



Islamabad POST

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Djokovic wins deportation delay after Australia cancels visa

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Pakistan values brotherly ties with Turkey

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Rizwan: most valuable player of the year

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Briefs

President tests positive for COVID-19

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Thursday said that he has again tested positive for the COVID-19. "I have tested +ive for Covid again. Had a sore throat since 4-5 days & was getting better. Felt mildly feverish for a few hours two nights ago. No other symptoms," President Alvi said in a twitter post. The President in his tweet also urged the people and friends to resume precautions and follow the COVID-19 Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs). - APP

Justice Ayesha gets JCP approval

DNA
ISLAMABAD: The Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP) on Thursday recommended the elevation of Justice Ayesha A Malik of the Lahore High Court (LHC) as a judge of the Supreme Court. The JCP approved the nomination of Justice Ayesha A Malik with five members endorsing the move and four opposing it. The Commission meeting was held at the Supreme Court building under the chair of Chief Justice of Pakistan Justice Gulzar Ahmed. Justice Qazi Faez Isa, Justice Maqbool Baqar, Justice Sardar Tariq and PBC representative strongly opposed the nomination of Justice Ayesha.

Maryam hypocrite over leaks

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Faruk Habib on Thursday drew attention of public towards 'double standards' and 'hypocrisy' of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Vice President Maryam Safdar over her audio and video leaks. "It is justified if Maryam took steps for making (former) Judge Arshad Malik video and doctored audio of [former Chief Justice] Saqib Nisar, but if her own audio on media management and abusing journalists surfaced, she demanded an apology. - APP

Biden slams Trump for 'web of lies'

Marking first anniversary of January 6 Capitol riot, Joe Biden terms the incidents as attack on US democracy



All responsible to be held accountable

NEWS DESK
WASHINGTON: US Attorney General Merrick Garland on Wednesday vowed to hold accountable anyone involved in last year's deadly Capitol attack by former President Donald Trump's supporters and said the Justice Department's work on the matter is far from done. In a speech a day before the one-year anniversary of the violence, Garland appeared to address criticism by some Democrats who want his department to act more aggressively against those responsible for the attack on January 6, 2021, that sought to overturn Trump's 2020 election loss. The department has charged more than 725 people with crimes arising from the riot ranging from disorderly conduct to assaulting police to conspiracy.

NEWS DESK
WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden on Thursday marked the first anniversary of the January 6 insurrection by forcefully calling out former President Donald Trump for attempting to undo American democracy, saying such an insurrection must never happen again. In a speech that lasted just under 30 minutes, Biden made a passionate case for defending the nation's founding ideals from the threats posed by Trump and the violent mob that stormed the Capitol one year ago. The speech saw an animated Biden make one of the most passionate addresses of his still-young presidency

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ISLAMABAD: The outgoing Ambassador of the Hellenic Republic (Greece), Andreas Papastavrou, pays a farewell call on President Dr Arif Alvi. - DNA

FM eyes deeper ties with Romania

Romanian envoy hopes relations will further be cemented

STAFF REPORT
ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Romania to Pakistan, Nicolae Goia called on Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The foreign minister said Pakistan greatly valued its relations with Romania adding we are looking forward to diversify these relations. He further said, both countries need to enhance bilateral visits. The Romanian ambassador thanked Minister Qureshi and hoped bilateral relations will further be strengthened.

Pakistan highly values ties with Greece: President

President appreciates the services rendered by the outgoing Ambassador for promoting Pakistan-Greece relations

MAHNOOR ANSAR/DNA
ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has said that Pakistan highly values its ties with Greece and wants to further expand bilateral cooperation in diverse areas of mutual interest. He urged the need to enhance the bilateral trade between Pakistan and Greece, and tap the potential of cooperation in the fields of culture, education, and tourism. The President made these remarks while talking to the outgoing Ambassador of the Hellenic Republic (Greece), Mr Andreas Papastavrou, who called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, today. Talking to the outgoing envoy, the President said that both countries had great potential to increase economic and cul-

tural cooperation. He also highlighted the efforts made by Pakistan for the promotion of peace and stability in Afghanistan. He said that a stable and peaceful Afghanistan would not only bring economic prosperity to Afghanistan but to other countries of the region as well. He termed the recently held 17th Extraordinary Session of OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, hosted by Pakistan, as highly successful, saying it attracted international support and economic assistance for the war-stricken people of Afghanistan. The President appreciated the services rendered by the outgoing Ambassador for promoting Pakistan-Greece relations and hoped that he would continue to play his role for further enhancing bilateral ties between the two countries.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Romania to Pakistan, Nicolae Goia called on Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi. - DNA

PPP announces long march from Feb 27

Bilawal Bhutto says the people of Pakistan want to get rid of the government

DNA
LAHORE: Pakistan People's Party (PPP) chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Thursday announced a long march against the government from Karachi on February 27. Bilawal Bhutto while addressing a press conference in Lahore said they will start the movement to overthrow the government from Lahore. The PPP's sudden call for the long march will be a sign of worry for the other opposition parties as well as the Pakistan Democratic Alliance had announced to hold a long march from March 23. A visibly divided opposition may result in another failure to gather the masses to oust the government.

Bilawal Bhutto said the people of Pakistan want to get rid of the government. The country's economy has been destroyed under the Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf (PTI) government, added Bilawal. The PPP leader said that a conspiracy to reverse the former tribal areas is being hatched with Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK). Bilawal said that the people of Pakistan have no food on the table and no gas. The promises made to the people of FATA have not been kept, he said. He said the people of Pakistan will end the PTI government and also demanded holding immediate

Continued on Page 06

700,000 Afghan refugees get smart cards

DNA
KABUL: The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees says Pakistan has issued smart identity cards to 700,000 Afghan refugees in that country. Babar Baloch, UNHCR spokesperson in Pakistan, told reporters that the first phase of issuing new electronic documents and reviewing the information of 1.4 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan has been completed. He said that the process in partnership with the Pakistani government and support from UNHCR was started on April 15, 2021 and ended on December 31, 2021. A statement from the organization said that more than 700,000 new smart identity cards have been issued to Afghan refugees and the process would continue until early April this year.

Indonesian embassy, NCSW join hands

STAFF REPORT
ISLAMABAD: Ambassador Adam Tugio held a meeting with the Chairperson of the National Commission on the Status of Women (NCSW), Ms. Nilofar Bakhtiar. Both sides praised women's significant roles during the pandemic, such as in the healthcare sector and in generating national economy from home. The meeting discussed potential joint collaboration between Indonesia and Pakistan, the two largest Muslim majority and democratic countries, and other Islamic countries in advancing women's rights from an Islamic perspective. Through a series of dialogs with experts from Islamic countries, it is expected that the workshops will shed light on best practices from a number of Islamic countries in mainstreaming women as an equal agent of national development.



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World must curb illegal transfer of wealth: FM

Qureshi addressed the 7th International Seminar of the OIC Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission on "Combating Corruption - A Pre-Requisite for the full realization of All Human Rights and Sustainable Development"

ANSAR M BHATTI
ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi has called for immediate and robust national and international action to curb illicit financial flows from the developing world to financial safe haven destinations. He was addressing the 7th International Seminar of the OIC Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission on "Combating Corruption - A Pre-Requisite for the full realization of All Human Rights and Sustainable Development" in Islamabad on Thursday. Shah Mahmood Qureshi said fighting corruption is essential to achieve the sustainable development goals. The Foreign Minister urged the OIC countries to actively explore innovative ideas and initiatives to strengthen the existing

international framework to prevent corruption and to end impunity. He proposed the establishment of a protocol and implementation mechanism for mutual legal assistance within the OIC on issues of corruption and stolen assets. He stressed for the development of a coherent, transparent and inclusive mechanism under the UN auspices for strengthening the international legal framework on monitoring illicit financial flows and return of stolen assets. He also called for establishment of a global beneficial ownership registry besides reviewing and revising unequal investment treaties procured through corruption. The Foreign Minister said Prime Minister Imran Khan whilst deriving guidance from Islamic teachings, has given a vision of corruption free Pakistan. He said Pakistan has taken measures to build and strengthen robust systems for



accountability, transparency and integrity. We are trying to pursue a proactive three-pronged approach to combating corruption, including awareness raising, prevention, and enforcement. He said we

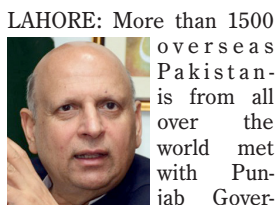
have supplemented existing legislation to induce transparency and openness in the public sector including through facilitating citizens' right to information. He pointed out that Pakistan's Citizen Portal app has received international recognition for an effective use of technology for enhancing public delivery. Due to our sustained efforts, visible positive socio-economic changes are taking place in the country. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet, in her video message on the occasion, stressed that combating corruption contributes to the full realization of human rights and is also vital to recovering from COVID-19 pandemic. She said the UN has produced complete guidance for states and others to prevent corruption in the manufacturing, allocation and distribution of anti-Covid vaccines. She said the need for a comprehensive action to stem corruption was also emphasized earlier this year when the UN

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Briefs

Over 1500 overseas Pakistanis meet Punjab Governor

NEWS DESK



LAHORE: More than 1500 overseas Pakistanis from all over the world met with Punjab Governor Chaudhry Muhammad Sarwar on the occasion of "Open Day for Overseas Pakistanis" here at Governor House on Thursday.

Talking to the delegations, Governor Punjab Chaudhry Muhammad Sarwar said that the doors of Governor House are open for overseas Pakistanis 24 hours a day and overseas Pakistanis are our priority and they will not be left alone.

Overseas Pakistanis from USA, United Kingdom, Italy, Germany, France, Greece, Portugal, Japan, Saudi Arabia, Dubai and different countries met with Punjab Governor and apprised him about their problems and appreciated the steps taken by him for opening the doors of Governor House for overseas Pakistanis.

Over 5.88m people vaccinated

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: Over 5.88 million (5,882,443) people have so far been vaccinated against COVID-19 in the district.

District Health Officer Dr Ataul Mun'im said on Thursday 3,686,246 citizens were injected first dose while 2,126,895 were administered the second dose of vaccine. He further said that 38,481 health workers were also given first dose while 30,821 received the second dose of vaccine.

He said that sufficient stock of coronavirus vaccine was available in the district. As many as 151,364 first doses and 100,909 second doses were in the stock in Faisalabad.

He said that 37 vaccination centers and 20 mobile vaccination camps were operational in Faisalabad where registered people were being vaccinated. In order to facilitate the people these centers had been established in various areas of the city including Allied Hospital, District Head Quarters Hospital, Government General Hospital, Faisalabad Institute of Cardiology, Government General Hospital Samanabad, Children Hospital, sports Complex Samanabad, Tehsil Head Quarters Hospital Jaranwala, Samundri, Tandianwala, Chak Jhumra, Sports Complex Chak Jhumra, Sports Complex Jaranwala, Government General Hospital Chak 224/R-B and New Building RHC Khurri-anwala, he added.

PPDW approves five schemes

LAHORE: The Punjab Provincial Development Working (PPDW) Party approved five development schemes of various sectors with an estimated cost of Rs 5,039.577 million. The schemes were approved in the 51st meeting of Provincial Development Working Party (PDWP) of current fiscal year 2021-22 presided over by Chairman Planning & Development Board Abdullah Khan Sumbal. The approved development scheme included dualization/improvement of road from MDA Chowk to Lodhi Colony via Pull Bararan, Length 1.25 Km, District Multan at the cost of Rs 1,038.963 million, construction of Underpass at Katchehri - Rasulnagar Road Railway Crossing City Sheikhupura at the cost of Rs. 943.224 million, rehabilitation & Concrete Side Protection / Lining of Dinga Disty and its System at the cost of Rs. 633.886 million, improving Shortage of Water Supply in Sikhawala Disty, Concrete Lining of Chichoki Mallian Disty System, Ahmad Wala Minor, Munyanwala Minor and Hardo Minor at the cost of Rs 423.504 million and Pilot/Demonstration Resource Efficiency & Cleaner Production Investments in Key Industrial Sectors (PGDP / DLI-7) at the cost of Rs 2,000 million. - News Desk



SAHIWAL: Mayor of Rochdale Asim Rasheed visited Khadam Milk Foods where he was received by CEO of Khadam Foods and Ambassador of Sahiwal Sohail Anjum Ansari. The visiting dignitary was shown various parts of the Farm. - DNA

OPF working for returning of migrants: Ayub Afridi

Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis & HRD/OPF and PGFRC supporting returning migrants in their social and economic reintegration

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Overseas Pakistanis Foundation (OPF) in line with the vision of Prime Minister of Pakistan is developing the capacity of returning migrants and providing them with trade-specific toolkits as an In-Kind support to help them start sustained self-employment.

A ceremony was organized in Islamabad under OPF's Pak - German Facilitation & Reintegration Centre (PGFRC) where toolkits were handed over to 82 returning migrant in the fields of photography, culinary arts, motorcycle mechanic, electrician, plumber, carpenter, and mason. These returnee migrants had also completed a comprehensive business development training from PGFRC in their selected trades.

Advisor to the Prime Minister on Overseas Pakistanis & Human Resource Development Mr. Muhammad Ayub Afridi was chief guest at the ceremony, Ms. Marion Pfenning, Head of Development Cooperation, Embassy of the Federal Republic of Ger-



many, Dr. Amer Sheikh, Managing Director OPF, Mr. Tobias Becker, Country Director, GIZ, members of Senate and National Assembly Standing Committees on Overseas Pakistanis & HRD, Members, OPF Board of Governors, senior government officials, representatives of international organizations and civil society representatives also

attended the ceremony. Mr. Muhammad Ayub Afridi, Advisor to the Prime Minister on Overseas Pakistanis & Human Resource Development said that today's ceremony is a testament to the commitment of Government of Pakistan which considers overseas Pakistanis as its roaming ambassadors abroad and is active-

Turkish CG distributes school bags among children

NAZIR H SIYAL

KARACHI: Consul General of Turkey said that education is an important tool in human development,

the name of Pakistani nation will be bright, when these children work hard at getting good education is actually an encouragement. The Consul General of Turkey, while distributing free books, school bags,

uniforms, school shoes, stationery, etc. to the children of Government Boys Tameer Millat Campus School Gulshan-e-Iqbal here on Thursday. He also said that it is a great pleasure for him to receive love and affection from Pakistani children and I remember my childhood and schooling. He said the children of Pakistan are intelligent and much sensible. Turkish Consul General in Karachi said that the provincial government and parents are playing a key role on this occasion.

Earlier, on the arrival of Turkish Consul General here at Government Boys Taamir-e-Millat Campus School, the children and teachers of the school gave a warm welcome and chanted slogans of Pak-Turkey Zindabad and paid glowing tributes on the occasion. Head Master/Principal and other teaching staff presented cultural Sindh Ajrak and Sindh Cap (Topi), while, the children also presented flower bouquets, to the Turkish Consul General on the occasion he was happy among the children.

PARCO inaugurates first Miyawaki Forest

The forestation project along two canals, covering over 9,000 square meters

DNA

GUJRANWALA: Total PARCO Pakistan has inaugurated its first Miyawaki Forest with Park and Horticulture Authority. The forestation project along two canals, covering over 9,000 square meters, is being undertaken by Total PARCO Pakistan with the assistance of Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) Gujranwala at Jinnah Park, Gujranwala. "Miyawaki" is a forest regeneration technique that aims to recreate self-sustaining multi-layered indigenous forests on degraded land with little human intervention. The chosen indigenous species

of plants grow 10 times faster and absorb 30 times more carbon dioxide, compared to conventional methods. The dense plantation also becomes 100 times more bio-diverse and provides great habitat for wildlife. Total PARCO Pakistan believes in sustainable initiatives that contribute towards the vision of greener and cleaner future for Pakistan.

164 doctors dismissed under PEEDA act

NEWS DESK

LAHORE: The Primary and Secondary Healthcare Department (P&SHD) has removed 164 doctors from their duties under the PEEDA Act 2006.

According to the P&SHD sources on Thursday, Secretary P&SHD Imran Sikander Baloch had dismissed 164 doctors under the PEEDA Act 2006 and a list of the doctors had been publicized. The action has been taken after issuance of repeated warnings and show-cause notices for being absent from the duty. The P&SHD had also issued ads in national newspapers to put it in public notice.

Talking about dismissal of medical officers, the secretary P&SHD said that regular absentees of doctors in government hospitals would not be tolerated at all. He added medical officers were bound to abide by the rules of PEEDA Act and it was a moral responsibility of doctors to remain present on their duties.

Rescue-1122 facilities 8,866 people

NEWS DESK

FAISALABAD: Punjab Emergency Service Rescue-1122 provided rescue facilities to 8,866 people during the month of December.

A spokesperson for Rescue-1122 said on Thursday, the rescue official received total 126,111 calls including 8,970 emergency calls and 22,129 informative calls during the last month. The teams provided rescue facilities to 8,866 victims of which 3,136 people provided first aid on the spot. The rescue teams responded 2,324 call of road accidents, 5,613 medical, 103 fire eruption, nine drowning, 10 building collapse, and 706 other emergencies. Rescue-1122 shifted 5,070 injured to various hospitals while 620 persons died in different incidents on the spot during the same period, the spokesperson added.

Professor shot dead in front of his mother

FAISALABAD: Dacoits shot dead a young professor in front of his mother in Faisalabad for resisting their attempt to loot a shop on Thursday. The looters were snatching valuables from a shop in the Amin Park area when Professor Asif Bukhari offered resistance. The slain professor was with his mother at the time of the dacoity incident. Police said that both the accused dacoits were on a motorbike but they ran away by dropping their bike at the crime scene. However, they later snatched another person's motorbike at gunpoint to flee the area. - DNA



Textile policy is imperative for economic growth: Vice President

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Continuity of the original textile policy is imperative for sustained economic growth and Government must withdraw the curtailment of repatriation period of foreign proceeds from 180 to 120 days, said Mr. Imran Mahmood Sheikh Senior Vice President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI).

Commenting on the decisions taken on the directive of Financial Action Task Force (FATF), he said that textile is the mainstay of the national economy which has around 60% share in total national exports. He said that the fifth wave of Corona (Omicron) has a crippling impact on the global economies and hence we must incentivize the export sector to maintain its growth trajectory in addition to bridging the import and export gap. He said that in 2020 our

textile export stood at 7.44 billion dollars which jumped to 9.39 billion dollars in 2021 due to the incentives enshrined in the textile policy.

He termed this growth as satisfactory in view of the ill impacts of corona and said that during the first six months of the current fiscal this sector performed well. He said that during the month of December the export of T-shirts recorded a phenomenal growth as compared to the same month of last year. "This category recorded 32% growth in quantity and 46% in value", he said

and added that men's garments also recorded 16% growth in quantity and 26% in value. Similarly, jersey and cardigans also recorded quantity wise growth of 38% while it was 55% in value.

He also quoted figures regarding home textile, cotton fabrics, cotton yarn and women garments which recorded a decline in quantity while it showed value wise increase of 2%, 17%, 11% and 13% respectively. He said that increase in export of cotton yarn has created shortage and price hike in domestic market and

hence Government must clamp complete ban on its export so that it could be used to enhance the exports of value-added products. Regarding reduction in the period of repatriation of foreign proceeds, he said that most of the EU countries open LC (Letter of Credit) for 180 days and any change in it would have a negative impact on our overall exports.

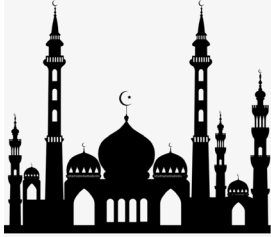
He said that the Government must revisit this decision and frame viable policy in consultation with the concerned stakeholders.



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Asr.....	03:36 pm
Maghrib.....	05:14 pm
Isha.....	06:43 pm



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Turkish Airlines.....	8494949
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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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Oman's business fraternity seeks business ties with Pak

H.E. Al-Sheikh Mohammed Al-Marhoon Ambassador of Oman to Pakistan said that his country was keen to promote trade ties with Pakistan as both countries have good potential to cooperate in many areas for mutual benefit

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A business delegation of Oman led by Engr. Redha Al Saleh, Chairman, Oman Chamber of Commerce & Industry visited Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry and held B2B meetings to explore business collaborations with Pakistani counterparts. The delegation was representing various sectors including trading, import/export, oil & gas, real estate, textiles & garments, tourism, IT & telecom, agriculture, fabrication and fashion designing. H.E. Al-Sheikh Mohammed Al-Marhoon Ambassador of Oman to Pakistan and H.E. K.K.Ahsan Wagan Ambassador of Pakistan to Oman also accompanied the delegation.

Speaking at the occasion, Engr. Redha Al Saleh, Chairman, Oman Chamber of Commerce & Industry said that the bilateral trade of around USD 500 between Pakistan and Oman was not reflective of actual potential of both countries and strong efforts should be made from both sides to take it to at least USD 1 billion. He



said that the geographical location of both countries offered them great potential to enhance business and investment relations as Oman was a gateway for Pakistan to access GCC, Africa and other regional markets. Similarly, Pakistan was a gateway for Oman to access Central Asia, China and other markets. He said that many Pakistanis have

invested in Oman and more should come as Oman was now allowing 100 percent FDI. He said that many Pakistani products were reaching Oman through neighbouring countries and stressed that both countries should promote direct trade to achieve better results. He emphasized for reactivating Pak-Oman Business Council to improve trade relations.

In his welcome address, Jamshaid Akhtar Sheikh, Senior Vice President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry welcomed Oman's delegation. He said that Pakistan and Oman can cooperate in many fields including agriculture, rice, seafood, meat, vegetables, fruits, dairy products, pharmaceuticals, textiles, cotton yarn, construction and petrochem-

icals that should be taken advantage of. He said that Gwadar and Salalah Ports can be used to create good communication channels and promote trade relations between the two countries. He said that the visit of Oman's business delegation was a right step to improve business linkages between the private sectors of two countries. He urged that

both countries should encourage regular exchange of trade delegations to explore all untapped areas of mutual cooperation.

H.E. Al-Sheikh Mohammed Al-Marhoon Ambassador of Oman to Pakistan said that his country was keen to promote trade ties with Pakistan as both countries have good potential to cooperate in many areas for mutual benefit. He said that both countries were discussing to start a ferry service to link Pakistani ports with Oman, Dubai and other regional countries that would create more opportunities for bilateral trade promotion.

H.E. K.K.Ahsan Wagan Ambassador of Pakistan to Oman said that the Government of Pakistan was focused on geo-economic strategy to promote Pakistan's business and economic relations with foreign countries and hoped that the visit of Oman's business delegation would promote bilateral trade relations between both countries. He said that foreign missions of both countries would work in coordination to promote linkages between entrepreneurs of both sides.



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's High Commissioner-designate to Brunei Darussalam, Major General (r) Farhat Abbas Sani, calls on President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. - DNA

High-level delegation to visit Afghanistan, says Asad Qaiser

ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser on Thursday chaired the meeting of Afghanistan Inter Ministerial Coordination Cell (AICC) and was informed that a delegation of high-ranking officials would soon visit Afghanistan for further engagement with Afghan government on all assistance-related prospects National Security Adviser and Convener of AICC Dr Moeed Yusuf welcomed the Speaker and made a detailed presentation about AICC and the progress made so far on various initiatives undertaken by the forum to facilitate the process of humanitarian assistance for the people of Afghanistan, said a news release. Speaking on the occasion, the Speaker National Assembly appreciated AICC for the well-coordinated efforts for helping the neighboring country in dealing with the crisis. He stressed that the world must not abandon people of Afghanistan in their time of need. "Peace and stability in Afghanistan offered enormous opportunities not only to the Afghan people but also to Pakistan in terms of access to Central Asian countries for greater trade and connectivity," Asad Qaiser said. The Speaker was informed that Rs5 billion assistance package announced by the Prime Minister of Pakistan included immediate supply of food commodities, life saving drugs and winter supplies and shelter including tents and blankets. - APP

OIC organs chart the way forward for new initiatives

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A virtual meeting of the steering committee for implementation of the STI Agenda 2026 was organized by COMSTECH on Wednesday. The agenda of the meeting was to review the progress on the implementation of STI Agenda 2026 during the last two years and to discuss new initiatives for the promotion of Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) in the light of the decisions of the 2nd OIC S&T Summit held last year. The meeting was attended by all 12 members of the steering committee, including the Assistant Secretary General OIC for Science and Technology, the Coordinator General COMSTECH, the Director General of OIC (S&T), COMCEC, IAS, IOFS, SESRIC, SMIC, and senior officials from ICCIA, ICYF, ISDB, ICESCO, and OIC-CERT. The Coordinator General COMSTECH Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary welcomed the participants and expressed appreciation for their continued cooperation with COMSTECH and with each other for the implementation of the STI Agenda 2026. Dr. Choudhary highlighted the importance of this meeting both in terms of reviewing the progress of the past four years since the approval of STI Agenda, and its importance in charting the way forward in the light of the Abu Dhabi declaration. The Assistant Secretary General OIC for S&T Ambassador Askar Mussinov addressed the meeting and shared the vision of the OIC as elaborated in the Abu Dhabi declaration of the 2nd Summit.

PAC organizes Islamic calligraphy exhibition

RAWALPINDI: Punjab Arts of the arts organized an Islamic calligraphy exhibition to promote the young talent of the region. Chief Guest of the exhibition was the Chairperson Senate Committee on Climate Change Senator Seemee Ezdi. More than hundred painting was put on display for the exhibition. While addressing on this occasion she said Islamic calligraphy is a lost art of Muslims, Such competitions should be held to keep it alive. We must focus on teaching our children formal literature as well as creative literature, she added.

We must focus on teaching our children formal literature as well as creative literature. The director of the Arts Council said that calligraphy is one of the oldest arts in the world. The Arts Council is taking significant steps to promote Islamic calligraphy. Islamic calligraphy classes are one such step. The exhibition was attended by a large number of people from different walks of life. - DNA



Akbar Babar questions PTI's funding by cricket club

As per law, only a Pakistani could give funds to any political party

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Akbar S. Babar, one of the founders of Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) and also a petitioner in the party's foreign funding case, on Thursday claimed that a Dubai-based Wootening Cricket Club had released funds of \$2.1 million to the ruling party. He said as per law, only a Pakistani could give funds to any political party, and that too only in his or her individual capacity, and there was no provision under which a company could fund a party. "The question here is, why did a cricket club dish out such a huge sum to the PTI?" he asked. Quoting from the book of Simon Cork, a former The Wall Street Journal, Babar said that the Wootening Cricket Club was owned by Arif Naqvi and The Abraaj Group. "And if that is true, it will have far more negative repercussions for the PTI," he said, and added, "This is because Naqvi is

facing a case of financial irregularities of \$1 billion in New York. And the authorities will not spare him unless they recover each and every penny from him."

He went on to add that even Naqvi's partners had become approvers in the case now. "And there is every likelihood that the USA's Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) will also probe the case to ascertain as to how the money finally landed in the PTI's bank accounts," Babar said it remained to be seen how much funding was done by the cricket club because these were the details up till 2013, and after that there was a sit-in by the party in 2014 as well. "Only God knows who gave how much money to the PTI during the sit-in," he wondered. He further said that Naqvi was also a member of Imran Khan's economic advisory team. "And when he was arrested, the first contact number he had given to the police was that of PM Imran," he claimed. He also claimed that the report compiled

by the scrutiny committee of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on PTI's foreign funding had also proved that the party had foreign bank accounts as well. "I was wondering from the very first day as to why the PTI government was not allowing the committee to work," Babar said, adding the committee was supposed to finish its task within one month, but it took it three years and nine months to compile the report. "I am amazed, the petitioner added, as to why the committee did not collect all the information required in the case despite the fact that the ECP had given it a free hand to contact any department for the purpose," he said. "Members of the scrutiny committee could have written to the Foreign Office which then would have asked Pakistani embassies abroad to gather more and more information. Had that been done, more foreign accounts of the PTI would have surfaced," Babar said, adding that the party admitted that money was transferred into the

accounts of four ordinary employees, but refused to divulge their details. "The talk of a shortfall of Rs31 million by the PTI leaders is merely a mean to distract the attention of people from the real issue," he said. Babar said the reason why he had filed a petition in the ECP was because he wanted to prove that the ruling party had received funds not only from foreign sources but also from the prohibited sources. "We have to establish that the PTI had concealed huge amount of money transferred into its accounts," the petitioner said, and added, "My auditor has detected the foreign funding of Rs2.2 billion, which I will make the part of my report." Commenting on PM Imran Khan's reaction to the scrutiny committee's report, Babar said Imran's statement carried no weight. "This statement of his is similar to that of 35 punctures statement, which he had later laughed off as merely a political one," he concluded.

AIOU admissions to commence from Jan 15

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) is commencing its first phase of Spring, 2022 semesters admissions throughout the country including AJK and GB on January 15, 2022 while admissions in the second phase will be offered on March 1, 2022.

According to the AIOU, the programs offered in the first phase include matriculation, intermediate, I Com, certificate courses, BS/ MSc (face to face), MPhil and PhD programs of all four faculties. University has also extended educational network for overseas Pakistanis and now overseas Pakistanis residing in any country of the world can get admission in matriculation, intermediate and I Com programs to enhance their educational qualification. These admissions are offered through online management system. All academic activities ranging from admission to issuance of certificate/ degree will be managed through online system. Prospectuses and admission application forms for all the programs will be available online on the university website (www.aiou.edu.pk) on January 15, 2022.

Admission in BS/ MSc (face to face), MPhil and PhD programs can only be applied via online system whereas admission application forms for matriculation, intermediate and I Com can be submitted manually as well as via online mode. In case of online submission of admission application form, the candidates are not required to dispatch printed application form to the university.

PBM to establish 13 more Panagahs

ISLAMABAD: Following the vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan for a welfare state on the model of Riyasat-e Madina, Pakistan Bait ul Maal (PBM) is all set to establish 13 new Panagahs (Shelter homes) across the country in 2022. Aiming to serve the marginalized strata of the society PBM had established 10 Panagahs in 2021 and 16 Panagah in 2020 where thousands of needy people are being served on daily basis.

Talking to APP, Focal person to Prime Minister on Panagah, Naseem ur Rehman said, "Ehsaas Panagah is a mega project and we are focusing on the development and welfare of downtrodden segment of society." Lauding the Punjab Panagah Authority Bill 2021, he said this bill would help to run the Ehsaas panagah programme on sustainable path to provide quality service to shelter-less people by taking care of them. It would provide multiple facilities to the deserving people including health care, secure environment and hygienic food in a respectable manner. - APP

Digital Banking will herald new era

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chief Executive Officer Pakistan Furniture Council (PFC), Mian Kashif Ashfaq Thursday said digital banking will herald a new era, a medium to achieve the broader objective of making the financial and economic sectors more productive, efficient and inclusive.

Talking to a delegation of corporate sector led by Waqas Anjum, he said digitalisation has massive potential to accelerate the pace of financial inclusion. He said technology driven solutions are the key to unlock doors of the financial sector for the unserved and underserved segments of the society particularly women folks. He said digital transformation could play a pivotal role in expansion of Islamic finance and help improve financial inclusion, he added. He congratulated the Prime Minister for issuing directions to the State Bank of Pakistan for introduction of digital banking in Pakistan, a long awaited demand of business community.

Briefs

26 new corona cases reported

DNA

RAWALPINDI: As many as 26 more people were diagnosed with fatal coronavirus during the last 24 hours, raising the tally of confirmed cases to 39,658 in the district. As per the latest data released by the District Health Authority here Thursday, the total infected cases included 36,608 from Rawalpindi and 3050 from other districts. Among the new patients, nine cases were reported from the Rawalpindi Cantonment area, seven from Potohar town, five from Gujjar Khan, three from Rawal town, and one of each case has arrived from Taxila and Kallar Syeda. "Presently 23 confirmed patients were admitted to three city facilities, counting nine of each in Fauji foundation hospital and Institute of Urology while five were admitted in Benazir Bhutto Hospital," the report said. District Health Authority further updated that 38,307 patients had been discharged after recovery, 35,266 with Rawalpindi and 3041 from outside districts. In addition, the report stated that 127 were quarantined, including 104 at homes and 23 in the isolation centres.

IESCO issues power schedule

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Thursday issued a power suspension schedule for Friday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to IESCO spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 09:00 am to 02:00 pm, Azharabad, Jhang, EME Complex, P&T Wani, I-8 Markaz, Zero Point, FHS, Chatta Bakhtawar, Kalyal, Gulshanabad, Dhok Noor, 502 Workshop, Adyala, Askari 14, Humayun, Humayun-1, Nest Road, Margalla, Nisar Shaheed, Sarai Kharboza, Museum, Shahallah Ditta, Garhi Afghan, Karpa, Sajjad Shaheed, Fateh Jhang City, Galyal, Gul Muhammad, Pandorian, G-6, New Marvi, Zia Masjid, Tamir, Sohwaran, F-10, H-8, Police Line, Bahria University, G-13/2, D-12/1, Rehara, CM Pak Zong, Bahria Enclave, Isolation Hospital, Sunni Bank, Cecil, Kohala, Patriata, TDCP, Upper Topa, Mangial, Malikabad, A-Block, Dhok Hakmadad, Iqbal Road-2, Abu Bakar, Jamia Masjid, Gawalmandi, Pir Wadhah, Mohammadi Chowk, People's Colony, NRC, New Kalyam, Sukho, Raman, CB Khan 2, Fatehpur, Kohar, Jakar, Dina-3 Rohtas, Hamlet, Dina-1, Rohan Polance Feeders and surrounding areas.

Transaction of Services Hotel completed

ISLAMABAD: Messrs Faisal Town Private Limited here on Thursday completed the transaction of Services International Hotel with payment of whole amount by the buyer and handing over the cheque bearing remaining amount to Privatization Commission. In this regard a small ceremony was held in the Ministry of Privatization, where the buyer handed over the cheque of remaining amount of Services International Hotel. Federal Minister for Privatization Mohammed Mian Soomro was also present at the occasion, said a press release. In June 2021, Cabinet Committee on Privatization (CCoP) and Federal Cabinet approved privatization of Services International Hotel by way of sale through an open auction which took place on August 26, 2021. The M/s Faisal Town Private Limited submitted the highest bid amounting to Rs1,951,718,500. The earnest money of Rs 100 million was deposited with the bid validity of 90 days. The CCoP approved the said bid on September 10, 2021, which was duly ratified by the Federal Cabinet on October 26, 2021. - APP

Kashmiris' just struggle for freedom praised

Formation of Pakistan is a precedent for Kashmiris: says Member Parliamentary committee on Kashmir at a conference

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A round table conference titled, "Kashmir's war of liberation for Right to self-determination," was organised by Legal Forum for Kashmir (LFK) to commemorate the 'Right to Self Determination Day'. LFK also launched an exhaustive Human Rights report for the year 2021, highlighting the grave Human Rights Violations perpetrated by Indian Occupying forces in Jammu and Kashmir. The session was moderated by Advocate Nasir Qadri, Executive Director LFK. The session was chaired by Ms Naureen Ibrahim, MNA, Member Parliamentary

Committee on Kashmir. The panellists included Dr Zarqa Suhawardy, Member of the Senate of Pakistan; Ms Farzana Yaqoob, former Minister for Social Welfare & Women's Development in the State of Azad Jammu and Kashmir; Dr. Salma Malik, Assistant Professor at the Department of DSS, Quaid e Azam University, Islamabad; Dr Waleed Rasool, Director Institute of Dialogue, Development and Diplomatic Studies (IDDD); Sheikh Abdul Mateen, Representative Chairman All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC). While speaking at the conference, Senator Zarqa Suhawardy stated that legal fora should be identified

where perpetrators of war crimes in Kashmir would be prosecuted. She underlined the need to engage the Kashmiri diaspora in order to raise awareness of Indian crimes in occupied Kashmir and to bolster the fight for self-determination. In her remarks to the panel, Ms Farzana Yaqoob, a former member of the AJK Assembly, lauded Kashmiris for their resilience in the face of Indian tyranny. She went on to say that further efforts are needed to bring attention to the plight of Kashmiris. "Indian authorities have harassed and intimidated Kashmiri activists like Khurram Parvez for exposing war crimes and the culprits who perpetrated them," said Ms Yaqoob. Addressing the panel, Dr. Salma Malik said, Pakistan has yet to learn a lesson from the events unfolding in Kashmir over the past seven decades. "Conflict is inevitable if basic rights are denied even in peaceful nations," she said, adding that there is no freedom in Kashmir and that the desire for freedom is growing among Kashmiris. "India has denied Kashmiris of their right to self-actualization following the UN constitutional and unilateral abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A," she added. She went on to say that Pakistan's inconsistencies and unsustainable policies had cost the country more than

a half-century. The legal debate over Kashmir must be the centre of attention. The international community prefers legal debate to emotional reactions. Dr. Waleed Rasool discussed the legal implications of UN Resolutions and how they were a watershed moment for Kashmir. He said, "After the indigenous people of Kashmir began a rebellion against the Dogra Maharaja, India's Prime Minister took the issue to the United Nations, which gave India time and eased tensions." He emphasised the economic imbalance between India and Pakistan, but said that despite limited resources, Kashmiris will continue their battle. He also expressed wor-

ry over the designation of Kashmir's indigenous armed leaders as terrorists, and urged all parties to settle the conflict rather than manage it. He went on to say that India has started its settler-colonial agenda and has undertaken demographic changes, and Kashmiri Muslims fear extermination. During his comments, Sheikh Abdul Mateen stated that the Kashmiris were promised a free and fair plebiscite in accordance with UN resolutions, but that promise is yet to be honoured after seven decades. He went on to say that since August 5, 2019, the incidence of human rights violations has grown substantially.

IBCC to shift exam to conceptual learning

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Inter Board Committee of Chairmen (IBCC) in its 170th Forum meeting held on Thursday, unanimously resolved that examination and assessment pattern may be shifted from rote learning to conceptual learning by introducing Student Learning Outcome (SLO) based examination. To this effect, IBCC held a meeting on the direction of Federal Minister for Education Shafiqat Mahmood in Sindh Assembly Building Karachi regarding examination reforms. The meeting was chaired by Ismail Rahu, Provincial Minister for Universities and Boards, Sindh. During the meeting, CEO Punjab Examination Commission (PEC) Tahir Iqbal, Chairman Federal Board Qaiser Alam and Chairman Peshawar Board Prof. Nasrullah Khan gave a presentation on examination reforms which includes introducing automation of examination for improving efficiency and transparency, conducting curriculum based examination, capacity building of examination staff to make assessment more valid and reliable, developing central item bank, enhancing security system at examination centers to curb cheating and other malpractices, e-marking to ensure job smarter and faster and establishing research section in boards for analysis and future improvements.

Snowfall in Murree increases tourists' influx

ISLAMABAD: The mesmerizing views of heavy snowfall in the Queen of Mountains - Murree have exponentially increased the tourists' influx as the nature lovers and families have thronged the snow-clad hill station. Talking to APP, Muhammad Nasir, a tourist said finding a room nowadays in any of the hotels of Murree has become an uphill task. "People have no option but to stay at Islamabad for a night or two before departing for the snowcapped mountains in the North," he added. According to details available, only 43% hotels of 3 to 5 star quality that are listed with Google Local have availability. The remaining 57% are going houseful and not offering additional bookings. "Although Islamabad receives guests every month on the calendar, we host a remarkably high number of tourists between September to December," informed Manager Shelton's Ambassador hotel Tanveer Ahmed. He told that more than 40% of tourists staying in his hotel came from Punjab, while 30% of the guests belonged to Sindh. "They stay with us for a day or two before leaving for Murree or other snow covered areas in the North," he added. - APP

HEC launches progress review meetings

ISLAMABAD: Keeping up with its continuing efforts to implant quality culture in the Degree Awarding Institutions (DAIs), the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) of Higher Education Commission has launched a series of progress review meetings as well as trainings for heads and officers of all Quality Enhancement Cells (QECs) of DAIs across the country. In this connection, a three-day session for the first group of QEC heads and officers from 21 HEIs of Islamabad, Rawalpindi and Azad Kashmir was held at Air University, Islamabad. Executive Director HEC, Dr Shaista Sohail, along with Vice Chancellor Air University, Javid Ahmed, graced the opening ceremony of the session. The Executive Director HEC acknowledged the role of QAA and QECs in sensitising the DAIs for building upon quality culture in the academic sphere. She emphasized the need for strengthening Internal Quality Assurance mechanism to ensure provision of quality education. The first day was followed by an interactive session on "how to strengthen Internal Quality Assurance" and a discussion on how the performances of QECs could be enhanced. - APP

Exports of services rise by 22.94 percent

The services' imports also rose by 34.27 percent by growing from \$3012.18 million last year to \$4044.42 million during the period under review

ISLAMABAD: The exports of services from the country witnessed an increase of 22.94 percent during the first five months of current financial year (2021-22) as compared to the corresponding period of last year, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. The exports of services during July-November (2021-22) were recorded at \$2720.94 million against the exports of \$2213.16 million during July-November (2020-21), showing growth of 22.94 percent. The services' imports also rose by 34.27 percent by growing from \$3012.18 million last year to \$4044.42 million during the period under review. On year-on-year basis, the services' exports during the month of November 2021 grew by 15.41 percent to \$582.93 million against the exports of \$505.12 million during November 2020. The imports also grew by 50.19 percent from \$554.03 million in last November to \$832.09 million in November 2021, the data revealed. On month-on-month basis, the exports from the country increased by 6.40 percent as compared to the exports of \$547.88 million in October 2021. On the other hand, the imports decreased by 3.48 percent as compared to the imports of \$862.09 million in October 2021, the data revealed. Meanwhile, the merchandise exports from the country during the first half of current financial year expanded by 24.71% as compared to the exports of the corresponding period of last year. During the period from July-December (2020-21), merchandise exports from the country were recorded at \$15.102 billion as compared to the exports of \$12.110 billion of same period of last year (July-December 2020). On the other hand, the imports into the country also registered about 65.94% growth and went up from \$24.454 billion in July-December, 2020 to \$40.580 billion during July-December 2021. Meanwhile, exports on year-on-year basis registered about 15.81% growth in December 2021 as compared to the exports of the corresponding month of last year. The exports reached to \$2.740 billion in December 2021 as compared to the exports of \$2.336 billion of corresponding month of last year. - APP



RAWALPINDI: A woman on the way under cover of an umbrella to protect herself from rain. - APP

Vaccination crucial amid Omicron: Abrar-ul-Haq

Chairman Red Crescent says more than 700,000 people have been vaccinated through PRCS vaccination campaign in 17 districts

ISLAMABAD: Omicron severity can be fought only with accelerated vaccination process and by taking precautions robustly, says Abrar-ul-Haq, Chairman PRCS. In a statement to media, Abrar ul Haq said Omicron variant has reminded us that the pandemic is far from over, it is therefore essential that people get the vaccine immediately and revisit mask-wearing. "I urge every individual to get both jabs on priority basis. Those already vaccinated should get booster jab too to immunize against COVID19



variant," he added. He said Pakistan Red Crescent Society is vigorously active in facilitating public in fight against the deadly virus, more than 700,000 people have been vaccinated through PRCS static and door-to-door vaccination campaign in 17 districts of Pakistan. "Efforts of PRCS against the virus are continued through nationwide awareness campaigns, vaccination drives, provision of hygiene kits and, edibles to low-income households, support to front liners in collaboration with RCRC Movement partners".

Ehsaas survey continues across country: Sania

Country Director WB congrats Ehsaas on the successful completion of South Asia's first digital survey

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ehsaas has successfully accomplished a countrywide National Socio-economic Registry Survey which includes households' information in terms of geographic data, demographics, socio-economic status, education, health, disability, employ-

ment, energy consumption, assets, communications, agri-landholdings, WASH, livestock etc. To celebrate the achievement of this milestone, Ehsaas hosted a launch event in Islamabad. Senator Dr. Sania Nish-tar, SAPM chaired the ceremony. Najy Benhassine, Country Director of the World Bank, Julien Harnes, Resident Coordinator U N R C, Secretary I s m a t Tahir, and senior representatives of

Government Departments, Asian Development Bank, development partners and media officials joined the event. Director General Naveed Akbar outlined the design, end to end digital methodology, approaches and rigorous transparency measures embedded in the execution of survey. In her opening remarks, Dr. Sania said, "Part of Ehsaas strategy, we have just concluded a new National Socio-economic Registry of 34.41 million households.

We did various validations of the data to precisely identify the real poor. With the readiness of survey, we are now transitioning from static to dynamic registry to make it more targeting efficient and to avoid possible inclusion and exclusion errors occurred due to continuous change in socio-economic status of the households especially due to demographic change. Tehsil level Ehsaas Registration Desks have also been opened all over the country to keep the national socio-economic registry dynamic. Further, the registry will be regularly updated every four years."

Gwadar mega projects to be completed in 2022

ISLAMABAD: Gwadar has multiple mega projects underway under China-Pakistan out of which several are expected to be completed in 2022. According to Gwadar Pro, some of the mega projects to be finished this year include Pakistan-China friendship hospital consisting of 300 beds. The work on hospital is expected to be finished by December this year. The second project is Gwadar East bay expressway which will connect Gwadar Port to Makran coastal highway. The six-lane expressway will be completed by April 2022. The third important project is provision of water to Gwadar city from nearby dams to meet the future water demand of the city. For this purpose, the laying of pipelines from Swad Dam to Gwadar is already completed. The 67 km long pipeline will provide 5 million gallons of water per day. The repair work of water pipelines inside Gwadar city is also expected to be completed this year. 90% work on the Ankara Kaur Dam is also completed which will provide 2.7 million gallons of water per day. Most of the work on Shadi dam is also completed and it will soon start providing around 2.5 million gallons of water per day to the port city. Altogether these three dams will provide around 10 million gallons of water every day. The projects include linking Gwadar to the national electricity grid; provision of water to Gwadar city from nearby dams; establishment of University of Gwadar and Gwadar Safe City project and certain other projects in the socio-economic domain. - DNA

"The Golden Hour" Art exhibition held at PNCA

"The Golden hour" is a show of 15 renowned plein air artists from all over Pakistan, exploring the northern areas including Naran, Babusar Top, Hunza and Khunjarab, capturing nature's beauty

DNA

ISLAMABAD: PNCA held an art exhibition in collaboration with Nomad Gallery, 'The Golden Hour' a show by 15 artists across Pakistan exploring their creativity and originality through the medium of arts. The show opened on 5th January, 2022. Mr. Shafiqat Mahmood graciously inaugurated the show and appreciated all the artists and met with them. The arts are a powerful and important part of what unites us. Arts celebrate our differences while connecting us through communal experience. Artist Summer Camp is an annual program for senior and

emerging artists and art lovers to gather, connect, practice and promote art, under the umbrella of Studio Ali Sajid and National Artists Association of Pakistan (NAAP-KP). Moreover Mr. Shafiqat Mahmood along with Nageen Hayat distributed certificates to the participating artists. "The Golden hour" is a show

of 15 renowned plein air artists from all over Pakistan, exploring the northern areas including Naran, Babusar Top, Hunza and Khunjarab, capturing nature's

beauty with their creative originality and technical skills in their chosen mediums. The show will continue till 10th January at Gallery no. 2 PNCA.

of 15 renowned plein air artists from all over Pakistan, exploring the northern areas including Naran, Babusar Top, Hunza and Khunjarab, capturing nature's



Audio leaks

AN audio recording allegedly from 2016, exposing a private conversation between PML-N vice president, Maryam Nawaz, and former senator, Perwaiz Rashid, was leaked online and disrupted political discourse. This has become a regular occurrence and while audio leaks do not have enough weightage on their own, they are still a nuisance and breach of privacy. This fact must not be forgotten as the content of the leaked call is dissected endlessly in various media outlets.

According to the details released, the recording is of a discussion between both concerned parties about the bias that journalists may have towards their party. The immediate consequence of this is a heated discussion about the role that the media plays in politics, particularly about its role in advantaging certain stakeholders by giving them a bigger platform and favourable coverage.

The content of a leaked audio should never become the main subject of discussion, unless there is a confession of a crime. Politicians, like all other individuals, are entitled to the right to privacy and this must not be forgotten in all the noise surrounding this matter.

As expected, other political parties have shunned this and have demanded an investigation into the matter. In the midst of all this, important questions like why the call was being recorded, who was recording it and what were the reasons for leaking it online are not being answered.

Recording any call is a serious breach of privacy and to release it is another menacing act that has to be punished. We must not forget that a law has been broken here and an investigation must be launched into the matter to prevent this from happening again, and to hold the culprits accountable.



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Inclusive Supreme Court

THE issue of the elevation of Lahore High Court judge Justice Ayesha A Malik to the Supreme Court has divided the legal fraternity once again. Previously the question of the elevation of the female judge was raised in September, where the extreme animosity of the Bar Council to the idea essentially forced the Judicial Commission of Pakistan (JCP) to reach no consensus and reject the elevation.

However, that failed to be the end of the matter, now that Chief Justice (CJP) Gulzar Ahmed has once again proposed that Justice Malik be elevated to the Supreme Court, with the JCP now meeting on January 6 to complete an unfinished agenda.

Even the second time around, the Punjab Bar Council's zeal and opposition against the potential appointment does not seem to have wavered. The Punjab Bar Council, and indeed all bar associations, have threatened that they would boycott all court proceedings, from the superior judiciary to the lower courts if this elevation was not rejected.

This is a complicated issue—with both sides having legitimate concerns. However, the circumstances and the way the fraternity is going about this, with ultimatums and complete lack of negotiation, raises suspicions that this issue is not just one of principle. The legal fraternity that argues in favour of seniority is right that arbitrariness in the elevation process injects uncertainty and the possibility of bias and favouritism in the judiciary. However, there seems to be no explanation as to why the Bar Council has chosen this particular appointment as a breaking point, when there have been countless precedents of younger judges being approved over senior judges. If the problem really is the lack of process, then the Bar Councils must demand that the commission set up a nomination and selection process that is inclusive and transparent by diluting the power of the CJP instead of enhancing it.

Targeting one of the rare female appointees to the Supreme Court, which has in its history never seen a female member of the bench, and threatening nationwide strikes will not bring the judiciary closer to transparency.

Bulli Bai auction: Audacious bullying of Indian Muslims

Ruben Banerjee



Though separated by months, the two episodes had uncanny similarities. The victims in both cases were Muslims, who also were known to have an opinion of their own

SOME 100 Muslim women in India had a disastrous start to 2022 when they woke up on January 1 to find that they were being auctioned online. To their horror, they found that someone or some people had stolen their images from their social media profiles and placed them for sale alongside nasty comments about them on an app called Bulli Bai.

Considered an insult to women across India – apparently 'bulli' refers to the penis in southern Indian languages, while in north India, 'bulli bai' is an innuendo for housemaid – the brazen attempt to degrade and dehumanise women triggered public outrage. Everyone was shocked. But few were surprised. For that matter, Bulli Bai wasn't the first attempt made to harass and humiliate women in India. Some six months ago, another app surfaced similarly suggesting that women were up for sale. The women were branded as Sulli Deals – 'sulli' being an insulting term regularly used by trolls to insult Muslim women.

Though separated by months, the two epi-

sodes had uncanny similarities. The victims in both cases were Muslims, who also were known to have an opinion of their own. Like then, Bulli Bai targeted journalists, opposition politicians, activists, and even the mother of a student mysteriously missing for years from a university that Hindu right-wing organisations view with suspicion as a hotbed of left-liberal ideas and have attacked physically. Though no real auction took place, the online vilification smacked of brazen audacity by the people behind it, encouraged by the lack of response from the establishment bordering on tacit complicity. When the women complained last time against Sulli Deals, the Delhi police – under direct control of the Indian central government headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi – barely took any action. No suspects were questioned and no arrests were made. This time though, the women have had some better luck. They lodged a complaint with the Mumbai police, which swung into action and took several teenagers into custody within days.

Politics perhaps played a role behind the police's proactive approach this time round. Mumbai falls with the Maharashtra state, which is governed by a coalition of political parties ranged against Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), and the police therefore were relatively freer to act.

But there is little guarantee that administrations elsewhere in the country would as swiftly come to the aid of Muslims who have been the target of a broader campaign of intimidation, particularly since 2014 when Modi's BJP stormed to power.

Spurred by its nationalist agenda, the party has been pushing for the dominance of Hindus in a country where minorities make up some 20 percent of its 1.3 billion population. The upshot has been a carefully crafted climate of hatred that has been whipped up against the minorities.

Muslims, in particular, have had to pay a heavy price in recent years. Scores have been lynched on suspicion of smuggling cows or possessing beef by Hindu vigilantes who consider the animal holy.

At times, the campaign against Muslims takes subtle and insidious forms. The whole community was demonised during the first

wave of the Covid pandemic when dozens of Muslims belonging to the Tablighi Jamaat group – the largest Islamic missionary movement – turned out to be afflicted by the virus. Many accused the Muslims of carrying out 'Corona Jihad'.

More recently, a popular television anchor accused the Muslims of conducting a 'Thook Jihad'. Thook is spitting in Hindi and the anchor argued on live television that members of the Muslim community were spitting into everything – from breads to fruits and vegetables – to spread harmful viruses among an unsuspecting Indian population.

The anchor has got away lightly with his outlandish claim. He is still in his job, allowing the sense of impunity enjoyed by supporters of Hindu nationalism to further grow.

Emboldening them are top elected officials. Muslim Friday prayers at designated open spaces have been disrupted by Hindu mobs for months in Gurgaon, next to Delhi. But instead of upholding the law, the region's top elected official – the chief minister of Haryana state – has come out in support of the disruptors. He has gone on the record saying his administration wouldn't allow prayers in public places. Elected officials brazenly taking sides are plenty. Take, for example, the case of Narottam Mishra, the home minister of BJP-ruled Madhya Pradesh state. When a mob vandalised the set of under production web series that they felt denigrated the Hindu community some months ago, Mishra reportedly hailed them as patriots.

Evidence is in abundance that India is indeed passing through twisted times. For that matter, it was the bangle seller and not his assailants who spent time in jail, based on the accusations of some of his attackers. And in the town of Anand in Gujarat – the state Modi hails from – residents came out to protest in their hundreds against the inauguration of a hotel part-owned by two Muslims.

In a country as large as India, examples of such bigotry may not necessarily seem too common. But they are substantial enough to show that Muslims are struggling to keep their space in a country whose vaunted principle of secularism is rapidly fraying.

— Courtesy: TRT World

Russia-US face-off: What should we expect in 2022?

Dimitar Bechev



To overcome the deadlock, the Kremlin would like to force a new deal and do it through the US, bypassing Paris and Berlin. The idea is that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy would be presented with a fait accompli and would have no choice but to fall in line

THESE days it feels like we are back in the days of Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev. Scanning through Russia's national TV channels, Russia 1 and First Channel, one could not help but feel transported to the 1970s. Warmongering rhetoric is back and so is staple criticism of the decadent West; film offerings range from the 1976 classic, Irony of Fate, to the 1967 comedy, Kidnapping, Caucasian Style, to, The Diamond Arm, a smash hit from 1969. At the 30th anniversary of the Soviet Union's disintegration, the Russian public is fed a healthy diet of nostalgia for the good old days of order and social stability.

Back-to-the-past seems to be the mood in Moscow's foreign policy, too. US-Russia summitry is becoming a regular feature of relations, a flashback to the height of the Cold War. On December 30, US President Joe Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin had a phone call to discuss tensions over Ukraine. Reportedly, each of them issued warnings to the other side but overall the tone was "constructive".

The exchange came on the heels of a meeting between the two leaders via a video link held on December 7 to discuss a number of issues, including Ukraine. Six months earlier they held a face-to-face summit in Geneva, which resulted in the return of the US and Russian ambassadors to the respective capitals.

Communication has intensified at different government levels, as well. In early November, William Burns, CIA director and former ambassador to Russia, travelled to Moscow, where he met Putin, Russia's Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev and Russian Foreign Intelligence Service chief Sergei Naryshkin to discuss tensions with Ukraine. US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan has also been in contact with Putin's foreign policy aid Yuriy Ushakov.

For the Kremlin, having Biden's full attention is a success. It is a clear sign that amassing troops and threatening military action against Ukraine works. During the past six years, Moscow has grown frustrated with the deadlock in the Ukrainian conflict. The Minsk II Agreement forged in 2015 with the mediation of France and Germany has failed to end the fighting.

Kyiv and Moscow are blaming each

other for the lack of progress. The Russians are claiming Ukraine has not delivered on its commitment to implement constitutional changes granting broad autonomy to the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics as a step towards reintegrating them. The Ukrainians, for their part, are accusing Russia of not allowing the government in Kyiv to restore control over the Russian-Ukrainian border.

To overcome the deadlock, the Kremlin would like to force a new deal and do it through the US, bypassing Paris and Berlin. The idea is that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy would be presented with a fait accompli and would have no choice but to fall in line. But in engaging with the US, Russia has also raised the stakes. On December 17, the Russian foreign ministry circulated two treaty proposals, one with the US and one with NATO. They put forward a demand for the Atlantic Alliance to remind the promise made to Ukraine and Georgia in April 2008 that they could one day join.

The draft furthermore requires NATO not to station large combat forces in its eastern members, as it started doing following Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea. Moscow also wants NATO to commit not to deploy intermediate-range missiles close to its borders.

Last but not least, the proposals call for an end to military assistance to Ukraine, whether provided by the US or through NATO, as well as a halt on alliance exercises involving post-Soviet countries. In essence, Russia wants to turn the clock back to the late 1990s, evicting the West from Eastern Europe and cementing its hegemonic position in its so-called "near abroad".

If everything goes well, there might be some limited progress too, especially on "deconfliction" in areas where NATO and Russia face off, such as the Black and the Baltic Seas. Over time, talks could yield partial security agreements acceptable to both parties as well as to the likes of Ukraine and Georgia which, contrary to what the Kremlin believes, have interests and agency of their own. But to be sure, there is plenty of scepticism, too. Some pundits are suggesting that Russia's publication of the draft treaties, before the actual talks, is a clever ploy to undermine the diplomatic track and create a pretext for military action against Ukraine.

To succeed in this game, the US and its allies need to negotiate with the Russians from a position of strength. As in Brezhnev's days, they need to credibly deter Moscow in order to open space for real negotiations. That is why, the US is communicating to Putin its readiness to ramp up economic sanctions – "like none he'd ever seen", in Biden's words – in case of war.

However, it is not clear to what extent European allies would follow suit. In France, President Emmanuel Macron has been calling for caution. Germany's new governing coalition between the left, the Greens and the liberals, could find itself divided on the issue, with Chancellor Olaf Scholz taking a dovish line and Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock pushing for a tough response. Needless to say, Russia will do its best to exploit any political rifts that might emerge within NATO. Thus far Putin's strategy is paying off. Moscow has been transacting with Washington as a near geopolitical peer. At a time, when the US is fixated on rising China, this is no small feat. Brezhnev's USSR may be long gone and today's Russia may be a pale shadow of its predecessor, but from the Kremlin's perspective, it is doing its best to stay in the game.

— Courtesy: Al Jazeera

Omicron makes the case for universal free vaccinations

Dr. Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg



Over the holidays (Dec. 21 to Jan. 3), Europe recorded millions of new cases and thousands of deaths

A recent visit to London revealed how the city has become the center of COVID-19 in the UK, yet is still reluctant to adopt stricter measures to combat the rapid spread of the new omicron variant. Over the holidays (Dec. 21 to Jan. 3), Europe recorded millions of new cases and thousands of deaths, prompting many European countries to tighten their defenses against the disease, including severe travel restrictions. Germany and France,

the EU's two largest countries, banned travel to and from the UK. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland also adopted stronger guidelines to limit the spread of the virus. However, England, the UK's largest region (or "country") and London, its most populous city, have remained aloof. During the holidays, England reported about 1.7 million cases and nearly 1,500 deaths from COVID-19. Officials have ruled out, for the time being, any new measures comparable to those adopted by other European countries or other parts of the UK. On Monday, Prime Minister Boris Johnson said new measures were not yet needed to fight the omicron variant: "The way forward for the country as a whole is to continue with the path that we are on." He added: "Of course we will keep all measures under review, but the mixture of things that we are doing at the moment is I think the right one."

There appears to be something in London's DNA that makes it want to defy the odds and one hopes that it will emerge victorious over the pandemic. The city may be suffering battle fatigue as a result of the on-off rounds of onerous COVID-19-related restrictions of the past two years.

London has a long history of fighting disease, but not always successfully. There have always been epidemics and waves of death within the city, according to historian Peter Ackroyd. "London is a city perpetual-

ly doomed," he wrote in his massive book "London: The Biography." The Black Death of 1348 killed about 40 percent of its population. This was followed by at least seven severe attacks of the plague between 1563 and 1666, when the Great Plague ravaged the city. Between June 1918 and April 1919, the city was struck by three separate waves of the Spanish flu, killing more than 18,000 Londoners out of a total of 228,000 fatalities in the UK. The virus disproportionately targeted young adults. However, as long as there are billions of unvaccinated people around the world, the pandemic will persist and the virus will keep mutating, triggering one health crisis after another. London is no exception. According to the New York Times COVID-19 vaccination tracker, about 51 percent of the world's population is "fully vaccinated," i.e., has received at least two doses. However, vaccination rates are not even. Scores of countries are still below 10 percent and many below 2 percent. In the UK, Europe and elsewhere, there are vocal minorities who are actively opposing vaccines and COVID-19-related restrictions, therefore frustrating official efforts to contain its spread. As omicron spreads globally like wildfire, it makes the case for universal vaccination drives, heeding the World Health Organization's urgent appeals for free vaccinations for all.

— Courtesy: Arab News

Briefs

PIA to restart Europe operations

The operations are expected to restart in February or March

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan International Airlines' (PIA) Europe operations, suspended in 2020 over safety concerns, are expected to restart in February or March, the country's aviation minister said on Thursday. Europe's aviation regulator banned Pakistani airlines from its airspace following a scandal over dubious pilot licences. "We are expecting PIA's Europe operations will resume in February or March, the airline has made plans for the European operations," Ghulam Sarwar Khan, minister for aviation, told reporters in Islamabad. The statement comes a day after Pakistan said the U.N.'s aviation body, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), had given the country's civil aviation regulator the all clear in terms of resolving significant safety concerns.

China to complete space station in 2022

ISLAMABAD: China will complete the building of its space station in 2022, according to the China Aerospace Science and Technology Corporation. The country will see 40-plus space launches in 2022, including multiple manned space flights, the company said at a recent conference on its plan for the new year. It plans to launch two cargo craft, two Shenzhou space-ships and two laboratory modules of China's planned space station within the year, ECNS reported. Other missions relating to the space station include in-orbit rendezvous and docking, extravehicular activities and spacecraft return. The Long March-6A carrier rocket will also make its maiden flight in 2022. — APP

Milinkovic-Savic saves Lazio

MILAN: Sergej Milinkovic-Savic earned Lazio a point with his last-gasp leveller in Thursday's 3-3 draw with Empoli, while a coronavirus cloud hangs over Serie A after Inter Milan's match at Bologna was abandoned. Serb Milinkovic-Savic nodded home his second of the game in the 93rd minute of a thrilling match at the Stadio Olimpico to snatch a draw for the hosts which leaves them in eighth, six points from the Champions League places. "We've dropped two big points here, it's a shame as we gave everything but unfortunately it's not finished as we would have liked," the 26-year-old told DAZN. — APP

World must curb illegal...

FROM PAGE 01

General Assembly held its first even session on corruption. OIC's Assistant Secretary General Asker Mussinov, urged the OIC member countries to devise their national anti-corruption plans. He said it is important to reinforce the capacity of human rights institutions, media and civil society to play an active role in anti-corruption efforts. The OIC's Assistant Secretary General said the number of OIC countries including Pakistan have made fighting corruption as their top priority and also took corresponding actions such as establishment of relevant agencies to combat this menace in an apolitical and independent manner. Chairperson of OIC Human Rights Commission Hacı Ali in his remarks commended Prime Minister Imran Khan's stance regarding countering illicit financial flows from the developing countries. He emphasized for strengthening institutional capacities and integrating the role of technology to combat corruption and promote transparency and accountability.

Djokovic wins deportation delay after visa cancelled

The vaccine-sceptic Serb was detained at Melbourne's Tullamarine Airport having failed to "provide appropriate evidence" of double vaccination, or a medical exemption needed to enter the country

AGENCIES

MELBOURNE: Tennis world number one Novak Djokovic won a temporary reprieve in his deportation from Australia on Thursday, but is set to spend the night in an immigration detention facility as he fights to remain in the country.

The vaccine-sceptic Serb was detained at Melbourne's Tullamarine Airport having failed to "provide appropriate evidence" of double vaccination, or a medical exemption needed to enter the country.

Djokovic had jetted into Australia on Wednesday hoping to defend his Australian Open crown and to bid for an unprecedented 21st Grand Slam title.

Instead of a conquering champion's welcome, he was questioned at the airport overnight before having his visa revoked and being transferred to a Melbourne immigration detention facility pending deportation. After an emergency online court appeal, a judge ordered that the controversial star would not be removed from Australia before Monday, when a final hearing is scheduled to begin. With scarcely 10 days before the tournament, it remains far from clear that Djokovic will be able to play, even if he wins in court.

Judge Anthony Kelly warned that justice will move at its own pace through all necessary appeals. "The tail won't be tagging the dog here," he warned the star's lawyers. For months there had been speculation about whether Djokovic would play in the January 17-30 tournament, given Australia's



rigid border rules.

The 34-year-old has refused to reveal his vaccine status, but has previously voiced opposition to being jabbed. He has contracted Covid at least once. Then this week a jubilant Djokovic boasted on Instagram that he had scored an unexpected medical exemption to play. That move prompted widespread outcry in Australia, where many residents have been unable to travel or welcome family from overseas for the last two years. Conservative Prime Minister Scott Morrison — under additional pressure from soaring Covid case numbers and the collapse of the once-excel-

lent testing system — defended revoking Djokovic's visa at the last minute.

"Rules are rules and there are no special cases," he said. Officials did not say exactly what evidence Djokovic failed to present, but medical exemptions must be accompanied by details of the doctor's consultation and clear reasons for not getting the vaccine. Djokovic is now believed to be at the Park Hotel, which the Australian government terms an "Alternative Place of Detention". As word of his arrival spread, Serbian flag-festooned supporters, anti-vaccine campaigners, refugee advocates and police descended on the already controver-

sial facility.

At least one pro-refugee protester was arrested in chaotic scenes as officers tried to clear the area. Veronica Michich said she was there to show support for Djokovic, whom she described as a beacon of hope for post-war Serbia. "We see him as a hero. He put Serbia back on the map, because Serbia was always portrayed, we were the aggressive ones, we were the attackers."

Currently around 32 refugees and asylum seekers are being held at the Park Hotel, after being brought for medical treatment from offshore detention facilities.

Detainees cannot leave the hotel and nobody is allowed in or out except staff. The facility gained notoriety last year when a fire in the building forced refugees and asylum seekers to be evacuated, and maggots were allegedly found in the food.

In October, 21 men reportedly contracted Covid at the facility, which has been the site of regular protests.

Detainee Mehdi Ali told AFP that Djokovic is his favourite tennis player, and that he was saddened by the prospect of the star being held there.

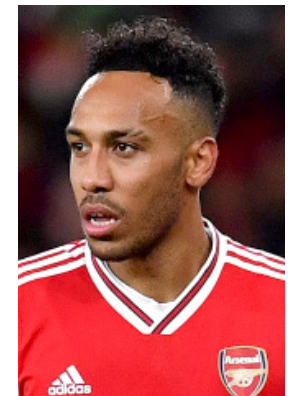
"The media will talk about us more, the whole world probably, which is so sad, just because Djokovic would be here for a few days," he said. Rafael Nadal — who like Djokovic and Roger Federer is stuck on a record-equaling 20 Grand Slam wins — said his rival must face the consequences of not being vaccinated. "He made his own decisions, and everybody is free to take their own decisions, but then there are some consequences," the Spaniard said.

Arsenal star, City manager test positive for Covid-19

SPORTS DESK

LIBREVILLE: Arsenal star Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang has tested positive for Covid-19. Gabon coach Patrice Neveu told AFP on Thursday just days ahead of their opening Africa Cup of Nations match. Aubameyang, team-mate Mario Lemina and assistant coach Yala Anicet all tested positive after taking a lateral flow test and are awaiting the results from a PCR one. "They underwent a PCR test and are isolating in their hotel," said Neveu, adding they displayed no symptoms.

Aubameyang — who was stripped of the Arsenal captaincy last month — is at risk of missing Gabon's opening Group C match against Comoros on January 10 in the biennial African showpiece tournament being hosted by Cameroon. They go on to



play further matches against Ghana and Morocco.

Gabon enter the finals on the back of a 3-0 defeat by Burkina Faso in a friendly match in Dubai last Sunday. In another development, Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola has tested positive for coronavirus, with 21 players and staff now isolating for Covid-related reasons, the club said on Thursday.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Kuwait to Pakistan, Nassar AbdulRahman J. AlMutairi calls on Muhammad Ayub Afridi, Advisor to the PM on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource. — DNA

Mohammad Rizwan adjudged Most Valuable Cricketer of 2021

LAHORE: Mohammad Rizwan has won the PCB's Most Valuable Cricketer of the Year award following a stellar 2021 in which he scored 455 Test, 134 ODI and 1,326 T20I runs, besides accounting for 56 batsmen behind the wickets across all formats.

For the Most Valuable Cricketer of the Year award, Rizwan beat the challenge of Babar Azam, Hasan Ali and Shaheen Shah Afridi, who also had an impressive and outstanding year, which is reflected through Pakistan's overall performance in 2021. In addition to the Most Valuable Cricketer of the Year award, Rizwan was also unanimously selected by an independent panel as the T20I Cricketer of the Year.

Mohammad Rizwan said on Thursday: "I feel humbled and honoured to have been adjudged Pakistan's Most Valuable Cricketer of 2021. This is the PCB's most prestigious award and to be recognised for my contributions in the team's superlative performances across all formats in 2021 in such a way gives me tremendous satisfaction and happiness. Hasan Ali won the Test Cricketer of the Year for his 41 wickets in nine Tests, including a 10-for and five, five-fors as well as two player of the match and one player of the series awards.

Pakistan all-format captain Babar Azam bagged the ODI Cricketer of the Year award for accumulating 405 runs in six ODIs with two centuries and a half-century. Shaheen Shah Afridi's three for 31 against India on 24 October in Dubai



in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2021 won him the Impactful Performance of the Year award. This performance changed the outlook of the side as it not only defeated India by 10 wickets but remained unbeaten in the league matches until they lost a heart-breaking match to Australia in the semi-final. PCB Chairman Ramiz Raja said: "On behalf of the PCB, I want to congratulate each award winner. They deserve all the applause and accolades for their tremendous consistency across all formats in difficult times that inspired their sides to outstanding performances throughout 2021, which have been widely acknowledged by the Pakistan cricket fans."

PCB Awards 2021 winners: Impactful performance of the year - Shaheen Shah Afridi (3-31 v Ind, T20 World Cup) Emerging Cricketer of the Year - Mohammad Wasim Jnr (15 international wickets, seven Pakistan Cup wickets, 12 HBL PSL 2021 wickets, five National T20 wickets and six Quaid-e-Azam Trophy wickets) ODI Cricketer of the Year - Babar Azam (6 ODIs, 405 runs) Women's Cricketer of the Year - Nida Dar (10 ODIs, 363 runs and 6 wickets; 6 T20Is, 95 runs and 5 wickets; 146 runs and 14 wickets in Pakistan Women's Cup) Test Cricketer of the Year - Hasan Ali (9 Tests, 41 wickets, 5 five-fors, 1 10-for, best match figures 10-114) T20I Cricketer of the Year - M Rizwan (29 T20Is, 1,326 runs)

Spirit of Cricket — Pakistan cricket team's visit to the Namibia cricket team's dressing room following their 45 runs victory to congratulate the Namibia side for qualifying for their maiden ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2021 and then progressing to the Super-12 Stage

Umpire of the Year — Asif Yaqoob (selected by the PCB's elite match officials)

Domestic Cricketer of the Year - Sahibzada Farhan (1,869 runs in Pakistan Cup, National T20 and Quaid-e-Azam Trophy)

Most Valuable Cricketer of the Year - M Rizwan (9 Tests, 455 runs; 6 ODIs, 134 runs; 29 T20Is, 1,326 runs; total dismissal 56). — APP

China unveils brand new train to serve Beijing Winter Olympics

BEIJING: China has unveiled a brand new, state-of-the-art Fuxing bullet train, said to be the world's first intelligent and autonomous high-speed train with a top speed of 350 kilometers per hour and a 5G live broadcast studio on board, to serve the upcoming Beijing Winter Olympics.

The demonstration of the train's new technologies to athletes and guests from around the world during the Beijing Games scheduled for February 4-20 will be a definite boon to the profile of China's high-speed railway (HSR) system, one of the crown jewels of Chinese industrial achievements, said a senior designer of the advanced electric multiple unit (EMU).

One of the unique characteristics of the EMU is that it has a live broadcast studio that could transmit ultra-high-definition content via 5G connections. The installation, which is one of the first on the world's fastest trains, will bring convenience to global media professionals covering the event. "To have so much advanced technology brought together on this train, and to present it in front of the world, this shows China's comprehensive strengths in terms of the train system, and will definitely boost the exports and go abroad efforts of the EMU system," Zhu Yan, deputy director with Engineering Research Center of CRRC Changchun Railway Vehicles Co, the train's maker, told the Global Times on Thursday. By using new materials and technologies, as well as an eagle-shaped nose chosen out of over 40 designs, the EMU has lower wind resistance and weighs less. These traits make it a green EMU that's 10 percent more energy-efficient than previous generations, saving 1.8 million kilowatt hours of electricity per year. — APP

Biden slams Trump...

FROM PAGE 01

as he harkened back to critical moments from the nation's past and cast last year's insurrection as a living symbol of the inflection point in American history he so often speaks about.

"For the first time in our history, a President had not just lost an election. He tried to prevent the peaceful transfer of power as a violent mob reached the Capitol," Biden said in a speech from the US Capitol. "But they failed. They failed. And on this day of remembrance, we must make sure that such an attack never, never happens again."

In a direct shot at Trump, Biden added, "Because his bruised ego matters more to him than our democracy or our Constitution, he can't accept he lost."

Biden has typically avoided speaking directly about his predecessor since taking office, and pointedly did not say his name on Thursday — instead making 16 references to "the former President." But the President's blistering speech nonetheless confronted

Trump's election lies and post-presidency behavior, accusing him of spreading falsehoods about the 2020 election, refusing to accept defeat and holding him accountable for inciting a violent mob of his supporters to storm the US Capitol.

"A former President of the United States of America has created and spread a web of lies about the 2020 election. He's done so because he values power over principle, because he sees his own interest as more important than his country's interest and America's interest," Biden said. Biden again emphasized the core message of his 2020 presidential campaign and the reason why he ran against Trump: "We are in a battle for the soul of America."

The President warned democracy and the "promise of America" is at risk and called on the American public to "stand for the rule of law, to preserve the flame of democracy." "The former President and his supporters have decided the only way for them to win is to suppress your vote and subvert our elections. It's wrong. It's undemocratic. And frankly it's un-American," Biden said.

The events of January 6, 2021, led to Trump's second impeachment by the House of Representatives. The insurrection launched the largest investigation in FBI history, with 700 people arrested and hundreds more offenders still at large. And a House select committee continues to investigate the events leading up to the riots. Two Trump allies — Mark Meadows and Steve Bannon — have been held in criminal contempt for declining to cooperate with committee investigators after being subpoenaed.

PPP announces...

FROM PAGE 01

and transparent elections. Bilawal said that the people of Pakistan are in a difficult situation at present and added said that the problems of the country will be solved only through democracy. He said PTI hid foreign funding for seven years.

Bilawal urged the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) to further investigate into foreign funding case and alleged that the PTI continued to use foreign funding against democratic forces. Bilawal said that the same local body system should be brought in Punjab as in Sindh. Bilawal said that instead of giving 10 million jobs, the positions have been taken away. He said the workers will be his strongest arm in the fight (against the government).

Bilawal said the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) did not consult PPP on the Long March. "No decision has yet been made on the no-confidence motion," added Bilawal. The PPP chairman said the PPP has always distributed power and has never taken it away. He added that Zardari was the most powerful civilian president but he handed over all his powers to the parliament. Bilawal said he wants the provinces to be empowered and the local body system strengthened. "Murad Ali Shah has given a new local body system in Sindh," added Bilawal.

PMLN, PPP should be named after Sharif, Zardari

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain on Thursday suggested both the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) to replace their names with 'Sharifia' and 'Zardaria'. The rule of both the Sharif and Zardari families had come to an end and it seemed that future of PPP and PML-N rested with the young leaders instead of heirs of those parties, he said addressing a news conference after the meeting of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Central Executive Committee. Fawad said the rise of corruption and dynastic politics had been

ended after Prime Minister Imran Khan came into the power. Pakistan was on right direction under the leadership of PM Imran Khan, he said, adding it was first time in the history that a clean government had come into power. "Nobody ever thought of a scandal-free government in Pakistan," he remarked. About audio leaks of Maryam Nawaz, Fawad said those were real as she herself had admitted that it was her voice. Maryam should have resigned from her party position and tender apology to the people of Pakistan and media as well, he added. The minister asked the PML-N



to tender an apology in written as Pervaiz Rashid was its senior leader. To a query, the minister said the government was ready to negotiate with the opposition on major reforms including electoral and economic ones. He ruled out of any negotiation on the ongoing accountability drive

by the government. Divulging details of the executive committee meeting, he said the PTI had announced its advisory councils for different regions, including Punjab, Sindh and others. "Except Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the PTI has announced its executive and advisory boards in the provinces," he said. The councils had been constituted separately in Central and South Punjab, besides Sindh. He said Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Farrukh Habib had been appointed as the PTI's Information Secretary, and Siraj Khan as Finance Secretary. He said Prime Minister Imran

Khan had directed PTI Vice Chairman Shah Mahmood Qureshi and Secretary General Asad Umar for coordinating with provincial presidents with regard to the party's new organizational set-up. The prime minister, he said, also directed the party to make preparations for the local government elections. "We are reaching out to the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) to build consensus for bringing amendment in the (election) code of conduct," he said, adding the ministers, prime minister and assembly members should be allowed to participate in the election campaign. — APP

Briefs

Rights court
throws
out UK gay
cake case

STRASBOURG: The European Court of Human Rights on Thursday rejected a case brought over a UK bakery's refusal to bake a gay wedding cake, saying British legal options had to be exhausted before it would get involved. Plaintiff Gareth Lee, who lives in Belfast, Northern Ireland, in 2014 ordered a cake for a gay activist event scheduled shortly after the province's assembly rejected legalising same-sex marriage for the third time.

He asked a Christian bakery to adorn the cake with an image of bedroom-sharing characters Bert and Ernie from the US television show "Sesame Street" and add the slogan "Support Gay Marriage". The Ashers Baking Company, which takes its name from an Old Testament figure, took the order but then declined to meet the special requests, apologised and refunded Lee's money.

Lee, who is British and an activist at the advocacy group Queer Space, filed a legal complaint against the bakery that was taken up by Northern Ireland's Equality Commission, which oversees the implementation of anti-discrimination laws.

A local court found the bakery guilty of discrimination after a high-profile inquiry in the province that only allowed same-sex marriage only in 2020, the last part of the United Kingdom to do so. That decision was upheld by an appeals court, but then overturned by the UK's Supreme Court, which said that the bakery owners had not refused to serve Lee because he was gay, but because they objected to promoting a message that they profoundly disagreed with. - APP

Arrests in
Egypt after
girl's suicide

CAIRO: Two youths were arrested Thursday over the suicide of a schoolgirl whom they were allegedly blackmailing with digitally altered photos of her on the internet. The case of internet shaming and loss of a young life has stirred angry demands on social media in Egypt for those responsible to be held to account. Basant Khaled, 17, who lived with her family in a village of northern Egypt, died after swallowing poison on December 23. A source in the prosecutor general's office said she was being blackmailed after having refused to have a relationship with the youths.

The photos posted widely on social media were seen by her parents and classmates, the source and Basant's sister said. "Her face had been attached to the body of someone else," their father, Khaled Chalabi, told local media. "She's my daughter. I know her well and she's not like that." In a desperate suicide note to her mother, shared with Egyptian media, Basant appealed for her understanding. - APP

Omicron
crashes
cruise party

PARIS: A series of coronavirus outbreaks have cropped up on cruise ships in North and South America, Europe and Asia in recent days despite strict health measures, giving new headaches to the pandemic-hit sector. Safety bubbles that include tests and vaccine requirements were set up to reassure travellers when cruise travel resumed last year following a long hiatus that was imposed as the world scrambled to contain the virus. But cases have been piling up for days now in waters off Brazil, Italy, Spain, the Caribbean, the United States and India. Cruise line companies say they have taken science-based measures to protect passengers and note that the rates of infection on ships is lower than those on land - but authorities have not taken any chances.

Last week, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) urged Americans to avoid cruise travel even if they are vaccinated after more than 5,000 cases were detected in US waters in the last two weeks of 2021. The United States is the sector's biggest market, accounting for nearly half of the 30.5 million passengers worldwide before the pandemic in 2019, according to data from Roland Berger consultancy. - APP

Time for idea of success of
Kashmir struggle has come

The event was hosted by Consul General of Pakistan Toronto Abdul Hameed who apprised the participants of the background to the Right to Self-Determination Day

DNA

OTTAWA: Speakers at a webinar hosted in the Canadian city of Toronto have called upon the world to respect the right of self-determination and democracy granted by the UN to the people of Kashmir, saying "nothing can stop an idea whose time has come, and for the idea of self-determination and democracy for the people of Kashmir, the time has come". They noted that only with mutual respect, peace could be achieved in Kashmir. They said it was high time that the right to self-determination of the people of Kashmir was respected and granted to them as per the UN resolutions. "The event was hosted by Consul General of Pakistan Toronto Abdul Hameed who apprised the participants of the background to the Right to Self-Determination Day, the resolution of 5th January 1949 adopted by the UN Commission on India and Pakistan (UNCIP) to settle the future of Kashmir through a free and impartial plebiscite under the auspices of the United Nations, and the grave human rights violations carried out



subsequently by the Indian occupation forces in the Illegally Occupied Indian Jammu and Kashmir." Speaking to the webinar, "Karen Rodman, a noted Canadian human rights activist and director of Canadian think-tank Just Peace Advocates", chronicled the history of the Kashmir issue and the earlier efforts of

the United Nations to resolve this issue, and how these efforts had fallen apart in the face of Indian stubbornness over the last seven decades. She stressed that Kashmir was an internationally recognized disputed territory, however, in violation of the UN resolutions and the Geneva Convention, the Indian

government had introduced draconian laws to silence the Kashmiris and deprive them of their rights and land.

In his address, "Canadian author and journalist Robert Fantina" read out various clauses of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 47, adopted on 21 April 1948, and explained in detail how India had violated all the clauses of this resolution one by one to deny the people of Kashmir their right to self-determination. India had imposed a rule of tyranny and oppression that had resulted in untold misery for the defenceless people of Kashmir, he said.

Well-known "Canadian broadcaster Phil Taylor" called the situation in Kashmir most unfortunate, saying the people of Kashmir had been forced to suffer under the yoke of 900,000 Indian troops despite the UN resolution granting them the right to self-determination. He argued that India could not shy away from granting the Kashmiris what it itself had pledged. He said Kashmir dispute could not be chased away by Indian troops as well, and the issue would only be resolved by granting the Kashmiris their freedom and right to self-determination.

Multiple twitter handles used
to divide Sikhs, Muslims

MUMBAI: Investigations by Mumbai Police in India have revealed that not only Bulli Bai, but several other handles were used on social media platforms, ostensibly intended to drive a wedge between Sikh and Muslim communities. Mumbai Police Commissioner Hemant Nagrale said that three persons have been arrested so far and the probe has shown other social media handles that were deployed to spread hate messages. They are: @Bullibai, @Sage0x11, @hmmaachaniceoki, @jatkhalsa, @jatkhalsa7, @Sikh_Khalsa11, @wannabesigmaf, etc., on micro-blogging platform Twitter. Six months ago, using the open-source software platform GitHub, the

app Sulli Bai was created on which pictures of Muslim women were posted, and a similar modus operandi was carried out with the Bulli Bai app. All these Twitter handles were purportedly linked to the Sikh community and as per the information available on @Bullibai, the KSF Khalsa Sikh Force had created the app Bulli Bai, said the police.

It was also sought to convey that one Khalsa Supremacist was a "follower" of Bulli Bai app, as per the investigations. After getting information from GitHub, the police teams have nabbed three accused - including a 21-year-old techie, Vishal Kumar Jha, a second-year civil engineering student from Dayanand Sagar College of

Engineering in Bengaluru. Nagrale said that after the techie's links came to the fore in the scam probe, he was arrested by a Mumbai Cyber Police team from Bengaluru. Deploying his technical expertise, Jha managed to conceal his identity to a great extent, and also claimed through @Khalsasupremacist that he was living in Canada, kept changing his name frequently, besides running a YouTube channel, Tavasya Vats, said the police. The Mumbai Police have also nabbed an 18-year-old girl, Shweta Anant Singh, from Rudrapur, Uttarakhand, who's said to be the mastermind, and Mayank Pradeepsingh Rawat, 21, also from the same state. As the entire issue snow-

bailed into to a major political fracas on January 1, with strong reactions from several leaders from the Congress, Nationalist Congress Party, Shiv Sena, ministers, elected representatives, prominent women activists and others, the Mumbai Police lodged an FIR against unidentified persons, including the unknown developers of the app and the Twitter handles which promoted it. The police action came after complaints were received from Muslim women that morphed pictures, sourced without consent, of hundreds of Muslim women, including activists and professionals, were being uploaded for 'auction' on the Bulli Bai app that was hosted by GitHub.

Swiss army knives
WhatsApp at work

ZURICH: Switzerland's army has banned the use of WhatsApp whilst on duty, a spokesman confirmed Thursday, in favour of a Swiss messaging service deemed more secure in terms of data protection. The ban also applies to using other messaging apps like Signal and Telegram on soldiers' private phones during service operations. At the end of December, commanders and chiefs of staff received an email from headquarters recommending that their troops switch to using the Swiss-based Threema.

The recommendation applies "to everyone", including conscripts doing their military service and those returning for refresher courses, army spokesman Daniel Reist told AFP. Switzerland is famously neutral. However, its long-standing position is one of armed neutrality and the landlocked European country has mandatory conscription for men.

The question of using messaging apps on duty came up during operations to support hospitals and the vaccination programme in Switzerland's efforts to control the Covid-19 pandemic, Reist said.

The Swiss army will cover the four Swiss francs (\$4.35, 3.85 euros) cost of downloading Threema, which is already used by other public bodies in Switzerland. Other messaging services such as WhatsApp are subject to the US Cloud Act, which allows the United States authorities to access data held by US operators, even if it is held on servers outside the country. - Agencies

PSX loses
325 points
to close
at 45,082
points

ISLAMABAD: The KSE 100-index of the Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) witnessed bearish trend on Thursday, losing 325.59 points, with a negative change of 0.72 percent, closing at 45,082.30 points against 45,407.89 points on the last working day. A total of 345,295,628 shares were traded during the day compared to the trade of 432,060,661 shares the previous day whereas the price of shares stood at Rs13.239 billion against Rs10.285 billion the previous day.

As many as 360 companies transacted shares in the stock market, 87 of them recorded gain and 258 sustained losses, whereas the share price of 15 companies remained unchanged. The three top trading companies were WorldCall Telecom with a volume of 65,105,500 shares and price per share of Rs2.26, TRG Pak Ltd with a volume of 54,816,464 and price per share of Rs114.33 and Unity Foods Ltd with volume of 30,196,170 and price per share of Rs2.25. Nestle Pakistan witnessed a maximum increase of Rs37.95 per share, closing at Rs5550 whereas the runner up was Ismail Ind, the share prices of which climbed up by Rs24.20 to Rs450. Sapphire Fiber witnessed maximum decrease of Rs150 closing at Rs19350 followed by Sapphire Fiber, the share price of which declined by Rs80.25 to close at Rs989.75. - APP

India records
first death
linked to
Omicron

NEW DELHI: A 74-year-old man who died in the western state of Rajasthan was India's first death with the Omicron variant, the health ministry said on Wednesday. Officials said the man had been suffering from diabetes and other comorbid conditions. India has reported 2,630 Omicron cases so far. It reported more than 90,000 cases on Thursday - a nearly six-fold rise over the past week that experts say is fuelled by the Omicron variant. India recorded 325 deaths in the 24 hours but only one has been linked to Omicron, officials said. "Technically it is an Omicron-related death. He was an elderly person who had diabetes and comorbid conditions," Health Ministry Joint Secretary, Lav Agarwal said at the daily press briefing on Wednesday. The Indian Express newspaper reported that the patient was admitted to a hospital in Udaipur city in Rajasthan state on 15 December and died 15 days later. Doctors said the man was fully vaccinated. - APP

Paris attacks
trial resumes

PARIS: A marathon trial of November 2015 Paris attack suspects resumed Thursday after uncertainty over the appearance of the main suspect was lifted by a negative test result for the virus. Salah Abdeslam, the only survivor of the 10 assailants, tested positive at the end of December, was declared fit to return to the courtroom after not appearing since November 25. He is set to take the stand for questioning next Thursday and Friday, an event long awaited by families of the 130 people killed on the night of November 13, 2015. In the meantime, there was a tense standoff between the presiding judge and another defendant.

Osama Krayem, a 29-year-old Swedish national, had informed the court through his lawyer that he would remain silent "until the end of proceedings", and also refuse to even attend the trial, calling it "an illusion". But when it was his turn on Thursday to be questioned about his role in the series of jihadist attacks on bars, restaurants, the Bataclan concert hall and the national stadium, chief judge Jean-Louis Peries said that he would be made to show up. "I will have no option but to use force to make him appear on the stand," he said. But that turned out to be unnecessary, as Krayem made his way to the bench uncoerced, and sat down next to Abdeslam. "It's good of you to come willingly," the judge commented. - APP

UK car sector
stalls on Covid, semi
conductor shortage

LONDON: Britain's car manufacturing stalled last year on pandemic fallout including a semiconductor shortage, despite record demand for greener electric vehicles, industry data showed Thursday. The nation's mainly foreign-owned automakers produced 1.65 million vehicles in 2021, the Society of Motor Manufacturers & Traders (SMMT) said in a statement. That was up just one percent from 2020 - but almost 29 percent lower than the market's pre-pandemic level in 2019.

"It's been another desperately disappointing year for the car industry as Covid continues to cast a pall over any recovery," SMMT chief executive Mike Hawes said in the statement. The SMMT has predicted a recovery to 1.96 million cars for this year, but the forecast predates the arrival of the Omicron coronavirus variant in late November. The pandemic erupted in early 2020 and has ravaged demand for new vehicles, while the market has also been impacted by a supply-chain crunch.

Global car output has been held back by a worldwide shortage in computer chips, which are vital components in all types of vehicle. The UK car industry is also grappling with trade fallout from Britain's exit from the European Union at the start of 2021. "Manufacturers continue to battle myriad challenges, with tougher trading arrangements, accelerating technology shifts and, above all, the global semiconductor shortage which is decimating supply," added Hawes. In more upbeat news, the SMMT revealed record-breaking demand for electric cars last year, as UK consumers sought more environmentally-friendly transport ahead of a ban on high-polluting vehicles. "The undeniable bright spot is the growth in electric car uptake," noted Hawes. The more infectious Omicron variant of COVID-19 appears to produce less severe disease than the globally dominant Delta strain, but it should not be categorised as "mild", said WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. Governments across the world are tightening restrictions as the Omicron variant continues to drive up COVID-19 cases globally. While the Omicron variant of COVID-19 appears to produce less severe disease than the globally dominant Delta strain, but it should not be categorised as "mild", the head of the WHO said. Speaking at a media briefing, director general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus also repeated his call for greater global equity in the distribution of and access to coronavirus vaccines. He warned that based on the current rate of vaccine rollout, 109 countries will miss the WHO's target for 70 percent of the world's population to be fully vaccinated by July. - APP



BAKU: President Ilham Aliyev and First Lady Mehriban Aliyeva viewed conditions created at new building of "Khanim Fatimeyi Zahra" mosque in Yeni Gunashli. - DNA

More than 100 test positive
on an Italy-India flight

AMRITSAR: A total of 125 passengers who arrived in the northern Indian city of Amritsar on a chartered flight from Italy have tested positive for Covid-19. They will be placed in isolation, health officials said. They were among 179 passengers on the flight from Milan which landed in Amritsar on Wednesday afternoon. India reported more than 90,000 cases on Thursday - a nearly six-fold rise over the past week that experts say is fuelled by the Omicron variant. The country recorded 325 deaths in the 24 hours but only one has been

linked to Omicron, officials said. Reports said that children and infants travelling on the plane were exempt from testing for Covid-19. Of the 160 passengers tested, 125 were found to be positive for the virus. TV pictures showed ambulances lined up outside the airport to take away the infected passengers and crowds outside the entrance gates.

Officials say the Omicron variant is the predominant strain in Indian cities and mass gatherings should be avoided. The states of Maharashtra, West Bengal, Delhi, Kerala, Tamil Nadu,

Karnataka and Jharkhand are deemed to be "emerging states of concern", with a sharp increase in weekly cases and positivity rates. India has so far recorded more than 35m Covid cases and around 482,000 deaths from the virus.

A disastrous second wave in April and May 2021 saw infections and deaths climb as hospitals ran out of beds, oxygen and life-saving drugs. Preliminary data suggests that those with Omicron are less likely to spend time in hospital in critical care compared to previous variants. - APP

Dutch govt ends funding to Palestinian group

Move comes despite external investigation finding no evidence of Israeli 'terror' claims made against Union of Agricultural Work Committees

MONITORING DESK

RAMALLAH: The Dutch government has said it will no longer fund one of the six major civil society and human rights organisations in Palestine which Israel banned as "terrorist groups" in October 2021. In a statement denouncing Wednesday's decision, the Ramallah-based Union of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC) - for which the Dutch government has been the lead donor since 2013 - said "this is the first time a government ends its funding for Palestinian civil society based on political conditionality". The UAWC provides hands-on aid to Palestinians, including rehabilitating land at risk of con-

fiscation by Israel. It helps tens of thousands of farmers in Area C - the more than 60 percent of the occupied West Bank under direct Israeli military control, and where most illegal Israeli settlements and their infrastructure are located. The group said it would consider legal steps to challenge the Dutch government's "harmful and unfair decision", which, it warned, was "likely to resonate far beyond our organisation".

In October 2021, Israel banned six organisations as "terrorist groups" under the pretext that they are affiliated with the left-wing Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP). The move was widely condemned by the international community and rights groups as "unjustified" and "baseless" as the

Israeli government has provided no evidence (PDF) to substantiate its claims. Israel's designation tied the six organisations to the armed wing of the PFLP, which was active as an organised body in the second Intifada (2000-2005) when it carried out attacks against Israeli civilian and military targets.

Five of the organisations are Palestinian: the Addameer prisoners' rights group; Al-Haq rights group; the Union of Palestinian Women's Committees (UPWC); the Bisan Center for Research and Development; and the UAWC. The sixth is the Palestine chapter of the Geneva-based Defence for Children International organisation. The Dutch government's decision followed an 18-month suspension of funding to the UAWC.

In July 2020, the Dutch ministry for foreign trade and development cooperation had ordered a review following the arrest of two Palestinian employees of the organisation. The now-former employees were accused by Israel of being responsible for an August 2019 roadside bomb attack that killed a 17-year-old Israeli girl near the illegal Israeli settlement of Dolev in the occupied West Bank. The investigation, conducted by the Netherlands-based Proximities Risk Consultancy group, began in February 2021 and covered the period between 2007 and 2020, during which the UAWC received Dutch funding. Its findings were presented on Wednesday at the Dutch parliament. While the external review said the

two former employees had "received part of their salaries from the Dutch-funded overhead costs," no evidence of financial flows between the UAWC and the PFLP, nor links between the UAWC and the PFLP's armed wing, were found. The investigation also said no evidence was found of staff or board members having used their positions in the organisation to organise armed attacks. "Nor has any proof been found of organisational unity between the UAWC and the PFLP or of the PFLP's providing direction to the UAWC," the review said, only finding ties with the political and civic arms of the PFLP "at the individual level between UAWC staff and board members and the PFLP."

Briefs

ECP's report exposed IK's wrongdoing: Maryam

DNA

LAHORE: PML-N Vice-President Maryam Nawaz on Thursday lambasted the PTI-led government for receiving foreign funding as revealed by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in its report and said that Prime Minister Imran Khan will have to be answerable to the masses for his wrongdoing.

Speaking during a press conference after a meeting of the PML-N in Lahore, Maryam said that PTI resorted to "misdeclaration" of funds upon the directives of PM Imran Khan. Several other senior PML-N leaders, including Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, Rana Sanaulah, Pervez Rasheed, and Maryam Aurangzeb were also in attendance during the press briefing. Providing details related to the figures revealed in the ECP's report, she said that the PTI has 26 bank accounts, of which 18 were active, while only four were declared.

"The foreign funding case was delayed for seven years on various pretexts," she said. "You received funding from the USA, the Middle East, Australia, Canada, and England. Companies were formed abroad and all this was done at the behest of Imran Khan." "Imran Khan solicited the money from abroad in the accounts of four of his employees but used all the money himself," Maryam said, adding that the PTI submitted fake certificates to the ECP.

"Imran Khan will have to be answerable to the people of Pakistan as to where he spent the illegal foreign funding," she said. She went on to say that in order to prevent ECP's report from being publically released, the government exerted a lot of pressure on the commission. Maryam further alleged that not only did the PTI government resort to the misdeclaration of foreign funding, but it also patronised and rewarded sugar, electricity, flour, and other mafias which led to inflation in the country. The PML-N vice-president said that the PTI used the religion card to conceal his wrongdoing.

North Korea says tested hypersonic missile

PYONGYANG: North Korea successfully tested a hypersonic missile on Wednesday, its first major weapons test this year, said a state media report. KCNA said it "precisely hit" a set target 700km (434 miles) away. This is the second reported test of a hypersonic missile, which can avoid detection for longer than ballistic missiles. The test comes as its leader Kim Jong-un had earlier vowed to bolster Pyongyang's defences. Mr Kim said in a New Year's speech that Pyongyang would continue to strengthen its defence capabilities due to an increasingly unstable military environment on the Korean peninsula. North Korea tested a variety of missiles last year amid stalled talks with the South and US. Pyongyang joins a small number of countries, including the United States and China, in attempting to develop hypersonic missiles.

The latest launch was first detected by the Japanese coast guard early on Wednesday, before being confirmed by defence authorities in Seoul. In Wednesday's test, the "hypersonic gliding warhead" detached from its rocket booster and manoeuvred 120 km (75 miles) laterally before it "precisely hit" a target 700 km (430 miles) away, KCNA reported. It said the test also confirmed components such as flight control and its ability to operate in the winter. Hypersonic weapons usually fly towards targets at lower altitudes than ballistic missiles and can achieve more than five times the speed of sound - or about 6,200 km per hour (3,850 miles per hour). - APP

Lawyers boycott over Justice Ayesha's elevation issue

DNA

LAHORE: Lawyers in Lahore, Karachi and many other cities of the country boycotted courts on the appeal of Pakistan Bar Council on Thursday to protest over the issue of Lahore High Court Justice Ayesha Malik's elevation to the Supreme Court. The apex court, however, heard cases as per its schedule as five benches of the SC took up cases at the principal seat. On the other hand, the accountability courts have adjourned cases fixed for Thursday. The major cases included Toshakhana case against former president and PPP Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari and former Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani. The Toshakhana case has been put off till January 20. Zardari, Gilani and others have been nominated in the reference.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan Khazar Farhadov presenting a souvenir to Abdul Razak Dawood, Advisor to Prime Minister of Pakistan for Commerce and Investment. Both sides discussed the possibilities to enhance and strengthen economic relations between #Azerbaijan and Pakistan. - DNA

Dozens of protesters killed in Kazakhstan

353 law enforcement officers were injured in addition to the 12 killed

AGENCIES

MOSCOW: Dozens of protesters were killed in Kazakhstan in attacks on government buildings and at least a dozen police officers died, including one who was found beheaded, authorities said Thursday. There were attempts to storm buildings overnight in the country's largest city, Almaty, and "dozens of attackers were liquidated," police spokeswoman Saltanat Azirbek said. She spoke on state news channel Khabar-24. The reported attempts to storm the buildings came after widespread unrest in the city on Wednesday, including seizure of the mayor's building, which was set on fire.

State news channel Khabar-24 cited the city commandant's office as saying Thursday that another 353 law enforcement officers were injured in addition to the 12 killed.

Kazakhstan is experiencing the worst street protests the country has seen since gaining independence three decades ago. A Russia-led military alliance, the Collective Security Treaty Organization, said early Thursday that it would send peacekeeper troops to Kazakhstan at the request of President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev. Kazakhstan has been rocked by intensifying protests that began on Sunday over a sharp rise in prices for liquefied petroleum gas fuel. The protests began in the country's west but spread to Almaty and the capital Nur-Sultan.

NA session on Jan 10 to give nod to mini-budget

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal government has decided to summon the National Assembly session on January 10 to get the Finance Amendment Bill 2021, also known as mini-budget, sail through the Lower House of the Parliament. Detailing the passage of the bill, Adviser to Prime Minister on Parliamentary Affairs Babar Awan said that the National Assembly session has been summoned on January 10 at 4:00 pm. "The Finance amendment bill will be tabled during the session besides also a discussion on suggestions on the bill proposed by Senate," he said and invited the opposition to take part in the legislation process.

He said that indulging in sloganeering would not help the opposition in improving the legislative process nor this could help them in creating hurdles for the government to pass the bill. "Our doors are open for talks with the opposition on the legislation process," he said. On December 30, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) led federal government tabled Finance (Supplementary) Bill 2021 - or the mini-budget in the National Assembly for approval. The Finance (Supplementary) Bill 2021 was tabled by Federal Finance Minister Shaukat Tarin in the lower house amid protest by the opposition members. Govt also tabled the State Bank of Pakistan (Amendment) Bill 2021 in the assembly for approval. The house also adopted different resolutions extending various Ordinances for a period of 120 days.

'It is time for world to recognize Taliban'

DNA

KABUL: Deputy Foreign Minister of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan Sher Muhammad Abbas Stanekzai said that they have completed all preconditions for recognition and now is the time for the International Community to come forward and recognize the IEA. Speaking at a convention in Paktia province, Sher Muhammad Abbas Stanekzai said that security, rule of law, and full control over Afghanistan's borders are the major preconditions for recognitions that have been met by the Taliban. The Deputy FM who was also a key member of the Taliban's negotiating team during US-Taliban talks said, they have been busy negotiating with the US and European countries for months and the talks are yet to be finished. "No negotiations have been carried out between Pakistan and Afghanistan on Durand Line."

Heavy snowfall kills 11 across Afghanistan

KABUL: Heavy snow and rainfall that erupted avalanches and floods in different provinces of Afghanistan have so far claimed the lives of 11 people and wounded 23 more. Citing officials of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, Bakhtar News Agency-Afghan news agency reported on Wednesday, January 5, 2022, that 90 percent of the country's territory witnessed snow or rainfall that led to financial loss besides death toll. - DNA

China concerned over Japan, Australia pact

Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Japanese PM Fumio Kishida met in a virtual summit to sign the Reciprocal Access Agreement

SYDNEY: The leaders of Japan and Australia signed a "landmark" defense agreement Thursday that allows closer cooperation between their militaries and stands as a rebuke to China's growing assertiveness in the Indo-Pacific region. Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida met in a virtual summit to sign the Reciprocal Access Agreement, the first such defense pact signed by Japan with any country other than the United States. The agreement follows more than a year of talks between Japan and Australia aimed at breaking down legal barriers to allow the troops of one country to enter the other for training and other

purposes. "Japan is our closest partner in Asia as demonstrated by our special strategic partnership - Australia's only such partnership," Morrison said. "An equal partnership, shared trust between two great democracies committed to the rule of law, human rights, free trade and a free and open Indo-Pacific." Kishida hailed the agreement as "a landmark instrument which will elevate security cooperation between the nations to new heights." While China wasn't mentioned, its significance at the signing was implicit. Japan's ambassador to Australia, Shingo Yamagami, said that "in light of the deteriorating security environment, what Japan and Australia can

do together is first of all to increase deterrence." Morrison said the agreement "will form an important part of Australia and Japan's response to the uncertainty we now face and will underpin greater and more complex engagement in operability between the Australia Defense Force and Japan Self-Defense Forces." He called the pact a "pivotal moment for Australia and Japan and (for) the security of our two nations and our people." Malcolm Davis, a senior analyst at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, said the agreement recognized the importance of establishing firm defense partnerships to deter an increasingly aggressive China.

"Japan is breaking away from its post-war constitutional constraints on the use of military force because Tokyo recognizes the challenges it is facing from China," he told Sky News. "There is a territorial dispute between China and Japan ... and more significantly there is a growing concern China will make a move over Taiwan in the next few years." The pact builds on the strategic dialogue known as "the Quad," which includes Japan, Australia, the United States and India. Australia last year also signed the Aukus agreement with the United States and Britain, both of which have pledged to help Australia acquire nuclear-powered submarines. - Agencies

Pakistan values brotherly ties with Turkey, says COAS

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Deputy Chief of Turkish General Staff, General Selcuk Bayraktaroglu, called on Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa at GHQ here on Thursday, said Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) in a statement on Thursday. According to ISPR, matters of regional security situation, mutual and professional interest with special emphasis on defence and security collaboration between the two brotherly countries were discussed during the meeting. COAS said: "We highly value our brotherly relations with Turkey which are deeply rooted in history and entrenched in our cultural and religious affinities. COAS Bajwa underscored the importance of peace and reconciliation initiatives in Afghanistan, said ISPR. The army chief stressed upon the need for global convergence and sincere efforts to avert a looming humanitarian catastrophe. Both sides agreed to further optimize military to military ties particularly in training and counter-terrorism domains, read the ISPR statement. The visiting dignitary acknowledged the professionalism of the Pakistan Armed Forces and vowed to enhance cooperation in various fields. He also appreciated Pakistan's role in Afghan situation, special efforts for border management and role in regional stability.

Alvi seeks trade ventures with Omani Businessmen

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has asked Omani businessmen to invest in Pakistan and benefit from its liberal and investment-friendly policy. He stated that the confidence of foreign investors had considerably increased over the policies of Pakistan that provided a conducive business environment to foreign investors. He made these remarks while talking to the visiting Omani business delegation, led by the Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Eng. Redha Juma Mohamed Ali Al-Saleh, which called on the President, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, today. Welcoming the delegation, the President said that Pakistan and Oman en-

joyed excellent relations which were deep-rooted in common culture, shared history and heritage. He underlined the need for increasing trade and cultural relations for the mutual benefit of the two countries. The President highlighted that Pakistan offered immense opportunities for investment and, in this regard, had established Special Economic and Technology Zones to attract foreign direct investment. He assured the delegation that the Government would facilitate and support Omani businessmen to make investments in various sectors of Pakistan's economy. It was agreed to increase the volume of trade and enhance contacts between the chambers of commerce of the two countries to boost economic relations. The President also highlighted Pakistan's concerns over human

rights violations in the Illegally Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir by the Indian security forces. He thanked the Government of Oman for its support on various issues at regional and international fora and expressed the hope that the visit of the Omani business delegation would further strengthen linkages between the business communities of the two brotherly countries. The Omani delegation reiterated its desire to further improve bilateral cooperation in various fields. The delegation emphasized the need for promoting bilateral cooperation in the areas of trade and tourism. It said that it would encourage Omani businessmen to invest in Pakistan. Both sides agreed to increase the volume of trade and promote people-to-people contacts to bring the two brotherly countries further closer.

PAF airlifts relief goods for flood affected areas

KARACHI: Pakistan Air Force (PAF) C-130 aircraft carrying relief goods for the flood affected areas of Gwadar, Balochistan, landed at Pasi airport on Thursday. PAF is undertaking relief operation on the instructions of Government of Pakistan, said a statement. PAF aircraft airlifted more than 39,860 pounds of relief goods comprising food items, tents and medicines for the flood affectees of Gwadar, Balochistan. The recent floods have caused devastation in the low-lying areas of Gwadar, badly damaging the villages and infrastructure. PAF has always responded to the call of the nation during natural calamities in addition to safeguarding the aerial frontiers of the country. - DNA



Promise of low cost houses being fulfilled: PM IK

The prime minister was informed in the meeting that steps were being taken to protect forests and natural diversity and 63 percent of Azad Kashmir consists of forests while 56.5 percent of the total area of Kashmir is government land

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan said on Thursday that the promise of low cost houses for the poor and middle class is being fulfilled and loans worth Rs 38 billion have been provided to build houses. A meeting of the National Coordination Committee for Housing was held in Islamabad with PM Imran Khan in chair. Minister for Finance and Revenue Shaukat Tarin, Minister for Information and Broadcasting Fawad Chaudhry, Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) Prime Minister Sardar Abdul Qayyum Khan Niazi, Minister of State Farrukh Habib, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister

Next three months crucial for govt

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Thursday said that the next three months are crucial for his government and they had to overcome a hike in inflation during the period. He said that the biggest failure of the incumbent government is the lack of accountability of the previous rulers as despite all evidence they are able to get away with the graft cases against them. The prime minister further lamented that most of his government's efforts are not being advertised properly. "I am completely satisfied with the performance of the Punjab government," he said and added that the PTI has not lost its vote bank, however, recent loss in KP local bodies elections have hurt the party's standing and is one of the biggest failures of the PTI organizational setup. The prime minister further challenged the opposition to bring a no-confidence motion against him and said that his government would complete its tenure with the support of allies. "I am not afraid of these corrupt political parties," he said. Further speaking on civil-military leadership, the prime minister said that he has an exemplary relationship with the military leadership. - DNA

on Political Communication Shahbaz Gill, State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Governor Dr Reza Baqir, Senior ministers of AJK including Sardar Tanvir Ilyas, Khawaja Farooq, Naya Pakistan Housing & Development Authority (NAPHDA) chairman and other senior officials attended the meeting. The meeting was informed that the CDA and NAPHDA will provide subsidy for these flats for would keep the monthly installments to a minimum, while all facilities would be provided in these flats. The meeting was also informed that on average, the rate of borrowing from banks has increased significantly and in the last two weeks alone, additional loan applications of Rs 6 billion have been received.