



Islamabad POST

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Turkey to help Kazakhstan restore peace and stability

Detailed News On Page-07

NAB committed to conclude references

Detailed News On Page-04



Halep sends AO warning with summer set win

Detailed News On Page-06



Briefs

Record snowfall left officials helpless

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Murree received unprecedented snowfall over the past 48 hours and along with it a record influx of tourists, which was next to impossible to handle for the local administration, says federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Fawad Chaudhry. He said the government was promoting tourism but that did not mean hundreds of thousands of people could converge at one point in less than 24 hours.

Poland to boost trade with Pak

ISLAMABAD: Poland has expressed keen interest in enhancing trade with Pakistan in Information Technology and agriculture sector. Talking to APP in Islamabad, Polish Ambassador Maciej Pisarski said currently the volume of trade between Pakistan and Poland is more than 500 million euros. He said both countries are focusing to explore more avenues of trade and investments in multiple sectors like information technology, food processing, preservation, and agriculture sector. The ambassador said the two countries are also significantly developing their political, economic, and defence cooperation. - APP

No travel to Murree for 24 hours

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Interior, Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed on Sunday said that the ban on using roads for Murree and Galiyat would continue for further 24 hours. In a statement, the minister said that the citizens of Murree and adjacent areas would only be allowed to travel on these roads while showing their national identity cards. He said that the situation of Murree and Galiyat was being monitored on a regular basis.



MURREE: Heavy machineries are being used by the authorities to remove snow on road as a large number of tourists still stranded due to heavy snowfall caused 23 casualties at the hilly stations. Inset: A person passing by a wrecked car on the road. - APP

All major roads opened for traffic in Murree: ISPR

Pak Army has also established relief camps in Murree

KHAYAM ABBASI

RAWALPINDI: After the rescue and relief operation of Pakistan Army, Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) announced on Sunday that all major roads have been opened for traffic in Murree. According to the details issued by ISPR, the soldiers of Pakistan Army are still working to open the minor link roads while the stranded tourists have been shifted to Islamabad. Meanwhile, Pakistan Army established relief camps in Murree. The engineers are busy in opening the roads and the other groups of soldiers have been deployed to provide food and water to the relief camps. On the other hand, the healthcare units are fully functional to render services to the people of the

Continued on Page 06

Free voice calls in Murree, Galiyat: PTA

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: In view of an emergency situation in Murree and Galiyat areas, the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) Sunday announced a free on-net calling facility for all those stranded in Murree due to heavy snowfall. "In view of emergency situation, mobile phone users, currently present in these areas with no balance, have immediately been provided with free on-net calling facility," the PTA said in a press release.

Govt criticized over tragedy



NAZIR SIYAL

LAHORE: The opposition lashed out at the government for its handling of the influx of tourists in Murree and inadequate preparations, following the tragedy at the hill station that left at least 22 dead. PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif said he was "heartbroken" over the death of tourists in Murree. "What a massive tragedy Murree is turning out to be! Heartbroken to learn about the loss of so many precious lives," the leader of the opposition in the National Assembly tweeted.

Continued on Page 06

Positivity rate at 3%

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan reported over 1,500 daily COVID-19 cases for the first time since October 3 as the country continues to battle against the fifth wave of the pandemic, data from the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) showed Sunday morning. As per the latest statistics of the NCOC, 1,572 people tested positive for the coronavirus after 49,658 COVID-19 tests were taken across the country in the last 24 hours. This brings the positivity rate to 3.16%. NCOC warned last week that the new variant is already spreading in the country at a "great pace." - DNA

Murree Tragedy

All those negligent to be punished

Inquiry committee formed; various decisions for Murree uplift taken; affected families to be compensated

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

MURREE: 'Chief Minister Punjab Usman Buzdar has vowed "impartial action" against all those found negligent in their duties, a day after the country saw the deaths of more than 20 people stranded in their vehicles in snow-hit Murree. Buzdar issued a statement on Twitter on Sunday to announce a series of measures being taken by the Punjab government to institute permanent solutions to longstanding issues in the tourist destination. He said that the government's foremost priority had first been to complete rescue operations. Thereafter, a "long consultative session" was held in Murree accompanied by a "detailed briefing". "Some important decisions have been taken so that with short term and long term solutions, a permanent solution to longstanding issues can be arrived at," the chief minister said. Buzdar said that in seven days, a probe committee supervised by the additional chief secretary for the Punjab home department, will submit a report and "impartial action" will be taken against those found negligent in their duties. The chief minister said that a decision "in principle" has been taken to give Murree the status of a district. "We will immediately appoint officers of the ranks of superintendent of police and additional deputy commissioner in Murree," he added. Buzdar said that two new police stations will be established in the city. In addition, two new parking plazas will be constructed in Sunny Bank and Jhika Gali and a shuttle service will be run between these points. In a statement yesterday, Buzdar said that there were a total of 33,745 vehicles in Murree till last night, much higher

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Initial probe blames officials

LAHORE: A preliminary investigation report of the Murree tragedy revealed on Sunday that poor conditions of the roads in the hill station and its outskirts was one of the factors that caused the enormous traffic jam, ultimately leaving at least 22 tourists freezing to death in vehicles trapped by the blizzard. The report submitted to the Punjab government stated that the roads had not been repaired for the past two years and freezing temperatures led to more potholes on the roads, hampering the flow of traffic. The report also blamed the authorities concerned for not removing the snow from the main exit point of the tourist resort town which also contributed to the massive traffic jam. The probe also revealed that the tourists were forced to stay in their vehicles due to prolonged power outages in different parts of Murree. The ban on entry of vehicles was imposed only after the intervention of deputy commissioner and CPO Rawalpindi district, read the report, adding that drivers of the machinery to remove snow from the roads also did not arrive on time. The report also highlighted that there was no parking plaza in Murree where tourists could park their vehicles. - DNA



BUCHAREST: Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi is being presented with a bouquet upon his arrival in Romania. - DNA

Saudi Arabia may run out of interceptor missiles

As Houthi rebel attacks escalate, Riyadh has 'an urgent situation' as it runs out of missiles for its air-defence system, Financial Times newspaper reports

MONITORING REPORT

JEDDAH: Saudi Arabia could run out of interceptor missiles for its US-made Patriot air-defence system in "months", according to a senior US official cited by the Financial Times (FT) newspaper, prompting Riyadh to appeal to regional allies for help to replenish the stock. "It's an urgent situation," the American official said, adding Washington supports the moves to source missiles from Gulf countries as Yemen's Houthi rebels ramp up their cross-border attacks on the kingdom. "There are other places in the Gulf they can get them from, and we are trying work on that. It may be the faster alternative [to US arms sales]," the official was quoted as saying. Two people briefed on talks between Saudi Arabia and its neighbours confirmed that Riyadh had made such requests. "There is an interceptor shortage. Saudi Arabia has asked its friends for loans, but there are not many to be had," one of the people told the publication. A second person told FT that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman hinted at the issue during a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) summit in Riyadh in December and

the kingdom subsequently contacted nations in the region directly. It is not clear if Saudi Arabia's neighbours have been able to supply it with munitions yet, the report said. A third US official said the Houthi rebels, who are aligned to Iran and control northern Yemen, ramped up their assaults on the kingdom last year, launching 375 cross-border attacks against Saudi Arabia, many of which were aimed at oil infrastructure, airports and cities. "Responding to those attacks using those kind of interceptors means that they're going to have a burn rate that is faster than they may have anticipated before," the official told FT. "That is something that we have to deal with and the answer to that is not only more interceptors, but the answer to that is ultimately a diplomatic solution to the crisis in Yemen." The situation represents the latest test for US-Saudi relations, which President Joe Biden's administration has sought to reshape in light of the October 2018 murder of Saudi dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi by Saudi operatives in Istanbul. In February last year, Biden said he would end US support for Saudi Arabia's "offensive operations" in Yemen, including "relevant arms sales". But several months later, his administration approved a \$650m sale of air-to-air missiles to the kingdom.

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By appeasing Iran, Biden is repeating a historic mistake - Page 05

England last-wicket pair hang on to draw 4th Test - Page 06

Russia: Won't agree to any concession with US - Page 07

Kazakhstan unrest: At least 164 killed in clashes - Page 08

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Briefs

Air Force continues rescue operation in Balochistan

DNA

QUETTA: Keeping the tradition of serving the nation during natural calamities, Pakistan Air Force is relentlessly carrying out rescue and relief operations in flood affected areas of Balochistan. During the operations, a number of sorties have been flown by PAF transport aircraft and helicopters in which relief goods including ration, tents, food items, medicines, drinking water, blankets and essentially required machinery have been airlifted. PAF has also established Medical Camp in Pasni to provide medical facilities to the flood affected people.

Nisar Khuhro demands to register FIR against PM, CM Punjab

LARKANA: Pakistan Peoples Party Sindh President Nisar Ahmed Khuhro has said that Prime Minister Imran Khan and Chief Minister Punjab are responsible for the 22 persons deaths in Murree and First Information Report (FIR) should be registered against Imran Khan and Punjab Chief Minister Usman Buzdar.

According to a statement by his spokesperson Shakeel Memon on Sunday, Khuhro said despite warnings of bad weather and heavy snowfall, the federal and Punjab governments did not take any precautionary measures to face any emergency situation. He further added that Prime Minister Imran Khan instead of acknowledging the governmental and administrative failures in Murree, was blaming the victims for the deaths which act is condemnable. — DNA

Skardu Airport becomes operational

SKARDU: The Skardu Airport has been made ready for flight operations after the central valley of Gilgit-Baltistan received heavy snowfall during the last four days. The Skardu air facility, located at 7,500 feet above the sea level, is one of the world's highest airports. According to details, the runway of Skardu Airport was closed due to heavy snowfall which has now been cleared by the CAA authorities. The airport became fully operational for the landing and take-off of aircraft. The airport management said that the runway and upper apron areas were completely closed due to 6 inches of snow at the airport, which have been cleared in eight hours. The CAA is working on an emergency basis at and around Skardu Airport. CAA staff cleared the runway with tractors. The management added that the airlines could operate the flight depending on the weather conditions. — DNA

ITI cargo train to go long way in promotion of economic ties

The UBG leader said that the length of ITI railway is 6500 km of which 2570 km is in Iran, 2000 km is in Turkey and about 1900 km in Pakistan

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Leader of the United Business Group President Zubair F. Tufail, Secretary General Zafar Bakhtawari, Secretary Information Dr. Mirza Ikhtiar Baig and other Members of UBG congratulated Shah Mahmood Qureshi Minister of Foreign Affairs, Azam Khan Swati Minister of Railways, and Abdul Razak Dawood Advisor to PM on Commerce on inauguration of ITI cargo train. While hailing the launching of Islamabad - Tehran - Istanbul freight train UBG declared it a milestone in expansion of commercial and economic activities in ECO region. They said ITI freight train was a long-standing desire of the business community of



Pakistan, Iran and Turkey which has now turned into reality. The freight train will go a long way in bringing the business community of ECO countries more closer resulting in expansion of economic ties and regional connectivity and also explore new avenues

for expansion of trade. The volume of import and export will rapidly short up in the times to come in 3 important countries of ECO while significant economy growth will be witnessed in entire ECO region.

The UBG leader said that the length of ITI railway is 6500 km of which 2570 km is in Iran, 2000 km is in Turkey and about 1900 km in Pakistan which take less than half the shipping time and will also be safer and more economical as compared to road. The UBG urged upon the business community to make use of ITI cargo train and make it a success and enhance connectivity amongst themselves. UBG members further suggested that Pakistan, Iran and Turkey may also initiate launching of passenger train so that tourism could have brighter prospects in ECO region.

UAJK official praises Germany for supporting AJK

DNA

MUZAFFARABAD: Azad Jammu and Kashmir University has crossed another milestone by launching a Bachelor of Science in Public Health (BSPH) and BS Ventilation and Respiratory Therapy degree programs under its Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences.

"The University under the visionary leadership of Vice-Chancellor Prof. Dr. Muhammad Kaleem Abbasi has become the first in the state to launch a 4-year degree program in Public Health and BS Ventilation and Respiratory Therapy", said Dr. Bashir-ur-Rehman Kanth, Associate Dean Faculty of Health and the Medical Sciences University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Muzaaffarabad.

The Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences was established in 2009 by the University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir 2010 in collaboration with

the German Development Bank, KfW, and the German Government/Department of Health led by Secretary Health in the wake of the devastating earthquake of 2005.

Dr. Kanth expressed his profound gratitude to the German government for its generous support and said that the Faculty of Health and Medical Sciences would continue to be a symbol of friendship between the people of Germany and Azad Jammu and Kashmir for long time to come.

"We are extremely grateful to the German government, their mission in Pakistan, and the German Development Bank for their generous support to train over 800 students, the majority of them female", he said.

Dr. Kanth was of the view that an extensive network of modern hospitals and primary health care facilities that AJK got after the 2005 earthquake need trained professionals for effective delivery of health care services

and to address the health-related problems in the region.

The faculty of Health and Medical Sciences currently offers a multitude of medical disciplines that include four-year degree program in Bachelor of Science in Public Health (BSPH), BS Anesthesia and Critical Care Sciences, BS Cardio Vascular Technology, BS Clinical Laboratory Sciences, BS Dialysis, and Critical Care Sciences, BS Diagnostic Radiology & Intensive Care Sciences, BS Emergency and Intensive Care Sciences, BS Physiotherapy & Rehab Sciences, BS Surgery & Operation Theater Sciences, BS Optometry & Vision Sciences. Dr. Kanth also expressed the deepest appreciation for Secretary Health Maj. Gen. Ahsan Altaf Satti and his team including Director General Health for their explicit and continuous co-operation/facilitation being provided to the students at CMH and DHQ Hospitals.

Govt urged to withdraw 17% sales tax

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: Government must withdraw its decision to impose 17% GST (General Sales Tax) on imported seeds in order to weed out rural poverty, achieving targets of food security and food security. Addressing a meeting of the standing committee on seeds, Mr. Atif Munir Sheikh, President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) said that Pakistan is predominantly an agrarian economy but we could not yet achieve self-sufficiency in seeds. He lamented over the poor performance of agri-researchers and said that we have been forced to continuously import disease resistant and high yielding varieties of seeds to meet our domestic needs. He said that our main crops are cotton, wheat, rice and sugarcane which have a share of 313 billion dollars in national GDP. "In addition to these main crops, we have to import seeds of other minor crops, vegetables and fodder etc.", he said and added that last year, we imported 311 ton seeds by spending foreign exchange of 37.9 million dollars. He said that if 17% GST was imposed, it would have direct repercussions on food inflation in addition to badly affecting the financial health of growers.

Pakistan Navy Flotilla visits Oman

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Navy Ships RAH NAWARD & MADADGAR along with PN Submarine HAMZA visited Port Sultan Bin Qaboos of Oman as part of overseas deployment. Upon arrival at port, Pakistan Navy Flotilla was received by Defence Attaché of Pakistan at Oman and officials from Royal Navy of Oman (RNO). During the visit, Commander Pakistan Fleet Vice Admiral Ovais Ahmed Bilgrami and Mission Commander called on Chief of Sultan's Armed Forces and Commander Royal Navy of Oman. During the interactions, matters of mutual interests were discussed and enhancement of bilateral ties in all spheres was re-affirmed. Commander Pakistan Fleet conveyed good wishes of Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi for the people of Oman in general and the Royal Navy of Oman in particular. Mission Commander along with Commanding Officer also called on Commander Said Bin Sultan Naval Base and DG Ops and Plans of Royal Navy of Oman.

During the port stay, various bilateral activities including exchange visits onboard afloat units, orientation visits of military installations and coordination meetings were undertaken. Upon completion of port visit, PNS RAH NAWARD participated in sailing exercise with Royal Navy of Oman Sail Training Ship, RNOV SHABAB. The event provided a unique training opportunity for onboard trainees of both navies.



KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah presides over a meeting of Coordination Committee at CM House. — APP

FESCO board approves purchase of transformers

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO) Board of Directors (BOD) has sanctioned the purchase of transformers, electricity poles, wires and other gadgets with an estimated cost of Rs.6.1 billion to improve the transmission and distribution system during the year 2021-22. The FESCO Board of Directors (BOD) sanctioned this amount to purchase 82 hundred new transformers of different capacities,

wire conductor of different types for 11KV with length of 8350KM, 7 Lac 15 thousand new meters, 500 steel structures with length of 58 feet and 23000 dropout cutout to bring a qualitative improvement in overall system. Similarly, 30000 AMI meters would also be procured in order to launch an automation system in the company while all commercial meters above load of 15KW would also be replaced.

Syed Husnain Haider Chairman FESCO (BOD) said that protection of consum-

ers' interest is top priority of the board and BOD has allowed it to spend huge amounts to improve the quality of service in the company. Meanwhile, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) FESCO Engr. Bashir Ahmed has appreciated the prudent decision of BOD and said that after this sanction, the delivery of material has been started and installation of new connections will be expedited during this month. He said that all pending applications of new connections would be disposed of. Similarly, re-

placement of old lines, old transformers and faulty meters has further expedited and all given targets would be achieved before the onset of summer season. He said that this procurement will not only facilitate the consumers but also help FESCO to further cut down losses and get more revenue from the sale of the electricity.

Nisar Khuhro demands to register FIR against PM, CM Punjab

DNA

LARKANA: Pakistan Peoples Party Sindh President Nisar Ahmed Khuhro has said that Prime Minister Imran Khan and Chief Minister Punjab are responsible for the 22 persons deaths in Murree and First Information Report (FIR) should be registered against Imran Khan and Punjab Chief Minister Usman Buzdar.

According to a statement by his spokesperson Shakeel Memon on Sunday, Khuhro said despite warnings of bad weather and heavy snowfall, the federal and Punjab governments did not take any precautionary measures to face any emergency situation. He further added that Prime Minister Imran Khan instead of acknowledging the governmental and administrative failures in Murree, was blaming the victims for the deaths which act is condemnable. Khuhro said the Prime Minister's blaming of those who died in the snowy season in the Murree tragedy shows his mental inferiority and Prime Minister should replied to the nation that despite the warnings of heavy snowfall why precautionary steps were not being taken by government to face any emergency, if the government was incapable of taking precautionary measures, then why the roads lead towards murree were not closed and why the people were allowed to enter in murree he added.

Sania opens Ehsaas Nashonuma Center

DNA

MULTAN: On the second day of visit to South Punjab, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Poverty Alleviation and Social Protection, Senator Dr. Sania Nasir on Sunday opened the Ehsaas Nashonuma Center at the District Headquarter Hospital Khanewal.

Four Ehsaas Nashonuma Centers are functional in Jahanian, Khanewal, Kabirwala and Mian Channu Tehsils of Khanewal. Currently, Ehsaas Nashonuma Centers are operational in two districts of South Punjab: Khanewal and Rajapur.

"In line with PM's vision to address stunting in children, Ehsaas Nashonuma Centers will be opened in all tehseils of the country this year", said Dr. Sania. Under Ehsaas Nashonuma, nutrition centered cash transfers are granted to the pregnant and lactating mothers and those with children under two years of age. Disbursements are linked to the consumption of nutritious food, immunization, checkups, and participation in health awareness training.

FCCI chief calls for industry-academia links

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, said Mr. Atif Munir Sheikh, President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI). Addressing a zoom meeting with Dr. Shaiста Sohail, Executive Director, Higher Education Commission (HEC), he welcomed the beginning of direct contacts between HEC and FCCI and said that it is very encouraging that HEC has realized 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 industrial 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 chal-

lenging 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.

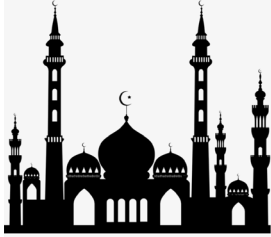
Mr. Atif Munir said that FCCI was organizing a national level economic conference during the month of March and one full session would be dedicated for the

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.

Dr. Shaiста Sohail Executive Director (HEC) 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.



SERVICES



Namaz Timings

Fajr.....	05:45 am
Zohr.....	12:15 pm
Asr.....	03:39 pm
Maghrib.....	05:17 pm
Isha.....	06:45 pm



Hotels & Restaurants

Serena Hotel.....	111 133 133
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Turkish Airlines.....	8494949
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Emergency

Rescue (Police).....	15
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Complaints

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

Islamabad Metropolitan

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

Wasa Water Tank

Rawalpindi.....	0331-5022125
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MURREE: People remove snow from the road as a large number of tourists still stranded due to heavy snowfall caused 23 casualties at the hilly stations. APP

Nation pulls on melancholic mood over Murree tragedy

A whole family of Rawalpindi was expired in the Murree tragedy. Muhammad Shahzad, his wife, two sons and two daughters lost their lives

DNA

ISLAMABAD/LAHORE: The entire nation is in a state of melancholy and mournfulness on the tragic death of 23 tourists stranded in their cars owing to heavy snowfall and worst traffic jam. When the dead bodies of the tourists reached their hometowns it created a somber scene over there. Every eye was tearful on their tragic demise and the atmosphere was occasionally echoed with wails and groans of those who lost their near and dear ones. The eight dead bodies of

Islamabad ASI Naveed's family were dispatched to Talagang. The bodies of Zafar Iqbal and Maroof Ashraf were sent to Lahore. The dead body of Ashfaq was dispatched to Gujranwala. Iqbal and Ashraf were residents of Peco Road, Lahore. The news of their death was like a bolt from the blue and the family members rushed to Murree to collect their bodies. The 19-year-old son of Iqbal said that his father was the only breadwinner in the family. "When we called him last time, he told us that he could not get a hotel room and was spending night in the car," the mourn-

ful son added. The funeral prayers of deceased Zafar Iqbal were offered in Lahore. A large number of people including relatives and nearby residents attended his Nimaz-e-Janaza. A whole family of Rawalpindi was expired in the Murree tragedy. Muhammad Shahzad, his wife, two sons and two daughters lost their lives. When six bodies reached Rawalpindi, every eye was laden with tears. Their funeral prayers were held at Shehbaz Sharif Park in Islamabad. Prominent personalities including PML-N leader Hanif Abbasi attended the funeral

prayers. Two victims of Murree tragedy: Sohail and Muhammad Bilal belonging to Mardan were buried in their hometown. The funeral prayers of Sohail were offered in a local Janazgah. A large number of people attended his funeral prayers. Bilal's funeral prayers were offered in his ancestral village in Charchor. The Pakistan Army Jawans Saturday started shifting all stranded tourists to five army relief camps established at Murree. According to the ISPR, food and shelter would be provided to people affected by heavy snowfall. Army relief centres have been

established at Army School of Technicians Barian, Military College Murree, Jhika Gali, APS Kuldana, Station Supply Depot Sunny Bank. FWO dozers and army engineers are busy keeping roads open and the Murree Express has been opened and cleared for any fresh snow by NHA/ FWO/ Army Engineers. However, the administration has banned entry of more tourists to Murree and Galyat. On the other hand, after weathering a fierce snowfall for the last three days, sun has appeared on the Murree horizon today giving tides of an improved condition ahead.

The administration has removed snow from most of the roads and 35,000 vehicles of tourists stranded on roads are on the move now. Whereas, more than 150 tourists have been lodged at different places and camps set up by the Pakistan Army and other institutions. The search operation by the rescue teams is underway on the road stretching between Kaldana and Barian. This road where most of the tourists' deaths have occurred is still closed. Here the vehicles of the tourists have beeline the road but the administration is evacuating the stranded holidaymakers.

RCCI inks MoU with Benazir University Peshawar



STAFF REPORT

Rawalpindi: A memorandum of understanding was signed between Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) and Benazir University Peshawar. The purpose of the MOU was to promote Industry Academia linkages and to

strengthen ties between two organizations. RCCI President Nadeem Rauf signed and exchanged the MoU document while ORIC Director Ms Henna Karamat signed the MoU on behalf of Benazir University. Senior Vice President Asim Malik, faculty members and chamber members were also present at the

signing ceremony. On this occasion, the chamber president Nadeem Rauf gave a briefing to the university delegation. He said that the chamber has entered into MoUs with more than 20 universities and colleges. Global Entrepreneurship Week is held every year in the Chamber Speaking on the

occasion, Director Henna Karamat said that the role of the Chamber in promoting business activities and enhancing industry linkages is exemplary. Under the MOU both organizations will share and exchange the information with each other on entrepreneurship, awareness drives and Seminars.

ITP continues services for Murree tourists

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) is making all possible efforts to maintain smooth flow of traffic during return of tourists from Murree and facilitate local commuters in the area. Senior Superintendent of Police, (Traffic) Mazhar Iqbal said that ITP personnel were making all possible efforts to maintain flow of traffic. He said all resources were being utilized to assist people during the emergency. More than 30 policemen were performing duties in areas leading to Murree and ensuring smooth flow of traffic so that the citizens did not face any difficulty and avoid traffic congestion, he said. He said ITP had adopted special measures to facilitate and guide the tourists after the Emergency declared in Murree. All Deputy Superintendents of Police (Traffic) are present at the 'Satra Meel' Toll Plaza and in Bhara Kau area. Additional contingent of traffic police, vehicles, lifters and other equipment are also available to assist the citizens. ITP is taking all possible steps to help and facilitate the citizens. Senior Superintendent of Police Rai Mazhar Iqbal said ITP Radio is keeping the citizens informed about the traffic situation time to time through its special broadcasts. Citizens should cooperate with the traffic police and avoid unnecessary travel, he concluded. - DNA

Kutchery Chowk project to be started soon

RAWALPINDI: Chairman, Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) Tariq Mehmood Murtaza on Sunday said work on Kutchery Chowk project would be started soon. He said Ammar Chowk project had been completed and the underpass was opened for traffic. He said after completion of Ammar Chowk project, now construction work of Kutchery Chowk project would be started. The chairman said Kutchery Chowk project was approved by Central Development Working Party (CDWP) and the estimated cost of this project would be Rs 4.7 billion. The Kutchery Chowk's two-storey flyover design was a unique and it would be first of its kind in the country, he added. - APP

HRCP seeks applications for photo-essay competition

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) is holding a nationwide photo-essay competition aims at creating awareness about the right to freedom of peaceful assembly. "Every citizen shall have the right to assemble peacefully and without arms, subject to any reasonable restrictions imposed by law in the interest of public order." (Article 16, Constitution of Pakistan). Assemblies can be platforms to advocate for change and to raise awareness of civil, political, social, economic, and cultural rights. HRCP invited Pakistan-based photographers to submit photo-essays (a series of photographs that tells a story) that illustrate the right to peaceful assembly. Submission can focus on a single public gathering or more than one, connected to a particular theme. Gatherings can include protests, rallies, marches, sit-ins, vigils, demonstrations or protest camps that have taken place between January 1, 2021 to March 15, 2022. The top three winning entries will be featured in a public exhibit

Human Rights Commission of Pakistan

tion organised by HRCP. One entry per person (team entries of two or more photographers are allowed). This competition is open to both amateur and professional photographers, but you must use your own images. Any images not produced by you are grounds for disqualification. Images must have been shot within the period specified and be relevant to the theme. Images submitted must not have been published elsewhere (for example, in a newspaper or magazine), although you may submit images that you have produced and shared on your social media platforms as long as you indicate when and where these were uploaded. The minimum and maximum number of images required for one entry are 7 and 20, respectively. Only include

those images required to tell your story, as unnecessary images may reduce the overall impact of your entry. Only still images (not video clips) can be used to compose the photo essay. The entrant's name must not appear on any of the images. No watermarking or digital matting, frames, or borders are allowed. Cropping and minor enhancements (such as spotting, dodging, burning, contrast and slight colour adjustments) are permissible. Entries may be created in any software, but must be submitted in a universal file format playable on all computers, such as JPG or PNG. Images must be high-quality, using a 12-megapixel camera. Photos taken with phone cameras are allowed as long as they meet this requirement.

Police action against beggars in full swing

SHAHEEN HANIF

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi Police crackdown against professional beggars was in full swing and 47 beggars were arrested as they were creating hurdle in traffic flow by standing on various highways and intersections. According to details, on the orders of SSP Operations Wasif Riaz, the Beggar Squad comprising Assistant Sub-Inspector (ASD) Muhammad Asif and ASI Matullah along with their respective teams took action against professional beggars and arrested 47 beggars and detained them in different police stations of Rawalpindi city. On the occasion, SSP Operations Wasim Riaz said that the special beggar squad was working hard to end this menace. "Professional beggars stand on various highways and intersections of Rawalpindi city and not only affect the flow of traffic but also causing accidents, so the public is requested to discourage such factors," he added.

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1

0.5 لیٹر بھاری گیس

272 روپے

2

1 لیٹر بھاری گیس

889 روپے

3

2 لیٹر بھاری گیس

3,530 روپے

4

4 لیٹر بھاری گیس

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Briefs

Cylinder blast injures nine including women

DNA

RAWALPINDI: At least nine people sustained wounds in a gas cylinder explosion in Rawalpindi on Sunday. According to details, a terrifying explosion took place in a house in Rawalpindi's Bangash Colony, as a result of which nine persons including women and children were injured. Police officials and rescue volunteers arrived at the scene after the blast and launched rescue operations. The injured were rushed to a hospital where they are being treated. According to the initial report, the houses adjacent to the affected house have also been severely damaged due to the intensity of the blast. It should be noted that several cases of gas cylinder gas leakage are reported in different parts of Pakistan in the current winter season. Earlier in the month of September, at least four persons were killed and seven were severely wounded when a multi-story residential building collapsed in city's area of Korangi. Troops of the Pakistan Army, Sindh Rangers, Police and Social Welfare organisations had contributed to the operation.

FEBR asks govt to facilitate businesses

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Friends of Economic & Business Reforms (FEBR) President Kashif Anwar has urged the government to facilitate the industry through reduction in tax rate on petroleum products, besides decreasing electricity tariffs as well as lowering the markup rate, as the country's economy is going through a challenging phase. He said that at a time when GDP ratio was very nominal amidst high cost of doing business, the industry needs maximum support and relief. He lamented that the GST on petroleum products has been increased to 4.77 percent from 1.63 percent on petrol, while the HSD rate was also increased to 9.08 percent from 7.37 percent. It is unfortunate that the Petroleum levy on petrol is raised to Rs 17.62 per litre and on HSD is also revised from Rs 13.14 to Rs 17.14 per litre. The business leader said that the government has made unprecedented increase in the ratio of tax, duty and Petroleum Levi ostensibly to earn billion of rupees in revenue. He said that inflation is on higher side due to the impact of government's economic policies of soaring fuel rates, enhancing power and gas tariff and depreciating the local currency.

CPJ demands release of Kashmiri journalist

ISLAMABAD: The Asia Desk of New York-based Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) has demanded of the Indian authorities to immediately release Sajjad-Gul, a Kashmiri journalist. Sajjad-Gul was arrested by the Indian occupation forces from his home in northeastern Shahgund village in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) after he posted a video of family members and relatives protesting the killing of a native. "CPJ is deeply disturbed by reports that Kashmiri journalist Sajjad-Gul was arrested days after posting a video of a protest on social media. Authorities must immediately release Gul and drop their investigations related to his journalistic work," the CPJ posted on Twitter. According to media reports, the police had indicated his release but later, his family was told that a criminal case was initiated. The Indian forces had slapped draconian measures to muzzle media in the IIOJK after India stripped the occupied valley of its special laws. A large number of journalists and mediamen have been arrested harassed and subjected to physical torture under so-called laws. - APP



MURREE: Relief goods are being distributed by Pakistan Air Force to the snowstorm stranded tourists in Murree and Galyat. - DNA

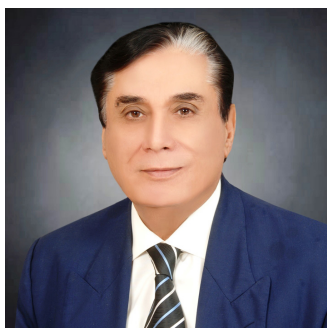
NAB filed references against big fish on corruption charges

The Chairman NAB said that references are related to corruption, money laundering, assets beyond known sources of income, cheating public at large etc

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Honorable Mr. Justice Javed Iqbal, Chairman NAB has said that NAB had filed references against on the basis of solid evidences so that corrupt should be brought to justice as per law. The Chairman NAB said that references are related to corruption, money laundering, assets beyond known sources of income, cheating public at large etc. He said that NAB is absolutely committed for logical conclusion of mega corruption cases and requests are being filed for early hearings of all references. He said that due to vigorous prosecution of NAB, 1194 accused persons were convicted from Oct 10, 2017 to Nov 10, 2021

during the tenure of present management of NAB. He said that NAB always believes working in accordance with law. NAB has no affiliation with any political party, group and individual and our affiliation is with state of Pakistan. He said that people who are claiming about their innocence in the media they should better request the concerned learned Accountability Courts to have hearing of their cases on a day to day basis where law will take its own course of action. He said that NAB had constituted a Combined Investigation Team (CIT) to benefit from the collective wisdom of senior supervisory officers which is lending quality. He said NAB was the focal institution of Pakistan under the UN



Convention against corruption (UNCAC) and the Chairman of SAARC Anti-Corruption Forum. He said NAB was considered a role model organization in SAARC countries. The Chairman said that NAB from Oct 2017 to Oct, 2021 has recovered Rs 539 billion directly and indirectly from cor-

rupt elements which is a record achievement as compared to other years which shows a commitment and dedication of NAB officers towards performance of their national responsibilities in eradication of corruption from the country. He said that 1264 corruption cases are under trial in various accountability courts of the country. He said that Pakistan is the only country with whom China has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for eradication of corruption. The performance of NAB is being reviewed regularly on the basis of a monitoring and evaluation system so that it could be improved further. He said that youth is our future; NAB has signed an MOU with Higher Education Commission in

order to aware youth about the ill effects of corruption in universities and colleges at an early age. Under this initiative, NAB has successfully established more than 50 thousands Character Building Societies in various universities and colleges besides constituting prevention committees in consultations with respective provincial and federal government departments in order to assist them to identify and plug loopholes in order to check corruption. He said that as per Gillani and Gallup survey, 59 percent people have shown trust upon NAB. He said that NAB has devised a comprehensive Quantified Grading System in order to further improve the performance of NAB Headquarter and all Regional Bureaus.



ISLAMABAD: Tourists are returning from hill stations after getting stranded there for days. - APP

President Alvi encourages youth to excel in IT field

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Sunday stressed upon the youth to avail of the existing and innovative opportunities in the realm of information and technology and access the ever-expanding global IT market, possessing huge prospects for progress and prosperity. He said that huge, exponential and quantum changes were taking place in the information and technological field throughout the globe which heralded bright prospects for the youth

of Pakistan to excel. The president was addressing an international webinar titled 'current entrepreneurship aspect in digital world' arranged by the Joint Cultural Society for Communities Collaboration. The webinar was arranged to discuss the visions and trends in the digital world and the role of youth considering the latest changes in

the artificial Intelligence. People around the world attended the webinar. The president said that mega revolutions were taking place in four key areas; first in computing, processing of data and analyzing of the artificial intelligence, second, in the energy sector and these were linked with bi-

ology, and finally in the 3D manufacturing, including virtual reality, blockchain, internet data, mobile computing, internet and social networking etc. The president said the present government had developed the human resource for the technological world craving for trained youth. Through the Digi skills initiative, about 1.6 million people moved to the next stage out of a total 2.4 million who had applied for the programme. - DNA

NIHCR webinar discusses Mughal rulers in India

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Mughal Emperors peacefully ruled over the predominantly Hindu subcontinent in the 16th and 17th centuries. Unlike many other empires, the Mughals were surprisingly tolerant of other religions, said Prof Emeritus Aslam Syed on Sunday. As an Empire, the Mughals were able to consolidate the smaller kingdoms of South Asia into one centralized government. They also succeeded in bringing Persian language combined with Arabic and Hindi to

form the language of Urdu, said the guest speaker while addressing a Webinar on Discourse of History on Indo-Pak History from Antiquity to Modernity X: Mughal's Rule in India here. Prof. Emeritus Aslam Syed has been serving the Centre for Religious Studies, Ruhr Universität, Bochum, Germany. He remained Chairman, Department of History, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad and also served the NIHCR as its Director. Responding to a question, Prof Syed said that the credit for organizing education on a systematic basis goes to Akbar (1542-1605). He

treated all his subjects alike and opened a large number of schools and colleges throughout his Empire. The adoption of Persian as the court language gave further encouragement to the Hindus and the Muslims to study Persian, he said. The Webinar arranged online by the National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research (NIHCR), Centre of Excellence, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, was attended by over 800 participants ranging from students, teachers and researchers to have greater insights into the valuable views of the guest

speaker. Replying a question, Prof Syed said that Mughal rulers were also great patrons of literature and gave considerable impetus to its development. Akbar ordered various Hindu classics and histories translated into Persian. In addition, a number of Greek and Arabic works were translated into Persian. Men of letters were patronized by the emperors, various regional officials and landlords, he said. It was the 29th consecutive session on the Discourse of History, a branch of the NIHCR Director DrSajid-Mahmood Awan.

MoITT launches 2 projects

ISLAMABAD: Minister of Information Technology and Telecommunication (MoITT) Syed Amin Ul-Haque has launched two more projects of high speed mobile broadband services (NGBSD) for unserved and underserved areas of four more districts of Sindh. The projects would be completed in a short span of 12 months which have been assigned to Jazz Network at a total cost of Rs. 698 million. The agreement for the two projects was signed by HaarisMahmood Chaudhry, Chief Executive Officer, Universal Service Fund (USF) and MudassarHussain, Vice President, Jazz Network, said a news release. Addressing the ceremony, Syed Amin-Ul-Haq said the first project was for providing high speed mobile broadband services at a cost of Rs, 246 million to provide 359 unserved and underserved Mauzas of KambarShahdadkot and Larkana, while the second project worth Rs, 451 million was to provide NGBSD of 438 Mauzas of Naushahro Feroze and Shaheed Benazirabad Districts. - APP

Political stability vital: SAARC CCI

ISLAMABAD: President SAARC Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI) Iftikhar Ali Malik on Sunday said Pakistan's economy, at this crucial juncture of time, can neither endure political turmoil nor afford political instability. "We need political stability which is prerequisite for sustained economic growth to cope with the multiple challenges in the country", he said. Politics of confrontation, agitation, protest, violence and agitation is not solution, said a news release issued here. He said time has changed as now the influential nations were paying more attention to financial warfare to continue their dominance. - APP

Diabetes prevalence in adults increased to 70 %

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The prevalence of diabetes in Pakistan has increased significantly as 33 million adults are now living with diabetes in the country with an increase of 70 percent. According to the International Diabetes Federation's (IDF) new figures, diabetes was responsible for 400,000 deaths in the country in the year 2021- the highest number

in the Middle-East and North Africa Region. These findings from the 10th Edition of the IDF Diabetes Atlas, report that one in four adults (26.7%) in Pakistan are living with diabetes - the highest national prevalence in the world. The report claimed that Pakistan now has the third highest number of people living with diabetes in the world, after China (141 million) and India (74 million). An additional 11 million

adults in Pakistan have Impaired Glucose Tolerance (IGT), which places them at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes. More than a quarter (26.9%) of adults living with diabetes in Pakistan are undiagnosed. When diabetes is undetected or inadequately treated, people with diabetes are at risk of serious and life-threatening complications, such as heart attack, stroke, kidney failure, blindness, and lower-limb amputation.



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Investing in forensics

AT the inauguration of the state-of-the-art Centre of Forensic Sciences Training Lab at Punjab Forensic Science Agency (PFSA) in Lahore, the chief minister of Punjab, Usman Buzdar announced that the government would provide Rs1 billion for the purchase of modern equipment for the PFSA in honour of the new lab.

It is true that the PFSA is certainly an integral part of Punjab's law enforcement. During the last three and a half years, the PFSA has made use of new and updated technology to conduct investigations of several high-profile cases. Crime scene investigation has reached new heights in the rest of the world, with Europe and the US making use of complex technologies and forensics to uncover previously unsolvable cases. Pakistan has yet not reached that level, a fact that is reflected in our low conviction rates. The courts are hesitant to trust forensic evidence and it has only been in recent years that forensic reports have been viewed as important evidence for rape cases.

The standard of techniques employed during investigation in Pakistan has in practice been rudimentary in nature, with an over-reliance on traditional methods passed down from seniors and a mistrust of technology. It is also true that the police has been expanded, which means the PFSA would require more funds for training and make new forensic methods.

However, the Punjab government will just need to justify the huge amount of Rs1.9 billion being spent in this endeavour and demonstrate the actual difference and the strides this new lab will be making, alongside the effect this expenditure will have on crime rates.

It must be noted that PFSA has already established units in places such as Lahore and Multan, with 14 disciplines already under its belt. More than the shortage of funds, it was the lack of proper bureaucracy and no support from legislation that held back the reach of these institutions, which is nowhere near enough to support the needs of the entire country. It is important to provide capacity to forensic science in order to improve our investigation system; yet the relevant department must also show, in a transparent way, how the funds allocated make a difference and bring results.

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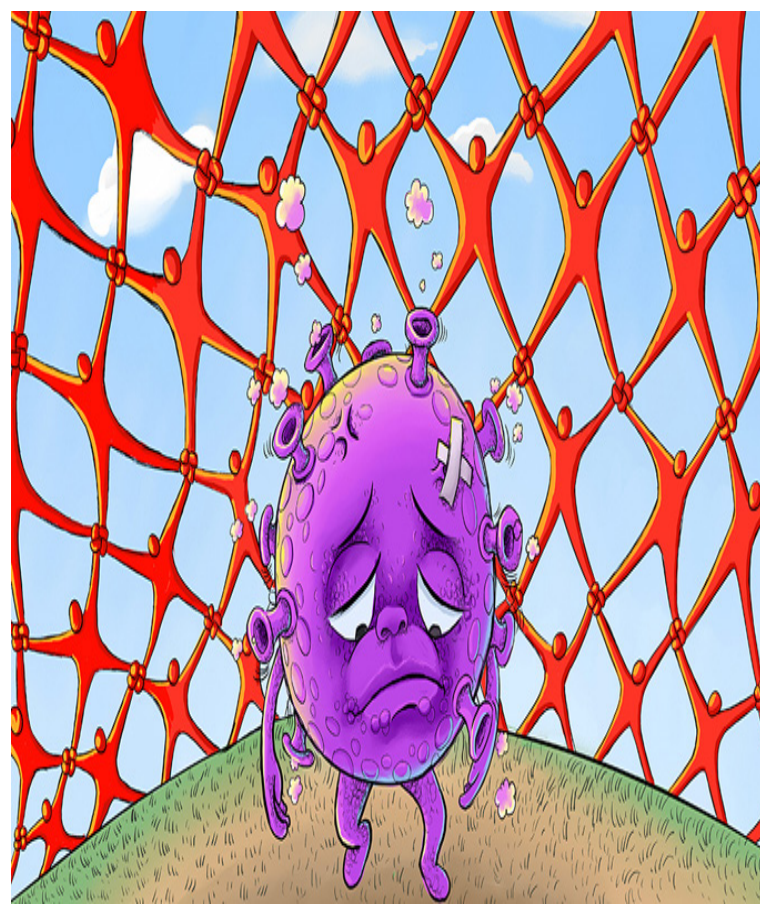
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Increasing infections

IN a little over a week, Pakistan has seen its corona numbers skyrocket again. Yesterday saw the total tally of daily cases go above 1300 for the first time since October last year. The spread of the Omicron variant is most likely the reason for this sudden spike. The national positivity rate stands at 2.9 percent, with Karachi diverging from the average and reaching a high of 10 percent.

This is extremely troubling, especially since it has only taken a little over a week for things to get this bad. The Omicron variant's increased virality is now taking full effect in Pakistan. Our efforts to stop the spread are becoming more sluggish by the day. A slowdown in the vaccination rate—which has dropped to a daily average of 700,000 from the all time high of 1.5 million—is something the government needs to urgently rectify.

It is also unclear why, in the midst of the pandemic, when the vaccination numbers have taken an impressive trajectory, the government has taken the decision to close down two major vaccination centres in Islamabad and Lahore. The centre at Fatima Jinnah Park in Islamabad and the Expo Centre in Lahore have been acclaimed as smooth and efficient operations all the way through, and yet, just when there is a predictable slowdown in voluntary vaccinations, the government has closed both without explanation.

Beyond this, public response and effort to curtail the spread has been ineffective and irresponsible. Public and private events no longer take prevention measures, and the government is not stepping in to enforce any of the rules.

The current trajectory we are on could very well lead us to around 6000 cases in the next few weeks. This is not something to take lightly. It is important to act now before lockdowns and other regressive policies are the only option left. The government must increase the vaccination numbers to almost double the current amount, and ask for public and private institutions to remember that we are not past the pandemic just yet.

By appeasing Iran, Biden is repeating a historic mistake

Ishtiaq Ahmed



The 2011 Arab Spring provided Iran with an opportunity to gear up its proxy warfare in Bahrain, Yemen, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon

THE appeasement of Nazi Germany in the 1930s spectacularly failed in its attempt to prevent the outbreak of the Second World War. In 1938, after British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain agreed to the fatal compromise on Czechoslovakia's German-speaking Sudetenland at Munich, Winston Churchill said: "You were given the choice between war and dishonor. You chose dishonor and you will have war." War broke out a year later after Germany invaded Poland. The rest is history, and its consequences were devastating. Three-quarters of a century down the line, yet another appeasement is now in play. This time, Iran is the aggressor and the US the appeaser. The venue is Vienna and the end goal less than ideal: To delay the possibility of Iran acquiring a weapon of mass destruction, rather than permanently cap its ability to do so. President Barack Obama tried before, fueling Iran's aggression across the region. His Democratic successor, Joe Biden, is now trying again, overlooking the consequences of this aggression.

Since 1979, Iran's clerical rulers have thrived on perpetual conflict with America and its allies in the Arab world, sponsoring terrorist assassinations, inflaming sectarian passions and flouting international commitments. More than a decade ago, Iran's unlawful pursuit of nuclear weapons alarmed the International Atomic Energy Agency, compelling the UN Security Council to pass a number of punitive

resolutions. But the worst was yet to come. The 2011 Arab Spring provided Iran with an opportunity to gear up its proxy warfare in Bahrain, Yemen, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. Yet, in 2015, without consulting his Arab allies, Obama went ahead with the so-called Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action—handing more than \$100 billion in sanctions relief to Iran in return for its nuclear compliance for a decade or so. The ayatollahs instead shifted their focus to amassing short and medium-range ballistic missiles and precision-guided munitions, which the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps has, through its affiliates, used against Arab nations and American forces.

In response, President Donald Trump in 2018 exited the "horrible" accord and exerted "maximum pressure" on Iran; but he did so only to protect US interests and not those of Washington's Arab allies.

Ironically, just as Iran has intensified its aggressive activities in the Middle East, the US has eroded its security commitments in the region. This is a bipartisan policy, which began with Obama's pivot to Asia strategy, continued with Trump's America First slogan and now sees a declared US geopolitical shift to the Indo-Pacific under Biden.

It is, however, on the nuclear front that the appeaser's kowtowing before the aggressor is unraveling rather starkly. Biden has already wasted almost a year attempting to woo Iran back to the JCPOA, despite its consistent breaches of the nuclear accord since 2019. Consequently, the breakout time Tehran needs to make a nuclear weapon has now shrunk to a matter of weeks, from three months in 2015, which Obama claimed to have extended to one year under the JCPOA. A return to this status quo ante would be fraught with great risks. Unless the timeline is extended by another decade or so, Iran has a few years left under the nuclear deal's sunset clauses to resume clandestine nuclear operations without any international oversight. Even an Iranian return to the nuclear accord becomes meaningless when one considers that the IAEA has already raised the alarm that Tehran has seriously breached the limits set by the JCPOA on the level and volume of uranium enrichment and the number and type of centrifuges. Iran has produced uranium metal, a crucial element in nuclear weapons; enriched enough uranium to 60 percent purity, a short distance to the 90 percent purity needed for nuclear weapons; increased its production and use of advanced centrifuges

for nuclear enrichment; and accumulated the scientific knowledge needed to develop nuclear weapons. It has also restricted or even blocked IAEA inspectors' access to declared nuclear installations at Natanz and Fordow and the centrifuge assembly plant at Karaj, while several of its undeclared and suspected nuclear sites remain beyond their reach.

Now in their eighth and probably final round, the so-called P5+1 talks on the JCPOA's revival in Vienna are hostage to the whims of Iran's hard-line negotiators. They have spared no opportunity to sabotage them by making unrealistic demands that the US must first lift all economic sanctions—even those not covered under the JCPOA—and also guarantee that no future president will withdraw from the accord. Biden's team is effectively cornered, unable to even directly participate in the Vienna talks upon Iranian insistence. It no more insists on a "longer, stronger" agreement—one that incorporates Iran's malign activities and ballistic missiles. And it prefers to blame Trump for providing Iran with the pretext to violate the JCPOA, instead of confessing its own timidity in dealing with such an aggressive rival. Appeasement breeds aggression. Rather than learning this key lesson from the buildup to the Second World War, Biden has incentivized Tehran's march toward the bomb by refusing to impose any consequences on the clerical regime for its provocations. What prevents him from taking firm action on an issue where the cost of inaction is unaffordable is hard to fathom.

The US still has a narrow window of opportunity to preempt Iran's nuclear breakout by immediately forsaking this useless nuclear diplomacy and adopting a range of sequential actions, such as ratcheting up the sanctions regime and sending a clear message that, if Iran chooses to cross the Rubicon on this issue, it must be ready to face resolute military action. The JCPOA was endorsed by UN Security Council Resolution 2231 of 2015. The IAEA has collected enough evidence about Iran's treaty violations for a censure resolution by its board of governors and to place it before the UNSC, where China and Russia can at best abstain from proceedings meant to invoke the use of force under Chapter VII of the UN Charter. Of course, such a course would have its own consequences, but that's a different story.

—Ishtiaq Ahmed is a former journalist who has been Vice Chancellor of Sargodha University in Pakistan and Quaid-e-Azam Fellow at the University of Oxford

Gulf religious moderation inspires few beyond borders

James Dorsey

"At the risk of simplifying a bit, one could argue that from the mid-1990s onward, the rise of Islamist violence in France that culminated with the terror wave of 2015-2016 was essentially a Salafi undertaking"

SAUDI Arabia and the United Arab Emirates have drawn praise for social reforms that have domestically reduced the role of religion in public life, enhanced women's rights, and, in the case of the UAE, catered to non-Muslim lifestyles.

Yet, Saudi and Emirati efforts to position their countries as the Muslim world's beacons of an autocratic notion of moderate Islam have done little to encourage moderation beyond their borders despite a radical cutback in decades-long global Saudi funding for the spread of an ultra-conservative interpretation of Islam and the Emirates' trumpeting of notions of tolerance. The geographic limits of Saudi and Emirati moderation are evident in the housing projects of France, the Rohingya refugee camp at Bangladesh's Cox Bazar, and in Pakistan, where Prime Minister Imran Khan appears to be reinforcing religious ultra-conservatism that has long been woven into the fabric of society with Saudi assistance.

The obstacles in garnering religious soft power are further evident in the travails of the Saudi-funded King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID). After a decade in Vienna, the centre has been forced to relocate to Lisbon. The centre hopes that the kingdom's lack of freedom of religion and tarnished human rights record will spark less controversy in the Portuguese capital.

Supporters of the centre have blamed anti-Muslim sentiment for the controversy surrounding it. However, while the rise of Islamophobia in recent years due to indiscriminate and senseless acts of violence, prejudice against migration, and right-wing xenophobic agitation is beyond doubt, equally true is that neither Saudi Arabia nor the UAE can claim total innocence.

Until the rise of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Saudi-funded ultra-conservatives fed on feelings of marginalisation, disenfranchisement, and alienation in housing projects in French cities populated primarily by Muslim immigrants and their French-born descendants.

"At the risk of simplifying a bit, one could argue that from the mid-1990s onward, the rise of Islamist violence in France that culminated with the terror wave of 2015-2016 was essentially a Salafi undertaking," said Marc Weitzmann, the author of a recent essay on the debate in France about violence and the country's Muslim minority. Mr. Weitzmann, who blames the Muslim Brotherhood and its Middle Eastern backers alongside the Saudis for France's problem, appeared to implicitly acknowledge that his assessment did not also hold French discriminatory policies and societal attitudes responsible. The combination of Saudi funding, Islamist agitation, and French policy

created a brew in an environment of increasing anti-Muslim, anti-migrant sentiment, and populist xenophobia that allowed the UAE to align its obsessive campaign against political Islam with the domestic and geopolitical aspirations of French President Emmanuel Macron. With an election scheduled for April in which the president's strongest challengers are likely to be right-wing xenophobes, Mr. Macron has accused the Brotherhood and Salafists of Islamist "separatism" and "supremacy" by allegedly seeking to introduce an Islamic legal code that would supercede French law.

Pakistani Prime Minister Khan emphasises the role of Islam in education and the clamping down on alleged blasphemy, an issue that often sparks mob violence in the South Asian nation, while Saudi Arabia and the UAE have sought to reduce the role religion plays in national identity and public life.

With the debate in Pakistan focused on education and social mores, Saudi Arabia announced last May that it would build a grand mosque in the name of King Salman on the campus of the Islamic University of Islamabad.

Mr. Khan himself was not shown to have offshore holdings. Nonetheless, in an online meeting last week with Islamic scholars, Mr. Khan, focusing on Islam's earliest years, appeared to argue that securing societal ethics and morals were a prerequisite for the fight against corruption. Among the participants were UAE-backed clerics Abdullah bin Bayyah and Hamza Yusuf; Recep Senturk, who is believed to be close to Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan; as well as renowned traditionalist thinker Seyyed Hossein Nasr and his Malaysian student, Osman Bakar; and Chandra Muzaffar, a controversial Malaysian scholar, former Islamist politician, and activist. The newly established Pakistani monitoring body invited them. Mr. Khan's "discourse sounded surreal given the nature of the problems faced by Muslim-majority countries. The prime ministerial observations and questions during the discussion revealed a narrow world outlook. In fact, such views can be taken as symptomatic of all that has caused the backwardness of Muslim countries," said Pakistani columnist Zahid Hussain.

Decrying the gap in social and economic development between Muslim countries and the rest of the world, Mr. Hussain cautioned that "obscurantism only accentuates our backwardness. The youth, which now comprises the majority of the Muslim world's population, need education, freedom of expression and thinking that can equip them to compete with the rest of the world."

Neither Saudi Arabia nor the UAE embrace fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of expression. On the contrary. Their human rights records are badly tarnished. Nonetheless, demonstrably nudging Pakistan to embrace educational reform and counter law-of-the-jungle social militancy, even if only in line with an autocratic definition of religious moderation and helping provide troubled communities with prospects beyond mere survival, would constitute a step forward.

Potentially, it would enhance the two Gulf states' competing efforts to be icons of a restrictive form of moderation and leadership of the Muslim world. Possibly, a first step towards moderation would at some point in the future unleash forces that further push the envelope.

Dr. James M. Dorsey is an award-winning journalist and scholar and a Senior Fellow at the National University of Singapore's Middle East Institute.

2022 – All Doom and Gloom

Fatima Abdullah, Sheeza Sajjad Mazari

Khurram Dastgir Khan, the opposition leader, is bemused at the dearth of the public fury. According to him, the economy is towards destruction due to the default in industrial sectors

THIS year, Pakistan's economic conditions will surely be in the spotlight after the outbreak of Covid situation in India and Afghanistan being captured by the Taliban's. Pakistan is trying hard to beat the odds, but it is expected that 2022 will be all doom and gloom if Pakistan just survives instead of revising and implementing the strategic state. The opposition leaders claimed that leading party, PTI, lacks necessary capabilities to fix the economic condi-

tions and has lost any sympathy it gathered from the general public.

In spite of the sufferings faced by the Pakistani families, they are still brave enough to put their trust in the leading party. If there is any development spotted in the current noxious conditions, there is still hope that the general public might turn a blind eye to the reckless affairs of the ruling party.

Khurram Dastgir Khan, the opposition leader, is bemused at the dearth of the public fury. According to him, the economy is towards destruction due to the default in industrial sectors. He also highlighted the issue of income disparity that has intensified in the past three years. As far as bilateral events are concerned, China has openly expressed disappointment over the handling of CPEC affairs in Pakistan due to the mismanagement of security arrangements in the project area, which is under the supervision of technical advisor, Khalid Mansoor. If the PTI team takes regular control of the area and track down the defamers, there is still a chance that the ball starts rolling again.

Apart from that, many small and medium enterprises (SMEs) have borne a huge loss due to the Covid-19 lockdown. According to the research, this pandemic has shattered many economies of the world, including Pakistan. Many SMEs businesses and startups which

were closed down because of the pandemic could never make it back. The government did try to help these businesses by stimulating bank loans, but more direct involvement is required to support small businesses.

Moreover, there are still opportunities for the manufacturing and service sectors to increase their efficiency and begin exporting commodities to the world, after the restrictions on exports due to the accessibility of export surpluses. However, some advancement was surely observed as the advisor on commerce diligently got involved with the business community but for long-term favorable conditions it depends on the output of manufacturing industries. At the same time, there were efforts made to hold down the imports, but it could not last for longer period as soon there was a need detected for resources and equipment.

In short, the current government of our country needs to conduct a deep analysis of the current situation and rewrite the strategies for promoting investments, upgrading relationships with neighboring countries, especially China, design plans for motivating and supporting SMEs, also to promote exports and limit the imports. Of course, the list does not end here for the PTI government to improve the worse conditions of the economy.

Briefs

Women's camel beauty contest makes debut in Saudi Arabia

RUMAH: Saudi women, in a first for the conservative kingdom, have paraded their camels in a beauty pageant for the prized "ships of the desert".

"I hope today to reach a certain social standing, in-shallah (God willing)," said Lamia al-Rashidi, 27, who participated at the weekend contest in the Rumah desert northeast of the capital Riyadh. The event, part of the prestigious King Abdelaziz Festival, was previously a men-only affair.

"I've been interested in camels ever since I was little," said Rashidi, whose family owns 40 camels. "Once this event was opened to women, I decided to participate," said the young woman, wearing a black face covering and with a colourful shawl over her shoulders.

The top five in the field of about 40 participants in the women's event went home with total prize money of one million riyals (about \$260,000).

The camels' beauty is judged on several criteria, but the shape and size of the lips, neck and hump are the main attributes.

In December, several participants were disqualified because their animals had undergone botox injections. — Agencies

Govt criticized...

FROM PAGE 01

"Where was the government all the while? What arrangements did it make to deal with such an influx? Incompetence is fast turning into criminality. Prior arrangements & round the clock supervision were the normal SOPs in the past." Shehbaz also expressed his condolences to the bereaved families and prayed for the departed souls.

PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari also expressed his sorrow over the Murree tragedy, saying that the whole nation was saddened over the incident.

The PPP chief also consoled with the bereaved families. "It would have been better if the tourists were informed about the weather in Murree in advance," he said in a statement issued by his party's media cell on Twitter.

"The administration should immediately begin rescue services for the tourists," he added.

PML-N Vice President Maryam Nawaz censured the government for its "negligence". "The job of governments is not only to count tourists but also to make prior arrangements and security measures for them," she tweeted.

She added that those who made "fun of Shehbaz's boots" were now trying to "save their government while sitting in their palaces". "These deaths are not because of the snowfall, but due to government negligence." PPP Vice President Senator Sherry Rehman termed the deaths as "heartbreaking".

She wrote on Twitter that governments needed to be more vigilant about the flood of tourists on the Galatya routes in extreme weather. "Instead of seeking more tourists, [the government] should have given a warning for jammed roads," she added. "This is the norm in perilous weather in all such destinations."

She maintained that these were tragic and avoidable losses, which no one intended, but no one acted in time either. "Lessons need to be learnt." Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman also criticised the government, saying a few moments of happiness in pleasant weather were ruined by the "poor arrangements" of the government. "Instead of giving relief to the people, the rulers have left people helpless," Fazl added.

PML-N senior leader and former premier Shahid Khan Abbas blamed PM Imran and the Punjab chief minister for the tragedy, saying that the "culprits" were sitting in the power corridors. "The culprit is [Punjab CM] Usman Buzdar," Abbas said, adding that it was the failure of the government, which did not care about the people.

England last-wicket pair hang on to draw 4th Test

It was a thrilling end to an entertaining match, with England's players barely able to watch in the dressing room as Anderson played out the final over

AGENCIES

SYDNEY: England clung on for a tense draw on the final day of the fourth Test in Sydney to end Australia's hopes of an Ashes clean sweep. The tourists were 13 balls from safety when Jack Leach edged Steve Smith behind, leaving it to Stuart Broad and last batter James Anderson to guide England home.

With the light fading and every Australia fielder around the bat, Broad and Anderson blocked out Smith and Nathan Lyon to secure a hard-fought draw, closing on 270-9.

Zak Crawley earlier made a fluent 77 and Ben Stokes hit 60 despite still struggling with his side injury as England crept towards safety. Boland continued his extraordinary start to Test cricket with 3-30, while captain Pat Cummins took two wickets in three balls to rattle England.

It was a thrilling end to an entertaining match, with England's players barely able to watch in the dressing room as Anderson played out the final over. Australia may be left to rue their late declaration on the fourth day, with rain meaning they lost seven overs as they tried to force victory on Sunday. The final Test of the series - a day-night match in Hobart - begins on 14 January. England may have al-



ready lost the Ashes but here they showed real fight and character throughout the match.

Jonny Bairstow displayed grit with his first-innings century and that energy and determination filtered back to the dressing room as the tourists fought to repel Australia on an absorbing final day.

The small crowd at the Sydney Cricket Ground were at their loudest in the final hour, as Australia tore in with the new ball. Cummins, who had been subdued with the ball throughout the day, trapped Jos Buttler lbw on review before doing the same to Mark

Wood two balls later with a delivery that knocked the bowler off his feet.

That left it to Bairstow, nursing a thumb injury that may keep him out of the next Test, and Leach, one of the heroes of Headingley 2019, to see off 15 overs.

Australia felt the pressure, with Smith dropping Bairstow off Mitchell Starc, but they would have felt victory was in their grasp when the same batter popped a catch to silly mid-off. Leach and Broad withstood some short, fast, hostile bowling, all accompanied by the chirping of the players

around the bat, before a disappointed Leach edged Smith to slip. It was left to Broad and Anderson, the veterans, to see England home and give them something to smile about after a bruising tour.

Positives have been few and far between for England, but Crawley's performance in the morning session hinted at what could be in the coming years.

Having started strongly the previous night, Crawley refused to let the bowlers settle. He pulled and drove the off-colour Starc before flicking Lyon away to bring up a 69-ball half-century. Just as

Bairstow and Stokes did on the third day, Crawley threw Australia off their plans, dominating the bowling with his elegant stroke-play.

By the time he fell, trapped by an excellent yorker from Cameron Green, he had scored 77. The other three England batters had scored 19 runs between them.

Crawley also shared a 43-run stand with fellow opener Hameed. That this was England's third highest opening partnership in the last four Ashes series underlines how long their Test batting has been falling away. Hameed battled admirably but struggled for the fluency Crawley was showing at the other end. He was dropped by Alex Carey off Cummins but could not make it count, instead fiddling Scott Boland behind for nine to register his sixth consecutive single-figure score. It seems highly unlikely he will feature in the final Test at Hobart.

David Malan played a poor shot to Lyon and was bowled, Root was left aghast as he nicked Boland behind and Stokes, having battled so bravely, almost punched his bat as he sent a simple catch off Lyon to Smith at slip. England have still to pass 300 on this tour, and while the draw in Sydney will raise their spirits, they will know that the same batting problems still linger in the background.

Australia loses bid to delay Djokovic's visa appeal

SPORTS DESK

MELBOURNE: A bid by the Australian government to delay Novak Djokovic's appeal against deportation has been rejected by a judge overseeing his case.

The government had requested the tennis star's court hearing be postponed until Wednesday, but it will instead begin as scheduled on Monday morning.

Djokovic was denied entry to Australia after landing in Melbourne last week to defend his Australian Open title. His case has caused a huge outcry and made headlines around the world.

The world number one men's tennis player - who has said he is opposed to vaccination - is in an immigration detention centre as his lawyers prepare to appeal against a decision by Australia's federal government to cancel his visa.

Djokovic, 34, had been granted a medical exemption to play in the Australian Open tournament in a decision that infuriated many ordinary Australians who have been living under some of the world's strictest Covid rules.

On Saturday, Djokovic's lawyers submitted a 35-page document arguing that their client fulfilled the criteria for a vaccine exemption certificate because of a recent Covid infection, which was confirmed by a PCR test on 16 December. There had been no prior announcement of Djokovic's Covid infection, and photos have since emerged of the player apparently attending events in the Serbian capital Belgrade maskless at around the time he tested positive.

Barty, Halep kick off Aus Open prep with victories

AGENCIES

ADELAIDE: World number one Ash Barty was in imperious form on Sunday as the Australian handed Elena Rybakina a 6-3 6-2 defeat at Memorial Drive to win the Adelaide International and claim the 14th WTA title of her career.

Barty, who won the event in 2020, dominated against the 22-year-old seventh seed from Kazakhstan to win in just over an hour, as she hits form a little more than a week ahead of the start of the Australian Open in Melbourne.

"The work that I do with my team behind the scenes puts me in the best possible position to play good tennis time, and time again each and every time we're asked," Barty told reporters. "I certainly feel pretty good coming into the summer."

"I feel good leading up to an Australian Open like I have every year. Each and every preparation is unique, each and every preparation is different."

"So we take it for what comes and what it is, move on, try and do the best that we can in every opportunity, whether that's here in Adelaide or it's in Mel-



bourne." The 25-year-old took command midway through the opening set after being forced to save two break points in the seventh game, fighting back to win despite a double fault.

Earlier a fit-again Simona Halep stormed to her first title in 16 months when she downed Russian Veronika Kudermetova to clinch the Melbourne Summer Set crown Sunday in a timely return to form, saying she was confident and feeling good.

The two-time Grand Slam champion pulled all of her big-match experience to pull through 6-2, 6-3 at the Rod Laver Arena in the ideal preparation for the



Australian Open, which starts January 17. There were two simultaneous WTA events as part of the Melbourne Summer Set, with Amanda Anisimova battling past Belarusian Aliaksandra Sasnovich 7-5, 1-6, 6-4 to win the other.

It was the 20-year-old American's second WTA Tour crown, as she too heads into the opening Grand Slam of the year full of confidence.

Former world number one Halep had not landed any silverware since Rome in September 2020, due largely to a calf tear that scuttled her mid-season in 2021 and saw her briefly fall outside the top 20 for the first time since 2013.

Warne, Vaughan want Australia to ensure they tour Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Former Australian leg-spinner Shane Warne and ex-England Test Skipper Michael Vaughan wants the Kangaroos to tour Pakistan for the promotion of the game of cricket saying Australia need to make sure that the players go there.

The duo emphasized why bigger cricketing nations have to tour countries like Pakistan and the responsibility is also on the International Cricket Council (ICC) to promote it.

"Extremely important," Warne said on Australia touring Pakistan. "You need Australians, New Zealand, India and England to go to Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and that sort of places," he while talking on Fox Cricket as quoted by cricketpakistan.com.pk.

"The excitement, then the money comes in from the revenue of TV rights. It's really important for teams to go there," Warne said. The 52-year-old was in shock thinking that some players of Pakistan team have not played a Test match in Pakistan.

"They played 40, 50 Tests and never played one at home, could you imagine what it feels to that person, their family, the crowd. Let's keep our fingers crossed, security and



everything is okay and we see some great cricket, Warne said.

Meanwhile, Vaughan opined that Australia must travel to Pakistan while expressing sadness over England not touring Pakistan for T20Is last year.

"If security ticks off, then Australia and other nations have to go to Pakistan. It's important for the world game. Pakistan adores cricket, not just T20s but Tests also. Australia needs to do everything in their powers to make sure the players go there," Vaughan said. "England pulled out of a Pakistan trip. I think they were going for a week to play 3 T20Is. — Agencies

Kohli returns as India look to hit back

SPORTS DESK

CAPE TOWN: India will be looking to Virat Kohli to provide inspiration and runs as they seek to bounce back in the decisive third Test against South Africa starting at Newlands on Tuesday.

Kohli is expected to return as captain and key batsman after missing India's defeat in the second Test in Johannesburg because of a back spasm.

Kohli's fierce competitiveness was missing in the closing stages at the Wanderers last Thursday as South Africa chased down a challenging target of 240 to level the series at 1-1. Indian coach Rahul Dravid pointed out that a damp outfield affected the ball and made the Indian bowlers less effective but there seemed an air of resignation as the South Africans got closer to their seven-wicket win.

Nadal beat Cressy for Melbourne title

MELBOURNE: Spanish superstar Rafael Nadal's Australian Open preparations remain on track after he beat American Maxime Cressy 7-6 (8/6), 6-3 in the final of the Melbourne Summer Set on Sunday.

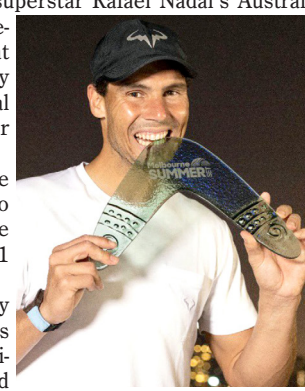
Nadal decided to play the lower level tournament to get some match practice after missing much of 2021 with injury and Covid-19.

He has not been totally fluent this week and was pushed hard by the American qualifier, but Nadal had too much experience for the 24-year-old serve-volleyer.

It was Nadal's 89th title on the ATP tour and the win ensures he has won at least one singles crown every year for the past 19 years.

Nadal said that, while he was not in perfect shape, he was happy with his form so far.

"Exactly where I would like to be is being 100 percent healthy from last year, playing until the end of the season, and with not having come back after five, six months away from competition," he said. — APP



COVID: US, Japan agree to keep troops on base

New COVID-19 cases have surged in Japan, jumping above 8,000 on Saturday, a four-month record. The spike has been most pronounced in areas near US bases

SPORTS DESK

TOKYO: The U.S. and Japan on Sunday agreed to keep American troops within their bases as worries grew about a sharp rise in coronavirus cases in the country.

The restrictions starting Monday will last 14 days, confining U.S. military personnel to base facilities except for "essential activities," a statement from the U.S. Forces in Japan said. The Japanese Foreign Ministry released the same statement.

The allies will share information

and cooperate on coronavirus measures, "given the extraordinary virulence of the omicron variant spreading throughout Japan," the statement said.

U.S. military members will wear masks, both on and off base, when outside their homes, and will continue to carry out strict testing before leaving for and after arrival in Japan, it said.

New COVID-19 cases have surged in Japan, jumping above 8,000 on Saturday, a four-month record. The spike has been most pronounced in areas near U.S. bases. Last week, Japan asked the U.S. for cooperation in keeping its mili-

tary personnel on base.

Okinawa, a southwestern group of islands that houses most of the 55,000 U.S. troops in Japan, is among the three prefectures where separate government restrictions kicked in Sunday. The measures, which last through the end of the month, include the early closing hours for restaurants, at 8 p.m. or 9 p.m. Some restaurants also must stop serving alcohol. The restrictions also went into effect in Yamaguchi prefecture, where Iwakuni base is located, and nearby Hiroshima. The Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum, which doc-

uments the U.S. atomic bombing of Japan at the end of World War II, and Hiroshima Castle are both closed to visitors. Other regions may see similar restrictions if cases keep rising.

People have been warned to stay home and avoid travel. Until recently, bars, shrines and shopping districts have been jam-packed with year-end shoppers and New Year's holiday travelers.

In Tokyo, confirmed daily cases have exceeded 1,200 for the past two days, 14 times the previous week. Throughout the pandemic, Japan has never imposed a lockdown but has implemented

varying levels of restrictions, including school closures and event cancellations.

About 80% of the population have received their second vaccine shots. Boosters have barely started, with fewer than 1% receiving them despite repeated promises by the government to speed up their rollout. Japan has set up stringent border controls, barring most incoming travel except for returning residents and citizens.

Japan has reported about 18,300 COVID-19-related deaths so far. On recent days, there have been just one or two deaths, and on some days, none at all.

All those negligent to be punished

FROM PAGE 01

than what the hill station can accommodate. The chief minister in his statement today said that Rescue 1122 staff will be provided trail bikes and wireless communication systems.

Furthermore, under a new traffic management system, new connecting roads to Murree will be built.

Media reported that the meeting took place in Gharial, Murree, during which the chief minister was given a detailed briefing on rescue and relief operations.

Commissioner, Rawalpindi Division; City Police Officer, Rawalpindi; Deputy Commissioner, Rawalpindi; and CTO Rawalpindi gave a detailed account to the chief minister on various aspects of the tragic incident.

A report was presented to him on the tragic incident and he was briefed about the traffic management plan. Buzdar expressed his annoyance over the overcrowding in Murree, media reported. He spent over three hours in Murree, it said. Later in the day, an initial report was presented to the chief minister. It said that on January 7, four feet of snow fell in Murree.

According to the report, between January 3 and 7, 162,000 vehicles entered the city. The report said that the 22 people who died on January 7 died due to carbon monoxide poisoning. Trees fell at 16 different points, blocking off the roads for traffic, said the report. According to the report, 21,000 cars that made their way to Murree were sent back.

All major roads opened...

FROM PAGE 01

country. Earlier today, at least 23 people have lost their lives while being trapped in their vehicles after snowstorm in Murree and other northern areas of the country.

The soldiers of Pakistan Army assisted the civil administration participated in relief activities to rescue the stranded tourists.

Over 100,000 cars had entered the scenic town of Murree in the past few days to see the unusually heavy snowfalls, causing an enormous traffic jam on roads leading in and out.

Rescue 1122 service has released the details of the people who have lost their lives trapped in their cars.

Chairman of National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) Lt. General Akhtar Nawaz on Sunday announced that all tourists trapped in the hill station have been rescued.

Talking to media persons, the chairman said that all tourists have been moved to safe locations and 371 people have been shifted to Army camps.

He further said that operation is underway to clear Kaldana to Barian Road where 77 cars are still trapped; however, there are no people in the vehicles as they left their cars and sought shelter somewhere else. Lt. General Akhtar said that tourists are being facilitated and food and medicines have been given to them.

Prime Minister Imran Khan ordered inquiry and putting in place strong regulation to ensure prevention of such tragedies. The Prime Minister, in a tweet, said that he was shocked and upset at tragic deaths of tourists on road to Murree.

The premier added that unprecedented snowfall and rush of people proceeding without checking weather conditions caught district administration unprepared.

The preliminary report of the tragic incident that took place in Murree was presented to Punjab Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar. According to sources, the report submitted to the chief minister said that Murree has the capacity to park 32,000 vehicles, while more than 72,000 vehicles entered Murree on Thursday.

The report also stated that the tourists parked their vehicles on the side of the roads after parking space ended.

CM Buzdar on Saturday has imposed emergency in Murree due to heavy snowfall and ordered to open government rest houses and offices for the tourists.

All the possible resources will be utilized to facilitate the travelers in this difficult time, he assured.

Briefs

Saudi princess freed after nearly 3 years in jail

DUBAI: Saudi authorities have released a princess detained in the kingdom under mysterious circumstances for nearly three years, her supporters said on Sunday. The princess, Basmah bint Saud, a daughter of Saudi Arabia's second king, disappeared in March 2019 and landed in a notorious Saudi prison without charge, she wrote on social media at the time.

The reason for her arrest along with her daughter was not clear, as she never wielded significant influence. But it marked the latest case against a royal family member as the headstrong Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman consolidated power as the kingdom's de facto leader.

Following his father King Salman's ascension to the throne in 2015, he has proscribed critics, activists and rival royals, and has locked up and shaken down princes in an anti-corruption purge. The 58-year-old Princess Basmah and her 30-year-old daughter Suhoud al-Sharif left al-Ha'ir Prison on the outskirts of the Saudi capital, Riyadh, last week and returned home to the port city of Jiddah Thursday, said her legal advisor Henri Estramant. Princess Basmah suffers from health problems including osteoporosis and is now focused on recovering and spending time with family, he added. Saudi Arabia's Embassy in Washington did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The Saudi government has not commented publicly on the case. - APP

Mauritania releases ex-president from prison

NOUAKCHOTT: Mauritania authorities on Saturday released former President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz from prison, according to local media. The local Al-Akhar news website said Ould Abdel Aziz was released after six months in prison. On Friday, a Mauritanian judge ordered the former president's release due to health reasons, but kept him under judicial and medical supervision at his home. Last week, the former president underwent a heart surgery in a government hospital in the capital Nouakchott. Ould Abdel Aziz was arrested in July on corruption charges in government deals. The former president came to power in 2008 after a military coup and served for two terms until 2019. He supported current President Mohamed Ould Ghazouani in the June 2019 elections. Ould Ghazouani took part in the 2008 military coup. - APP

7 killed in southeastern Brazil

BUENOS AIRES: At least seven people were killed Saturday in southeastern Brazil when a canyon wall collapsed on speedboats in a lake, according to local authorities. The rockslide in Lago de Furnas near the city of Capitulo hit four boats and two sank, said local sources, while footage of the incident went viral on social media. The Minas Gerais Fire Department said three missing people were found on a boat called Jesus that the rock directly hit. Earlier, Fire Chief Edgard Estevo said 20 people were missing because of the accident. Search and rescue efforts continue and divers will take a break from their night work as it is risky. Fire department spokesman Pedro Aihara told the Brazilian EPTV channel that some who were missing were found after contacting state hospitals. After the accident, many victims went to hospitals in the state and 20 were listed as missing because there was no cross-listing, added Aihara. It occurred "due to heavy rains, which caused the loosening of a wall of stones in Lago de Furnas, in Capitulo," Minas Governor Romeu Zema said on Twitter. "The Government of Minas is present from the beginning through the Civil Defense and Fire Department. Rescue work is still ongoing," he added. The navy will launch an investigation into the incident. - APP

Russia: Won't agree to any concession with US

Russia since late last year has amassed tens of thousands of troops at the Ukrainian border and demanded guarantees that NATO will not expand further eastward

WEB DESK

MOSCOW: Russia has demanded binding promises that NATO will not further expand eastward and that the US will remove troops and weapons from Eastern Europe in exchange for reducing its expanded troop presence on the Ukrainian border. Russia has ruled out any concession at talks with the United States on soaring tensions over Ukraine as Moscow seeks a wide-ranging new security arrangement with the West but faces strong pressure to pull back troops. Russia's deputy foreign minister Sergei Ryabkov on Sunday told Russian news

agencies ahead of his talks in Geneva the Kremlin was also "disappointed" with signals coming from both Washington and Brussels, where NATO and the European Union are based. "We will not agree to any concession. That is completely excluded," Ryabkov said. "We are disappointed with the signals coming in the last few days from Washington but also from Brussels." The high-level discussions start a week of diplomacy in which Russia will meet with NATO and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), with the US trying to assure European allies they will not be sidelined. Russia since late last year has amassed tens of thou-

EU, US officials discuss Russia's military

WASHINGTON: EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken discussed Russia's military build-up around Ukraine during a telephone call Saturday. The call came ahead of a Jan. 10 US-Russia meeting on security in Geneva. They reaffirmed the EU and US support for Ukraine's sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity and emphasized the need for Russia to de-escalate and fully implement the Minsk agreements, the EU said in a statement. Any further military aggression against Ukraine will have massive consequences and severe costs, it said. They also discussed bilateral and multilateral diplomatic engagements following the proposals presented by the Russian Federation regarding Moscow's views about the security arrangements in Europe. They underlined the US' and the EU's enduring partnership and shared commitments to Transatlantic security and to confront common security challenges. - DNA

sands of troops at the Ukrainian border and demanded guarantees that NATO will not expand further eastward. The Kremlin is insisting NATO must never grant membership to ex-Soviet Ukraine, which is pushing to join. The United States, to be represented by Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman, agreed to talks even though it made plain that many of Moscow's proposals are non-starters. Originally scheduled to start on Monday, Sherman is now due to have a working dinner with Ryabkov on Sunday evening, said a State Department spokesperson. In two phone calls to Russian President Vladimir Putin, US President Joe Biden has

warned of severe consequences if Russia invades Ukraine. Europeans have showed solidarity, with EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell visiting the frontline in Ukraine, although some nations are expected to hesitate at the strongest measures. Russia insists it was deceived after the Cold War and understood that NATO would not expand. Instead, the US-led alliance accepted most of the former Warsaw Pact nations and the three Baltic nations that were under Soviet rule. Russia has put intense pressure on neighbouring Ukraine since 2014 after a revolution overthrew a government that had sided with the Kremlin against moving closer to Europe.

Turkey to help Kazakhstan restore peace, stability

ANKARA: Turkish foreign minister Sunday said Turkiye will help Kazakhstan establish peace and stability as soon as possible. Speaking at a Justice and Development (AK) Party's consultation and evaluation meeting in Antalya, Mevlut Cavusoglu said Turkiye hoped Kazakhstan will soon restore peace in the country. "For this, we will provide all kinds of support as Turkiye and the Organization of Turkic States," he added. The protests against an increase in LPG prices have grown into massive riots across Kazakhstan over the past week. At least 18 security personnel and 26 protesters lost their lives during the unrest, the country's Interior Ministry had said on Thursday. Regarding the three Turkish soldiers killed by terrorists on Saturday, Cavusoglu said Turkiye will continue to "work day and night to neutralize all the elements that pose a threat to our country, regardless of where they are in Syria and Iraq." The soldiers were killed in the southeastern Saniurfa province's border district of Akcakale by an IED. Some 12 PKK/YPG terrorists were later neutralized by the Turkish forces in the area. Turkish authorities use the word "neutralized" in statements to imply that the terrorists in question either surrendered or were killed or captured. In its more than 35-year terror campaign against Turkiye, the PKK - listed as a terrorist organization by Turkiye, the US, and the EU - has been responsible for the deaths of nearly 40,000 people, including women, children, and infants. The YPG is the PKK's Syrian offshoot. - Agencies



TEHRAN: A high level delegation led by acting Foreign Minister of Afghanistan Maulvi Amir Khan Muttaki, who is visiting Tehran at the invitation of Iran, met with Dr. Hussein Amir Abdullahi, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Iran. - DNA

Sri Lanka seeks Chinese debt restructuring amid crisis



COLOMBO: The president of debt-ridden Sri Lanka on Sunday asked China for the restructuring of its loans and access to preferential credit for imports of essential goods, as the island nation struggles in the throes of its worst economic crisis, partly due to Beijing-financed projects that don't generate revenue. President Gotabaya Rajapaksa told visiting Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi that it would be "a great relief to the country if attention could be paid on restructuring the debt repayments as a solution to the economic crisis that has arisen in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic," according to a

statement from his office. Rajapaksa asked Wang for a concessional credit facility for imports so that industries can run without disruption, the statement said. He also requested assistance to enable Chinese tourists to travel to Sri Lanka within a secure bubble. Wang and Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa, the president's brother, later visited Colombo's Port City, a reclaimed island developed with Chinese investment, where they opened a promenade and inaugurated the sailing of 65 boats to commemorate the 65 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries. Wang arrived in Sri Lanka

on Saturday from the Maldives on the last leg of a multinational trip that also took him to Eritrea, Kenya and the Comoros in East Africa. Sri Lanka faces one of its worst economic crises, with foreign reserves down to around \$1.6 billion, barely enough for a few weeks of imports. It also has foreign debt obligations exceeding \$7 billion in 2022, including repayment of bonds worth \$500 million in January and \$1 billion in July. The declining foreign reserves are partly blamed on infrastructure projects built with Chinese loans that don't make money. China loaned money to build a seaport and airport in the

southern Hambantota district, in addition to a wide network of roads. Central Bank figures show that current Chinese loans to Sri Lanka total around \$3.38 billion, not including loans to state-owned businesses, which are accounted for separately and thought to be substantial. "Technically we can claim we are bankrupt now," said Muttukrishna Sarvananthan, principal researcher at the Point Pedro Institute of Development. "When you have foreign reserves in the red, that means you are technically bankrupt." The situation has left households grappling with severe shortages. People wait in long lines to buy essential goods like milk powder, cooking gas and kerosene. Prices have increased sharply, and the Central Bank says the inflation rate rose to 12.1% by the end of December from 9.9% in November. Food inflation increased to over 22% in the same period. Because of a currency shortage, importers are unable to clear their cargo containing essentials and manufacturers are not able to buy raw materials from overseas. Expatriate remittances have also fallen after the government ordered the mandatory conversion of foreign currency and exchange rate controls. - DNA

Sudan forces fire tear gas

KHARTOUM: Security forces fired tear gas Sunday as thousands rallied in Sudan's capital Khartoum and a neighbouring city, witnesses said, keeping up pressure on the military following a coup 11 weeks ago. The coup, led by army chief General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan on October 25, derailed a power-sharing transition between the military and civilians that had been painstakingly established in the wake of long-time autocrat Omar al-Bashir's ouster in 2019. Security forces fired tear gas as pro-democracy protesters headed towards the presidential palace, witnesses said, amid roadblocks seeking to prevent people converging there and at army headquarters. Protesters also rallied in Omdurman, Khartoum's twin city. The resumption of protests since the coup has been met with a crackdown that has killed at least 60 people, according to medics. Authorities have repeatedly denied using live ammunition in confronting protests and said scores of security forces have been wounded during demonstrations that have often "deviated from peacefulness". - Agencies

Anti vaccine protests erupt across France

PARIS: Over 100,000 anti-vaccine protesters took the streets in France again on Saturday, opposing upcoming vaccine pass requirements as daily coronavirus cases skyrocketed to more than 300,000. The demonstrations were also fueled by anger against President Emmanuel Macron's recent vow to "piss off the unvaccinated" by restricting their entry to public places so they feel compelled to get the jab. The interior ministry estimated nearly 105,200 people participated in 179 rallies, including 18,000 in Paris, the BFMTV news channel reported. In several places, demonstrations turned violent as police fired tear gas at angry demonstrators with at least 34 arrested and 10 police personnel injured in clashes. Demonstrators, the majority of whom marched without masks, chanted derogatory slogans against Macron, raising banners that said: "Resistance for our freedoms - no digital pass, no vaccine," "Freedom," and "Piss off Macron." In separate rallies, groups of vaccinated people gathered in a show of support for Macron and applauded him for the vaccine pass bill. - APP

Iran justice workers hold rare protests for wage hike

TEHRAN: Civil servants in one of Iran's most powerful sectors, the judiciary, held rare demonstrations on Sunday against the government's refusal to increase their pay. Ultraconservative President Ebrahim Raisi, who assumed his post in August, had proposed a salary hike in the last weeks of his previous job as judicial chief. But the new government which he leads changed its mind.

Hit by severe economic sanctions imposed since 2018 by the United States, Iran has seen its inflation rate surge to close to 60 percent. Shargh, a newspaper representing the reformist viewpoint, on Sunday published video of a protest by hundreds of men and women in front of parliament in Tehran. "If our problem is not resolved, we will shut down the justice system!" they chanted.

Another reformist paper, Arman Melli, reported: "Some judicial personnel organised rallies yesterday (Saturday) in most of the country's cities to protest the rejection of the plan for parliament to increase their salaries." The demonstrators held up signs with slogans declaring that "justice workers are unable to support themselves" and decrying the "hypocrisy of the government and parliament". Meysam Latifi, head of the Administrative and Recruitment Affairs Organisation, angered judiciary employees with his remarks in parliament on Wednesday, when the increase was rejected. - APP

China's Tianjin testing all residents

BEIJING: The numbers are small, but the major port of Tianjin may be facing China's first outbreak of omicron of any size, less than four weeks before the Winter Olympics open in nearby Beijing. The city began mass testing of its 14 million residents on Sunday after a cluster of 20 children and adults tested positive for COVID-19, including at least two with the omicron variant. Officials said the virus has been circulating so the number of cases could grow. China has stepped up its strict zero tolerance strategy in the run-up to the Olympics, which open Feb. 4. The Chinese capital is 115 kilometers (70 miles) northwest of Tianjin and many people regularly travel back and forth by car or on a high-speed rail link that takes less than one hour. Elsewhere, millions of people are being confined to their homes in Xi'an and Yuzhou, two cities that are farther away but have larger outbreaks. Both have been traced to the delta variant. The outbreak in Yuzhou is also affecting Zhengzhou, the Henan provincial capital 70 kilometers (40 miles) to the north. Zhengzhou has been conducting mass testing and is closing schools starting Monday. - APP

UK to unilaterally end N. Ireland Protocol

LONDON: Britain will pull out of Northern Ireland Protocol if a "negotiated solution" with the EU is not reached, the UK's foreign secretary said. Writing for The Telegraph Saturday, Britain's chief Brexit negotiator Liz Truss said she would trigger the Article 16 "safeguard clause" in the protocol, which was signed between the UK and EU to avoid a land border between Northern Ireland and Ireland. "Northern Ireland is not in the Single Market and should not be treated as if it is," Truss wrote.

"We are proposing a common-sense solution - goods going to the EU should go through customs formalities and those staying in the United Kingdom should not," she added. Truss said her priority is "to protect peace and stability in Northern Ireland." "I want a negotiated solution but if we have to use legitimate provisions including Article 16, I am willing to do that." Truss's remarks came as she is scheduled to host Maros Sefcovic, the bloc's negotiator at Chevening, Kent, next Thursday for further discussions on the problems caused by the protocol. Sefcovic has already warned of "serious consequences" if Britain triggered Article 16. - APP

Turkey always with Azerbaijan: Hulusi Akar

Military cooperation between Azerbaijan and Turkey first emerged in 1992, with an agreement signed between the Azerbaijani and Turkish governments on military education and weapon equipment and deals to help strengthen the bond between the two nations

DNA

BAKU: National Defence Minister Hulusi Akar has again stressed Turkey's support for Azerbaijan, the Turkish media have reported. He made the relevant remarks in an interview with reporters in Ankara. Azerbaijan is a fraternal country for us. As "two states, one nation" we are always close to Azerbaijan, Akar said. He noted that his country's goal is to contribute to lasting peace and stability in the Caucasus. "Our wish and hope is to understand and seize the hand of peace extended to Armenia by the presidents of Azer-

baijan and Turkey. To seize this opportunity. It is not just about Azerbaijan and Armenia, it is about turning the whole region into an island of stability," Akar said. Recalling the establishment of a joint center with Russia to monitor the ceasefire since January 30, 2021, the minister said: "Cases of ceasefire violations are under control there. We are optimistic about the situation. Ceasefire violations are decreasing, stability is becoming more comprehensive. We hope that the situation will be more stable in the coming days. We believe that Turkish-Russian cooperation in these issues will be



successful, a ceasefire will be achieved, and we will contribute to its sustainability." The minister also noted that the Turkish military, together with their Azerbaijani counterparts, are trying to clear mines and impro-

vised explosive devices on Azerbaijan's liberated territories. Along with Russia, Turkey is represented with an equal number of servicemen in the joint centre to monitor the situation in and around Karabakh under a

trilateral peace agreement signed by Azerbaijan, Russia and Armenia on November 10, 2020, to end the war in Nagorno-Karabakh. Military cooperation between Azerbaijan and Turkey first emerged in 1992, with an agreement signed between the Azerbaijani and Turkish governments on military education and weapon equipment and deals to help strengthen the bond between the two nations. On June 15, the two countries signed a memorandum of alliance that cemented the existing military, political and economic cooperation. The Shusha Declaration on

Allied Relations that President Ilham Aliyev and his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan signed during the first official visit to Shusha eight months after Azerbaijan's victory in the war with Armenia, also focuses on defence cooperation. It affirms joint efforts by the two armies in the face of foreign threats. The declaration also pledges joint efforts for the restructuring and modernization of the armed forces. Moreover, the two nations affirm to encourage the execution of joint projects with the aim of developing capabilities in the field of sea, air, and space.

Briefs

Baby lost in Kabul evacuation reunited with family

DNA

KABUL: A baby boy separated from his parents in the chaos of the US evacuation of Afghanistan has finally been reunited with his family. The Taliban had just seized control of the country in August and many Afghans were desperately trying to flee. Two-month-old Sohail Ahmadi was handed to an American soldier over a fence, to protect him from the crush as thousands pushed to get into Kabul airport. But once his family were inside, Sohail was nowhere to be found. After a frantic but futile search for the infant, his father Mirza Ali Ahmadi, who had worked as a security guard at the US embassy, mother Suraya and their four other children were put on an evacuation flight to the US. For months they had no idea where their young son was.

Lahore records another 44 Omicron cases

DNA

LAHORE: Omicron has started spreading its tentacles in Lahore as 44 new cases of the new variant were reported in the provincial capital on Sunday taking the tally in the city to 286. The fast-spreading variant which has already wreaked havoc in the USA, UK, France and other European countries has started unleashing its wrath in Pakistan. According to the statistics released by the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) on Sunday morning, there were 1,572 new infections and seven deaths from the coronavirus in the country during the last 24 hours pulling the positivity ratio up to 3.16%. On December 9, the first Omicron variant case was detected in Karachi by doctors at a private hospital. Minister for Planning and NCOC head Asad Umar last week warned that there were clear signs that the country was going to be hit by another wave of Covid-19 pandemic as genome sequencing revealed that the Omicron variant cases started surging across the country particularly in Karachi.

Six terrorists killed in Quetta gunbattle with CTD team

DNA

QUETTA: At least six alleged terrorists belonging to a defunct organisation were killed in a gunbattle with a team of Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) in Quetta. The CTD personnel also seized weapons and ammunition from the terrorists' hideout located near Eastern Bypass of the provincial capital. A spokesman of the CTD informed the media that one of the terrorists belonged to an outlawed group had a head money of Rs2 million. A day earlier, the Balochistan Counter-Terrorism Department had arrested four alleged terrorists from Kech during an operation. The operation was conducted after the forces had received a tip-off from one of their sources. The suspects were the masterminds of a bomb explosion last year in Turbat. Two children were killed in the blast. Also on Friday, two terrorists were killed in a gunbattle with a raiding team of the Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) in Bannu region. On a tip-off, the CTD raiding party carried out an intelligence-based operation on Amirwanda Road within limits of Lakki Police Station. The terrorists suddenly opened fire on the raiding team's personnel who also retaliated fiercely, killing the two terrorists. The CTD team also seized two Kalashnikovs, six magazines, large number of cartridges, two identity cards, cash, a sack full of explosive material and other equipment from the hideout of the dead terrorists.

10 killed as heavy rain, snow lashes KP

PESHAWAR: With the rain and snow battering Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for the sixth consecutive day on Saturday, at least 10 people were killed and 13 injured in separate incidents in different parts of the province. The damage to public life and property was reported in Upper Dir, Khyber and Mardan districts. The Pakistan Meteorological Department forecast more rain and snowfall in hilly areas of the province. According to the relevant officials, six people, including four children, lost life in two incidents in Upper Dir district. No damage to public life in Galiyat despite landslides. - APP



MURREE: Rescue and police personnel helping stranded tourists as heavy snowfall caused 23 casualties at the hilly stations. - APP

Kazakhstan unrest: At least 164 killed in clashes

Almost 6,000 people have been arrested, including "a substantial number of foreign nationals", Kazakhstan's presidential office said on Sunday

NEWS DESK

NUR SULTAN: At least 164 people have died in Kazakhstan during violent anti-government protests, according to media reports citing health officials. It confirmed it would mark a sharp rise from the previous figure of 44 deaths. Almost 6,000 people have been arrested, including "a substantial number of foreign nationals", Kazakhstan's presidential office said on Sunday. The demonstrations, triggered by a rise in fuel prices, turned into huge riots as they spread across the country. They started on 2 January and grew

to reflect discontent at the government and former President Nursultan Nazarbayev, who led Kazakhstan for three decades and is still thought to retain significant influence. Last week, troops from countries including Russia were sent to Kazakhstan to help restore order. The presidential statement added that the situation had stabilised, with troops continuing "cleanup" operations and guarding "strategic facilities". A state of emergency and a nationwide curfew remain in place. Kazakhstan shares borders with Russia to the north and China to the east. It is a huge country the size of

Western Europe. Why does it matter? A former Soviet republic which is mainly Muslim with a large Russian minority, it has vast mineral resources, with 3% of global oil reserves and important coal and gas sectors. Why is it making the news? Fuel riots, which have escalated to become broader protests against the government, have resulted in resignations at the top and a bloody crackdown on protesters. In the capital, Nursultan, there are obvious signs that security has been tightened, with the entrance to the city's Presidential Palace blocked. There is a growing suggestion that the recent violence is linked to a

power struggle within Kazakhstan's ruling elite. Some 103 fatalities in the latest violence were reportedly in the main city, Almaty. The security forces said they killed rioters in Almaty while trying to restore order and that protesters had tried to take control of police stations in the city. President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev said "20,000 bandits" had attacked Almaty and that he had told security forces to "fire without warning". On Saturday, Kazakh authorities said the country's former intelligence chief Karim Massimov had been arrested on suspicion of treason. They gave no further details.

Afghan professor arrested for criticising Taliban

WEB DESK

KABUL: A prominent Afghan university professor who openly criticised the Taliban's hardline regime has been arrested in Kabul, a spokesman for the government said. Professor Faizullah Jalal has made several appearances on television talk shows since the previous US-backed government was ousted in August, blaming the Taliban for the worsening financial crisis and criticising them for ruling by force. Since returning to power, the Taliban have cracked down on dissent, forcefully dispersing women's rights protests and briefly detaining several Afghan journalists. Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid tweeted that Jalal had been detained on Saturday over statements he made on social media in which he was "trying to instigate people against the system and was playing with the dignity of the people". "He has been arrested so that others don't make similar senseless comments in the name of being a professor or scholar that harm the dignity of others," he added. Mujahid shared screenshots of tweets he claimed had been posted by Jalal, which said the Taliban intelligence chief was a stooge of Pakistan, and that the new government considers Afghans as "donkeys". In one television appearance, Jalal called Taliban spokesman Mohammad Naeem who was also participating - a "calf", a grave insult in Afghanistan. Clips of his passionate criticism went viral on social media, sparking concern he risked Taliban retribution. Jalal's wife Massouda, who once stood as Afghanistan's first woman candidate for the presidency, posted on Facebook that her husband had been arrested by Taliban forces and detained in an unknown location. "Dr. Jalal has fought and spoken out for justice and the national interest in all his activities pertaining to human rights," she said. A long-time professor of law and political science at Kabul University, Jalal has long had a reputation as a critic of Afghanistan's leaders.

Beijing on high alert with Winter Olympics at corner

BEIJING: The Beijing Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued a reminder on Sunday that people in Beijing should not unnecessarily visit Tianjin and those in Tianjin should not visit the capital unless necessary. It is also suggested that commuters between the two cities work from home. Anyone in Beijing who has visited Tianjin's Jinnan and Nankai districts since December 23, 2021, will be quarantined at home and tested. Others who have traveled to Tianjin since the same date need to promptly report to their local communities, employers and hotels, the CDC said. Huge uncertainties exist for the Tianjin outbreak as the source of infection remains unknown, Global Times reported on Sunday, citing an unnamed immunologist.

The Tianjin outbreak may pose risks to Beijing and the upcoming Winter Olympics, because of the large number of commuters working and living in the two cities, the immunologist warned. The inter-city train between Tianjin and Beijing is operating normally as of press time. The Chinese mainland reported 165 confirmed COVID-19 cases on Saturday, with 92 linked to local transmissions and 73 from overseas, data from the National Health Commission showed on Sunday. A total of 46 new asymptomatic cases were also recorded, and 675 asymptomatic patients remain under medical observation. Confirmed cases on the Chinese mainland now total 103,619, with the death toll remaining unchanged at 4,636 since January last year. China has fully vaccinated more

than 1.21 billion people, or 86.25 percent of the country's total population against COVID-19 as of Friday, the National Health Commission said on Saturday. Meanwhile, North China's Tianjin, a municipality some 100 kilometers to the southeast of Beijing, has started a citywide nucleic acid testing after 20 people tested positive for COVID-19, authorities said Sunday. It is one of the latest regional outbreaks in China since Shaanxi Province in the country's northeast had reported nearly 2,000 confirmed COVID-19 cases since December, and smaller outbreaks were found in Guangdong of the south, Zhejiang to the east, and Henan in central China. The city advised residents not to leave Tianjin for unnecessary reasons, the government said late on Saturday. - APP

928 new cases of corona detected, no death reported

KARACHI: Fortunately no death stemming from Coronavirus reported on Sunday, however 928 new cases emerged when 14,012 tests were conducted. This was stated by Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah in a statement issued here from CM House on Sunday. Mr Shah said that fortunately no death was reported on Sunday. He added that till last Saturday the number death was 7,681. Mr. Shah said that 14,012 samples were tested which detected 928 cases that constituted 6.6 percent current detection rate. He added that so far 7,256,330 tests have been conducted against which 486,350 cases were diagnosed, of them 96.4 percent or 468,826 patients have recovered, including 161 overnight. The CM said that currently 9,843 patients were under treatment, of them 9,574 were in home isolation, 120 at isolation centers and 149 at different hospitals. He added that the condition of

142 patients was stated to be critical, including 11 shifted to ventilators. According to the statement, out of 928 new cases, 748 have been detected from Karachi, including 279 from East, 216 South, 97 Central, 85 Korangi, 37 Malir and 34 West. Hyderabad has 29, Nausheroferoze 15, Shaheed Benazirabad and Thatta 13 each, Dadu and Matiari 12 each, Kashmore and Larkana 10 each, Sukkur 8, Tando Allahyar and Jamshoro 9 each, Mirpurkhas 7, Umerkot 6, Jacobabad and Tharparkar 5 each, Ghotki and Sanghar 4 each, Shikarpur and Tando Muhammad Khan 3 each, Badin 2. Vaccination: Sharing vaccination data the CM said that 30,470,881 vaccinations have been administered upto January 7th and added during the last 24 hours 147,163 vaccines were inoculated - in total 30,618,044 vaccines administered which constituted 55.44 percent of the vaccine eligible population. - DNA

Restrictions imposed in several states in India

The state government has said only fully vaccinated people will be allowed into private offices while limiting the capacity to 50% of the total workforce

MUMBAI: India reported 159,632 new COVID-19 cases on Sunday, as the Omicron variant of the coronavirus continues to spread rapidly in the country, nudging several state governments to impose fresh restrictions. India's richest state, Maharashtra, said on Saturday it would close swimming pools and gyms from Monday while schools and colleges have been closed till Feb 15 after daily cases in the state jumped to over 41,000. The state government has said only fully vaccinated people will be allowed into private offices while limiting the capacity to 50% of the total workforce. In the neighbouring state of Gujarat, authorities have extended night curfew hours and cancelled leave for all healthcare personnel. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will chair a meeting to review the COVID-19 situation later on Sunday, according to government sources. The health ministry reported 327 new deaths, taking the official death toll since the start of the pandemic to 483,790. Total infections stand at 35.52 million. - Agencies

Over 100,000 Afghan people on borders vaccinated

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has effectively vaccinated over 100,000 people travelling from across Afghan borders against COVID-19 contagious virus since November 2021. This was disclosed during the meeting of Afghan Inter-Ministerial Coordination Cell (AICC) chaired by National Security Adviser and Convener of AICC Dr Moeed Yusuf, said a media release. The meeting took a review of progress made under the Afghan humanitarian assistance package announced by PM Imran Khan. - APP

Greece sets February deadline for booster jabs

Ahead of New Year's Eve, the Greek govt has implemented new measures as daily cases soared, after Christmas celebrations

ATHENS: Greece on Sunday set a February deadline for people to receive coronavirus booster jabs and will bar those without the additional dose from most indoor venues. "From February 1, anyone who has not taken the booster dose after a seven-month period (from the second dose) will be considered unvaccinated," Greek Health Minister Thanos Plevris said in an interview with the Ant1 broadcaster. "The certificate will be valid, because it is a European certificate valid for nine months, but they will not be able to have the privileges and advantages as to access indoor

and other activities that are for the fully vaccinated." Greece is struggling to contain a surge of the Omicron variant and encouraging those not vaccinated to get jabbed as well as imposing further restrictions for the vaccinated. Since mid-November, unvaccinated people have been largely barred from indoor spaces, including restaurants, cinemas, museums and gyms, even if they test negative for Covid-19. Ahead of New Year's Eve, the Greek government has implemented new measures as daily cases soared, after Christmas celebra-

tions. Until January 16, restaurants and entertainment venues are required to close at midnight, are only able to seat tables of six people while music is banned. Up to half of employees in the public and private sectors are advised to work from home, up from 20 percent previously. The country has recorded 1,489,024 coronavirus cases and 21,328 related deaths since the start of the pandemic. On December 14, the country said a record 130 people had died of Covid in 24 hours, but that daily figure has since dropped below 100. - Agencies

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