



Islamabad POST

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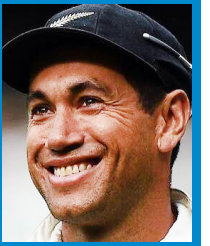
Detailed News On Page-07

Saudi FM visit reflects strong China-KSA ties

Detailed News On Page-08

NZ seals win in Ross Taylor's last test match

Detailed News On Page-06



Briefs

PPP will not join PDM again

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former president and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari on Tuesday said he did not think that PPP would ever become the part of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) again.

Speaking to the media outside National Accountability Bureau (NAB) court in Islamabad where he had gone in connection with the hearing of New York property reference, Zardari said it was his desire from day one that the PTI government was sent home.

PM running companies abroad

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Shahid Khaqan Abbasi on Tuesday has alleged Prime Minister Imran Khan of running companies abroad and making money.

Talking to media, the former PM said that embezzlement has been unearthed in PTI funding. The ruling party only declared four bank accounts out of 26 accounts. Not a single bank statement has been submitted in Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) in seven years, he added. Shahid Khaqan Abbasi said that no one is ready to take responsibility of Murree tragedy that killed 23 people.

Lata Mangeshkar in ICU

NEWS DESK

MUMBAI: Bollywood's iconic playback singer Lata Mangeshkar was admitted to a hospital after testing positive for the coronavirus on Saturday. According to the Times of India, the 92-year-old singer was admitted to the ICU of Mumbai's Breach Candy hospital on January 8 after she tested positive for Covid-19. Alongside Covid-19, Mangeshkar is also reportedly suffering from pneumonia.

Cabinet rules out lockdown in Pakistan

Fawad Chaudhry says govt will approach Lahore High Court (LHC) against Shehbaz Sharif, who was Nawaz Sharif's guarantor



SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Federal cabinet has decided against imposing lockdown in the country despite a sudden surge in Covid-19 cases besides approving the filing of a disqualification plea against Opposition Leader Shehbaz Sharif over a guarantee he submitted before Lahore High Court (LHC) regarding the return of PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif from London. Sharing details of the decisions taken by the federal cabinet meeting headed by Prime Minister Imran Khan during a presser, Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry said that the Covid cases have seen a two-time surge recently, however, the cabinet has decided against imposing a lockdown. People are advised to wear facemasks,

Continued on Page 06

Govt putting Pakistan 'at stake': Shahbaz

RANA FARRUKH

ISLAMABAD: Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Shahbaz Sharif on Tuesday said that the government is "putting Pakistan at stake, for a mere \$1 billion". Speaking during a session of the National Assembly the PML-N president said that \$1 billion can be arranged mutually, "let's talk about this issue in the House."

If the government decides to stand against the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the public interest the Opposition will support it, Shahbaz said. The Opposition is ready to support the government if it rejects the conditions put forth by the Fund, he added. Shahbaz underlined that Pakistan is currently one of the most expensive countries of the world. Highlighting the "unnecessary taxes" in the supplementary finance bill, he said that countries are reducing taxes while the PTI government is imposing additional taxes. He regretted that

Continued on Page 06

Afghanistan seeks good ties with world

Muttaqi says the govt has pledged to not allow foreign countries to interfere in Afghan affairs

CENTRELINE REPORT

KABUL: Acting Foreign Minister Amir Kahn Muttaqi said that the new government is exercising power over the whole country, and the Islamic Emirate-led government will not pose a threat to any country in the world. He said that the political isolation of Afghanistan is not in the interest of anyone.

Amir Khan Muttaqi, who was talking with Afghan citizens in the United States in a video conference, said the government

Continued on Page 06

Afghan envoy leaves China

BEIJING: Afghan Ambassador to China Javid Ahmad Qaem has left China due to his personal reasons, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin said on Tuesday.

"We noted the Ambassador Qaem's relevant remarks and we appreciate his efforts to promote China-Afghanistan relations during his tenure of office in China," he said during his regular briefing while responding to a question. "We hope that he (Ambassador Qaem) will continue to play an active role in this regard." - APP



MADRID: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi meets his Spanish counterpart Jose Manuel Albares. - DNA

Pak desires meaningful partnership with EU: FM

Pakistan considers Spain as a very important country in bilateral as well as EU context

NEWS DESK

MADRID: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi says Pakistan desires meaningful partnership with member countries of the European Union, including Spain. He expressed these views during a banquet he had hosted in honor of think tanks at Pakistan House in Madrid. The Foreign Minister said the government, under its policy of economic diplomacy, is trying to attract the world's attention towards Pakistan's rising market of 200 million population and the investment and trade opportunities in the country.

Continued on Page 06

COAS chairs Corps Cmdr Conference

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa has emphasized on continued mission oriented training to ensure combat readiness in the face of emerging threats and challenges.

Addressing the Corps Commanders' Conference in Rawalpindi, the Army Chief appreciated the

Continued on Page 06

Kazakh President appoints new PM amid crisis

Tokayev, who earlier sacked the government in an attempt to ease dissent, nominated Alikhan Smailov as the country's new Prime Minister, and the lower house of parliament swiftly voted him in for the job

NEWS DESK

NURSULTAN: President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev announced Tuesday that a contingent of Russia-led forces would begin leaving Kazakhstan in two days, as the country's parliament elected ex-finance minister Alikhan Smailov as new Prime Minister.

Addressing the government and parliament in a video conference call broadcast live, 68-year-old Tokayev also promised to conduct reforms, rein in inflation, and boost wages as the energy-rich post-Soviet country emerges from a week of deadly unrest. Kazakhstan and Russia have framed last week's unrest that grew out of a peaceful protest against an energy price hike in the west of the country and left dozens dead as a coup attempt assisted by foreign "terrorists", but have provided little evidence to support the claim. Following a request from Tokayev, the Moscow-led Col-



lective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO) deployed troops to bring about order and buttress the authorities. On Tuesday, Tokayev announced that "a phased withdrawal" would begin in two days and should take "no more than 10 days." "The main mission of the CSTO peacekeeping forces has been successfully completed," he said. The CSTO mission of more than 2,000 troops was despatched at the peak of the crisis last week, after armed clashes between government opponents and security forces and a looting spree rendered parts of the largest city Almaty almost unrecognisable.

Russia-led troops to start leaving in two days

NURSULTAN: Kazakhstan's President Kassym Jomart Tokayev said Tuesday that a contingent of Russia-led forces would begin leaving the troubled Central Asian country in two days, with the pullout to take no more than 10 days.

"The main mission of the CSTO peacekeeping forces has been successfully completed," Tokayev said, referring to troops of the Collective Security Treaty Organization. "In two days a phased withdrawal of the CSTO united peacekeeping contingent will begin. The withdrawal process of the contingent will take no more than 10 days," he said, addressing the government and parliament in a video conference call broadcast live.

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RCMS desk set up at Commissioner's office Faisalabad

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CPEC M-15 connects more resourceful places

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Kremlin: Russia-US talks inspire no significant optimism

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Azerbaijan supports Kazakhstan's sovereignty

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Art & beauty of Japanese dolls exhibition starts at PNCA

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ISLAMABAD: A man enjoying the Zip Line at beautiful ancient tourists spot Shah Allah Ditta, in Federal capital. – DNA

SC seeks details of govt's new plots' allotment policy

Barrister Akram Sheikh, representing the petitioners, told the court that the IHC, in its verdict, had said that after getting plots, the judges lost their impartiality

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court of Pakistan Tuesday sought from the federal government details of its new plots allotment policy. Speaking during the hearing of petitions filed against the Islamabad High Court's (IHC) ruling in which it had declared the allotment of plots to judges and bureaucrats as illegal, Justice Umar Ata Bandial remarked these are not the judges; these are their decisions that speak. A three-member bench of the apex court, led by Justice Umar Ata Bandial, heard the petitions. Barrister Akram Sheikh, representing the petitioners, told the court that the IHC, in its verdict, had said that after getting plots, the judges lost their impartiality. "This is high court's observation that if plots are allotted to the judges, the entire judicial system will collapse," he added. Justice Bandial asked him whether he thought that the IHC gave the verdict after taking suo motu notice of the plots' allotment case. Akram Sheikh replied that it was the high court's order which created the impression that the court meant it when it had said that the judges getting plots no longer remained 'impartial'.

KP tourism projects get huge response

PESHAWAR: Investors evinced keen interest to invest in different projects of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa tourism sector at the Dubai Expo on Tuesday. Titled Tourism Week, the organisers showcased a number of projects to the investors in the investment conferences in tourism sector, said a communique received here. Four Letters of Intent for investment were signed while a number of international and Dubai-based investors expressed willingness to invest in various projects of KP tourism sector. Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Mahmood Khan will attend the mega conference on investment opportunities in tourism and other sectors to be held on January 16. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa is displaying tourist spots, cultural heritage sites, indigenous Kalash culture, historic Gandhara Civilization, sites for adventure tourism in northern and southern parts and a lot of more to the tourists and investors to visit these marvelous places and invest in the sector. – APP

COURT NOTICE

In the court of Madam Nasir Zadi Mehwish Sahiba family Judge Jhelum
Title of case: ISMA BIBI VS NAZAKAT HUSSAIN
Respondent: Nazakat Hussain s/o Abdul Majeed r/o Machine muhla Num 3 Tehsil & Distt Jhelum
Claim: Dissolution of marriage
In each case, the respondent are informed through advertisement. As there is not possible to call the respondent through Summons in the instant case so through proclamation in Newspaper, you are directed to appear or legal advisor in the court on 12-01-2022 at 9:00AM, otherwise ex-parte proceedings will be initiated.

FESCO issues power shutdown notice

DNA

FAISALABAD: The Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (Fesco) issued a shutdown notice for Wednesday due to necessary repair, maintenance and expansion of electricity lines.

According to the notice issued by the company, power supply from MCL, GHFM, ZR Green, PABC, Kamal Mill, King Kong and Malik MIJ feeders emanating from 132-KV M-III grid station will remain suspended from 9:30am to 1pm while Rajoa, Chenab Nagar, Jhok Millian, Jhang Road, Aasiyan, Faisalabad Road, Lahore Road, Dawar, Badshahi Masjid, Sakhi Abdul Wahhab, Tube Well, WASA, Muazzam Shah, Beeranwala, Ahmad Straw Board, Iqbal Rice Mill, WASA Express, Jhumra Road, Shah Burhan, City, Jani Shah, Usman Abad, Hindoana, Abdulah Fiber feeders originating from 132-KV Chiniot Industrial grid station will observe shutdown from 10 am to 2 pm on Wednesday (January 12). Similarly, electricity supply from all feeders of 132-KV MTM and JK Tech grid stations, VAC, Garment City, Sadaqat Textile, Gohar Textile, Global, Tricon, Chawla, Bahmaniwala, Sumaira Fabrics, Ahmad Jamal and Shah Kot feeders emanating from 132-KV VAC grid station will remain suspended from 9:30 am to 4 pm whereas Muzaffar Shaheed, Thikriwala, new Sabzi Mandi, Loona, FIG, Mujtaba Saood, Malik Abad, Kamal Fabrics, al-Khalig, Mansoorwala, Bhola Pir, Kamal Spinning, Sohail, al-Fareed, Hussain Abad and Paradise feeders originating from 132-KV Thikriwala grid station, Jalal Street, General Hospital, Faisal and Iqbal Town feeders emanating from 132-KV University grid station will observe loadshedding from 9 am to 2 pm on January 12.

Newly built school building inaugurated

KAMRAN GUJJAR

JHELUM: Inauguration ceremony of newly constructed building of Happy Home Secondary School Jhelum held. Chief Guest of the inaugural ceremony was Raja Yawar Kamal along with Deputy Commissioner Jhelum Noman Hafeez, District Police Officer Tahir-ur-Rehman and Baba Irfan UI Haq and chairman of Hamza Welfare Society and officials of relevant institutions. The inauguration ceremony started with the recitation of the Holy Quran, the principal of the school, Shamim Akhtar, made a regular opening by cutting the ribbon and Baba Irfan UI Haq prayed on the occasion, Deputy Commissioner Noman Hafeez and District Police Officer visited the school building. Swing for children's fun and separate blocks for library and laboratory have also been made for students. The school has beautiful plants and grass that offer a beautiful scene. Deputy Commissioner Noman Hafeez said that the construction of the school will benefit the residents with good education, healthy environment.



Provincial minister inaugurates family quarters in central jail

Jails in the Punjab province were being converted into welfare institutes and prisoners were being provided training in different vocational trades so they could be able to earn livelihood for their families after completing their confinement

DNA

FAISALABAD: Provincial Minister for Prisons Fayyazul Hassan Chohan inaugurated family quarters constructed for prisoners in the central jail here on Tuesday. Inspector General Prisons Mirza Shahid Saleem Baig, Deputy Inspector General Saeedullah Gondal, Superintendent Muhammad Asgar and others were present on the occasion. Talking to the media, the minister said the government was taking measures to facilitate the prisoners in jails and various steps had been taken for their welfare. He said that central jail Faisalabad was the first where family quarters had been constructed. In the second phase,

such types of quarters would be inaugurated in Multan and Rawalpindi prisons, he added. He said that jails in the Punjab province were being converted into welfare institutes and prisoners were being provided training in different vocational trades so they could be able to earn livelihood for their families after completing their confinement. He said that an agreement had been signed between the public and private sector, under which stitching machines had been provided in the central jail for imparting stitching training to prisoners. "I have established a welfare organization namely Fayyazul Hassan Chohan Foundation which will be functional within a couple of day", he said, adding that the foundation would provide the

RCMS desk set up at Commissioner's office Faisalabad

Divisional Commissioner Zahid Hussain visited the online desk of RCMS and observed the process of submitting online file

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: The Revenue Court Management System (RCMS) has been established at Commissioner's office and the now the appeal/review of Revenue case would be filed through online system besides video link remote hearing and the applicants/advocates will not go to BOR Lahore.

Divisional Commissioner Zahid Hussain visited the online desk of RCMS and observed the process of submitting online file. Deputy Commissioner Ali Shahzad, Additional Commissioner Revenue Tariq Niazi, ADCR Fazal e Rabi Cheema, Senior Advocate Ch. Abdul Islam, Javed Bajwa, Deta Entry Operator Aehalmand Naeem Saleem and other advocates were also present on the occasion. Talking to the reporters, Divisional Commissioner said that under the public reforms program of Punjab Govt., the applications would be filed at divisional level and applicant/Advocate could contacted from cell via Phone no.041.9201723. He cleared that justice is providing to the common man at their doorsteps and big computer screen would be provided in the cell on the recommendation of advocates. He informed that the revenue cases

would be decided in time through this system and due to the initiatives of BOR Punjab under the leadership of SMBR the pending case have been reduced upto 46%. He retreated his commitment and said that the services are being providing to the masses and in this regard Divisional and District Administration is active in this regard. DEO informed about the procedure of

filing the application and said that after hearing the copy of decision would be provided to the applicant on the spot. Advocate appreciated the step of establishing Revenue Court Management System and said that this cell would be provided big facility to the applicants and they would be relieved. He thanked to Divisional Commissioner for implemented this system quickly.



FAISALABAD: Divisional Commissioner Zahid Hussain inaugurated the Revenue Court Management System (RCMS) at Commissioner Office. – DNA

Over 3000 women trained in digital skills

PESHAWAR: Minister for Science and Technology Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Atif Khan here on Tuesday said the government was utilizing hefty funds for the development of science and technology which is a prerequisite for achieving socio-economic development. He expressed these views while addressing a graduation ceremony of Internship, Advanced Digital Skills on Entrepreneurship for 3000 women at KP Information Technology Board here. "Since without utilization of technology no country can make progress, hefty funds to the tune of about Rs14 billion were being spent on the development of science and technology and information technology," he added. He said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Youth Employment Program was a flagship project of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Information Technology Board under which digital skills were imparted to 11,700 youth. Similarly, 3,300 women were empowered

under the Digital Skills Program while 2,000 youth were trained under KP Digital Internship Program, adding these training would help polish skills of the participants and enable them to perform their duties in a more efficient manner. He said that digital training would enable the youth to earn their livelihood while working from home, adding the more one tried to learn skills, the more they would progress. He said that most of the businesses over the world have great reliance on digital skills and IT, so requirements of those fields could be fulfilled with training which helps a great deal to improve skills. He said that the government was fully cognizant of such challenges and had allocated Rs8 billion for digital skills and training. He said that one lakh people were being trained in IT, adding that one lakh people would be able to earn 21 billion annually. – APP

PAF sorties for flood affected areas of Balochistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Air Force aircraft undertook 13 sorties for provision of relief goods in flood affected areas of Balochistan. PAF C-130 aircraft have airlifted 131,887 pounds of goods comprising of dry ration, mineral water, medicines, blankets and tents in the calamity hit areas. PAF Medical Camp in Pasni, led by PAF doctors and paramedical staff, is providing medical facilities to the flood affectees round the clock. Additionally, PAF helicopter fleet is actively participating in relief and rescue operations in the flood affected areas.

It said that the ATMs were not working in the affected areas due to broke down communication system and stranded tourists were forced to withhold their precious items including ornaments and documents of their vehicle with hotel managements as security. – APP



388 corona cases reported in Punjab

LAHORE: Another 388 new cases of coronavirus were reported in Punjab during the last 24 hours. In a press statement issued here on Tuesday, Punjab Primary and Secondary Healthcare (P&SH) Department Secretary Imran Sikandar Baloch said that 332 positive cases were reported in Lahore while 19 in Rawalpindi, 5 in Multan, 3 each in Faisalabad, Jhelum, Sheikhupura, 2 each in Chinot, DG Khan, Kasur, Pakpatan, Sahiwal, 1 each in Hafizabad, Vehari, Attock, Bhawalnagar, Bahawalpur and Gujrawala. The secretary said that so far, total number of cases reached 448,580 and recoveries 429,734 in the province. The total number of active cases was 5,768 to date, he added. During the last 24 hours, one death was reported in Punjab pushing the death toll to 13,078. He said that 18,224 tests were conducted in 24 hours while a total of 9.12 million tests were conducted altogether. Baloch said the overall rate of COVID-19 incidence in the last 24 hours was recorded as 2.1 percent in the province, adding Lahore had 3.9 percent, Rawalpindi 1.3 pc, Multan 0.6 pc, Faisalabad 0.4 pc and 0.2 percent in Gujrawala. – APP

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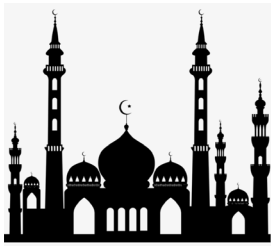
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| Asr..... | 03:41 pm |
| Maghrib..... | 05:18 pm |
| Isha..... | 06:47 pm |



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| Serena Hotel..... | 111 133 133 |
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| Monal..... | 0334-5421812 |



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| Turkish Airlines..... | 8494949 |
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Emergency

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



Enquiry

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| Edhi Ambulance..... | 115 |
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| WASA Rawalpindi..... | 5555489 |
| CAA..... | 9281092 |



Hospitals

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



Departments

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



Complaints

| | |
|--|-------------|
| Water Tanker Service E-7, F-10 & F-11..... | 9204654 |
| G-5, G-6, G-7, G-8..... | 9203853 |
| 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 |
|-----------------|--------------|

CPEC M-15 connects more resourceful places

Murree, a hill station in northern Punjab, receives the biggest influx because of close proximity to Islamabad

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Hazara Motorway of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) connects the best destinations for enjoying snowfall with safety and comfort, experts familiar with Pakistan's scenic northern areas told Gwadar Pro. Saeed Akbar said that Siran Valley in Mansehra district of Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province was the most suitable place for enjoying snowfall during winters. Its only at a two-hour hassle-free drive from Islamabad through the CPEC Hazara Motorway (M-15). This is one of the most beautiful valleys in the country with lush green meadows, peaks, forests and rivers, which make it a perfect place to visit round the year, especially when it is snowing, he said. Popular tourist hotspots like Chattr Plain, Battal and Shinkari have dedicated interchanges on M-15 and fully-developed tourism facilities including hotels and restaurants, he said. Travelling through the mesmerising Hazara Motorway is a feast in itself, he added.

Amjad Qamar, a communication expert from Mansehra, said that M-15 had made it convenient for people of KP, northern Punjab and Islamabad to enjoy snowfall in the Siran Valley and go back home during the same day. The Valley has vast plains and broader roads with no concerns of parking or accommodation, he said. Also, it is easy to reverse the vehicle and go back if weather condition gets bad, he said. In December and January, people flock to northern areas of the country to witness the snowfall, with Murree, Mansehra and

Swat being the top spots for winter tourism. Murree, a hill station in northern Punjab, receives the biggest influx because of close proximity to Islamabad. However, tourists have been complaining of scarcity of resources including water, accommodation and parking facilities due to limited capacity because of the hilly terrain. During the past weekend, two dozen people lost lives inside vehicles stuck in heavy snow and severe traffic congestion. After the incident, experts have advised the winter tourists to opt for areas linked through Hazara Motorway for enjoying snowfall in a safe and comfortable way. Shazia Mehboob Tanoli, an Islamabad-based feature writer hailing from Mansehra, added that weather condition in Siran Valley never deteriorates to the extent to harm tourists. Furthermore, due to plain areas, it is easy for the administration to clear the roads and rescue the tourists in case of heavy snowfall, she said. Saeed Akbar said that tourists should get on Karakoram Highway, or China-Pakistan Friendship Highway,

from Mansehra up to Chattr Plain to enjoy snowfall to the fullest. They can come back through M-15 via Chattr interchange or proceed further to spend a night in Bisham, headquarters of KP's Shangla district, which also receives snowfall during winters. He said that the mentioned areas were expected to witness a fresh spell of snowfall from January 16-22. Ahsen Ali, a travel advisor, said that in case of light rain, tourists should use the Friendship Highway instead of the M-15 between Mansehra and Thakot.

PHA Rwp provides assistance to stranded tourists

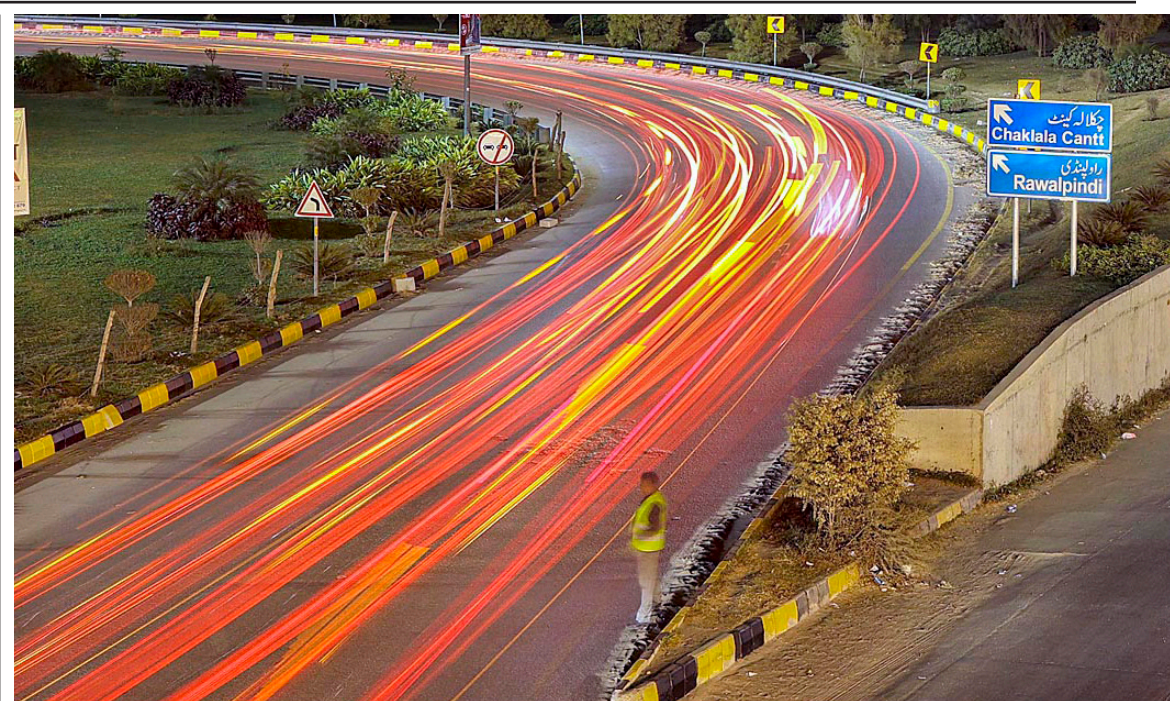
RAWALPINDI: Parks and Horticulture Authority (PHA) Rawalpindi on the directives of Chairman, Asif Mahmood, provided all possible assistance to the tourists stranded in Murree due to heavy snowfall. According to a PHA spokesperson, the authority utilized all available resources to rescue the stranded tourists and provide help to a number of tourists. PHA also distributed food items including cooked food, juice, water, milk, biscuits and other items among the tourists in Murree. The spokesperson informed that on the special directives of the Chairman PHA relief goods were sent from Rawalpindi. Several vehicles stuck in the snow were also evacuated by the PHA employees and fuel was also provided. The stranded tourists were accommodated in PHA Rawalpindi's Camp Office Murree and the food items were provided free of cost. The efforts made by PHA were appreciated by the people. The Chief Secretary Punjab also appreciated PHA Rawalpindi for its timely relief activities. – APP

Punjab govt to initiate Surra dam project in DG Khan

ISLAMABAD: Punjab government has decided to initiate Surra dam project near Sanghar Town of Dera Ghazi Khan district to store hill-torrents water in D G Khan, which would be used for irrigation purpose. The dam would be constructed to store the hill-torrents' water in Dera Ghazi Khan, official source told APP on Tuesday. The Punjab government has directed authorities concerned early completion of feasibility study of the Surra dam project. The source further said the construction of the dam would provide water to people up to Taunsa in abundant quantity, besides ensuring development of agriculture sector of the area. "The Surra dam will prove to be a game-changer for the area," the source said. The Punjab government would start the Surra dam as a pilot project to conserve rainwater that went down the drain during the rainy season. The project would also generate jobs for the local people to earn their livelihood. He said the dam construction would also promote tourism in the area. – DNA

ANF seizes 3052.303 kg drugs in 37 operations

RAWALPINDI: Anti Narcotics Force (ANF) Pakistan has seized 3052.303 kg drugs and 576 liters suspected chemical valuing US\$ 529.32 million internationally, arrested 32 culprits including two women, two foreigners and impounded eight vehicles while conducting 37 counter-narcotics operations throughout the country. According to an ANF Headquarters spokesman, the seized drugs comprised 14.142 Kg Heroin, 1552.5 Kg Hashish, 1079.5 Kg Opium, 8.4 Kg Methamphetamine (Ice), 396 Kg Morphine, 1.554 Kg Cocaine, 0.182 Kg Lexotanil Tablets (900 Tabs), 0.025 Kg LSD Stickers (25 Stickers) and 576 Liters Suspected Chemical. ANF Balochistan recovered 1275 Kg drugs and 576 liters suspected chemical in three operations while arrested three accused and seized a vehicle. The seized drugs comprised 186 Kg Hashish, 693 Kg Opium, 396 Kg Morphine and 576 liters suspected chemical. ANF Punjab recovered 1132.17 Kg drugs in nine operations while arrested eight accused and seized two vehicles. The seized drugs comprised 5.37 Kg Heroin, 814.3 Kg Hashish, 308.6 Kg opium and 3.900 Methamphetamine (Ice). ANF KPK recovered 205.236 Kg drugs in nine operations while arrested seven accused including one woman, two foreigners and seized a vehicle. The seized drugs comprised 5 Kg Heroin, 129 Kg Hashish, 69.5 Kg Opium, 1.554 Kg Cocaine and 900 Lexotanil Tabs (0.182 kg). – Agencies



ISLAMABAD: An attractive and eye-catching night view vehicle's rear lights. – APP

Chairman WADPA reviewed progress on Dasu Project

China Gezhouba Group Company (CGGC) has been working on DHPP as the Main Works Contractor since 2017, which is one of the top green and low-cost energy projects in the country

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) Chairman Lt Gen Muzammil Hussain (Retd) reviewed the progress of Dasu Hydropower Project (DHPP), being constructed on River Indus in Upper Kohistan District of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP). The China Gezhouba Group Company (CGGC) has been working on DHPP as the Main Works Contractor since 2017, which is one of the top green and low-cost energy projects in the country. The Chairman WAPDA witnessed construction activities and held meetings with the General Manager of the project, consultants and the officials of CGGC. Currently construction is underway simultaneously on eight sites including diversion tunnels, underground powerhouse, flushing and traffic tunnel, relocation of Karakoram Highway (KKH), right bank access roads, 132 KV transmission line and WAPDA colony and offices. "DHPP is of immense importance for a quantum increase in green and low-cost hydel electricity in the National Grid," said Mr. Husain and he called on the project authorities to redouble their efforts for the on-time completion of the project in accordance with construction standards. It is apt to mention that recently General Manager DHPP, in a letter of appreciation, acknowledged the cooperation of the Engineering Department of CGGS during emergency situations in the region. "The employer recognizes the good will gesture of CGGC and appreciates the same," reads the letter. The 4320 MW project is being implemented in two stages; currently WAPDA is working on 2160 MW-Stage-I, which will provide 12 billion green and low-cost electricity to the National Grid annually while the Stage-II will contribute another 9 billion units to the system per annum.



RAWALPINDI: A street vendor displaying saltish edible stuff to attract the customers. – APP

AIOU participates in "Plant for Pakistan" drive

ISLAMABAD, Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has begun spring plantation at the university under the banner of plant for Pakistan drive. AIOU is exclusively focusing on achieving government's objective of a green and pollution free Pakistan by planting four hundred thousand saplings and five thousand rose plants of ten different varieties'. These views were expressed by Prof Dr Shair Muhammad, Chairman, Agricultural Sciences. He, further, added that on the directives of Prof Dr Zia Ul-Qayyum, VC, AIOU, special efforts are being made to enhance the breathtaking natural and scenic beauty of the university with colorful and fragrant flowers of different varieties. Owing to these efforts, university has been ranked in top 500 green universities of the world. Moreover, university has maintained its record of winning first position in the exhibition of chrysanthemum which is held every year in the beautiful capital city of Islamabad. It is pertinent to mention here that all these four hundred thousand saplings have been grown in university's nursery. However, rose plants have been imported which include all famous rose varieties of the world. University gardeners are primarily responsible for taking care of these plantation drives. – DNA

Oil Painting exhibition starting from Thursday

ISLAMABAD: A three-day Oil Painting exhibition will be starting from January 13 (Thursday) at the Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) Visual Arts Division aiming to showcase the hidden talent of a skilled artist. Talking to APP an official of PNCA Masroor Shah said, the exhibition would continue till Jan 16 where oil painting scriptures and art pieces of Senior Artist Parveen Khan would be showcased. Oil painting techniques often begin with the artist sketching the subject onto the canvas with charcoal or thinned paint. Oil paint is usually mixed with linseed oil, artist grade mineral spirits, or other solvents to make the paint thinner, faster, or slow-drying. Because the solvents thin the oil in the paint that can also be used to clean paint brushes, he said. The basic rule of oil paint application was 'fat over lean', meaning that each additional layer of paint should contain more oil than the layer below to allow proper drying. If each additional layer contains less oil, the final painting will crack and peel. The consistency on the canvas depends on the layering of the oil paint. This rule does not ensure permanence; it is the quality and type of oil that leads to a strong and stable paint film, he added. – APP

Ongoing rise in the SME culture in Pakistan

MAHAM JAVED

PAKISTAN, being a developing nation, is still young and full of opportunities that are still to be exploited. In the recent years, the economical state of the country coupled with a dying need to raise the standard of living to that of the western counterparts has fanned the flames to the fire that is the SME (Small and Medium-size Enterprise) culture. Even though Pakistan's economy is and always has been an economy of SMEs, in the past, efforts have largely been focused on the large enterprises, neglecting SMEs, which are crucial to our economy. SMEs in Pakistan have suffered in numerous ways such as lack of capital and financing, high-interest loans, improper infrastructure with unavailability of modern technology, weak trade and a sheer lack of investment opportunities, which has led to growth constraints, has stunted their ability to adjust to global economic liberalization measures and take full advantage of the rapidly expanding markets of the world. Although they have been sidelined in the past, their importance in our socio-economic structure has started to come to light and their potential, if properly regulated and promoted, is massive. The significant role of SMEs is clearly indicated by research and statistics. Enterprises employing up to 99 persons constitute about 90 % of all private enterprises in the industrial sector and

SME employ some 78 % of non-agriculture labor force. They contribute over 30 % to GDP, PKR 140 billion to exports, and 25 % of manufacturing export earnings besides sharing 35 % in manufacturing value added. SMEs are large contributors in generating work opportunities, income, and wealth, all of which ultimately leads to poverty reduction and this is exactly why financing agents are looking to invest now more than ever. The State Bank of Pakistan, considering the importance of SMEs for Pakistan, has introduced an initiative to improve financing for SMEs, with support from the government of Pakistan in order to introduce a more facilitative environment for small businesses to get off their feet and prosper. This initiative is aimed at assisting SMEs that are

creditworthy but are still unable to access finance, as they cannot offer the security required as collateral by banks. SBP will provide refinancing to the banks while the government of Pakistan will support via partial credit guarantees to the participating banks, as per the statement issued by SBP. Globally, SMEs constitute an integral part in developing economies through imports and commodities price, which generates global economic prosperity, so it should be a no-brainer that the SME culture be the primary focus when it comes to economic growth and capital investments, as it is essential for the strengthening of Pakistan's economy and its very survival in the socio-economic competition prevalent in the world today.

The writer is a student

Briefs

WHO provides kits to detect Omicron

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The World Health Organization (WHO) has provided RT-PCR kits to the District Health Authority to detect the new variant of coronavirus Omicron here on Tuesday. Focal person Health Authority, Dr Waqar Ahmed told APP that the kits could detect the Omicron variant and other variants of COVID-19 reported so far. He said that free of cost, Omicron tests would be available at Benazir Bhutto Hospital from Wednesday, while earlier, the authority had to send specimens to the National Institute of Health for diagnoses of the new variant of Omicron.

Dr Waqar informed that only four cases of the Omicron had been tested positive so far, while results of five cases were awaited, which would be confirmed on January 12. The health officer said that timely and reliable testing was crucial to control and manage the emerging variant.

Street library established near RDA Office

ISLAMABAD: AAA Associates has established a street library by the name of "Bazame-Zauq" near Rawalpindi Development Authority (RDA) office which would provide free access to books loving people. In order to revive the old habit of reading books, AAA Associates in a collaborative effort along with Rawalpindi Development Authority has taken the initiative of opening a street library in the vicinity, said a news release. Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam inaugurated the street library. Chairman AAA Associates Sheikh Fawad Bashir, Commissioner Rawalpindi Syed Gulzar Hussain Shah, Chairman Rawalpindi Development Authority Raja Tariq Mehmood Mirza, Vice Chairman Rawalpindi Development Authority Mr Haroon Hashmi were among the attendees along with other people from different walks of life.

Addressing the event, SAPM on Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam said, "Libraries are an essential part of our communities and the cultural backbone of our city and such initiatives not only contribute to making a better society but also imparts valuable lessons from years of experience." Chairman AAA Associates Sheikh Fawad Bashir said, "the purpose of AAA's Bazame-Zauq street library is to compel people to read more books as reading has been proven to be an effective way to keep the brain active. Every good book opens up new dimensions of thoughts for the reader." - APP

IRSA releases 41259 cusecs water

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Tuesday released 41259 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 61729 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in the Indus River at Tarbela Dam was 1439.05 feet, which was 47.05 feet higher than its dead level 1392 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 16200 and 5000 cusecs respectively. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1128.75 feet, which was 78.75 feet higher than its dead level of 1050 feet whereas the inflow and outflow of water was recorded 10716 and 1446 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa and Sukkur was recorded as 26327, 10602 and 4672 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from the Kabul River a total of 9200 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 25613 cusecs released from the Chenab River at Marala.

FS stresses upon facilitating Pakistani diaspora overseas

"Economic Diplomacy is not just a buzzword, but a blueprint to leverage our diplomatic assets in the service of our development agenda," he said

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Commending the valuable contributions of overseas Pakistanis in the country's economic growth and national development, Foreign Secretary Sohail Mahmood Tuesday stressed upon Pakistan missions abroad to utilize all available resources to facilitate the Pakistani diaspora. They were further advised to undertake sustained efforts in addressing complaints in an effective and time-bound manner, a press release said. The foreign secretary held a virtual meeting with Pakistan ambassadors and consuls gen-

eral across the globe, as well as heads of ministry's camp offices in Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar and Quetta. Appreciating the engagement of the ambassadors and consuls general with overseas Pakistanis through E-Kachehreis, the foreign secretary underscored that these interactions with the Pakistani diaspora must continue on a regular basis in line with the Prime Minister's directive. The meeting focused on matters pertaining to the Prime Minister's Performance Delivery Unit (PMDU) and reviewed the systemic issues with respect to redressal of complaints initiated at PCP,

with a view to enhancing efficiency and effectiveness of public service delivery and resolution of complaints by Pakistan missions abroad and the ministry's camp offices in the provincial capitals. He also highlighted the significance of PCP and E-Kachehreis in identifying and eliminating the systemic issues that impede the timely resolution of complaints and efficient delivery of services to the Pakistani diaspora.

The participants apprised the foreign secretary of the trends in complaints lodged by Pakistani diaspora on PCP and suggested a range of measures for redressal

on a sustainable basis.

The foreign secretary affirmed that the recommendations made by the heads of missions would be shared with the relevant government entities to bring further improvement in the public service delivery to the Pakistani diaspora and resolution of their complaints. Last month, Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said Pakistan's foreign policy must navigate through the external environment to ensure the security of country's sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence, and advancement of development agenda. Addressing the passing-out

ceremony of Foreign Service Probationers, FM Qureshi said, for the first time ever, Pakistan had re-oriented the thrust of its diplomatic efforts towards economic benefit and prosperity of the masses.

"Economic Diplomacy is not just a buzzword, but a blueprint to leverage our diplomatic assets in the service of our development agenda," he said. "We have put in place a 'Strategic Engagement Plan' with the European Union and the 'Strategic Economic Framework' with Turkey."

The foreign minister added that in order to explore untapped markets and opportunities, the government

had also launched the 'Engage Africa' initiative.

"Going forward, our pivot towards economic diplomacy will gather further momentum as new avenues are opened, and existing ones gain greater traction," he added.

Congratulating the probationers passing out of the 41st Specialised Diplomatic Course, FM said they had had a brief taste of the work related to the recent OIC CFM in Islamabad and did an admirable job. The foreign minister advised the probationers to strive to serve Pakistan and its people to the best of their ability as their primary focus throughout their careers.

Farrukh condoles with APP MD

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Farrukh Habib on Tuesday expressed deep grief and sorrow over the demise of mother of Managing Director APP Mobashir Hasan. In a message, he said that there was no substitute for this great relationship of mother. He said he stood with Mobashir Hasan and the grieving family members at this difficult time. The minister prayed to Allah Almighty to rest the departed soul in eternal peace and grant courage to the bereaved family to bear this loss with fortitude. - APP

Govt focuses to develop new tourist spots

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Tuesday said that the government had planned to explore new tourist spots in a bid to revitalize the tourism industry and project a positive image of country globally through modern means of communication. Talking to a private news channel, he said that there was a dire need to explore almost 10 to 15 new tourist spots to create options for travellers. The record-breaking snowfall was occurred after decades in Murree which created such a challenging situation, he said, adding, we would ensure proper management in the future. The minister further said that the situation in Murree was consistently being monitored and till this evening all routes would be cleared. He said that the situation would be under control if public show their cooperation and stop moving towards Murree. Replying a question, he also criticized irresponsible behaviour of opposition that they were playing politics on the tragedy instead of extending a helping hand.

Nation remembers Ibn-e-Insha

ISLAMABAD: Prominent Urdu poet, humorist, travelogue writer and columnist Ibn-e-Insha was remembered on his 44th death anniversary for his unforgettable services in the field of literature. He was born in the Jalandhar district of Indian Punjab in 1927, however, he later migrated to Pakistan. Ibn-e-Insha died on January 11 in 1978 and was buried in Karachi. His real name was Sher Muhammad Khan. His poetry was simple yet deep. The real reason for his popularity was his humorous poetry and columns, PTV news channel reported. His most famous ghazal 'Insha Ji Utho' is a modern-day classic, private news channels reported.

Ibn e Insha's poetic works include Chand Nagar and Dil-e-Wehshi while travelogues include "Awara Gard Ki Diary", "Dunya Gol Hey", "Ibn-e-Batoota Kay Ta'auq Main", "Chaltay Ho To Cheen KO Chaliye" and "Nagri Nagri Phira Musafir". His humorous books are "Khumar-e-Gandum" and "Urdu Ki Aakhri Kitaab". His collection of letters is titled "Khat Insha Jee Kay". Ibn-e-Insha died this day in 1978 and was buried in Karachi. - APP

HRCP

report show concerns over Covid deaths

ISLAMABAD: Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) in its report has expressed its concerns over the rise of COVID-19 related deaths and cases throughout the country during the outgoing year 2021. "On the last day of the year, the virus death toll had risen to 10,105 and confirmed cases to 479,715, with fears increasing over the emergence of a new, more contagious Omicron COVID-19 variant," the report said. Hundreds of thousands of factory workers and private employees were laid off during the pandemic lockdown, with daily wage earners the hardest hit, the annual report of HRCP said. The Sindh Covid-19 Emergency Relief Ordinance 2020 was an important response to the Covid-19 crisis in terms of providing relief to workers, tenants and parents of school-going children, the report underscored. - APP

Capital reports fresh 99 Corona cases

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Health officials on Tuesday said that 99 new Coronavirus cases were reported in the federal capital during the last 24 hours. According to an official of the NCOC, as many as 113 cases were reported on Monday while 116 cases were reported on Sunday. He said so far 109,495 cases were reported from the federal capital and 967 deaths were reported from Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) while 107,709 patients had been recovered completely.

Meanwhile, on the direction of the Ministry of National Health Services, the district administration of Islamabad had continued surveillance of different areas of the capital to reduce transmission of the infection in the selected streets and other sectors. They also started taking action on a violation of standard operating procedures (SOPs) related to the coronavirus while visiting marriage halls, markets, and petrol pumps by its inspection teams. The administration had been asked to take action on the violation of SOPs at shops, workshops, and restaurants.



ISLAMABAD: Railways Minister Azam Swati inaugurating Women's Chamber conference in Islamabad. - DNA

Punctuality of passenger trains improves by 83%

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The punctuality ratio of Pakistan Railways passenger trains improved by 83 percent in first six months of financial year 2021-2022 due to untiring efforts of the management. "With the punctuality of trains and concrete measures taken by the government, over 20 million passengers have been added in the system, which is an ample proof of depart-

ment's achievement," an official in the Ministry of Railways told media. He said the punctuality of passenger trains, was 71 percent in 2017-18, 70 percent in 2018-19 and only 40 percent in tenures of the previous governments which was now improving day-by-day on the directives of Minister for Railways Azam Khan Swati. "The quality of food served in the passenger trains had been improved considerably as it had been officially su-

pervised by the authorities that passengers should get pure and quality food on the trains," he added.

To a question, he said in pursuance to the policy of the Federal Government, Pakistan Railways had outsourced some of its trains under Public Private Policy (PPP). According to policy decision given by Railways Board, Ministry of Railways, the bids more than the Railways earning would be accepted, he added. He said it was quite evident

that the decision had been made to minimize the loss of Pakistan Railways by bridging the gap between earning and expenditure. Hence under this policy, Pakistan Railways had introduced outsourcing of commercial management of passenger and freight trains, luggage/brake vans, dining cars etc. He said Pakistan Railways was getting fixed amount per annum from these activities through Private Sector without any complicity.

Police committed to resolve public issues on priority

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Police is committed to resolve public grievances on priority. It was stated by the Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Muhammad Ahsan Younas while listening public complaints during khuli kacheri. The IGP Islamabad is listening public complaints in khuli kacheri on daily bases.

While listening public complaints, the IGP directed all police officials to resolve the public complaints on priority adding that the purpose of holding these khuli kacheries is to resolve public issues immediately and purely on merit. He strictly directed all zonal officers to take immediate and strict action against land

grabbers. "No one would be allowed to grab property of any citizen" he added. Islamabad police chief said that it is our prime responsibility to provide protection to the lives and property of the citizens and resolve their problems on priority. He said that citizens at 'Open Court' should be behaved in a respectful manner and their trust on police department to be won through resolving their issues.

The IGP also directed all SHO's to remain present in their offices from 03pm to 05pm daily and listen public complaints. The Such interaction with citizens are aimed to promote community policing, resolve the issues of people at their door steps through merit and curb activities of anti-social elements, he added.

Gold prices decline by Rs 200

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The price of 24 karat per tola gold decreased by Rs200 and was sold at Rs126,000 in the local market on Tuesday against its sale at Rs126,200, Karachi Sarafa and Jewellers Group reported. The price of 10 gram 24 karat also declined by Rs171 to Rs108,025 from Rs108,196 where as that of 10 gram 22 karat gold went down to Rs99,022 from Rs 99,180 respectively. The price of per tola and ten gram silver remained constant at Rs 1450 and Rs 1243.14 respectively.

UBG lauds Pak Army for rescue work

ISLAMABAD: Iftikhar Ali Malik, Tanvir Ahmad Sheikh, Zafar Bakhtawari, Dr Mirza Ikhtiar Baig, Sh. Khalid Tabab others leaders and members of UBG have lauded the rescue work carried out by Pak Army at Murree saving lot of precious lives trapped in heavy snowfall. While commenting on Murree calamity the UBG said that the death toll would have gone more high if Pak Army personal had not come in time to rescue the stranded tourists at Murree who were helpless there on roads. The UBG said that unprecedented snowfall and rush of thousand of people to Murree had worsen the situation out of control. They said that for the last two days continue snowfall had blocked the roads leading to Murree due to which the rescue work had become even challenging consequently thousand of tourists including women and children were trapped on the roads without meals and water. - APP

UNICEF, UNDP launch 'Youth Challenge' in Pakistan

To welcome young innovators; to design solutions by accelerating the SDGs and fighting climate change, the theme for Pakistan this year is: Alleviating People and the Planet

DNA

ISLAMABAD: United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and United Nations Development Fund (UNDP) with implementing partner the School of Leadership Foundation (SoLF), has launched the Generation Unlimited imaGen Ventures Youth Challenge 2021/22 in Pakistan. The Generation Unlimited imaGen Ventures Youth Challenge 2021/22 will be implemented in more than 35 countries worldwide and calls on young innovators to design solutions to improve employment and civic engagement. The youth challenge encourages youth between the age of 14-24 to come forward to participate in this challenge. To welcome young innovators; to design solutions by accelerating the SDGs and fighting climate change, the theme for Pakistan this year is: Alleviating People and the Planet. The challenge objectives are to engage Pakistani youth from disadvantaged and marginalised communities to become problem-solvers in their communities. Solutions and enterprises generated at the grassroots level lead to holistic, stra-

tegic SDG fulfilment. It also showcases inspirational young 'solvers' and creates role models from disadvantaged communities. In Pakistan, an open call for ap-

plication was live on December 10, 2021, and the application deadline is; February 9, 2022. From the nominations received (11 - 15) teams, will be selected for the



Lessons from tragedy

THE tragedy in Murree is a perfect example of what happens when the government allows for the free market to take over, without any provisions for government intervention. The tourism industry however, is such that both the public and private sectors need to fulfil their role in establishing the infrastructure associated with the industry. The private sector provides both services and facilities such as hotels, while the government steps in for regulation and ensuring that public goods such as roads, communication and crucially, infrastructure, are in place for public safety and welfare. The current government's focus on growing the tourism industry has been so single-minded that there was little anticipation for when the demand would continue to increase, without any real capacity change. The case of Murree now is the perfect example of this, but the hill station is not an outlier in terms of capacity shortages; it is merely more easily accessible for a larger portion of the population. This will happen to other regions as travel becomes easier, unless a course correction is implemented. One of the important lessons to take away from this debacle is on the government's reaction to emergencies of this nature. There needs to be more proactive movement on this front. Weather reports need to be kept abreast of while they are taking place, and not after the fact. The sluggish pace at which the government responds must also change. Almost always in cases like this, government action comes about after a public outcry or through media attention. Given that the state has the greatest access to information and predictive patterns, why does it have to wait for outrage and the loss of lives before stepping in? Data must also be made a core part of decision making going forward. This is a tale of numbers—the total capacity of Murree was never capable of handling this influx. In the government's bid to promote tourism, it got the first part of its job right—advertisement—but it never anticipated this demand; something that we have been guilty of during past governments as well. Finally, there is an urgent need to stop public officials from commenting on issues without prior approval or a coherent strategy. Reactions from the government—from the PM to members of the bureaucracy—only attempted to deflect blame or indulge in self-congratulatory statements after expending minimum effort. This does not help anything. It is hoped that the state will approach such tragedies more thoughtfully in the future.

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Gas crisis

TO tackle problems of gas shortages and ensure that energy demands for the next 10 months are met, the government tasked state-owned entities to construct a new LNG terminal. This was a speedy solution that was needed but in the midst of all the chaos—contract defaults, emergency LNG cargo purchases and shortages—the promise of the Gas Infrastructure Development Cess (GIDC) Act of 2011 has been forgotten. It provided a long-term fix, which is exactly what Pakistan needs currently. Pakistan has two existing terminals that are proving to be insufficient in meeting the country's energy demands. Most areas across the country experience a shortage of gas, often receiving incredibly low pressures even during the times it was promised to flow fully. One can understand why the government is embarking upon a project for a new terminal as it promises better flow and the utilisation of a higher capacity. However, there are lessons that must be learnt from the past. The GIDC Act was introduced to meet a gas shortfall that was considerably worse than today's. The Iran-Pakistan (IP) and Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline projects were created to ensure free-flowing LNG from one country to the next, at cheaper rates and without any interruption or seasonal contracts. It was the solution to our inability to meet rising energy requirements but ever since it was introduced, no progress has been made towards completing the projects. Millions have been collected but still, little has been accomplished. If the government was to prioritise these avenues, instead of focusing on expensive alternatives from Qatar Petroleum, then the country would experience lower prices and an increased inflow of LNG—at least enough to satisfy residential and industrial demands for the foreseeable future. It would also decrease its reliance on inconsistent providers like Gunvor and ENI which recently defaulted on their commitments and made matters much worse. The construction of a third pipeline is a project that can work simultaneously, if not after, such initiatives which were designed to address and resolve the gas problem for the long-term are completed.

China-Russia: A strange case in Central Asia

Dr. M Akram Zaheer



The prospect of a withdrawal of US troops from the region shows Washington's limited interest in Central Asian states

CHINA and Russia are convergence in Central Asia regarding to their own interests. Both the countries has the desire of terrorism free region and stability particularly in Afghanistan. They also desired United States exit from the region and at last the United States left Afghanistan. As United States departure from Afghanistan, China and Russia are ramping up their security assistance to the regional states. However, this situation does not point their competition. Post departure of United States from Afghanistan, the new Taliban government participates in the military exercise which has organized by Russia Tajikistan and Uzbekistan just 20km away from Afghan border. Few days after China hold counter terrorism drills with Tajikistan for the public security. China has been providing assistance to Tajikistan near the Afghan border since 2016. The prospect of a withdrawal of US troops from the region shows Washington's limited interest in Central Asian states. Post 9/11, when the United States started operations in Afghanistan and used Central Asia as a logistics hub and open bases in Uzbekistan

and Kyrgyzstan. By 2014, these bases were closed and a series of supply lines to Afghanistan through the Northern Distribution Network, Russia and Central Asia, which began in 2009, were shut down in 2015 after growing tensions between Washington and Moscow. Although the US government has promised to build new facilities on the Tajik border with Afghanistan, this security assistance has fallen from a high of \$450 million to just \$11 million in 2020. Russia is a key security provider character in the region. It has maintained military installations in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. The half import of arms for Central Asia is managed from the Russia. Russia also has conducted 121 joint exercises with the regional states since their independence. Russia has a number of mechanisms for providing security, both bilateral and multilateral, such as the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Collective Security Treaty Organization. Although Russian share in the regional arms market has been stable over the past decade, it has frequently increased its share in regional exercises from 39% to 49% as the region. Russian arms have low price and easy to make deal with poor Central Asian states like Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Russia has often donated only weapons and most recently 12 BRDM-2M patrol vehicles are delivered to Tajikistan in mid-September 2021. Russian exercises are on average twice as large as those of its nearest rival, China. Unlike China, which has focused on developing ties with the Central Asian security services and police forces, Russia has focused on military cooperation with the regional States. Two-thirds of the Russian-led joint exercises were carried out by the Russian military or air force. In recent years, Russia has also demonstrated its potential as a military power in the region. In August 2018, Russian forces in Tajikistan launched a series of airstrikes against drug traffickers. It was their first armed intervention in Afghan politics since the 1989 Soviet withdrawal. Since the rise of the Taliban, Russia has been testing its logistics networks to deliver Mi-8 and Mi-

24 helicopters to Gasar Air Base outside Dushanbe in case of instability in Afghanistan. Rapid response capabilities have been enhanced to strengthen the Tajik border, and Russia has also moved Su-25 strike aircraft from Kyrgyzstan to Gasar. On the other hand, China's economic and strategic role in the region also is growing day by day. In Arms market its share has increased from 1.5% to 13% over the past decade. China is also making strategic strides in the areas where Russia lags behind in terms of technology, such as with drones. China has sold its CH-3, CH-4, CH-5 and Wing Long drones to regional states such as Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. China has also been more active in strategic exercises and has conducted 35 joint military exercises, either bilaterally or through the SCO. The security natures of the exercises also show that China wants to continue to cool Russia, which understands itself as a key security player in the region. Beijing has shown respect for Moscow here in the past. In 2017, the Development Research Center, an influential think tank under the Chinese cabinet, invited high-profile Russian researchers to a private seminar to determine Moscow's red lines in the region. In 2021, the SibU/Interaction exercise, which were the largest ever held between Chinese and Russian forces. It demonstrates that both the countries have, focused more on joint operations, including command and control, than on previous exercises and also suggest deeper cooperation. Although China and Russia have many differences and these differences may remain in near future but there are indications that both the countries are thinking about their strategic position in the world. Both the countries have established their own goals and have also taken several measures without each other. Russia has made deal of exporting arms to India while China has also organized military exercise outside the SCO and has set-up its own mechanism. Additionally, it has arranged the China + Central Asia Foreign Ministers Meeting, which began on May 12, 2021, and counter-terrorism with Pakistan.

Saudi diplomacy needs flesh on its skeleton of sports and religion

James Dorsey

The explosion cast a shadow over Saudi efforts to project itself as a prime venue for major international sports events

LIKE Qatar, after winning the right to host this year's World Cup, Saudi Arabia is discovering the pitfalls of seeking soft power, whether through sports or religion, without coming to grips with skeletons in its closet. Last week, France spotlighted the pitfalls when it questioned security in the kingdom following a mysterious explosion in a support vehicle carrying six members of the Sodcars Racing team exploded outside the Donatello hotel in the coastal city of Jeddah. The explosion, days before last week's start in the kingdom of the Dakar Rally, severely injured French driver Philippe Boudron. The 61-year-old suffered 'burnt and torn' legs and was moved to a military hospital in Paris for further medical treatment after three initial operations in the kingdom. The other passengers escaped unscathed. The explosion cast a shadow over Saudi efforts to project itself as a prime venue for major international sports events. It also dented the impact of last month's visit to the kingdom by French President Emmanuel Macron and his meeting with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Mr. Macron was the first Western head of state to engage directly and publicly with the crown prince since the 2018 killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul. Differences between France and Saudi Arabia over the cause of the explosion could raise questions about security in the kingdom as well as the crown prince's crackdown on potential rivals and any form of dissent. Originally dubbed the Paris-Dakar rally, the race moved from North and West Africa several years ago for security reasons, first to South America and in 2020 to Saudi Arabia. France opened a terrorism investigation into the incident, but Saudi Arabia has insisted that its inquiry had found no initial criminal suspicions. The Saudi foreign ministry said it was liaising with French authorities. The issue was likely discussed in a telephone conversation on Sunday between Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan and his French counterpart Jean-Yves Le Drian. Mr. Le Drian demanded earlier that Saudi Arabia provide "the greatest possible transparency." In addition, France warned its nationals in the kingdom to exercise "maximum alertness" in the wake of the blast. Sodcars chairman Richard Gonzalez supported French suspicions of a deliberate attack. "I saw everything. It was a deliberate act; there's no doubt about it," Mr. Gonzalez said. Saudi Arabia is widely believed to see sports as an opportunity to diversify its economy away from dependence on oil exports and as a vehicle for improving public health and a means to polish its badly tarnished human rights image. The explosion coincided with a second recent setback in Saudi efforts to distract from its human rights abuses not only through sports but also by projecting the kingdom as a religiously tolerant beacon of a 'moderate' interpretation of Islam

and a leader in inter-faith dialogue. The kingdom's projection suffered a defeat with the forced decision to move its King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz International Centre for Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue (KAICIID) from Vienna 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. Similarly, unmentioned is the lack of a degree of religious freedom and tolerance in the kingdom that contrasts starkly with its global promotion of inter-faith dialogue. In contrast to most Muslim-majority countries, the kingdom bans public non-Muslim worship and the building of non-Muslim houses of worship. To be fair, the kingdom has allowed oblique references to Christmas and Valentine's Day in recent years. Last year, it removed supremacist references to Jews, Christians, and Shiites in schoolbooks. However, Saudi Arabia may also be encountering headwinds in its traditional diplomatic efforts to dial down tensions in the Middle East, in part by entering into an Iraqi-managed dialogue with Iran. In a reversal of what appeared to be efforts by both countries to tone down their rhetoric, Saudi media in recent days published articles raising issues to which Iran is particularly sensitive. The publications came days after Saudi King Salman expressed concern about Iran's alleged lack of cooperation with the international community on its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes and its "negative behaviour" in the region. Together with earlier statements by Saudi officials designed to temper expectations about the talks with Iran, the king's remarks and the publications appeared to suggest that progress in the dialogue was slow-moving. "We follow with concern the Iranian government's policy which is destabilising regional security and stability, including building and backing sectarian armed militias and propagating its military power in other countries," the king said. Feeding an Iranian belief that Saudi Arabia together with the United States would like to see a break-up of Iran as a nation-state, Arab News, the kingdom's foremost English-language newspaper, last week published a full-page article detailing the plight of repressed Iranians of Arab descent in the oil-rich province of Khuzestan and their century-old aspirations. Similarly, in a recent article, Al-Jazirah, a daily newspaper that, like all Saudi media, toes the government line, reverted to sectarian rhetoric. The article asserted that Iran sought to spread its Shiite brand of Islam beyond the Middle East, particularly in Indonesia, Malaysia, India, Ethiopia, and Nigeria. None of this is to say that Saudi public and traditional diplomacy has failed. However, it does suggest that to be effective, efforts to project Saudi Arabia as an enlightened kingdom require greater degrees of transparency and adherence at home to the same principles it propagates abroad. It also suggests that a rapprochement between the kingdom and Iran is likely to be fragile and more a mutually acceptable arrangement than a meeting of the minds irrespective of whether or not talks in Vienna succeed in reviving the 2015 Iranian agreement that curbed the Islamic republic's nuclear programme. —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

Book Review: Where the clouds meet

Asma Ishaq

Book: Where Clouds Meet
Author: Tahir Mehmood.
Genre: Novel (Fiction)
Publisher: Ferozsons (Pvt.) LTD.
Publication Year: October 2021.
ISBN: 978-969-0-02781-8.
Reviewed By: Asma Ishaq.



happens to be appealing and thus becomes successful to convey the message. To the surprise of many, the second protagonist is not a human but the high-mountain- bird that the author has named it, 'Tutu Titu'. His part of plot runs with the two major themes Survival of the Fittest and Individualism. He descends from the mountains to know about the world of 'Homings' to whom he thinks the strange specie. Tutu calls humans the 'Homings'. He goes on the 'journey of learning', 'research' and seeking 'wisdom' via many errands and encounters.

The theme of Love seems to be glorified in the character of Professor NKK. He has a soul of nomad. He is filled with the wisdom and intellect. Despite the fact that life has been horribly cruel to him, he manages to give love to the fellow humans. The time and circumstances have transformed him in the personification of love. Now, he has become a philosopher to interpret the life and to seeking its meaning and purpose. NKK's mantra for love is, "Love is a Divine manifestation which has put a halo around the universe." This book is a 'stand-out' than many other contemporary books. It has got to offer so much for its reader. For any young officer, it is a complete guide for learning soldiery. For any history student, it brings the concrete details. For any common individual, it shares a useful read to fit in the society for the survival. For students of peace and conflict, it reveals that the war is sacred too and actually comes in the field to prevail the good over evil. It is definitely right to say here, Tahir has written one Classic Literature kind of literary masterpiece. He has strengthened the 'Gripping Narration' in this novel. He amps up the reader's mind while creating an irresistible picture in the narration. He knows the art of storytelling. He proves it aptly, "We humans are the story telling creatures in life, so make it an interesting read." —Asma Ishaq teaches English Language and Literature to senior classes

THE worth of any book can be gauged via critical analysis that how much it has been able to incite the reader's mind to do critical thinking upon the themes. Any book proves to be void without the proper theme imbedded with the plot. The heavier the themes, the heavier the story is for the readers. 'Where Clouds Meet' written by Tahir Mehmood is one such book that weighs heavier on the literary scale when it comes giving the cognition exercise to its readers. Providing a range of philosophical interpretations on life, Tahir has come up with an ideal literary work of Fiction. Based on Love in particular, it has been enriched with themes like Warfare, Nature, Survival of the Fittest, Soldiery, Romanticism, Idealism, Realism, Friendship and Individualism. Such a novel

Briefs

Cabinet rules out...

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maintain social distancing and vaccinate themselves, he said and added that the cabinet decided that there was no need for a lockdown in the country in the current situation. Further speaking during the presser, Fawad Chaudhry said that the cabinet has decided to approach the Lahore High Court (LHC) against Shehbaz Sharif, who was a guarantor in the case allowing abroad medical treatment of Nawaz Sharif. "It has been 17 months since Nawaz Sharif fraudulently went abroad and had not received any treatment since then," he said and added that the Punjab government has already rejected the extension pleas of Nawaz Sharif and the Pakistan High Commission in London have asked the Sharif family twice to submit latest medical reports, however, they refused to do so. He said that Shehbaz Sharif was equally responsible for the fraud committed by Nawaz Sharif and the cabinet has directed the attorney general to raise the issue with the LHC. "A disqualification plea will be filed against Shehbaz Sharif over submitting a fake affidavit before the court," he said. Fawad Chaudhry further spoke regarding a briefing on Murree tragedy to the cabinet and said that the Punjab government has formed a committee to probe the matter. "Hundreds of thousands of people were evacuated from Murree within hours," he said and added that the KP and Punjab government are round the clock monitoring the situation at tourist spots.

Govt putting Pakistan...

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general sales tax is being imposed on children's milk even. Shahbaz said: "I said earlier that Nero fiddled while Rome burned. Today they [the government] have proved me right. Rome is burning and Nero is playing the fiddle." The Opposition cooperated with the ruling PTI government for removal from the Financial Action Task Force's (FATF) grey list. However, "we were called thieves," the Opposition leader said. The PML-N leader told the House that it "wasn't former prime ministers Nawaz Sharif or Shahid Khaqan Abbasi who stood on the container and said that if the power tariff is increased, then the prime minister of that time is a thief". "This was said the current Prime Minister Imran Khan," he said. Shahbaz highlighted that the government has proposed taxes on the export of machinery for charitable hospitals along with increasing taxes on exports of equipment used for treatment of TB and cancer patients.

Afghanistan seeks good...

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has pledged to not allow foreign countries to interfere in Afghanistan's internal affairs, and that Afghanistan will open a new chapter of good governance and relations with neighbors and regional and world countries. "We seek positive and constructive relations with our neighbors, region and the world. We want positive interaction based on mutual respect with all nations," Muttaqi told the participants of the conference. Referring to the fall of Kabul in mid-August, Muttaqi said that Islamic Emirate forces sought to enter Kabul through dialogue but the security organization of the previous administration ran away and created a power vacuum in Kabul, so Kabul residents requested Islamic Emirate forces to enter and maintain security. "We sought to enter Kabul city through dialogue and understanding, but as the head, and security organs of the previous administration chose to run away and a power vacuum gripped Kabul, public figures and residents of Kabul requested our forces to enter the city and establish security, he said.

Kremlin: Russia-US talks inspire no significant optimism

"The work continues, it will continue tomorrow, we're focused on achieving results both in the form of the very process of talks and the agreements, which we informed about in advance in terms of laying out our position. I don't see a reason for concern"

NEWS DESK

MOSCOW: The Kremlin said Tuesday it saw "no significant reason for optimism" after the highly anticipated Russia-U.S. talks over Ukraine and other security issues. The talks aimed at defusing tensions over Ukraine took place in Geneva on Monday and offered no sign of immediate progress. Moscow went in insisting on guarantees to halt NATO's eastward expansion and even roll back the military alliance's deployments in Eastern Europe — demands that Washington had earlier firmly rejected as a nonstarter. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Tuesday the manner in which the talks were held — "open, comprehensive and direct" — "deserves a positive assessment," but it's the result that matters. "So far, let's say, we see no significant reason for optimism," Peskov told a conference call with reporters. "There are still several rounds (of talks) ahead of us, which will allow us to work out a clearer understanding, a clearer picture of where we stand with the Americans. For now, it's impossible to draw any conclusions, unfortunately," the spokesman added. After the Russia-U.S. meeting in Geneva on Monday, Moscow and NATO representatives are expected to meet on Wednesday. Russia is also meeting the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe this week, which includes



the United States. Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova told Russian state TV on Tuesday that the diplomatic work continues and there is no "reason for concern." "The work continues, it will continue tomorrow, we're focused on achieving results both in the form of the very process of talks and the agreements, which we informed about in advance in terms of laying out our position.

Raducanu loses as Murray wins in Sydney Tennis Classic

Murray and Raducanu are set to feature in the Australian Open, which starts on Monday in Melbourne



SPORTS DESK

SYDNEY: Britain's Emma Raducanu was heavily beaten in the first round of the Sydney Tennis Classic but Andy Murray is through to round two. US Open champion Raducanu lost 6-0 6-1 to world number 13 Elena Rybakina. Murray, 34, beat Norway's Viktor Durasovic 6-3 6-1 in 72 minutes and will face second seed Nikoloz Basilashvili in the second round. Murray and Raducanu are set to feature in the Australian Open, which starts on Monday in Melbourne. Raducanu, 19, struggled with her serve as she was comfortably beaten by Kazakhstan's Rybakina in just 55 minutes. She conceded four double

faults in losing the first set and was 3-0 down in the second before winning her sole game of the match.

Raducanu did manage to save two match points, before Rybakina wrapped up victory to set up a last-16 tie against France's Caroline Garcia. British number one Raducanu, who became the first singles qualifier to win a Grand Slam at the US Open last year, will be seeded 17th for the Australian Open. Her preparation has been hampered as she pulled out of the first WTA tournament of the season in Melbourne last week, having recently come out of isolation after contracting Covid-19. Former world number one Murray has accepted a wildcard for the Grand Slam in what will be his first appearance there

since his emotional first-round exit in 2019. Murray said he could be forced to retire through injury then, but made a comeback after having surgery on his hip for the second time. "It is really nice to get my range and hopefully I can carry that through [to the Australian Open]," said Murray, who lost in the first round of the Melbourne Summer Series.

"I believe I can have a good run there and who knows, if I can find a bit of form and the draw opens up?" Britain's Katie Swan and Liam Broady both reached the second round of Australian Open qualifying.

Swan, 22, beat Australia's Abbie Myers 6-2 6-4 to set up a tie against Bulgaria's Viktoriya Tomova in Melbourne. Broady fought back from a set down to beat Poland's Kacper Zuk 4-6 6-1 6-2. The 28-year-old, who has never reached the main draw of the Australian Open, will face American JJ Wolf in the second round.

However, Katie Boulter, Jodie Burrage and Francesca Jones are all out. Boulter was beaten 6-3 6-4 by American Emina Bektas, while Burrage lost 5-7 6-1 6-4 to Australia's Seone Mendez. Jones retired while trailing 5-1 in the first set against American Usue Maitane Arconada. On Monday, Harriet Dart beat Italy's Federica di Sarra 6-4 6-3 to reach the second round, where she will play American Alycia Parks. Samantha Murray Sharan was beaten 6-1 6-7 (2-7) 7-6 (10-8) by American Hailey Baptiste.

Djokovic back into swing in Australia

MELBOURNE: Tennis star Novak Djokovic held a practice session at Melbourne Park on Tuesday, his second day out of detention, focusing on his Australian Open title defense while still facing the prospect of deportation because he's not vaccinated for COVID-19.

The top-ranked Djokovic hit the show courts within hours of winning a legal battle Monday against the cancellation of his visa, based on procedural grounds. He returned Tuesday afternoon for a closed practice, with doors locked and only his support team allowed into Rod Laver Arena. Aerial images taken by Australian TV networks from a helicopter showed the nine-time Australian Open winner back at work, less than a week before the first Grand Slam tournament of the year is due to start.

Video showed Djokovic hitting shots from behind the baseline, taking feedback from his coach, and stretching beside the court with a trainer on a sunny but mild summer afternoon. Soon after, organizers released the seedings for the Australian Open tournament, and Djokovic was listed at No. 1 for the men's singles draw.

While he's trying to make up time after spending four days confined to an immigration detention hotel, Djokovic is conscious he could again have his visa revoked. Immigration Minister Alex Hawke is considering exercising his power to deport the 34-year-old Serbian under separate legislation, assessing a medical exemption that the unvaccinated Djokovic relied on to fly into Melbourne and the information supplied in the visa application.

The Australian Associated Press reported the decision was not expected Tuesday, after Hawke's office issued a statement saying the matter was still under consideration "in line with due process." — APP

Pakistan to host Asian Open Taekwondo C'ship

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan will host the 4th edition of Asian Open Taekwondo Championship this year in November which would see the top taekwondo players from across the globe taking part in the international event.

The first ever event at Asian level to host by Pakistan Taekwondo Federation (PTF) announced by Asian Taekwondo Union (ATU) after the withdrawal by Chinese Taipei Taekwondo Association to host the Asian championship.

According to Pakistan Taekwondo Federation president Lt. Col. (r) Waseem Ahmed, the Asian championship will be held in Islamabad from 1st to 4th November this year where top athletes from various countries across the globe are taking part in the international event. He said that young players mostly aged 17 and above are going to participate in senior male and female Khyrougi event, adding that Pakistani national and international referees will also be part of this event.

"The first ever mega event being given to Pakistan Taekwondo speaks of dedication, continuous hard work and remarkable performance of our athletes and officials", he said adding that such events are beneficial for the professional development of our officials and athletes.

Pak desires meaningful...

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He said Pakistan considers Spain as a very important country in bilateral as well as European Union context and there are a lot of opportunities for both countries to enhance bilateral trade and economic cooperation. Shah Mahmood Qureshi said Pakistan is continuing its utmost efforts for peace in Afghanistan and the region. He said peace in Afghanistan would promote regional linkages which would prove helpful in achieving our economic targets.

COAS chairs Corps Cmdr...

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efforts of formations involved in relief operations to mitigate challenges of people affected due to snow storm in Murree and heavy rainfalls in Balochistan. He expressed satisfaction over operational preparedness of the formations. According to ISPR, the forum took comprehensive review of the security situation with particular focus on Border Management and Internal Security. The participants were apprised on the progress and achievements of Operation Radd ul Fasad in detail. — DNA

PM stresses efforts...

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The summit was being attended by presidents of more than 54 regular chambers, 10 small chambers and 13 women chambers, besides representatives from development partners, international business community, political parties, ministries and the government institutions.

The summit will provide an opportunity to the businessmen to seek resolution of their issues, besides presentation of solid proposals to the stakeholders for the formulation of business-friendly policy of the country. The prime minister said the government was constantly endeavouring to introduce incentives for ease of doing business and remove all bottlenecks, which would help increase the businessmen's profits and develop a tax culture. He also termed the introduction of mini-budget an effort to document the economy. Out of the total estimated Rs 11 trillion retail market, only Rs 3 trillion market was registered.

The government was also working on full tax automation, he added. The prime minister said, "No government in Pakistan ever faced such big challenges like the fiscal and current account deficits. If our friends, Saudi Arabia and China, would not have helped us, we would have defaulted due to our liabilities. We had no reserves to stem the depreciation of rupee."

He said the country's economy was going through a stabilization phase, but unfortunately, then came the Covid-19 which posed the century's biggest challenge. It was worth appreciable how Pakistan was out of the woods. The government not only saved the economy but also the lives of people, he said, adding the pandemic brought havoc across the world. In India, its economy was badly impacted with a huge death toll.

He was criticized by the political opponents for not clamping a complete lockdown, but his decision of smart lockdown was being followed by British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, he added.

Then, he said, came the challenge of Afghanistan and the flight of dollars, which put pressure on rupee.

The prime minister said the world also witnessed a record surge in commodity prices as the supply and demand lines were disrupted by the pandemic. The people all over the world had been facing problems, he added.

About the commodity prices, the prime minister expressed the confidence that they would ease soon.

The prime minister further stressed upon developing a tax culture like the Scandinavian countries that had the highest tax ratio. He observed that tax culture could not evolve in the country as the people were reluctant to pay taxes in the past, due to lack of trust over rulers who spent the public tax money on their luxurious living.

Taylor's final Test act seals New Zealand victory

The victory margin could have been bigger but for Liton Das' counter-attacking 102 for Bangladesh, who had shocked the world test champions in the opening match in Mount Maunganui

SPORTS DESK

CHRISTCHURCH: Ross Taylor claimed the last Bangladesh wicket in his final act in Test cricket to seal New Zealand's series-levelling victory by an innings and 117 runs in the second and final match on Tuesday. New Zealand's decision to enforce the follow-on denied Taylor, who made 28 in their first innings total of 521-6 declared, the chance to bat again. Bangladesh managed 126 in the first innings and were 278-9 in third day's final session when New Zealand skipper Tom Latham tossed the ball to Taylor. The part-time spinner sent down two dot balls before inducing a skyer from Ebadot Hossain and Latham took a tumbling catch at midwicket to ensure a winning farewell for the former New Zealand captain. The victory margin could have been bigger but for Liton Das' counter-attacking 102 for Bangladesh, who had shocked the world test champions in the opening match in Mount Maunganui. "It's a great way to finish," said Taylor, New Zealand's most prolific Test

batsman with 7,683 runs, which include 19 hundreds, from 112 matches with an average of 44.66. "I wanted to finish with a win and the guys definitely gave it to me.

"It was an emotional game for me and my family ... it was good to get the win," added the 37-year-old, who will play his last limited overs internationals against Australia and

the Netherlands during the home summer. Smartering from their shock eight-wicket loss in the opening test, New Zealand enforced the follow-on before their seamers ensured victory. "The bowlers did a bloody good job on a tiring wicket," Latham said.

"Ross Taylor rocked up and took the last wicket. He has been there for 17 years ... been such an important member of the group." Latham, whose 252 earned him the man-of-the-match award, took a stunning catch at second slip to dismiss Mohammad Naim as Bangladesh started to unravel.

Neil Wagner subjected the tourists' batsmen to a bouncer barrage and was rewarded with figures of 3-77, while Kyle Jamieson claimed 4-82. Bangladesh captain Mominul Haque (37) and Nurul Hasan (36) could not convert their starts into big knocks but Liton scored freely to bring up his second Test hundred in 106 balls.

"I'm really happy with the first test, but second test was disappointing," Mominul said. Devon Conway was adjudged man-of-the-series for smashing two hundreds in three innings.



Briefs

EU parliament president David Sassoli has died

STRASBOURG: The president of the European Parliament, David Sassoli, died early Tuesday in hospital in Italy, his spokesman said on Twitter. The 65-year-old Italian had been seriously ill in hospital for more than two weeks due to a dysfunction of his immune system. "David Sassoli passed away at 1.15 am on 11 January at the CRO in Aviano, Italy, where he was hospitalized," his spokesman Roberto Cuillo tweeted. "The date and place of the funeral will be communicated in the next few hours." The former television newreader had been in hospital since December 26 due to "a serious complication due to a dysfunction of the immune system," Cuillo had said on Monday, announcing the cancellation of Sassoli's official activities. Sassoli was previously admitted with pneumonia for several weeks last September. The European Parliament sits for a five-year term between elections, but the president of the body serves for half that time. Sassoli had already indicated that he would not seek re-election. He was born on May 30, 1956, in Florence, Italy. After a three-decade career as an Italian journalist, starting out in newspapers then moving to television and becoming a nationally known anchor, Sassoli became a member of the European Parliament in 2009, and speaker in 2019. — APP

6.6 magnitude quake jolts Cyprus

NICOSIA: A 6.6-magnitude quake hit off the west coast of Cyprus early Tuesday, the US Geological Survey said, but there were no reports of casualties or structural damage. The strong and relatively shallow quake at 0107 GMT was centred 48 kilometres (30 miles) west-northwest of the town of Polis on the Mediterranean island, the USGS said. The tremor was felt across Cyprus and around the region with reports from as far away as Turkey, Israel and Lebanon, according to the USGS. It shook buildings in the capital Nicosia, 130 kilometres away, and some of those who were awake went out into the streets. "It was frightening. The whole building was shaking endlessly," one Nicosia resident told AFP. "I thought it would never end." Cyprus police told AFP there were no reports of any injuries or serious structural damage from the quake, but it woke people across the island. "We were in bed and it woke us up - it really went on for a long time," Limassol resident Carol Bailey, a 61-year-old French teacher, told AFP. She said friends who live farther west told her it shook their building and set the lights swinging, while the inside of their fireplace "was making a noise like a horror film". The European-Mediterranean Seismological Centre measured the tremor at 6.5 magnitude at a depth of 51 kilometres. — APP

Japan further extends strict entry ban

TOKYO: Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said Tuesday an entry ban on non-resident foreigners will be further extended until the end of February. "The infection situations regarding Omicron are clearly different at home (and) from abroad, so the framework of the current border controls will be maintained until the end of February," Kishida told reporters. The entry ban on non-resident foreigners in its current form has been in place since Nov. 30, 2021, following Japan's first case of the highly contagious Omicron variant of the COVID-19. The current border control measures were initially set to last for about a month, which prohibited entry into Japan of non-resident foreigners and require returning Japanese nationals and foreign residents to quarantine in government-designated facilities. The government said it would also restrict the number of people entering Japan to around 3,500 people a day. — APP



TASHKENT: Students of Tashkent University visited Pakistan embassy in Uzbekistan and interacted with the Pakistan ambassador and other embassy staff. Students are in a group photo with Pakistan Ambassador. — DNA

Azerbaijan supports Kazakhstan's sovereignty

The minister noted that both bilaterally and under relevant multilateral forums, such as the Organization of Turkic States and its related entities, Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan have developed outstanding strategic cooperation relations

DNA

BAKU: Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov has said that Azerbaijan supports Kazakhstan's sovereignty and territorial integrity, the Foreign Ministry reported. Bayramov made the remarks at the extraordinary meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of Turkic States on the recent events in Kazakhstan, the report added. "As a country enjoying deeply-rooted ethnic, religious and historic brotherhood with Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan reaffirms the crucial importance of respect for the sovereignty, territorial

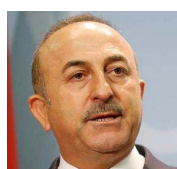
integrity of Kazakhstan," Bayramov stressed. He added that Azerbaijan is quite concerned about the events in Kazakhstan, which resulted in human deaths and injuries and expresses its profound sympathies to the whole Kazakh people, and wishes all those injured a swift recovery. The minister emphasized that Azerbaijan supports the quickest possible normalization of the situation and the restoration of the rule of law in Kazakhstan. The use of illegitimate force and violence to destabilize public order and threaten citizens' fundamental human rights and freedoms can never be



justified, and must be categorically opposed and rejected, he added. "We believe in the wisdom and capacity of the people and the government of Kazakhstan. We trust that the situation will be overcome and common sense will prevail without risking remarkable achievements Kazakhstan has accom-

plished since regaining its independence," Bayramov underlined. Commenting on the role of the Organization of the Turkic States in the normalization of the situation in Kazakhstan, Bayramov said that the organization is based on member-state solidarity, and the member countries are obliged to stand with the Kazakh people during this difficult time. "It is within this understanding that we welcome the statement of January 6, 2022, and the expressed readiness by the Organization to assist Kazakhstan as needed, in finding a way out of the current situation."

Turkic states stand by Kazakhstan: FM Çavuşoğlu



ANKARA: Turkic nations stand behind Kazakhstan with all their resources and full support, Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu told a meeting of Turkic states on Tuesday. Speaking at an extraordinary virtual meeting of the Organization of Turkic States, Çavuşoğlu also said that Turkey welcomes the appointment of a new prime minister and the easing of tensions in Kazakhstan after country-wide violence last week. The virtual meeting of the foreign ministers was chaired by Çavuşoğlu, with Kazakhstan's Mukhtar Tileuberdi, Kyrgyzstan's Ruslan Kazakbaev, Abdulaziz Kamilov of Uzbekistan, and Peter Szijarto of Hungary in attendance. Turkmenistan's Foreign Minister Rashid Meredov and Secretary-General of the Organization of Turkic States, Baghdad Amreyev, also joined the meeting. — DNA

Russia denies involvement in possible Uzbek coup attempt

MOSCOW: Russia is not engaged in conversations about a possible coup attempt in Uzbekistan following the failed insurrection in Kazakhstan, which was mentioned as a potential risk by Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Tuesday. "It is more like a topic for a conversation between Minsk and Tashkent, in this regard, we aren't involved in such conversations," he said in response to a question. Lukashenko said at an extraordinary session of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) Collective Security Council on January 10 that if no lessons were learned from the recent events in Kazakhstan, similar developments might take place again, first and foremost, in Uzbekistan. According to the Belarusian president, the information that he has makes it clear that terrorists have already set their sights on Uzbekistan. Protests erupted in various Kazakh cities on January 2, escalating into mass riots that involved attacks on police officers, service members and government buildings in many cities of the country, primarily in Almaty. Thousands of people were injured, and the number of casualties is unknown. — Agencies



MADRID: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi meeting with opinion makers during his recent visit to Madrid, Spain. — DNA

EU condemns Bosnian Serb nationalist celebrations

BRUSSELS: The European Union condemned the divisive rhetoric used by Bosnian Serb leaders during nationalist celebrations of Statehood Day. "The EU firmly condemns the negative, divisive and inflammatory rhetoric used by Republika Srpska (RS) leaders during the celebrations of 9th of January this Sunday," Peter Stano, lead spokesperson of the European External Action Service, wrote in a statement. On Sunday, Bosnian Serbs held public celebrations on the 30th anniversary of the proclamation of the autonomous Republika Srpska in 1992 that led to war. According to the bloc's statement, the rhetoric and actions during the holiday further escalated the ongoing political crisis and put the country's stability and prosperity at risk. The document also said the celebrations were against a 2015 ruling by the country's constitutional court saying the holiday could be discriminatory against other ethnic and religious groups. The EU called on Bosnian Serb leaders to put an end to "the worrying trend of hatred and intolerance," including the glorification of war criminals and the denial of their crimes. "We, therefore, urge all leaders, including the leadership of Republika Srpska, to bring unacceptable divisive steps to an end and return in full to the work of State institutions," the statement added. In 1995, the Dayton Agreement ending the Yugoslav Wars created a complex double-federative system of two main entities, the Republika Srpska and the Croat-Bosniak-populated Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The country's worst political turmoil since the end of the war started last July when Serb officials started to boycott federal institutions after outgoing High Representative Valentin Inzko introduced a new law banning the denial of genocide and criminalizing the glorification of war criminals. — Agencies

Indonesia to lift coal export ban in phases

JAKARTA: Indonesian authorities have said that the country will resume coal export in phases starting from Wednesday, with dozens of ships carrying coal cleared to depart on Tuesday. Coordinating Minister for Maritime and Investment Affairs Luhut Binsar Pandjaitan told a press conference late Monday that the official regulation to lift the coal export ban was being finalized. The world's largest thermal coal exporter imposed on Dec. 31, 2021, a policy to ban coal exports for the entire month of Jan. — APP

Latvia detains two for spying for Russia

RIGA: The Latvian State Security Service jointly with the Defense Intelligence and Security Service (MIDD) has taken two individuals into custody on suspicion of spying for Russian military intelligence for a lengthy period of time, the LETA Latvian news agency reported on Tuesday. These two suspects were detained last year and, according to the Latvian authorities, they held meetings with members of Russian military intelligence in Russia disclosing classified information about the Latvian defense sector. They both have been labeled as

suspects and were placed into custody as a security measure. According to LETA, the arrest of these persons was conducted within the framework of two separate criminal cases. The State Security Service turned over materials to the Prosecutor General's Office of one of the criminal cases on December 30, 2021, requesting prosecution procedures be launched. "Information obtained during the investigation shows that the person used the range of contacts established in his professional activities to obtain, compile, analyze. — APP

Poland hits milestone of 100,000 covid deaths

WARSAW: Poland has become the latest European nation to reach the grim milestone of 100,000 deaths related to the coronavirus. Nearly a quarter of those deaths — some 24,000 — occurred in the most recent wave of infection that began in October, a period in which vaccines have been widely available in the European Union nation. Health Minister Adam Niedzielski said early Tuesday that 493 deaths of people with COVID-19 had been registered in the past day, pushing the death toll to over 100,000. The vast majority of the deaths are among people who have not been vaccinated. The vaccination rate in Poland is 55.8%. Poland now joins Italy, the U.K, France and Germany as those European nations that have recorded 100,000 deaths. — APP

New York Man charged with threatening to kill Trump

NEW YORK: The US Secret Service arrested a 72-year-old man in New York on Monday after he allegedly phoned them threatening to kill ex-president Donald Trump, a criminal indictment showed. Prosecutors in Brooklyn say Thomas Melnick "knowingly and willfully threatened to kill, kidnap, and inflict bodily harm upon" the former US president. It alleges that Melnick told US Capitol Police during an interview in July 2020 that if Trump "loses the 2020 election and refused to step down" he would "acquire weapons and take him down." Trump is referred to as "Individual-1" in the indictment. Melnick is also accused of having left two voice mail messages with the Secret Service's office in Long Island, New York in January last year in which he "threatened to kill" Trump as well as 12 unnamed members of Congress. "Oh yeah that's a threat, come and arrest me. I will do anything I can to take out [Individual-1] and his 12 monkeys," Melnick, who lives in Queens, is alleged to have said. Melnick is also accused of having called the Secret Service's desk in New York City last November three times from his cell phone, introducing himself by name each time. "He repeatedly referred to Individual-1 as 'Hitler' and stated, 'I will do everything I can to make sure [Individual-1] is dead,' reads the indictment. In another call last month he stated that "the new Civil War could break out and taking up arms against the government is justified when ballots don't matter." He added that he used to own a .22 calibre firearm, according to the indictment. Melnick was arraigned on the charges in a Brooklyn federal court via videoconference later Monday and was to be released on payment of a \$50,000 bond. — APP

Chinese reports 110 locally transmitted Covid cases

BEIJING: The Chinese mainland on Monday reported 110 new locally transmitted COVID-19 cases, the National Health Commission said in its daily report on Tuesday. Of the new local cases, 87 were reported in Henan, 13 in Shaanxi, and 10 in Tianjin, the commission said. Also reported were 82 new imported cases in 11 provincial-level regions, according to the commission. No new suspected cases or deaths from COVID-19 were reported Monday, added the commission. The total number of confirmed COVID-19 cases on the mainland had reached 103,968 by Monday, including 3,458 patients still receiving treatment, of whom 21 were in severe condition. A total of 95,874 patients had been discharged from hospitals on the mainland, and 4,636 had died as a result of the virus. A total of 50 asymptomatic cases were newly reported Monday, 39 of whom arrived from outside the mainland. — APP

'FPCCI official elections result for 2022 is undeclared

However High Court of Sindh (SHC) ordered issuance of notice for January 13th 2022 through Attorney General of Pakistan to Secretary Commerce, FPCCI, DGTO and others in a case regarding inclusion of the names of different trade bodies in the final voter list of FPCCI for 2022 as un-lawful

DNA

LAHORE: FPCCI United Business Group (UBG) Senior office bearer, Mian Usman Zulfiqar said the Election Commission of the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) is unable to declare official and final election results due to honourable high court order of December 29th, 2021 because status of some votes are subjudice in different courts, however the honorable Sindh high court has restricted to announce any kind of result until next hearing / fate of the writ petition filed on and temporary

injunction give on 29th of December 2021, but by hanging with the name of un-official results suggest Businessmen Panel (BMP) claiming the victory, which is out rightly contempt of court in the light of decision of Sindh High Court which clearly stated "No result shall be announced". While talking to Media, he said this is very unfortunate that the orders of honourable superior courts are thrown away using the name and power gimmicks of our non biased institutions as well as premier house, this is not only playing and maliging with the security institutions at this hour where Pakistan is suffering in-

ternal external security and economical threat, only few people trying to juvenile the celebration for pure personal interests which is illegal, unlawfully, contempt of court and ethically wrong keeping in view current circumstances. The two competing groups BMP and United Business Group (UBG) have often disclosed use of fake and bogus trade bodies and illegal nominations to rig elections by each of them. To think, the FPCCI politics is no different than the national politics. All the ambitious people maneuvering to win their way to the throne sans regard to rules, regulations and ethics. Let alone the betterment

of their members. As world over trade bodies play an important role in business development, trade facilitation, business promotion and employment generation. However High Court of Sindh (SHC) ordered issuance of notice for January 13th 2022 through Attorney General of Pakistan to Secretary Commerce, FPCCI, DGTO and others in a case regarding inclusion of the names of different trade bodies in the final voter list of FPCCI for 2022 as un-lawful. "High Court further ordered that votes casted by the controversial trade bodies be sealed and kept separate subject to the orders of SHC, but result of the election

shall not be announced". Similarly Irfan Iqbal Sheikh representing Lahore Chamber of Commerce enjoyed illegal, unlawfully victory, despite his eligibility as voter/member was also challenged last month before high court and Irfan Sheikh was requested by divisional bench to contest elections only and accordingly he was allowed but his main case is still pending before the high court for the final verdict as per case no 2923/2021. While Dr. Nauman Idris Butt of Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry as runner up followed by Muhammad Aslam Sheikh and Aamir Atta Bajwa being the Presidential Candidates too.

Briefs

Hungary
general
election
on April 3

BUDAPEST: Hungary will hold a general election on April 3, the president said Tuesday, with controversial right-wing Prime Minister Viktor Orban facing his toughest contest since coming to power in 2010.

Aiming to win a fourth consecutive term, the nationalist Orban is up against a united opposition alliance with most polls indicating a close race. Orban remains popular at home despite accusations by critics that his centralising policies have steered Hungary towards authoritarianism. His supporters say that he has reformed Hungary after decades of stagnation, and maintained the Central European EU member's national sovereignty and Christian identity. Since 2015 the 58-year-old has also become well-known abroad for his hardline anti-immigration policies, emerging with Poland as a fierce critic of EU policies in this and other areas. At the last election in 2018 Orban's Fidesz party, with its junior coalition partner the Christian Democrats, won around 48 percent of the vote, giving it 133 of the assembly's 199 seats. The result meant Fidesz retained the two-thirds "supermajority" it won in 2010 and 2014, enabling it to push major bills through parliament. But for the first time since 2006 a Hungarian general election is unpredictable after the opposition joined forces to combat election rules introduced under Orban in 2012 that favour Fidesz. In October a six-party alliance of opposition parties from left to right held its first ever primary to select single challengers versus Orban and Fidesz in all 106 electoral districts. — APP

Irregular
migrants 'above
pre-pandemic
levels': EU

WARSAW: The number of irregular migrants who crossed into the European Union last year was "just short of 200,000" — the highest number since 2017, the EU's border agency Frontex said on Tuesday. The number of detected crossings was 57 percent higher than 2020 when Covid restrictions drastically reduced migration but also 36 percent higher than 2019, Frontex said in a statement. The statement said arrivals were now "above pre-pandemic levels".

"This suggests that factors other than the lifting of restrictions on global mobility are the cause of increased migratory pressure," the Warsaw-based agency said. It said one new factor in 2021 was the influx of migrants — most from the Middle East — through Belarus in what the EU says was a deliberate operation by the Belarusian regime. There were also sharp increases in migrant arrivals through the Central Mediterranean, the Western Balkans and Cyprus. The main route was the Central Mediterranean — accounting for 65,362 arrivals, or around a third of the total. The year-on-year increase was 83 percent, Frontex said. — APP

NJ Senate seeks
Biden's attention
towards Sikh
genocide

DNA

TRENTON: Senate of New Jersey, a northeastern US state has unanimously passed a resolution condemning the 1984 Sikh massacre by India terming it as genocide.

Sponsored by Senator Stephen M. Sweeney the resolution will be transmitted to the President and Vice-President of the United States, the Majority and Minority Leaders of the United States Senate, the Speaker and Minority Leader of the United States House of Representatives, and every member of Congress elected from this State. It said that the Sikh community, which originated in Punjab, India, and began immigrating into the United States over 100 years ago, has played an important role in developing the United States and New Jersey.

The Sikh genocide began on November 1, 1984, after the assassination of Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi in New Delhi and the states of Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Orissa, Jammu and Kashmir, Chhattisgarh, Tripura, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, and Maharashtra.

The resolution hailed Sikhism as the world's fifth-largest religion with nearly 309 million adherents, including roughly 1,000,000 in the United States. It said, the Sikh genocide lasted three days and over 30,000 Sikhs were brutally murdered as they were hunted in their homes, where they were hacked and burned alive.

Art & beauty of Japanese dolls
exhibition starts at PNCA

Ambassador WADA, while speaking at the inaugural ceremony of the exhibition said that dolls have been an important part of the Japanese culture for centuries

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: An exhibition titled "NINGYO: Art & Beauty of Japanese Dolls" started here at Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) as part of 70th anniversary celebrations of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Japan. The Embassy of Japan in Pakistan and the Japan Foundation in collaboration with PNCA displayed a superb collection of Japanese dolls at exhibition, said a press release issued here.

This popular Japanese dolls travelling exhibition was inaugurated on Tuesday 11th January by WADA Mitsuhiro, the Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, together with the distinguished guests, Andleeb Abbas, member of the National Assembly of Pakistan and Federal Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs, present on the occasion.

The exhibition presented a comprehensive introduction to Japanese doll culture, from Katashiro and Amagatsu, which are considered to be the archetypes of dolls in Japan, to local dolls that reflect the climate and anecdotes from across the country, to dress-up dolls that are beloved in Japan today as doll toys, and scale figures that are highly regarded around the world. In the exhibition, a total of 67 carefully selected dolls divided un-



der four sections "Ningyo to pray for children's growth," "Ningyo as fine art," "Ningyo as folk art," and "Spread of Ningyo culture" have been displayed by exhibiting the diversity of the Japanese dolls. Japanese dolls traditionally known as "Ningyo" (which means human shape in Japanese) are a unique cultural symbol because of their rich history and association with the Japanese way of life.

They reflect the customs of Japan and the aspirations of its people, possess distinctive regional attributes, and over the centuries have developed in many diverse forms. Ambassador WADA, while speaking at the inaugural ceremony of the exhibition said that dolls have been an important part of the Japanese culture for centuries and they reflect the history of Japan from prehistoric to modern times.

As this year marks the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Pakistan, the dolls exhibition is a delightful occasion for the Pakistani friends to learn more about the Japanese dolls culture. The purpose of showing this exhibition is to give the visitors a close glimpse of the versatility and individuality of the traditional and cultural life of Japanese people, said the Ambassador. The exhibition will remain open for public viewing till 25th of January 2022.

Turkish foreign
minister to
visit China

WED DESK

ANKARA: Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu will pay a visit to China on Wednesday. In a statement, the Foreign Ministry said Cavusoglu will address "bilateral relations as well as current regional and international issues" during the visit. Türkiye and the People's Republic of China established diplomatic relations in August 1971. Bilateral, economic and political relations between the two countries gained momentum in the 1980s. From the last decade onwards, the relations grew into a strategic cooperation level. The trade volume between the two countries is around \$24 billion as of 2020. This originates primarily from the increasing export volume of Turkish agricultural and husbandry goods to China.

Saudi FM
visit reflects
China-Saudi ties

BEIJING: As the first foreign minister to arrive in China in the new year, your visit reflects the high-level China-Saudi Arabia comprehensive strategic partnership," said China's State Councilor and Foreign Minister during talks with Saudi Arabian Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud in Wuxi, East China's Jiangsu Province. Wang noted that as a good friend, partner and brother sharing mutual trust and reciprocity with Saudi Arabia, China had always prioritized the relations with Saudi Arabia in the Middle East and was willing to push bilateral relations to a higher and deeper level, according to Global Times on Tuesday.

He said as an important Islamic country, "Saudi Arabia upholds justice on the Xinjiang issue and opposes the interference into China's domestic affairs, which China highly appreciates, adding its gratitude toward Saudi Arabia for standing with China to hold the Beijing 2022 Games." — APP

Unequal vaccine access could
hamper climate fight: WEF

PARIS: Unequal access to Covid-19 vaccines is widening the gap between rich countries and the developing world, threatening the cooperation needed to tackle common challenges such as climate change, the World Economic Forum warned on Tuesday.

In its annual Global Risks Report, the Swiss foundation behind the annual Davos gathering of the rich and powerful warned that vaccine haves and have-nots were increasingly on divergent paths. "A greater prevalence of Covid-19 in low-vaccination countries than in high-vaccination ones will weigh on worker availability and productivity, disrupt supply chains and weaken consumption," the 17th edition of the report, which surveys global experts, warned. "Moreover, a lower post-pandemic risk appetite in the vaccinated world — comprised

mostly of advanced economies — could weaken their investment in the non-vaccinated world," it added. According to the World Health Organization, 98 countries have yet to vaccinate 40 percent of their population — a stark contrast with the situation in many Western countries, where vaccination rates hover around the 70-80 percent mark. Rich countries have been accused of hoarding vaccines, with only a fraction of the billions of doses produced last year winding up in the arms of people in countries with the most fragile health systems.

The WEF warned that the growing gulf between rich and poor countries would create a poisonous legacy of resentment, making it harder to reach agreements on global issues such as climate change, managing migration flows and

halting cyber attacks.

The climate crisis displaced the pandemic this year as the biggest risk for the world, accounting for five of the top 10 risks for the world over the next 10 years.

But the report also highlighted the continuing fallout of the pandemic, with developing economies struggling to bounce back from successive lockdowns while rich countries emerge more resilient.

"By 2024, developing economies (excluding China) will have fallen 5.5 percent below their pre-pandemic expected GDP growth, while advanced economies will have surpassed it by 0.9 percent — widening the global income gap," the survey predicted. The WEF also emphasised the "societal scarring" caused by the pandemic, including in rich countries. — Agencies

IHC orders
to take over
navy's golf
course

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Tuesday ordered authorities to take over the Navy Golf Course by close of business. The order came during a hearing presided over by IHC Chief Justice Athar Minallah of a case related to the encroachments on the Margalla Hills National Park. Secretaries for the ministries of defence and interior, the chairman of the Capital Development Authority (CDA), and the additional attorney general (AAG) were present during the hearing. Justice Minallah said the national park's land belongs to the state and no commercial activities can be carried out here. "No one can even cut the grass on the land, this land belongs to the state."

Over 50% of
Europeans on
track to contract
Omicron: WHO

COPENHAGEN: More than half of people in Europe are on track to contract the Omicron coronavirus variant in the next two months if infections continue at current rates, the World Health Organization said Tuesday.

Speaking at a press conference, regional director Hans Kluge warned that the Omicron variant represented a "new west-to-east tidal wave sweeping across" the European region.

"At this rate, the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) forecasts that more than 50 percent of the population in the region will be infected with Omicron in the next six to eight weeks," Kluge told reporters. The WHO's European region comprises 53 countries and territories including several in Central Asia, and Kluge noted that 50 of them had confirmed cases of the Omicron variant.

According to the WHO, 26 of those countries reported that over one percent of their populations were "catching Covid-19 each week" as of January 10, and that the region had seen over seven million new virus cases reported in the first week of 2022 alone. Kluge said the "unprecedented scale of transmission" now meant countries were seeing rising hospitalisations from Covid-19, but added that mortality rates were still stable. The wave "is challenging health systems and service delivery in many countries where Omicron has spread at speed, and threatens to overwhelm in many more," Kluge lamented.

Referencing data collected over the last few weeks, Kluge said the variant was confirmed to be more transmissible and "the mutations it has enable it to adhere to human cells more easily, and it can infect even those who have been previously infected or vaccinated." However, Kluge also stressed that "approved vaccines do continue to provide good protection against severe disease and death, including for Omicron." Despite reports of a higher degree of asymptomatic cases and lower proportion of hospitalisations for Omicron cases, the WHO said it was too early to treat the disease as endemic — meaning a regularly occurring milder disease like the flu. "We still have a virus that's evolving quite quickly and posing quite new challenges. So we're certainly not at the point of being able to call it endemic," WHO senior emergencies officer Catherine Smallwood told reporters. — APP



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan to Pakistan, Khazar Farhadov met with Seyed Mohammad Ali Hosseini, Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan. Both sides discussed matters of mutual interest. — DNA

UN launches \$5bn aid appeal for Afghanistan

According to UN humanitarian coordination office OCHA, half the population now faces acute hunger, over nine million people have been displaced and millions of children are out of school

WEB DESK

UNITED NATIONS: The UN and partners launched a more than \$5 billion funding appeal for Afghanistan on Tuesday, in the hope of shoring up collapsing basic services there, which have left 22 million in need of assistance inside the country, and 5.7 million people requiring help beyond its borders. Speaking in Geneva, UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths said that \$4.4 billion was needed for the Afghanistan Humanitarian Response Plan alone, "to pay direct" to health workers and others, not the de facto authorities.

UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi called for \$623 million, to support refugees and host communities in five neighbouring countries, for the Afghanistan Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan.

"Today we are launching an appeal for \$4.4 billion for Afghanistan itself for 2022," Griffiths said. "This is the

largest ever appeal for a single country for humanitarian assistance and it is three times the amount needed, and actually fundraised in 2021."

The scale of need is already enormous, both UN officials stressed, warning that if insufficient action is taken now to support the Afghanistan and regional response plans, "next year we'll be asking for \$10 billion".

Griffiths added: "This is a stop-gap, an absolutely essential stop-gap measure that we are putting in front of the international community today. Without this being funded, there won't be a future, we need this to be done, otherwise there will be outflow, there will be suffering." Rejecting questions that the funding would be used to support the Taliban's grip on de facto government, Griffiths insisted that it would go directly into the pockets of "nurses and health officials in the field" so that these services can continue, not as support for State structures.

UN aid agencies describe Afghani-

stan's plight as one of the world's most rapidly growing humanitarian crises.

According to UN humanitarian coordination office OCHA, half the population now faces acute hunger, over nine million people have been displaced and millions of children are out of school. Asked to describe what might happen if sufficient support was not forthcoming, the UN emergency relief chief replied that he was particularly concerned for one million children now facing severe acute malnutrition. "A million children - figures are so hard to grasp when they're this kind of size, but a million children at risk of that kind of malnutrition if these things don't happen, is a shocking one."

But humanitarian agencies and their partners who will receive the requested funding directly can only do so much, Griffiths explained, before reiterating his support for the 22 December UN Security Council resolution that cleared the way for aid to reach Afghans, while preventing funds from

falling into the hands of the Taliban.

"Humanitarian agencies inside Afghanistan can only operate if there's cash in the economy which can be used to pay officials, salaries, costs, fuel and so forth," he said. "So, liquidity in its first phase is a humanitarian issue, it's not just a bigger economic issue."

He added: "My message is urgent: don't shut the door on the people of Afghanistan. Humanitarian partners are on the ground, and they are delivering, despite the challenges. Help us scale up and stave off wide-spread hunger, disease, malnutrition and ultimately death by supporting the humanitarian plans we are launching today."

Highlighting the need to avoid a wider regional crisis emanating from Afghanistan, UNHCR chief Grandi, insisted that what was needed most, was "to stabilize the situation inside Afghanistan, including that of displaced people who are displaced inside their country. Also, to prevent a larger refugee crisis, a larger crisis of external displacement."