



# Islamabad POST

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**UN Secretary-General welcomes the P5 stance on nukes**

Detailed News On Page-01

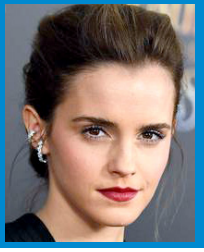
**Erdogan vows to decrease the inflation**

Detailed News On Page-07



**Emma Watson voices support for Palestinians**

Detailed News On Page-06



**Briefs**

**Revelations enough to get rid of PTI**

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Following the release of scrutiny committee's report into Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) foreign funding case, PML-N Vice President Maryam Nawaz has said that a series of revelations, leaks and evidence were enough to get rid of the whole PTI including Prime Minister Imran Khan. In a statement on social networking site Twitter, she said that the person who accused others of plundering has himself turned out to be a plunderer.

**Sirajul Haq advises PPP to listen to demands**

DNA

LAHORE: While expressing solidarity with the "Give Right to Karachi Movement", Jamaat-e-Islami Emir Sirajul Haq has advised the PPP to listen to the demands of the participants of the sit-in to prove its democratic credentials. In a statement issued from Mansoor on Tuesday, he asked the PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari to issue direction to the Sindh CM Murad Ali Shah to hold dialogue with the JI Karachi chapter to peacefully resolve the issue.

**Yasmin Rashid tests positive for COVID-19**

DNA

LAHORE: Punjab Minister for Health Dr Yasmin on Tuesday tested positive for coronavirus, a spokesperson for the lawmaker confirmed, as Pakistan faces a rising number of Omicron cases. The health minister is isolating at home, the spokesperson said, adding that she got herself tested after her son tested positive upon his arrival in the United States. The spokesperson said Dr Rashid attended a meeting regarding dengue today, where the province's chief secretary was also in attendance.

**PTI stance stands vindicated**

## PTI believes in accounting, transparency

Fawad says the Election Commission should make a comparison of all the parties' foreign funding before the public

SHUJAAT HAMZA/DNA



ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Fawad Chaudhry on Tuesday urged the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) for early release of its scrutiny committees' reports compiled after auditing bank accounts of three major political parties, including PTI, PML-N and PPP. "From the first day, we want that the Election Commission make a comparison of all the parties' foreign funding before the public so that it could be known where they all stand," the minister told the media after the Federal Cabinet meeting, chaired by Prime Minister Imran Khan. Flanked by Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Farrukh Habib, Fawad said the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) and Prime Minister Imran Khan took that stance from the very beginning as they believed that it was only the PTI which had an elaborate system for 'accounting' and 'funding'. All the other parties had no such system

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## Millions in funds hid by PTI: ECP

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The ruling PTI hid funds worth millions of rupees from the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), the report of an ECP scrutiny committee probing the party's funds revealed on Tuesday. The report stated that the PTI provided "false information" regarding the party's funding to the ECP. It said that SBP's bank statement revealed that the party had received Rs1.64 billion in funding. According to the report, the party did not disclose funding worth more than Rs310 million to the ECP. The scrutiny committee was formed in 2019 to audit foreign funding received by the PTI. The case began in 2014 when the party's founding member, Akbar S Babar, filed it. Babar alleged that the PTI received funding from illegal sources and that the party was also involved in money laundering, according to media. Today, in a Twitter post, Babar thanked Allah, saying he stands "vindicated". Meanwhile, in a post-cabinet meeting press conference, Fawad Chaudhry said that according to the report "there is no question of foreign funding".

## UN chief backs P5 stance on nukes

Secretary General looks forward to further details about future initiatives

CENTRELINE REPORT

UNITED NATIONS: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has hailed a joint statement by the leaders of Russia, China, the United States, Britain and France on the prevention of nuclear war, the UN Secretary-General's spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said in a statement on Monday. "The Secretary-General welcomes the joint statement by the nuclear-weapon States on the prevention of nuclear war and avoidance of arms races," Dujarric said. "The Secretary-General appreciates the recognition by the nuclear-weapon states of their need to comply with their bilateral and multilateral non-proliferation, disarmament, and arms control agreements and commitments, including their binding obligations under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons related to nuclear disarmament. "He is encouraged by the nuclear-weapon states' commitment to pursue measures to prevent nuclear war, consistent with his long-standing call for dialogue and cooperation to this end. He looks forward to further details about future initiatives.

## China: US and Russia should reduce nukes first

NEWS DESK

BEIJING: A day after world powers jointly pledged to avoid nuclear conflict, signatory Beijing has conceded it is "modernizing" its own arsenal. But it denied allegations from the United States that it was enlarging it at speed. China said on Tuesday it was continuing to "modernize" its arsenal of nuclear weapons, but argued that this was only to ensure that it met its minimum requirements for national defense.

"The Secretary-General takes the opportunity to restate what he has said repeatedly: the only way to eliminate all nuclear risks is to eliminate all nuclear weapons. He reiterates his willingness to work with the nuclear-weapon States and all Member States to achieve this goal as soon as possible," the statement reads.

## Secy Gen GCC due today

During the visit, the Secretary General will hold delegation-level talks with the Foreign Minister

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Nayef bin Falah Al-Hajraf, will visit Pakistan on 5 January 2022. The Secretary General is visiting Pakistan on the invitation of Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi, extended during the Secretary General's visit to Pakistan, to attend the 17th Extraordinary Session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers on the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan on 19 December 2021. During the visit, the Secretary General will hold delegation-level talks with the Foreign Minister. He will also meet the Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, and Prime Minister's Advisor for Commerce and Investment.

Continued on Page 06

## 2nd Chinese city forced into lockdown

DNA

BEIJING: YUZHOU - which has a population of 1.1 million - saw its transport system shut down and all but essential food stores closed overnight. It follows a similar lockdown in Xi'an, where 13 million have been confined to their homes since 23 December. The strict measures come ahead of the Lunar New Year and the Winter Olympics due to be held in Beijing. With exactly a month to go until the Games start, foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin assured reporters China had "formulated an efficient and highly effective defence system".

## Pakistan condemns insult of Muslim women in India

These horrifying occurrences have left Muslim women traumatized and in deep fear

ANSAR BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Tuesday strongly condemned the "despicable and totally unacceptable harassment and insult of Muslim women on the internet and purpose-built online application in India". "In a completely obnoxious and repugnant act, aimed at humiliating, harassing and insulting Muslim women, their doctored images have been placed on the internet application with outrageous captions for "auction", the Foreign Office spokesperson said in a statement. It said that hate-mongering followers of such applications attacked the dignity of nearly 100 influential Muslim women by "bidding" on them. The Foreign Office said this is the newest low in the violent streak of hate attacks against minorities in India whereby

Continued on Page 06

## Arrests after fake auction in India

NEW DELHI: Police in India have detained a woman accused of organising a fake online auction in which hundreds of prominent female Muslims were put "for sale" on a website. There were shock waves of anger and disgust in India after it emerged that a website calling itself Bulli Bai, an offensive term for Muslims, had set up a pretend auction of more than 100 Muslim women, including journalists, scholars and artists, where they were to be "sold" as servants for negligible sums. Although no real transactions took place, the Bulli Bai website featured photos of the women, many taken from their social media and manipulated.

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Crackdown on charity: Is the Modi govt afraid of NGOs? - Page 05

Normalization steps in ME will accelerate in 2022 - Page 06

China will continue to 'modernise' nukes: Fu Cong - Page 07

US sets global record of over 1M daily Covid cases - Page 08

## Baluchistan rainfall: Pak Army assisting rescue operations

Heavy rains on Monday and Tuesday caused urban flooding in low-lying areas of Gwadar and Turbat

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

RAWALPINDI: Pakistan Army troops helped the city administration in rescue operations as the heavy rain lashed coastal areas of Balochistan. Heavy rains on Monday and Tuesday caused urban flooding in low-lying areas of Gwadar and Turbat, a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said. Army troops immediately assisted the civil administration in rescue and relief efforts including dewatering of various areas and shifting people stranded in water through boats, it added. Food and shelter were provided along with Coastal Highway, Pasni, Surbandar, Nigore, and Jiwani areas, the statement read.



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# FBR holds awareness walk in Faisalabad

Chairman NA Standing Committee on Finance, Revenue and Economic Affairs Faiz Ullah Kamoka led the walk which started from McDonald Chowk Sitiana Road

## BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: A walk was arranged under the aegis of the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) here on Tuesday to create awareness among the public for obtaining original receipt while shopping any item and winning prizes by participating in balloting. Chairman NA Standing Committee on Finance, Revenue and Economic Affairs Faiz Ullah Kamoka led the walk which started from McDonald Chowk Sitiana Road. Renowned cricketer Mushtaq Ahmad Commissioner Inland Revenue FBR Faisalabad Syed Mehmood Hussain Jaafari, President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) Atif Munir Sheikh and President Anjuman Tajiran City Faisalabad Khawaja Shahid Razaq Sikka were also present on the occasion in addition to representatives of Pakistan Hosiery Manufacturers & Exporters Association, Power Looms Owners

Association, Anjuman Tajiran City Faisalabad, Government College for Women University Faisalabad, University of Agriculture Faisalabad, Government College University Faisalabad, trade bodies and civil society. The participants holding banners and placards marched on various city roads including Sitiana Road, D-Ground Chowk, Jaranwala Road and the walk culminated at Koh-e-Noor Palaza Chowk. Speaking on the occasion, Commissioner Inland Revenue FBR Syed Mehmood Jaafari said that that people must obtain original receipt while purchasing any item. In this connection, the shopkeepers and mall owners are also bound to issue original receipt to the purchaser. He said that this receipt would not only help in increase tax collection in the country but also facilitate the receipt holder to take part in a balloting to win the prizes of millions of rupees. He said that the FBR would arrange balloting of the receipts on 15th day of

every month and disburse cash prizes of millions of rupees. He said that first prize would be Rs.1 million while 2 prizes of Rs.500,000/- each would be awarded to second position holders. Similarly, 4 prizes of Rs.25,000/- each would be awarded to third position holders and 1000 receipt holders would be given cash prizes of Rs.50,000/- each, he added. He said that the citizen should download Tax Aasan App from play store in their mobile phone and get their receipt verified to take part in the prize balloting. Similarly, the citizens can also participate in the prize balloting after scanning QR code of the receipt and sending its message through SMS on 9966. The citizens should write "INV (Space) FBR INVOICE NUMBER" while sending message through SMS on 9966, he said. The list of registered retailers is available on FBR website www.fbr.gov.pk in addition to Tax Aasan Mobile App, he added.



ISLAMABAD: Younger girls are learning the paintings from tutor in painting class at weekly Tuesday market in Federal capital. – DNA

## 2-day training workshop concludes at UVAS

LAHORE: The Department of Food Science and Human Nutrition (FSHN) of the University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences (UVAS) organised concluding ceremony of two days training workshop on "Scientific Writing" here on Tuesday at city campus. Vice-Chancellor Prof Dr Nasim Ahmad presided over the concluding ceremony of the training workshop and distributed certificates among participants and resource persons while a number of participants/postgraduates students were present. Dr Qaiser Raza, Dr Azmat Ullah and Dr Muhammad Asif Ali were the resource persons of the training. Speaking on the occasion, Prof Dr Nasim Ahmad lauded the organizer of the workshop to arrange this workshop on informative topic. – APP

## CPDI issues report on budget transparency

The process has been reviewed at the federal and provincial levels, resulting in a report based on "budget transparency situation in Pakistan 2021"

### KAMRAN GUJJAR

JHELUM: CPDI issued a second annual report based on the transparency of the budget in Pakistan. The meeting was held in the same series. CEO health Dr. Waseem and DHO Dr. Mazhar hayat also attended the meeting. CEO health will be very beneficial in this regard to the people of CPDI and Sarahah. On this occasion, chairman CRG Raja Nobhar Khan said that the CPDI has identified the shortcomings in the federal and provincial level of the process of making a report. The report has demanded that the budget proposals should be brought under discussion with a wide range of urban groups, government institutions and important partners and give legal protection to the participation of citizens, and the government institutions should be

obliged to consult citizens during various stages of budget making. During the media briefing, vice chairman CRG Mir Manzar Elahi said that for the past decade, CPDI has been trying to improve the budget process from district level to federal level and to promote transparency in Pakistan. Like this year, the process has been reviewed at the federal and provincial levels, resulting in a report based on "budget transparency situation in Pakistan 2021". This report has not only examined budget transparency in Pakistan, but it is also possible to estimate the extent to which the laws of access to information in Pakistan are effective in achieving budget information. 152 requests for information were sent to selected federal ministries and provincial departments to check transparency in the budget process.



LAHORE: Vice President PML-N and leader of opposition Punjab Hamza Shahbaz Sharif visits Bilal Yasin, MPA at Mayo Hospital. – DNA

## FDA starts digital transfer operation

FAISALABAD: Faisalabad Development Authority (FDA) has started a digital transfer operation system of properties from the beginning of New Year 2022. Presiding over a meeting here Tuesday, FDA Director General Rizwan Nazir said that a digital operation system would be helpful for transfer of properties in transparent manners. Work on digitization of records was underway to convert the FDA on most modern lines. This system will help to control fake transfer of properties, fraud, fabrications etc. He said that now all work of transfer of property would be done through a digital system. Under this system, the purchaser of the property will be issued a transfer letter on security paper, he said adding that an ownership card will also be issued to the buyer inscribed with particulars of the property.

## Jinnah statue to be erected in London: Ch. Sarwar

LAHORE: Vice-Chairman of the Conservative Party for British Affairs and a member of the British House of Lords, Lord Daniel Hannan, has said that a statue of the father of the nation, Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Jinnah will be erected in London on August 14 as part of 75th Independence Day of Pakistan celebrations this year. Speaking during a press conference alongside Governor Punjab Chaudhry Muhammad Sarwar and UK based businessman Dr Nasir Awan at the Governor's House here on Tuesday, he said the year 2022 is significant for Pakistan as the country celebrates its 75th birth-anniversary, adding that he would seek formal approval from the House of Lords to erect a statue of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah in London. Hannan said the UK has already extended full support to Pakistan for the extension of GSP Plus status to the country and will continue to do so in the future, adding that he expressed the hope the bilateral ties between Pakistan and the UK will strengthen further. – APP

## OCCI delegation calls on Sindh CM for investment purposes

The Oman's delegation told the chief minister that they have an interest to invest in the fisheries sector, agriculture, livestock, construction, water supply and education sector

### DNA

KARACHI: The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) delegation Tuesday called on Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah at CM House to invest in different sectors such as fisheries, water, construction, food processing and in other sectors of their choice as his government is ready to work with them on public private partnership basis. The 15-member OCCI delegation led by its chairman Redha Juma Mohammad Ali Al-Saleh called on Sindh chief minister to discuss investment opportunities in Sindh and Oman for the investors of Sindh. The meeting was attended by Minister Industries Jam Ikramullah Dharejo, CM's Special Assistant Syed Qasim Naveed, Suleman chawla of FPCCI, Pakistan Ambassador in Oman K.K. Ahsan Wagan and others. The chief minister said that Karachi being a port city has vast investment opportunities. "We, the Sindh government, work as a partner with the private sector to execute mega projects," he said.



## Mini-budget tabled in senate amid ruckus

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: The federal government on Tuesday tabled Finance (Supplementary) Bill 2021 – generally known as mini-budget in the Senate. The finance bill was moved by Finance Minister Shaukat Tarin amid the opposition's noisy protest. The finance supplementary bill, generally known as mini-budget, which it had already presented in the National Assembly, proposes amendments in income tax, sales tax and federal excise duty to impose Rs375 billion taxation measures and withdraws the Rs343 billion sales tax exemption. Traders and businessmen have urged the government to withdraw 17 per

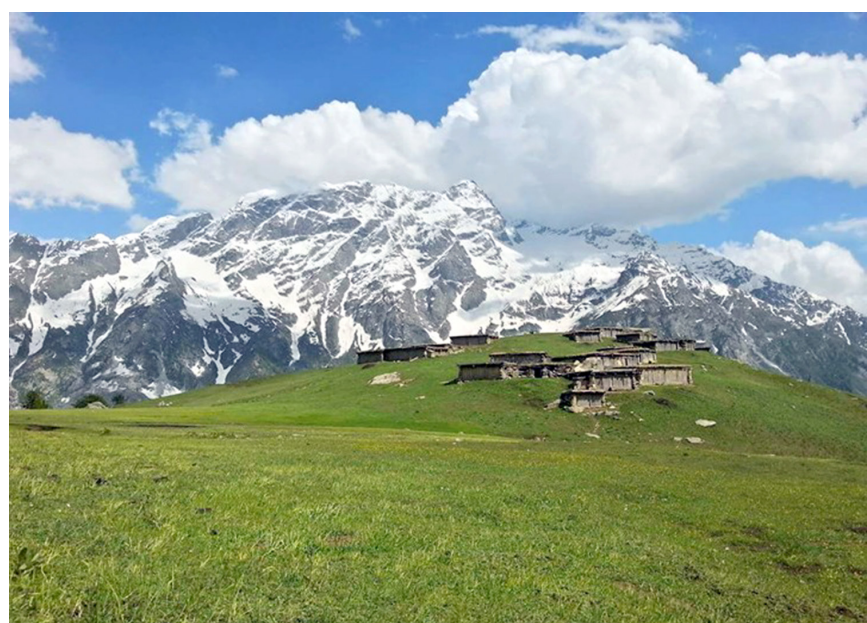
cent sales tax imposed on mobile phones through the mini-budget. Prime Minister Imran Khan yesterday directed government spokespersons to counter the "fake narrative" of opposition parties targeting the recently-tabled finance bill. The prime minister had issued directives while chairing a meeting of the party spokespersons, which was attended by federal ministers and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leaders. During the meeting, the prime minister took the participants in confidence on economic situation of the country. PM Khan and Finance Minister Shaukat Tareen briefed the participants on the Finance (Supplementary) Bill 2021. "Remove the public's confusion over the mini-budget," the prime minister issued directives while talking with spokespersons.

## KP govt declares three tourists' spots as ITZs

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government has accorded approval to declare three tourist spots as Integrated Tourism Zones (ITZs) to promote tourism in the province. The new ITZs include Ghanoor (Mansehra), Mankyal (Swat) and Madaklasht (Lower Chitral) respectively. This approval was accorded in the first meeting of Provincial Tourism Strategy Board held here on Tuesday with KP Chief Minister Mahmood Khan in the chair. For formal approval the matter would be presented before the provincial cabinet. Besides, Provincial ministers Taimur Saleem Jhagra and Ishtiaq Urmar, Chief Secretary Dr Shehzad Bangash, Additional Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah, Principal Secretary to CM Amjad Ali Khan, administrative secretaries of concerned departments and other board members also attended the meeting. Briefing about aforesaid Integrated Tourism Zones, the forum was informed that Ghanoor Integrated Tourism Zone would consist of an area of 489 Kanal whereas Mankyal and Madaklasht Integrated Tourism Zones would consist 450 Kanal and 500 Kanals of land respectively.

It was further informed that section-4 has been imposed on the land identified for newly approved Integrated Tourism Zones and land acquisition process has

also been started. The authorities said that a suitable site has also been identified for another Integrated Tourism Zone in Thandiani district



Abbottabad adding that after codal formalities this site would also be declared as Integrated Tourism Zone. The participants were informed that master plans of the said Integrated Tourism Zones had been prepared, and in the next phase Management Plans would be prepared for these Integrated Tourism Zones. It was also revealed in the meeting that these Integrated Tourism Zones would be presented in Dubai Expo 2022 in order to attract foreign investment. Addressing the participants, the Chief Minister has directed the quarters concerned to ensure preparation of regulations for the said ITZs within the next two months and submit for approval. He further directed them to ensure protection of the natural environment including forests and rivers adding that management plans for ITZs be completed as soon as possible. He said that the incumbent government was working under an integrated strategy to promote tourism as an industry in the province which will stabilise the local economy and provide job opportunities to people. – APP



## SERVICES



## Namaz Timings

Fajr.....	05:44 am
Zohr.....	12:12 pm
Asr.....	03:35 pm
Maghrib.....	05:13 pm
Isha.....	06:41 pm



## Hotels &amp; Restaurants

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



## Airlines

Turkish Airlines.....	8494949
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## Emergency

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RGH.....	9290301-7
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PIMS.....	9261170-79
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Shifa International.....	4603666



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TMA.....	5770886
Cantonment Board	9270151-3



## Complaints

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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
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## Three Gorges Corporation promoting Pak-China ties

DC has extended gratitude and high respect to the staff of TGDC-5 for their "positive contribution, the best quality of work and promoting Pak-China ties"

DNA

ISLAMABAD: China's Three Gorges Technology & Economic Development Company (TGDC) has received four letters of appreciation from the administrative departments of the Government of Punjab and the Government of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) for its "best quality of work, accommodating locals to work and the promotion of Pak-China Friendship", Gwadar Pro reported on Tuesday. The TGDC is building 720MW Karot Hydropower Project, AJK/Punjab is a ma-

cor pilot project under the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). TGDC-5 received the appreciation letters from Sub-divisional Officer Highway Kahuta, Assistant Commissioner Kahuta, Deputy Commissioner Sudhnuti (Pallandri) AJ&K, and Commissioner Poonch Division Rawalakot in December 2021. "The company has used the best quality of materials and has adopted modern techniques of constructional work; it is really worth praising to see the pedestal suspension bridge of Poonch and main AJK Bridge at Azad Pattan," reads one of



the letters. It further adds that besides undertaking a few welfare projects, the company has also accommodated several locals to work and earn their livelihood. "The level of commitment and dedication shown by the TGDC-5 during the entire period of the construction of reservoirs area of

Karot Hydropower Project is worth praising," reads the letter issued by Assistant Commissioner Kahuta, which further added, "This CPEC project is, indeed, a national level project the significance of which cannot be denied in terms of its socio-economic gains". Deputy Commissioner

Sudhnuti has extended gratitude and high respect to the staff of TGDC-5 for their "positive contribution, the best quality of work and promoting Pak-China Friendship". According to Commissioner Poonch Division Rawalakot, despite Covid-19, flood control, and other issues, TGDC-5 has made major progress on site with respect to both the construction of the project itself and other allied construction work such as Azad Pattan Rawalpindi Road. While crediting the company for its achievement, the official added, "We expect

that the road construction work would be expedited and completed within timelines". Karot Hydropower Project, Jhelum River, is a 720MW project being developed by Karot Power Company under the umbrella of CPEC. China Three Gorges South Asia Investment Ltd achieved a financial close of 720MW Karot Hydropower project on March 8, 2017. The levelized tariff of Karot hydropower project is Rs 7.68 per unit. The cost of Karot hydropower project is \$1.7 billion. The project is expected to be completed in April 2022.

### Rains to bring positive impact on crops

ISLAMABAD: The first spell of winter rains will bring about positive impact on all seasonal major and minor crops, fruits orchards, vegetables farms, besides it would also be beneficial for human and animals health as well as help to reduce environmental hazards. It is also beneficial for human health, environment and livestock as it acts like a natural cleanser for environment to reduce dust particulates causing different allergies and strengthening the clean water resources for the animals consumptions. - DNA



ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi being briefed about Virtual University, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. - DNA

### KJP's business loans disbursement remarkable: Dar

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Youth Affairs Muhammad Usman Dar on Tuesday termed the disbursement of the business loans worth over Rs29 billion as a remarkable achievement within a period of two years under Kamyab Jawan Programme. Under the Kamyab Jawan Programme (KJP), loans worth two to three billion rupees were being disbursed every month among the youth for establishing their own businesses, the SAPM said in a statement. Dar said over Rs 34 billion were disbursed so far among 120,000 families under the flagship programme of KJP. Under the 'Skills for All' programme scholarships were being provided to over 100,000 youth to acquire technical education in modern and traditional fields at a cost of Rs 4 billion, he said while sharing further details. He said the disbursement of business loans under the Kamyab Jawan Programme has been accelerated to facilitate maximum number of youth in the country. "Prime Minister Imran Khan is working for the development and prosperity of the youth", he mentioned. - APP

### Transgender people applied for EUSP

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Around 652 transgender people have applied for Ehsaas Undergraduate Scholarship Program (EUSP) this year, according to the data compiled after the closing of web portal by the end of year. "Around 122,744 undergraduate students including 50,048 girls and 652 Transgender people applied under the scholarship program. As many as 50,000 students will be provided scholarships under the program including 50 percent girl students", an official tweet revealed.

### CDNS obtain Rs 480 bln fresh deposits

ISLAMABAD: Central Directorate of National Savings (CDNS) obtained Rs 480 billion fresh deposits in half yearly of current fiscal year 2021-22 from the month July 1 to December 31. The CDNS has set an annual gross receipt target of Rs 980 billion from July 1 to June 30 of the previous fiscal year 2020-21 to promote savings in the country, a senior official of CDNS told APP here on Tuesday. The senior official said the CDNS had set Rs 250 billion annual collection target from July 1 to June 30 for the year 2020-21 as compared to Rs 352 billion for the previous year (2019-20) same time span to enhance savings in the country. The CDNS had set Rs 352 billion annual collection tar-

get for the year 2019-20 as compared to Rs 350 billion for the previous year (2018-19), he said. The CDNS had received an increased investment of Rs 80 billion by June 30 2021, from the newly registered Premium Prize Bond of Rs 40,000 and Rs 25,000 by the institution. During last year (2020-21), investors withdrew Rs 300 billion after the suspension of the said bond. He said new registered Premium Prize Bonds of Rs 40,000 and Rs 25,000 were registered by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) and encashed only by the registered financial institutions under the SBP. Replying to a question, he informed, "We paid the encashment of Rs 155 billion by June 30th of this month to the investors

against the suspension of prize bonds of Rs 25,000." He said the federal government recently withdrew Rs 25,000 prize bonds and had given a six-month deadline to investors to encash their total savings of Rs160 billion. The senior official of CDNS said National Savings had paid Rs148 billion to its customers in the last six months after withdrawing Rs. 7,500 prize bonds and the remaining Rs five billion out of the total Rs 160 billion would also be paid by October 30, 2021, he said. He informed that the government had already canceled prize bonds of Rs 40,000 and CDNS repaid to the investors the encashment worth of Rs 258 billion in the previous fiscal year 2019-20. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Two persons on the way under the cover of umbrellas to protect from rain. - APP

### Chinese companies help Pak cellphone imports

ISLAMABAD: Chinese mobile phone manufacturing companies have played a crucial role in helping Pakistan bypass import of mobile phones in 2021, says a report published by Gwadar Pro. For the first time in the history of Pakistan, in 2021, the production of mobile phones by local manufacturing plants surpassed the imports of mobile phones. According to Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), during Jan-November 2021, the production of mobile phones by local manufacturing plants was 22.12 million while the imports remained at 9.95 million. In 2020, the number of locally manufactured mobile phones was 13.05 million

against the hefty 24.51 million imports. During Jan-November 2021, the local manufacturing plants assembled 9.03 million smartphones while the number of 2G mobile phones remained 13.09 million. As compared to 2020, the comparison to 2G sets has increased in 2021. In 2020, the number of locally manufactured 2G phones remained 10.98 million against 2.06 smartphones; similarly, in 2019 the number of locally assembled smartphones was 0.12 million and 2G phones were 11.62 million. According to PTA's data, currently, in Pakistan, the number of mobile 2G devices on the Pakistani network is 48 million while 52 million are smartphone users. - DNA

### First rain-spell brings relief for allergy, smog

The sale of second hand clothes has also registered an increase especially after this rain-spell due to the price hike and the limited purchasing capacity of people

ISLAMABAD: The first rain-spell of the year 2022 continued across the country intermittently for the second consecutive day providing much needed relief to the citizens from the seasonal illnesses besides subsiding the prevailing smoggy conditions which caused hindrance for travelers as well as benefiting the wheat crop. The intermittent rain spell started Monday evening, continued till Tuesday significantly decreasing the temperatures. It provided the citizens with an opportunity to enjoy winter delights while staying back in the warmth of their homes. The cold weather has also increased the sale of winter delights including chicken corn soup, doodh jalebi, gajar ka halwa, Kashmiri tea, samosas, fritters, fried fish and dry fruits etc.

For Murad Ali, a resident of G-9 sector, gajar ka halwa is most loved seasonal delight in his family. "I use to buy this almost twice a week as it is difficult to prepare it at home owing to the low gas pressure", he said talking to APP. The sale of second hand clothes has also registered an increase especially after this rain-spell due to the price hike and the limited purchasing capacity of people. "Although the long-awaited rain-spell is of moderate intensity in most parts of the country but still it has helped cleared the smog that engulfed various parts, reducing miseries of the citizens", said Asima Kamran, a working woman. Smoggy conditions in the plains of Punjab due to lack of rain was posing serious health risks to the citizens and inconvenience to the

commuters especially on motorways leading to different cities of Punjab province. While this rain-spell was a sigh of relief for the citizens who were suffering from different ailments and allergies due to dusty and polluted atmosphere and especially for the travelers facing zero visibility on highways and motorways. The influx of tourists can be witnessed in the hilly areas of the country who are enjoying the snowfall along with their families, taking advantage of the winter vacations. During the last 24 hours (till Tuesday morning), the rainfall recorded in different cities of Balochistan is as follows: Pasni 70 mm, Gawadar 57, Ormara 27, Turbat, Jiwan 24, Quetta (City 09, Samungli 07), Kalat 04, Dalbandin, Khuzdar, Panjgur 03, and Sibbi 01 mm. The

rainfall recorded in different cities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is: Parachinar 20, Dir (Upper 19, Lower 14), Malamjappa 18, Kalam 13, Peshawar, Cherat, Takhtbai 11, Saidu Sharif, Pattan 10, Drosh, Balakot 08, Mirkhani 06, Chitral 05, Kakul 03, and Bannu 02. In Gilgit Baltistan cities the rainfall record reads: Gupis 12, Bagrote 03, Skardu 02, Gilgit 01, Kashmir: Gariduppatta 05, Rawalakot, and Muzaffarabad 04. Punjab: Murree, Chakwal 04, Attock 03, Islamabad (Zero point 03, Airport, Golra, Saidpur 02, Bokra 01), Rawalpindi (Chaklala, Shamsabad) 02, Jhelum, Gujrat 02, Lahore, Sialkot, Mandi Bahauddin, Okara, Sahiwal, Narowal 01, Sindh: Jacobabad 02 mm. The snowfall recorded during the period was Malamjappa 09 inches, Gupis, Kalam 06 and

traces in Hunza. The weather experts have indicated that a strong westerly wave affecting most parts of the country may persist till Sunday. The widespread intermittent rain with snowfall over the hills is likely in Balochistan, Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Islamabad, Punjab, Gilgit Baltistan and Kashmir. Heavy rain and good snowfall is also likely in upper Punjab, Islamabad, Kashmir and upper Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during the ongoing week. The Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) has advised the concerned authorities to remain alert due to the heavy rainfall which may cause flash flooding in vulnerable parts of Sibbi, Bolan, Kalat, Khuzdar, Naseerabad, Kohlu and Koh-e-Suleman till Wednesday. - APP

### PSX continues with bullish trend

ISLAMABAD: The KSE 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) continued with bullish trend on Tuesday, gaining 503.95 points, with a positive change of 1.12 percent, closing at 45,390.84 points against 44,886.89 points on the last working day. A total of 375,985,013 shares were traded during the day compared to the trade of 195,167,173 shares the previous day whereas the price of shares stood at Rs12.781 billion against Rs6.517 billion the previous day. As many as 380 companies' transacted shares in the stock market, 267 of them recorded gain and 89 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 24 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were Unity Foods Ltd with a volume of 25,719,845 shares and price per share of Rs1.48, TRG Pak Ltd with a volume of 23,015,857 and price per share of Rs123.39 WorldCall Telecom with volume of 22,056,000 and price per share of Rs2.17. Unilever Food witnessed a maximum increase of Rs233.00 per share, closing at Rs19500.00 whereas the runner up was Mehmood Tex, the share prices of which climbed up by Rs33.00 to Rs483.00. Rafhan Maize witnessed maximum decrease of Rs119.00 closing Rs9281.00 followed by Ismail Ind, the share price of which declined by Rs20.00 to close at Rs460.00. - APP

### Rupee sheds 23 paises against dollar

ISLAMABAD: The exchange rate of Pakistan rupee weakened by 23 paises against the US dollar in the interbank trading on Tuesday to close at Rs176.74 as compared to the previous day's closing of Rs 176.51. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of dollars in the open market were recorded at Rs177.6 and Rs179.5 respectively. Similarly, the price of the euro was appreciated by 04 paises and closed at Rs199.67 against the last day's trading of Rs199.63, the State Bank of Pakistan reported. The Japanese Yen lost one paisa to close at Rs1.52, whereas an increase of 21 paises was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs238.49 as compared to its last closing of Rs238.28. The exchange rates of Emirates Dirham and Saudi Riyal increased by 06 paises to close at Rs48.11 and Rs47.07 respectively. - APP

### Pak reports over 52,000 dengue cases in 2021

WEB DESK

ISLAMABAD: The dengue virus continued to spread across the country in 2021, with the case tally reaching 52,894 by December 31, according to the Ministry of National Health Services (NHS). The deadly virus took 224 lives in the previous year, Director-General Dr Rana Safdar told. The cases and the death toll are the highest since 2019 - when 95 deaths and 53,498 cases were reported. In 2020, only 6,016 cases were registered, while no deaths were recorded. Pakistan reports over 52,000 dengue cases in 2021 of the total cases recorded till December 31, 2021, the majority of the cases - 26,261 - were reported in Punjab, followed by Khyber Pakhtunkhwa where 10,617 cases were registered. In Punjab, 163 deaths were reported while KP registered 10 deaths. In Sindh, 6,739 cases of the mosquito-borne disease were recorded, while 28 people had succumbed to the disease. Islamabad reported as many as 5,315 dengue cases and 22 deaths, Balochistan 2,269 cases and no deaths, Azad Jammu and Kashmir 1,693 cases and one death. While the first confirmed outbreak of dengue fever was recorded in Pakistan in 1994, Pakistan has been experiencing an epidemic of dengue fever since 2010 as highlighted by the WHO.



## Briefs

Senate's  
317th session  
to continue  
for 6 weeks

ISLAMABAD: The House Business Advisory Committee (HBAC) of the Senate on Tuesday decided that the current 317th session would continue for six weeks. The committee, which met with Senate Chairman Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani in the chair, discussed in detail legislative business to be transacted during the ongoing session. Besides legislative business, the session would take up discussion on the current situation of important national and international issues, said a press release. The meeting was attended by Senate Deputy Chairman Mirza Muhammad Afridi, Leader of the House Dr Shehzad Waseem, senators Muhammad Tahir Bizenjo, Sardar Muhammad Shafeeq Tareen, Sherry Rehman, Hidayatullah Khan and Mushtaq Ahmad, Sadiq Abbasi, Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Ali Muhammad Khan and Secretary Senate Mohammad Qasim Samad Khan.

Pottery  
making  
workshop  
held at PAC

DNA

RAWALPINDI: A three-day pottery making workshop was organized under the auspices of Punjab Arts Council for the promotion of technical education and to make the youth skillful. Ibrahim Alam, a renowned craftsman from Bahawalpur, imparted training in the art of pottery making to the students. At the end of the workshop, Director Punjab Arts Council Waqar Ahmad distributed certificates among the participants of the workshop. Speaking on the occasion, Director Arts Council Waqar Ahmad said that besides general education, vocational education is an important need of the hour. He said that students should get vocational education in any field along with their general education. Waqar Ahmad further said that Punjab Arts Council has started more than 30 training courses for the training of students. He said that those trained by Arts Council are demonstrating their skills in many fields.

Not to take  
admission  
in affiliated  
colleges

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Commission (HEC) of Pakistan has alerted students across the country not to take admission in PhD and MS/MPhil/Equivalent programmes offered by the affiliated colleges and institutes. Students have been strictly advised not to seek admission in any programme offered by affiliated colleges and institutes at MPhil and PhD level, since the resultant degrees shall not be recognized and attested by HEC. The affiliated colleges/institutes have also been advised not to offer and advertise admission in PhD and MPhil/MS/Equivalent Programmes. They have been warned that any such action is liable to be proceeded as per law.

IRSA releases  
21385  
cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) Tuesday released 21385 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 32950 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in the Indus River at Tarbela Dam was 1432.00 feet, which was 40.00 feet higher than its dead level 1392 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 15000 and 7000 cusecs respectively. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1121.20 feet, which was 71.02 feet higher than its dead level of 1050 feet whereas the inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 7565 and 4000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa and Sukkur was recorded as 13376, 12636 and 11770 cusecs respectively. - APP

Taxation measures to retard  
growth of economy: ICCI

Muhammad Shakeel Munir, President, ICCI said that the government has imposed 17 percent GST on the import of industrial machinery of mining and other sectors that would affect the growth of industry and exports

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) has cautioned the government that the Rs.375 billion taxation measures proposed in the mini-budget would badly hit the business and industrial sectors and retard the economic growth of the country, therefore, the government should give a comprehensive reconsideration to its implications in order to save the country from further troubles. He said this while talking to a delegation of All Pakistan Marble Industry Association that visited ICCI led by Senior Vice Chairman Abdul Sattar Shah. Mian Sami, Arif Butt and others were in the delegation. Muhammad Shakeel Munir, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that the government has imposed 17 percent GST on the import of industrial machinery of mining and other sectors that would affect the growth of industry and ex-



ports. He said that the National Renewable Energy Policy of Pakistan aims to acquire a 30 percent share of renewables in the energy mix by 2030, but the imposition of 17 per cent sales tax on solar panels, invert-

ers and related equipment would make it difficult to achieve this target. He said that the withdrawal of tax exemptions of Rs.160 from pharmaceutical sector and imposition of 17 percent GST on the import of phar-

ma raw material would increase the cost of medicines for the common man. ICCI President said that the Finance (Supplementary) Bill 2021 would raise the prices of many good items, computers, mobile phones and affect the growth of these industries. This would happen at a time when the inflation was already at record higher levels. He urged that the government should review the far reaching implications of mini-budget on the business and industrial sectors to save the economy from more difficulties. Jamshaid Akhtar Sheikh Senior Vice President and Muhammad Faheem Khan Vice President ICCI said that instead of generating additional tax revenue for the government, the mini-budget would promote smuggling due to price hike that would lead to a negative impact on the local industrial and business activities. They urged that the government should consult with the stakeholders to address the key challenges of the economy and withdraw the mini-budget to save the country from more problems.

SMEDA conducts 54 training  
programs for last six months

ISLAMABAD: Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) has arranged 54 trainings, seminars and webinars during the last six months (July-December) this year to provide invaluable skills to young entrepreneurs, especially women seeking economic empowerment. These training sessions, usually one-day events, covered wide range of entrepreneurial aspects including, 'Financial Management for SMEs',

'Social Media Marketing', 'Selling on Amazon from Pakistan', 'Digital Entrepreneurship', 'Food Safety & Hygiene Management in Food/Restaurant Business', 'Sales and Marketing Strategies for SMEs', revealed statistics on SEMDA's official website. Regarding SMEDA's role in women entrepreneurship development, an official of SMEDA told this scribe that the authority had formed a Women Entrepreneurship Development Cell (WEDC)

to highlight the challenges women face and create a platform to optimize women's success during the stages of business creation. According to the information received through Right To Information, WEs working with SMEDA have diversified areas of business and products that they deal in, including shoes making, handicrafts, embroidery, apparel, hospitality, confectionary and bakery, restaurants, construction, organic food, organic

skin care products, dry fruit business, khussa making, basketry, pottery, dairy farms, beauty salons and SPA, health care, women gyms, daycare centers, home cooked food, wedding planners, pulses, grains, spices & lentils and soap and candle making etc. SMEDA has been tasked with an advisory role in the implementation of Prime Minister's 'Kamyab Jawan - Youth Entrepreneurship Scheme', for young entrepreneurs and existing businesses. - APP

AIOU awards 85 PhD,  
630 MPhil degrees

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has achieved a milestone nationally by awarding 85 PhD and 630 MPhil degrees in various subjects during the academic year of 2021. According to details from AIOU, 27 degree were issued in Islamic Studies, 23 in Urdu, 13 in Education, eight in Pakistani languages, seven in Chemistry, two in Iqbal studies and one degree in food and nutrition disciplines. Vice Chancellor, AIOU, Prof. Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum congratulated students and said that they were especially focusing on quality education and research. He added that AIOU was striving hard to provide skill-based, professional and higher education to the students at their doorstep. It is pertinent to mention here that Faculty of Education, AIOU is offering PhD and MPhil in Department of distance, non-formal and continuing education, Department of Educational Planning, Policy Studies and Leadership, Department of Early Childhood Education and Elementary Teacher Education, Department of Secondary Teacher Education, Department of Special Education and Department of Science Education. Faculty of Arabic and Islamic Studies, AIOU is offering PhD in Department of Arabic, Department of Quran and Tafseer, Islamic Thought, History and Culture department whereas Department of Shari'ah is offering MPhil degree. The Faculty of Science offers PhD and MPhil in Chemistry, Agricultural sciences, Statistics and Computer science and MPhil in Mathematics. Faculty of social sciences offers MPhil and PhD in Mass Communication, Urdu, Iqbal Studies, Business Administration, Pakistani Languages, Library and Information Sciences, English and History while offers MPhil in Pakistan Studies. - DNA

Leather goods export  
increases 11%

ISLAMABAD: The leather goods exports witnessed an increase of 11.03 percent during the first five months of current financial year (2021-22) as compared to the exports of corresponding period of last year. Pakistan exported leather goods worth US \$266.595 million during July-November (2021-22) against the exports of \$240.100 million during July-November (2020-21), showing growth of 11.03 percent, according to the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS). Among the leather products, the exports of leather garments increased by 10.42 percent by going up from \$125.971 million last year to \$139.100 million during the current year. The leather gloves exports also rose by 11.81 percent to \$119.516 million from \$106.890 million. Likewise, the exports of all other leather goods also increased by 10.22 percent during the period under review as these went up from \$7.239 million last year to \$7.979 million during the current fiscal year. - APP



RAWALPINDI: A family on the way on motorcycle under cover of an umbrella to protect from that that experienced the Twin Cities. - APP

Ehsaas RoshanRiyat – a  
panacea to poors' miseries

ISLAMABAD: Empowering the weaker segments of society and improving their living standards through introducing time to time digitally enabled poverty alleviation interventions is at the core of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) led government policies. The multi-faceted initiatives being executed under the umbrella of Ehsaas including Kafalat, Nashonuma, Education Stipends, Tahafuz, Amdan, Interest Free Loans, Emergency Cash and Undergraduate Scholarships are largely contributing to the well being of disadvantaged populations across the country through addressing their basic needs. However, the newly launched first-ever targeted subsidy initiative of Ehsaas RoshanRiyat by the present government is another milestone to provide relief to the inflation stricken people by giving them subsidy on basic grocery items. The Rs. 120 billion program will serve 20 million families with income below Rs. 50,000 by providing Rs. 1000 subsidy per family on the purchase of flour, pulses and cooking oil or ghee through a network of Ehsaas RoshanRiyat enabled Kiriyana stores across the country. The Ehsaas RoshanRiyat program is the first-ever initiative which is not only targeting the general public but also government employees having less than Rs. 31,500 monthly income. "Providing subsidy on basic grocery items through Ehsaas RoshanRiyat is a direly needed initiative at this time when the price hike situation has reduced our purchasing power. Including government employees in such initiatives is a welcoming step", Fauzia Ifukhar, a government employee said. According to an official tweet issued on Tuesday, "Ehsaas RoshanRiyat retailer enrollment witnessed an increase from 300 to 3000 per week since Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab Chief Secretaries have started collaborating with Ehsaas. - DNA

16 projects  
launched  
for farmers

ISLAMABAD: Some 16 projects have been launched by the govt under its National Agriculture Emergency Programme for the welfare of farmers at a total cost of Rs 84,305.10 million. Minister for National Food Security and Research Syed Fakhar Imam, in a written reply submitted to the Senate, said 13 projects were ongoing while three, also included in the prime minister's emergency programme, were yet to be started. The minister said the procedure for local farmers was very easy to get benefit from the ongoing projects, who have to visit district level office for registering their name. - Agencies

ECP delegation meets Brazilian  
envoy to learn about EVMs

ISLAMABAD: A high level delegation headed by Secretary Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Tuesday met Ambassador of Brazil to Pakistan Olyntho Vieira to learn about the Brazilian electoral experience of using Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and overseas voting (Internet Voting). During the meeting, areas of cooperation were identified such as technical visits, exchange of experts, sharing technology, training and capacity building of the officials of the ECP. ECP secretary Omar Hamid Khan said that ECP would like to benefit from the experiences of Brazil which shares numerous electoral and demographic similarities with Pakistan. ECP would like to benefit

from the experiences of Brazil which shares numerous electoral and demographic similarities with Pakistan. The Secretary ECP explained that the ECP has been making concerted efforts to acquire the new technology and this requires following International best practices and standards. He stated that, however, inherent challenges for acquiring this technology have to be surmounted where countries like Brazil

present a success story. The Brazilian ambassador briefly discussed about the gradual introduction of technology in the electoral process especially use of EVMs in Brazil where it evolved over a period of 30 years along with its main features, operations and functions during the elections. He also offered support to ECP in the areas of selection of technology, training and provision of experts along with transfer of technology in elections.

He conveyed that in Brazil voting is compulsory up to 70 years of age. A fine is imposed for not participating in the election. The Secretary ECP and the Ambassador to Brazil agreed to work closely on use of technologies and to formalize relations on the issue between the two countries. Brazil has more than three decades of electoral technology experience and almost similar demographic and electoral features. It was agreed to institutionalize different components of the EVM and Overseas Voting projects. The Election Commission has directed the Secretary to benefit from experiences of countries like Philippines, Estonia and others using EVM / I-Voting technology. - APP

Govt notifies  
transfer,  
posting of  
officers

ISLAMABAD: The federal government on Tuesday notified the transfer and posting of high ranking officers. According to a notification issued by the Establishment Division, a BS-21 officer of Secretariat Group, Hassan Raza Saeed presently posted as Senior Joint Secretary, National Heritage and Culture Division, is transferred and posted as Senior Joint Secretary, Power Division, with immediate effect and until further orders. While, a BS-20 officer of Secretariat Group, Sajjad Ahmad, presently posted as Joint Secretary, Power Division is transferred and posted as Joint Secretary, National Heritage and Culture Division, with immediate effect and until further orders. - APP

ITP  
accelerates  
efforts against  
traffic violators

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) has accelerated its efforts against those involved in violation of traffic laws especially lane violations, seat belt violations and not following parking rules. ITP is working on hastening actions against traffic violators under special directives of Inspector General Police (IGP) Islamabad Muhammad Ahsan Younis to reduce accidents and to facilitate the smooth flow of traffic. Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Traffic Rai Mazhar Iqbal has advised all zonal DSPs and inspectors to take strict action against all the motorists violating traffic rules, including lane violations, seat belt violations and no-parking violations. Islamabad Traffic Police has constituted special squads to conduct operations throughout the city, and its education wing will work to improve road safety awareness for the public on several highways of the capital. SSP Traffic has instructed officers to deal with the citizens in a courteous manner as disrespect will not be tolerated and to take unbiased action against rule violators. He said that in-charge beat inspectors will be answerable for their jurisdictions and that strict departmental action will be taken against under performers while those who work diligently will be rewarded for their efforts. The SSP Traffic Rai Mazhar Iqbal has also appealed the citizens to follow traffic rules and assist Islamabad Traffic Police in maintaining traffic discipline in the city. - APP



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## Israel air attacks

**T**HE New Year had more of the same in store for innocent Palestinians in Gaza as Israel's military launched air attacks on Hamas positions in the Gaza strip, a day after rockets fired from Gaza landed in the Mediterranean Sea. Reports are inconclusive on whether the rockets from Gaza were intended to hit Israel, but groups based there often test-fire missiles towards the sea. While the occupying military has stated that the attacks targeted a rocket manufacturing facility and a military post for Hamas, people on the ground have claimed that the strikes also landed on agricultural lands. This of course is not the first time that attacks by Israel have been disproportionate and indiscriminate, which has resulted in the loss of innocent lives and damage to infrastructure. Even in this instance, this show of force by the Israeli forces was certainly not merited in response to two rockets fired into the sea. This situation is untenable given the frequency of events where innocent civilians are injured or killed. Just last week, three Palestinians were wounded by Israeli tank fire in Gaza. It is quite disheartening to see that more has not been done to alleviate the suffering of Palestinians after the tragic 11-day war in May where more than 260 Palestinians were killed—many of them civilians and children. The bombardment also destroyed 1,800 residential units and partially demolished at least 14,300 other units. Despite the fragile ceasefire that was brokered by Egypt and other mediators in May, life for the residents in Gaza has been extremely difficult under blockade, with their movement tightly restricted and the economy being ravaged. Even before the violence during the summer of 2021, UNICEF had stated that one in three children in Gaza already required support for conflict-related trauma. It is evident that the international community has become oblivious to the ongoing suffering, but this needs to change. It is high time that the de-escalation measures and mechanisms are put into place because the idea of restraint is an alien one for the Israeli state and armed forces.

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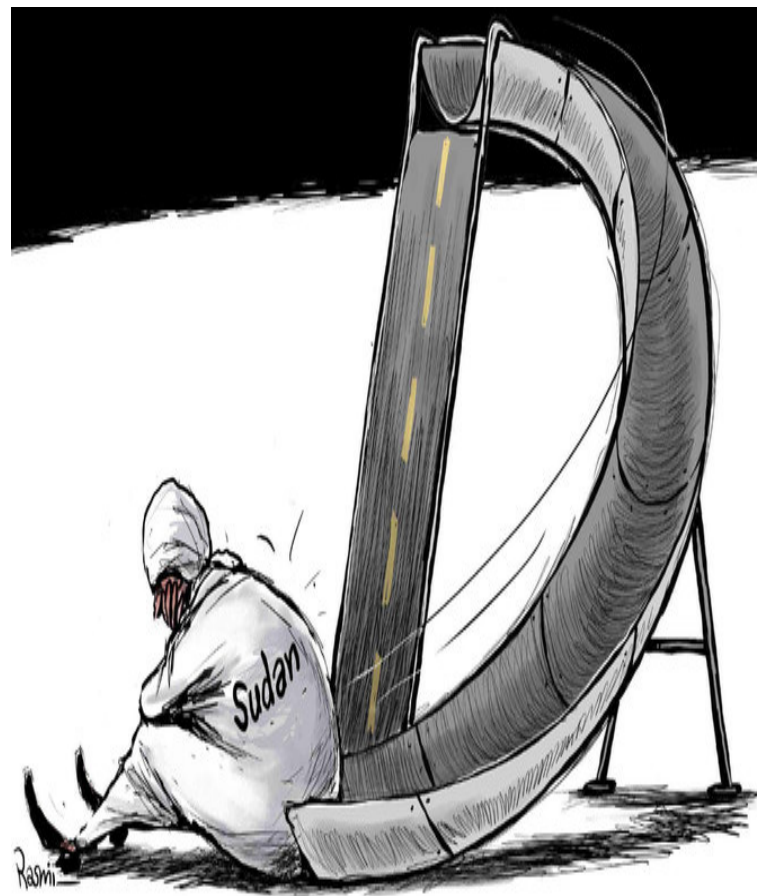
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## Violence in Karachi

**T**HE daylight assassination of a former police official in Karachi brings back memories of the most violent and bloodstained period of the city's history. Former policeman Javed Baloch's own chequered past and links to the Lyari gang war are being looked at as the main reasons for this targeted murder. His suspected role in helping one gang leader—Uzair Baloch—murder another—Arshad Pappu—and then potentially turning into an approver, indicates that this murder is linked to those outlawed groups as well. The murder brings forth the usual questions, and while the police may never be able to conclusively identify the culprits, it is clear that the authorities must increase their vigilance on the remnants of the gangs of Lyari. We cannot let Karachi's streets turn into a warzone once again. The criminal underworld had essentially installed a parallel system; one that used violence as a coercive tool with reckless abandon. This cannot be repeated. Given the fact that former officer Javed Baloch was returning from testifying in court, the assassination is also another black mark on the failure of our authorities to protect witnesses and potential approvers. Incidents such as this breed fear amongst those that can be key witnesses in court. This was most evident in the heydays of these gangs, when witnesses would be killed or blackmailed, or would even turn hostile against the court on occasion. It is important to remember that the progress made by authorities in Karachi, particularly because of the added presence of Rangers in the city, can easily be undone if violent elements are allowed to operate with impunity. This sort of incident cannot be taken lightly. The investigation around this must be thorough and hopefully conclusive. Those suspected and attached to this decades' old enmity must be kept under close watch and brought to the courts if found involved.

## Crackdown on charity: Is the Modi govt afraid of NGOs?

Ruben Banerjee



**Coming in the backdrop of increasing attacks on churches and Christmas day celebrations across the country, the government move put the very future of the charity under a cloud**

**C**HOKING the charity's funding is one of the expected consequences of Hindu nationalism. On December 19 this year, India's nationalist Prime Minister Narendra Modi recalled his meeting with Pope Francis in October at the Vatican when he invited the head of the Catholic world to the country. "This is the greatest gift you've given me," Modi quoted the Pope as saying about the invite. Barely a week later, Modi's government barred the Missionary of Charity—founded by Catholic nun Mother Teresa—from receiving foreign funds that sustain its work for the poor, from education, medical care, social assistance to disaster relief. The irony was not lost on anybody. In 2016, the Pope had bestowed sainthood on Mother Teresa, a 1979 Nobel Peace Prize winner who was born to Albanian parents. She came to India in 1950 and founded the Missionaries of Charity in Kolkata, where she lived for most of her life. She died in 1997. True to its tradition, the charity found itself in international headlines again this week—albeit for the wrong reasons. Once the news broke that the Indian government has refused to renew the organisation's license to receive foreign funding under the Foreign Contri-

butation Regulation Act (FCRA), it triggered disbelief and consternation the world over. Coming in the backdrop of increasing attacks on churches and Christmas day celebrations across the country, the government move put the very future of the charity under a cloud. It heightened fears that the organisation run by Christian missionaries could have run afoul of India's ruling dispensation that propagates the primacy of its Hindu population over communities of other religious faiths. Christians constitute a minuscule 2 percent of India's 1.2 billion population. Though the charity has not been barred from functioning, the cutting off of foreign funding could seriously endanger its operations and imperil the well-being of those that the organisation shelters. By rough estimates, some 22,000 individuals, including abandoned babies, are currently looked after by the charity that received some 1,099 crore Indian rupees (around \$148 million) in foreign donations over the past 15 years. The non-renewal of the license naturally drew sharp reactions from those critical of the government. "While the law is paramount, humanitarian efforts must not be compromised," cautioned Modi-critic Mamata Banerjee. Kolkata, the global headquarters of the charity, is the regional capital of the West Bengal state that Banerjee governs as the head of a political party opposed to Modi. That the charity, despite its global stature, is no more a favourite of the Indian government has been evident for some time. The police in Gujarat—the home state of Modi—registered a complaint against it earlier this month for 'forcing girls to read Christian religious texts and participate in prayers'. Further, Nishikant Dubey—a member of parliament belonging to Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party—accused the charity recently of furtively encouraging religious conversions. But more than anything else, the charity's troubles have highlighted the Indian government's fraught ties with non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Enjoying a brute majority in parliament, Modi's government has a reputation of being extremely impatient with criticism. It is also said to be suspicious of civil society, which it views as an impediment to India's development. A report by the Intelligence Bureau soon after Modi stormed to power in 2014 accused several NGOs of impacting the country's GDP growth negatively by up to 3 percentage points by opposing several of its development projects. Many of the NGOs—and India has tens of thousands of them—suffer from a lack of transparency and have often been dogged by accusations of corruption. But it is also undeniable that many of them act as watchdogs and have consistently raised is-

ssues of public importance, often vigorously disagreeing with the government. Many of them were actively involved in the recent protests that raged against three farm laws that the Modi government wanted to enforce to reform the ailing agricultural sector. Modi was forced to repeal the laws in the face of stiff opposition. The hostility between NGOs and the Indian government has a long history. Several outfits had on the grounds of public safety and environmental concerns opposed a nuclear project in Kudankulam in south India in 2012, prompting a government crackdown. Ties, however, have markedly deteriorated since Modi assumed power in 2014. A slew of new rules has tightened the screws on NGOs, forcing some very big names such as Amnesty, Greenpeace India and the Ford Foundation to effectively shut shop in India. One such bizarre rule was that every NGO in a vast country such as India that receives foreign funds must receive them through a particular bank branch in Delhi. Organisations such as Amnesty were repeatedly raided too by government agencies. Amnesty finally ceased operations last year, shortly after it brought out two damning reports—one on Kashmir after it was controversially stripped of its special status by the Indian government, and the other on communal riots that rocked Delhi in early 2000. The latter reconfirmed popular perception that the police were complicit in the violence. Statements by top Indian officials have shone light on the deepening distrust that has come to engulf relations between the government and the NGOs, many of which focus on sensitive issues such as human rights and civil liberties. Addressing a meeting of the National Human Rights Commission some months ago, Modi criticised the 'selective approach' of some of the outfits and accused them of 'denting India's image and that of democracy'. Ajit Doval, his national security adviser, also struck an ominous note when he recently told a batch of new police officials to be wary of civil society. According to him, civil society was the new frontier of war as it could be manipulated against the nation's interests. Critics of the government say the Missionaries of Charity could well be in the crosshairs of the predominantly Hindu nationalist government primarily over such apprehensions. The good work done by Christian missionaries is a cause for suspicion at a time when India is high on Hindu nationalism. Choking the charity's funding is therefore an expected consequence.

— Courtesy: TRT World

## No, Putin is not becoming Stalin

Leonid Ragozin



**Making parallels with the USSR in the 1930s cannot help explain Putin's Russia**

**I**N late December, a Russian court ruled to shut down Memorial, an organisation dedicated to preserving the memory of people who perished in communist terror. Memorial was founded by Nobel Peace Prize winner Andrei Sakharov and fellow Soviet dissidents at the height of Perestroika in 1989, when Mikhail Gorbachev's policy of glasnost (free speech) made it possible to talk openly about Vladimir Lenin's and Joseph Stalin's genocidal crimes. The tragic symbolism of this event is hard to overstate. The formal grounds for outlawing Memorial were based on its alleged failure to comply with the law on "foreign agents"—a term that immediately evokes memories of the 20th-century Soviet terror. The closing of the organisation is a major blow for Russian civil society and it comes amid a massive wave of repression against regime opponents—the worst since Vladimir Putin came to power in 2000. Opposition leader Alexey Navalny was thrown in prison last January when he returned from Germany after recovering from a near-death poisoning with Novichok nerve agent, a Soviet-made chemical weapon. An investigation by Bellingcat, an investigative media outlet, and Navalny's team blamed it on Russian secret services. The authorities proceeded with clamping down on what remained of the Navalny-led opposition, with hundreds of activists and major public figures being forced into emigration and some of the most stubborn ones jailed. Even more ominously, Yury Dmitriyev, a prominent Gulag historian and member of Memorial, who discovered a huge Stalin-era killing field in the Karelia region, had his jail sentence on trumped-up charges of paedophilia increased to 15 years. This policy of repression could not but bring up historical parallels. On New Year's Eve, opposition activists were posting old Soviet postcards celebrating the arrival of 1937—the year when Stalin's terror reached its pinnacle, with thousands of innocent people being arrested and executed—not because they did anything specific, but simply to fulfil quotas on the extermination of "enemies of the people". But despite the obvious associations with the most tragic period of Russia's 20th-century history, what is happening in the country is part of a totally different 21st-century story. Is Putin really planning to wipe out the memory of communist victims and—as some critics fear—turn himself into a new Stalin, unleashing another wave of genocide? Those who follow Russian politics attentively know that the answer is negative. In 2015, a state-run museum dedicated to the history of the Gulag was opened. In 2017, Putin inaugurated the Wall of Grief, a massive monument in Moscow dedicated to the victims of terror. In 2020, the Russian president ordered the creation of a database for terror victims. It would become a government-controlled alternative to the database that was painstakingly compiled by the researchers from Memorial over the past 30 years. This detail provides a key to understanding Putin's motives. It is not Memorial's history research that drew his ire. The real reason is that the organisation linked that effort to defending human rights in the present. It maintained its own human rights centre, which monitored abuses and designated political prisoners. It also organised an annual vigil in front of the former KGB (currently FSB) building in Moscow, with thousands coming to read

out the names of terror victims in a powerful "never again" message to modern abusers of human rights. A former KGB officer, the Russian leader is known to be obsessed with control. He is not really against ideological diversity, but he wants to be the one who is pulling the strings. Throughout the two decades of Putin's rule, his administration has been trying, with a varying level of success, to nurture loyal nationalist, communist, liberal and even neo-Nazi groups as an alternative to their ideological equivalents which earnestly opposed Putin's government and took part in political struggles. This classic secret services strategy was brilliantly satirised in the 1987 Soviet film *A Forgotten Tune for the Flute*, where a KGB character says: "The best way of stopping a spontaneous movement is to organise and lead it." This catchphrase came to be widely used in modern Russian politics. This is exactly what is happening now. By shutting down Memorial and simultaneously setting up loyal institutions researching communist crimes against humanity, the Kremlin is mopping up the liberal wing of Russian society. But acting in the very same manner, it is simultaneously manipulating the illiberal wing, which is prone to denying or justifying the terror. Like elsewhere, Russian admirers of 20th-century totalitarianism tend to concentrate in law-enforcement agencies and the army, having become a kind of professional counter-culture among the people whose job involves carrying arms. This is why, while publicly decrying Stalin's terror and frequently referring to 1937 in a negative context, Putin is turning a blind eye to officers of his own Investigative Committee, a body responsible for today's repressions, donning retro-uniforms of NKVD, the secret services tasked with exterminating "enemies of the people" in the 1930s. He is also OK with Russian Communist Party leaders celebrating Stalin's birthday in the Red Square. Simultaneously, Putin's regime has been ruthlessly clamping down on the parts of the far left, which it sees as its opponents. Young communists from the Left Front, far-left opposition organisation, served prison sentences after being accused of plotting to overthrow the government during the Bolotnaya protests of 2011-12. This year's wave of repression hit moderate left-wingers who ran for the national and regional elections on the Communist Party ticket. Moscow communist party boss Valery Rashkin, who maintains an ambiguous relationship with Navalny's movement, faces accusations of poaching, which many believe are politically motivated. In the same spirit, the Kremlin has courted far-right groups. For example, it allowed neo-Nazis from the Saint Petersburg-based group "Rusich" to integrate into the Wagner mercenary army, which has been used for "deniable" military intervention in the Ukrainian, Syrian and other conflicts. At the same time, repressions on the far right and nationalist flank have been severe, with lengthy prison sentences meted out to several major leaders and numerous activists. In 2020, the most prominent neo-Nazi figure, Maksim Martsinkevich aka Tesak, died in his prison cell under suspicious circumstances, with lawyers saying that his body had signs of torture. Many of Tesak's comrades fled to Ukraine where they joined the Azov regiment fighting against Russian-backed forces. Putin's regime regards 20th-century totalitarian ideologies as fashion brands—visually attractive, but rather meaningless in terms of modern politics. All it cares about is the loyalty of their adherents. This is what defines its policy with regards to historical memory today. The regime is also acutely aware that its American adversaries are also cynically manipulating historical memory to foment polarisation and radical nationalism in places like Ukraine and other countries neighbouring Russia. Using a 20th-century lens to understand 21st-century Russia has never worked. Together with geopolitics, it obscures the real forces of modern political technology and globalisation which are at play in Putin's Russia—a country that finds itself at the forefront of the global trend of illiberal populism engulfing Europe and the United States. Using a 21st-century perspective to talk about Russia today could help elucidate what is happening in the country, including the wave of repression it is currently experiencing.

— Courtesy: Al Jazeera

## How Turkey can overcome its economic challenges

Zaid M. Belbagi



**Turkish economy, which is heavily dependent on imports for producing goods domestically, suffered further, with inflation for producers up as much as 50 percent in some cases**

**T**HE Turks love tea, with each one consuming an average of 1,300 cups per year. The associated transactions, though small, are sufficiently numerous that they play their part in keeping the economy ticking over. Unfortunately, inflation has become almost as identifiable with Turkey as tea.

From 1975 to 2004, Turkey's painful experience of high and chronic inflation was alleviated only by increased economic growth marked by investments, increased employment levels and rising incomes. Last year, however, the Turkish economy, which is heavily dependent on imports for producing goods domestically, suffered further, with inflation for producers up as much as 50 percent in some cases. Amid the lira slumping 48 percent against the dollar in 2021, the worst-performing emerging market currency has almost become a barometer for Turkish economic instability. Inflation is rising around the world, meaning central banks are eyeing up hikes in interest rates—but not in Turkey. The lira's collapse comes not only amid a dogged determination to keep rates low, but also a growing myriad of economic problems. Over the last two decades, Turkey has transformed into an upper middle-income nation, with the poverty rate decreasing from 44 percent to 18 percent. Strong fiscal policies were a central feature of the economic progress Turkey enjoyed. However, the wheels are coming off the world's 20th-largest economy. Importing more than it exports, the country has run a trade deficit year on year. Rather than dealing with this, Turkey has only grown more reliant on foreign investments and loans, mostly in foreign currencies. Fueled by lower interest rates, this debt drove a construction boom. However, the real estate market now has 2 million unsold homes. "It is a problem of trust. The hiring and firing makes us look inconsistent and, just when we need to build confidence, our government is perceived as being unable to implement urgent reforms for fear of opposing the president," a sen-

ior Ankara-based economist said. Having lost this independence, Turkey is unable to encourage the top-down good governance that is required to alleviate its economic woes. The presidency accepts the need for a strong lira and stable currency, but it has failed to appreciate the added importance of a strong central bank and has instead lurched from crisis to crisis with tactical solutions and no long-term strategy. An elastic supply of cheap finance fueled Turkey's boom in the late 2000s. However, inflation and short-term policies have discouraged the understanding that slower, more sustainable growth is preferable to the boom and bust cycles of the past. Justice and Development Party governments have always seen the path to Turkish prosperity as being a weak Turkish lira to boost exports. However, given the country's recurring trade deficit, this model is unsustainable. Turkey requires an overhaul of economic thought and policy if its economy is to remain viable. Turkish industry and manufacturing are central pillars of the country's economy, while the services sector is an under-explored area for potential growth. Turkey must invest in education to keep its economy competitive, as the challenges of human capital and language have hindered the potential for the economy to move away from one that is based on attracting investment, providing unsustainably cheap finance and competitive exports to one that is less exposed to shocks, is competitive and, importantly, allows institutions to have the ability to inspire confidence and embark upon bold policymaking.

— Courtesy: Arab News



## Briefs

**Beijing seals off its Olympic 'bubble'**

AGENCIES

BEIJING: Beijing sealed up its Winter Olympic "bubble" on Tuesday, preparing the Games venues, transport and staff for the world's strictest mass sporting event since the global pandemic. China, where the virus emerged toward the end of 2019, has pursued a zero-tolerance strategy on Covid-19 and is taking the same approach to limit the pandemic's potential impact on the February 4-20 Winter Olympics and subsequent Paralympics.

Starting Tuesday, thousands of Games-related staff, volunteers, cleaners, cooks and coach drivers will be cocooned for weeks in the so-called "closed loop" with no direct physical access to the outside world. That contrasts with the Covid-delayed Tokyo Summer Olympics, which allowed some movement in and out for volunteers and other personnel.

The global media and roughly 3,000 athletes are expected to start arriving in the Chinese capital in the weeks ahead and will remain in the bubble from the moment they land until they leave the country. Anyone entering the bubble must be fully vaccinated or face a 21-day quarantine when they touch down, and everyone inside will be tested daily and must wear face masks at all times.

**Swiatek advances in Adelaide, Svitolina out**

AGENCIES

ADELAIDE: Defending champion Iga Swiatek cruised to a 6-3 6-3 win over Daria Saville in the opening round of the Adelaide International at Memorial Drive on Tuesday while number eight seed Elna Svitolina fell to Russia's Anastasia Gasanova.

Gasanova overcame back issues to seal a 5-7 6-4 6-3 win over the Ukrainian and advance to the second round of the Australian Open warm-up event. Svitolina won a tight first set but the 22-year-old Gasanova broke serve early in the second before needing to take a medical timeout. Svitolina broke back immediately after play resumed but Gasanova followed suit in the next game and went on to close out the set.

The pair traded breaks early in the decider but Gasanova finally prevailed to knock out the former world number three. Swiatek, who defeated Belinda Bencic to win last year's title, had no such issues against Saville as she defeated the Australian qualifier in an hour and 19 minutes.

The Pole, ranked fifth at this year's tournament, will next face U.S. Open runner-up Leylah Fernandez.

Sofia Kenin will take on Ajla Tomljanovic in the second round following her 7-5 7-5 victory over Lucia Bronzetti while Wimbledon champion Ash Barty will face Coco Gauff, who beat Ulrikke Eikeri 6-2 6-1. Japan's Misaki Doi also progressed with a 6-3 3-6 6-1 win over Kristina Kucova from Slovakia.

Shelby Rogers beat Australian qualifier Maddison Inglis 6-1 6-3 to set up a second round clash with Maria Sakkari.

**Secy Gen GCC due...**

FROM PAGE 01

The visit offers the two sides an opportunity to review mutual cooperation and take steps to foster enhanced collaboration in diverse fields, with a renewed focus on trade and economic relations between Pakistan and the GCC Member States.

Pakistan and the GCC enjoy long-standing cordial relations. Pakistan's relations with the Member States of the GCC are rooted firmly in shared faith, values and culture.

The visit of the Secretary General is expected to further broaden and diversify avenues of cooperation between Pakistan and the Gulf Cooperation Council.

# Normalization steps in ME will accelerate in 2022

Ankara and Cairo have recently exchanged positive signals in an attempt to restore relations after more than seven years of political estrangement

FOREIGN DESK

ANKARA: New regional initiatives and normalization steps will accelerate in 2022, Turkey's Presidential Spokesperson Ibrahim Kalin said. Speaking to the Turkish political magazine Kriter, Kalin said that Turkey responds to any positive steps taken toward it. "We do not leave the hand of anyone who reaches out to us. Whoever takes a friendly step toward us, we take two steps. We care about leaving the periodic crises and tensions behind and taking new normalization steps," he said.

Noting that Turkey evaluates the recent steps taken with Egypt and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) within this perspective, Kalin added that new steps can follow this process. "We believe that all these are steps that will contribute to our national interests, regional vision and global peace," he added. The year 2021 saw Turkey seek-

ing warmer ties with several regional countries and long-time foes after many tumultuous years. Ankara reiterated that Turkey hopes to maximize its cooperation with Egypt and Gulf nations "on a win-win basis," at a time when Ankara intensified diplomacy to mend its fraught ties with Cairo and some Gulf nations after years of tensions.

Converging interests have driven regional power shifts in the Middle East, mainly led by regional powerhouses Turkey and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan (MBZ) visited Turkey for the first time since 2012 in November. Erdogan and MBZ, who is seen as the de facto leader of the UAE and the force behind its foreign policy stance, oversaw the signing of nearly a dozen cooperation deals during the visit, while a top Emirati official said the UAE has earmarked \$10 billion for investment in Turkey. The president will pay a visit to



the UAE in February. Similarly, Ankara and Cairo have recently exchanged positive signals in an attempt to restore relations after more than seven years of political estrangement.

In May, a delegation of senior Turkish officials traveled to Egypt for an official visit, the first since 2013, to discuss normalizing diplomatic relations amid efforts by the two countries to improve ties that deteriorated following the Arab Spring - the

move was reciprocated by a second round in Ankara. Turkey has called on Egypt to cooperate in the Eastern Mediterranean, saying a maritime deal with Ankara would be more beneficial for Cairo than one with Greece.

Moreover, Ankara and Riyadh have in recent months attempted to repair some diplomatic damage after a decade of tension, especially after the 2018 murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in Saudi Arabia's Istanbul consulate. Aside from the Khashoggi incident, Saudi Arabia's rapprochement with Israel, support of the coup in Egypt and its stance on Libya and Syria have been other points of contention.

Most recently, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Monday said he will visit Saudi Arabia next month, the Turkish leader's first since the Khashoggi murder. Kalin also touched upon the relations between Turkey and the United States, saying that there are serious problems in the U.S.' perception of Turkey.

"The instrumental and interactional perspective does not reflect the spirit of alliance. Turkey demands to establish an equal, fair and transparent relationship with everyone, including the U.S. Of course, each country puts its own national interest first. But if you define your national interests on too narrow and selfish grounds, you jeopardize your fundamental and long-term interests."

NATO allies Ankara and Washington have been at odds over a host of issues, from Turkey's purchase of Russian S-400 missile defense systems - a move that drew U.S. sanctions last year - to regional policy differences, human rights, legal matters and the U.S. support to the PKK terrorist group's Syrian branch, the YPG.

He reiterated that Ankara's main expectations from Washington are to stop supporting the YPG, to take a realistic and constructive stance on the S-400s and to take decisive and fruitful steps against the Gülenist Terrorist Group (FETÖ).

Shaw questions Man Utd's commitment

MANCHESTER: Manchester United defender Luke Shaw accused his side of lacking enough aggression, intensity, and motivation after a meek 1-0 home defeat to Wolves on Monday.

A fourth league defeat in 10 games at Old Trafford this season leaves United still languishing in seventh, four points adrift of the top four. United was expected to mount a title challenge this season after adding Cristiano Ronaldo, Jadon Sancho, and Raphael Varane to a squad that finished second to Manchester City last season. But the Red Devils are 22 points behind City at the top of the table and closer to rock bottom Norwich.

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer paid for a dreadful run of results when he was sacked as manager in November.

Interim boss Ralf Rangnick had picked up 10 points from his first four games in charge despite indifferent performances and they were finally made to pay as Joao Moutinho's strike eight minutes from time secured Wolves' first win at Old Trafford since 1980.

"We look our squad, our team, the players we have, we have unbelievable quality," Shaw told Sky Sport. "Sometimes quality isn't enough. - APP

Pakistan condemns insult of Muslim...

FROM PAGE 01

cyberspace with purpose-built online platforms and social media has been used yet again, to demean and harass women, particularly Muslim women, to create a feeling of fear and shame amongst the Muslim community. These horrifying occurrences have left Muslim women traumatized and in deep fear. The statement said under the Hinduva-inspired BJP-RSS combine dispensation in New Delhi, space for minorities particularly Muslims is continuously shrinking in India. It is reprehensible that no action has been taken against the perpetrators of similar abhorrent act six months ago auctioning dozens of influential Muslim women in India on a social media platform.

The Foreign Office said deafening silence of the BJP leadership and absence of discernible action against 'Hinduva' proponents openly calling for genocide of Muslims should send alarm bells across the international community about the gross and systematic human rights violations of minorities particularly Muslims in India.

The Foreign Office reiterated Pakistan's calls on the international community, particularly the United Nations and relevant international human rights and humanitarian organizations to fulfill their responsibilities to stop the rising xenophobia, Islamophobia and violent attacks against minorities in India and ensure their safety, security and well-being.

PTI believes in...

FROM PAGE 01

as they were patronized by some 'feudals' or 'businessmen', who gave them funds which were in fact used to run house affairs of their leadership.

Fawad lashed out at Nawaz Sharif for using the accounts his party Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) to launder ill-gotten money. An amount of Rs 80 million was deposited in the PML-N account which was later withdrawn by him using certain tactics.

He said, "The PTI is the only party in the country, which has an extraordinary legal, detailed and elaborate system for funding." Under the system, he said, the PTI workers from across the globe funded the party according to their capacity. Citing the example of Shaukat Khanum hospital, he said Prime Minister Imran Khan was the only person who had been entrusted by the people of Pakistan with their money.

About 70 per cent of the patients at Shaukat Khanum hospital were getting free treatment as it received donations worth billions of rupees from across the globe in the name of PM Imran Khan, he added.

## Rusty Osaka sees off Cornet in error-strewn return

AGENCIES

MELBOURNE: Australian Open champion Naomi Osaka was rusty on her return to action for the first time in four months on Tuesday but still advanced to the second round of the Melbourne Summer Set tournament with a 6-4 3-6 6-3 win over Alize Cornet. Osaka, who last played competitively when she lost to Leylah Fernandez in the third round of the U.S. Open in September, displayed plenty of her trademark power but often lacked accuracy at the Australian Open warm-up event.

The Japanese player struggled with her first serve while committing 57 unforced errors, including eight double faults, as she eventually saw off the former world number 11.

"I feel like I probably made a lot of unforced errors today but I kind of expected that because it is the first match," said Osaka. "I was really nervous so I'm just glad that I was able to hold my serve on the last game." The match was the first since Osaka announced she was taking an indefinite break from tennis following her loss to Fernandez at Flushing Meadows.

That decision brought an end to a season that had also seen her withdraw from the French Open citing mental health issues and miss Wimbledon



during a mid-season hiatus.

Playing on the same Rod Laver Arena court where she has won two Australian Open titles, the former world number 13 in the world, regained her poise early in the third set, winning the first three games before closing out the match.

In the men's ATP 250 event at the same venue, former world number one Andy Murray suffered a setback in his preparation for the Australian Open as Argentine Facundo Bagnis overcame the Briton 6-3 5-7 6-3 in the round of 32. "To beat him is amazing, I'm really happy. I enjoyed every point in the match," world number 76 Bagnis said.

Osaka looked to be heading for a comfortable win but the loss of four consecutive games saw Cornet pull level. Osaka, who is ranked number 13 in the world, regained her poise early in the third set, winning the first three games before closing out the match.

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## 'Exemption permission': Djokovic heading to Australian Open



SPORTS DESK

MELBOURNE: World number one Novak Djokovic said Tuesday that he was heading to the Australian Open to defend his title after being granted a medical exemption

to play. All participants at the Australian Open, which starts on January 17, need to be vaccinated against Covid-19 or have a medical exemption, assessed by an independent panel of experts.

The Serb has repeatedly refused to confirm if he has been inoculated, with his participation at the opening Grand Slam of the year at Melbourne Park the subject of intense speculation for months.

"I've spent fantastic quality time with my loved ones over the break and today I'm heading Down Under with exemption permit. Let's go 2022!" the nine-time Australian Open winner said on Instagram. His post was accompanied by a picture of him at an airport, looking relaxed, with his bags. Djokovic's confirmation that he is en route sets the scene for a showdown with arch-rival Rafael Nadal, with both gunning for a record 21st Grand Slam title.

The Spanish superstar is already in Melbourne preparing after recovering from the coronavirus.

## Mbappe hat-trick fires PSG into French Cup last 16

"We made a few adjustments at half-time, including the positioning of the midfielders. It allowed us to be more fluid in the flow of the ball, and to find depth"

SPORTS DESK

PARIS: Kylian Mbappe scored a hat-trick as Paris Saint-Germain overcame their Covid crisis and a drone-related interruption to ease into the French Cup last 16 on Monday with a 4-0 win over fourth-division Vannes.

Despite the absence of five PSG players including superstar Lionel Messi and Danilo after positive tests for Covid-19, Mauricio Pochettino's side was never worried by the Brittany minnows.

Defender Presnel Kimpembe, wearing the captain's armband, headed in after 28 minutes just after the match had been interrupted for a minute after a drone flew over the Rabine Stadium in western France. Kimpembe then set up Mbappe for the second just before the hour mark with the French forward completing a hat-trick in an 18-minute spell.

Mbappe added a second after 71 minutes after good work from Marco Verratti and Xavi Simons adding a third six minutes later for his 150th goal in a PSG jersey. "I'm happy to get started again," said World Cup winner Mbappe. "It was not an easy match for us to

positioning of the midfielders. It allowed us to be more fluid in the flow of the ball, and to find depth." Vannes' Cup dream was over with the Brittany side also missing out on their hoped-for bonanza after the French government's crowd

restrictions with 5,000 spectators only permitted at outdoor events. Vannes had been hoping for a 9,600 sell-out and according to their president, Maxime Ray is set to miss out on revenue of 250,000 euros (\$282,000).



"We are missing out on what is a fortune to us," he said. Covid could also overshadow Tuesday's Lens versus Lille Cup clash with seven players from the visiting team confirmed positive.

"We had four Covid cases which have now become seven," said Lille coach Jocelyn Gourvenec, without naming the players. "We're going to re-test all the players tomorrow (Tuesday) morning."

Monday's drone incident was another in a series of problems French football has had since the start of the 2021/22 season.

Sunday's Cup match between fourth-division Jura Sud and Saint-Etienne, in Louhans, was interrupted for about 20 minutes due to smoke and fireworks launched by supporters of the Greens. Jura Sud goalkeeper Cedric Mensah described his shock on Monday after crowd trouble "cut the legs" of his team in a 4-1 French Cup defeat to Ligue 1 outfit Saint-Etienne.

"I heard a powerful bang and felt a pain in my right ear. I had the impression that a bomb had exploded and felt the pitch vibrate," he said. "The doctor explained to me that if it had exploded closer, I could have pierced my eardrum. At the time, it really shook me."



## Briefs

## Violence flares at pandemic protests in Germany

WEB DESK

BERLIN: Police in Germany have reported sporadic violence at demonstrations against the country's pandemic restrictions, with one protester in the eastern town of Lichtenstein biting an officer and another attempting to steal a service weapon. Tens of thousands of people in total took to the streets in scores of German towns and cities for weekly marches that have organizers have labeled "strolls" in an attempt to bypass restrictions on public gatherings. Counter-protests were also held in towns such as Rostock and Trier, the dpa news agency reported.

Most of the rallies passed peacefully, though many broke rules on social distancing, prompting officers to intervene. People detained dozens of people, some of whom face criminal charges or fines for breaching COVID-19 rules. Police in the eastern state of Saxony said the incident late Monday in Lichtenstein, about 20 kilometers (12 miles) west of Chemnitz, occurred when officers tried to pull about 60 rowdy people out of a march to check their identities. Several of the protesters attacked police and sprayed them with chemical irritants. "One person attempted to seize an officer's service weapon and another police officer suffered a bite wound from a participant of the gathering," Saxony police said in a statement. In Bautzen, further east, some participants of a 600-strong march attempted to break through a police cordon. Officers responded with pepper spray and batons.

## NATO to hold FM's meeting over Ukraine

BRUSSELS: NATO announced Tuesday that the alliance will hold a virtual meeting of foreign ministers from the 30 member nations this week to assess the situation in Ukraine and upcoming talks with Russia. The extraordinary meeting of the alliance members on Friday will kick off a week of intense diplomacy over the military buildup on Ukraine's borders and initiatives to ease the tension between the Cold War foes. U.S. President Joe Biden has warned Russian President Vladimir Putin that Washington could impose new sanctions against Moscow if it takes further military action against Ukraine. Putin responded that such a U.S. move could lead to a complete rupture of ties between the nations.

The two leaders spoke frankly for nearly an hour last week amid growing alarm over Russia's troop buildup near Ukraine, a crisis that has deepened as the Kremlin has stiffened its insistence on border security guarantees and test-fired hypersonic missiles to underscore its demands. - APP

## Fighting intensifies in eastern Colombia

AGENCIES

BOGOTA: At least 23 people were killed in Colombia this weekend and 20 had to flee their homes as fighting between rebel groups intensified in the eastern state of Arauca, Colombia's Defense Minister said Monday.

The killings mark a setback for Colombia's government, which was able to bring down homicide rates in much of the country following a 2016 peace deal with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia. But it is now struggling to control violence in rural pockets of the country where smaller rebel groups and drug trafficking organizations are fighting over smuggling routes, coca fields, illegal mines and other assets. Arauca is home to some of Colombia's largest oil wells and is also crossed by a pipeline that is regularly attacked by rebel groups that steal its oil. The state borders Venezuela and drug trafficking groups have been fighting over its smuggling routes for decades.

## China will continue to 'modernise' nukes: Fu Cong

The US has also raised concern about analyst reports based on satellite imagery that China is building missile silos in its northwestern desert and its test of a hypersonic missile last summer

FOREIGN DESK

BEIJING: A senior Chinese arms control official denied Tuesday that his government is rapidly expanding its nuclear arsenal, though he said it is taking steps to modernize its nuclear forces. Fu Cong, director general of the Foreign Ministry's arms control department, said China is working to ensure its nuclear deterrent meets the minimum level necessary for national defense. "On the assertions made by U.S. officials that China is

expanding dramatically its nuclear capabilities, first, let me say that this is untrue," he said at a briefing in Beijing. The briefing was held a day after China, the U.S., Russia, Great Britain and France issued a joint statement on preventing nuclear war or an arms race. The statement was supposed to be timed to the start of a global conference on disarmament at the U.N., but the meeting has been postponed because of a surge in COVID-19 cases. The U.S. Defense Department

said in a report in November that China is expanding its nuclear force faster than previously predicted and could have more than 1,000 warheads by 2030. The U.S. has 3,750 nuclear weapons. The U.S. has also raised concern about analyst reports based on satellite imagery that China is building missile silos in its northwestern desert and its test of a hypersonic missile last summer. Fu would not confirm the missile silos but said the size of China's nuclear force should not be

estimated based on the satellite photos. He said China does need to take steps to make sure its nuclear force is sufficient in light of a changing security environment in Asia. He cited U.S. talk of deploying intermediate-range non-nuclear missiles in the region. India also has nuclear weapons, as does its neighbor Pakistan. Fu stuck by the Chinese position that it would not join nuclear arms reduction talks between the U.S. and Russia, as the American side is pushing for. He

called on both to reduce their arsenals, by far the largest in the world. "We will be happy to join if they have reduced to our level," he said, adding that "the two superpowers need to ... drastically reduce their nuclear capabilities to a level comparable to the level of China, and for that matter to the level of France and the U.K., so that other nuclear states can join in this process." U.S. President Joe Biden's administration is carrying out a review of America's nuclear posture, but major change seems

unlikely given the reports of China's growing nuclear force and tensions with China over Taiwan and with Russia over Ukraine. Fu also called on the U.S. to lift sanctions on Iran, and for Iran to return to its nuclear commitments on that basis. Iran is in talks with the U.S., China, Russia, the U.K., France and Germany on restoring a 2015 agreement that granted Iran sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on its nuclear program. Former President Donald Trump pulled the U.S. out of the deal in 2018.

## FPCCI urges govt to raise forest cover up to 25%

ISLAMABAD: The newly elected President of Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry Irfan Iqbal Sheikh Tuesday urged the government and private sector to join hands for raising forest cover from 5 to 25 per cent to meet the ever growing needs of furniture industry in the country. Talking to Mian Kashif Ashfaq, CEO Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC) here today Irfan Iqbal Sheikh said currently, furniture and local industries, were experiencing serious supply shocks, which were not only impeding their further growth, but also adversely affecting their international competitiveness. As the global economy is expected to be more challenging this year in wake of Covid-19, he urged the furniture industry to remain resilient by innovating, adopting technology as well as diversifying export markets in order to sustain demand in the long run, he said. "We have to overcome challenges to strengthen our market share; we must continue to produce innovative and market-oriented products to meet challenging times," he added. Irfan Iqbal Sheikh said in the absence of enough supplies of wood, cheaper furniture made of fancy and laminated sheets of chipboard has flooded the local market. He said wooden furniture, like that of shishum wood, is quite expensive that is why shishum's furniture is made for selected buyers only. Mian Kashif briefing the FPCCI chief said Pakistan needs mass tree plantation at plain, hilly and barren areas with the active participation of private sector and government to meet the demands of the growing furniture industry. - DNA



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for finance and revenue Shaukat Tarin held a meeting with special representative to the PM on religious harmony Maulana Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi.

## Protesters should show responsibility: President

The rallies have involved thousands of people. They began on Jan. 2 - the day after the price caps on LPG were lifted

NUR-SULTAN: The government commission, including the representatives of the Presidential Administration, started its work in Aktau, the Twitter account of the Head of State reads. The commission is tasked to find out a mutually acceptable decision of the problem for the benefit of the country's stability. The law enforcement agencies are charged to prevent violation of public order. Protesters should demonstrate responsibility and readiness for dialogue, the President noted. Protests have erupted in several Kazakh towns and

cities after the Central Asian nation's government lifted price caps on liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and the cost of the popular alternative to gasoline rose. The rallies have involved thousands of people. They began on Jan. 2 - the day after the price caps on LPG were lifted - in the town of Zhanaozen, the site of the deadliest clashes between protesters and police since independence from the Soviet Union.

Protesters in Zhanaozen, an oil industry hub in the western Mangistau province where dozens of people were killed in protests in 2011 after the sacking of oil workers, demanded the price of LPG be halved from 120 tenge (\$0.27) per litre to the level at which the fuel was sold last year. Retailers have agreed to cut the price by a quarter but President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev's government has said further cuts are impos-

sible because of production costs. The price had previously been regulated, but officials said artificially low prices were making LPG production infeasible. Protests have spread to Mangistau's provincial centre, Aktau, as well as a worker camp used by subcontractors of Kazakhstan's biggest oil producer, Tengizchevroil. The Chevron-led (CVX.N) venture said output had not been affected. In Kazakhstan's biggest city, Almaty, police cordoned off the main square on Monday and Tuesday. Mobile internet was jammed in the downtown area. - Agencies

## UBG will be back in FPCCI: Tariq Haleem

STAFF REPORT

KARACHI: Tariq Haleem Former Vice President FPCCI (2018) and Present Chairman UBG Standing Committee on Maritime Affairs & Gwadar Development said we would like to congratulate BMP on their win of President, Senior Vice President and 6 Vice President seats. Congratulations also go to UBG for their win of 5 Vice President seats. We hope that the new team at FPCCI will work to protect and promote the interests of the entire business community of Pakistan during 2022. Tariq Haleem said that "United Business Group" (UBG) would like to thank the voters for such a strong turnout and keen interest on 30-Dec-2021. UBG assures the business community of their continuous attention and efforts for them. Tariq Haleem said I am available 24/7 as usual for any problems or services for the Maritime Sector, Communications & Gwadar Development. The Business Community should feel free to contact me on email, WhatsApp & phone for any assistance whatsoever. It is part of the World War II history that General Douglas MacArthur when withdrawing from the Philippines in March 1942 said "I shall return". When he returned to the Philippines in October 20, 1944 he announced on radio "People of the Philippines, I have returned". Tariq Haleem said that UBG assures the Business Community that "we shall return" TO FPCCI, Inshaallah.

## German unemployment declines in December amid virus uncertainty

FRANKFURT: Germany's joblessness rate fell slightly in December despite the return of health restrictions to tackle a new wave of coronavirus cases, official figures published Tuesday showed. The seasonally adjusted rate dropped to 5.2 percent from 5.3 percent the previous month, the BA federal labour agency said, the equivalent of 23,000 fewer unemployed people. "The recovery seen in recent months continued in December," agency head Detlef Scheele said in a statement. In raw figures, the number of unemployed sat just under 2,330,000, down around 378,000 since December 2020. Unemployment in Europe's top economy climbed as high as six percent in the months following the rapid spread of the coronavirus through Europe in the first half of 2020. Germany has relied heavily on subsidised short-term work schemes to help businesses and workers whether the pandemic storm, with nearly six million Germans placed on reduced hours at the peak of the crisis in April 2020. - DNA

## Sudanese forces deployed ahead of anti-coup protests

KHARTOUM: Sudanese security forces have spread out around Khartoum and neighbouring cities ahead of planned anti-coup protests, days after the resignation of the country's civilian prime minister, witnesses said Tuesday. Streets leading to the army headquarters in central Khartoum were sealed off amid a heavy presence of riot police, paramilitary forces and army personnel, the witnesses said. Pro-democracy activists have stepped up calls for protests against an October 25 military coup led by top general Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, who detained then-prime minister Abdalla Hamdok and cabinet ministers. The coup has triggered mass demonstrations and a violent crackdown that has so far left at least 57 dead and hundreds wounded. At least 13 women have been raped during the unrest. On November 21, Burhan reinstated Hamdok in a deal promising elections in mid-2023. The protest movement slammed the deal as "betrayal" and has kept up street pressure. Late Sunday, Hamdok announced that he was stepping down, saying he had tried to prevent the country "from sliding toward disaster" but that it was now at a "dangerous crossroads threatening its very survival". Pro-democracy activists have urged protesters to take to the streets Tuesday and to head to the presidential palace in Khartoum "until victory is achieved". Sudan has been navigating a fragile transition towards full civilian rule since the April 2019 ouster of veteran president Omar al-Bashir following an unprecedented wave of youth-led protests. Burhan last month issued a decree allowing security forces to arrest individuals "over crimes related to the state of emergency", effectively banning street protests. Security forces are allowed to enter and search "any building or individual" and impose "surveillance of any property and facility". Since the coup, authorities have often blocked internet services and disrupted communication lines to prevent mass gatherings. - APP

## Erdogan vows to decrease inflation to single-digit level

Touching on the inflation issue, he said the US saw the highest inflation figures in 40 years, Germany in 30 years and the UK in 10 years. "Like others, there is a reality of inflation in front of our country"

FOREIGN DESK

ANKARA: Turkey's share in the global trade exceeded 1% for the first time last year, the nation's president said on Monday, citing the newly announced 2021 export figures. While the global goods trade decreased 10% in 2021, Turkey achieved to increase its exports by 33%, Recep Tayyip Erdogan told reporters following a Cabinet meeting in the capital Ankara. Compared to 2002, when Turkey's annual exports were \$36 billion, they increased by six times, he stressed, as Monday's figures showed that the country's exports reached \$225.37 billion last year. He also said that Turkey's foreign trade volume hit almost \$500 billion in 2021, while it could not reach \$88 billion in 2002.

Last year, the foreign trade deficit decreased to \$46 billion, while the export-import coverage ratio reached 83%, which was 51% in the early 2000s. In tourism field, Turkey hosted 29 million foreign visitors in 2021 and earned \$24 billion, up by 83% and 100%, respectively, compared to 2020. The country's new tourism target is to surpass the pre-pandemic level, Erdogan said. In order to ease the burden of high gas and electricity bills on citizens, the president said, his government gave a subsidy of 80 billion liras (\$9.5 billion) on natural gas, 20 billion liras (\$2.4 billion) on electricity and 65 billion liras (\$7.7 billion) on automobile fuel. He said: "During the pandemic, oil prices almost doubled, coal prices



increased by three to five times, natural gas prices increased six to 10 times, metal and mineral prices increased by 50% and agricultural products prices increased by 25%. "Due to the excessive rise in energy prices, many countries had to increase their electricity tariffs by an average of three times, while

we followed a way to protect our citizens." "We provide 100,000 liras (\$7.659) support to businesses that maintain the number of employees in the last 12 months and commit to employ our vocational high school or university graduates for at least 12 months," Erdogan said. Touching on the country's foreign currency-protected Turkish lira deposit accounts, he said that citizens have so far deposited 78 billion Turkish liras (\$5.97 billion) to these accounts. While the global trade volume shrank by 5.3% in 2020, Turkey grew by 1.8%, Erdogan said, adding the growth of 7.4% in the first quarter of 2021, 22% in the second quarter and 7.4% in the third quarter is the sign of double-digit growth in 2021. "We are approaching step by step towards Turkey's goal of becoming

one of the world's top 10 economies with its performance," he added. He said salaries of civil servants have increased by 30.5% in 2022 and the minimum pension amount increased to 2,500 Turkish liras (\$191) from 1,500 Turkish liras (\$114). Touching on the inflation issue, he said the US saw the highest inflation figures in 40 years, Germany in 30 years and the UK in 10 years. "Like others, there is a reality of inflation in front of our country." "We regret that our annual inflation hit 36%. We are determined to break the neck of the inflation, which we reduced to 6% in our country before, and we will reduce it back to single digit as soon as possible," he underlined. "We have taken special measures ... A 50% increase in the minimum wage is one such example," he added.

## Brazil floods: Death toll rises to 26

BUENOS AIRES: The death toll from heavy rains and flooding in Brazil's northeastern state of Bahia rose to 26 late Monday, with 715,634 people affected by the natural disaster.

The local Civil Defense and Protection Observatory said in a statement that 26 people have lost their lives due to the continuous rains since November while the number of injured has reached 518. It noted that 30,915 people have lost their homes and 62,731 have been evacuated. In addition, 166 cities have been affected in the state, which is home to over 15 million people, the statement said, adding that a state of emergency was declared in 154 cities. At least 37 cities in southern Bahia were completely submerged as a result of the flooding.

Bahia Governor Rui Costa said the state was hit simultaneously by COVID-19 as well as the natural disaster and all vaccines and medication in some cities became unusable. On Jan. 1, Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro announced that the Latin American country had sanctioned 700 million Brazilian reals (\$125.6 million) in relief loans for flood-affected areas. - APP

## 5.5 magnitude quake jolts China's Yunnan

KUNMING: Thirty people have sustained minor injuries as of Tuesday noon after a 5.5-magnitude earthquake jolted Ninglang County in southwest China's Yunnan Province at 3:02 p.m. Sunday, local authorities said.

All the injured are receiving treatment and are under medical observation, and none sustained life-threatening injuries, according to the county government.

The earthquake affected a total of 26,797 people in four towns, and 6,848 people from 1,546 households whose homes were damaged have been relocated. Power supply, transport and telecommunication services in the quake-hit areas have been largely restored. Meanwhile, thousands of tents, quilts, folding beds and overcoats have been delivered to those in need in the affected areas.

The epicenter was about 60 km away from the county seat of Ninglang in the city of Lijiang and 110 km from the Old Town of Lijiang, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The earthquake struck at a depth of 10 km, according to the China Earthquake Networks Center (CENC). - APP

## S. Africa parliament fire contained: firefighters

JOHANNESBURG: A fire that ravaged South Africa's parliament has been contained after strong winds had reignited the blaze, firefighters said on Tuesday.

The fire began in the early hours on Sunday and devastated much of the parliament complex before it was declared under control on Monday morning. But strong winds reignited the blaze late in the afternoon.

"Firefighters managed to extinguish the blaze that erupted late yesterday afternoon just before five," firefighters spokesman Jermaine Carelse told AFP.

"The fire was fanned by a strong south-easterly wind but firefighters managed to contain the fire just before 12:00 last night," he said.

"This morning, just before five, there was a small flare but firefighters managed to extinguish that blaze," he said, adding that some 20 firefighters remained on the scene to monitor the situation throughout the day.

A 49-year-old man who had been arrested on Sunday inside the parliament building was to appear in court on Tuesday charged with "housebreaking, arson" and damaging state property.

No casualties have been reported in the fire, but the damage to the nation's parliament has shocked the country. The fire started at around 5:00 am (0300 GMT) Sunday in the wood-paneled older part of the complex - a section that once housed South Africa's first parliament. - APP



# US sets global record of over 1M daily Covid cases

Meanwhile, India reported 37,379 new Covid-19 cases in the past 24 hours, the most since early September

**WEB DESK**

WASHINGTON: The United States has recorded more than one million Covid-19 cases, according to data from Johns Hopkins University, as the Omicron variant spread at a blistering pace. There were 1,080,211 new cases in the country, a global record, with the number of cases doubling on the previous week. It comes a day after top US pandemic advisor Anthony Fauci said the country was experiencing "almost a vertical increase" in Covid-19 cases, adding the peak may be only weeks away. India's capital Delhi will impose a weekend curfew to try and curb the spread of the Omicron variant of the coronavirus as cases have risen in the past few days. Deputy Chief Minister Manish Sisodia told a news conference that most offices would have to make half their employees work from home. Meanwhile, India reported 37,379 new Covid-19 cases in the past 24 hours, the most since early September. Deaths rose by 124 to reach a total of 482,017. Total infections stand at 34.96 million. Russia has reported 834 deaths and 15,903 cases of Covid-19 in the past 24

hours. People being hospitalised with Covid-19 in the United Kingdom are broadly showing less severe symptoms than before, Britain's vaccine minister has said. "At the moment, if you look at the people who have been hospitalised, they are going in with less severe conditions than before," Minister for Vaccines and Public Health Maggie Throup told Sky News. "The numbers that are in hospital beds is about half what it was a year ago - and that just shows the power of the vaccine." France's lower house of parliament has suspended debates over a bill to make it mandatory for people to show proof of Covid-19 vaccination to go to a restaurant or cinema or take the train. Tense discussions of the new law, which would remove the option of showing a negative test result instead of having the inoculations, were halted after midnight on Monday after a majority of deputies voted to suspend the session. The heads of the various parliamentary groups must now set a new date for debates to resume, the Vice-President of the National Assembly Annie Genevard said. Once voted in the National Assembly, the new law needs to be voted in by the senate, before it comes into force

on Jan 15. A strained debate in parliament on Monday highlighted what the government and the opposition described as widespread fatigue with the pandemic and measures to tackle it. The proposed tightening of the rules has angered anti-vaccination activists and some lawmakers say they have been subject to aggression including vandalism and violent threats. Australia's Covid-19 cases have touched a fresh pandemic high amid an Omicron surge in its two most populous states as hospitalisations in New South Wales (NSW), home to Sydney, surpassed the record numbers hit during the Delta outbreak. NSW and Victoria, home to more than half of Australia's 25 million people, saw another spike in infections, with 37,151 new cases reported between them, just shy of the national one-day high of 37,212 hit a day earlier. Tasmania reported 702 new cases. Other states and territories are due to report their numbers later in the day. People admitted in NSW hospitals rose to 1,344, a new pandemic peak, topping the 1,266 reached last September during the Delta wave. Numbers have more than doubled in a week, straining the health system.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Iran Seyyed Mohammad Ali Hosseini calls on Federal Minister of National Food Security Syed Fakhar Imam. - DNA

## Fakhar Imam lauds Iranian offer to cut tariff on agri-products

Seyd Mohammad Ali Hussaini said that Iran imports several agricultural products from Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Minister for National Food Security Syed Fakhar Imam on Tuesday welcomed Iranian offer to waive off tariff on all agricultural exports to Iran and said that Pakistan has immense export potential in citrus fruits, rice, mangoes, onion, potatoes, fisheries and livestock. Talking to Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Pakistan Syed Mohammad Ali Hussaini, who called on the him, Imam said that Pakistan can meet the entire demand of rice of Iran as it has 8 million tonnes of rice which can be exported. Fakhar said that Pakistan exported about 144,000 tonnes of mangoes to different countries and hence its export to Iran also has huge potential. Pakistan faces a number of challenges

but with the right policy interventions under the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan, agriculture sector is transformed, he said adding that local agriculture has been tottering along the traditional agricultural techniques and it is time to look ahead to the future in terms of modernization. Fakhar Imam praised the current governments efforts and said that in the last 70 years the main set back to research was insufficient funds. This is the first time in the history of Pakistan that under Prime Minister Initiative Program billions of rupees have been invested in agricultural research which has led to record production of wheat, maize and rice last year. The minister thanked the Ambassador and highlighted the cordial and

friendly relations between the two countries since 1947 and said that Iran was the first country to recognize the state of Pakistan. Minister said that the two countries have shared history and literature. Speaking on the occasion, Seyd Mohammad Ali Hussaini said that Iran imports several agricultural products from Pakistan, besides importing over 5,000 tonnes of citrus fruits as well as it was also importing rice and has a substantial market for livestock, red meat and fisheries. Iran is exporting 104 MW electricity to Pakistan, he said adding that Iran and Pakistan have a border of 900 km and both countries should take advantage of that to strengthen economic and trade relations with each other. - APP

## 'PTI to extend full co-op to ECP'

**STAFF REPORT**

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning and Development, Asad Umar has assured to extend full cooperation to Election Commission of Pakistan in foreign funding case. Talking to media outside Election Commission of Pakistan in Islamabad on Tuesday, he said PTI has collected funds in the most transparent manner and the nation has full confidence on the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan. He, however, said the secret accounts of PML (N) and the PPP are coming to the surface. Speaking on the occasion, Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting, Farrukh Habib said the scrutiny committees should immediately submit their reports regarding PML (N) and the PPP to Election Commission.

## KP govt plans to build 3 more dams

**DNA**

ISLAMABAD: Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government has decided to construct three new dams in Tank and Dera Ismail Khan districts to refill the ground of water level. The new dams included Tank Zam Dam, Chodwan Zam Dam and Daraban Dam would be constructed on priority basis as the region has facing water shortage, said official source. After construction these dams an estimated 109,721 acres of barren land would be irrigated and 25.5 MW of electricity would also be generated as well. These dams would also bring an agricultural revolution in KP's improvised zone, besides ensuring food security and creating job opportunities for the local people. By using water efficient models the command area can be enhanced and would help in achieving self-sufficiency in food sector as per the vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan. The decision of the provincial government was highly lauded by the people of Tank and DI Khan who were of the view that would highly usher a new era of prosperity in the area.

## Four bills smoothly sail through Senate

ISLAMABAD: The Senate of Pakistan on Tuesday passed four bills including the Protection against Harassment of women at the Workplace (Amendment) Bill, 2021, the National Commission on the Rights of Child (Amendment) Bill, 2021, the Juvenile Justice System (Amendment) Bill, 2021 and the Islamabad Capital Territory Child Protection (Amendment) Bill, 2021 as reported by the standing committee. All four bills were piloted by Minister of Human Rights DR. Shireen M Mazari in the House. The statement of objects and reasons of the protection against harassment of women amendment bill say that the amendment aims to facilitate increased participation of women in the workforce by removing the lacuna present in the existing law. It broadens the ambit and scope of the law to including certain professions and employment models that the current law does not expressly mention. Through these amendments protection from harassment shall be provided to people engaged in all types of work-formal and informal.

## Thousands of Rohingya shops demolished

COX'S BAZAR: Bangladesh authorities have bulldozed more than 3,000 Rohingya-run shops since last month, a government official confirmed Tuesday, as struggling refugee families voiced their dismay at the demolitions. About 850,000 members of the stateless Muslim minority are packed into overcrowded displacement camps in Bangladesh, most having fled neighbouring Myanmar after a 2017 military clampdown that prompted an international genocide investigation. Bangladesh has been praised for taking in the refugees but rights groups have criticised restrictions placed on the refugees, most recently a drive to knock down makeshift shops that serve their communities. The country's deputy refugee commissioner Shamsud Douza told AFP that "more than 3,000 illegal shops" had been demolished. "The number of Rohingya is increasing. And they need shelters. We are already building sheds on the premises," he said, adding that relief groups were ensuring the refugees were still getting daily necessities. But Khin Maung, a Rohingya community leader and rights activist, told AFP the demolitions had already hurt tens of thousands of refugees in the camps. "Rohingya families are large and the amount of food ration given to them is decreasing. Many families used to rely on the income from the shops," he said. Salim Ullah, whose grocery shop was torn down, said he would now struggle to feed his family of eight. "That shop was my last hope. How do I run a family now? There is no way out except to die. I am helpless," he told AFP. Saad Hammadi of Amnesty International said the move would leave refugees vulnerable to exploitation and worsen conditions in the camps. "Demolition of shops and closure of community-led schools... aggravate tension and frustration," he said. Hammadi urged authorities to "protect the rights and dignity of the Rohingya refugees by involving them in the decisions including their right to earn a living". - APP

## Farrukh for early submission of PPP, PML-N audited reports

Says the reports of the scrutiny committees for the bank accounts of the PPP and PMLN had been completed

**STAFF REPORT**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) on Tuesday asked Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to direct its scrutiny committees to submit with it audited reports of bank accounts relating to foreign funding of different political parties including Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). The request was made in backdrop of suspicious revelations relating to secretive bank accounts of both the PML-N and PPP's traced by the financial experts and chartered accountants of ruling party PTI. Talking to media outside the ECP here, Minister of State for Information



and Broadcasting, Farrukh Habib said the scrutiny committees formed in PPP and PML-N cases were identical to the Body constituted to audit bank accounts of ruling party PTI. Farrukh Habib, flanked by Minister for Planning and Development, Asad Umar and PTI Senior Leader Aamir

## Turkiye's Erdogan to visit Saudi Arabia in February

ANKARA: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's planned visit comes as part of Ankara's intention to normalise ties with several regional countries. Türkiye's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan will visit Saudi Arabia in February as part of Ankara's intention to normalise ties with several regional countries. Erdogan made the announcement in Istanbul on Monday, saying trade between Türkiye and Saudi Arabia will be discussed during his next month's visit, local media reported. Like Ankara, Riyadh has also been attempting to repair its diplomatic ties with Türkiye following the murder of dissident Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi in Saudi Arabia's Istanbul Consulate in 2018. Erdogan and Saudi King Salman had discussed bilateral relations in



April and May in 2021. Following the development, Türkiye said Ankara hoped to maximize its cooperation with the Gulf countries. Aside from Saudi Arabia, Türkiye has also been in negotiations with Egypt and the United Arab Emirates in an attempt to mend fraught ties. In May, Ankara sent a delegation led by Foreign Minister, Mevlut Cavusoglu to Saudi Arabia for talks and the foreign minister met his counterpart, Prince Faisal bin Farhan, in Riyadh. Although the kingdom never publicly acknowledged that it was boycotting Türkiye-made products, some Saudi businessmen endorsed the move amid growing political tensions between the two countries. To circumvent the unofficial blockade, some Turkish exporters have been routing food, clothing and other goods. - DNA

## 8 killed in southern Iran floods

TEHRAN: At least eight people have been killed in flash flooding in Iran's south due to heavy rains expected to last until later this week, state media reported on Tuesday. "Following the floods and rains of the past few days in the southern regions of the country, we have seen an increase in casualties and deaths," spokesman for the national rescue service Mojtaba Khaledi said, quoted by state news agency IRNA. "So far eight people have died and two are still missing," Khaledi said, adding that 14 others had been injured. Five of the deaths occurred in Fars province, local crisis management official Rahim Azadi told the state news agency. A local official had said Monday that at least two people were killed in flash flooding in the province. Heavy rain damaged "agriculture, infrastructure, urban and rural housing", Azadi said. Iran's Red Crescent has provided "emergency accommodation for more than 3,000 people, and over 20,000 have received relief assistance", its

head of rescue and emergency operations Mehdi Valipour told state television. "Houses have been flooded and infrastructure such as roads and communication systems have been damaged," he said, adding that more than 500 teams were providing assistance in parts of the country's south and east. Pictures published by the Red Crescent showed its personnel setting up tents in sports halls and assisting cars trapped on flooded roads or stuck in snow-covered mountain areas. Relief operations were underway in 87 cities across more than half of Iran's 31 provinces, it added. Interior Minister Ahmad Vahidi has asked local authorities in Fars, Hormozgan, Kerman and Sistan-Baluchestan provinces to use "all their resources and capacities" to aid residents, IRNA reported. President Ebrahim Raisi instructed Energy Minister Ali Akbar Mehrabian to inspect flood-hit areas in Sistan-Baluchestan and Hormozgan provinces, it added. - APP

## Bhutto an invincible movement of Pakistan: Bilawal

The Chairman PPP reiterated his commitment that the PPP will continue to safeguard the gift given by its founding Chairman Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, the unanimous Constitution of 1973, which is the assurance of our national unity and harmony

**DNA**

KARACHI: Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has said that Zulfikar Ali Bhutto is now an unforgettable history and invincible movement, while the slogan of Jiye Bhutto is the mirror, every dictatorial and anti-people thinking individual is afraid to face. In his message on the 94th anniversary of the first elected Prime Minister of Pakistan and the Founder Chairman of the Pakistan Peoples Party, the Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said, "I pay tribute to Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, whose style of politics and gov-

ernance provided Pakistanis with the opportunity to come close to the state for the first time and take the reins of the country in their own hands. He said that the Quaid-e-Awam was the first leader to declare the people as the source of power and laid the foundation of a democratic ideological party which defended the rights and interests of the people of Pakistan. "Bhutto Shaheed was and will always be a source of encouragement to the oppressed, and deprived people of the country" he added. Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that after Quaid-e-Azam, if anyone has given the most service and sacrifices



for the country and the nation, it is Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. He used his political savvy and diplomatic skills to lift a broken country, put it back on its feet, got freed 93,000 Prisoners of War (PoWs) and reclaimed 5,000 square miles of land from enemy occupation. He said that Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto gave the first unanimous Constitution to the war-torn country, launched a nuclear program to make the national defense invincible, and laid strong foundations for the economy and industries. Steps such as universal suffrage, agrarian reform, equality, elimination of all forms of discrimination, empowerment

of women and the weaker sections of society are the hallmarks of Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. During the rule of Quaid-e-Awam, significant progress was made in every sector of Pakistan. He further said that unparalleled services and uncompromising ideals are the reasons why Bhutto is still alive in the hearts and minds of the people. Chairman PPP Bilawal Bhutto Zardari further said that the best way to pay homage to Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto is to remember his sacrifices and ideology and work together for the growth of prosperity, security and a bright future of the country.