



# Islamabad POST

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Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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## Chinese, Afghan envoys discuss collaboration

Afghanistan can also benefit from CPEC, Nong Rong tells Sardar Shakib



**SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT**

ISLAMABAD: Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Nong Rong and Charge de Affaires of the Embassy of Afghanistan in Islamabad, in a meeting here, discussed the current humanitarian situation in Afghanistan and the expansion of trade activities between their respective countries. Nong Rong called on Sardar Ahmad Shakib at the Embassy of Afghanistan in Islamabad. During the meeting, issues concerning the increase in humanitarian assistance for Afghanistan and interaction with the Afghan Government came under discussion. They also discussed the expansion

of trade between the two countries and the facilitation of visas and other facilities for Afghan traders. Mr. Shakib presented souvenirs of Afghanistan to Ambassador Nong Rong. The report added, Pakistan creates a link between China and Afghanistan. The government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has already approved Chitral-Shandor CPEC Route, connecting the district with Gilgit and China beyond. Afghanistan can also benefit from CPEC, as the country has already started using Gwadar Port for transit trade. Amidst looming humanitarian crises, China is one of the countries at the forefront of humanitarian activities in

Continued on Page 06

**Taliban calls for aid without 'political bias'**

KABUL: The Taliban appealed on Friday for emergency humanitarian aid without "political bias", saying recent snow and flooding had worsened the plight of the Afghan people. Since the Taliban seized control of Afghanistan in mid-August, the country has plunged into financial chaos, with inflation and unemployment surging. Billions of dollars of the country's assets have been frozen by the United States, while aid supplies have been heavily disrupted. Global aid agencies have warned that more than half of Afghanistan's 38 million people are expected to face hunger this winter. In a video appeal, deputy prime minister Abdul Ghani Baradar said the world had an obligation to help. "In various places right now, people do not have food, accommodation, warm clothes or money," Baradar said. "The world has to support Afghan people without any political bias and carry out their humanitarian obligations." Snow has blanketed most of central and northern Afghanistan in recent days while flooding has affected parts of the south. - APP



RAWALPINDI: Christian Turner, British High Commissioner called on General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) at GHQ. - DNA

**IHC orders demolition of Navy Club**

'Navy does not have the authority to undertake a real estate venture'

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Friday ordered the demolition of the "illegal" Navy Sailing Club established at the bank of Rawal Lake within three weeks and ordered action against a former naval chief. IHC Chief Justice Athar Minallah announced the verdict, which was reserved on Thursday. In a short judgment issued today, the IHC CJ said Pakistan's military has an important status that is mentioned in the constitution. The top judge ruled that the navy does not have the authority to undertake a real estate venture and the name of the institution could not be used for such activities. The IHC said the Capital Development Authority (CDA) was not empowered

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## COAS urges assistance for Afghanistan

Christian Turner appreciated Pakistan's efforts for peace, especially in the Afghan situation

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: The British High Commissioner to Pakistan Dr Christian Turner Friday called on a meeting with the Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa at the General Headquarters, a statement issued by Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said. According to the military's media wing, in the meeting, Turner appreciated Pakistan's efforts for peace, especially in the Afghan situation. The meeting further discussed matters of mutual interest, regional security situation, including developments regarding peace in Afghanistan, and bilateral cooperation in several fields.

The COAS also talked about the importance of regional peace and stability, and ways to prevent humanitarian crises in Afghanistan, including the assistance of the international community.

**Fencing issue to be resolved through talks: FM**

MULTAN: Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi on Friday said that the government has received positive response from Afghan authorities to resolve border fencing issue through diplomatic channels. The Foreign Minister expressed these views while addressing a press conference along with Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Poverty Alleviation and Social Safety, Senator Dr. Sania Nishtar and PTI's Chief Whip in National Assembly Malik Muhammad Amir Dogar at Raza hall in Multan.

Continued on Page 06

**Iran displays missiles amid talks**

WEB DESK

DUBAI: Iran displayed three ballistic missiles at an outdoor prayer esplanade in central Tehran on Friday as talks in Vienna aimed at reviving Tehran's nuclear deal with world powers flounder. The missiles - known as Dezful, Qiam and Zolfaghar - have official ranges of up to 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) and are already-known models, the paramilitary Revolutionary Guard said. Diplomats from countries that remain in the 2015 nuclear deal - Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China - are working with Tehran to revive the accord, which had sought to limit Iran's nuclear ambitions in exchange for lifting of economic sanctions. American diplomats are present at the nuclear talks in Vienna but they are not in direct talks with Iranians. The accord collapsed in 2018 when then-President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the United States from the deal and re-imposed sanctions on Iran.

## SAARC Summit: Pak rejects Indian claims

FO spokesperson says "India's obstruction of the Saarc process is an established fact"

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office (FO) on Friday categorically rejected the "false claims and tendentious remarks" by the Indian Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson regarding the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (Saarc) and Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

According to a report, Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi on Monday had

reiterated Pakistan's invitation to India and other members of Saarc for the next summit in Islamabad, adding that New Delhi could join the moot virtually if it did not want to attend in-person. No Saarc summit has taken place since 2014. The 19th summit, scheduled to be held in 2016 in Islamabad, could not go ahead after India pulled out, blaming Pakistan for an attack on its army brigade in Uri - a town in occupied Kashmir. Under the Saarc charter, a meeting of the heads of government cannot be held if any one of the member states does not join. Spokesperson Arindam Bagchi told the media on Thursday that it was "aware of the background" regarding why the

Continued on Page 06

### Briefs

**Imran should resign**

DNA

LAHORE: Leader of Opposition in National Assembly and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) president Shehbaz Sharif said on Friday that after being proved a thief and a liar, Imran Niazi should resign. The opposition leader said in his statement that under the constitution of Pakistan and the laws no thief and liar can be the PM. He said the law and political ethics demand that Imran Niazi to step down. Shehbaz Sharif said that like the case against Nawaz Sharif, the case against Imran Niazi should be heard on daily basis.

**Tourists stopped to move Murree**

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Interior, Sheikh Rashid Ahmed on Friday said that tourists moving to Murree and Galiyat have been stopped temporarily due to massive traffic jam there. In a statement, he said that tourists will not be allowed to move further from Satramel Interchange. However, citizens will be allowed to travel Murree and Galiyat in case of any emergency. - APP

**Holiday Notice**

The offices of daily Islamabad POST shall remain closed on Saturday on account of weekly off therefore there will be no newspaper on Sunday. - Editor

## FM Qureshi to visit Romania, Spain from Jan 9

Pakistan enjoys excellent relations with both the key European countries

ANSAR BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi will undertake an official visit to Romania and Spain from 9-12 January 2022. During the first leg of the visit, Foreign Minister Qureshi will visit Bucharest at the invitation of Foreign Minister Bogdan Aurescu from 9-10 January 2022. The Foreign Minister will hold meetings with the Romanian Foreign Minister and other dignitaries. Besides focusing on measures to further deepen bilateral cooperation, the two sides will hold wide-ranging consultations on regional and international issues. The Foreign Minister will subsequently visit Spain on the invitation of Foreign Minister José Manuel Albares Bueno from 10-12 January 2022. Besides meeting with his Spanish counterpart, Foreign Minister Qureshi will hold meetings with other Ministers and Members of



the Spanish Parliament. A large Pakistani diaspora in Spain serves as a strong bridge between the two countries. In 2021, Pakistan and Spain celebrated the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. Romania and Spain are important partners of Pakistan, both bilaterally and in the context of the European Union. The Foreign Minister's visit will give further impetus to the growing cooperation with these two friendly countries.

## Constitutional order mainly restored: Kazakh President

Tokayev confirmed that a peacekeeping force from the Russia-dominated Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) had arrived in Kazakhstan

AGENCIES

MOSCOW: Kazakhstan's President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev said Friday that order had mostly been restored in the country after days of unprecedented unrest. The interior ministry said security forces had taken all the country's regions "under increased protection" and that 26 "armed criminals" had been killed and 18 wounded in the unrest. "Law enforcement forces are working hard. The constitutional order has been mainly restored in all regions," Tokayev said in a statement after a meeting with top officials. "Local authorities are monitoring the situation. But terrorists are still using weapons, causing damage to civilian property,"

he said. "Therefore the counter-terrorist operation will continue until the total destruction of the militants." Tokayev confirmed that a peacekeeping force from the Russia-dominated Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) had arrived in Kazakhstan. "This contingent arrived for a limited period of time to carry out mainly the functions of covering and ensuring the protection of strategic facilities," the statement said. It said a number of orders had been issued to "further stabilise the situation in the country" but did not provide further details. The interior ministry said in a statement that 70 24-hour checkpoints had been set up across the country. The police and armed forces, it said, were "protecting public order and ob-

**'No talks, will destroy 'armed bandits'**

MOSCOW: Kazakhstan's President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev said Friday there would be no negotiations with protesters after days of unrest, vowing to destroy "armed bandits" who had attacked the country. In a televised address to the nation, he said the country's main city Almaty had been attacked by "20,000 bandits" and gave "special thanks" to Russian President Vladimir Putin for sending troops to help quell the unrest. - APP

**President gives shoot to kill orders**

ALMATY: Kazakhstan's president said on Friday he had ordered his forces to shoot-to-kill to deal with disturbances from those he called bandits and terrorists, a day after Russia sent troops to put down a countrywide uprising. Security forces appeared to be in control of the streets of the main city Almaty on Friday morning but gunfire could still be heard after days of unrest in which dozens of people have been killed and public buildings ransacked and torched. - DNA

jects of strategic importance, and clearing the streets." Long seen as one of the most stable of the ex-Soviet republics of Central Asia, energy-rich Kazakhstan is facing its biggest crisis in decades after days of protests over rising fuel prices escalated into widespread unrest. Protesters stormed government buildings and fought running battles with police and the military, with officials saying 748 security officers were wounded and 18 killed. Tokayev declared a nationwide state of emergency and appealed for help from the CSTO, which includes five other ex-Soviet states, to combat what he called "terrorist groups" that had "received extensive training abroad". The unrest raised fears of a destabilization of Kazakhstan, a major energy exporter and producer of uranium.





ISLAMABAD: Senator Talha Mahmood member Tehree-e-Suba Hazara speaks during a press conference at National Press Club. – DNA

## Sania leads Ehsaas Roshan Registration drive in Multan

DNA

MULTAN: On the fifth leg of Ehsaas Roshan Tour to 30 cities, Senator Dr. Sania Nishtar, SAPM arrived in Multan today. During the visit, Dr. Sania was joined by Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi and Commissioner Multan. She was also accompanied by senior officials of National Bank of Pakistan (NBP) and Ehsaas.

The visit meant to mobilize local trader associations and Kiryana alliances across Multan for raising awareness on the Ehsaas Roshan Registration drive across Multan. Families earning below Rs. 50,000 a month can enroll through 8171. The registration of Kiryana owners is ongoing through <https://ehsaasroshan.pass.gov.pk/>.

At Multan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dr. Sania chaired a meeting with local Kiryana retailers, NBP team and local press and electronic media. She highlighted that the government would give 8% commission to Kiryana retailers on subsidy amount and there will be quarterly lucky draws to award cars, motorcycles, mobile phones etc to best performing retailers.

All over the country, Kiryana stores of any scale can be enrolled in the Roshan programme. It is essential for Kiryana retailers to have a bank account and an android mobile phone. NBP is facilitating the Kiryana owners countrywide to open their bank accounts. NBP enabled Kiryana retailers having bank accounts will install 'mobile Point of Sale' (mPOS) App in their cell phones for Ehsaas Roshan Riayat delivery.

Later, Dr. Sania went to the Old Shujabad Road in Multan to speak to Kiryana retailers in the market about the Ehsaas Roshan programme. Kiryana owners showed a very positive response and enthusiasm for the Ehsaas Roshan Riayat programme.

Earlier, Dr. Sania was joined by Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi at Commissioner's Office Multan. During the meeting, Parliamentarians, district administration and District Coordination Committee of Multan was briefed on the ongoing programmes of Ehsaas in the district including Ehsaas Kafaalat, Ehsaas School Stipends, Ehsaas Undergraduate Scholarships, Ehsaas Interest Free Loans and Ehsaas Roshan Riayat. The meeting concluded at a joint press conference.

## PITB, Mines dept sign MOU

LAHORE: Punjab Information Technology Board (PITB) and Punjab Mines & Minerals Department (MMD) on Friday signed an MOU as part of the project, 'Strengthening of Directorate General Mines & Minerals, Punjab and IT Integration of Administrative Department' under the ongoing Annual Development Program (ADP).

The MoU was signed by PITB DG e-Governance Sajid Latif and Secretary Mines & Minerals Department Amir Ejaz Akbar Gondal at a ceremony held at Arfa Software Technology Park. Chairman PITB Azfar Manzoor and other senior officials including PITB DG IT-Operations Faisal Yousuf, Director Atif Husain, Project Director Ali Zeb, MMD's Director General Zafar Javed Malghani, Deputy Secretary (Admin) Atika Ammar and Deputy Secretary (Technical) Sajid-Ur-Rehman were also present. – APP

# Industry-academia linkages vital for sustained growth

"It was also catering 80% domestic needs of cloth wears at the national level"

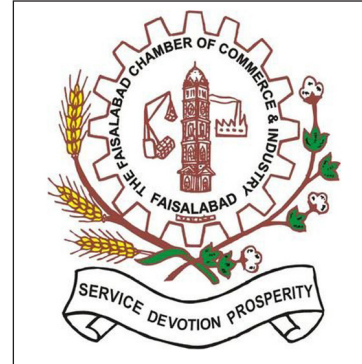
ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Industry-academia linkages are imperative for sustained economic growth in addition to promoting knowledge-based economy and providing qualified and highly skilled workers to face the challenges of the fourth industrial revolution.

This was stated by Atif Munir Sheikh, president Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI), while addressing a zoom meeting with Dr. Shaista Sohail, executive director, Higher Education Commission (HEC).

He welcomed the beginning of direct contacts between the HEC and the FCCI and said that it was very encouraging that the Commission had realised the fact that without synchronizing industry with higher education institutes, we could not make a phenomenal and inclusive growth. He termed the direct meeting between HEC and FCCI as a new milestone towards unfolding a modern industrial era of cloud computing, robotic and artificial intelligence etc. He hoped that the contacts between the two entities would continue in future to get tangible results. Introducing Faisalabad, President Atif Munir said that it has been contributing more than 52% share towards the total textile export of Pakistan.

"It was also catering 80% domestic needs of cloth wears at the national level", he said and remarked that despite this excellent contribution, the industry



sector was working on decades old traditional technologies and skills without any new inventions.

He said that we must give a new dimension to the industrial sector to improve their efficiency and successfully survive in the most challenging and competitive world. He said that Faisalabad has three major public sector universities but they could not give a visible push to industrial growth. He lamented that PhD scholars depend on secondary data downloaded through Google. "It has no relevance to the ground realities", he said and added that it also dampens their creative, practical and mental faculties. He suggested that university graduates and scholars must spend at least six months in their relevant industry to understand its practical implications and give globally acceptable solutions by utilizing their theoretical knowledge.

He negated this impression that the

industrial sector was not accommodating the internees and said that he was ready to accommodate maximum young graduates in their relevant fields. He said that it would provide them with primary data and harness their innovative and professional skills. Atif Munir said that FCCI was organizing a national level economic conference during the month of March and one full session would be dedicated for the education sector. He said that at primary level students must be given practical training in social, moral and ethical issues in addition to providing them basic knowledge about road traffic. He said that the industrial sector must be involved in designing curriculum for the universities so that it's passed out graduates could be accommodated immediately in their relevant field. He further said that renowned academicians and intellectuals would also be invited to participate in this conference and give their productive output. He said that each session would not only pinpoint the relevant problems but also give their viable solutions which would be submitted to the Government for future policy making.

HEC Executive Director Dr. Shaista Sohail said that it is a federal supra body mandated to facilitate, support and ensure quality higher education across the country. She underlined the need to further strengthen the industry-academia linkages and said that she would prefer to visit major industrial centers after having zoom meetings with various chambers of the country.



ISLAMABAD: Metshiro Wada, ambassador of Japan to Pakistan calls on Nawaf bin Saeed Al-Maliki, Ambassador of Saudi Arabia. – DNA

## State land retrieved

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: The 10 Kanal 9 marla precious govt land worth of 140 million at Chak 212 R.B Lal Mills Chowk has been retrieved from land grabbers. City Assistant Commissioner Sahibzada Muhammad Yousaf supervised the operation and retrieved land. He informed that the land grabbers had allotted the housing plots, constructed the roads, foot paths and sewer lines and using heavy machinery the illegal constructions have been demolished.

## Polio eradication campaign from Jan 24

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: The next Anti Polio Campaign in Faisalabad district would continue from 24 to 28 January in the district and 1.3 million children up to the age of five years would be administered polio drops for which 4870 teams would perform duty and all necessary arrangements are being finalized in this regard.

This was informed by Deputy Commissioner Ali Shahzad during the meeting of District Polio Eradication Committee. ADCG Qasim Abbas Rind, CEO DHA Dr. Bilal Ahmad, DHO Dr. Waseem Bhatti and other officers of various departments were also

present. Deputy Commissioner directed that before the campaign, all necessary arrangements should be completed keeping in view of micro-plan so that the weaknesses and shortcomings could be rectified. He clarified that every round of polio was important therefore the training of relevant staff should be completed before time besides for awareness of parents all out resources should utilize.

He said that all arrangements should be made finalize in tehsil level also and no negligence would be tolerated in this regard. He also cleared that corona SOPs should be implemented as per guidelines. CEO briefed the house on arrangements of next Polio campaign.

## PHP holds road safety show

FAISALABAD: The Punjab Highway Patrol (PHP) police Faisalabad region held a road safety show at Tandianwala near here Friday. Education Officer Sub-Inspector Rizwan Bhatti provided very useful tips to citizens about safe driving during fog and rainy weather and safety from road accidents.

He advised them to avoid unnecessary traveling during dense fog, keep fog and back lights lights operations on their vehicle, limit use of heater in vehicles, take guidance from lines and sign boards on highways, keep suitable distance between vehicles, avoid speeding and ringing pressure horns.

The team also pasted reflectors on the rear side of slow and loaded vehicles. The team also distributed pamphlets among citizens.

Meanwhile, SSP patrolling police Faisalabad region Mirza anjum Kamal said that education unit of patrol police held road safety shows, awareness sessions about traffic rules, smog, anti-corona virus at 289 educational institutes, 368 commercial markets. – APP

## Gulf countries want to further strengthen relations with Pakistan: GCC secy general

ISLAMABAD: Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Secretary General Dr Falah Mubarak Al-Hajraf Friday said the Gulf countries wanted to further strengthen relations with Pakistan in all areas including trade, economy, culture and media. Talking to Pakistan Ulema Council Chairman and Special Aide to the Prime Minister on Religious Harmony and Middle East Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi, GCC Secretary General Dr Falah Mubarak Al-Hajraf said that sentiments expressed by the leadership of Pakistan for further strengthening of relations with the Gulf countries in all fields were commendable and valuable during his visit to Pakistan. Over 4.6 million Pakistanis residing in Gulf countries, were playing their respective role in the development and stability of Gulf countries and Pakistan in all walks of life. He said that practical steps that had to be taken before are being taken now to strengthen cooperation between Pakistan and Gulf countries.

The leadership of the Gulf countries wanted to see stronger and stronger relations with Pakistan, said Dr Falah Al-Hajraf. He said the cooperation between Gulf countries and Pakistan would be put into practical undertaking at all levels. Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Foreign Ministers' level session held in Pakistan regarding prevail-

ing situation in Afghanistan had been a step in the right direction, he said. He said that Gulf countries had been providing every possible assistance on humanitarian grounds for the people of Afghanistan and this support would be continued.

The decisions that had been taken in the Extraordinary Session of OIC Foreign Ministers' Council would be implemented with the cooperation of Pakistan, he said. He also added that the challenges posed to Islam and Muslims could be met with mutual unity. Ashrafi said that decision to further strengthen and expand practical cooperation between Gulf Cooperation Council and Pakistan was evidence of strong ties between the two sides. Cooperation with Arab Islamic countries in trade, economy, culture and media was a top priority, he said.

The young generation could be rescued from the menace of extremism and terrorism with mutual unity, he said adding that Pakistan had been playing its role in resolving the issues and its support from the Muslim Ummah was a step in the right direction.

Tahir Ashrafi said that he welcomed the assurance of every possible step taken by the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to solve the problems faced by Pakistanis in the Gulf countries. – APP

## Razak vows for increasing, IT export in FY 2021-22

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Commerce and Investment, Abdul Razak Dawood on Friday said that there is a lot of scope to increase exports in Information Technology (IT) from non-traditional sector at present.

The current annual \$ 2.5 billion IT exports are very low, "We now have an annual export target of \$3.7 billion this year, he said. The Adviser said this while addressing to the "Technology Roundtable" to highlight investment opportunities in the IT and ITES (Information Technology Enabled Services) sector organized by Board of Investment (BOI) here.

Today is the age of Information Technology and e-commerce, our youth can take full advantage of it, he said.

Pakistan's exports can now be boosted by focusing on some of the non-traditional sectors from the traditional export sector including textile, the Adviser said.

Razak Dawood said that there was a need to promote export culture in the country at present and the government wanted to increase exports on priority basis.

During his address, he said that Pakistan's economy has made significant progress reflecting a blend of stabilization and structural reforms despite being challenged at economic and geo political front and is moving on a positive growth trajectory.

He added that Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), that use e-Commerce platforms, are around five times more likely to export than those in the traditional economy and the policy aims

to pave the way for holistic growth of e-Commerce in the country by creating an enabling environment in which enterprises have equal opportunity to grow steadily. He stressed that the way forward for Pakistan on the economic front is to focus on exports, specifically IT related exports. He said that he sees a lot of potential in the young population of Pakistan and encouraged them to dream big for themselves and for their country.

The Adviser affirmed that Pakistan has a bright future and is moving towards economic progress.

While addressing the technology roundtable session, Chairman BOI said that government of Pakistan is making all out efforts to put the economy on the track of long-term and sustainable economic progress.

He shared that BOI is mandated to promote, encourage and facilitate both local and foreign investment and acts as an interface between international and local investors, public and private sector.

He stressed that BOI works for enabling business environment through policy and strategic interventions.

"IT Sector Policy of Pakistan offers a generous set of incentives to investors" he said. Ahsan apprised the participants on "Pakistan Regulatory Modernization Initiative" (PRMI), being led by BOI that was launched by the Honorable Prime Minister of Pakistan. Once rolled out, it shall transform the regulatory landscape across all tiers of government, he said.

The Chairman shared that IT Sector Policy of Pakistan offers a generous set of incentives such as custom duties and sales tax rebates to local and foreign incentives. He

added that the IT sector also allows up to 100% foreign ownership and 100% repatriation of profits. He encouraged business leaders to find new approaches to enhance technology-based landscape of Pakistan and make best use of this platform.

Secretary BOI, while highlighting IT sector specific reforms introduced in Pakistan shared that the payment limit for foreign vendors of digital services has been enhanced by SBP from USD \$100,000 to USD\$ 400,000 and the approval from SBP for payment above USD\$ 100,000 has been waived off for digital services.

She further added that in order to facilitate IT businesses, 62 globally recognized companies have been notified requiring no approval from the State Bank and that the State Bank has allowed commercial banks to obtain the Cloud Outsourcing Services to meet their growing customers' needs.

Ms. Fareena said that since 2015, the government of Pakistan has introduced various policies to encourage investment in the country, some of which include telecom policy, digital Pakistan policy, e-commerce policy, national cyber security policy etc.

The secretary expounded that Pakistan produces around 25000 IT graduates annually and is one of the most popular countries for free-lancing. With 178 million mobile phone subscribers and 95 million internet users, the country offers vast opportunities in the IT sector, she informed the audience that more than 3,000 international technology firms are registered with SECP including Intel, Microsoft, Amazon, Samsung etc. and the pace of technology adoption is speeding up.



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## SERVICES



## Namaz Timings

Fajr.....	05:45 am
Zohr.....	12:14 pm
Asr.....	03:37 pm
Maghrib.....	05:15 pm
Isha.....	06:43 pm



## Hotels &amp; Restaurants

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



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Turkish Airlines.....	8494949
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## Emergency

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## Islamabad Metropolitan

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Potohar Town.....	9209224
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## Wasa Water Tank

Rawalpindi.....	0331-5022125
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# China's negligence; future of Pak students in jeopardy

RCCI President Nadeem Rauf says chamber would take up the matter with the Chinese embassy and government representatives

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) has shown strong concerns over the difficulties faced by Pakistani students in continuing their education in China. The educational future of more than 6,000 students is at stake if they do not go to China, the academic year of thousands of students will be wasted. This was stated by RCCI President Nadeem Rauf at a meeting of

the Pak-China Overseas Community Standing Committee at the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce here.

Vice President Talat Awan, executive members, committee members and a large number of students and businessmen were present on the occasion. The meeting discussed issues facing Pakistani students, especially those returning to China, quarantine stay, high prices of air fares, accommodation, expiration of scholarships, suspension of direct flights, travel documents, anti-



body tests such as IgG, IgM, and Other COVID related tests. President Nadeem Rauf said the chamber would take up the matter with the Chinese embassy and government representatives. He assured the committee members and students participating in the meeting that the demands of the students would be conveyed to the higher authorities so that the students' academic year would not be wasted. Chairman of the committee Shaikat Ali Safi said that students as well as businessmen are facing problems. Ticket and

accommodation fares for Chinese cities have increased manifold. On this occasion, the students informed that IgG and IgM tests are very expensive. HEC and PMDC in Pakistan are not accepting online education certification/courses from China. Scholarships of many students are running out, and are on the verge of expiry. Part-time job should be facilitated, many courses are based on seasons, e.g. spring courses, if you can not go to China in January, the whole year will be wasted, they added.

## PAEI to hold property show in Peshawar



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Association of Exhibition Industry is going to Organize 3-day Property Exhibition in Peshawar. Peshawar International Property Exhibition and Convention which will be held on 11-12-13 February 2022 at Marbella Cave Marquee Warsak Road, Peshawar.

The three-days exhibition will be Exhibited by a large number of Builders, Developers, including Banking & Tourism Projects. Chairman Pakistan Association of Exhibition Industry Mohammad Khurshid Barlas while talking to media said that It will be a great opportunity for all peoples of KP and twin cities to visit this exhibition, which will have an impact upon the construction industry and real estate market in Pakistan, through boosting the economy of Pakistan. - DNA

## To resolve public issues top priority

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Ahsan Younas while listening public complaints during khuli kacheri directed all police officials to resolve the public complaints on priority. The IGP said that the purpose of holding these khuli kacheries is to solve public issues immediately and purely on merit. The IGP while listening public complaints strictly directed all zonal officers to take immediate and strict action against land grabbers. "No one would be allowed to grab property of any citizen" he added.

Islamabad police chief said that it is our prime responsibility to provide protection to the lives and property of the citizens and resolve their problems on priority. He said that citizens at 'Open Court' should be behaved in a respectful manner and their trust on police department to be won through resolving their issues. He said that interaction with people also ensures accountability of the policemen and they should address public complaints on merit by considering their own issues. He said that positive image of policemen should be ensured before them through unbiased approach towards anyone. The IGP hoped that interaction during 'open kacheries' would help to promote friendly policing.

## COMSTECH organizes gateway for milestone discoveries

ISLAMABAD: COMSTECH organized a webinar on "Metabolomics Gateway for Milestone Discoveries in the Prehistoric and Post Genomic Era" which was delivered online by Prof. Dr. Mohamed Ali Farag of Cairo University, Egypt. Prof. Farag said that the metabolomics is the analysis of the cellular processes based on the chemical processes. He said metabolomics is useful in food production in establishing the chemical make-up of food and quality control between different rounds of production. Prof. Farag said it can be used in medical research to help understand the progression of diseases and to assess the impact of a person's diet and metabolism. He also talked about functional food as well. Prof. Farag described the history of metabolomics. He said that what we know in science is like the ice-berg in the ocean and not the whole thing. He said that the ability to sequence the whole plant and human genomes has established that our knowledge with respect to gene function is rather limited. The lecture provided an overview of metabolomics and discussed its complementary role within system biology. The webinar was attended by students, researchers, scientists, and academicians from the OIC member states. -DNA

## AIOU signs Letter of Intent with ILKE

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) and a Turkish organisation ILKE, signed a Letter of Intent to establish a formal mechanism for joint research, faculty and students exchange programs, exposure study tours and to conduct academic, economic and policy research on academic and development issues. Registrar, AIOU, Raja Umer Younis and General Secretary, ILKE Foundation, Mr.

Abdullah Serenli signed the document. On this occasion VC, AIOU, Prof. Dr. Zia Ul-Qayyum said that collaboration between the institutions would go a long way in promotion of education in both Pakistan and Turkey. He viewed that the panacea for social and economic development of majority of the Islamic countries lies in bringing the quality of education at par with the developed world. He added that both the institutions should work jointly to portray the positive image of Islam around the globe.

## WB country director felicitates Ehsaas

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The World Bank (WB) Country Director Najib Benhassine congratulated Ehsaas on the successful completion of South Asia's first digital National Socio Economic Registry (NSER) survey. He was speaking at the launching ceremony of the NSER survey chaired by Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Poverty Alleviation and Social Protection, Senator Dr Sania Nishtar. Speaking on the occasion, the WB country director said, "I congratulate the Government of Pakistan

and Ehsaas on achieving this historical milestone. The World Bank feels proud to be the technical partner in this game changer survey. This is not just Pakistan's but also South Asia's first digitally enabled socio-economic census. It will be really transformative that the registry will now facilitate data sharing for social protection programs of federal government, provinces, government departments and development agencies." Director General, Naveed Akbar outlined the design, end to end digital methodology, approaches and rigorous transparency measures

embedded in the execution of the survey. In her opening remarks, Dr Sania said, "Part of Ehsaas strategy, we have just concluded a new National Socioeconomic 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 socioeconomic status of the households especially due to demographic change.

## Murunj Dam to generate 12 MW electricity

ISLAMABAD: Murunj Dam Project to be constructed on KahaNullah, 116 km west of Rajanpur would generate 12 megawatt (MW) cheap and environmental-friendly electricity, while having the gross water storage of 800,000 acre feet. KahaNullah is one of the largest hill torrents of the Koh-i-Sulaiman Range located in the vicinity of Rajanpur with average annual inflows of 183,000 acre feet.

The project would have tangible benefits and bring about 120,000 acres into irrigable, ground water recharging, and fisheries development. The implementation of project would have significant positive impact and uplift of local economy, official source said.

The project has three main objectives including storage of water for irrigated agriculture and drinking purpose, flood mitigation and power generation.

The available water resources are very scarce in Rajanpur and adjoining areas facing acute shortage of fresh water for drinking and agriculture.

The annual monsoon rains give rise to flashy hill torrents causing inundation of thousands of acres land in the adjoining foothills and rendering damages to public property and cultivated land each year. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, former president of Salamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry and CEO of Centaurus Mall, is giving a shield to Engineer Rada Saleh, chairman of Sultanate of Oman Chamber of Commerce. Former ICCI President Ejaz Abbasi, Senior Vice President Jamshed Akhtar Sheikh, Vice President Fahim Khan, Former Senior Vice President Khalid Chaudhry, Sardar Tahir Mehmood, Shahid Abbasi and others were present on the occasion. - DNA

## Finance bill to help improve taxation system: Senators

Senator Waleed Iqbal said that the current supplementary bill will have negligible impact on the poor segments of the society

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Senators on Friday termed the 'supplementary finance bill 2021' an effort to improve the taxation system of the country as it seeks to register the undocumented sectors of economy with Federal Board of Revenue (FBR).

Senator Waleed Iqbal said while participating in the debate on the supplementary bill in the Upper House that the current supplementary bill will have negligible impact on the poor segments of the society as a major portion of taxes are either refundable and adjustable or are linked to the luxurious items not consumed by the poor. He said Pakistan badly needed documentation of the country's economy, therefore,

the government had proposed to impose taxes on pharmaceutical and industrial sectors to bring the sector under tax net. He said a number of tax exemptions on various sectors were being withdrawn to remove distortions in the taxation system. However, he said, the government would expand targeted subsidy instead of offering tax exemptions. He also said that out of the total 800 pharmaceutical companies only 453 were registered with the FBR and after the passage of supplementary bill all companies would be brought under the tax net. Speaking on the occasion, Senator Faisal Javed said this was not a mini budget but just a supplementary bill. He said facts and figures with respect to the bill were being distorted to create hype among mass-

es. He said 82 percent of the total loans from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) were obtained by the governments led by Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and Pakistan Muslim League-N, therefore these parties should not mislead the nation with regard to the IMF. He said the IMF had asked the government to impose Rs 700 billion new taxes but, Prime Minister Imran Khan showed resistance and brought the level of taxes to Rs. 343 billion. He further said the new taxes were imposed only on rich and they had nothing to do with the poor. He added that the previous government had put the country on the verge of collapse, while the current government led by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf helped strengthened the institutions that were now transforming

from huge net losses to profitable institutions. He said the universal health insurance offered by the current government was an exemplary initiative under which each family would get health cover of up to Rs. one million per year. Senator Mushtaq said Pakistani people could not afford further inflation, therefore, the government should focus on keeping prices of the essential items in control instead of imposing new taxes. Senator Rukhsana Zuberi stressed the need for adopting strict austerity measures. She said: "As a poor country that we are, we can not afford luxurious lifestyles". She also suggested taxing the international food brands, big bakeries, luxurious items, food served in five stars hotels, and other such high end products, because, she reasoned, the people who could

afford such high price products, could also afford the additional tax. Senator Dr Zarka Suhrwardi said the opposition parties who were criticizing the government on the IMF programme were in fact the main cause of the worst economic situation of the country due to which Pakistan had to approach IMF again and again.

With respect to austerity measures, she said the current government's borrowing from the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) was almost zero. She said austerity measures were already in place as the Prime Minister had cut down his foreign visits to minimum level and total expenditures on the visits so far were recorded at Rs 200 million only which were equivalent to a single visit of the past government's prime minister.

## Gold prices decline by Rs50

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold witnessed a decrease of Rs 50 and was sold at Rs126,100 on Friday against its sale at Rs126,150 in the local market the previous day.

The price of 10 gram 24 karat gold also decreased by Rs 43 to Rs108,110 from Rs 108,153 whereas that of 10 gram 22 karat decreased to Rs 99,101 from Rs 99,140.

The price of per tola silver decreased by Rs 10 to Rs 1450 from Rs 1460 and ten gram silver also dipped by Rs 8.57 to Rs 1243.14 from Rs 1251.71 respectively. The price of gold in international market decreased by \$10 and was traded at \$1791 against its sale at \$1801, the Jewellers Group reported. - APP

## IRSA releases 36494 cusecs water

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) Friday released 36494 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 57850 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in the Indus River at Tarbela Dam was 1434.81 feet, which was 42.81 feet higher than its dead level 1392 feet.

Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 17800 and 5000 cusecs respectively. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1122.65 feet, which was 72.65 feet higher than its dead level of 1050 feet whereas the inflow and outflow of water was recorded 12556 and 4000 cusecs respectively.

The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa and Sukkur was recorded as 16155, 12702 and 8092 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from the Kabul River a total of 18694 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 6285 cusecs released from the Chenab River at Marala.

## Rupee gains 24 paises against dollar

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The exchange rate of Pakistan rupee strengthened by 24 paises against the US dollar in the interbank trading on Friday to close at Rs 176.67 as compared to the previous day's closing of Rs 176.91.

According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of dollars in the open market were recorded at Rs 178 and Rs 179.2 respectively. Similarly, the price of the euro was appreciated by 03 paises and closed at Rs 199.73 against the last day's trading of Rs 199.70, the State Bank of Pakistan reported.

The Japanese Yen remained unchanged to close at Rs 1.52, whereas an increase of 16 paises was witnessed in the exchange rate of the British Pound, which was traded at Rs 239.10 as compared to its last closing of Rs 238.94.

The exchange rates of Emirates Dirham and Saudi Riyal decreased by 03 paises to close at Rs 48.09 and Rs 47.07 respectively.

## Pak exports to CARs increase by US \$ 145

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to Prime Minister on Commerce and Investment, Abdul Razak Dawood on Friday said Pakistan exports to Central Asian Republics (CARs) countries increased to USD \$ 145 million in 2020-21 from USD \$ 104 million in 2019-20.

For six months, from July-December 2021, these exports were increased by 173 percent to USD\$ 134 million from USD 49 million during same period last year, the advisor said in a series of tweets.

The Ministry of Commerce's 'Silk Route Reconnect' initiative is now bearing results, he added. Razak Dawood said that the Pakistan-Uzbekistan Transit Trade Agreement was signed in 2021 at Tashkent and both the countries discussed to open banks in each other's country. - APP



## Briefs

## 24 more diagnosed cases of coronavirus

RAWALPINDI: As many as 24 more patients were tested positive of the COVID-19 during last 24 hours in the district, with seven each belonging to the Rawalpindi Cantonment and Rawal town, four from Potohar town, three from Gujjar Khan, two from Taxila and one from Kahutta.

According to the daily situation report issued by the District Corona Management centre on Friday, 23 Coronavirus confirmed patients were admitted to three city facilities, including nine of each in the Institute of Urology and Fauji Foundation hospital while five were admitted to the Benazir Bhutto Hospital.

The report updated that one patient was on a ventilator in critical condition, ten stable and 12 oxygen support. Around 5,273,838 people, including 44,550 health workers, had so far been vaccinated against the fatal disease since the start of the vaccination drive from March 10," it informed.

District Health Authority added that 38,314 patients had been discharged after recovery out of 39,682 tested positives so far, adding 144 were quarantined, including 121 at homes and 23 in the isolation centres.

In addition, the report updated that during the last 24 hours, 1,537 samples were collected, out of which 1,513 were declared negative, while the positivity rate was recorded at 1.56 per cent. - APP

## ITP continues crackdown against violators

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) has continued crackdown against the violators so as to ensure safety of life and property of the road-users in the capital city. All the zonal in-charge have been directed to come hard on the road-users found without driving license.

SSP (Traffic) Mazhar Iqbal in a news release on Friday said the crackdown would ensure road discipline in the city. He asked all the traffic wardens to deal with the violators politely. He directed the Islamabad Traffic Police Education Team to sensitize the motorists about road safety and traffic laws to avoid accidents. He appealed the citizens to cooperate with police to maintain traffic discipline in the city. - APP

## RWMC cleanliness drive in full swing

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) on Friday carried out cleanliness of nullahs and choked drains during continued rainfall for last four days, to ensure sanitation in several city areas.

According to Rawalpindi Waste Management Company spokesman, the officials were instructed to ensure cleanliness where some sanitation-related problems were pointed out. The spokesman informed that the company had deputed additional sanitary workers for the cleanliness operation and dredging of major drains to avoid any flood-like situation.

He said Rawalpindi Waste Management Company removed hundreds of tons of snow and rubbish from the Murree areas despite heavy snowfall and rains. He added that Mall Road, TMA, NADRA office, and GPO chowk areas in Murree were being cleared round the clock to make it accessible for the tourists.

Rawalpindi Waste Management Company has appealed to the citizens not to throw garbage and plastic bags in nullahs and drains, which cause obstruction, adding that RWMC would utilize all its resources to keep the city clean. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan Khazar Farhadov met with Munaza Hassan, Chairperson of the Climate Change Standing Committee and Secretary General of the Women's Parliamentary Caucus in the National Assembly of Pakistan. - DNA

## Speakers condemn Indian forces brutalities in Sopore

Dr Sheikh Waleed Rasool gave an emotional account of the massacre as he was present in the same town during carnage done by Indian Occupying forces. "It is a haunting memory that still haunts Kashmir people," Said Dr Rasool.

## STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Institute of Conflict Resolution (ICR), in collaboration with Legal Forum for Kashmir (LFK), organised a webinar titled "Sopore Massacre 1993: The barbarity that still haunts" on Thursday, January 6, 2022, commemorating the anniversary of the Sopore Massacre. The panelists included Ms Sahab Aslam, Founder ICR, Dr Muhammad Sajjad Khan, Director KPRI, Prof. Dr Shaheen Akhtar, Associate Professor National Defense University, Dr Muhammad Khan, Professor IUI, and Dr Sheikh Waleed Rasool, Director IDDDS.

While speaking to the panel, Dr Sajjad laid out the context by elaborating the history of the massacre. He highlighted that the massacre was state-sanctioned, and Indian paramilitary troops did butchery. It was the 9th battalion of Border Security Forces (BSF). He added further that laws and legislation provide blatant impunity to the perpetrators. The Indian judicial system is highly militarised, abolishing every rule of law to protect humanity, said Dr Sajjad.

Furthermore, he also mentioned that roads leading to justice are being deliberately blocked, and Indian Occupying Forces have been given a license to kill while the



world watches in silence, Dr Sheikh Waleed Rasool gave an emotional account of the massacre as he was present in the same town during carnage done by Indian Occupying forces. "It is a haunting memory that still haunts Kashmir people,"

Said Dr Rasool. He added further that Indian miseries started much before Independence and are still being perpetrated by Indian forces through draconian laws. Calling out the international community Dr Rasool said that the international com-

munity is biased when it comes to Kashmir and international humanitarian law stands nowhere in the case of Kashmir. He recommended that all those involved be held accountable for war crimes by identifying them and taking them to international forums. Moreover, it is the responsibility of the researchers and scholars to devise a strategy using data and building case studies.

The last speaker on the panel was Prof. Dr Shaheen Akhtar. Dr Akhtar overviewed Indian atrocities upon Kashmiris for decades and are still going on. She said every time Kashmiris voice for their fundamental rights; there comes systematic violence

from Indian forces with absolute impunity from the Indian government.

Dr Akhtar further added that India is advancing in their extremist ideas and implementation of Hindutva ideology through exterminating Muslim identity. If the world does not act at the right time, there would likely be more incidents of systematic and organised massacres said, Dr Shaheen.

While highlighting the role of the government of Pakistan, Dr Akhtar urged that the government of Pakistan shall facilitate the Kashmiri victims to approach international forums like ICC so that perpetrators of war crimes could be brought to justice.

## Government committed to welfare of journalists: Fawad

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain on Friday said the government believed in freedom of the press and it was committed to take steps for welfare of the journalists. The minister said this in a congratulatory message to newly elected office bearers of Press Association of Supreme Court. The minister congratulated Raja Mohsin Ijaz on being elected President



and Adeel Sarfaraz on being elected Secretary General of the association. He said that the Supreme Court coverage was a very important and sensitive and court reporters were fulfilling this responsibility

## 'PSX claims highest profit'

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain said on Friday that Pakistan stock market has earned highest aggregate profit worth Rs258b. In a tweet, the minister said that Pakistan stock market earned highest profit in ten years despite virus pandemic. - DNA

with an efficient manner. Court reporting plays an important role in increasing public confidence in the judiciary, said Chaudhry Fawad. The minister remarked the services of court reporters in providing information to the public on legal matters and important court decisions were commendable. "We will provide health cards to journalists on priority basis," Chaudhry Fawad assured. - APP

## Pakistan-China Friendship Hospital to complete Gwadar

ISLAMABAD: Under the game changer CPEC Project the Chinese government is financing the Pak-China Friendship Hospital being established over 68 acres of land which would be equipped with a modern medical facility for the people of the port city of Gwadar. The project has been proposed for implementation of Phase-II of 50-beds hospital to be constructed under the GDA Business Plan (Federal PSDP), an official source told APP while updating on the mega project. The Hospital would create employment opportunities for the local masses as a total of 40 local jobs would be generated whereas civil work had started by November 2020 which was expected to be completed by December 2022, he said. He informed that one out of six medical blocks (each 50 bedded) along with 20 percent of the residential blocks were completed. Under the proposed project remaining medical blocks, nursing and paramedical institutes, medical college, central laboratory, and other allied facilities would be constructed with a supply of medical equipment and machinery, he added. - DNA

## Bad weather forces PIA to divert three flight

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) diverted its three domestic and international flights to Islamabad International Airport (IIAP), scheduled to land at the Lahore airport due to bad weather conditions in the provincial capital of Punjab, Pakistan International Airlines spokesman Abdullah Hafee Khan said on Friday. "PK-302 the Karachi-Lahore, PK-264 Abu Dhabi-Lahore and PK-9760 Jeddah-Lahore have landed at Islamabad due to bad weather and 447 passengers of these flights will be taken to Lahore by special buses," he said in a press statement.

Meanwhile, the national flag carrier cancelled three flights including Lahore-Karachi (PK303), Lahore-Jeddah (PK-9759) and Lahore-Bahrain (PK-189), keeping in view the prevailing harsh weather conditions.

The spokesman requested the passengers to get confirmation of their flights from a 'Pakistan International Airlines Call Centre,' operating round-the-clock, before leaving home for airports. - APP

## Poet Mehboob Azmi remembered

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Famous humorous poet, translator and writer of various detective novels Mehboob Azmi 14 Anniversary today. On the occasion of the anniversary, Quran recitation will be held. Mehboob Azmi's two collections of poetry consisting of humorous poetry "Moqarar Kaha Bagar" and "Kasa Kahon" has been published. Detective novels "Shwola Series" and "Parmood Series" became popular in 60s.

Numerous books of his poetry and prose are being published, including Natya poetry, humorous ghazals and collections of humorous essays.

## RTA impounds 10 PSVs vehicles

RAWALPINDI: The Regional Transport Authority (RTA) Rawalpindi on Friday impounded 10 Public Service Vehicles (PSVs) and imposed fines for violation of overloading and overcharging.

According to a Regional Transport Authority spokesman, the team on the directives of the Regional Transport Authority Secretary conducted raids and checked Rawalpindi to Kotli-Sattian routes.

He said there was a zero-tolerance policy against overloading and overcharging and strict action in accordance with the law was being taken against the violators. During the operation against overcharging and overloading, 26 vehicles were penalized and 10 of them impounded, he added. - APP

## PBM distributes winter clothes

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM) on Friday distributed winter clothes, shawls, caps and socks among over 500 poor inmates of five Panahgahs, established at various localities in Islamabad.

Pakistan Baitul Mal (PBM) Managing Director, Malik Zaheer Abbas Khokhar himself monitored the distribution process to ensure accommodating every deserving person in Panahgahs.

Speaking on the occasion, Managing Director termed Prime Minister's initiative a caring and sympathetic approach towards the down trodden segments of the country.

"Protecting the daily wagers, laborers, passengers and other needy persons from the extremely cold weather conditions, such a kind gesture really describes the love and affection of Prime Minister for the vulnerable populace of the country", he added. - APP

## How to tackle unemployment, inflation

I will recommend that the appropriate economic policies may be designed to stabilize the economic growth and control the inflation and unemployment in the current economy

## INSHA REHMAN

INFLATION and unemployment are hot topics of all financial system especially in the economy of Pakistan. Whereas, "Employment" means work of different workers along with particular ending objective to get not many earnings that will be used for accomplishing their daily wants. Opposite of that, unemployment is a period when people are effectively looking for jobs and are reasonably content to work at any wage level that currently lies in the target market.

All policy-makers aim for achieving low inflation and unemployment. In Pakistan's context unemployment was one of the main problems due to the lack of adaptation in all under developing countries of the world. The high rate of unemployment in Pakistan is critical problem which is recognized by the industrialized states. On contrary, the exorbitant unemployment rate affects the financial system that leads to unstable monetary scenario. It tends to be a problematic in sense that in the case of unemployment, resources are under-utilized by skilled workers. The potential level of income and resources

are not as much as overall population in these countries therefore was not completely used. The Pakistan's government should focus on to the build employment opportunities throughout different useful exercises, use of every existing factor of yield. It is often fall out with the aim of single-digit inflation and unemployment percentage about around five percent could ensure that macro-economic strength is strengthened in an economy where everything is equal. Macroeconomic permanence is very essential to development, setting up, and growth of any country. The inflation and unemployment are

significant areas for economists and trade legislature. Main goals of complete employment as well as steady financial system throughout low inflation achieved through macroeconomic strategy. Finally, if I talk about the current inflation rate in Pakistan it is round about 11.5%. And same if, I talk about unemployment rate in Pakistan it is about 8.3% that is the main reason why Pakistan is not making process like other countries. I will recommend that the appropriate economic policies may be designed to stabilize the economic growth and control the inflation and unemployment in the

current economy. I will also recommend that every government should follow the same goal for the betterment or to achieve their economic objectives yeah, the policies or the strategies could be the different for achieving and sustaining on that goals instead of making new plans while starting a new reign of government.

And also the need is that we have to change our thoughts and stop blaming government. Infect, it is not wrong to say that firstly you have to change yourself for changing the economy or environment.

- The writer is student at SZABIST Islamabad



## Widening deficit

**T**HE 106 percent increase in the trade deficit on a year-on-year basis is a damning indictment of the government's efforts to balance the national current account. While the month of December showed a 1 billion decrease from November, it is important to take the larger picture into account—which firmly indicates that our import bill is bloated and we are not exporting nearly enough.

The problems on both sides are not new. The import numbers are hard to reduce because of the composition of commodities brought into the country. We have already been through the slimming down process of decreasing luxury and unnecessary imports; what is left behind is still a huge burden, consisting of food, raw materials for production and oil. Apart from food, Pakistan has no other recourse than to import both oil and raw materials for key industries.

The State Bank's attempt to prevent the outflow of foreign currency and prevent the devaluation of the Rupee has also not been effective. The most recent decision to reduce the time period for exports to bring proceeds back to Pakistan in 120 days instead of the original 180 has been seen by exporters as an unworkable request.

The only thing we can do at this point is to try and bring exports up to speed, something we have often attempted, but failed to see any tangible results in. Raw materials imported for various sectors such as textile and manufacturing must lead to more finished products and an overall increase in exports. This can only happen if the industries are not left with hours of no power and other barriers to trade.

It is important to note that the year's import and export numbers also indicate that the deficit is not likely to be overturned in the coming year. The policies implemented by the government so far have not been effective. The next year is likely to see the same issues of stalled production, high transportation costs and a severely devalued Rupee, unless the government looks to bring in more radical reforms to the export sector.

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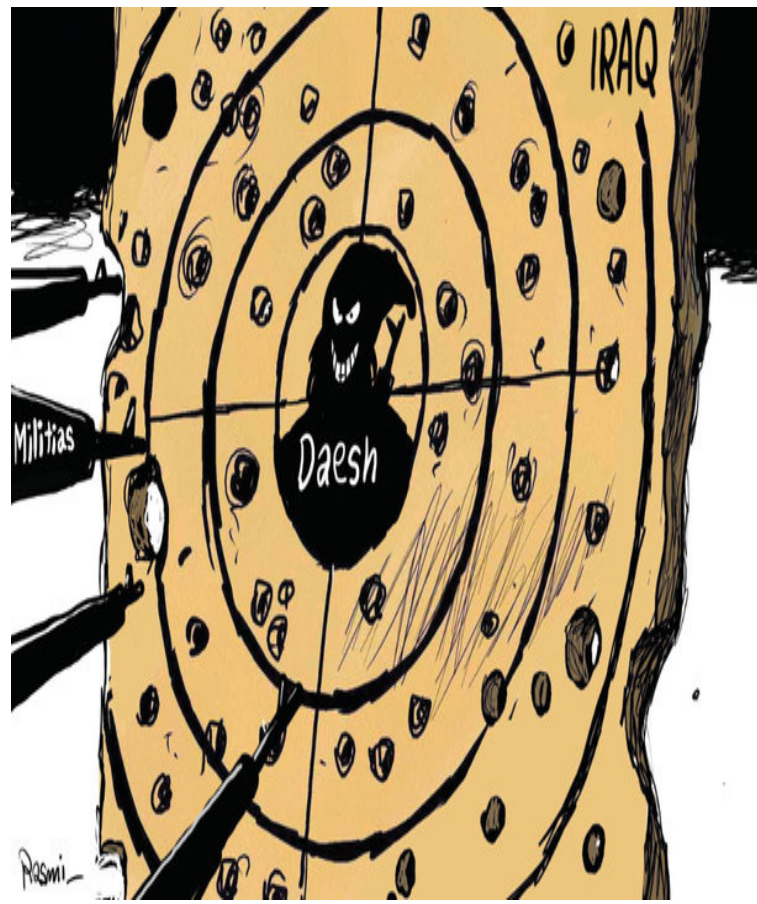
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## About video and audio leaks

**T**HE country's main political discourse has been degenerating for quite a while but now things have deteriorated to the extent that targeted audio and video leaks have become quite the norm. So now we have a leaked phone conversation exposing Maryam Nawaz and Pervez Rasheed talking trash about certain journalists on a certain TV program on a certain channel. And while that raises yet more questions, which will ultimately have to be answered, it's also left people wondering just what is going to be next. For, the one thing that one can be certain of amid all this uncertainty is that whichever side is targeted makes it something of a mission to do the same, or something similar, to the other.

PML-N leaders should now expect loaded questions at their press conferences. How was it, when all the time they made such a fuss about freedom of expression, etc, that they were so dead against some sections of the press? And media barons mentioned in the leak should also be made to explain their obvious, voluntary tilt towards political parties. Doesn't that amount to the media violating its impartiality and playing into the hands of politicians instead of acting as their social, political and moral compass?

For far too long every pot in politics has been calling every kettle black and getting away with it. Senior politicians ought to know that they embarrass themselves (more than anybody else) when they lower themselves to practices like recording and leaking video and audio conversations. But any sane society should also know that there are limits to the invasion of everybody's privacy, even public figures. Such things happen or are allowed to happen only in societies where the rule of law is very weak. And ours is just such a society. No wonder then that our politics also suffers as a result of it.

## How conspiracy theories enable violent extremism

Abdul Basit

Extremist groups use conspiracy theories as a rhetorical device to legitimise their violence and generally exploit those conspiracy theories which have a strong emotional appeal

**A** culture of conspiracy theories have always existed within extremist groups of all hues and stripes, but it exploded during the Covid-19 pandemic. Historically, extremist groups across the ideological spectrum have used conspiracy theories not only to produce violence and lure recruits, but to validate their Manichean worldviews as well. During crisis events such as pandemics and natural disasters, conspiracy theories proliferate quickly and gain widespread traction. In August 2020, the European Union's Counter Terrorism Coordinator, Gilles de Kerchove, warned about new forms of terrorism based on conspiracy theories. Although a culture of conspiracy theories existed within the extremist groups of all hues and stripes, it became more prominent during the Covid-19 pandemic resulting in an explosion of unverified myths and rumors. Conspiracy theories play a significant social and functional role as enablers and multipliers of violent extremism.

Extremist groups use conspiracy theories as a rhetorical device to legitimise their violence and generally exploit those conspiracy theories which have a strong emotional appeal. Conspiracy theories also act as an adhesive in keeping extremist groups together and pushing them in more extreme directions, resulting in violence. Against this backdrop, examining the potential role of conspiracy theories as enablers

and incubators of violent extremism is essential. Arguably, when paired with conspiracy theories and misinformation, extremist narratives carry mass appeal, especially if they are linked to prevailing socio-political and economic concerns.

In early December, the vigilante killing of a Sri Lankan national in Pakistan's Sialkot over alleged blasphemy charges brings into sharp focus the role of conspiracy theories in fueling extremist violence. The rumors surrounding the blasphemy allegations, which pushed the enraged mob towards violent extremism, were actually motivated by personal vendetta. In Pakistan, radical religious groups like Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan have created a hostile environment where even legislative efforts to remove the procedural lacunae, which have been abused for years, have been conspiratorially deemed as efforts to undermine Islam.

On the other hand, militant groups like Al Qaeda and Daesh have employed victimhood-based conspiratorial narratives that portrays Islam as being under siege, which requires fighting back by to defend the religion. In doing so, these groups advance their ideological narratives to attract recruits and funding and legitimise their extremist violence. By linking individual Muslim grievances with broader narratives of Muslims' decline, Al Qaeda and Daesh provide aggrieved individuals self-worth by allowing them to participate in events of historical significance, i.e., performing a sacred duty to glorify Islam.

Similarly, the 2021 Capitol attack epitomises the role of conspiracy theories as triggers of extremist violence. On January 6, a number of former US President Donald Trump's supporters, including far-right groups like QAnon and Proud Boys, stormed the US Capitol in Washington in a bid to disrupt the peaceful transition of power, following the incumbent President Joe Biden's election victory. They conspiratorially believed that Trump's mandate was deliberately stolen to eject him from power. QAnon is an online conspiracy group whose sudden rise underscores how conspiracy-driven violence translates into domestic terrorism in the

US. Their influence spread rapidly after the outbreak of Covid-19 and a survey in May 2021 found that almost one in five Americans believe in QAnon conspiracy theories. In 2019, the Federal Bureau of Investigation classified QAnon as a domestic terrorist threat. Similarly, in Europe, conspiracy theories linked to the emergence of new technologies (or technophobia) also result in violent incidents. The adherents of technophobia are known as neo-Luddites. In the 19th century UK, Luddites were a group of English textile workers who destroyed textile machinery, fearing machines would replace their role in the industry. The 'love jihad' conspiracy opines that Muslim men in India are luring Hindu women into marriages to convert them to Islam as part of the broader war by Muslims against India. Some states in India have passed anti-love jihad laws to discourage inter-faith marriages, especially of Hindu women to Muslim men. Meanwhile, 'land jihad' refers to the alleged plot by the Muslim community forcing Hindus to sell their native lands (in the countryside) by making it uninhabitable through cattle theft and throwing chopped heads of the cattle in the courtyard. On the other hand, the 'population jihad' pertains to a faster growth rate of the Muslim population aimed at outnumbering the Hindus in India. The use of conspiracy theories for extremist violence by terrorist groups across the ideological spectrum will have long-term implications for the global efforts to curb extremism and terrorism. The unhindered circulation of conspiracy theories would produce a climate conducive for undirected radicalism. The 5G attacks, outlined above, are only one manifestation of new forms of political violence related to emerging technologies. Similar concerns also exist regarding automation, Artificial Intelligence and robotics. If not equipped with the requisite skill sets and knowledge, people fear losing their jobs. Going forward, states involved in countering extremist narratives will have to focus on the potential role of conspiracy theories as enablers and producers of violent extremism as well.

—Courtesy: TRT World

## Pakistan is for all!

Asma Ishaq

“You are free; you are free to go to your temples. You are free to go to your mosques or to any other places of worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion, caste or creed—that has nothing to do with the business of the state”

**T**HE interpretation of Two Nation Theory reveals that it has been primarily founded on the rejection against intolerance, religious extremism and any kind of discriminatory behaviour carried by one group to another living in the society. Presenting the two nation theory, the visionary leader Quaid e Azam maintained the principles of tolerance, non-discrimination and peaceful co-existence everywhere, he got the chance to do so. The dear Quaid made it clear in the speeches, before and after the Independence that the ideology of Pakistan has the core of fundamental principles of Islam that are tolerance, peaceful coexistence and prosperity for everyone. Pakistan appeared on map of the world personifying every concept of sacrifice. People who had struggled for it and were dedicated for the cause of Pakistan Movement, worked harder until the fruit was born for them. On the eve of Independence, thousands of lives that were laid down during exodus of the Partition 1947 had the same intention to have done something exemplary. Likewise, an unparalleled generosity of some great people was shown by those who welcomed the empty handed individuals, reaching here. This tradition of sacrifice was not ended there. It continued and in every time of need the hundreds of soldiers' sacrifice sustained the freedom and integrity of this sacred Land. All these historic facts are there to learn one thing that Pakistan's movement, creation and survival, all have been based on the spirit of sacrifice.

Pakistan preserves its ideology of tolerance and peaceful co-existence in the teachings of Noble Prophet Muhammad PBUH. At the time of conquest of Makkah when the infidels who had been inflicting the unbearable hardships and pain onto the Prophet Muhammad PBUH, were anticipating any severe punishment. Yet! The Prophet Muhammad PBUH spoke gently to them, “You may go free! No reproach this day shall be on you. May Lord forgive you” The purpose of demonstrating the concept of general amnesty was to leave the legacy of tolerance and peaceful co-existence for all the followers coming ahead. An evident fact is that Prophet Muhammad PBUH has been appreciated not only as the most successful religious leader but also the most influential political figure. He knew it well that for developing the thriving society, individuals require the strong foundation of political, social and of economic stability. Above all, the tolerance leads ahead of all! Thus, with the norms of freedom and tolerance for all, Quaid established this state where people form every sect, every race, every caste and every religion would live peacefully. This is the most considered principle by Muhammad Ali Jinnah himself. He, throughout the life had fought against the religious

extremism and animosity having witnessed by the Hindus done to halt the Muslims in the Sub-Continent. In the post-independence speeches, Jinnah meant it clearly that Pakistan has been created for everyone to live with the fullest liberty, enjoying the respective belief system and the life style. He had the idea of a happy-tolerant Pakistan for all. In one often quoted part of speech Quaid had said, “You are free; you are free to go to your temples. You are free to go to your mosques or to any other places of worship in this State of Pakistan. You may belong to any religion, caste or creed—that has nothing to do with the business of the state.”

Pakistan is a wonderful country and proves to be more wonderful when it comes the human population. The vibrant, loving and loyal people. In the time of crisis, the masses stand together and becomes one to respond to any threat. Still, some loopholes are there that result in incidents causing the loss of public property and sadly even the precious human lives. Eventually, it causes an embarrassment at the national and international level both. Every time, such events leave oneself to analyze the factors and causes.

Likewise, there should be exposure-opportunity to different learning and healthy activities for masses at the public level. Exposure to the different intellectual platforms performs a constructive role in the individual's life. It is proven useful that when a person has various avenues to think about the on-going situation and events happening around, he thinks in much reflective. Instead of keeping oneself dedicated to the one-single school of thought, the person carries out the research for a better analysis.

The Dark Ages of Europe met an end when the theological transcripts were disseminated among the masses to be interpreted by own-individually. Then, there were constructive discussions and an ardent reading culture replaced the 'locked ideologies' forwarded from the Medieval Church. In that time, only one idea was considered the supreme that each human is capable enough to contemplate and conclude between the right or wrong for the given situation.

Revering one's land has been an old tradition in the human societies since the primitive time. Humans took care of the land not only for the habitation alone but also considered a blessing as it prospers the inhabitants there. Pakistan has been made of love, the very struggle for its creation was carried out in the name of Islam that again means peace and love for everyone. It is a legacy of people who were truly enlightened and intellectuals in both the words and acts too.

Pakistan still lives on love. It is a blessed land that love-helps the individuals to prosper. It gives everyone a fortune living way, from a laborer working on the street to the CEO in any leading commerce entity. It is an auspicious land that emanates love and peace for all. It welcomes each life and guarantees the freedom to live in accordance to their respective belief system. The institutions here, too, remember and establish such mechanism for freedom to everyone.

Let's be a nation that is an embodiment of tolerance, hard-work, wisdom and more over love and peace for everyone. All must work to be a physical manifestation of what this land means for! Everyone must remember that Pakistan is synonym to love, peace and prosperity! Above all! Pakistan is for all! Happy 2022!

—Asma Ishaq teaches English Language and Literature to senior classes

## US turns a blind eye to Israeli violence against Palestinians

Ray Hanania



It is a staggering achievement for Israel, but not significant enough to get Israeli officials to acknowledge their gov't's brutality

**L**AST year was the deadliest for Israeli violence against Palestinians since 2014, when Israel invaded the Gaza Strip and killed more than 2,310 Palestinians, according to B'Tselem, the Israeli human rights watchdog. Data that exposes Israel's propaganda lies is one reason Israel wants to outlaw organizations such as B'Tselem. Israel murdered

313 Palestinians in the occupied territories in 2021, while 895 Palestinians had their homes demolished by Israeli soldiers and armed Jewish settlers using US-made Caterpillar D9 bulldozers.

It is a staggering achievement for Israel, but not significant enough to get Israeli officials to acknowledge their government's brutality. Instead, most Israelis have been directing their anger this week at Emma Watson, the British actress best known for playing Hermione Granger in the Harry Potter films. The cause of their outrage was Watson sharing an Instagram post with an image of a sign that read “Solidarity is a verb.” Israel's UN envoy Gilad Erdan said that Watson's message was “fiction” like her films. Former Israeli ambassador to the UN Danny Danon was more brutal, calling Watson an “antisemite.”

Any time Israelis murder a Palestinian civilian without first bringing them to a court of justice or applying the international rule that people are innocent until proven guilty, they deflect public outrage by declaring the murdered civilians “terrorists,” or accusing those who criticize Israel's policies of being antisemitic. Israelis seem to believe the public is more concerned about who is an antisemite than it is about who is a murderer and takes innocent civilian lives. Lost in the fog of Israel's propaganda war

against truth are the details of death.

In addition to the 295 homes destroyed and 895 people thrown on to the street, another 548 nonresidential structures were demolished, including cisterns, water wells, warehouses, agricultural and farming structures, businesses and Palestinian public buildings. This was the highest number since 2012. Israel insists that its use of live fire to respond to protests, in one case killing a young Palestinian who was hunting birds “too close” to the fence built on the Gaza side of the border with Israel, is justified. I am certain that the shocking B'Tselem report, which Israel hopes to bury by outlawing the human rights organization, will not make it into any major news report in the US media.

The US media would not want to embarrass Israel, and thereby embarrass themselves for having turned a blind eye to morality, ethics and human decency.

Can you imagine a major US newspaper such as The New York Times running a headline that reads: “Israel kills 313 Palestinians,” with the subhead “And libels Emma Watson as an ‘antisemite’ for suggesting Palestinians have rights”? Does the term “antisemite” have any meaning now? Or has it been ground into insignificance by Israeli propaganda and anger?

—Courtesy: Arab News



## Briefs

## Spain beats Poland to advance to ATP Cup final

WEB DESK

SYDNEY: Roberto Bautista Agut clinched Spain's spot in the ATP Cup final with a 7-6 (6), 2-6, 7-6 (5) victory over Poland's Hubert Hurkacz on Friday.

In the opening singles match, Pablo Carreno Busta gave Spain the advantage with a 6-2, 6-1 win against late replacement Jan Zielinski. Kamil Majchrzak went 3-0 for Poland in the group stages, but was forced into isolation due to a positive COVID-19 test.

Russia and Canada will meet on Saturday to play for the other spot in Sunday's final. Two years ago, Bautista Agut played a leading role during Spain's run to the final, which Serbia won. The 33-year-old Bautista Agut has won all four of his matches at No. 1 singles in this tournament to lead the way for the two-time finalists. Majchrzak, who is experiencing minor symptoms from his illness, announced his positive COVID-19 test moments before he was due to step on court to face Carreno Busta.

"It's a match I'll always remember; both of us could have got the win today," Carreno Busta said. "This is our game, this is tennis and today I was the one who got the win." Hurkacz saved five match points before finally succumbing to Bautista Agut. "Sometimes you get the win on the first (match) point."

## IHC orders demolition of Navy Club

FROM PAGE 01

to issue a no-objection certificate (NOC) to the Pakistan Navy, as the institution had encroached on National Park's land.

"The sailing club is illegal, and therefore, it should be demolished in three weeks," the IHC judge said.

The inauguration of the club by the former naval chief, Admiral (ret'd) Zafar Mahmood Abbasi was also declared unconstitutional by the court.

The court ordered to initiate "criminal" and "misconduct" proceedings against the former navy chief and others responsible for the construction of the "illegal" sailing club.

## Fencing issue to be resolved through...

FROM PAGE 01

Border fencing was in the interest of both Pakistan and Afghanistan to regulate and facilitate trade and regulate movement through border so that unscrupulous elements do not get any opportunity to misuse Afghanistan or Pakistan's land for their nefarious designs.

"It was meant to regulate movement across the border through visa and we are moving forward to that end," he added.

Qureshi said, 94 to 95 per cent work has been completed on the border fencing and country suffered difficulties, hurdles and martyrdoms in the way.

The foreign minister said that he was hopeful that the issue would be resolved through diplomatic channels, talks.

"There were some incidents that we have taken up with the Afghan authorities, our talks were ongoing and they have given a positive response," the FM said.

"We must not forget there are spoilers who do not wish to see the exemplary friendly relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan moving forward. They do create hurdles and would continue with it but we will thwart their nefarious plans."

He said that while on way to muster up support from international community to help Afghan people facing crisis situation, Pakistan has recently contacted neighbours of Afghanistan and established a new platform titled 'The Immediate Neighbours of Afghanistan' adding that its first meeting took place in Islamabad, another in Tehran and the third meeting was scheduled to take place in China in February. — APP

## Djokovic fans protest shock Australia detention

"We want to show that what Novak stands for his anti-public health, anti-social solidarity, and we stand for the freedom of refugees who've been held for eight-plus years," said Zak Barzovoy, a 27-year-old student

AGENCIES

MELBOURNE: Novak Djokovic's fans rallied in the rain Friday to protest the tennis superstar's shock detention in Australia, a development that reverberated globally and sparked an angry reaction from Serbia. About 50 protesters — a mix of tennis fans, anti-vaccine demonstrators, and immigrant rights activists — congregated on Orthodox Christmas Day outside a detention facility in Melbourne.

"We came out to support him just because it's our Christmas and obviously he's going through a lot," said fan Sash Aleksic on the sodden street outside the building.

"There would obviously be a lot more people here if people did not have family obligations today." Not everyone was a supporter, though. "Refugees are welcome here, Djokovic is not," chanted a group of protesters. Police intervened to separate them from the Novak fans.

"We want to show that what Novak stands for his anti-public health, anti-social solidarity, and we stand for the freedom of refugees who've been held for eight-plus years," said Zak Barzovoy, a 27-year-old student.

The former Park Hotel, now officially known as an "alternative place of detention", holds about 32 refugees and asylum seekers trapped in Australia's headline immigration system. It is believed the world's top tennis player is among them, although border authorities



have refused to confirm where Djokovic is detained. The five-story centre gained notoriety last year when a fire forced migrants to be evacuated, and maggots were allegedly found in the food.

Djokovic was held after arrival in Australia this week — his visa revoked for failing to meet the country's tough pandemic restrictions. Foreigners are still mostly banned from travel to Australia, and those granted entries must be fully vaccinated or have a medical exemption. Australian authorities said the 34-year-old Serbian star — who has declared himself against vaccines and claimed to have an exemption — provided evidence of

neither and was detained, pending deportation.

Djokovic secured an exemption to play in the Australian Open this month. But the Australian government said he did not meet the stricter standard required to enter the country. In fiery remarks at a Belgrade rally, his father Srđan Djokovic told a crowd his son was the victim of a "political witch hunt" and "corona fascism".

"Jesus was crucified and endured many things but is still alive among us," he said on Orthodox Christmas Eve. "Novak is also crucified... the best sportsman and man in the world."

His mother Djina Djokovic told

reporters at the rally: "They are keeping him as a prisoner. It is just not fair. It is not human." Many Australians, who have endured nearly two years of travel bans and rolling lockdowns, were outraged when they learned the player was given a vaccine exemption.

Tennis players seemed divided, but some rallied around Novak. "Look I definitely believe in taking action, I got vaccinated because of others and for my mum's health, but how we are handling Novak's situation is bad, really bad," said Australian star Nick Kyrgios.

"This is one of our great champions but at the end of the day, he is human," he said on social media.

## Novak not being held captive: Australia

WEB DESK

SYDNEY: Novak Djokovic is not being held captive in Australia, a top official says, as the men's world number one tennis player faces deportation over Covid vaccination rules. The Serb star remains in immigration detention in Melbourne after being denied entry on Wednesday.

A court challenge is due on Monday, a week before the Australian Open begins. Czech player Renata Voracova has also had her Australian visa cancelled, local media reported on Friday.

Now more uncertainty surrounds the schedule of the tournament that Djokovic has won nine times. A 10th win would see him become the men's most successful player, with 21 Grand Slams.

Djokovic, who has said he is opposed to vaccination, had been granted a medical exemption to play in the tournament for unspecified reasons, in a decision that infuriated many Australians.

## Chinese, Afghan envoys...

FROM PAGE 01

Afghanistan and helping Kabul to rebuild its economy via trade activities.

In September 2021, China announced assistance of RMB200 million materials to Afghanistan. The first batch of aid, mainly including warm materials, arrived in Afghanistan from China on September 29. Humanitarian assistance donated by China is being distributed to needy people in different parts of the country.

Besides humanitarian assistance, China was the first to buy Chahgoza (pine nuts) from Afghanistan to help Afghan farmers in the chronic economic hardships. The first plane carrying chahgoza took off from Kabul and arrived in Shanghai on November 1, which laid the foundation of the "Pine nut air corridor" between the two countries. So far, Afghanistan has sent 10 flights of pine nuts to China and it is interesting to note that 26 tons of chahgoza were sold in China in just a few minutes.

## SAARC Summit: Pak rejects Indian claims

FROM PAGE 01

summit had not been held since 2014.

"There has been no material change in the situation since then. Therefore, there is still no consensus that would permit holding of the summit," he was quoted as saying by Hindustan Times.

In a statement issued, FO spokesperson Asim Iftikhar Ahmad said "India's obstruction of the Saarc process was an established fact".

"Motivated by its partisan reasons, and acting in violation of charter provisions requiring exclusion of bilateral issues, India was responsible for stymieing the 19th Saarc summit scheduled to take place in Pakistan in 2016," he said.

The spokesperson added that India's "myopic attitude" was rendering a valuable platform for regional cooperation increasingly dysfunctional.

"Pakistan hoped that India would review its self-serving approach and enable the Saarc process to move forward for the progress and prosperity of the peoples of South Asia. For its part, Pakistan remained ready to host the next Saarc summit as soon as the artificial obstacles created in its way were removed," the statement said.

During his media briefing, the Indian official was also asked about Prime Minister Imran Khan's appeal to the international community to take action on the situation in IIOJK.

According to the Hindustan Times report, Bagchi responded by saying that occupied Kashmir was "an inalienable and integral part of India".

He was also quoted as saying that the remarks were made "by the prime minister of such a country that openly supports cross-border terrorism, which gave refuge to Osama bin Laden, and whose shocking human rights record the world is familiar with".

The FO spokesperson addressed these comments and said that no amount of obfuscation and misrepresentation by Indian officials could hide India's state-terrorism in IIOJK.

"The egregious violations of human rights of the Kashmiri people had been extensively documented by the international human rights machinery [...]. In addition, Pakistan had shared several dossiers with the international community on India's unabated human rights abuses in IIOJK and its state-terrorism against the Kashmiri people and in Pakistan," the FO spokesperson said.

"India must abjure the use of state-terrorism as an instrument of policy. Pakistan will continue to resolutely oppose Indian machinations and expose its anti-peace agenda imperiling regional peace and security," he added.

He called on India to recognise the reality of the just, legitimate and indigenous Kashmiri struggle, respect the wishes of the Kashmiri people, and grant them their inalienable right to self-determination in accordance with the UN Charter and the relevant UN Security Council resolutions.

## Simona Halep targets top 10 after injury-hit season

SPORTS DESK

MELBOURNE: Former Wimbledon champion Simona Halep says she is confident she can climb back into the world's top 10 this year.

The 30-year-old Romanian struggled with injuries in 2021 and has dropped to 20th in the rankings as a result. Halep reached the semi-finals at the Melbourne Summer Set — a warm-up for the Australian Open — on Friday.

"I want to finish the year in the top 10 if it is possible. This is the goal and the dream," said Halep, who won the 2018 French Open and Wimbledon in 2019. "I know it's going to be difficult. But also I know it's possible."

Halep suffered a calf injury at the Italian Open in May and was subsequently ruled out of Roland Garros, Wimbledon and the Olympics.

In August, the former world number one dropped out of the top 10 after 373 consecutive weeks.

Halep returned to court at the back



end of 2021 before calling time on the season after withdrawing from her Linz semi-final in November with a knee injury. She has started the new season with three victories in Melbourne, but was made to work hard for a 6-2 5-7 6-4 win over Swiss sixth seed

Viktorija Golubic on Friday.

On trying to regain her place in the top 10, Halep added: "I embrace it. I like the challenge. I like the pressure. It's good that I have a restart, refresh in my mind. "Of course it's not what I wanted, but I was injured so I couldn't play. That's where I'm where I am. "I feel like it's possible to get back to top 10. I have that confidence. I have just to put hard work and to trust."

If second seed Halep beats Chinese qualifier Zheng Qinwen, she could face Naomi Osaka in the final.

Japanese top seed Osaka also reached the last four with a 6-1 7-5 win over Germany's Andrea Petkovic. The four-time major champion plays Russian third seed Veronika Kudermetova next. Meanwhile, Australia's world number one Ashleigh Barty reached the Adelaide International semi-finals with a 6-3 6-4 victory over American Sofia Kenin.

Barty, 25, is also making her own comeback after ending her 2021 season early because of quarantine rules.

## Barcelona eye return to La Liga's top four

MADRID: Barcelona could return to La Liga's Champions League spots for the first time in four months on Saturday as the beginnings of recovery under Xavi Hernandez appear finally to be taking shape.

Barca is unbeaten in five games ahead of their trip to Granada this weekend, even if the 15-point gap to Real Madrid serves as a painful reminder of the long road that still lies ahead. Narrow wins over Linares Deportivo of Spain's third tier, Mallorca and Elche, to go with draws with Sevilla and Osasuna, might not, until very recently, have been taken as a sign of progress at Camp Nou.

But for a team that last month was sitting ninth in the table, there is at least a sense now that a youthful Barcelona side is starting to turn a corner.

Performances have been encouraging, with last weekend's 1-0 grind against Mallorca particularly noteworthy for its resilience as a patched-up team, deprived of eight players due to Covid, held on for a gutsy victory. Optimism is being harnessed off the pitch too, with the club's president Joan Laporta this week determined to drive home the message that Barcelona's revival is now in full flow. "Everyone should get ready because we're back, and with the desire to do good things," Laporta said at the presentation of new signing, Ferran Torres, on Monday. — APP

## 3 Iranian clubs barred from 2022 ACL

KUALA LUMPUR: Three Iranian soccer clubs were barred Friday from the Asian Champions League, including 2020 finalist Persepolis, after having their license to compete withdrawn. The Asian Football Confederation did not specify why Persepolis, Esteghlal and Gol Gohar Sirjan are now ineligible to play in the 2022 competition. The AFC cited licensing regulations the clubs failed to meet which relate to issues including timely submission of documents about stadium safety, having fully qualified staff and details of who owns clubs. — APP

## Barty, Osaka advance in Aussie warmups

MELBOURNE: Top-ranked Ash Barty reached the Adelaide International semifinals with a 6-3, 6-4 win over 2020 Australian Open champion Sofia Kenin on Friday and Rafael Nadal advanced in Melbourne via a walkover in tune-up tournaments ahead of the year's first Grand Slam event. Barty used her usual backhand slice and powerful forehand drive but also hit 17 aces and won 31 of 32 points on her first serve to advance. Barty lost to Kenin in the Australian Open semifinals at Melbourne Park two years ago.

"I was able to look after my service games pretty well and it was a lot of fun playing out here again and to get a little bit more court time and to start to play a little bit better," Barty said.

On Wednesday, Barty beat Coco



Gauff in three sets in her season opener after almost four months since her last competitive outing. "That's what you want. It's nice to come out here right from the start and know that you have to bring your very best level," the 2021 Wimbledon champion said. "Obviously looking at these last two matches, there's still work to do."



Barty will meet defending champion Iga Swiatek in the semifinals. The 2020 French Open champion beat two-time Australian Open champion Victoria Azarenka 6-3, 2-6, 6-1. Earlier, seventh-seeded Elena Rybakina beat Shelby Rogers 3-6, 6-3, 6-2 to advance to the semifinals. Nadal, a 20-time Grand Slam singles champion, advanced without taking

the court when Dutch opponent Tallon Griekspoor withdrew. It was only one day after Nadal played and won his first competitive match in five months, beating Ricardas Berankis in straight sets. Nadal will play unseeded Emil Ruusuvuori on Saturday for a place in the final. Ruusuvuori beat Alex Molcan 6-2, 6-1. In other men's play Friday, Marin Cilic and top-seeded Gael Monfils won in the Adelaide International quarterfinals. Cilic beat Laslo Djere 6-3, 6-2 and Monfils defeated sixth-seeded Tommy Paul 6-4, 6-1.

Top-seeded Naomi Osaka and second-seeded Simona Halep advanced to the semifinals of the Summer Set 1 tune-up event in Melbourne. Osaka beat Andre Petkovic 6-1, 7-5 while Halep defeated Viktorija Golubic 6-2, 5-7, 6-4. — Agencies

## Ashes: Bairstow's century lifts England

SPORTS DESK

SYDNEY: A timely century by Jonny Bairstow and a half-century for Ben Stokes helped England claw its way back to 258-7 after a terrible start to the third day of the fourth Ashes test.

Bairstow scored England's first century in its seventh innings this series against Australia.

It was the headline performance Friday, when England had slumped to 36-4 by lunch before its middle order counterattacked to get back into the match on another rain-affected day at the Sydney Cricket Ground.

In clear pain after being struck on the thumb by a Pat Cummins delivery and with batting partners running out, Bairstow began attacking at nearly every ball and brought up a deserved century moments before stumps by slashing a Cummins delivery for four. His 138-ball hundred contained 12 boundaries and three sixes.

"I'm absolutely over the moon," Bairstow said. "To be honest, it's the hardest (century) so far given

the circumstances.

"They've got a very good bowling attack and it's one of those where I'm just delighted to reach three figures for England again."

Bairstow celebrated his seventh test century by running with arms aloft halfway toward the England

team's dressing room, where his teammates had gathered to acknowledge a vital innings in the context of the match which had earlier looked to be slipping away.

England has already lost the five-match series with three straight losses, allowing Australia to retain

the Ashes, but are determined to get something positive out of the tour. At stumps, Bairstow was 103 not out and Jack Leach was on four, with England trailing Australia by 158 runs. Earlier, Stokes made a typically swashbuckling 66 of 91 balls, including nine fours and a

towering six over cover, as part of a 128-run partnership with Bairstow which steadied England's innings after its early collapse. "The partnership with Ben was a big one and it was tough there and I'm delighted with it," Bairstow said. Nathan Lyon eventually ended the 128-run partnership by trapping Stokes lbw with a ball that kept low.

He was perhaps fortunate to get that far having before tea survived a missed caught-and-bowled chance off Cummins and then successfully reviewing an on-field lbw 'out' decision where the ball had in fact missed the pad and flicked the off stump but not dislodged the bail. Shortly after raising his half-century off 80 balls, Bairstow was struck by a ball from Cummins that reared up off the pitch and struck the batsman on the thumb. Bairstow received treatment on the ground before resuming his innings, but was visibly in discomfort holding the bat.

"It takes quite a bit to get me off the park," Bairstow said. "Yes it was sore but in the circumstances of the game it was a decision I made to stay out there."





## Briefs

## UAE works on Friday for first time

DUBAI: Employees and schoolchildren juggled work and studies with weekly Muslim prayers on the first ever working Friday in the United Arab Emirates as the Gulf country formally switched to a Saturday-Sunday weekend. Some grumbled at the change and businesses were split, with many moving to the Western-style weekend but other private firms sticking with Fridays and Saturdays, as in other Gulf states.

The weekly day of prayer has always been a free day in the UAE, which had previously observed a Thursday-Friday weekend until 2006. However, mosques appeared busy as worshippers carrying prayer mats arrived as usual, before many of them later headed back to the office.

"I'd rather take (Friday) off," said 22-year-old Briton Rachel King, who works in the hospitality industry and has been living in Dubai for six months. "That is what we all know and love, having a Friday off and going to certain places that are open and we could do things. But now it is going to be Saturday." The UAE made the surprise announcement of the weekend switch for the public sector in December as it grapples with rising competition in international business from other Gulf countries, particularly Saudi Arabia.

Government bodies and schools will operate four-and-a-half-days per week, closing at 12 pm on Fridays for a fixed prayer time of 1:15 pm, whereas the Muslim prayer schedule usually depends on the position of the sun. Out of 195 businesses polled by human resources consultancy Mercer, only 23 percent were preparing to follow the four-and-a-half-day week, but more than half would switch to Saturday-Sunday weekends. — APP

## India reports 117,100 new Covid cases

NEW DELHI: India's COVID-19 tally rose to 35,226,386 on Friday, as 117,100 new cases were registered during the past 24 hours across the country, showed the federal health ministry's latest data. Besides, 302 more deaths were recorded since Thursday morning, taking the death toll to 483,178.

This is a steep rise in the numbers of new cases in a day, as on Thursday 90,928 new cases and on Wednesday 58,097 new cases were registered. Currently there are 371,363 active cases in the country, with an increase of 85,962 during the period. This is the 10th consecutive day when the number of active cases rose in the country. A total of 34,371,845 people have recovered and been discharged from hospitals so far, with 30,836 new recoveries. Meanwhile, the country's Omicron tally has reached 3,007, out of which Maharashtra and Delhi have reported 876 and 465 cases, respectively. Till now 1,199 patients have been discharged, as per the federal health ministry's data. — APP

## Criticized RSS on Fb; Kerala leader sent to jail

ISLAMABAD, Jan 7 (AP-F): Kerala Police arrested Popular Front of India local leader Usman Hameed over his Facebook post criticizing Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and Kerala Police on yesterday.

Hameed, a 41-year-old from Kattappana in Idukki is the Idukki district committee member of the Popular Front of India, Kashmir Media Service reported. He was charged under section 153A of the Indian Penal Code (promoting enmity between groups on the grounds of religion) and sent to Sub Jail Peermade for 14 days, Kattappana Police Station SHO told media. In a Facebook post on Tuesday, 4 January, Hameed criticized RSS and other Hindu groups for inciting riots in the state and Kerala Police's alleged inaction against those saffron groups. He also shared a news story on social media which was about the state government intelligence informing that the RSS is making headway for state-wide riots. — APP



BAKU: Pakistan's ambassador to Azerbaijan Bilal Hayee met with Hikmet Hajiyev, the President's aide on political affairs. Both sides discussed Pakistan Azerbaijan relations and priorities for 2022. As desired by our leadership, economic cooperation and people to people contacts will remain high on bilateral agenda. — DNA

## France, Germany 'agree to disagree' on nuclear power

The green energy list, known as the EU's "taxonomy", was meant to have landed before the end of 2021, but deep divisions between member states have held it up

BERLIN: Germany and France have "agreed to disagree" on the EU's move to label nuclear energy as green, German Europe Minister Anna Luehrmann said Friday, denying any conflict between the two European giants on the issue. The European Commission has issued a draft proposal to label nuclear energy, along with natural gas, as "green" sources eligible for investment under rules for promoting a carbon-neutral

future. France has led the charge for nuclear power — its main energy source — to be included on the list, while Germany, which is in the process of shutting all its nuclear plants, remains fiercely opposed to the move. "We know what the French position is on nuclear power and the French side knows very well what the German position is," Luehrmann told AFP in an interview. "So we can say we agree

to disagree on the issue and then turn to the issues where we want to move forward... from climate protection to sustainable investments, to the issue of European strategic sovereignty." The green energy list, known as the EU's "taxonomy", was meant to have landed before the end of 2021, but deep divisions between member states have held it up. The European Commis-

sion quietly distributed a draft text of its plans on New Year's Eve and said it had started consulting with member states on the proposal. If a majority of member states back it, it will become EU law, coming into effect from 2023. France, which gets about 70 percent of its power from nuclear, signed a statement supporting nuclear power with nine other EU states in October, including Poland and the Czech Republic.

But Germany's Environment Minister Steffi Lemke has said it would be "absolutely wrong" to include nuclear energy on the list, arguing that atomic power "can lead to devastating environmental catastrophes". Germany shut down three of its six remaining nuclear power plants late last year and will close the others by the end of 2022, following Angela Merkel's timetable for phasing out atomic energy.

"We have made it very clear as the entire federal government that we are against the inclusion of nuclear as a sustainable financial product," Luehrmann said. "We have to go in a different direction for climate reasons, but also for reasons of political independence, and I see that as an argument against both gas and nuclear energy. Because the uranium has to come from somewhere," she said. — Agencies

## Turkish citizenship rules changes

ANKARA: The Turkish government on Thursday changed the regulation for foreigners to acquire Turkish citizenship in a bid to support its Turkish lira, according to a decree issued in the Turkish official gazette. Foreigners who make a certain investment in the country, buy real estate or make a fixed capital investment could get Turkish citizenship, it said.

For example, foreigners who own real estate in Turkey worth at least 250,000 U.S. dollars and hold the property for at least three years will be able to acquire Turkish citizenship.

According to the new regulation, the foreign currency obtained from the sale of property to foreigners will be sold to the central bank through a local bank and converted into Turkish lira. The currency that foreigners keep in the bank for investment will also be converted into the local currency, it said. The regulation comes amid the currency turmoil in Turkey. — APP

## At least 20 trapped in building collapse

BEIJING: At least 20 people were trapped after an explosion on Friday caused a building housing a government canteen to collapse in the Chinese city of Chongqing, according to state media. The blast at 12:10 pm (0410 GMT) was caused by a "suspected gas leak" in a canteen and caused a neighbourhood committee building to collapse, trapping people inside, the state-run People's Daily reported.

Authorities have sent around 260 rescue workers and 50 vehicles to the site, state broadcaster CCTV reported, adding that the cause of the blast was under investigation.

A video posted on the official Weibo page of China's fire department showed orange-clad workers in hard hats climbing through large chunks of rubble.

Nine people have been rescued from the site, the department said. — Agencies



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Industries and Production, Makhdum Khusro Bakhtyar, Federal Minister for Energy and Fertilizer, Muhammad Hamad Azhar, addressing a joint press conference at Media center, PTV HQ. — APP

## 13 passengers on Italy-India flight escape quarantine

NEWS DESK

NEW DELHI: At least 13 passengers, who tested positive for Covid-19 upon their arrival in the Indian city of Amritsar, have escaped institutional quarantine. They were among 125 infected passengers on a chartered flight from Milan which landed on Wednesday afternoon. While nine of them escaped from the airport, four others ran away from a local hospital, city official Sherjang Singh told BBC Punjabi.

Police said they would file complaints against all of them. India reported more than 100,000 cases on Friday — experts believe Omicron is causing the sharp jump in infections the country has seen in the last week. A total of 160 passengers were travelling on the Italy-India flight. Reports said that children and infants — about 19 of them — were exempt from testing. TV footage showed ambulances lined up at the airport to take the infected passengers to hospital as crowds gathered outside the gates. All infected passengers were admitted to the city's Guru Nanak Dev Hospital, officials said. It's unclear how nine of the passengers escaped from the airport, but authorities at the hospital allegedly "tricked the health officials". Police said that they have initiated proceedings to cancel their passports.

"If they don't return by morning, we will publish their photos in the newspaper and register cases against them," Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar Gurbpreet Singh Khehra told NDTV. Punjab, where Amritsar is located, is among several states that have brought back curbs to fight the rise in Covid-19 infections. On Tuesday, the state imposed a temporary night curfew and shut all schools and colleges.

## Bulgaria vs North Macedonia — is there a way forward?

Bulgaria's new pro-European govt in Sofia promises to find a way out of the impasse resulting from the veto on the opening of accession talks with Skopje. What chance of compromise between two Balkan neighbors?

THERE is no rational explanation for the Bulgarian veto on the opening of accession talks with North Macedonia. The nationalists in the former government were simply out to boost their dwindling popularity. But why the enthusiastic consensus? Bulgarians seem to have expected the Macedonians, once "freed" from Serbian hegemony, to return to them — and were thus disappointed to discover their neighbors had developed a solid national identity of their own. The Greeks' refusal to accept the newcomer's initial name may well have informed the Bulgarian national ego. But whereas Athens presented Skopje with clear conditions, Bulgaria's anger today seems vague and illogical. It sets a dangerous precedent that could well be used to stoke tensions between Serbs and Kosovars, Poles and Ukrainians and all other countries with divergent views on their shared history. The hopes of North Macedonia that the EU might force Bulgaria to lift the veto are exaggerated: France favors a deepening of the Union over its enlargement, while extreme right parties are skeptical about admitting countries with substantial Muslim populations — like North

Macedonia. **Whose version of history?** Finding of a solution to the deadlock implies a compromise that would allow both sides to claim victory. So what are the Bulgarians' demands? First, they want their Macedonian neighbors to admit their Bulgarian origins. In the process, the official formulation of a "common history" has suddenly been abandoned, with the Macedonians accused of stealing Bulgarian history. The unfortunate conflation of historical fact and national identity means both sides assume that recognizing specific events from the past automatically makes you either Bulgarian or Macedonian. The new liberal leadership in Sofia has promised to enlarge the scope of negotiations. To date talks have revolved around the bilateral commission on history, which has the impossible task of establishing one truth about the past. Prime Minister Petkov's plan now is to launch talks on transportation, business, culture, security — fields arguably more relevant to the enlargement process. Expert teams are expected to furnish their results by the end of the French presidency in July 2022. The commission of historians has no

deadline and is supposed to continue working throughout the accession process. **Hate speech** One rather vague Bulgarian demand is the prevention of hate speech. Examples vary from offensive graffiti on the walls in Skopje to the desecration of Bulgarian WW2 soldiers' graves. The veto has unsurprisingly heightened feelings of negativity: a recent poll showed that over 50% of Macedonians see their eastern neighbor as a hostile country. The tendency of Bulgarians to refer to the neighboring nation and its language as "invented" only contributes to the mutual animosity. If there is a problem with history, it is arguably linked to the pro-fascist regime in Bulgaria — complicit in Nazi crimes — and the early period of Yugoslav communism, when many Bulgarians in Yugoslav Macedonia were forcefully assimilated. For the moment, however, neither country is ready to assume their historical guilt and therefore prefers to point the finger. **In the minority** Sofia's third grievance is human rights. Discrimination of people who identify as Bulgarians in Macedonia may be a serious concern, nevertheless, substantial proof is lacking. No cases have yet

made it to the European Court of Human Rights; the examples cited are usually those of people with dual nationality, such as the mayor of Skopje or the singer at the Eurovision contest, despite the fact that neither was actually prevented from realizing their ambitions. At the same time, PM Petkov has come under similar pressure for having dual — this time, Canadian — citizenship. Nevertheless, the demands of Sofia are not unfounded. 120,000 citizens of North Macedonia have been granted Bulgarian citizenship: 12 times more than the Vlachs who enjoy minority status under the North Macedonian constitution. And where are the 120,000? Everyone knows the answer: in western Europe. Bulgarian passports are often acquired by bribing Bulgarian officials and faking family documents. **Ethnicity highly political** So, what happens if, as predicted, only 3000 persons end up identifying as Bulgarians in North Macedonia's 2021 census, which is still being processed? Sofia has the answer: they will have been discriminated against and intimidated. Inscrubing the Bulgarian minority into the North Macedonia constitution be-

fore the "and others" may seem easy, but it would require a two-thirds parliamentary majority. Moreover, the Macedonian opposition is guaranteed to fight back. Things are uncertain on the Bulgarian side as well. Recognizing a Bulgarian minority in North Macedonia would imply that the remaining majority is not Bulgarian, thus putting paid to one nationalist dream. With nation and ethnicity tightly interwoven in the Balkans, the ethnic question remains highly political. Ultimately the fragile political balance in Sofia could easily be upset by the prospect of new elections, the fourth in quick succession. The populist Slavi Trifonov, leader of one of the four ruling parties with responsibility for the Bulgarian foreign ministry, recently came up with the following absurd proposal: Bulgaria would lift its veto on condition of admission to the EU Schengen Area and the abolition by the USA of its visa requirement for Bulgarian nationals. Since when has it been possible to blackmail someone by threatening to shoot yourself in the foot? — Courtesy DW



## Briefs

### PM seeks report from CM on rains damages

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan Friday sought a report from the Chief Minister Balochistan on the damages caused by recent rains. The Prime Minister asked the National Disaster Management Authority to give immediate relief to the affectedes in Gwadar and Turbat. He said the affectedes should be given all possible assistance. Heavy rains have caused floods in the low-lying areas of Balochistan and disrupted life, while over 1000 vehicles have been stranded near the Pakistan-Iran border due to road closure.

The Pakistan Meteorological Department Wednesday reported recording the highest 320mm of rains in the Makran division, which includes Gwadar. The heavy rainfall has also choked the drainage system in Quetta. Balochistan Chief Minister Abdul Qudus Bizenjo has instructed the authorities to "speed up" the rescue work and to clean the drainage and sewage system in Spiny Road, Imdad Chowk, and other areas.

"The administration should have been fully prepared to deal with any kind of emergency keeping in view the weather forecast," he said. "No negligence would be tolerated." He urged the Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) to ensure the relief work in the affected districts and to maintain the flow of traffic on highways. - APP

### Hamid Yar Hiraj joins provincial cabinet

LAHORE: Governor Punjab Chaudhry Mohammad Sarwar administered oath to MPA Hamid Yar Hiraj during a solemn ceremony at the Governor's House here on Friday. Hamid Yar Hiraj was elected from PP-205 (Khanewal-III). Chief Minister Punjab Sardar Usman Buzdar, Provincial Law Minister Raja Muhammad Basharat, Minister Local Government Mian Mehmood ur Rasheed, Minister Irrigation Sardar Mohsin Leghari, PML-Zia Chief Ijaz ul Haq, MNAs, MPAs, Chief Secretary Punjab Kamran Ali Afzal, Inspector General of Police (IGP) Punjab Rao Sardar Ali Khan, party workers and members of civil bureaucracy were present at the ceremony. Later, the newly appointed provincial minister Hamid Yar Hiraj held a meeting with Punjab Governor Chaudhry Mohammad Sarwar. - APP

### Thai Airways resumes Pak flights

DNA

KARACHI: Effective, 01 February 2022, THAI AIRWAYS will resume total Six (06) weekly flights to Pakistan, there will be 2 flights from Karachi, 2 flights from Lahore and 2 flights from Islamabad to Bangkok and to the World, said by Mr. Weerachart Tiamtumporn, Team Lead for Area Pakistan. In this context, Thai Airways has started selling tickets through its Travel Agents, Tour Operator and Online. Pakistan is very large and potential market for Thailand and to the World and being National carrier's Thai Airways International provides better and convenient travel facilities to Pakistani's passengers. Beside passengers travelling to Thailand and its Network, it's also play very vital role to promote Cargo business from / to Pakistan. - APP

### New Covid variant not a threat yet: WHO

GENEVA: The new COVID variant called B.1.640 being monitored by the World Health Organization (WHO) is not "circulating widely at the moment" and has so far been identified in less than one percent of the samples sequenced in France, WHO experts said. The strain is also known as the IHU variant because it was first identified by academics at the IHU Mediterranean Infection Institute in Marseille, France. At a WHO press briefing, Maria van Kerkhove, technical lead for the WHO's Health Emergencies Program, said that the B.1.640 variant was first detected in September 2021 in a number of countries. Following internal discussions, the WHO classified it as a "variant under monitoring" (VUM) in November 2021. According to the WHO's definition, a VUM is SARS-CoV-2 variant with genetic changes that are suspected to affect virus characteristics, which may pose a future risk, but evidence of phenotypic or epidemiological impact is currently unclear, thus requiring enhanced monitoring and repeat assessment pending new evidence. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan chairs a meeting on fertilizer industry. - DNA

## Pakistan fared exceptionally well in combating Covid-19

Prime Minister said despite worst balance of payments crisis in history of Pakistan in 2018, economic difficulties due to Covid-19

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan says Pakistan performed exceptionally well in combating COVID, compared to the countries in the region. Chairing a meeting of the Macro Economic Advisory Group in Islamabad on Friday, he said government's policies of Smart Lockdown and incentive for the construction industry, social protection programs and subsidies for industries, small and medium enterprises kept the economy growing at a steady pace which has been praised by commentators globally. He said government's three years are an economic success story as we inherited huge circular debt, anti-export policies, unsustainable fiscal conditions, less competitive business environment and policies of lack of incentive for the private sector. The Prime Minister said despite worst balance of payments crisis in the history of Pakistan in 2018, economic difficulties due to COVID, high commodity prices in the global market and humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan having direct and indirect im-

### PM warns those involved in artificial urea shortage

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan has said those involved in creating artificial shortage of urea in the country will be dealt with iron hands. Presiding over a meeting to review the demand and supply of fertilizers in Islamabad today [Friday], he said Pakistan produces 25,000 tons of urea daily, which is enough to meet its needs. He said last year, the country produced record bumper crops of wheat, sugarcane, cotton and maize. He said due to the government's agriculture friendly policies, farmers earned an additional 822 billion rupees in the fiscal year 2020-21. The Prime Minister said increased income has resulted in higher purchase of urea by farmers. Imran Khan said government is focusing on providing adequate amount of fertilizer for maximum production of wheat to ensure food security in the country. He directed the authorities concerned to take all possible steps for efficient management of urea supply chain for Rabi crops. - DNA

taken which resulted in high growth compared to all regional countries even in the tested times of COVID. The exports have shown an increase of 25 percent, tax revenues are record high with an increase of 38 percent and remittances have also increased by 27 percent. Moreover, the agriculture sector witnessed record incomes, record high profits of 950 billion rupees by industries, boom in IT sector due to government's IT policy, reduction in monthly circular debt after successful IPP tariff agreements. In addition to the above, the government fulfilled its promise of a welfare state by launching the biggest social safety program under Ehsaas, brought institutional reforms and successfully complied with FATF's conditions which saved us from going into the blacklist. The meeting was also presented with proposals to mitigate the transfer of the effects of high global commodity prices to common people. The proposals included an increase in incomes, purchasing power of the people, subsidies focused on middle and lower income classes and expansion of social safety net.

given a comprehensive overview of the overall economic situation of the country, the government's steps to mitigate the effects of high commodity prices on common people and government's achievements in the last three years. The meeting was informed that after successfully averting the crisis that the previous government left, robust economic stabilization measures were

## IHC defers indictment in Rana Shamim affidavit case

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Friday adjourned the hearing of a contempt of court case against former chief judge of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) Rana Shamim and several journalists till January 20. The IHC had in the last hearing decided to indict the former GB chief judge and others in a contempt of court case pertaining to the publication of an affidavit containing serious allegations that ex-chief justice of Pakistan Saqib Nisar attempted to influence a case against former prime minister Nawaz Sharif and his daughter, Maryam Nawaz. At the outset of today's proceedings, IHC Chief Justice Athar Minallah told journalist Ansar Abbasi that the court had received his plea of a clerical error in the order. "Tell me, what clerical error is there in the order?" The journalist told the IHC CJ that in the order, the court had quoted him as saying that even if a claim was wrong, he would publish it in the interest of the masses. Responding to the journalist, the IHC CJ said: "In your application, you yourself had written that you were not aware whether his (Shamim's) claim against Nisar was true or not." The judge asked Abbasi whether he



would publish an affidavit solely on the basis of a prominent personality handing it to him. "The prevalent narrative is that Saqib Nisar had influenced a judge in a case. However, the said judge was not even part of the bench [which tried Nawaz and Maryam]." "Justice Mohsin Akhtar Kiyani, Justice Miangul Hassan Aurangzeb and I were part of that bench [...] and [in light of the news story], it seems like we had been influenced," he said. If an inquiry is held, it will take place against the judges who were part of the bench, Justice Minallah said. The IHC CJ told

Abbasi that throughout the entire proceedings, he had tried to explain to the journalist what he had done. "Take a look at past newspapers and see what you have published." "The story was published two days before appeals in the case were to be heard," he pointed out. "Nobody knows importance of ongoing case" At this, Abbasi said Shamim will have to answer to the court regarding his affidavit. Insisting that he had followed journalistic principles, Abbasi said he had published the former GB judge's claim along with Nisar's rebuttal. The IHC CJ said he respected the right to freedom of expression and that he did not care about the criticism directed towards him. "Nobody knows about the importance of the ongoing case in the court. Sometimes things are done unintendedly; this is the second contempt of court case I am hearing in my judicial career." The IHC CJ also pointed out to Abbasi that his case was sub judice, yet he was still publishing statements from international institutions. At this, the journalist said he believes that the court should not frame charges. It is pertinent to mention here that Reporters Without Borders (RSF) and other journalist organisations had urged the IHC to halt contempt proceedings against the journalists.

## Security does not depend solely on military might

Chairing the Committee's meeting, Senator Mushahid Hussain also underlined that Kashmir and the nuclear programme were at the center of Pakistan's core national interests and these should be promoted and protected

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Standing Committee on Defence, Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed Friday said, in the wake of changing global scenario, the national security cannot be defined solely in terms of military might rather it should revolve around human security challenges such as health, population management, the pandemic, climate change, food security, water scarcity and education. Chairing the Committee's meeting, he also underlined that Kashmir and the nuclear programme were at the center of Pakistan's core national interests and these should be promoted and protected. Senator Mushahid underscored that the need for building a sophisticated, coordinated, professional strategic communication that would present Pakistan's narrative to the outside world, adding, "in this regard parliamentary diplomacy

is a key component." Mushahid said that the national security policy, which was above partisan politics, must have a broad political consensus through parliament and institutional decision-making must be the basis of the policies pursued for implementation. National Security Adviser, Dr Moeed Yusuf at an in-camera meeting gave a comprehensive briefing to the Committee. During the briefing specific features of National Security Policy, its various dimensions and components and time lines for implementations were discussed. The National Security Adviser briefed on the process of policy formulation and the policy's salient features. The National Security Policy formation process was started in 2014 when the



National Security Division was created, he added. "Over the last seven years, an inter-government consultation process was undertaken with federal ministries, provincial governments and all other stakeholders. Consultations were also held with academics, university students, independent policy experts and other members of civil society," he told. Dr Moeed informed that the National Security Policy was built on existing government policies and provided an overall umbrella document that would guide future policy direction in areas that impact national security. "It also examines opportunities and challenges in a fluid global environment and prioritizes policy actions for implementation. It is important

that it contains an annual review and new government comes into place to ensure policy continuity and build flexibility on national security issues," he highlighted. Dr Moeed mentioned that the policy placed economic security as the core of comprehensive security because it was recognized that only through increasing prosperity of the citizens and the overall national resources, Pakistan could invest more in strengthening human security and traditional security. The Committee welcomed the National Security Policy as first good step, which was built on the work on national security done by previous governments. The briefing by Dr. Moeed Yusuf was followed by detailed question hour session with the members of the Committee present on the occasion. Senators Faisal Javed, Ruksana Zuberi, Dr. Zarga Suharwardy Taimoor, Palwasha Mohammad Zai Khan, Hidayatullah and Waleed Iqbal attended the meeting.

## Creator of controversial app arrested in India

NEWS DESK

NEW DELHI: India's police say they have arrested a 20-year-old man they suspect created an online app that shared pictures of Muslim women for a virtual "auction", as an investigation into the case of religious hatred widens. An open-source app on the Microsoft-owned Github platform called "Bulli Bai" - a derogatory term to describe Muslim women - had shared pictures of dozens of women without their consent before it was taken down a week ago.

K P S Malhotra, a police official in the capital, New Delhi, on Thursday said his team had arrested Niraj Bishnoi, a 20-year-old engineering student, from Jorhat in the north-eastern state of Assam after a probe that involved the state-run Computer Emergency Response Team. "He is the person who had created the Bulli Bai app on Github. He had also created the Twitter handle @bullibai\_ and other handles," Malhotra said. Police in the western city of Mumbai, who are also investigating the app, have separately arrested three people this week, including two 21-year-old engineering students - Vishal Kumar and Mayank Rawal - and Shweta Singh, a 19-year-old woman.

Mumbai police said they were investigating whether the app, which did not involve any actual auctioning of people, was part of a "larger conspiracy". Several Indian Muslim journalists were targeted by the app, including Ismat Ara who filed and then shared on social media a police complaint on Sunday that said the app was "designed to insult Muslim women". - APP

## Gwadar: Army, Navy busy in rescue operation

DNA

GWADAR: The Pakistan Army and Navy troops are busy in rescue and relief efforts in flood-affected areas of Gwadar since the last 96 hours after the coastal belt of Balochistan was hit by heavy rainfalls, the Inter-Service Public Relation (ISPR) said on Friday. Special relief efforts are being undertaken in isolated villages of Kulnach, Sardasht and Sunstar valleys, the statement said, adding that Gwadar old town also remains the focus of the dewatering operation.

The military's media wing said the Army, FC and Pakistan Coast Guards have established medical camps and are distributing rations to the flood victims. "Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) has provided tents, blankets and rations through Army aviation helicopters in remote areas," the statement mentioned. Meanwhile, the ISPR said that damage assessment is also underway to reach out to stranded families and channelise/render relief to far-flung areas. "PAF C130 sorties loaded with rations and clothing have also been flown to assist the population of Pasni," the statement read.

## Karachi's positivity rate tops 10pc

KARACHI: As the fifth wave of the coronavirus intensifies in Pakistan, the positivity rate in the country's financial capital Karachi has doubled in one week to cross 10 per cent, it emerged on Friday. Data from the Sindh health department showed that the positivity rate in Karachi was 4.74pc on December 31, 2021, when 160 people in the metropolis tested positive for the virus. In contrast, 650 people tested positive in the provincial capital on January 6, while the positivity rate was recorded at 10.25pc. The positivity rate in Hyderabad stood at 1.24pc in the last 24 hours while it was 0.94pc for the rest of the province. Overall, the country detected 1,293 new infections in the last 24 hours - highest in over three months - marking the second day of more than 1,000 daily cases. - APP

## NA body receives briefing on NCOC

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Standing Committee on National Health Services Regulations and Coordination on Friday received briefing on performance of National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) in controlling COVID-19. While giving briefing, Special Assistant to Prime Minister on National Health Services, Dr Faisal Sultan shared latest figures on COVID-19 vaccine situation and said that citizens have been appealed to vaccinate themselves against Coronavirus. Dr. Faisal expressed satisfaction over the arrangements and available facilities for citizens for Corona vaccination in centers across the country. He assured further improvements in vaccination centers to properly serve the citizens. He said that keeping in view the interest of citizens for COVID vaccination, the government has increased the staff and the number of centers. - APP