will continue to put immense pressure on exhausted health workers, and health systems on the brink of collapse." The variant has already started to overwhelm some hospitals in the United States, the hardest-hit nation where the seven-day average of new cases hit 265,427, according to a Johns Hopkins University tracker. Harvard epidemiologist and immunologist Michael Mina tweeted that the count was likely just the "tip of the iceberg", with the true number likely far higher because of a shortage of tests. But there was some hope as data indicated a decoupling of the number of cases and hospitalisations.

"We should not become complacent," top US infectious diseases expert Anthony Fauci said Wednesday, but "all indications point to a lesser severity of

Omicron". At a drive-through virus testing site in Miami, Florida, on Wednesday, there were long lines of cars with people waiting to provide samples. "Half of my family has it, you know this new variant is very, very spreadable, like way more spreadable than the first time around," said resident Victoria Sierralta.

Omicron 'not a common cold' yet, virologist warns

NEWS DESK

BERLIN: The South African virologist Wolfgang Preiser who first discovered the omicron variant of the coronavirus warned of its highly contagious nature in an interview with DW on Thursday. "With this variant, it will be next to impossible to escape infection," Preiser told DW. The virologist was "cautiously optimistic" about the sharp decline in case numbers now being seen in South Africa, one of the countries first hit by the new variant. "Maybe omicron is a bit less virulent than the previous strains," Preiser said. "But we

are still seeing patients dying from it," he warned. The omicron variant was first registered in November and has since led to record-breaking numbers of infections in several European countries, including France where daily infections have recently surpassed 200,000.

While early reports on the variant have suggested it may have milder effects than other variants of the virus, scientists have warned that the surges in cases could easily overwhelm health services nevertheless. "It's not a question of a common cold virus yet, it may be moving in that direction and that would be good news," Preiser explained.

Samina Alvi urges students to focus on practical education

Begum Samina Arif Alvi also advised the students of IU to also work for creating awareness among the special children about preventive measures to maintain good health

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Begum Samina Arif Alvi on Thursday urged students to equally focus on practical aspects and scope of their respective studies so as to get jobs after completing their studies. She said this in her address to the students and faculty members of the Iqra University (IU), North Campus on the occasion of Poster Competition for Physical Wellness organized by IU here. Begum Samina Arif Alvi has stated that it would be very good for all, if the students after attaining their education get a suitable job; therefore practical aspect of the education is equally important. She highly appreciated the students, faculty members and administration of the IU for organizing the Poster Competition and said posters pre-

pared by the students were very informative and could appear very useful with regard to awareness about health and fitness.

These types of posters should also be displayed in schools because these would be very fruitful to create awareness among the students about preventive measures to maintain physical wellness, she said.

She also expressed pleasure to see the happy faces of the students and said it shows their enthusiasm and interest in their studies.

Begum Samina Arif Alvi also advised the students of IU to also work for creating awareness among the special children about preventive measures to maintain good health.

She said that the persons with disabilities (PWDs) also needed support of all of us. The differently-able children also deserve to get sympathy and empathy

from the whole society to lead a normal life and become a productive member of the society, she observed.

First Lady Begum Samina Arif Alvi also called upon the management of the Iqra University to organize health awareness camps in the less-privileged localities to create awareness among the masses.

She said that the present government was also paying active attention to extend best healthcare services to the masses.

Earlier, she visited the Poster Competition and took keen interests in the posters prepared by the participants.

First Lady Begum Samina Arif Alvi was also presented souvenir on the occasion by the Iqra University.

Later, First Lady Begum Samina Arif Alvi distributed shields among the winners and runners-up of the Poster Competition.



ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani offering Fateha on the sad demise of the mother of Muhammad Ayub Afridi, adviser to the PM for overseas Pakistanis and HR development. – DNA

Pak hands over wheat consignment to Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD: The first consignment of 1800 metric tons of wheat from Pakistan is being handed over to the Afghan authorities Thursday on the basis of humanitarian sympathy for Afghanistan, said a statement here. On November 22, 2021, Prime Minister Imran Khan announced the provision of Rs 5 billion worth of humanitarian aid to Afghanistan. The relief supplies include 50,000 metric tons of wheat, emergency medical supplies, tents and other essentials. The Prime Minister's decision also includes approval of reduction in key commodity tariffs and sales tax on exports from Afghanistan to Pakistan. In the context of this initiative of the Government of Pakistan, the first consignment of wheat (1800 metric tons) is being delivered to Afghanistan at Torkham, the statement said. – APP

Hotel One to open in Sialkot

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The purpose built 58-room hotel will be strategically placed in the business hub of the city, to help strengthen and further develop the economy of Sialkot.

To redefine the modern travel experience by opening a brand-new Hotel One on Paris Road, Sialkot, Hashoo Group has joined hands with Nizam Sons (Pvt) Ltd and Leather Field (Pvt) Ltd.

Hashoo Group is the leading and largest chain of hotels in Pakistan, whereas Nizam Sons (Pvt) Ltd and Leather Field (Pvt) Ltd have joined forces to develop Union Tower, as the landmark and icon building for Sialkot, where Hotel One will be launched.

For this, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between Hotel One and Union Tower, on 28th December 2021. The MoU was signed by Mr. Haseeb Gardezi, Chief Executive Officer, Hotel One as well as the Chief Operating Officer of Hashoo Group, Hospitality and Education Division, and Mr. Ameen Ahsan, partner Union Tower.

At the MoU signing ceremony, Mr. Haseeb A. Gardezi said, "Hotel One is the fastest growing chain of select-service hotels in Pakistan which is contributing to the economy by providing jobs.

Vaccination of kiln workers to be ensured: Mamoon

KAMRAN GUJJAR

JHELMUM: The meeting of the district vigilance committee was held in the DC office committee room chaired by assistant com-

missioner Jhelum Maria Javed. The meeting was attended by DO industries Saeed, DO literacy Mamoon Anjum, DO education and other district officers, officials of kiln owners association, officials of kiln

workers union.

The meeting reviewed in detail other issues including complaints about kiln, vaccination of kiln workers, operation on minimum wages, forced labor, social security CARDS.

On this occasion, the assistant commissioner said that the vaccination of kiln workers should be done as soon as possible, full protection of the rights of kiln workers and implementation of minimum wage law and all resources should be used to eliminate child labor.

The maximum social security cards for workers should be ensured and said that future workers will be distributed to the assistant commissioner's office.



SNGPL Faisalabad evolved comprehensive strategy

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) has evolved a comprehensive strategy to give new gas connections in addition to resolving the problems of low pressure in different parts of this region, said Mr. Masroor Ahmad Khan General Manager SNGPL Faisalabad.

Addressing the business community in Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) here today, he said that despite the acute shortage of gas SNGPL has installed 52,000 domestic connections during last year. He said that industrial development is imperative for the national growth and hence SNGPL was trying its optimum best to resolve its genuine issues on top priority basis.

He said that being a nation, we must try to accept ground realities and accordingly mend our ways. He said that Faisalabad region has been declared best because of its outclass performance. "It has recorded minimum losses", he said and added

that more connections are installed as against the given targets.

He underlined the need to ensure close liaison between FCCI and SNGPL and said that Mr. Atif Munir Sheikh should identify the areas facing problems of low pressure so that the genuine complaints could be resolved without any delay. He also floated a proposal to create a WhatsApp group so that FCCI members could file their complaints 24/7 and could also get online feedback from the department. He said that gas problems relating to M3 and Allama Iqbal Industrial Estates are being resolved expeditiously while Government has also been requested to allocate additional gas quota for the new industrial units expected to be set up in these planned industrial estates.

About the overall shortage of gas in the country, he said that our domestic reservoirs are depleting at a much faster pace and the Government must involve 3rd party from the private sector to ensure smooth and uninterrupted supply of imported LNG.

PDMA conducts risk assessment

PESHAWAR: The Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in collaboration with GLOF II project, UNDP and technical support of CDPM & NCEG University of Peshawar has conducted hazard, vulnerability and risk assessment (HVRA) for 17 most vulnerable valleys of Chitral Upper & Lower, Dir Upper, Swat, Kohistan Upper and lower and Kolai Palas to the glacial related hazards.

HVRA is a step towards integrated and comprehensive Disaster Risk Reduction mainstreamed development at local, provincial, and national levels.

It guides the policy makers in requisite land-use planning and implementation of development programs aligned to ground vulnerabilities, exposure to risks etc. – APP

Police arrest 245 accused

PESHAWAR: Rural Division Police, Peshawar have arrested 245 accused involved in various cases during the current year.

According to police, those arrested accused were involved in murder, attempted murder, robbery and other serious crimes. – APP

FIA busts gang defrauding people

DNA

KARACHI: Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) has busted a gang allegedly involved in defrauding people in the name of the Ehsaas program in Naushahro Feroze district of the Sindh province.

The FIA claimed that it had arrested three people for their role in the entire scam after it was pointed out by a beneficiary of the Ehsaas program. Fake SIMs, fingerprints, and mobile phones were found from their possession besides also recovering laptops and 1500 copies of national identity cards (NICs).

According to the FIA, the suspects used to create a fake ID of the Ehsaas program using the illegally obtained data and later used it to receive money in their name. Earlier this year, the staff of Ehsaas Kafalat Centre was found allegedly using fingerprints of deserving women to issue SIM cards in Jacobabad.

The staff members of Ehsaas Kafalat Centre in Jacobabad were allegedly found involved in illegally issuing SIM cards on the names of the deserving women registered with the poverty alleviation programme by using their fingerprints.

Four killed in separate incidents

FAISALABAD: Four people were killed in various incidents in and around city during the last 24 hours.

Police spokesman said on Thursday that two armed men namely Hamza and Naem opened indiscriminate firing on Muhammad Sufyan Khan over a dispute near Ghousia Chowk. As a result, he suffered severe bullet injuries and died on-the-spot. The body was shifted to the mortuary for medico-legal formalities. In another incident, two dead bodies of women, including a girl, were found from Siem Nullah near Chak 510-GB in the limits of Mamukanjan police station. Locals spotted the bodies and informed the area police. – APP

Police hold flag march

FAISALABAD: The district police on Thursday held a flag march in M-III as well as Allama Iqbal Industrial City, Sahianwala.

A spokesperson for FIEDMC said that FIEDMC Chairman Zafar Iqbal Sarwar and senior police officers were among the team members of the flag march. Chairman Zafar Iqbal said that the objective of holding flag march was to ensure protection of life and property to the business community in the industrial estates.

He said that FIEDMC, with the help of police, was providing strict security cover to all local as well as foreign investors in both industrial estates. – APP

Covid provides opportunities for E-commerce

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Despite its horrific economic impacts, Corona has provided a positive opportunity to the SME sector to spread its wings to the global markets through E-commerce without bearing additional financial cost, said Mr. Atif Munir Sheikh, President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI).

He was addressing a seminar on "Grow Your Export Business with Alibaba.com" in FCCI here today. This free session was organized in collaboration with "Hive Technologies" while Mr. Song Song country Manager Alibaba.com specially participated in it. Mr. Atif said that before corona, the global market was following the traditional system but the pandemic opened new avenues of development, particularly for the SME sector with limited financial resources. "The entire global system switched over to the E-commerce as people discouraged direct links due to the Covid-19", he said and added that as the E-commerce thrived across the borders, the pioneer of E-commerce Mr. Bill Gates could not maintain

its superiority and Alibaba.com jumped to the top position as a global giant. He said that a large number of Pakistani youth is already working with Alibaba.com. "They have given excellent results despite their non professionalism", he said and added that Alibaba.com has made excellent growth which has also opened new avenues for the new startups. "Youth working with Alibaba.com falls within the bracket of 20-30 years", he said and added that they have adopted new technologies and are now yielding best results. He said that Faisalabad is a hub of textile which is producing high-quality value-added textile products which could be exported throughout the globe by utilizing the platform of Alibaba.com.

He also appreciated the cooperation of Mr. Song Song who invited president FCCI to visit the headquarters of Alibaba.com next year. Mr. Saad Khawaja and Mr. Waqas Khawaja narrated their success stories and said that in view of the increasing importance of E-commerce, they have got a franchise of Alibaba.com for Faisalabad. "We shall train local youth to effectively use this global platform to give a quantum jump to textile exports", he added.

FESCO upgrading its system: CEO

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO) is upgrading its transmission and distribution system to ensure uninterrupted electricity supply to its consumers during the upcoming hot season, said Engineer Bashir Ahmad Chief Executive Officer FESCO. He was addressing a function to handover new operational vehicles to new subdivisions in FESCO headquarter here today. He said that FESCO is a consumer-friendly organization and was exploiting its all-available resources to ensure in time services by strengthening and augmenting its transmission and distribution system. "Transmission lines and grid stations are being upgraded well ahead of the coming hot season", he said and added that the shortage of meters and other installation material would also be overcome by next week. He further said that as many as 159 vehicles are being pur-

chased with the approval of FESCO Board of Directors (BOD). Among these include single cabins, pickups and other vehicles for the operation staff.

He hoped that with these vehicles FESCO would save approximately Rs.55 million per annum from the head of petrol, maintenance and other related expenditures. He said that in the first phase, 13 signal cabin latest porters H-100 model of Hyundai are being handed over to the most needed subdivisions so that consumers complaints could be redressed expeditiously by ensuring speedy transportation of staff and material. He assured that

all existing fleets will be replaced with new vehicles within the next 20-30 years in this region.

Mr. Suleman Najeeb Khan Member FESCO BOD said that maximum facilities are being doled out to the FESCO officers and officials. "We are trying to introduce digitalization and automation so that the problems of FESCO consumers could be resolved through a click", he added. Mr. Kashif Bashir Deputy Director Transport said that the first lot of new vehicles is going to become an active part of FESCO, which will ensure qualitative as well as quantitative improvement in the company.



Plaque of Pakistan-China Joint Research Center unveiled

DNA

KARACHI: Prof. Dr. Atta-ur-Rahman, Chairman of Prime Minister's Task Force on Science and Technology, has said that the establishment of 'Pakistan-China Joint Research Center for Nutrition and Health' in the International Center for Chemical and Biological Sciences (ICCBS), University of Karachi is really valuable that will open new vistas for researchers to have new discoveries in the field of Nutrition and Health.

A silent revolution in education is taking place in Pakistan, as the landscape of higher education, science, and technology are presently undergoing a major positive change. He was speaking in the joint opening ceremony (online) of the 'Paki-

stan-China Joint Research Center for Nutrition and Health' held at the H.E.J. Research Institute of Chemistry, University of Karachi, recently.

Prof. Atta-ur-Rahman and Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Director of the International Center for Chemical and Biological Sciences, and COMSTECH Coordinator General, jointly unveiled the plaque of the joint research center in the ceremony.

It is pertinent to mention here that the Chinese officials also unveiled the plaque of the joint center in the Institute of Food Science and Technology, Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS), China, at the same time in the ceremony. Many Chinese and Pakistani scientists attended the joint online ceremony.

Prof. Atta-ur-Rahman said that as a result of numerous projects undertaken by the technology-driven Knowledge Economy Task Force set up by Prime Minister Imran Khan in early 2019 under his chairmanship, the landscape of higher education, science and technology were presently undergoing a major positive change.

"There has been a huge 600 percent enhancement in the development budget of the Ministry of Science and Technology over the last three years and projects of over Rs100 billion have either been approved or are in the final phase of approval," he informed the ceremony.

Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary emphasized the significance of the bilateral relations between Pakistan and China, and said that the decades of relationship between the

two brotherly countries were now translating into institutional collaboration. The ICCBS as a center for excellence owns an international stature in the field of science and research, he said.

He said that ICCBS – University of Karachi was contributing its role remarkably in the area of research and higher education.

He proposed to compile a Pharmacopoeia of medicinal plants used both in TCM and in traditional Unani medicine. He acknowledged the advice and tremendous support of minister health Dr. Azra Fazal Pehuchio in the establishment of the binational center.

He said, "ICCBS was the only institution in Pakistan, which was not only certified by ISO but it also became 'UNESCO Centre for Excellence Category-2 Institute'."

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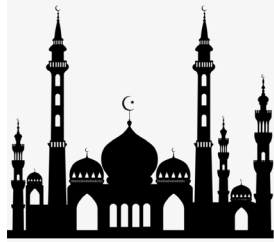
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Rescue (Police).....15
Bomb Disposal.....15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance..1122 & Rescue Services.4451122
Motorway Police.....9266044
Motorway Police..9270601-20
Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596
Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115
PIAFlightInfo.....114
PIACargo.....9280979
Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi..5555489
CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

CMH.....5611111
MH.....561116
Cantt Hospital...9270907-11
DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International.4603666



Departments

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



Complaints

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

Islamabad Metropolitan

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

Wasa Water Tank

Rawalpindi.....0331-5022125

PAF's heroics during 1971 Pak-India war laudable

Former senior Pakistan Air Force officers and eminent diplomats discuss PAF at the National Seminar on “PAF’s Saga in December ’71 Air War”

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: “Mr Jinnah was right” when he wanted “Peace within and Peace without” for Pakistan to make its rightful place in the comity of nations. He was right when he desired an Air Force “Second to None” for Pakistan. This was the key message of former senior Pakistan Air Force officers and eminent diplomats at the National Seminar on “PAF’s Saga in December ’71 Air War”, organized by the Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies (CASS) in Islamabad. Air Marshal Masood Akhtar (Retd), former Deputy Chief of Air Staff (Training), PAF was the Key-note Speaker, while other eminent speakers included Ambassador Khalid Mahmood, Chairman Board of Governors, Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad (ISSI); Air Commodore Jamal Hussain (Retd), PAF veteran and Defence Analyst; Ambassador Afrasiab Mehdi Hashmi Qureshi, former High Commissioner of Pakistan to Bangladesh,



Bhutan, and New Zealand. The seminar was chaired by President CASS Air Marshal Farhat Hussain Khan (Retd), while Air Vice Marshal Faheem Ullah Malik (Retd), Director Warfare & Aerospace

moderated the proceedings. Outlining why it was important to re-tell the stories of those PAF officers who had sacrificed their lives for the nation in the 1971 War, President CASS Air Mar-

shal Farhat Hussain Khan (Retd) highlighted that the seminar was organized because their exceptional devotion, valour and sacrifice remained overshadowed by the great national catastrophe. “It is imperative to communicate to the younger generations PAF’s repeated admirable performance in times when all others had gone under,” he said. In his Keynote Address, Air Marshal Masood Akhtar provided an overview of Pakistan’s political environment after Quid-i-Azam’s demise in both East and West Pakistan, the overall defence establishment construct, build-up of armed forces in general and PAF in particular, he pointed out that in the backdrop of 1971, we often shy away from looking at the constraints on PAF and how in spite of all those, the PAF performed above par.

PTCL and Ufone welcome 4th batch of FUEL program

ISLAMABAD: PTCL Group has welcomed the 4th batch of its flagship leadership development program, ‘FUEL’ that focuses on carving out the next line of business leaders through two-year immersive training of its most talented and top-performing employees. To welcome the new batch and bid farewell to the graduating batch, an event was organized in Islamabad that was attended by Hatem Bamatraf, President & Group Chief Executive Officer, PTCL & Ufone, along with the top management, said a news release. On the occasion, Syed Mazhar Hussain, Group Chief Human Resource Officer, PTCL & Ufone shared his thoughts with said, “I congratulate and wish their professional ver, I would like welcome the new age them to pursue with enthusiasm have always been companies are a people. When you ple in your compa culture & right can move mountains.” PTCL launched the FUEL program in 2013 to prepare the next generation of leaders to assume important organizational responsibilities and so far over 100 employees from various functions have been trained thoroughly. However, this year Ufone is also participating in the program that will provide a learning opportunity for mid-level professionals within the company. FUEL is feedback-intensive and transformative in nature that helps the employees in acquiring a clear perspective on their career path and future. The program consists of rigorous development interventions such as certifications, executive coaching, leadership academy in collaboration with LUMS, mobility program, job rotation, etc. PTCL and Ufone have been recently recognized as the Best Places to Work by the Pakistan Society of Human Resource Management (PSHRM) at its 2021 Annual awards, thereby authenticating the Group’s standing as one of the most employee-centric organizations in the country. – DNA



3 excise officials suspended

ISLAMABAD: A former E&T officer and his accomplices were caught by the departmental team in Islamabad red-handed when they were extorting money from some labourers at a checkpoint by posing themselves as E&T officers. The department also suspended three of its officers namely Altaf Hussain, Zafar Ishaq, both ETOs, and Inspector Arshad Iqbal. – APP

Pak, Saudi Arabia mull cooperation

DNA
ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Saudi Arabia in Pakistan Nawaf bin Saeed Al-Malki Thursday called on Foreign Secretary Sohail Mahmood in Islamabad Thursday. During the meeting, they exchanged views on further fortifying the ongoing momentum in relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. The foreign secretary deeply appreciated Ambassador Nawaf’s contributions to strengthening historic and multi-dimensional ties between two brotherly countries.

Every state institution involved in real estate business: IHC CJ

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday adjourned hearing till January 26, in a case pertaining to implementation on police order 2002. IHC Chief Justice Athar Minallah heard the case. Attorney General for Pakistan Khalid Javed Khan appeared before the court. At the outset of hearing, the chief justice remarked that every state institution had been involved in real estate business. The Intelligence Bureau (IB) was running a big housing society, he said adding even the senior officers of interior ministry were involved in this business. The court observed that a prisoner had sent a letter from Bhakar Jail and said the whole state machinery was allegedly involved in this business. The court said the real culprit were not arrested, adding this city had become elite’s captured. The court further said the police department was also developing a housing society and on the other hand citizens were facing problems. Justice Minallah asked that who would address the issues of citizens, adding the land grabbing could not be done without the help of the station house officer and ‘Patwaris’. The court said the police order was imposed in 2015 and it had repeatedly asked for implementation. Last week, he Islamabad High Court (IHC) had stopped construction of a wall around the Defence Complex, also known as the New General Headquarters, and ordered that action be taken against any illegal activity or construction undertaken on state land. While hearing a petition filed by an affected villager, IHC Chief Justice Athar Minallah also ordered the CDA to make sure that the Defence Complex is constructed in accordance with the approved plan. The petitioner – a resident of Bairi Meera village, which falls within the notified area of the Margalla Hills National Park – has challenged the alleged illegal encroachment of the Quarter Master General (QMG) upon land around the Defence Complex in Sector E-10. The petition asserts that a specified area was allotted by the CDA under the Capital Development Authority Ordinance, 1960 for establishing the Defence Complex in Sector E-10. – APP

7th Pak Int’l Mountain Film Festival launched

ISLAMABAD: Featuring 16 films from 12 countries, the 7th edition of the Pakistan International Mountain Film Festival is launching from December 29 to 30, 2021. The variety of films in the festival ranges from nature and wildlife documentaries to short animated films. The films in the festival also cover a range of topics from climate change, mental health problems caused by climate migration in Gilgit-Baltistan, women’s rights in Iran, and deforestation. Festival Chairman and Director Wajahat Malik expressed his satisfaction in continuing the tradition of curating some of the best mountain films from around the world for Pakistani audiences. “The pandemic has taken a toll on everyone, and most of all the film industry, so promoting both local and foreign mountain films is the least we can do to continue inspiring both ourselves and the audiences. This is the second online edition of the festival, and we may continue this medium with physical events in the future.” Audiences from around the world can watch the films for free on Rinstra, an online streaming platform. Pakistan International Mountain Film Festival is one of the three Mountain Film Festivals in Asia and the only one in Pakistan. Created in 2015, the event is organized by Islamabad-based Eyebex Films in collaboration with Idea Workshop and online streaming platform Rinstra. – APP

Dr Sania lauds top performers in Stipends drive

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Poverty Alleviation and Social Protection, Senator Dr Sania Nishtar in a ceremony held here Thursday lauded top performers in Ehsaas School Stipends enrollment drive. Chairing the appreciation award ceremony, the SAPM eulogized the valuable contribution of the field teams and regional officials of Ehsaas engaged in enrolling 6.44 million children countrywide, so far. Secretary Ismat Tahira, DG Naveed Akbar, DG Khalid Siddique and DG Zafar Kamal also graced the occasion. During the period of Jul to Sep 2021, majority of field teams met all enrollment targets on time and made substantial progress on creating awareness and leading enrollment drive for the education conditional cash transfer programme of Ehsaas.

The programme enrolled 907,486 children in all tehsils of the country which shows 99.3% achievement against the target of 913,590. According to the breakdown by region, 520,071 children were enrolled in Punjab; 191,321 in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa; 126,680 in Sindh; 26,039 in Balochistan; 27,844 in Azad Jammu and Kashmir; 13,355 in Gilgit Baltistan; and 2,176 in Islamabad. To celebrate the achievement of this major milestone, a cohort of 30 high performing field officers were invited to Islamabad.

Partly cloudy weather in most parts of country

ISLAMABAD: Partly cloudy and very cold weather in most parts of the country during next 24 hours. However, chances of light rain/snow in north/ northwest Balochistan , said MET office Islamabad on Thursday. 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 morning/night. Continental air is prevailing over most parts of the country. A shallow westerly wave is affecting western parts of Balochistan. Minimum temperature's recorded in(°C): Leh -16, Kalam -12, Skardu -11, Astore -09, Gupis, Gilgit, Hunza -08, Kalat -07, Quetta, Bagrote -06, Dir, Pulwama, Baramulla -05, Rawalakot, Parachinar, Anantnag, Srinagar, Shupiyan -04, Droshi, Malamjabbha, Zhob -03, Bunji, Chitral, Mirkhani -02, Murree, Kakul, Balakot, Gairidupatta -01. – APP

Eight PSVs impounded over SOPs violations

RAWALPINDI: The Regional Transport Authority (RTA) has impounded eight Public Service Vehicles (PSVs) and challaned several others besides imposing fines on violations of corona virus Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). The district administration, on the special directives of Rawalpindi Deputy Commissioner (DC) Muhammad Ali continued its ongoing campaign to enforce Covid-19 SOPs. The operation was conducted under the supervision of Secretary, Regional Transport Authority (RTA). A total of 27 raids were conducted in different areas of the district during last three days as the authorities took action against the violators. The DC urged the citizens to follow the SOPs and adopt all possible precautionary measures against corona virus. The officers concerned had accelerated their raids against the violators, said a district administration spokesman. He informed that the provincial government had imposed restrictions on public transport and business activities to curb the spread of contagion. To implement this, various teams led by Rawalpindi RTA Secretary cracked down on public transport vehicles. He informed that Secretary, RTA also distributed face masks among citizens. – APP

Transition to be a major part of energy planning

SAPM, Malik Amin Aslam was speaking at the official Launch of the “Network for Clean Energy Transition (NCET)- Research and Advocacy,” by Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI)

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Climate Change, Malik Amin Aslam has said that the energy transition is a major component of Pakistan’s recent Energy Planning and thus, it has been given significant importance in revised Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and country’s interventions at Conference to Parties (COP26). He was speaking at the official Launch of the “Network for Clean Energy Transition (NCET)- Research and Advocacy,” by Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI). Mr Aslam on the occasion assured of his support to the network and cause of energy transition in Pakistan. The Network for Clean Energy Transition for Research and Ad-

vocacy is a first-of-its-kind initiative in Pakistan, which aims to address the critical dimensions of the energy transition for achieving SDG-7. Dr Hina Aslam, Research Fellow, SDPI highlighting the objective of the network said that energy and climate change are the core challenges for Pakistan. She said further that media, academia, researchers, technical experts, civil society, financial institutes, corporate sector, INGO, parliamentarians, concerned ministries and relevant stakeholders would be part of the network. Senator Faisal Javed, while sharing his views informed the participants that Pakistan has become the first country in the World to meet the International ‘Bonn Challenge’ by restoring over 350,000 hectares of land. He said that the Network is expected to play an important role to make a



socio-economic case for energy transition in Pakistan. Dr Abid Qaiyum Suleri, Executive Director, SDPI, while welcoming all the members of the network, mentioned various recent initiatives of Pakistan to overcome the challenges in the energy sector as well as the challenges posed by climate change. Ms Syma Nadeem, MNA/Parliamentary Secretary for Interprovincial Coordination,

emphasized on the need of industrialization of renewable energy technologies and manufacturing units of Solar power plants. She added further that the Higher Education Commission needs to play its role by engaging academia to come up with Technological innovations in the energy sector. Mr Shah Jahan Mirza, Managing Director, Private Power, and Infrastructure Board (PPIB) was of view that the Government of Pakistan has shown a strong commitment towards increasing the share of renewable energy through ARE Policy 2019. He said the total share of clean and green energy by 2030 is expected to be over 60%. Dr Hassan Daud Butt, Chief Executive Officer, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Investment and Trade (KP-BOIT) highlighted the importance of an effective stakeholder engagement

process in the sector. Mr Mustafa Hyder Sayed, Executive Director, Pakistan-China Institute (PCI), asserted that Pakistan needs to put a focus on power evacuation capacity. Mr Waqas ul Hassan, CEO, Karandaaz emphasized that we need to invest in energy efficiency, distribution systems, waste management, and mobilize the green investment deals. Mr Fauz ul Azeem, DGM, Interloop Pvt. Ltd. said that there is a need to have datasets publicly available on emissions from demand sectors. Dr Fatima Khushnud, Head of Policy, Research & New Business, Engro Energy Ltd highlighted the recent initiatives of Engro Energy Ltd. in promoting clean energy. Mr Saad Latif, Director Net Zero, Pakistan Environment Trust said Green Financing initiatives for SMEs are missing from banking sector initiatives.

Briefs

'Ode to the Modern Masters' continues at PNCA

ISLAMABAD: 'Ode to the Modern Masters' continue to attract large number of people at Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA). According to PNCA, collection includes art pieces by the internationally renowned names like Sad-equin, Shakir Ali, Abdul Rehman Chughtai, Zahoor ul Akhlaq and many others which is a great asset of our country.

The exhibition is a great initiative of PNCA, Ministry of Heritage and Culture Division has presented a collection of sculptures, ceramics, engraving and drawings by famous artists including Akram Dost Baloch, Abbas Shah, Amin Gulgee, Anjum Ayaz, Elizabeth Dadi, Fauzia Aziz Minallah, David Alesworth, Jamil Baloch, Mian Salahuddin and Rabia Zuberi from the Permanent Collection of PNCA.

PNCA and Visual Arts Division, to present this exciting exhibition in honor of the Modern Master artists of the country.

Senior Sculptor and visual artist, Abbas Shah was the Guest of Honor, representing the visual artists of the country.

Abbas Shah is an Islamabad based artist, self taught and master sculptor of Pakistan. He said that it is a great opportunity for the young generation to have physical interaction with the works of senior artists and sculptors and he appreciated PNCA for arranging the exhibition. This occasion was witnessed by attended by an audience of artists, families and special guests from the community. – APP

‘Swaang’ to perform at Lok Virsa

ISLAMABAD: A new Theater Group 'Swaang' would perform first ever two-day theater performance on January 8 at National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage- Lok Virsa. According to Lok Virsa, 'Main Ne Kuch Nahī Keya' (MNKNK) is a light comedy play would be performed at Lok Virsa Media Center at 6 pm.

The comedy & mystery play is directed by Safer Ullah Khan. The duration of the play is 55 minutes.

In a statement, Theatre Wallay has welcomed the new Theater Group in federal capital.

They aimed to promote performing arts in the city through regular classes and events.

Team Theater Wallay has extended all kinds of support. – APP

20 Brick Kilns in ICT convert over 'zigzag' tech

ISLAMABAD: The federal capital's 20 Brick Kilns out of the total 64 units have converted over eco-friendly zigzag technology to reduce the risk of air pollution and respiratory diseases caused due to hazardous dark smoke.

Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA) official told APP that regular monitoring of ambient air pollutants in Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) by Pak-EPA noticed that ambient air standards for particulate matter of size 2.5 microns (PM2.5) have exceeded during smog season.

The Agency has directed brick kiln owners to adopt zigzag technology on an immediate basis as it was introduced with the cooperation of the All Pakistan Brick Kiln Owners Association (APBKOA).

"The zig-zag kiln technology has been established to embellish fuel efficiency, energy savings, and lessening in emissions. All the owners of brick kilns who have not yet installed the pollution control technology have now submitted affidavits to convert their kilns to environment-friendly zig-zag technology," he informed. He mentioned that recently, Pak-EPA has sealed five Brick Kilns who were operating their kilns in Sector H-16, Islamabad without the installation of pollution control technology. – APP

ICCI for capitalizing on Pak-Afghan trade potential

ICCI President said that Pakistan could export a wide range of products to Afghanistan including marble & granites, steel, cement, bricks, food products, pharmaceuticals, electrical goods, clothes, fruits and many other items while it could import fresh and dry fruits from Afghanistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) and the Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce & Industry (PAJCCI) have discussed collaborating and working jointly for promoting the Pakistan-Afghanistan bilateral trade and economic relations that would bring prosperity for both countries.

These views were exchanged during a meeting of Ms. Faiza, Secretary General, Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Pakistan Chapter with Muhammad Shakeel Munir, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry during her visit to ICCI. Jamshaid Akhtar Sheikh Senior Vice President, Baser Daud former President ICCI, Saboor Malik PAJCCI Pakistan Director and others were also present at the occasion.

Speaking at the occasion, Muhammad Shakeel Munir, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry said that according to some estimates, Pakistan and Afghanistan have the potential to increase bilateral trade up to US



\$8 billion to \$10 billion annually and emphasized that both countries should facilitate the private sectors to capitalize on this vast potential.

He stressed that all hurdles in the way of smooth flow of trade should be removed by either side with mutual consultations. He further

said that the number of scanners at the Torkham border should be increased to expedite the goods handling.

ICCI President said that Pakistan could export a wide range of products to Afghanistan including marble & granites, steel, cement, bricks, food products, pharmaceu-

ticals, electrical goods, clothes, fruits and many other items while it could import fresh and dry fruits from Afghanistan.

He said that Pakistan provided shortest and cheapest connectivity to Afghanistan with the rest of the world while Afghanistan provided easy access to Pakistan for

Central Asian markets, therefore, close mutual cooperation would be very beneficial for both countries.

He assured that ICCI was ready to work closely with PAJCCI for increasing bilateral trade volume between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Ms. Faiza, Secretary General, Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce & Industry shared the vision of President PAJCCI with the President ICCI for improving Pak-Afghan bilateral trade. She said that promoting trade, investment and JVs between Pakistan and Afghanistan was the key focus of PAJCCI and cooperation of ICCI was important to achieve these goals.

She said that Afghanistan needed to improve and upgrade its trade & industrial infrastructure and Pakistani investors should explore opportunities of investment and JVs in Afghanistan.

She assured that PAJCCI would extend them all possible cooperation in such pursuits. Both sides also discussed many options to expand and deepen trade and economic relations between the two countries for achieving mutually beneficial results.

Four Pak artists to feature in Salahuddin series

ISLAMABAD: Four well-known Pakistani artists were chosen to feature in upcoming Pak-Turk joint drama series Salahuddin Ayubi, focusing on the life of the great Muslim leader better known in the West as Saladin.

Pakistani Film and Drama Industry's reputable artists, Ushna Shah, Adnan Jilani, Farhan Agha, and Ayesha Omar, were chosen in the first round of auditions that were held in Lahore and Karachi. Over 6,000 professional and budding actors and actresses had applied for the tryouts, but only 62 were shortlisted for the Islamic warrior series, to be screened in Pakistan and Turkey simultaneously.

Renowned Pakistani actor Adnan Siddiqui who has been selected as executive producer along with Humayun Saeed, Dr Kashif and Dr Junaid Ali Shah in an interview with BBC Asian Network said "I am excited, I can feel it in my bones that this particular series will do wonders for Pakistanis. It will be opening doors for Pakistani actors in the international market and the only way we can penetrate in the international market is through Turkey" Turkish producer Emre Konuk, owner of Akli Film in a tweet said, a contract has been reached between Akli Films and Ansari & Shah Films regarding the upcoming Pak-Turk joint series". – APP



ISLAMABAD: Girls are taking interest on paintings during exhibition at NIFTH Art Gallery of Lok Versa in federal capital. – DNA

Capital gears up for week-long New Year festivities

ISLAMABAD: The capital will be illuminated with more than week-long fun-filled family events, arranged by various public and private organizations to bid farewell to the outgoing and welcome the upcoming year.

Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad (MCI), Capital Development Authority (CDA), Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Administration, Islamabad Cycling Association and Islamabad Running Club (IRC) have joined hands to host a 10 km run organized by Directorate of Sports, Culture & Culture CDA/MCI on 1st January, 2022 to start off the new year with this exciting event. Participants can register themselves online or on the spot at any time between 9.30 am and 10.40 am while the race will commence from 11 am at D-chowk. MCI will be handing out the prize money to the winners and medals to the 80 finishers at the end.

Maxmart supermarket, a relatively new addition in the e-commerce and retail industry, has planned a special free-to-enter grand anniversary event on December 31st at its

Islamabad branch, which will include a wide range of activities for both kids and adults such as inflatables, games, face painting & nail art, assorted food stalls. The recently established cash and carry will be offering a massive 20-30% discount on its products and conducting a lucky draw on the same day. The New Year celebrations will kick start at 2 pm and conclude at 10 pm.

Sadhu's Retreat and the Fossils Restaurant, located near D-12, has arranged a reserve-to-attend New Year's Family Party from 3:30 pm to 11:45 pm. The Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) compliant event will start with optional and complimentary trek to Ban Faqir Stupa and ending with release of sky lanterns to welcome and wish prosperous New Year for the humans combating new Covid variant Omicron. BlueArc, a Design and Construction Company, is scheduled to hold its celebrations at Mini Golf Club, Bahria Town from 8 pm to 11:45 pm. The Family Gala will include a celebration dinner besides Qawwali and bonfire.

Families will also be entertained with funfair, fire and magic show, to attract and amuse large gatherings.

Property Naama Consultants, a real estate advisory and marketing agency, has arranged its festivities at the scenic Park View City that include a fireworks and a holographic show that will start off at 6 pm on December 31 and conclude at midnight.

House of ERIST, a company that provides a multitude of services ranging from IT and real estate to event management and tourism, in extended celebrations will conduct an Islamabad Family Festival from 7th to 9th January 2022. This festival will be open for participation from 11 am to 10 pm on all days and will feature performances of well-known artists Asim Azhar, Bilal Saeed and Yashal Shahid besides a variety of food and shopping stalls. Islamabad Police and Islamabad Traffic Police have mapped out extensive security arrangements and monitoring strategies for peaceful and smooth execution of new year festivities. – APP

IIUI committee agrees to introduce quality food & campus life set-ups

ISLAMABAD: The meeting of the Supervisory committee of International Islamic University (IIU) on canteens, shops and commercial setups was held here at the new campus of the university on Thursday under the chairmanship of Prof. Dr. N.B. Jumani, Vice President Administration and Finance (A&F).

The committee, in the light of the vision and directions of worthy IIU President took various decisions to ensure best living and food facilities across the campus that included a revamped, hygienic and controlled price with availability of quality products and services based set-ups of canteens, barber shops, photostat shops and general stores. It was agreed in the meeting that tenders after approval of the competent authority shall be floated soon to bring in quality service provider parties that shall be monitored by the committee as per approved indicators. The committee decided that in the first phase set ups of the maximum subsidized price and quality products shall be introduced, while better food and sitting set ups with improved ambiance shall also be ensured on the campus. It was also agreed that in the next stage, international chains and their setups will be introduced at the campus. On the occasion, Dr. N.B. Jumani appreciated the hard work and dedicated efforts of the committee to introduce quality set ups with subsidized rates for the IIUI campuses. He also directed that the guidelines of the government to discourage the substandard food items must also be followed. The chair hailed that the committee through its monitoring mechanism was already examining such indicators for ensuring a healthy campus. – DNA

Lok Virsa museum attracts large number of visitors

ISLAMABAD: National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage -Lok Virsa Heritage Museum is attracting a large number of visitors particularly students of various educational institutions from across the country.

Executive Director Lok Virsa Talha Ali told APP that the museum is up-graded and renovated which was presenting history and living traditions of people of the country both from the main stream and remotest regions.

Talha Ali said that main objective of the museum is to educate and edify present and future generations, adding that most museum in the country were archaeological which were a throw-back from colonial times. The Executive Director said that the Heritage Museum is the first state museum of ethnology in the country which presents the history and living traditions of the people. According to Lok Virsa, the museum has a covered area of 60,000 sq. ft. featuring exhibit halls, making it the largest museum in the country.

The entry fees for the local adults are Rs. 50, students Rs. 20 and foreigners Rs.800. While entry is free for children under seven years of age. The museum remain open from Tuesday to Sunday 10 am to 7 pm On Friday, 10 am to 7 pm with 12:30 pm to 2 pm break. While on Monday the museum remained closed. – APP

Govt notifies transfer, posting of officers

ISLAMABAD: The federal government notified transfer and posting of high rank officers on Thursday. According to a notification issued by Establishment Division, Muhammad Shahzad Aslam Siddiqui, a BS-20 Officer of Police Service of Pakistan, presently posted as Officer on Special Duty (OSD) in Establishment Division, is transferred and his services are placed at the disposal of Government of Balochistan, with immediate effect and until further orders.

While, Kifayat-Ullah, a BS-18 officer of Police Service of Pakistan, presently serving under Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, shall retire from Government Service on 31-12-2021, on attaining the age of superannuation. – APP

Sadaqat Abbasi criticizes opposition

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) MNA Sadaqat Ali Abbasi Thursday criticized opposition parties for its irresponsible behaviour against mini-budget and assured that it would not only give relief to the people but fulfill the aspirations of poor segment of the society.

Talking to a private news channel, he said the conspiracy to derail democratic system would fail miserably as economic team would present a 'pro-poor and relief-oriented' mini-budget.

Self interest opposition parties trying to unite again were just following their personal agendas to save their political future, he said, adding, the opposition should come up with an alternative to the "mini-budget" instead of doing negative politics.

Opposition was undermining national interest and criticizing mini-budget to hide their embarrassment after failing at every front, he said, adding, the government would take all allied political partners on board before presenting the mini-budget.

Replying a question, he stressed for 'structural economic reforms' and said the government has the full capabilities to pull the country out of the current economic crisis under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister.

The government was successfully implementing its agenda of economic stability, besides making sincere efforts to bring a balance in the country's exports, he claimed. – APP

Academia to play vital role in Pak-Afghan ties

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The existing mistrust between Afghanistan and Pakistan has largely resulted from the years-long distortion of facts that were influenced by politically motivated agendas.

The need is now to project commonalities by identifying lacunas from the shared history of the two nations; and this can be done by the academia and civil society taking the lead, setting aside all fictions and fabrications, and shaping up a joint-narrative that is based on facts and ground realities, all aimed at ensuring peaceful coexistence and strengthening bilateral ties.

The exigency was stressed at a roundtable titled 'Afghan historiography: A hybrid threat to Pakistan', which was held at Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Islamabad. The session was addressed as keynote speaker by Dr Farhat Taj, associate professor from the University of Tromsø, Norway, chaired by IPS' Vice Chairman Ambassador (r) Syed Abrar Hussain and



participated as discussants by IPS' Chairman Khalid Rahman, Akhonzada Chattan, a former parliamentarian, Brigadier (ret'd) Said Nazir, strategic affairs expert, Juma Khan Sufi, a renowned author and Afghan affairs expert, Dr Anwar-ul-Hassan Gilani, vice chancellor, University of Haripur, and Naufil Shahrukh, GM operations at IPS.

Commenting over the hybrid threats emanating from Afghanistan, Dr Taj underscored the role that the research institutions and academia from Afghanistan and Pakistan can play by carrying out genuine research sans any politi-

cal or other kind of duress, to develop a narrative that is based only on historical facts. She stressed that the distortion of facts by presenting fables has rather widened the gulf of distrust between the two neighboring countries.

The speaker, for instance, observed that the Durand line issue, which was a settled matter in light of historical evidences, was deeply inculcated into the false consciousness of Afghan people by their governments to achieve vested interests – a truth that needs to be popularized and brought into discussion by the academia so that the government, politicians, intel-

ligentsia and other stakeholders and sensitized and apprised about it. Speaking of the efforts Pakistan has made to address this wariness, Ambassador Abrar was of the view that the country has facilitated and accommodated thousands of Afghan students who have come to Pakistan over the years for higher education due to the prolonged instability in their country. He also highlighted the importance of the Pashto language in counter narrative building in response to fiction being presented as history by anti-state elements.

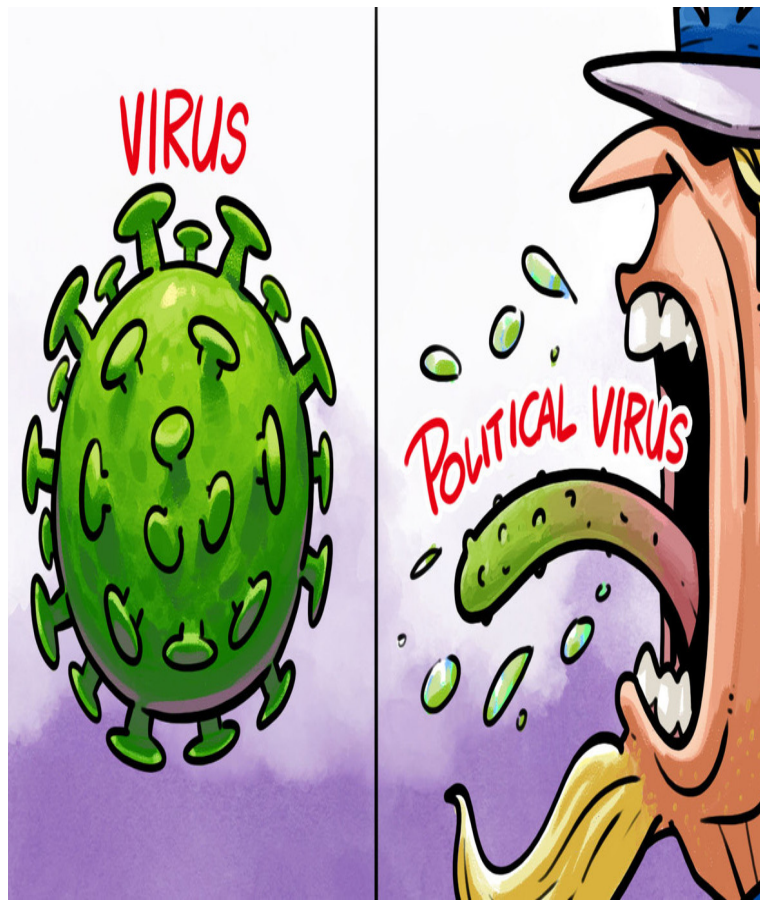
Stressing the need for employing methods to remove the existing mis-

trust, Khalid Rahman opined that religion can build the desired bond by bringing closer both nations who have shared traditions, culture and religion for centuries. However, he rued that governance crisis especially in former tribal areas and KPK have caused grievances among people who were left in the hands of enemies which could exploit them against the state.

Other speakers also felt the need for highlighting the fact that putting the disputed matters on the back burner in the hope of resolving it would not fetch desired results. Rather, a proactive approach towards clearing the air surrounding disputed historical matters between the two countries as well as the factual reporting of the historical events was seen as need of the hour. During the discussion, it was also mentioned that both countries need to live in a peaceful coexistence as their survival depends on each other. It was accentuated that this narrative, if made part of national discourse of both neighboring nations, can serve both countries well for the generations to come.

False promises

NEW Delhi has put up Jammu and Kashmir on sale.” This is the perspective of many Kashmiris as India keeps taking more and more steps intended on overstepping on the sovereignty and rights of Indian Illegally-Occupied Kashmir (IIOK). The All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), an alliance of 26 political, social and religious organisations, has said that it has “strongly appealed to the international community to take cognisance of the systemic demographic change being foisted upon Muslim majority Jammu & Kashmir”. This particular outrage has been in response to the Indian government enacting a series of new laws in October allowing any of its nationals to buy land in IIOK. The change in land laws was at first defended from international criticism through the justification that this was only for farmers and to allow agricultural use of the land. However, last week, just one week before the start of the new year, the IIOK administration, headed by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha, changed the land use laws and allowed re-classifying agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes. Despite the false justifications and excuses that the Indian government feeds the world in order to evade accountability for violating international law, it is clear that a demographic policy is in place, and the Indian state has no intention to honour any international agreement or settlement it has signed with respect to IIOK. The Indian government has shown that it cannot be trusted at all. Just the fact that the government amended these land laws on October 27—which is observed as the Kashmir Black Day to mark protest and resentment by Kashmiris around the world—is evidence of the Indian state’s bad faith and lack of concern for the well-being of the residents of IIOK. Manoj Sinha’s breaking of his promise, that the land would only be used for agricultural purposes, shows that slowly but surely, with the use of false assurances, the Indian government intends to put up IIOK’s land for sale specifically for the purpose of ethnic cleansing and displacement.



Pneumonia Virus

THE provincial health department of Sindh recorded the deaths of 7462 children owing to the deadly pneumonia virus. More than 27,136 children have been severely affected by the illness as well. These are alarming figures and it is concerning that such an epidemic has been gone unaddressed by the government for this long. One must question why a campaign has not been launched and why the lives of thousands of children were neglected. Pneumonia is a virus that is easily preventable just as it is treatable, provided that the appropriate resources have been given to the public. For 90,000 children to die every single year from the disease is then preposterous, especially when 60 percent of the deaths are concentrated in rural areas. It signals to the fact that there is an extreme gap in the healthcare sector which has failed to tackle this underlying menace in the country. The provision of competent medical services across the country should be a priority for the government given how concerning the matter is becoming. The mass availability of diagnostic facilities and treatment centres will ensure that no region is deprived of medical attention and that cases are dealt with immediately so that the lives of the children can be fought for. At the same time, it is also especially pertinent to take preventative measures that nip the problem in the bud. Had these children been vaccinated against pneumonia, they would have been immunised and the probability of survival even in the case that they had contracted it would have been much higher. The Expanded Programme of Immunisation (EPI) must embark upon a new drive that is as effective as its polio counterpart which involved the dispatch of 290,000 healthcare workers who went door-to-door to vaccinate 40 million children against the virus. This shows that it is not beyond our capabilities to resolve the spread of pneumonia in the country but entails that as long as the matter is taken seriously, progress can ensue. Thus, all concerned authorities must act out of concern for countless other children who are extremely vulnerable to transmission and have little means to seek treatment on their own.

2021: The year of failed political leadership

Nanjala Nyabola

Capitalist governments assassinated communist leaders in poor countries and funded shadow wars while ignoring the leadership vacuums they created, while communist governments sponsored never-ending conflicts while discounting their human cost. From the so-called Third World, we watched as each side went to exactly the same extreme as the other...

2021 was the year of political leadership, or more importantly, lack of it, and an invitation to reflect on the social consequences of leadership failures. I think for many of us, it was the year that felt like when time slows down while you are witnessing an accident happen – two seconds that feel like two minutes – or in this case, twelve months that feel like a decade of closings, openings, lockdowns, mandates, curfews, hoarding and devastation. In this year, in which millions of people lost everything, we are reminded that the purpose of leadership goes beyond telling people what to do. We are prompted to consider – in the spirit of recently departed philosopher bell hooks – how governance that has no love for the people it oversees is vulnerable to tyranny and failure. Since the end of World War II, the dominant thinking in political science was that we were all stuck in a battle for ideas, that ideology was the most important thing to debate and that everything would flow from that. Communism versus capitalism was the thing, never mind the violence that proponents of both ideologies inflicted all around the world in the name of ideology. Capitalist governments assassinated communist leaders in poor countries and funded shadow wars while ignoring the leadership vacuums they created, while communist governments sponsored never-ending conflicts while discounting their human cost. From the so-called Third World, we watched as each side went to exactly the same extreme as the other, often in our countries, but tried to reassure us that when they enacted violence on us, it was out of love and when the other side did it, it was out of greed

and hatred. There was only limited engagement with the moral claims that the various leaders made: what mattered was that they sang from the correct ideological hymnbook. 2021 has reminded us that governance guided only by ideology without any concern for moral outcomes is a dangerous and deadly trap. Around the world, countries of various political persuasion are making a mockery of the claim that ideology can be an accurate predictor of how a country will perform in the middle of a crisis. The main challenge is of course the COVID-19 pandemic, crashing into its third year and causing unprecedented upheaval and devastation. At the time of writing there were 280 million cases reported worldwide and up to 5.4 million deaths – i.e. the equivalent of a country the size of Slovakia being wiped out. With the Omicron variant, countries like France and the United States are reporting their highest number of cases since the beginning of the pandemic, despite having vaccines in abundance. At the same time, there is a real anxiety in countries that have been denied access to vaccines through the complicity of the world’s wealthiest nations that this is the wave that will break through their meagre defences and the cycle of lockdowns and travel bans they have been depending on. But it is not just COVID-19 that has revealed the paucity of moral leadership in the world. The global refugee and migrant crisis continues, with an increasing number of people on the move all over the world because of conflict, economic collapse and climate change. The return of the Taliban in Afghanistan left hundreds of thousands of Afghans scrambling for an exit, the vast majority ending up in neighbouring countries like Pakistan and Iran without a plan except to avoid the reprisals that have since been enacted against those considered to have collaborated with the US occupation. In Myanmar, minorities persecuted by the junta are arriving in Bangladesh and Thailand by the hundreds, while the slow collapse of several Central American nations into political uncertainty and gang violence continues to send caravans towards the US-Mexico border. The Mediterranean Sea remains a watery grave for thousands of people denied safe routes to asylum or migration while the English Channel and the Belarussian-Polish border have turned into new fronts where European countries can play politics with the lives of vulnerable people. Uighur people are still languishing in detention camps in China and the war in Yemen rages on, driven by Gulf countries and fought with weapons manufactured in the West. 2021 was also the year that the climate crisis hinted at the scale of devastation that is knocking at our doors. Flood waters rushed through and destroyed towns and cities in countries as far apart as Germany, the Philippines, Australia, Indonesia and Brazil. Unprecedented rainfall all over the world surged rivers that had quietly run

their course for hundreds of years and they suddenly burst their banks. In 2021, temperatures in the Arctic peaked, while scientists warned that Antarctica’s Domesday Glacier threatens to collapse in the next three years and could raise sea levels by more than half a metre (about 20 inches), damning coastal cities like New York, Mumbai, and Mombasa. And yet, the UN Climate Conference held in Glasgow culminated in a mealy-mouthed statement and a heartbroken conference chair softly weeping at the podium as a result of the failure. 2021 is an invitation to reconsider ideology as the be all and end all for measuring how governments perform, inviting us instead to judge them by what they do and not just what they say. The capitalism of the United States has failed to deliver a meaningful response to the COVID-19 pandemic; it has secured a glut of vaccines but failed in establishing a functioning COVID-19 testing system or retaining medical staff, as doctors and nurses leave the profession for lack of support. Meanwhile tiny communist Cuba has developed its own vaccine, fully inoculated 85 percent of its population and kept a low mortality rate of 0.9 percent compared to the US’s 1.6 percent. Canada, often vaunted as an example of democracy and progress has been one of the worst offenders in regards to hoarding vaccines and taking discriminatory political action, including racist bans against Southern African countries for flagging the emergence of the new strain. Russia is spoiling for a war in Ukraine even while the COVID-19 death rate in the country hovers at around 2.9 percent. By contrast, the leadership of Prime Minister Jacinda Adern in New Zealand continues to set a new global standard for what governance beyond rhetoric and ideological competition should look like – providing for people, maintaining open lines of communication between government and the governed, responding swiftly to emerging challenges. All of these contradictions and more are an invitation to think beyond ideology as a simplistic frame of reference. 2021 has reminded us that there is an emptiness behind the simplistic “us-versus-them” narratives that currently dominate political thinking and practice. These are approaches to politics that are centred on competition rather than cooperation, and jingoistic nationalism that privileges the political survival of the few over the collective well-being of the many. In the spirit of bell hooks, whose untimely death has robbed the world of a scholar who created a framework of thinking about politics and society rooted in values like love, 2021 was the year that a tiny virus invited us to remember why we enter society in the first place – to make sure that we are all better off and not to pursue empty ideological triumphs at the expense of others. Political leaders should take heed if 2022 is to be any better.

– *Courtesy: Al Jazeera*

China and contemporary Taliban Regime

M Akram Zaheer



Afghanistan is a wonderful country where the interests of China, Europeans and Americans are relatively intertwined. Beijing wants to see it as a stable political settlement and has been instrumental in reconciliation talks on various issues. China’s close ally in the region, Pakistan, has been the main host and support for the Taliban, providing them with an additional avenue of influence, whether it is always ready to use it effectively or can in In the coming years...

THE security situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated since the United States and its European allies decided to withdraw from a two decades-long mission in the country. The US presence was viewed by China as a geopolitical threat, as was the Soviet military presence in the 1980s. China has concerns on a number of issues. Its ongoing concern, the last time the Taliban was in power, is that Afghanistan could become a safe haven for militant groups that could potentially target China. China’s economic and political interests in the region as a whole have grown significantly since the BRI project. Many scholars see China as an opportunity to increase its influence in the region after the talks between Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Taliban leaders. The Chinese government has long sought to strike deals with the Taliban, focusing mainly on relations with Uyghur groups. The recent meeting between Mullah Baradar and Wang Yi in Tianjin was extremely popular; the two sides have been in talks for decades. However, Beijing is pragmatic about the realities of power in Afghanistan; it has always been uncomfortable with the Taliban’s ideological agenda. China wants to see them compromise with the other political forces in the country, not revive them after a military victory. The Chinese government fears the implications of its success in Afghanistan for militancy in the face of the threat, including the Pakistani Taliban that may challenge to CPEC. Beijing is also concerned about the threats of confusion in Afghanistan, which is seen as a strategic trap that has undermined other major powers heavily involved. So, as it watches what is happening now, there is a need to play a more active political role to deal with the consequences of United

States and NATO’s withdrawal, Beijing feels a lot of fear about it. For China, There are certainly considerable trade and economic interests in Afghanistan. Major investment project such as the Aynak copper mine and the Amu Darya energy project, which are stalled for years. There has been a lot of talk about Afghanistan’s participation in the Belt and Road Initiative, including China-Pakistan Economic Corridor ties, but Beijing believes stability in Afghanistan must be proceed for serious economic commitments. Beijing has also chosen not to build cross-border infrastructure via the Wakhan Corridor, despite requests from the Afghan government. If Afghanistan has a security and political environment, China will certainly play an important investment role - but it will be very cautious. At present, Beijing is very concerned about the recent attacks on Chinese nationals working on projects in Pakistan. Therefore, to think about new project in Afghanistan, may be dangerous. Taliban’s direct contacts with Xinjiang are minimal. Virtually all attacks in China are entirely local and unrelated to international terrorist networks. The border is closed and there is no fear of a literal spread from neighboring Badakhshan. Potential cross-border issues focus on Central Asia and Pakistan not with China, which is one of the main reasons, Chinese security presence on the Tajik border with Afghanistan. In the long run, Chinese concerns about the Islamic Movement in East Turkestan are mismatched with the threat shown by any Uyghurs trapped in a militant network in the region. The civil war in Syria has seen the Turkistan Islamic Party emerge as a more capable actor than its predecessors and has a presence in Afghanistan. China is also concerned about the return of fighters from northern Syria. Since the late 2000s, China has also been the target of various other militant and terrorist groups in Xinjiang and partly to Pakistan. The Taliban whatever promises they make to the Chinese government and are ready to turn a blind eye to the situation in Xinjiang but the environment have created in which many of these groups are likely to thrive. While it is incomprehensible to expect attacks on Chinese soil, but it is also clear that threats against soft Chinese targets in the region have increased.. The Afghanistan situation brings back a massive influx of refugees in Europe, and all that are political. Afghans are already appearing in large numbers in Turkey as they flee violence and the consequences of the Taliban takeover. Unsurprisingly, many European states have seen more gradual and circumstantial US evacuations than the current scenario. Afghanistan is a wonderful country where the interests of China, Europeans and Americans are relatively intertwined. Beijing wants to see it as a stable political settlement and has been instrumental in reconciliation talks on various issues. China’s close ally in the region, Pakistan, has been the main host and support for the Taliban, providing them with an additional avenue of influence, whether it is always ready to use it effectively or can in In the coming years, however, Beijing will focus on securing its bilateral interests in Afghanistan and use its diplomatic energy in the region to deal with current events particularly with withdrawal of United States from Afghanistan. There will certainly be opportunities for European states to trade with China on Afghanistan. It is expected that Beijing will place such a priority on such active cooperation with Europe at this time.

Pakistan has no plans to establish ties with Armenia

Dr. Ashfaq Ahmed
/ Saima Kausar

It is worthy to note that Azerbaijan is one of the five members of OIC Contact Group on Jammu and Kashmir. Group includes Azerbaijan, Niger, Turkey, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. Contrarily, Armenian disdained Prime Minister Pashinyan during interviews to international media categorically asserted...

ON December 21, 2021 in an interview Armenian president Sarkissian stated that “Pakistan is not a country we can ignore...” He added “I’m trying to build them, because I don’t come from the concept that if somebody supports my competitor or the enemy I shouldn’t talk to him.” Pakistan cannot recognize Armenia for its disrespect for international law, continued occupation of Azerbaijan’s Karabakh for decades, loitering destruction and landmines in occupied territories. Differences between two distinct nations are unbridgeable. Pakistan raised voice against Yerevan’s illegal occupation of Karabakh at international forums and during 44 Days’ Patriotic War. Economic, diplomatic, cultural and defence relations between the two governments and people-to-people contacts are closer than before. Pakistan Government source reacting to Sarkissian statement was quoted by Islamabad based newspaper stating that “Pakistan considers Armenia as an aggressor who illegally occupied Azerbaijani territories for decades. It was after 44 days Patriotic War that Azerbaijan liberated its territories from Armenian occupation.” Likewise, Azerbaijan supports Pakistan’s diplomatic efforts in the United Nations (UN) and in Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC). It is worthy to note that Azerbaijan is one of the

five members of OIC Contact Group on Jammu and Kashmir. Group includes Azerbaijan, Niger, Turkey, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan. Contrarily, Armenian disdained Prime Minister Pashinyan during interviews to international media categorically asserted that, “in Kashmir issue we fully defend the Indian position and it is our firm position.” In November, 2016 Armenia vetoed Pakistan request to join Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) in response to Pakistan’s support for Azerbaijan on Karabakh issue. Armenia’s representative to UN General Assembly always voted against Pakistan on Kashmir issue. Abovementioned facts are additional reasons for Pakistan to avoid establishing diplomatic ties with a hostile state. Sarkissian recent interview in Arab News was the part of deliberately orchestrated effort to create confusion, various versions and rumors in Azerbaijan-Pakistani society. Clandestine agenda can neither divide public opinion nor spoil Azerbaijan-Pakistan brotherly relations. – *Dr. Ashfaq Ahmed is Assistant Professor Department of Politics & International Relations (DPIR), University of Sargodha Pakistan – Saima Kausar, M.Phil Scholar Department of International Relations Iqra University Islamabad, Pakistan*

Briefs

Omicron surge: WHO warns of Covid 'tsunami'

FROM PAGE 01

"It's like we're back in like the first stage of Covid. It's absolutely crazy." Millions around the world will again welcome a new year in the shadow of the pandemic, which is known to have killed more than 5.4m people so far, with festivities dampened or cancelled in many countries. Greece on Wednesday banned music in bars and restaurants to try and limit New Year's Eve parties, with public events already cancelled. The mayor of Mexico's capital has cancelled the city's massive New Year's Eve celebrations after a spike in cases.

PPP's Shagufa...

FROM PAGE 01

legislators to stop the proceedings of the Lower House. During the verbal clash, the PPP leader lapped PTI's Ghazala Saifi. Later, talking to newsmen, Ghazala accused Shagufa of attacking her and claimed her hand might have got fractured. She alleged that Shafuqa used foul language against her and also assaulted her. She said the member should not resort to street fights in the assembly. Terming Shagufa as an illiterate person and alleged that PPP MNA had accumulated wealth after electing to assembly. Later, she left for the check up of her hand.

Lay man to bear...

FROM PAGE 01

which Rs 272 billion taxes were refundable or adjustable, while the rest Rs 71 billion tax exemptions were about luxury items. "We are not putting extra burden on common man as only Rs2 billion tax exemptions have been proposed on the items that can be related to the common man which would have a very negligible impact on inflation," he said while addressing a press conference here after presenting the supplementary finance bill in the parliament.

End 'negative'...

From Page 01 after having urged world powers last year to take a "firm stance" against Tehran. Salman, addressing the Shura council, the top government advisory body, virtually for a second year in a row, spoke for less than four minutes. He read slowly from a white piece of paper, pausing at times, in a speech broadcast three hours after its initial scheduled time. The official Saudi Press Agency later released the king's full statement. "We hope (Iran) changes its policy and negative behaviour in the region, and it heads towards dialogue and cooperation," he said, according to the statement.

Iran launches...

FROM PAGE 01

It was unclear whether any of the objects entered orbit around the Earth. Previous launches have drawn rebukes from the United States, which unilaterally withdrew from the nuclear deal in May 2018 and reimposed sanctions against Iran. Defence ministry spokesman Ahmad Hosseini said the Si-morgh satellite carrier rocket, whose name translates as "Phoenix", had launched the devices at an altitude of 470 kilometres (290 miles). He did not give further details.

Fled Kabul to prevent...

FROM PAGE 01

Mr Ghani explained. "And the possibility of a massive conflict between them that would destroy the city of five million and bring havoc to the people was enormous." He agreed to let a number of those close to him leave Kabul - including his wife, who he said did so very reluctantly. His national security advisor also left, and Mr Ghani waited for a car to take him to the ministry of defence.

WAPDA "B" annexed Pakistan Women Basketball Tournament

Final Match was played between WAPDA-A and WAPDA-B. Both teams showed excellent performance in the final as both teams scored net to net points but WAPDA-B got one point edge just before finishing the match by 8-7

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: WAPDA "B" annexed the All Pakistan 3X3 Women Basketball Tournament in a close encounter by beating WAPDA "A" by 8-7 organized by Pakistan Basketball Federation, says press release on Thursday. The final Match was played between WAPDA A and WAPDA B. Both teams showed excellent performance in the final as both teams scored net to net points but WAPDA B got one point edge just before finishing the match by 8-7 to win the tournament title. Earlier in the semi final round WAPDA (A) beat Frank Five Clubby a score of 11-4. The second semi final was played between WAPDA (B) and SA Garden.



WAPDA B defeated SA Gardens by a score of 10-7. Prof. Dr. Asghar Zaidi Vice Chancellor (GCU) was the chief guest of closing ceremony while Pakistan Basketball Federation Secretary General Khalid Bashir and other dignities were also present in the concluding ceremony while Yasir Ghaffoor, Naveed Ahmed, Saadat Jehangir conducted the tournament as officials Pakistan Basketball Federation Secretary General Khalid Bashir also announced the dates for Mahmood Butt Memorial All Pakistan 3X3 Men & Women Basketball Tournaments from 10th to 17th January 2021 to be held at GCU basketball courts Lahore. The tournament began on December 27 in which 12 teams participated in the tournament.

Bangladesh series becomes farewell tour for NZ great Taylor

WELLINGTON: The decision by New Zealand great Ross Taylor to end his illustrious Test career after the looming Bangladesh series has placed a new emphasis on the two matches which start at Mt Maunganui's Bay Oval on Saturday. From being a chance for New Zealand to get their World Test championship campaign back on track after the recent 1-0 loss to India, it has become a farewell to Taylor, a cricketing great who hit the winning runs when the Black Caps won the first World Test crown this year. After the Tests, Taylor has a series of one-day internationals to play against Australia and the Netherlands before stepping away from international cricket. While he is uncomfortable with the closing weeks of his career being termed "a farewell tour", the 110-Test veteran accepts that's the way it will be. "It doesn't sit that well with me but I know it needs to be done," he said. "I would have liked to have just pulled the stumps but it gives my family and friends and fans a chance to come and watch me for one last time." It will also give him a chance to build on his 19 Test centuries and close in on the New Zealand record of 24 held by Kane Williamson. Bangladesh always struggle in New Zealand conditions and have never won there, losing nine from nine in five visits and unable to even scramble a draw in rain-disrupted Tests as they fail to make the transition from their slow-turning home wickets to the Black Caps' traditional pace-friendly green tops. - Agencies



Man City extend lead to 8 points as Chelsea stumble

LONDON: Manchester City beat Brentford 1-0 on Wednesday to extend their lead at the top of the Premier League to an ominous eight points as title rivals Chelsea conceded a last-gasp equaliser at home to Leeds. Phil Foden's first-half goal was enough to give Pep Guardiola's champions a 10th consecutive league win as they took full advantage of injury-hit Chelsea's slip-up at Stamford Bridge. The defending champions now have 50 points after 20 matches, putting them eight clear of second-placed Chelsea. Liverpool, who lost to Leicester on Tuesday, are a further point behind. The coronavirus pandemic has ravaged English football's fixture list, leaving some clubs needing to play catch-up, but 2021 will end with City out on their own. Brentford threatened in the opening stages in west London, but City took the lead in the 16th minute when Foden cleverly tucked in a pinpoint cross from Kevin

De Bruyne. Foden and Jack Grealish were left out of the starting XI for City's wins over Newcastle and Leicester after they were pictured on a night out following the 7-0 home victory over Leeds. But the England pair were back on the teamsheet on Wednesday and Foden's goal made it a perfect 10 out of 10 for City. Despite their dominance of possession, the visitors mustered just three shots on target in the entire game and Guardiola looked edgy in the latter stages as his team attempted to see out the victory. They thought they had sealed the three points in the dying minutes when Aymeric Laporte rose to head home but his goal was ruled out by VAR for a marginal offside. Guardiola, who hailed the "exceptional" Foden, refused to be complacent despite his side's huge lead at the top of the Premier League. "There are 54 points to play for," he told the BBC. "It is not expect-

ed to have this distance for eight and nine, but Liverpool play one game less. But it is 54 points. "In December no one is champion. We are going to lose games. I see in my mind Arsenal, Chelsea, Southampton coming.... I cannot say more than congratulations to the team but we must focus." Thomas Tuchel's Chelsea, who kicked off 45 minutes before City, looked poised for victory after Romelu Lukaku headed them into a first-half lead but Brighton substitute Danny Welbeck struck in stoppage time for a 1-1 draw. Chelsea wing-back Reece James limped off in the 27th minute with a hamstring injury, to be replaced by Marcos Alonso. The home side went ahead immediately when Lukaku shook off the attentions of Neal Maupay after a tussle to power a header past goalkeeper Robert Sanchez from a Mason Mount corner. But Graham Potter's side

Wasim looks at T20 WC in Australia

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chief Selector believes the Green-shirts has to play the 2022 ICC Men's T20 World Cup in Australia, therefore the selection committee would approach the mega event according to the conditions and requirements there. Despite a satisfactory 2021, Wasim hoped that Pakistan would continue with the same momentum next year but said we need to be realistic because the team has to play T20 World Cup in Australia and the selection committee will approach the mega event according to conditions and requirements. "We need to keep the conditions and requirements in our mind and decide what's the best possible option for us going into the World Cup down-under. It is not necessary that the same group of players who have been performing in friendly conditions would be able to perform there as well, so we will have to keep things in mind. Ideally, the same squad should go but if we feel the need for any changes then we'll surely bring them in the squad," he said. "A lot of cricket is to be played before the World Cup in Australia, so we will assess the situation but I can't guarantee who will be there and who will not be," Wasim said in an interview to a private news channel. Wasim also feels that the team needs improvement in the spin department saying we were working on the area. "We are good in fast bowling and batting, with good performers and ample backups. One area that needs improvement is the spin department, we are lacking there, I believe that we don't have enough quality spin options as we used to but we are working in this area, we have our eyes on performers in the domestic tournament," Wasim said. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Rehana Jaffery, a player of Rising Stars Girls Hockey Academy gets an award from the chief guest during an exhibition match. Rising Stars and Gojra played 1-1 draw in a thriller. - DNA

'Snow guns' in Beijing Olympics raise concerns

The venues use automated snow-making systems that monitor air temperature and humidity to maximise production. Fed by local reservoirs, about 300 turbines - known as "snow guns" - mix water with compressed air before propelling the droplets into the air to form snow

WEB DESK

CHINA: Bright yellow turbines line the slopes of the Beijing Winter Olympics, spraying out the artificial snow needed for the Games to take place. Man-made snow has been used to varying degrees since the 1980 Winter Olympics in Lake Placid, New York. But February's Beijing Games will depend almost entirely on artificial snow because they are happening in one of the driest parts of China. With just five weeks until the Games begin, organisers are racing to coat the pistes in high-quality snow - a vast and complex task that critics say is environmentally unsustainable. The venues use automated snow-making systems that monitor air temperature and humidity to maximise production. Fed by local reservoirs, about 300 turbines - known as "snow guns" - mix water with compressed air before propelling the droplets into the air to form snow. Workers then use truck-like vehicles called "snowcats" to spread the snow onto the pistes and sculpt jumps and turns. Venues must ensure the snow meets precise standards of depth, hardness and consistency.

"The biggest challenge for us is maintaining uniform snow quality," said Li Xin, deputy chief of mountain operations at the National Alpine Skiing Centre in Yanqing, about 80 kilometres (50 miles) from Beijing. Variations in the snow-making process "can cause snow quality to be too hard in some places and too soft in others,

which could be dangerous for the athletes", he told a press event at the site. The stark white patches stand out vividly against Yanqing's brown mountains, which see minimal natural snowfall. An International Olympic Committee evaluation report said that Zhangjiakou and Yanqing - the Games zones hosting al-



pine skiing and snowboarding, among other outdoor events - "would rely completely on artificial snow". A 2020 study in science publication Nature warned that groundwater depletion in northern China was a "critical issue" and among the highest globally, due to intensive agricultural irrigation, rapid urbanisation, and a dry climate. This has meant water shortages for millions of Beijing residents and the water supply is likely to worsen in the future, researchers said. Organisers at the Winter Olympics say the snow-makers are powered by renewable energy and will not damage mountain ecosystems, while the water they use will return to local reservoirs as the snow melts in spring. The equipment's automated systems reduce the kind of human error that can lead to waste, said Florian Hajzeri, the China general manager for TechnoAlpin, the Italian company that supplies the machines. With resorts worldwide turning to artificial snow to operate smoothly through the winter, "no matter which Olympics, there will always be snow-making systems for all of the venues", he told AFP. But experts say the reliance on man-made snow undermines Beijing's pledge to hold a "green" Games.

'Mini-budget' tabled in NA amid ruckus

FROM PAGE 01

Tarin also moved a resolution to "extend the Tax Laws (Third Amendment) Ordinance, 2021 [...] for a further period of one hundred and twenty days w.e.f. 12-01-2022, under proviso to sub-paragraph (i) of paragraph (a) of clause (2) of Article 89 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. In addition, he moved another resolution "to extend the Federal Government Properties Management Authority Ordinance, 2021 [...] for a further period of one hundred and twenty days w.e.f. 15-12-2021, under proviso to sub-paragraph (ii) of paragraph (a) of clause (2) of Article 89 of the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan".

In all, eight resolutions were moved to extend various ordinances. It is pertinent to mention, that supplementary finance bill will not be sent to the standing committee. The House adopted different resolutions extending various Ordinances for a period of 120 days.

These Ordinances include; "the Federal Government Properties Management Authority Ordinance, 2021", "the Elections (Third Amendment) Ordinance, 2021", "the Public Properties (Removal of Encroachment) Ordinance, 2021", "the Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (Amendment) Ordinance, 2021", "the Pakistan Food Security Flow and Information Ordinance, 2021" and "the Tax Laws (Third Amendment) Ordinance, 2021".

The House adopted the resolutions with a majority vote amid uproar from the opposition benches. The supplementary finance bill, termed by the Opposition as a "mini-budget", is a pre-requisite to resume the \$6 billion External Fund Facility (EFF) of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

According to the finance ministry's proposal, the government will tax approximately 150 goods at a rate of 17%. Therefore, goods that were currently either completely exempt from General Sales Tax (GST) or being taxed at 5% to 12% would now be taxed at 17%. The income tax rate on mobile phone calls is expected to increase from 10% to 15%. Meanwhile, the GST rate on cars above 1,000cc will go up to 17% and the tax on the import of electric vehicles in CBU conditions will increase from 5% to 17%. Business to business transactions will go up from 16.9% to 17%.

Zero-rating available on supplies of raw materials for imported milk would be withdrawn and be taxed at 17%. Supplies to duty-free shops will be taxed at 17%. As they will be taxed for the first time, there are no revenue estimates.

The finance bill also proposes that bread prepared in bakeries, restaurants, food chains and shops be taxed at a 17% rate. The bill increases the tax collection target from Rs5,829 billion to Rs6,100 billion for the remaining financial year. The government has also reduced the budget for development programmes by Rs200 billion.

The "mini-budget" was one of the conditions of the IMF which was to be met before January 12, 2022, in order to recover more than \$1 billion in instalments from the Fund. The Opposition loudly chanted anti-government slogans throughout the session to protest against the bill, due to which when Tarin, when he stood up to introduce it, could scarcely be heard.

Syed Naveed Qamar of Pakistan Peoples Party objected that the government was introducing new traditions as government was bringing new ordinances after their expiry. Adviser to the Prime Minister on Parliamentary Affairs Babar Awan responded by saying that the government had introduced the ordinances in parliament prior to their expiry.

Therefore, everything would be according to the law and constitution, he said. Advisor on Parliamentary Affairs Babar Awan replied that everything would be according to the law and constitution. At one point in the session, PPP's Shazia Marri objected to the strength of lawmakers in Parliament. At this, the speaker instructed all MNAs to stand at their seats for a headcount. The leaders of joint opposition held a meeting at the Parliament House. Speaking on the floor of the House, Former minister and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Khawaja Asif said that the government was selling Pakistan's economic sovereignty by silencing the opposition and the people of Pakistan.

Briefs

UN Security Council condemns killing of 35 civilians in Myanmar

AGENCIES

UNITED NATIONS: The UN Security Council has condemned the reported killing of at least 35 people, including four children and two humanitarian workers in Myanmar's Kayah State on 25 December.

In a statement, the 15-member Council called for accountability and "the immediate cessation of all violence". Credible reports suggested that four children were killed, including two 17-year-old boys, a teenage girl and a child approximately age five, whose gender was not mentioned.

The two humanitarians worked for the non-Governmental organization (NGO) Save the Children, which confirmed their deaths.

They were killed while returning to NGO's Loikaw office after responding to humanitarian needs in a nearby community. The Council members emphasized the importance of respecting human rights and in ensuring the safety of civilians.

They also underscored the need for "safe and unimpeded humanitarian access to all people in need, and for the full protection, safety and security of humanitarian and medical personnel".

Philippine president apologizes to typhoon victims

NEWS DESK

MANILA: Philippine President Duterte has apologized for delays in the distribution of aid to the victims of a typhoon that hit the archipelago country last week.

"My brothers and sisters, let me start by asking for your forgiveness because government's relief operations were delayed," Duterte told survivors of the typhoon in the Negros Oriental province.

Duterte was on a visit to the province on Wednesday to distribute aid.

"This is because there's a law that hinders me from declaring a state of calamity that will enable me to use government funds to buy everything you need," daily Manila Bulletin quoted Duterte as saying.

The typhoon left at least 389 people dead and 1,146 others injured, while 64 people are still missing, according to the country's National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council.

Assessment of the damages took time while other reports need to be submitted before declaring a state of calamity – to hasten rescue, relief, and rehabilitation efforts – the Filipino president said.

Japan sees 2-month high in virus cases

AGENCIES

TOKYO: Japan on Thursday reported the highest number of COVID-19 cases in the past two months as the country's prime minister vowed to reinforce measures against infections by preparing for "worst-case scenarios."

Data by Japanese health authorities showed the country of 127 million people reported 502 new coronavirus cases on Wednesday, exceeding the 500 mark for the first time in over two months, Kyodo News reported. The high number of COVID-19 cases has triggered concern among the people as the country prepares for the New Year celebrations which see a mass movement of people.

Capital Tokyo reported 76 cases, the health authorities said.

Besides, there are around 20 omicron cases in the country.

In a video message on the eve of New Year, Premier Fumio Kishida said: "I will do my best in making oral medicine widely available and securing a healthcare service system."

Calls for genocide in India could lead to civil war: Shah

"If it comes to the crunch, we will fight back... If it comes to that, we will. We are defending our homes, our family, our children"

ISLAMABAD: One of the most highly regarded Bollywood actors Naseeruddin Shah has warned of civil war in Narendra Modi's India if attempts for the Muslim genocide and ethnic cleansing continued.

"If it comes to the crunch, we will fight back... If it comes to that, we will. We are defending our homes, our family, our children," the actor said in an interview with prominent Indian journalist Karan Thapar for The Wire, an Indian news website.

Speaking about members of the Dharam Sansad, who few days ago in Haridwar called for genocide and ethnic cleansing, he said, "I wonder if they know what they are talking about? 200 million are going to fight back. We belong here. We were born here and we will live here." He said it could lead to a "civil war," the Wire reported.

According to the website, between December 17 and 19, a large collection of major religious leaders, right-wing activists, hardline fundamentalist militants and Hindutva organisations came together at Haridwar for an event called the 'Dharma Sansad' or 'Religious Parliament'. Over the course of

three days, this event witnessed an extraordinary outpouring of hate speech, mobilisations to violence and anti-Muslim sentiment. He was questioned "what does it feel like to be a Muslim in Narendra Modi's India?" To this, he said, "Muslims are being marginalised and made redundant."

He said the Muslims were in the process of being reduced to second class citizens and that was happening in every field. He told the interviewer that "a concerted attempt is being made to make Muslims insecure". He said, "It's an attempt to make us scared." However, he added, "We should not be scared."

"An attempt is being made to spread a phobia among Muslims", but "We must not admit this is frightening us."

To a question, he said he did not feel insecure because that was his home but he was concerned about the future of his children.

Talking about Prime Minister Modi's total silence after the bloodcurdling calls for genocide and ethnic cleansing, Naseeruddin Shah said "he doesn't care" adding "at least you cannot accuse him of being a hypocrite".



Naseeruddin Shah said not only is there no chastisement of the people who threatened genocide "but the Prime Minister follows them on Twitter".

He said: "Our leader keeps silent but claims to care for everybody". "He'll parade his own religious beliefs yet issue dog-whistles against Muslims."

According to The Wire, Naseeruddin Shah's "powerful interview" has to be heard and seen.

"It cannot be written about and described. Very few – if any – Bollywood stars of Naseeruddin Shah's stature have spoken out the way he has. That alone makes it a rare and special interview."

Swami Prabodhanand Giri, president of the Hindu Raksha Sena, a right-wing organisation based out of Uttarakhand told the participants of the Dharam Sansad, "This is our state now. You have seen this at the Delhi border, they killed Hindus and hung them. There is no more time, the case now is that either you prepare to die now, or get ready to kill, there's no other way. This is why, like in Myanmar, the police here, the politicians here, the army and every Hindu must pick up weapons and we will have to conduct this cleanliness drive (safai abhiyan). There is no solution apart from this."

At the Dharam Sansad, Sadhvi Annapurna also known as Pooja Shakun Pandey, a mahamandleshwar of the Niranjani Akhara and general secretary of the Hindu Mahasabha also gave a call to arms and incitement to genocide. Without any ambiguity, she gave a direct call for the mass murder of Muslims.

"Nothing is possible without weapons. If you want to eliminate their population then kill them. Be ready to kill and be ready to go to jail. Even if 100

of us are ready to kill 20 lakhs of them (Muslims), then we will be victorious, and go to jail.

The fascist Modi regime's targeted campaign is not merely against Muslims rather it is aimed at ethnic cleansing of all non-Hindu communities including Christians, Sikhs and Dalits.

The country saw a wave of fresh violence against Christians as the community was preparing to celebrate Christmas but the RSS goons forced them to hold secret gatherings.

The Christmas celebrations were disrupted, Jesus statues were smashed and effigies of Santa Claus were burned in a spate of attacks on Christian community over Christmas.

Amid growing intolerance and violence against India's Christian minority, who make up about 2% of India's population, several Christmas events were targeted by Hindu right wing groups, accusing them of using festivities to force Hindus to convert.

In Agra in Uttar Pradesh, members of right wing Hindu groups burned effigies of Santa Claus outside missionary-led schools. – APP

Amb. Janjua holds virtual khuli katchery

DNA

BRUSSELS: The Ambassador of Pakistan to Belgium, Luxembourg and the European Union, Mr. Zaheer A. Janjua, held the 12th monthly Khuli Katchery in virtual format with Pakistani diaspora in Belgium and Luxembourg on December 30. During the meeting, the Ambassador conveyed greetings on the occasion of Christmas, Jinnah Day and New Year to the participants and hoped that the new year would be a harbinger of peace and happiness for all Pakistanis as well as the global community.

Talking about the Government's initiatives, Ambassador Janjua said that the establishment of tax facilitation points, online power of attorney attestation system, Rosh Digital Account, Roshan Apna Ghar scheme, overseas facilitation desks and Foreign Ministers Portal would facilitate overseas Pakistanis in a big way.

Ambassador Janjua also briefed on the recent high-level engagements in Brussels, including the visits by the Foreign Minister, Governor Punjab, President AJK and Secretary Commerce. He underscored that these visits contributed to further strengthening of Pakistan's bilateral relations with Belgium, the EU and NATO. He highlighted that the host authorities greatly appreciated the key role played by Pakistan in their evacuation operations from Afghanistan.

In order to overcome the challenges posed by the current spike in COVID-19 infections, the Ambassador emphasized that precaution was better than cure. He urged the community members to exercise caution and comply with local regulations. The monthly interaction with the Pakistani diaspora was organized in accordance with the vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan and in line with Embassy's efforts to ensure efficient and smooth service delivery to the Pakistani diaspora.



BAKU: Pakistan ambassador to Azerbaijan Bilal Hayee received Belgian ambassador to Azerbaijan Michel Peetermans and discussed bilateral relations and regional situation. – DNA

EU mulls new sanctions on Myanmar

FOREIGN DESK

BRUSSELS: The EU is ready to impose new sanctions, including an arms embargo, against the military regime in Myanmar, the bloc's foreign policy chief said on Thursday. "In view of the escalating violence in Myanmar, increased international preventive action is required, including an arms embargo", Josep Borrell wrote in a statement, adding that that bloc stood "ready to impose further sanctions against the military regime."

The statement also condemned the recent surge of violence in the Kayah and Karen states of Myanmar.

Borrell called the attacks against civilians and humanitarian actors "unacceptable and a blatant violation of international law" and underlined "the urgent need to hold those responsible accountable."



HANOI: Ambassador of Pakistan to Vietnam calla on Deputy Secretary General of National Assembly of Vietnam/ the President of Pakistan-Vietnam Parliamentary Friendship Group, to discuss areas of mutual interest between the two countries. – DNA

PIA resumes direct flights to Mashhad after 5-year break

"First flight PK-119 carrying 165 passengers left Lahore for Mashhad [late Wednesday night]," PIA spokesman Abdullah Hafeez Khan said

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has resumed its direct flight operation for Mashhad, a holy city in Iran, after a gap of almost five years aimed at facilitating pilgrim and strengthening people-to-people contacts.

"First flight PK-119 carrying 165 passengers left Lahore for Mashhad [late Wednesday night]," PIA spokesman Abdullah Hafeez Khan said in a news release here on Thursday.

He said flights to Mashhad were the continuation of the previously launched flight operations to Najaf, Baghdad and Damascus.

"With the flight to Mashhad, the pilgrims will be able to reach all the holy places," the spokesman said.

"Flights to Mashhad are being operated for the convenience of pilgrims," PIA's Chief Executive Officer Air Marshal Arshad Malik said, adding it was a long-standing demand of pilgrims. He said the national flag carrier PIA had always been at the forefront to

transport pilgrims to holy places. With the resumption of this flight operation, he said, the devotees would have the facility of easy and cost-effective air travel.

Meanwhile, the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA), an Iranian news agency, reported that the development took place following the serious efforts of the Iranian Embassy in Islamabad to facilitate air travel between the two neighbouring countries and to boost the tourism industry.

Earlier this month Chief Executive of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) Air Marshal Arshad Malik during a meeting with Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan Mohammad Ali Hosseini had announced that the PIA was going to start direct flights from Lahore to Mashhad. PIA Spokesperson Abdullah Khan told IRNA that the PIA flight departed from Lahore to Mashhad on Wednesday at 23:19 from Allama Iqbal International Airport and was scheduled to arrive in Mashhad at 01:14 a.m.

early Thursday. A cake was also cut on the occasion with the presence of Pakistani officials and staff of the Iranian Embassy. He said the return flight from Mashhad to Lahore was scheduled to depart on December 30, Thursday, 02:30 a.m. Iran local time and land at Lahore airport at 06:30 a.m.

Ambassador Hosseini in a tweet had also revealed that Iran and Pakistan had agreed on increasing efforts to promote air cooperation between Iran and Pakistan. In this regard, PIA is going to begin direct flights from Karachi to Mashhad on January 1, 2022.

Currently, Iran Air operates one weekly flight from Tehran to Karachi and vice versa, and there are reports that Mahan Air Airlines would resume flights from Tehran and Mashhad to Lahore. Lahore is one of the important cities of Pakistan and is known as the 'cultural heart' of the country, so the resumption of these flights can be an effective step in the development of bilateral relations between Iran and Pakistan. – APP

Murad for promotion of Pak Brands in international markets

ISLAMABAD: Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah Thursday stressed the urgent need for fully focusing on promotion of Pak "Brands" in global markets with significant improvement in quality of products at par with international standards to attract the foreign buyers.

Talking to a 100 members high profile delegation of United Business Group in Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) Karachi, he emphasized the importance of equipping with modern trend of digital economy to compete global market as world is switching over rapidly to it, according to a statement received here.

He said industrialization plays a vital role in economic development of underdeveloped countries that allows them to make optimal use of their scarce resources which increases the quantity and quality of products manufactured that mainly contribute to gross national products (GNP). He said that industrialization has always been instrumental in the economic development of the world which enhances the supply of goods for internal and external markets.

Syed Murad Ali Shah Sindh government attached great importance to agro-based industries to offset the impending global threat of food insecurity. He said agro-based industrialization development plays a strategic role in economic growth which also helps a lot in abject poverty alleviation besides heralding new era of ample job opportunities for unemployed youths.

Protesters across Sudan demand 'civilian rule'

WEB DESK

KHARTOUM: Several rallies took place on Thursday in different areas across Sudan, including its capital Khartoum, to demand the restoration of civilian rule.

Rallies took place in several areas in Khartoum, Kasaala, and Port Sudan in the country's east, as well as the northern city of Atbara, according to Anadolu Agency's correspondent on the ground.

During the rallies, protesters called for democratic civilian rule and decried a recent political deal between the military and Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok.

Internet services on Thursday were down in the capital and other areas prior to the demonstrations as providers cut mobile services, with only landline connections remaining available.

Neither authorities, nor internet providers have so far commented on the issue.

On Wednesday, security authorities closed multiple bridges and overland routes, installing concrete barriers and barbed wire on roads leading to the presidential palace.

The calls for protest were made by the Sudanese Professionals Association, which rejected the deal signed last month and called for full civilian rule.

China sanctions five US individuals

NEWS DESK

BEIJING: China on Thursday announced tit-for-tat sanctions on five US individuals, including a former commerce secretary, after Washington punished several Chinese officials over Beijing's crackdown on Hong Kong.

"These US individuals sanctioned are not allowed to enter the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong and Macao, and their assets in China will be frozen. They're also forbidden to trade with Chinese citizens and institutions," Lijian Zhao, China's Foreign Ministry Spokesman, told a news conference in Beijing. The sanctioned individuals include former Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross and US-China Economic and Security Review Commission (USC) President Carolyn Bartholomew, the Chinese daily Global Times reported.

Azerbaijan, Algeria mull co-op, regional peace

Bayramov stated that the development of ties with Algeria is very important to Azerbaijan and emphasized the necessity of high-level interactions between the two countries in this respect

FOREIGN DESK

BAKU: Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov and Algeria's newly-appointed ambassador to Azerbaijan Abdelouhab Osmane have discussed cooperation, peace, security and progress in the region, the ministry has reported.

Bayramov stated that the development of ties with Algeria is very important to Azerbaijan and emphasized the necessity of high-level interactions between the two countries in this respect.

He said that growing political, economic, humanitarian, and people-to-people relations require close collaboration between the two countries.

"Our countries continue to successfully cooperate in the UN, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, the Non-Aligned Movement and other international platforms," Bayramov underlined.

He expressed gratitude to Algeria for supporting Azerbaijan's internationally



justified position in the former Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict.

"The minister also briefed the ambassador on the current situation in the region,

the post-conflict recovery and reconstruction process, issues related to the implementation of bilateral statements, opportunities for normalization of relations with Armenia and unilateral steps taken by Azerbaijan in this direction, as well as Azerbaijan's vision for the future development of the region in peace, security and progress" the report added. Bayramov congratulated Osmane and wished him success in his new mission while receiving a copy of his credentials. In turn, Osmane expressed delight with his appointment, stating that his nation had always supported peaceful diplomacy and the restoration of relations between Azerbaijan and Armenia.

The ambassador emphasized the necessity of boosting political and economic connections between Azerbaijan and Algeria, saying he would go to great lengths to achieve so.

The sides also exchanged views on prospects of the development of bilateral relations.

Briefs

Pakistan
condemns
India's killing
spree in IIOJK

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Thursday strongly condemned the extra-judicial killing of six Kashmiri youth in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) by the Indian occupation forces in the last two days.

In the escalating campaign of repression in IIOJK, including fake encounters and so-called cordon-and-search-operations, at least 24 Kashmiris have been martyred in the month of December so far, Foreign Office Spokesperson Asim Iftikhar said in a statement issued here.

"Equally reprehensible are the continuing human rights violations in IIOJK, including arbitrary detentions, humiliation and harassment of Kashmiris," he added. The Spokesperson said that the international community must take cognizance of the deteriorating situation in IIOJK and hold India accountable for its unrelenting oppression of Kashmiris with total impunity in complete disregard of international law.

"It is equally important that relevant international, UN and OIC human rights bodies thoroughly investigate incidents of fake encounters in IIOJK including the one in Hyderabad in November 2021 - in which the Indian occupation forces are now desperately trying to cover up the massacre of 4 Kashmiris through fabrication and lies," he added. — **APP**

France warns
Britons no
more transit
to return to
EU homes

NEWS DESK

PARIS: Britons who live in the European Union can no longer drive through France to their homes elsewhere in the bloc under new regulations that have created confusion for many holiday travellers.

Many Britons take the Channel Tunnel from England to France, using Eurotunnel's Shuttle service, to drive from the UK to their homes in other EU countries.

But under new Covid travel rules being applied since December 28 by French authorities, only Britons whose official primary residence is in France are being allowed in.

"Unless they hold French residency, British citizens are now considered third country citizens and can no longer transit France by road to reach their country of residence in the EU," Eurotunnel said in a tweet late Wednesday.

P&O Ferries issued a similar tweet warning that "only those with French residency will be permitted to enter France."

US-Russia
security talks
on Jan 10

MOSCOW: Russia-US talks on security guarantees will be held on Jan. 10 in Geneva, the Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman announced on Thursday.

The Russian delegation will be headed by Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov and the US team by Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman, Maria Zakharova told a weekly news conference in Moscow.

"This date doesn't have any alternatives at the moment. The agenda includes a discussion of two Russian drafts of fundamental documents submitted to the United States from Russia on Dec. 15 — the treaty between the Russian Federation and the US on security guarantees and the agreement on measures to ensure the security of the Russian Federation and the member states of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization," she said.

Russia will seek firm legal guarantees for the non-movement of NATO to the east and the non-deployment of weapons systems threatening Russia at the country's borders, she stressed.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan chairs meeting of federal cabinet. — DNA

NAB recovered Rs14 bn only
this year, claims chairman

Addressing a ceremony in Islamabad, the NAB chairman said had it not been for the anti-corruption watchdog, the recovery of such a huge sum was not possible

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Claiming that the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) had made most of the recoveries during the last four years, NAB Chairman Justice (r) Javed Iqbal said on Thursday that Rs14 billion were recovered from the corrupt elements only in the ongoing year.

Addressing a ceremony in Islamabad, the NAB chairman said had it not been for the anti-corruption watchdog, the recovery of such a huge sum was not possible. Rejecting the allegation that the amount recovered was usurped by the NAB officials, he said that the truth of the matter was that the entire amount was distributed among the affectees of

corruption scandals. "And while this was being done, it was made sure that the money was returned to only those to whom it belonged," he clarified. "Do criticize the Bureau, but not without proof," he urged people, particularly the politicians.

He went on to add that the Bureau had taken action even against those people who were considered to be 'untouchables'. "Out of total Rs14 billion, a huge amount was recovered from the owners of different housing societies," the NAB chairman claimed.

He regretted that the concerned departments had turned a blind eye to the wrongdoings of these societies' owners. He said he was amazed how people were hoodwinked by these people so easily. "Admitted brochures are beautiful



which tempt people to purchase plots in these societies," Justice (r) Javed said, and asked people to use brain before doing so because fraudsters were everywhere. He recalled that only a few years back when the NAB had asked the Sindh government about the

wheat stocks, which had suddenly disappeared in the province, the provincial government made the excuse that they had been eaten by the mice.

He said the anti-graft watchdog even arrested those "wheat-eating rats" and recovered Rs20 billion from them when it initiated a probe against tonnes of missing wheat stocks in Sukkur. "When I asked, where all the wheat? I was told that rats ate it," said Justice Iqbal.

He said it was claimed that suspects were not punished in NAB cases. Instead of criticism for the sake of criticism, people should make constructive criticism, said the NAB chief. He clarified that in four years, the bureau punished 1,194 people. The NAB chief said some people

tried to kick up a storm in a teacup by asking where the Rs 541 Billion recovered by the accountability bureau.

He said that NAB made direct and indirect recoveries of Rs541 billion in the last four years.

"During the last four years, the NAB took 200 disciplinary actions and made the biggest recoveries of its history.

While, in 16 years previously, just 100 disciplinary actions were taken," he said.

The NAB chief said that the anti-graft watchdog also had the record of the people who got their money back after it recovered it. He also revealed that Rs56 billion were recovered from different illegal societies and urged people to investigate before making any investment.

Four killed in
Al-Shabaab raid
near Somalia capital

MOGADISHU: At least four people were killed on Thursday when heavily armed fighters from the Al-Shabaab jihadist group raided a town near Somalia's capital Mogadishu, police said.

The attack came with the troubled country in the grip of an escalating political crisis pitting the president against the prime minister.

The attackers, armed with machine guns and RPG rocket-launchers, raided the town of Balcad, about 30 kilometres (18 miles) north of Mogadishu, police and witnesses said.

Four people, including two members of the security forces, were killed and eight others wounded, police officer Abdullahi Mohamed told AFP by phone.

The militants targeted government security checkpoints in the early morning raid "to terrorise the public", said Mohamed.

"The situation returned to normal now and the government forces are in full control," he added. Witnesses said the Al-Qaeda linked jihadists managed to enter some parts of the town, which lies along a road north of the capital linking Mogadishu to rest of the country, before they were repelled.

"There was heavy fighting but the fighters later pulled back and the situation is quiet now," said one resident, Hussein Abdikarin.

Another witness, Shamsi Ali, said they were woken by heavy blasts and the sound of machine gun fire as the militants entered the town. "We were shocked to see this happening but thanks to God, we remained at safety inside our houses until the fighting was over," he said. Al-Shabaab issued a statement claiming responsibility for the attack. — **Agencies**

Ukraine: Biden, Putin phone
call seeks 'diplomatic path'

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden is set to hold talks with Russia's Vladimir Putin for the second time this month, in a bid to de-escalate tensions over Ukraine. The two leaders will speak by phone on Thursday evening. They will discuss forthcoming security talks between the countries and the situation in Europe, a White House official said. Russia, which has built up forces on the border with Ukraine, denies planning to invade the country.

It says its troops are there for exercises, and that it is entitled to move its troops freely on its own soil.

Hours before the call, Mr Putin told Mr Biden in a holiday message he was "convinced" the pair could work together based on "mutual respect and consideration of each other's national interests". His spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, said Moscow was "in the mood for a conversation".

The US consulted European leaders ahead of the call to co-ordinate a common response to the Ukraine issue, a White House statement said.

Ukrainian security officials say more than 100,000 Russian troops have been sent close to their shared border, and the US has threatened Mr Putin with sanctions "like none he's ever seen" if



Ukraine comes under attack.

Mr Biden will offer his Russian counterpart a "diplomatic path" but remains "gravely" concerned by the Russian troop buildup on the border, a US official told AFP news agency.

Mr Biden is expected to tell Mr Putin that the US is prepared to respond if Russia advances with "a further invasion of Ukraine".

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Wednesday.

The US state department said Mr Blinken had "reiterated the United States' unwavering support for Ukraine's independence, sovereignty, and territorial integrity in the face of Russia's military

buildup on Ukraine's borders".

Earlier this month, the two presidents held a virtual summit in which Mr Biden reiterated his support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. While Ukraine is not a Nato member, it has close ties with the bloc. Russia has said it wants legally binding guarantees that Nato will not move eastwards and that weapons will not be sent to Ukraine or any neighbouring countries. Nato Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg has been adamant that Ukraine's membership of the alliance is a matter for Nato and Kyiv. "Any dialogue with Russia has of course to respect the core principles which European security has been based on," he previously said.

Europe has
'cognitive
split' towards
China

BEIJING: Europe has a "cognitive split" in its policy towards China by trying to both be a partner and also seeing it as an opponent, Wang Yi, state councillor and foreign minister, said in an interview with state media on Thursday.

Relations between China and the European Union worsened this year after an investment deal was frozen amid tit-for-tat sanctions and EU member Lithuania withdrew its diplomats from Beijing during a dispute over the status of Taiwan.

The European Parliament this year halted ratification of an investment pact with China until it lifted sanctions on EU politicians.

China's sanctions were a response to Western sanctions against Chinese officials accused of the mass detentions of members of the Muslim Uyghur community in western China. Putting up barriers to the investment agreement would "ultimately harm the long-term interests of the European people", Wang said.

"There seems to be some kind of 'cognitive split' in Europe's China policy. It is hard to imagine that, on the one hand, it has established a comprehensive strategic partnership with China and on the other hand, it has positioned China as an institutional opponent," he said. — **Agencies**

Citizen's
portal settles
pre-partition
land dispute

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Citizen's Portal (PCP) seems to be serving its intended purpose as it lately helped settle a ten decades old land dispute.

A former bureaucrat, Ahsan Malik filed a complaint with the portal seeking the prime minister's help in resolving a long-running dispute involving a piece of land in Punjab's Khushab.

The complainant, who served as federal secretary, said that he got back possession of the property that had been under illegal occupation after he lodged a complaint on the portal.

The Khushab revenue department transferred the ownership of the land previously owned by his grandmother to her lawful heirs, he said, expressing gratitude to Prime Minister Imran Khan for redressal of his grievance.

Earlier this month, the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit (PMDU) issued a monthly report on the performance of the Pakistan Citizen's Portal (PCP), stating that the number of registered users has crossed the 3.7 million mark.

According to the report, 2.2 million people registered themselves with the PCP from Punjab, 0.6 million from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP), 0.5 million from Sindh, 51,000 from Balochistan and 77,000 from Balochistan. As many as 4.4 million complaints were lodged on the portal, including 215,000 from non-resident Pakistanis.

Vaccination
is only safety
from Omicron

DNA

ISLAMABAD: National Command and Control Center (NCCOC) said that only safety we can get against Omicron variant is vaccination.

NCCOC, in a tweet, said that the whole world is facing a new wave of coronavirus cases due to Omicron. People are advised to get complete vaccination and stand by their government on the war against coronavirus.

Moreover, Pakistan has reported 3 deaths in the last 24 hours by novel coronavirus as the number of positive cases has surged to 1,294,861. The nationwide tally of fatalities has jumped to 28,921 on Thursday. According to the latest figures by the National Command and Operation Center (NCCOC) 482 persons tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 24 hours.

'Biden will struggle to steer US agenda in 2022'

"Under the circumstances, Biden's done phenomenally well, getting what he did get done," James Thurber, a professor of government at American University in Washington, DC, who is writing a book on Biden's first year in office

MONITORING DESK

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden's first year in office was a rollercoaster, marked by legislative victories and major political setbacks — and with midterm elections set for November, next year promises to be even tougher. When Biden was inaugurated this past January, outgoing President Donald Trump's supporters were still angling to overturn election results, the US Capitol was cordoned off by troops, the COVID-19 pandemic was raging, and the US economy was in shambles. Today, Biden's approval ratings are low and his signature policy proposals bogged down, as Republicans appear set to retake control of Congress.

"Under the circumstances, Biden's done phenomenally well, getting what he did get done," James Thurber, a professor of government at American University in Washington, DC, who is writing a book on Biden's first year in office, told Al Jazeera.

Democrats in Congress pushed through a \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief and economic stimulus package in March. Bipartisan majorities in the House and Senate passed a \$1.2 trillion infrastructure plan in November and a \$777bn defence budget in December.

But Biden's flagship welfare and climate legislation — the \$1.75 trillion, 10-year "Build Back Better" plan — has been blocked by Democratic in-fighting and Republican opposition. The Omicron variant



of COVID-19 has caused a surge in infections and prices for food and fuel have been rising. "People will still be disappointed and he will have a rough time in 2022 because it's an election year," Thurber said. "It will be an

ugly year of confrontation, partisanship and gridlock."

It would be hard to overstate the stakes of the year ahead for Biden's presidency. At risk in the November 2022 elections is the Democratic Party's control of Congress, which will define the political landscape for the remaining two years of Biden's term.

Democrats hold a narrow 221 to 213 majority in the House of Representatives and a controlling vote in the Senate, which is evenly split between Republicans and Democrats. Democratic control of Congress could easily be lost in November when all 435 House seats and a third of the 100-seat Senate are up for election.

Historically, in US politics, the party that controls the White House loses seats in Congress

in the following election, as the out-of-power party mobilises its voters.

In jeopardy are Biden's ambitious policy proposals ranging from addressing climate change to investing in childcare, to reforming the immigration system, to protecting reproductive rights for millions of women.

"The Republicans go into this cycle with huge structural advantages," James Henson, director of the Texas Politics Project at the University of Texas at Austin, told Al Jazeera.

Biden enjoyed a kind of honeymoon with the American public in his first six months in office, with his approval rating hovering above 53 percent and disapproval near 43 percent. But by August, those trends had flipped.