



Islamabad POST

Friday, January 14, 2022

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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Erdogan slams EU but says accession Turkey's priority

Detailed News On Page-06

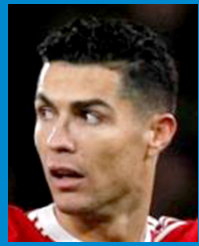
No Ukraine talks under pressure from Russia

Detailed News On Page-08



Man United must finish in top three

Detailed News On Page-06



State Banks's Autonomy Approved

'Mini-Budget' passed amid Opp. ruckus

Government decided to withdraw proposal to impose additional taxes on formula milk, bread, laptops etc.; says Opposition's protest baseless

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly on Thursday passed the supplementary finance bill – termed by the Opposition as a “mini-budget” – with a majority vote, giving effect to new tax measures in an ambitious bid to achieve a tax target of Rs5.8 trillion as per the requirement of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

The approval of the supplementary finance bill was necessary to ensure Pakistan's sixth review of the \$6 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF) gets cleared by the IMF's Executive Board which is scheduled to meet later this month to decide the disbursement of the \$1-billion tranche. Days after Federal Minister for Finance Shaukat Tarin introduced two bills in the assembly to give effect to the Rs343 billion mini-budget and granted autonomy to the central bank, the NA approved the bills amid a ruckus created by the Opposition in an hours-long

Opposition demands public opinion on mini-budget

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: The Opposition on Thursday demanded the government to circulate the copy of Finance (Supplementary) Bill, 2021 for the purpose of eliciting opinion on it. PPPP lawmaker Shazia Mari moved an amendment by citing Rule 124 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the National Assembly, 2007 and demanded to circulate the bill related to the mini-budget. She said that the public should be given the right to decide about the bill and it should be circulated for eliciting opinion. Another PPPP lawmaker

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan and government lawmakers attending the National Assembly session. – DNA

US envoy calls on Army Chief

Angela Aggeler lauds role of armed forces

DNA

RAWALPINDI: The Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa on Thursday met with US Charge d' Affairs to Pakistan Angela Aggeler at the General Head Quarters (GHQ) to discuss the current situation in Afghanistan, a statement by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said. According to the military's media wing, the meeting discussed “matters of mutual interest, regional security situation including Afghanistan and bilateral cooperation in various fields”. Highlighting the issue of the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, the COAS reiterated the need for global convergence to address the evolving situation in the country. The visiting dignitary appreciated Pakistan's role and efforts in the Afghan situation to maintain regional peace and stability.

PM to attend Olympics opening ceremony

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan will attend the opening ceremony of the Winter Olympics as he will visit China from February 3-5, Foreign Office confirmed Thursday. Ministry of Foreign Affairs Spokesperson Asim Iftikhar Ahmed, addressing a weekly press briefing, said during the prime minister's visit, officials of Islamabad and Beijing would discuss the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), among other matters. The Pakistani prime minister's presence will be of great significance as some major western countries have decided on the diplomatic boycott of the mega event, set to begin on February 4.

Pak lauds joint P5 anti-nukes declaration

As a responsible nuclear weapons State, Pakistan supports the objectives of global nuclear disarmament

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: “This understanding among the permanent members of the UN Security Council can pave the way for concrete measures for strategic stability at the global and regional levels,” the Foreign Office spokesperson said in a statement. He said as a responsible nuclear weapons state, Pakistan supported the objectives of global and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, in line with the stipulations of the First Special Session on Disarmament of the UN General Assembly (SSOD-I) – with equal and undiminished security being the defining consideration. The spokesperson said the P-5

Continued on Page 06

Pakistan rejects Indian Army Chief's claims

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan categorically rejects the Indian Army Chief's fallacious comments made at a press conference, insinuating the presence of so-called “launch pads” and “training” camps across the Line of Control (LoC). There is nothing new about the Indian General's unfounded allegations, as these are a part of the malicious anti-Pakistan propaganda being pedaled by the BJP-RSS

Continued on Page 06

HRW: West needs to 'do better' against autocrats

WEB DESK

BERLIN: Democratic leaders have failed in addressing serious global challenges, such as climate change and the COVID-19 pandemic, Human Rights Watch said in a report published Thursday. HRW Executive Director Kenneth Roth said the leaders in Western democracies have often been too mired in partisan battles and short-term preoccupations to deal with the problems effectively. “If democracies are to prevail in the global contest with autocracy, their leaders must do more than spotlight the autocrats' inevitable shortcomings,” Roth wrote in the report's introductory essay. “They need to make a stronger, positive

case for democratic rule.” The pandemic also put the spotlight on the self-serving tendencies of autocrats, many of whom spent months downplaying the health crisis, Roth said. “Autocrats claim to deliver better results than democrats, but they usually deliver mainly for themselves,” the HRW chief said. They have gone from subtly manipulating elections for the preservation of their power to overt electoral charades that guarantee their desired results, he wrote. “What is left after such blatant undermining of elections is no longer managed democracy but ‘zombie democracy’—the walking dead of democracy, a charade that has no pretense of a free and fair contest,” the rights activist added.

Briefs

Justice Umar Ata Bandial next CJP

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Supreme Court Justice Umar Ata Bandial will take oath as Pakistan's 28th chief justice on February 2, replacing incumbent CJP Justice Gulzar Ahmed, as the President formally appointed him for the post. The change will take place on the principle of seniority in which the puisne judge becomes the chief justice. The Ministry of Law and Justice secretary had sent the summary to President Arif Alvi to appoint Justice Bandial as the next CJP. Justice Bandial will continue as the chief justice till his retirement on September 18, 2023, and will hold the position for some 19 months.

Journalists' protection top priority

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain on Thursday said the government fully believed in freedom of expression. In a congratulatory message to the newly elected office bearers of Lahore Press Club, he said along with freedom of expression, there was a need to promote responsible journalism in the country. The protection of working journalists has been the top priority of the government, said Chaudhry Fawad. PTI, he said, was committed to providing healthcare facilities to journalists. The minister said Sehat Insaf cards will be provided to the journalist community on priority basis. “We will continue to make every effort to solve the collective and individual problems of journalists”, said Chaudhry Fawad.

Taliban release first budget since takeover

The budget of 53.9 bn afghanis (\$508 mn) approved will cover the first quarter of 2022

NEWS DESK

KABUL: The Taliban said Thursday they have approved their first budget for Afghanistan since the they returned to power in August, with no mention of foreign aid. International assistance represented 40 percent of Afghanistan's GDP and made up 80 percent of its budget when the former US-backed government was in control. When it crumbled in August and the Taliban took command, Western powers froze billions of dollars in aid and assets in what the United Nations described as an “unprecedented fiscal shock”.

Continued on Page 06

WFP warns of 'tsunami of hunger'

BRUSSELS: Afghanistan is facing a “tsunami of hunger” because of a shortage of funds that's needed to keep the supply of food intact as country teeters on the edge of economic run with more than half of the population struggling to eat this winter, a senior official with the United Nations World Food Program said on

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Asif Zardari attending National Assembly session. – DNA

Russia-led troops begin pullback from Kazakhstan

“We must come home. We've completed our mission,” Putin told Shoigu during their meeting

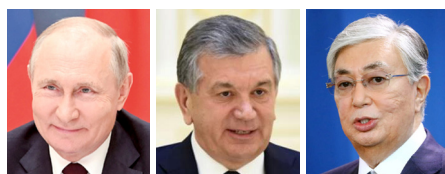
AGENCIES

ALMATY: Russian troops were loading onto planes taking-off from Kazakhstan Thursday after President Vladimir Putin said their mission to quell protests that turned into unprecedented violence in the Central Asian country had ended. The decision to dispatch troops was a first for the Moscow-led Collective Security Treaty Organisation (CSTO), an alliance of ex-Soviet states often touted by Russia as a NATO equivalent, following an urgent plea from Kazakhstan's leadership. At a ceremony marking the end of the mission, soldiers lined up as anthems from each of the six member countries were played before official speeches. “The peacekeeping operation is over,” said Russian General Andrei Serdyukov, commander of the contingent that included troops from Belarus, Armenia, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu

told Putin the pullout would be completed by Wednesday next week, several days ahead of a January 22 deadline set by the alliance to complete the withdrawal. “We must come home. We've completed our mission,” Putin told Shoigu during their meeting. The plea from Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, during the height of the unrest, for Moscow to intervene was a turning point of the protests. The move sparked concerns that Moscow would leverage the mission to shore up influence in Kazakhstan and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken earlier warned that “once Russians are in your house, it's sometimes very difficult to get them to leave”. During his first visit to Kazakhstan's main city Almaty on Wednesday – where life has been gradually returning to normal – Tokayev praised the “psychological importance” of the CSTO mission. The financial hub of 1.8 million people was devastated during clashes between security forces and government opponents that gave way to a spree of looting.

Putin discusses situation with Kazakh, Uzbek presidents

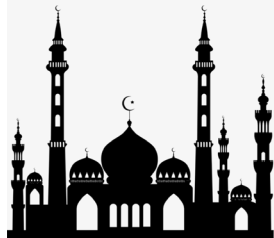
MOSCOW: The Russian president on Thursday discussed the situation in Kazakhstan and a gradual withdrawal of peacekeepers with his Kazakh and Uzbek counterparts, the Kremlin said. In a phone call, Kazakhstan President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev briefed Vladimir Putin on the measures for restoration of order in Kazakhstan, and the effective actions of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) peacekeeping force, a statement said. “He (Tokayev) extended special gratitude for the help and support of the Russian Federation, Kazakhstan's strategic partner and ally in the CSTO.” In another phone call, Putin and Uzbek leader Shavkat Mirziyoyev discussed stabilization in Kazakhstan and bilateral projects. Both Putin and Mirziyoyev praised “resolute and consistent actions of the Kazakh leadership” as well as the “timely and effective assistance through the CSTO” that led to an early settlement of the crisis in Kazakhstan. – DNA



One strategic complex the troop contingent was guarding was Almaty airport, which was reportedly seized by government opponents last week. The airport's press service said that it was handling both domestic and international flights again on Thursday. Last week's violence erupted on the back of rallies over a rise in fuel prices and against a background of deteriorating living standards and endemic corruption. Tokayev has framed the clashes as a coup attempt assisted by local and international terrorists and said that economic damage from the violence “could total \$2-3 billion”. Putin hinted that the violence was reminiscent of “colour revolutions” instigated with foreign help and at least 12,000 people have been detained, police said, with at least three journalists reportedly under arrest. AFP correspondents in Almaty earlier Thursday witnessed a funeral for a serviceman killed during the clashes, which was attended by dozens of soldiers and featured sombre military music.

PID (I) No. 4780/21

SERVICES



Namaz Timings	
Fajr.....	05:45 am
Zohr.....	12:16 pm
Asr.....	03:42 pm
Maghrib.....	05:20 pm
Isha.....	06:48 pm



Hotels & Restaurants

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



Airlines

Turkish Airlines.....	8494949
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Emergency

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

Islamabad Metropolitan

Corporation.....	9209224
Potohar Town.....	9209224
RawalTown.....	5773343

Wasa Water Tank

Rawalpindi.....	0331-5022125
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President for enhanced trade with South Korea and Algeria

The President made these remarks while talking to the Ambassador-designate of Pakistan to Republic of Korea, Mr Nabeel Munir, who called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr



MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has said that Pakistan highly values its relationship with the Republic of Korea and wants to further enhance collaborations for promoting political, economic, people-to-people, and cultural relations. He emphasized the need for proactive measures to increase the quantum of trade between the two countries.

The President made these remarks while talking to the Ambassador-designate of Pakistan to the Republic of Korea, Mr Nabeel Munir, who called on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. Talking to the Ambassador-designate, the President highlighted that Pakistan was a key investment destination for foreign investors in view of its investor-friendly policies and improved business environment. He asked the

Ambassador to urge Korean investors to invest in different sectors of the Pakistani economy, particularly in the Special Economic Zones and CPEC projects. He said that both countries had great scope for promoting religious tourism as Pakistan possessed a number of historic Buddhist religious sites and religious tourists from Korea needed to be encouraged to visit Pakistan. The President appreci-

ated the assistance and cooperation extended by the EXIM Bank of South Korea for initiating work on the construction and establishment of the Information Technology Park, at the cost of USD 88.80 million, in Islamabad. He welcomed the recent launch of the Samsung Mobile Phones Manufacturing Unit in Pakistan, being established in Karachi. The President also

encourage the exchanges of Parliamentary Friendship Groups of the two countries to further boost bilateral cooperation. Later, the Ambassador-designate of Pakistan to Algeria, Dr Muhammad Tariq, also called on the President. The President said that Pakistan and Algeria enjoyed cordial relations based on a common religion and cultural values. The President stated that Pakistan had

a vibrant IT sector and underscored the need for increasing collaboration between the two countries in the field of IT. He asked the ambassador to work for further promoting bilateral relations by arranging the exchange of Parliamentary and Chamber of Commerce delegations between the two countries. He also proposed to set up a Joint Business Council to improve bilateral trade between Pakistan and Algeria.

Imam for transforming agri-sector into vibrant, resilient

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister of National Food Security and Research Syed Fakhar Imam on Thursday urged the need to transform agriculture sector into vibrant and resilient scale to withstand the impacts of climate change and protect the livelihood. Addressing the seventh D-8 Agricultural Ministerial Meeting on "Agriculture and Food Security: Promoting Climate Smart Agriculture, Imam said that agro-industries and its contributions to the global greenhouse gas emissions were at the minimum possible levels. The meeting was also attended by ministers of ag-

riculture, Live stocks, rural development and heads of delegation of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Arab Republic of Egypt, Republic of Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Malaysia, Federal Republic of Nigeria and the Republic of Turkey. Fakhar Imam said that this conference has provided a platform, where we can make commitment to eradicate poverty, end hunger, combat climate change, and address the challenge of reducing food loss and waste. Fakhar said climate change has become the most significant challenge to achieve sustainable development goals and it threatens to drag millions of people into never-ending poverty food insecurity. Agriculture is

the foundation of food security in the developing world, he said adding that it will not only provide essential food for human consumption but also provide raw materials for industry and value-added products for both domestic consumption and international markets. He said that food food Security ministry through Pakistan Agricultural Research Council has done some pioneer work regarding research and development of Climate Smart Agriculture and urge that PARC along with suitable organizations from other countries should be made part of this initiative right from the planning stage. The minister said that due to the excellent ag-

ricultural policies of the government; despite COVID pandemic, the production of wheat, rice, maize, sugarcane, potato, onion and groundnut has increased to a record level. This year has been remarkable for agriculture sector of Pakistan, and our economy got a boost with the record agricultural production, indicating a lesser reliance on food imports in 2021-22. Additionally, due to our favorable policies and interventions, the exports of agro-commodities have also increased significantly, including mango by 28.6%, citrus 31.25% and potatoes 28%. Fakhar said that he was very pleased to know that the D-8 Secretariat has taken this initiative at the right time.

22 suspects held during search operation

IG Islamabad M Ahsan Younas said that the purpose of the search operation was to tighten the noose around the criminals

ISLAMABAD: As many as 22 suspects were taken into custody by the capital police during a massive search and comping operation conducted in limits of police station Noon, said a police spokesman on Thursday. According to details, a search operation was conducted in and around Jhangi Syedan on the direction of IG Islamabad Muhammad Ahsan Younas, in which more than 90 officials participated under the supervision of SP Industrial Area Saud Khan. During the search operation 22 suspects were shifted to police station for verification while cache of weapons were also recovered. Two drug peddlers were also arrested during the search operation from which 2410 grams hashish was recovered.Cases were registered against the drug peddlers and carrying illegal weapons. During the search operation, 200 houses and 200 persons were searched. IG Islamabad Muhammad Ahsan Younas said that the purpose of the search operation was to tighten the noose around the criminals. Search operations are being carried out against criminal elements in different areas of the city. – DNA

PILDAT releases details of 39th and 316th Senate session

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The 15th National Assembly of Pakistan held 6 sittings during 39th session held from December 22-31, 2021. These sittings were held on December 22, December 24, December 27, December 29, December 30, December 31. During the 39th session, the National Assembly met for only 3 hours and 58 minutes with an average time of 39 minutes per sitting. The longest sitting lasted for 1 hour and 3 minutes held on December 30, 2021 while the shortest sitting was held only for 12 minutes on December 31, 2021. All 6 sittings were held with an average delay of 43 minutes per sitting. Average 81.02% agenda items were left over during 39th session of the National Assembly. The maximum agenda items, i.e., 96.97% were left over on December 24, 2021 while the minimum agenda items left over (27.78%) were on December 30. During the 39th session of the National Assembly, 2 Government bills were introduced while no Private Member's Bill was intro-

duced. No bill was passed during this session and only one bill was referred to the committee. No new ordinance was laid in the National Assembly and 8 Ordinances were extended during the session. Out of 6 sittings held during 39th session, quorum was pointed out 4 times in 4 sittings (66.67%). During the whole session, 3 or 50% sittings were adjourned due to quorum pointed out. Both Prime Minister and Leader of the Opposition did not attend any sitting during the 39th session. As far as the attendance of MNAs is concerned, average attendance of MNAs during the session was 63.16% (216 MNAs present per sitting). Mr. Asad Mahmood, MNA, (NA-37 Tank, KP, MMAF) was the most vocal MNA during 39th session of the National Assembly. He spoke for a total of 15 minutes and 20 seconds. He was followed by Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, MNA (NA-58 Rawalpindi-II, Punjab, PPPF) who spoke for almost 13 minutes. The Senate of Pakistan held 4 sittings during 316th session held from December 22-29, 2021.

Sale, production of cars up by over 71%

ISLAMABAD: The sale and production of cars witnessed an increase of 71.22 and 72.85 percent respectively during the first half of current financial year 2021-22 as compared to corresponding period of last year. During the July-December 2021-22, as many as 114,765 cars were sold against the sale of 67,026 units while the production of cars increased from 62,041 units to 107,242 units, showing growth of 71.22 and 72.85 percent respectively, according to Pakistan Automobile Manufacturing Association (PAMA). Among cars, the sale of Honda cars increased by 47.34 percent from 11,958 units during last year to 17,620 units during current year while Toyota Co-

rolla cars sale also grew by 88.71 percent from 8,427 units to 15,903 units. The sale of Suzuki Swift went down from 998 units to 497 units, showing decreased of 50.20 percent whereas the sale of Suzuki Bolan increased to 6,241 units from 3,582 units. The sale of Toyota Yaris went up from 12,845 units to 13,223 units, witnessing an increase of 2.94 percent while the sale of Suzuki Cultus also increase to 14,516 units from 7,517 during last year. Meanwhile, the sale of Suzuki Wagon-R also rose to 11,629 units from 5,478 units whereas the sale of Suzuki Alto witnessed Sharp increase of 99.66 percent from 16,221 units against 32,388 units. On the other hand, the produc-

tion of Honda cars went up by 49.49 percent from 11,697 units to 17,487 units during the months under review whereas the production of Toyota Corolla cars also increased by 86.20 percent from 8,440 units to 15,716 units. The production of Suzuki Swift however decreased from 712 units to 385 units, showing decline of 45.92 percent whereas the production of Toyota Yaris also dipped from 12,754 units to 12,335 units, it added. The production of Suzuki Cultus increased to 12,895 units during the months under review from 7,582 units while the production of Suzuki Wagon-R also increased to 10,418 units this year from 4,455 units during last year, it added. – DNA



ISLAMABAD: Visitors taking interest in pictures during an exhibition at PNCA. – DNA

"Timeless Relics" goes on display at NAG

This beautiful exhibition which is an amalgamation of timeless imagery creatively portrayed on canvas. This show was particularly very important because Perveen Khan presented her works for the very first time at the PNCA. Perveen Khan did her BFA from Sir JJs school of Arts and was born in Bombay

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan National Council of the Arts present a one-day oil painting workshop and a solo art exhibition titled "Timeless Relics" by Perveen Khan, a very senior master artist of Pakistan. The show was inaugurated by Ayub jamali director PNCA. The Oil painting workshop was a

huge success as more than 30 individuals of different age groups participated to learn techniques of knife painting from the legendary artist, Perveen Khan. Each participant received a certificate of participation from PNCA. This beautiful exhibition which is an amalgamation of timeless imagery creatively portrayed on canvas. This show was particularly very important because

Perveen Khan presented her works for the very first time at the PNCA. Perveen Khan did her BFA from Sir JJs school of Arts and was born in Bombay. Whilst, still a student she developed a liking for a palette knife as she was greatly influenced by the impressionists and their style of painting. She migrated to Pakistan in 1964, after getting married. She entered an arts com-

petition in which her painting won the first prize, the second went to Khalid Lateef and the third went to Ghulam Rasool the famous painter who passed away a few years ago.For years, she attended the weekly classes at the old Alhambra, on Mall Road. There, she was taught by Colin David, Naseem Kazi and Khalid Iqbal. Her first solo exhibition held in Lahore in 1968 and her sec-

ond in Karachi in 1970 and her journey from there has been unstoppable. PNCA is dedicated to promote Pakistani Art on Local and National scale. The council is also committed to promote significant aspects of the country and encourages community participation in gallery activities, and sustainable local arts industry. The Exhibition will be on display till 16th January,2022.

ITP organizes road safety workshop

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) arranged two-day road safety workshop at Competition Commission, Ministry of Finance here Thursday to acquaint the staff with traffic laws. The ITP has been arranging lectures at various educational and government institutions, aiming to inculcate traffic sense among the people. The ITP Education Team delivered lecture on Road Safety Tips. Director General Admin and Finance from Ministry of Finance Shehzad Hussain, Director HR Maria Usman, Deputy Director HR Zareen Rashid were also present on the occasion. At the concluding ceremony, SSP (Traffic) Rai Mazhar Iqbal said the aim of holding such programs was to acquaint the people with traffic laws while inculcating better traffic sense among them. The SSP (Traffic) said that ITP was doing its utmost effort to maintain traffic discipline in the city while conducting inspection through radars, to control over-speeding practices. In this regard he said, the ITP has arranged several workshops and programs in various educational and government institutions and would continue to deliver lectures there in future as well. This exercise would prove helpful in providing disciplined traffic system to the masses, he added. – APP

ANF recovers over 31kg drugs; two arrests

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) on Thursday conducted an operation near Islamabad Motorway Toll Plaza and seized over 31 kg drugs and arrested two accused including a woman. According to an ANF spokesman, ANF Rawalpindi and ANF Intelligence conducted a joint operation and recovered 21.6 kg opium and 9.6 kg hashish from a Toyota Corolla car which was intercepted near Islamabad Motorway Toll Plaza. ANF arrested Amir Ali resident of Hafizabad and a woman identified as Gulshan Kossar. Both the accused were shifted to ANF police station while further investigation is underway. – APP

Cold, dry weather likely in most parts of country

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) Thursday forecast cold and dry weather for most parts of the country during next 24 hours. Very cold or partly cloudy is expected in upper areas of the country. According to the synoptic situation, continental air was prevailing over most parts of the country. Dense fog is likely to prevail in upper Sindh, plain areas of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. During the last 24 hours, cold and dry weather prevailed over most parts of the country, while very cold in hilly areas. The lowest minimum temperatures recorded during the last 24 hours were Leh -16 C, Astore -12, Gupis -10, Ziarat -09, Skardu -07, Pulwama, Shopian, Baramulla -06, Hunza -05, Bagrote -04, Malam Jabba, Quetta, Srinagar, Anantnag, Drosch -03, Mir Khani, Parachinar -02, Rawalakot and Murree -01 C. – APP

Women held involved in drug supplying

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Golra police has booked six female drug peddlers and seized narcotics from their possession, said a police spokesman on Thursday. He said the department intensified operation against the drug mafia especially in slum areas in the federal capital, following directions of IGP Muhammad Ahsan Younas. A special campaign underway to make Islamabad "drug-free" city and strict action was being ensured against those involved in drug pushing activities or using drugs. "We are committed to eliminate the drug menace from the city and no one would be allowed to ruin the future of our young generation" he quoted IGP as saying. – APP

Briefs

Traffic mess
on roads
irks citizens

RAWALPINDI: Heavy traffic jam on roads especially during peak hours is creating problems for the citizen and the authorities concerned of City Traffic Police have been urged to take solid steps to ensure smooth flow of traffic to provide relief to the motorists. The citizens said that they face inconvenience when they reach late at their destinations, as traffic is not regulated properly by the traffic wardens on different routes.

Talking about traffic jam in the city, people belonging to different walks of life said, the Benazir Bhutto Road, Raja Bazaar Road, Bank Road, BaniChowk, Saidpur Road, Pirwadhai Road, TenchBhatta and 22 Number Chungi are main arteries of the city but due to traffic jam citizens are suffering a lot. The traffic wardens did not perform their duties properly in several chowks, said a motorist. The citizens urged the authorities concerned that strict checking of traffic rules violations should be ordered. The commuters face traffic problems on the congested Murree Road, especially from MareerChowk to ChandniChowk, Bani road, TenchBhatta and Pin-dora road due to heavy traffic load, traffic mismanagement and rules violations. A motorist while underlining the need for collective efforts to resolve the traffic issues said strict adherence to the traffic rules could resolve the problem. — APP

Finance bill
aimed at
documenting
economy

ISLAMABAD: Spokesperson to Minister of Finance, MuzammilAslam Thursday said that supplementary finance bill was aimed at documenting the national economy, capturing the tax value chain and enhancing taxpayers penetration through simplification of revenue system for broadening of the tax base. Addressing a press conference along with Adviser to Prime Minister on Parliamentary Affairs Dr Babar Awan, Muzammil said that other objective of the reform measures were to discourage the rent-seeking culture, taxing the rich and transferring it to improve the living standards of under-privileged segments of the society. He termed the reform measures introduced in the money bill as historic, which would have not any negative impact on common people in the country, adding that it would help in documentation of economy and overcome the tax evasion. He said that the country was witnessing Rs1,800 billion sales annually, out of which only Rs250 to Rs300 were registered with the revenue collecting authorities whereas the remaining were still undocumented. — APP

Rawalpindi's
corona
positivity rate
increases

RAWALPINDI: As many as 109 more were tested positive of deadly coronavirus, raising the tally of confirmed cases to 39,917 in the district, while the positivity rate was recorded at 6.02 per cent during the last 24 hours in the district. As per the latest data released by the District Health Authority on Thursday, among the new cases, 38 belonging to the Rawalpindi Cantonment area, 25 from Pothohar town, 23 from Rawal town, eight from KalarSye-da, seven from Kahutta, four from Taxila, three from Gujar Khan while one patient arrived from Islamabad. "Presently 22 confirmed patients were admitted to three city facilities, counting nine in the Fauji foundation hospital, eight in Institute of Urology and five in the Benazir Bhutto Hospital," the report said. It updated that 38,362 patients had been discharged after recovery, 35,307 with Rawalpindi and 3048 from outside districts. Three hundred and thirty-one were quarantined, including 309 at homes and 22 in isolation. The report further updated that 4,732,128 people, including 44,560 health workers, had jabbed themselves against the lethal coronavirus so far. — APP

ICCI for empowerment of
women to achieve growth

Muhammad Shakeel Munir, President, ICCI while addressing the last day of Roundtable Conference on Increased Economic Participation of Women Workers

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The government should take policy measures to increase the economic empowerment of women that would set the direction towards gender equality, poverty eradication, inclusive economic growth and enable the country to achieve sustainable development.

This was said by Muhammad ShakeelMunir, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) while addressing the last day of Roundtable Conference on Increased Economic Participation of Women Workers and GSP Plus Status organized by ICCI in collaboration with Trust for Democratic Education & Accountability and Women Workers Alliance. Muhammad ShakeelMunir said that women were half



of our total population and bringing more women in the mainstream of economy by increasing their share in the workforce was very important for the better future of the country. He said that women participation in the workforce

in Pakistan was reportedly less than 25 percent while it was over 50 percent in many countries. He stressed that the government should take policy measures to increase women participation in the workforce that would have a positive impact on the

economy. He said that the women should be provided easy access to education, finance and transportation that would increase their independence and economic empowerment. He lauded the efforts of Women Workers Alliance with employers,

line departments and the parliament for creating more safe workplaces for women. He assured that ICCI would fully cooperate with the Women Workers Alliance to address the issues of women workers and improve their economic participa-

tion. He hoped that the collaboration between the Women Workers Alliance and ICCI would help to further strengthen Pakistan's position in the EU market under the GSP Plus regime. Ms. Shandana Gulzar Khan, Chairperson of the Commonwealth Women Parliamentarians said that Pakistan was not taking full benefit of zero duty tariff lines under EU's GSP Plus for exports and stressed that more efforts should be made to increase exports under this facility that would also create new opportunities for women economic empowerment. Ms. Aliya Hamza Malik Parliamentary Secretary Commerce said that the government was working on new laws to improve the conditions for working women and these legislative measures would provide them better protection at workplaces.

CG COMSTECH calls on
Secretary General OIC

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator General COMSTECH, H. E. Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, called on Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), H.E. Mr. HisseinBarahimTaha, at OIC General Secretariat, in Jeddah, Kingdom of Saudi

Arabia on Wednesday. Prof. Choudhary briefed the Secretary General OIC about the preparations for the 31st Executive Committee Meeting of COMSTECH, which is being held on January 27, 2022, in Islamabad, Pakistan, under the Chair of H.E. Dr. ArifAlvi, President, Islamic Republic of Pakistan/ Chairman COMSTECH.

Secretary General OIC conveyed his appreciation to the Government of Pakistan for generously supporting OIC's Ministerial Standing Committee for Scientific and Technological Cooperation (COMSTECH). He assured his complete patronage to COMSTECH which is among the key OIC institutions.

AIOU establishes
prospectus sale
points at UC level

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) is commencing admissions in the first phase of spring 2022 semester from January 15, 2022 and established prospectus sale points at union council level.

After achieving the objective of digital transformation of all key academic, administrative and financial operations of the university, all admission related processes are carried out online. However, upon special directives of Prof Dr Zia Ul-Qayyum, admission application forms for matriculation, intermediate and I.Com can be submitted manually as well as via online mode. In case of online submission of admission application form, the candidates are not required to dispatch printed application form to the university. It is pertinent to mention here that admission in BS/ MSc (face to face), M.Phil and PhD programs can only be applied via online system. In order to facilitate the students, prospectus sale points have been established at the union council level throughout the country. The information related to prospectus sale points will be uploaded on the university website (www.aiou.edu.pk) on January 15 besides admission application forms and of all programs. students facilities have been established at regional centers to provide assistance to the students in the online admission application form. — DN

Training
of QEC
directors
concludes

ISLAMABAD: Three days meeting and training for directors Quality Enhancement Cells (QECs) of 22 universities of Pakistan was concluded here at the National University of Modern Languages (NUML). Three days long training was organized by Quality Assurance Agency (QAA), Higher Education Commission (HEC). Director QAA HEC Nasir Shah and director Quality Enhancement Cell NUML Dr. KhushbaktHina were the chief organizers of the event.

It was IQA training programme for Directors' QECs for the universities. For this purpose, 22 university across Pakistan were invited. For 3 days meeting and training inaugural session, the Chief Guest Dr. ShaistaSohail, Executive Director, Higher Education Commission received by Major General Muhammad Jaffar, Rector NUML, and Director General NUML Brig Syed Nadir Ali.

The closing ceremony was graced by Prof. Meritorious Dr. Javeid Iqbal, Member of Commission. At the end, certificates were presented among the organizers and participants by Prof. Meritorious Dr. Javeid Iqbal and DG NUML. — APP

BEOE
launches
online foreign
jobs portal

ISLAMABAD: Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment (BEOE), Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (OP&HRD), has launched an online foreign jobs portal www.beoe.gov.pk/foreign-jobs, to facilitate overseas job seekers. An official source told APP here on Thursday that the decision has been taken for the interest of overseas job seekers to reduce the load of unemployment in the country.

To a question, he said that job seekers could easily search details of overseas job opportunities with Licensed Overseas Employment Promoters as some mafias were looting the innocent youth in the name of jobs in foreign countries. He said that recently, the Ambassador of Kuwait had hold a meeting with Advisor to the Prime Minister on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (OP&HRD) Muhammad AyubAfridi and discussed bilateral relations and matters of mutual interests.

The Advisor has appreciated the step of Kuwaiti government for opening work visa for Pakistanis. He asked the Ambassador to enhance the job quota for Pakistanis youth as Pakistan has potential manpower to meet Kuwaiti market requirements.

They reiterated for close coordination between relevant official of both countries regarding data sharing of migrant workers in order to ensure protection of their rights. — APP

PML-N's
newly elected
MNA Sahista
takes oath

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Shaista Pervaiz Malik of the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) on Thursday took oath as Member of the National Assembly (MNA), who was elected from NA-133 constituency in by polls last month. Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser administered oath and congratulated Shaista Pervaiz on becoming part of the Parliament.

Lawmakers also congratulated Shaista Pervaiz Malik by thumping desks. Later, she signed the roll. The seat in NA-133 had fallen vacant due to the death of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) MNA Pervaiz Malik on October 11, 2021.

Shaista Pervaiz thanked the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leadership for reposing confidence in her and giving the opportunity to serve the public and the country. She vowed to work for welfare and progress of the country, setting aside all political differences.

Cleanliness
drive
underway
in Murree

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi Waste Management Company (RWMC) cleanliness drive was in full swing in Tehsil Murree while heavy machinery and excavators were being used to remove snow and rubbish from the roads. According to RWMC Spokesman, the company had also disposed of hundreds of tons of garbage from the hill station. He said that RWMC Managing Director Awais Manzoor Tarrar had deputed additional staff at all choking points to ensure smooth water drainage to provide maximum facilities to the tourists visiting the hill station. He said that RWMC continued to perform cleaning duties in Murree, and salt was also being sprinkled on the roads to ensure a smooth traffic flow. The spokesman said that to keep the city neat and clean, the sanitary workers had carried cleanliness work in the Rawalpindi city areas despite severe colds and rain. — APP

PPPP, PML-N introduced
majority IMF programs
in Pakistan's history

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Advisor to Prime Minister on Parliamentary Affairs Dr. Babar Awan on Thursday said the previous governments of PPP and PML-N introduced 13 out of 22 programs of International Monetary Fund (IMF) in the history of Pakistan. Talking to media along with spokesperson of Ministry of Finance MuzammilAslam, he said that those criticizing the mini-budget and deal with IMF should review their own performance in past as they approached IMF for 13 out of 22 times in the history of the country. He said that national economy was weakened in past due to personal interests of the former rulers who strengthened their 'personal economy' and damaged the country. The Adviser said that economic team of Prime Minister Imran Khan deserved appreciation over successful negotiations with IMF by keeping national and public interests on priority. He said it was proposed to increase electricity rate at the cost of Rs. 5 per unit but team successfully handled the matter by bringing these rates down to Re 1 and 40 paises. Likewise, he said that tax ratio was also reduced and it was imposed on luxurious items. The Adviser said that PPP in their last tenure made a deal of 10 billion dollars with IMF of which around

eight billion dollars were received. All demands of IMF were accepted by PPP which was criticizing now PTI government over the same demands it accepted. Dr. Babar Awan said government would bring back self-exiled former prime minister Nawaz Sharif to the country as he would never return himself. He said that opposition was scaring due to the determination of the government to bring back Nawaz Sharif. "All means to live abroad have been blocked while routes are open for Nawaz Sharif to go to prison in Pakistan," he added. He said a drama was made in past over the health issue of Nawaz Sharif who was never treated or admitted to hospital in abroad after his departure from Pakistan. The Adviser also criticized the opposition leader in National Assembly Mian Muhammad ShabbazSharif and said that he used to pretend backache during imprisonment but make illogical speeches in the National Assembly for hours. He said that opposition would get nothing through protests as incumbent government led by Prime Minister Imran Khan would complete five years. The opposition, he said, announced long march for seven times but it could not get support from the public. The Adviser said that a legislative proposal — the Islamabad Capital Territory Local Government Ordinance 2021 — would be laid in the National Assembly which was aimed to transfer power at grassroots level.

HEC holds training of English language teachers

The objective of this programme is to train the participants on the newly designed English expository writing courses as part of the Undergraduate Education Policy 2020

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The National Academy of Higher Education (NAHE) of the Higher Education Commission (HEC), held a two-day training programme for English language teachers of different universities and affiliated colleges across the country. The training is a part of an ongoing nine-month certificate course funded by Regional English Language Office (RELO) at the US Embassy, Islamabad in collaboration with University of Oregon. Twenty four teachers took part in the course. They have completed the first two phases of the programme online.

The objective of this programme is to train the participants on the newly designed English expository writing courses as part of the Undergraduate Education



Policy 2020. Under the programme, the courses have been developed by a group of experts from Pakistani and US universities under a collaborative project by

HEC, RELO Pakistan and Pak TESOL. In her opening remarks, Rector NAHE Dr. ShaheenSardar Ali underlined the role of university faculty in preparing the

future generation of the nation. Dr. Kelli Odhuu, the head of RELO, highlighted the significance of professional development and briefed the participants on various opportunities created by RELO for the English language teachers community of the country.

Former Vice Chancellor Fatima Jinnah Women University Dr. Samina Amin Qadir shed light on the history of English language teaching reforms initiated by HEC since 2004-5. She also guided the participants on various aspects of research supervision in the English language.

Programme Specialist Academics, PERU, Dr. ZulfikarGilani shared with the participants the philosophy and approaches of the revamping project. Sharing their views, the participants appreciated the efforts of HEC, RELO and Pak TESOL for the improvement of English language teaching in the country.

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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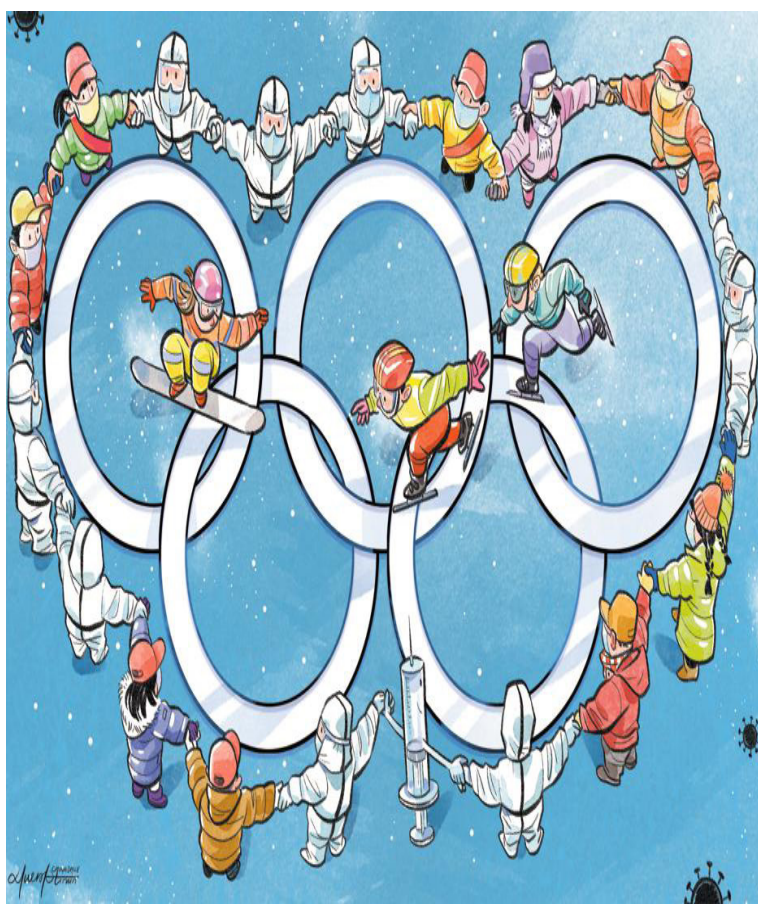
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Justice needed

WHEN the video of four persons holding a couple at gun-point, forcing them to strip and then beating them up went viral on social media in July of last year, the country reacted with outrage against the heinous offence. In the days following this event, it seemed like the victims might get justice and see some accountability against the culprits, as the police arrested the men visibly seen harassing the couple in the video.

The accused were sent to judicial remand after investigation and for a while, it seemed like this might be a rare instance of the culprits in a sexual crimes case actually seeing the punishment of their crimes. Unfortunately, however, it seems that this idealistic hope was misplaced. The victims in the case on Tuesday retracted their statement against the accused including Usman, the main suspect. The couple, in their written affidavit told the trial court that they did not want to pursue the case against the main accused, and the female victim told the judge that she did not go to Adiala Jail and had not taken part in the identification parade, despite the victims having identified three of the suspects in an identification parade held at Adiala Jail in July.

The affidavit of the eyewitness holds serious weight in Pakistan's courts; judging from precedent, it has become very difficult for the accused to be convicted. Eyewitness testimony holds greater weight in the court of law than forensic, video or documentary evidence, so this report will make it difficult to prove that it was indeed the accused who had committed this crime, despite their faces being clearly visible in the video, and other videos uploaded by the accused themselves alluding to the crime and flouting their freedom.

If a case with clear video evidence showing the crime will not prove guilt in law, then it is harrowing to think how the thousands of cases that do not have such strong evidence would fare. The justice system must make an example of this case to set new precedents in evidence law that need catching up with modern times. In a society where victims are so vulnerable to threats, blackmail and social taboos, the reliability of forensic evidence, videos and technology must be trusted to ensure that the accused do not use legal loopholes to escape punishment.

Kazakhstan has lessons for the Gulf

James Dorsey

The Gulf states are likely to find little reassurance in what already is evident with the massing of some 100,000 Russian troops on Ukraine's border

RUSSIA'S intervention in Kazakhstan contains a cautionary message for Gulf foreign ministers visiting Beijing this week. The intervention to stabilize the government of Kazakh President Kassym-Johart Tokayev, following mass protests, cemented Russia's primacy when it comes to security in Central Asia, a swathe of land that is as much Russia's backyard as it is China's. At least 164 people were killed in the protest, thousands wounded, and some 10,000 arrested. Mr. Tokayev described the protests as a foreign-instigated coup attempt involving terrorists.

The intervention reaffirmed a long-standing understanding that Russia, at least for the short-term, shoulders responsibility for security while China focuses on economic development in the region.

"China is happiest when someone else is dealing with Central Asian security questions," noted Central Asia scholar Raffaelo Pantucci. Like in Kazakhstan, "in the immediate fallout from the collapse of the government in Afghanistan, it was not Chinese soldiers or weapons that were rushed to Central Asian borders, but Russian ones." The question ministers of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, and Bahrain and the secretary-general of the Gulf Cooperation Council ought to ask themselves is why

China would wish to adopt a different approach toward security in the Middle East if it is reluctant to play an upfront role in its own backyard. The Gulf ministers may point out that their region is key to China's energy supply and increasingly important for its geopolitical influence. But that does not explain why China played second security fiddle to Russia in Central Asia, a region of equal strategic importance. China's problem and the Gulf's bet have to be that there is no alternative to the United States, the Middle East's current, increasingly unreliable security guarantor, which leaves both with few good choices.

With Russia having neither the apparent will nor the wherewithal to commit to a role in the Middle East similar to that it plays in Central Asia, China may have little choice but to step up to the plate ultimately. As the United States, NATO, and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) this week discuss with Russia the crisis over Ukraine, the Gulf states will likely closely monitor US and European responses to a possible Russian invasion of the East European state or efforts to destabilise it further. The Gulf states are likely to find little reassurance in what already is evident with the massing of some 100,000 Russian troops on Ukraine's border. The US and European response will be limited to economic sanctions against Russia and military support for Ukraine but will stop short of direct military confrontation to reverse any Russian action. Gulf States may be betting on a possible silver lining. China has much at stake in Kazakhstan and Central Asia. It has invested billions of dollars in the region central to its Belt and Road initiative that is designed to tie Eurasia to China through infrastructure, telecommunications, information technology, and energy. Moreover, Central Asia borders on China's strategic but troubled province of Xinjiang, with which it has close ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious ties.

In a rare move, China reportedly offered to send law enforcement and special forces to Kazakhstan, although only after Mr. Tokayev's Russian-backed crackdown had already brought the situation under control. The Gulf States are likely to hope that a greater, albeit gradual and discreet Chinese engagement in Central Asia, where it already before the Kazakh crisis had begun to expand its security presence, will persuade China to be more assertive in protecting its investments, assets, and interests further afield, including in the Middle East. China established its first foreign military base in Djibouti in the Horn of Africa several years ago, just opposite the Gulf.

Like the United States, China could also attempt to improve the Gulf states' ability to defend themselves through enhanced arms sales, joint exercises, and training. Meanwhile, China has already exploited the US reluctance to sell certain weapons systems or to do so only under strict conditions. For example, China has in recent years opened its first overseas weapons facility for the production of drones in Saudi Arabia and is enabling the kingdom to manufacture ballistic missiles. In doing so, China risks fueling a Middle Eastern arms race. Undoubtedly, Chinese engagement will come with strings. Unlike the United States, the Chinese won't make pesty demands related to human and other rights but will want to ensure that Gulf states do not divert from the broad lines of Chinese policy. As a result, the best the Gulf can hope for is that greater Chinese assertiveness will create an environment in which they have margins of manoeuvrability to play one against the other. It's a modus vivendi, but not an ideal one.

—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

Learning to live with COVID-19 will not be easy

Mohamed Chebaro



Johnson and his ministers want us to learn to live with omicron, but what if it does not want to live with us and it mutates again into a more lethal variant?

IT is no secret that everyone is tired of COVID-19 and its constantly evolving and negative developments. The latest such development was what I read this week about a Cypriot scientist discovering a new variant he called the "deltacron," which is apparently a combination of the mutations seen in delta and omicron, although experts have contested the finding and blamed it on laboratory samples becoming contaminated. Regardless of whether this new variant's existence is either confirmed or denied, COVID-19 infections worldwide

topped 300 million this week, according to an AFP count based on official figures, and the real number might be even higher. Keeping this in mind, I am struggling to digest the words of British Prime Minister Boris Johnson that the UK has been making progress against omicron and that he is looking at reducing the isolation period for those infected from seven days to five. Clearly, this has been causing more disruption to the health sector and the economy than a full lockdown due to rising absenteeism across the country, with figures showing that one in every 20 to 25 Britons is infected. This is maybe based on conclusions reached by scientists that, a year ago, one in every 10 cases needed hospitalization, whereas this year it is one in every 50 thanks to the vaccines. But as this omicron variant, we are told, is more prevalent, isn't it likely that it will infect more people and hence cause a higher level of hospital admissions? It seems like this is not being factored in by Johnson, who said that "we have got to make sure that we see off omicron. We are making great progress," even if 18,000 are currently in British hospitals with COVID-19. UK government officials have been boasting that, now that so many of us are vaccinated and boosted, we need to "learn to live with COVID." Education Minister Nadhim Zahawi revealed over the weekend that the country "is witnessing the transition of the virus from pandemic to endemic." One is desperate to believe such statements by Johnson and the ministers who are working to contain the spread of the disease, while also keeping services and the economy ticking over, which — one has to admit — is no

easy task. But many questions spring to mind for people in the UK and all over the world as they are gripped by this crisis. Johnson and his ministers want us to learn to live with omicron, but what if it does not want to live with us and it mutates again into a more lethal variant? Meanwhile, developing countries are not faring any better, as vaccine delivery and administration is lagging way behind the richer nations. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, just one in every 1,000 people has had two shots of vaccine so far. This has led the International Monetary Fund to warn that omicron-related turbulence is yet to hit developing economies. The order of the day globally seems to be don't stay at home and do go to work, even if you are sick. Rich and poor states alike can no longer afford to be generous and shield employees for however many years the COVID-19 emergency lasts. This atmosphere of uncertainty requires global leadership to ensure all countries work in unison and protect the safety of both people and the economy. A lot has been said and done in the past two years, but it has all fallen short of providing a common blueprint to isolate the threat of the virus and reduce the pandemic to epidemic level, which would allow the world to function and return to quasi-normality. Instead, COVID-19 has been added to the long list of permanent adverse factors affecting the world, alongside the climate change crisis, conflicts and wars, and economic worries that continue to shake the stability of state and society. Such risks should be seen as existential threats to us all.

— Courtesy: Arab News

Omicron spreading

FOR the third consecutive day, Pakistan has been reporting a positivity rate of more than three percent and within the last 24 hours, 2233 cases were reported across the country. Given the upwards trajectory the roaring fifth wave is taking, it seems that we are only a few days away from reporting 4000 and then 6000 cases per day unless the government acts immediately and implements smart lockdowns in major hotspots. This is a sad reality that we must come to terms with but as of right now, such stringent measures are needed and time is of the essence.

It is essential to give credit where credit is due in that the government has now successfully inoculated 49 percent of the eligible population of Pakistan. This contributes greatly towards limiting the transmission rates and decreasing the burden onto the hospitals as those who even contract Covid-19 after getting vaccinated often experience milder symptoms. With the government's plan to initiate door-to-door vaccinations, more members of the public who had a tough time accessing clinics and centres will be catered to as well.

At the same time however, there are certain areas within the country that don't seem to be showing any signs of slowing down when it comes to virus transmission. Karachi has been consistently reporting a worrying 20.22 percent positivity rate despite government efforts. Earlier in the month, a 15-day lockdown was imposed in the neighbourhood of Gulshan-e-Iqbal which was reporting high cases. Perhaps a similar policy is what is needed on a national level before matters proceed to get out of hand further.

The Minister for Information and Broadcasting, Fawad Chaudhry, asserted that Pakistan will not undergo another lockdown and that all focus is being placed on vaccinating as many people as possible so that the Omicron wave becomes tolerable. While it is understandable that the economic strain of a lockdown will be immense, we must also understand the growing impact of a raging fifth wave which, if it continues to grow in intensity, will cause more harm by reducing workforce sizes, disrupting national health, challenging our country's building immunity and subjecting us to pressure and restrictions from the international community as well.

What are Iran's stakes in the Kazakhstan crisis?

Giorgio Cafiero

"Iran is siding firmly with the Kazakh govt and against the protesters. The Iranian Foreign Ministry is aligning closely with the views of Russia and China, and their colour revolution narratives resonate within the Iranian foreign policy establishment, especially since the 2009 Green Movement."

WHAT are Iran's stakes in the Kazakhstan crisis?

Tehran is wary of destabilisation in Central Asia, which could pose a threat to its economic and national security. Many world powers have high stakes in the outcome of ongoing unrest in Kazakhstan, an oil-rich state bordering Russia and China with a land mass equivalent to Western Europe. This former Soviet republic maintains an alliance with Moscow and deep economic links to Beijing. Kazakhstan also has important ties to the West, which have helped Nursultan maintain a sense of balance in its foreign policy. Ultimately, the geopolitical ramifications of the crisis in Kazakhstan have yet to be realised. Nonetheless, one country closely monitoring Kazakhstan's tense situation is Iran.

Although Kazakhstan rarely enters discussions about Iranian foreign policy, many analysts overlook the importance of Central Asia to Tehran. Since Kazakhstan's independence in 1991, it has maintained good ties with the Islamic Republic. From energy to trade and culture, bilateral relations have been strong. Over the years, Kazakhstan has served to provide Iran with economic help in the form of oil swap arrangements. The Central Asian nation has been important to Tehran's ability to circumvent Washington's sanctions and other US-backed measures designed to isolate and weaken Iran internationally. "Iran's primary concern in Kazakhstan is avoiding instability," Dr Samuel Ramani, an Associate Fellow at Royal United Services Institution (RUSI), told TRT World: "Since Mohammad Khatami's presidency, Iran has viewed Kazakhstan as an increasingly important trade partner in Central Asia and Kazakhstan continued to engage with Iran economically even during Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's presidency."

Because Tehran's Central Asia policy depends on actual and potential connectivity projects, particularly in energy sectors, deep ties to Kazakhstan advance these Iranians interests. For the Islamic Republic, Kazakhstan's unrest this month is a source of concern. On January 6, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Saeed Khatibzadeh addressed the violence in Kazakhstan, affirming that Tehran is closely observing the country's ongoing unrest and attaching much importance to the Central Asian state's security and stability. He said: "[Iran's government] believes that the wise people and government of the friendly country of Kazakhstan can solve their disputes and problems through dialogue based on national interests and peaceful ways without for-

eign interference." Khatibzadeh added that Tehran wishes that tranquility will soon return to Kazakhstan.

Notably, "foreign interference" is not a reference to this month's deployment of troops from the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) to Kazakhstan. Because Nursultan formally asked Moscow to send armed forces to help quell unrest, Tehran's concerns are not about Russia and the CSTO's current roles in Kazakhstan. In fact, it is fair to conclude that Iran will be closely aligned with the Kremlin in relation to Central Asia's latest crisis.

"Iran's foreign policy interests in Central Asia are best served by continuing to align with Moscow as far as events in Russia's so-called 'near abroad' are concerned. A stance it has largely maintained since the break-up of the Soviet Union," explained Dr Edward Wastnidge, who lectures on international studies and politics at the British Open University, in an interview with TRT World. "Iran sees itself as playing a complementary role to that of Russia and China in the region, and like them it wishes to see a stable Central Asia that doesn't become too closely aligned with Western powers."

Like the Syrian crisis, which Moscow responded to with intense military intervention in 2015, President Vladimir Putin's government depicts Russia's role in Kazakhstan within the framework of its struggle against "international terrorism" and "external forces" that seek to destabilise countries on Russia's borders. The narrative in Moscow is that the crisis in Kazakhstan echoes the spirit of the so-called 'colour revolutions' and are, therefore, foreign attempts to alter the status quo.

Tehran shares Moscow's interests in standing by President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev's government and limiting Western involvement in Kazakhstan. Dr Ramani agrees with this assessment. "Iran is siding firmly with the Kazakh government and against the protesters. The Iranian Foreign Ministry is aligning closely with the views of Russia and China, and their colour revolution narratives resonate within the Iranian foreign policy establishment, especially since the 2009 Green Movement."

Iran is also wary of the perceived US role in destabilising Central Asia, which could pose a threat to its security. He explained: "These conspiracies followed the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, which some in Iran saw as a means of trying to destabilise the region, and fuel support within Iran for the belief that these protests in Kazakhstan are US orchestrated."

The unrest plaguing Kazakhstan will likely lead to Tehran deepening its relationship with Nursultan, both on a bilateral basis and via multilateral institutions such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU), and the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO). At the same time, the current situation in the Central Asian country could easily lead to Iran advancing its interests with Moscow and Beijing vis-a-vis the ongoing nuclear talks in Vienna.

Iran will likely play a lower profile role in Kazakhstan than Türkiye, but will leverage the situation to strengthen its normative bonds with Russia and China, according to Dr Ramani. He explained: "The coincidence in timing between the Kazakhstan [crisis] and Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) negotiations is fortuitous for Iran. Tehran can use its solidarity with Russia and China on Kazakhstan to ensure that they continue backing its positions in the JCPOA talks."

—Courtesy: TRT World

Briefs

Taliban
release first
budget since
takeover

FROM PAGE 01

"For the first time in the last two decades, we made a budget that is not dependent on foreign aid and that is a very big achievement for us," said Taliban finance ministry spokesman Ahmad Wali Haqmal.

The budget of 53.9 billion afghanis (\$508 million) approved on Wednesday will cover the first quarter of 2022 and is almost entirely dedicated to funding government institutions.

Haqmal said state workers, many of whom have not been paid for months, will start receiving salaries by the end of January.

Women staff, who have mostly been blocked from returning to their jobs, will also be paid.

"We count them like they have come back to work. We have not fired them," Haqmal said.

Around 4.7 billion afghanis will be spent on development projects including transport infrastructure.

"It's a small amount but that's what we can do now," Haqmal said.

The Taliban exchequer is funded by "our own resources" including tax, trade and mining revenue, he added.

They are set to announce their first annual budget in March, shifting the fiscal year to match Afghanistan's solar calendar.

Since they took power Western nations have grappled with the task of channelling aid to the nation without financing its new rulers. Meanwhile millions are facing hunger this winter as a cash, fuel and food crisis grips the impoverished country.

Pak lauds
joint P5...

FROM PAGE 01

statement rightly acknowledged the imperative of creating a conducive security environment for meaningful progress on nuclear disarmament. This will include addressing the underlying security concerns of states, pacific settlement of outstanding disputes, and cessation of destabilizing arms build-ups that accentuated asymmetries, he added.

In the context of South Asia, the spokesperson said, Pakistan's proposal for a Strategic Restraint Regime, encompassing nuclear and missile restraint, conventional balance and settlement of disputes, could contribute significantly towards maintaining strategic stability and avoiding military conflict. This will also entail eschewing misplaced notions of space for war in a nuclearized environment, he added.

"Pakistan fully agrees with the need for effective measures by all nuclear powers to guard against any unauthorized or unintended use of nuclear weapons," the spokesperson reiterated.

Pakistan
rejects Indian
Army Chief's
claims

FROM PAGE 01

combine at the helm in India. The Indian government is driven by its belligerent and expansionist agenda embedded in the delusional notion of "Akhand Bharat", which poses a grave threat to regional peace.

The Indian Army Chief has made a desperate attempt at diverting global attention from India's state-terrorism and egregious human rights violations, which continue unabated in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK).

Pakistan calls on India to forthwith halt its tyranny in the IOJK, renounce its campaign of persecution of Kashmiris, and let them exercise their right to self-determination as promised to them under the relevant UN Security Council resolutions.

Pakistan is committed to pursue meaningful dialogue with India for peaceful resolution of all outstanding disputes, including Jammu and Kashmir. The onus is, however, on India to create an enabling environment conducive for dialogue.



LAHORE: CEO Haier Javed Afridi along with others cutting cake during celebration of record the biggest number of 700k units of refrigerators in Pakistan. – DNA

US Consulate, sports team
partners for climate awareness

Legend players Jahangir Khan and Football women Captain Hajra Khan also expressed that to keep Pakistan environmentally safe and clean, use solar energy to meet the objectives and control climate change due to fossils fuel and others

NAZIR SIYAL/DNA

KARACHI: U.S Consulate General Karachi is partners with various national sports personalities to raise awareness and inspire action to combat climate change. This was disclosed by the U.S Consulate General Karachi media spokesman Mr Asad Ali. He told that the Pakistan's Men National Soccer Team Captain Kaleemullah Khan discusses ways to control cli-



mate change in the first video of the 'Climate Change Awareness' campaign. Simultaneously, Legend players Jahangir Khan and Football women Captain Hajra Khan also expressed that to keep Pakistan environmentally safe and clean, use solar energy to meet the objectives and control climate change due to fossils fuel and others. While, legends and National sports team individuals have recorded their messages to Pakistani peoples regarding awareness campaign partner with US consulate Karachi.

Erdogan slams EU but
says accession remains
Turkey's priority

FOREIGN DESK

ANKARA: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan criticized the European Union for "injustices" while highlighting that Turkey's accession continues to be Ankara's priority as he called on the bloc to take a more courageous stance on efforts to improve bilateral ties. Speaking to ambassadors of the bloc in the capital Ankara on Thursday, Erdogan said he has personally witnessed the attempts to block Turkey's bid to join the EU. "Turkey, which is geographically and historically a part of Europe, is committed to its target of becoming a member," the president said, adding that accession is a priority for Ankara, despite all the "injustices."

Erdogan noted that Turkey continues to exert efforts and added that he hopes the bloc bids itself of what he called "strategic blindness" and acts more courageously on developing relations with Ankara.

Highlighting Turkey's critical role as a problem solver in important issues, Erdogan criticized the bloc for embracing a destructive stance rather than dialogue and diplomacy to enhance relations. "They have used the delaying tactic against us in many issues, including the

customs union," the president said, noting that the bloc has ultimately prioritized the interests of some members over the benefit of the EU as a whole. "What really needs to be considered is the fact that the bloc's will has been taken captive by a few states," he said. Without naming any countries, Erdogan said some EU member states need to stop trying to solve their problems with Ankara via the bloc. "The EU needs to prevent attempts to sabotage Turkey-EU relations with the excuse of inter-bloc solidarity," he added.

Turkey-EU relations are marked by disputes on several issues, including tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean. Turkey's role in Syria, the migrant crisis and the stalemate in Turkey's accession process to join the bloc. During a meeting in Brussels on Dec. 10, 2020, EU leaders decided to draw up a list of Turkish targets to sanction. But since then, the rhetoric on all sides has mellowed dramatically as Turkey and the bloc voiced their intent to "turn a new page."

Regarding the migration crisis, which is one of the issues of contention in the region, Erdogan said Turkey is a key player and that the migrant pressure will not subside unless the crises around Turkey and Europe are managed.

Djokovic in
Australian
Open draw
as visa saga
continues

WEB DESK

MELBOURNE: Novak Djokovic remained in limbo even after he was included in the draw for the Australian Open on Thursday, with the tennis star still awaiting a government decision on whether to deport him for not being vaccinated for COVID-19. Despite the cloud hanging over Djokovic's ability to compete, Australian Open organizers included the top seed in the draw. He is slated to play fellow Serb Miomir Kecmanovic, who is ranked world No. 78., in the opening round next week. No. 1-ranked Djokovic had his visa canceled on arrival in Melbourne last week when his vaccination exemption was rejected, but he won a legal battle on procedural grounds that allowed him to stay in the country. Immigration Minister Alex Hawke has been considering the question since a judge reinstated Djokovic's visa on Monday.

Jabeur suffers
injury scare days
before Aus Open

SYDNEY: In-form world number seven Anett Kontaveit cruised into the Sydney Classic semi-finals Thursday after top-10 opponent Ons Jabeur retired hurt, days before the Australian Open. The Estonian won a tight first set 6-4 before the Tunisian called for a medical timeout. After lengthy treatment on her lower back, Jabeur forfeited the match. It is a big setback for Jabeur, with the opening Grand Slam of the year starting on Monday. She had a breakthrough 2021, when she won her maiden WTA singles title and surged into the top 10 for the first time. Kontaveit will now play world number four and French Open champion Barbora Krejickova, with the Czech crushing France's Caroline Garcia 6-0, 6-2. "It's never the way you want to win and I really hope Ons is going to be fine for next week and that it's nothing too serious," said the Estonian. "The first set was really competitive and we've had some tough matches before and she's always come out on top, so it was good to get the set and that I was playing the way I was playing." The understated Kontaveit is in the second half of the tournament as a serious contender.

shaping up as a serious contender in the second half of the tournament. Park after her election last season, she won four titles in two months before ending her runner-up at the WTA Finals to Garbine Muguruza. Krejickova also raced through the rankings last year, winning at Roland Garros, Strasbourg and Prague. – APP

Barca 'heads
held high': Xavi

RIYADH: Xavi Hernandez said his young Barcelona team could leave with their "heads held high", despite losing to Real Madrid in the semi-final of the Spanish Super Cup. Barca were beaten 3-2 after extra-time in Saudi Arabia to make it five consecutive Real Madrid victories in Clasico games. But Xavi's side, who sit 17 points behind the La Liga leaders, were far from outclassed and instead showed why there is great hope at the club for the future. "It was clear that it was a day when we showed courage and took responsibility with the ball. Today was a day to go out with your head held high despite the defeat," said Xavi afterward. – Agencies

Man Utd must finish in top three: Ronaldo

The German interim boss has steadied the ship since taking over from the sacked Ole Gunnar Solskjaer but United are languishing in seventh place, 22 points behind leaders Manchester City

SPORTS DESK

LONDON: Cristiano Ronaldo says finishing outside the top three in the Premier League would be unacceptable for Manchester United as Ralf Rangnick struggles to turn around his under-performing team. The German interim boss has steadied the ship since taking over from the sacked Ole Gunnar Solskjaer but United are languishing in seventh place, 22 points behind leaders Manchester City. The five-time world player of the year has called for a change of mindset within the dressing room to address United's poor form, which resulted in a 1-0 defeat at the hands of Wolves in their most recent league outing. "Manchester United should win the league or be second or third," Ronaldo told Sky Sports. "I don't see any other position for Manchester United."

"In my heart, I don't accept that our mentality be less than being in the top three in the Premier League, in my opinion."

"I think to build up good things sometimes you have to destroy a few things. New year, new life, I hope that Manchester can be at the level people want, especially the fans."

We are capable of changing things now. "We can do it better, all of us. I don't want to be here in the club to fight to be in sixth or seventh place. I am here to try to win, to compete. I believe if we change our mind we can achieve big things."

Rangnick was brought in until the end of

the season after Solskjaer was dismissed in November following a run of heavy defeats. The German has won four of his seven games in charge in all competitions but the team's style of football has still attracted criticism and there have been reports of disquiet within the squad. United produced another disjointed display in their FA Cup third-round tie against Aston Villa on Monday but managed to scrape through 1-0. Ronaldo backed Rangnick to turn things around but pleaded for patience ahead of Saturday's league trip to Villa Park. "He arrived here five weeks ago," said the Portuguese superstar. "He changed many things but he needs time to put his ideas through the players and on the pitch. "It takes time but I believe that he is going to do a good job. We know we don't play the best football, as we should do, but we have many games to improve. Since he arrived I think in some points we are better, but he needs time."

'Mini-Budget'
passed...

FROM PAGE 01

session. In the amended bill, the government rolled back its plan to impose additional sales taxes on children's formula milk, bread, and small cars. It also withdrew the proposal to impose taxes on laptops and computers.

The Opposition's amendments to the bill were rejected and when the voting took place, 150 members voted in favour of the amendments, while 168 voted against them. By this measure, the government has an edge with 18 parliamentarians to get the bill passed. The National Assembly comprises 342 lawmakers, of which the government has 182 MNAs, while the Opposition has 160 MNAs.

During session, 14 of the government's lawmakers were absent, while 10 from the Opposition's side didn't show up. Addressing the finance minister, PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari said that the finance minister is continuously asking why is the Opposition protesting, "so let us tell him that if the government is going to ignore the voice of a common man, we are going to highlight the issues."

PPP leader said: "We know the address of your Karachi's residence," adding that "go and ask people why are they upset." "If you will not go to people, we will bring people to you," he said, reiterating that he knows Tarin's address. Referring to the strict conditions of the IMF, Bilawal said that if the government is serious about Pakistan, they should reject the "IMF budget." "We will bring Pakistanis out of this economic situation," he asserted.

Shedding light on the criticism regarding the supplementary bill being the "IMF bill", Finance Minister Shaukat Tarin said that during the previous government's tenure, 13 agreements were signed with the Fund. "They [the Opposition] are saying that IMF has destroyed the economy of Pakistan, while they went to the IMF in their tenures as well," he said.

Tarin further said that the PTI government is being accused of "mortgaging country's sovereignty"; however, the government was forced to approach the IMF.

"We had no other option but to ask for IMF's help," he reiterated. Tarin also said that the supplementary finance bill is a step towards the "process of documentation."

Addressing the allegations of the Opposition that the mini-budget will bring a tsunami of inflation in the country, the finance minister said that out of Rs343 billion taxes worth Rs280 will be refunded "then what is the issue?"

The minister underlined that the government has decided to withdraw its proposal to impose additional sales taxes on children's formula milk, bread, laptops etc.

Tarin said that the country cannot achieve its target of 6.8% growth until the tax-to-GDP ratio is around 18-20%. "Opposition's protest against the supplementary finance bill is baseless," Tarin said, adding that this will help in the documentation which will in return highlight the actual income of people.

WFP warns...

FROM PAGE 01

Thursday. In an interview with The Associated Press, WFP leader in Afghanistan Mary-Ellen McGroarty urged the international community to put humanitarian necessity above political discussions and avoid disaster by making sure that billions in aid keep reaching the Taliban-run country. According to the UN humanitarian organization, 22.8 million people face acute food shortages, including 8.7 million close to starvation. "We don't have enough money going into 2022," said McGroarty during a stop in Brussels. "What we call all the humanitarian sector in Afghanistan needs 4.4 billion dollars for the next 12 months to mount a comprehensive response. – Agencies

Opposition...

FROM PAGE 01

Abdul Qadiar Patel also made the same demand and asked to withdraw tax on items of children including milk and bicycles. Ali Gohar from PML-N opposed the mini-budget and said that it would increase the problems for the people. He demanded for timely decisions on the economic issue. Later, the voting was held on the motion and it was rejected with majority vote. A total of 150 lawmakers voted in favor of the motion while 168 opposed it.

Briefs

Tunisia's
Ennahdha
urges
protests

TUNIS: Tunisia's Islamist-inspired Ennahdha party has reiterated calls for demonstrations on Friday marking the anniversary of the country's revolution, defying tightened coronavirus restrictions it says are politically motivated. Ennahdha is the biggest party in a parliament that was suspended by President Kais Saied in July 2021, and has staged a string of protests against the premier. The party had last week called for rallies on Friday to mark the 2011 fall of dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali in a revolt that sparked copycat uprisings in several Arab countries. But on Wednesday Saied's office announced new measures against mounting coronavirus cases, including a nighttime curfew and a ban on public gatherings, starting Thursday evening. In a statement on Facebook on Thursday morning, Ennahdha accused the government of "utilising the coronavirus crisis for political ends, targeting what remains of the margin of freedom" in Tunisia. "Ennahdha calls on all those planning to take part in the January 14 demonstrations to respect health protocols," it added. The potential showdown comes amid heightened tensions between the party and Saied after two senior Ennahdha officials including former justice minister Noureddine Bhiri were arrested by plainclothes police officers on December 31 and later accused of possible "terrorism" offences. — APP

Web portal
launched
on CPEC
projects

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Space & Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO), together with the Planning Ministry has developed a web portal and mobile application though which progress on various projects of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) can be monitored. According to Gwadar Pro on Thursday, "SUPARCO has complemented this capability with an indigenously developed mobile application that a user from Planning Commission of Pakistan can install on his/her cell phone and monitor the progress on CPEC projects," an official statement stated. Through the dedicated web portal from where users can easily browse, place orders and directly download satellite imagery right from their desktop. It is state of the art portal with advanced imaging options for the professionals. In addition to CPEC projects, the dedicated portal can be used for monitoring of other projects as well. The launching ceremony for Web Portal and Mobile App was held on Wednesday at Pakistan Planning and Management Institute Islamabad. Federal Minister Asad Umar, Chairman SUPARCO Major General Amer Nadeem, senior officers of Planning Ministry and stakeholders from public and private sectors attended the launching ceremony. — APP

Abdul Razzaq Dawood
lauds PAJCCI's role

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Zubair Motiwala; Chairman PAJCCI called upon Mr. Abdul Razzaq Dawood, Advisor to Prime Minister on Commerce & Investment for deliberating upon issues of business community of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Chairman PAJCCI shared the activities & initiatives of PAJCCI in raising the voice of business community of both sides, providing insights to both governments and bringing issues on the table with objective of beneficial and long-term resolution. He shared the on-going obstacles in trade activities and their impact on long term trade and economic relationship with Afghanistan resulting in revenue loss, socio-economic effects on people living on borders, widening trade gap especially exports, loss of livelihood increasing hardships for people and unrest in border areas. He apprised the Advisor on high impact issues like developing a formal mechanism for barter trade, facilitating trade in PKR, withdrawal of Cash on Counter facility, requirement of advance payments, reluctance of correspondence banks to accept third party payment in case of Afghanistan and the congestion at border resulting due to delayed checking and payment issues raised due to SBP's change in policy. He added that at present Afghanistan has no operational banking nor they have USD

reserves, traders cannot bring more than PKR 10,000 while crossing borders hence advance and cash payments cannot be made, consignment values are way higher than allowable limit of cash carrying. In case payments to be made in USD, traders will eventually buy them in Pakistan hence impacting Pakistan's Foreign reserves and USD crunch in local market. Business community understands the requirements of international laws with respect to FATF however international community is well aware of Afghan situation hence trading in PKR is the only way to continue trading, reducing humanitarian crisis and safeguarding Pakistan's interest in the region. Zubair Motiwala suggested to set up bank counters at borders so payments can be made at the spot without delaying shipments and creating congestion. He also appreciated the Government's approval to carry out PKR trade for perishable items however requested to add meat, poultry and pharmaceuticals in the same category. He sought Advisor's intervention in resolving the core issue of cash on counter facility withdrawal by State Bank of Pakistan. Afghanistan having financial crisis, lack of banking structure and seized foreign exchange cannot survive under such stern regime. Trade between Pakistan and Afghanistan is governed by EIF and E-Form. Banks issue E-Form only after receiving advance payments.

11 killed in
Philippine
truck crash

MANILA: At least 11 people were killed after a small truck packed with party-goers, including children, overturned in the southern Philippines, police said Thursday. The vehicle was travelling to a beachside resort on Mindanao island for a postponed Christmas party on Wednesday when the driver lost control after the brakes apparently failed on a downhill section of road. Around 50 people were crammed into the truck, most of them in the open tray, when it veered off the road and into a tree. The vehicle then flipped over onto a pile of rocks, Balingasag municipal police chief Major Teodoro De Oro said. Eleven people were killed, including a three-year-old child, De Oro said, adding police were seeking to confirm another three deaths. Scores of other passengers were injured, including a dozen children. The vehicle was part of a convoy of three trucks but the other two were not involved in the accident, De Oro said. — APP

On Culture Day, Romanians
celebrate Mihai Eminescu,
the national poet of Romania

Romania is getting ready to celebrate its National Culture Day on January 15

INTRODUCED in 2010, Romania's National Culture Day is celebrated on January 15, the birth date of Romanian poet and novelist Mihai Eminescu, a canonical figure of Romanian literature and a representative of the European Romanticism. The Romanian National Culture Day, now reaching its 12th edition, is an official national celebration, initiated by the Romanian Academy. Mihai Eminescu was a Romanian poet, prose writer and journalist, reckoned by Romanian readers and literary criticism as the most important poetic voice in Romanian literature. He was born on 15 January 1850 in Ipotești/Botoșani County, then in the Principality of Moldavia, and died on 15 June 1889 in Bucharest / Kingdom of Romania. He is considered the national poet of Romania, being called the "The star of Romanian poetry", but also the most important representative

of romanticism in Romanian literature. He transformed both the form and content of Romanian poetry, creating a school of poetry that strongly influenced Romanian writers and poets in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Eminescu was an active member of the Junimea Literary Society and worked as an editor for the newspaper Timpul ("The Time"), the official newspaper of the Conservative Party (1880-1918). His poetry was first published when he was 16 and he went to Vienna to study when he was 19. The poet's manuscripts contain 46 volumes and approximately 14,000 pages, being one of the most prolific poets of his time. His most notable works include Luceafărul (The Vesper/The Evening Star/The Lucifer/The Daystar), Odăimetru antic (Ode in Ancient Meter), and the five Letters (Epistles/Satires). In his poems he frequently used met-



aphysical, mythological and historical subjects. "Luceafărul" (Evening Star) is the most famous poetry of Mihai Eminescu, started in 1873, but written and finished over many years until its publication in April 1883 in the Almanac of the "Romania Juna" student society in Vienna. After the publication in Vienna, the poem was then resumed in the same year in the magazine "Convorbiri literare" and finally in the princeps volume entitled "Poesii" published in 1884. With 98 stanzas, Luceafărul is the longest love poem in the world. Eminescu's poems have been translated into more than 60 languages, being one of the most appreciated love poets in Europe. Mihai Eminescu is considered as the first poet to make Romanian language a real object of art, since Romanian poetry was only at its beginnings. Having studied the

philosophy, law, medicine, economics, sociology and other subjects, he gained a real success in his career as a journalist, and his articles of literary, social and political criticism were published in "Timpul" and "Curierul de Iași" newspapers. His entire journalist activity was put to the right of the Romanian people to live in the Romanian nation, supporting the Romanians in Transylvania and Bucovina in his articles. Nicolae Iorga, the Romanian historian, considers Eminescu "the godfather of the modern Romanian language, in the same way that Shakespeare is seen to have directly influenced the English language". Mihai Eminescu is unanimously celebrated as the greatest and most representative Romanian poet his legacy strongly influenced the Romanian literature and culture. — DNA

Uzbekistan holds
military parade
in Tashkent

TASHKENT: In honor of the 30th anniversary of the formation of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Uzbekistan and on 14 January - Defender of the Motherland Day, a military-patriotic parade was held in the capital with the participation of military personnel of ministries and departments that are part of the Armed Forces. The military-patriotic parade, which started at the Turkiston Palace, passed through the streets of Alisher Navoi, Sharof Rashidov, Islam Karimov and ended at the Friendship of Peoples Palace. More than 1,200 representatives of law enforcement agencies and military bands took part in the parade. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the festive march with the participation of military personnel strengthened in the hearts of compatriots a sense of honor and pride in the power of the national army, for its combat potential and increased confidence in the bright tomorrow of our beloved country, where peace and tranquility reign. And right now, a concert program is taking place on the Friendship of Peoples Square with the participation of military bands, a military ensemble and prominent artists. — APP

Germany jails former
Syrian regime official

BERLIN: In a landmark case on the crimes committed by the Syrian regime, a German court on Thursday sentenced a former Syrian intelligence official to life in prison. Anwar Raslan, 58, was convicted of committing crimes against humanity, murders, torture, and sexual assault while serving as the head of the investigation unit at Damascus' al-Khatib prison between 2011 and 2012. The Higher Regional Court of Koblenz said he was a co-perpetrator in at least 27 murders, 25 cases of dangerous physical injury,

many cases of torture, and individual cases of sexual assault and rape. Raslan was arrested in Germany in 2019 after Syrian torture survivors and witnesses informed the authorities. Germany's unique legislation - the Code of Crimes against International Law - gives courts universal jurisdiction over war crimes and crimes against humanity, and they can open full investigation into such crimes, even when they were not committed within its territory. The European Center for Constitutional and Human

Rights (ECCHR), which assisted Syrian torture survivors and investigated the crimes perpetrated by the Assad regime, welcomed the landmark ruling. "For the first time, a higher-ranking member of the Syrian regime has been convicted of crimes against humanity - also thanks to the tireless work of many activists and NGOs," said Patrick Kroker, the ECCHR's partner lawyer. "The verdict today is only a first step in addressing the crimes in Syria - but this first step is often the most difficult. The goal remains to bring senior Assad asso-

ciates, such as former Air Force Intelligence chief Jamil Hassan, to justice for their crimes," he added. Germany's Justice Minister Marco Buschmann said on Thursday that the court delivered a landmark ruling. "Crimes against humanity cannot go unpunished: No matter where they are committed, no matter who perpetrates them," he said in a statement. Buschmann underlined that it is the responsibility of all countries to ensure that those who committed crimes against humanity in Syria will be brought to justice. — APP

Lebanese
protesters
shut down
major
highways

APP

BEIRUT: A general strike by public transportation and labor unions has paralysed Lebanon as the country suffers one of the world's worst economic crises. Thursday's strike comes as the country's ruling class has continued to do almost nothing to try and pull the country out of its meltdown rooted in decades of corruption and mismanagement. Protesters closed the country's major highways as well as roads inside cities and towns starting at 5AM local time. The nationwide protests, dubbed a "day of rage," are scheduled to last 12 hours. Taxi and truck drivers used their vehicles to block roads to protest a sharp increase in fuel prices as the government lifted subsidies. Their demand is to get subsidised fuel again. Universities and schools were closed all over Lebanon and many people were not able to reach work because of road closures. In the capital of Beirut, many roads were blocked by giant trash bins and vehicles.



ISLAMABAD: Advisor to the Prime Minister on Commerce and Investment, Abdul Razzaq Dawood in a meeting with Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan, Mitsuhiro Wada. — DNA

Russia launches military
drill near Ukraine's border

MOSCOW: The Russian Defense Ministry Thursday announced the start of military exercises with the participation of more than 10,000 soldiers near the border with Ukraine. The exercises are held at different training sites in the south of the country, including near cities of Volgograd, Astrakhan, Stavropol, Rostov, and Krasnodar, the min-

istry said in a statement. The military personnel will train in tactical actions as part of reconnaissance and offensive operations, the statement added. On Wednesday, Russia and NATO held a meeting in Brussels regarding security issues, including the situation in Ukraine. After the meeting, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister

Aleksandr Grushko said Moscow expects a "definite" response from NATO to Russia's proposals on security guarantees. Russia, Ukraine, and NATO have stepped up military exercises as tensions have intensified in recent weeks as Kyiv has openly accused Moscow of planning to stage an invasion. — APP

Europe at greatest
risk of war in 30
years, Poland warns

VIENNA: Europe is nearer war than it has been in 30 years, Poland's foreign minister warned during the third round of diplomacy this week aimed at defusing tensions over Russia's demand that Ukraine never be allowed to join NATO. Addressing envoys from the 57 members of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), Zbigniew Rau did not name Russia, but listed

a string of conflicts in which Moscow's involvement has been alleged. "It seems that the risk of war in the OSCE area is now greater than ever before in the last 30 years," Rau said in a speech outlining his country's priorities as it holds the OSCE's rotating chairmanship this year. "For several weeks we have been faced with the prospect of a major military escalation in Eastern Europe." — APP



GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN

PAKISTAN PUBLIC WORKS DEPARTMENT

No.EE/CEMD-III/AB/99

Dated: 13/01/2022

NOTICE INVITING TENDER

- Sealed bids are invited for supply, installation testing & commissioning of "CONSTRUCTION OF ISLAMABAD HIGH COURT BUILDING G-5, ISLAMABAD. (SH:-ADDITIONAL E/M WORKS)". On single stage two envelope basis from the authorized dealers dealing with Leading brands of the required items provided in BOQ.
- The firms desired to participate should submit **Technical Proposal and Financial Bid** separately in sealed envelopes/ covers duly marked on face of each envelope the works "**Technical Proposal and Financial Bid**" separately (as per PPRA rule 36(b) which shall be opened in the presence of interested bidders who up to attend.
- The complete proposal technical + financial can be purchased from the office of the undersigned up to 28/01/2022 and the same will be received on 31/01/2022 up to 02:00 pm and the technical proposal will be opened at 02:30 pm on same day.
- Envelopes containing Financial Bids of eligible firms will be opened after the approval of Technical bids.

Sr. No	Name of Work	Earnest Money/ Bid Security	Period of Completion	Cost of Tender (Rs.)
1	CONSTRUCTION OF ISLAMABAD HIGH COURT BUILDING AT G-5, ISLAMABAD. (SH:- ADDITIONAL E/M WORKS).	4% Bid Amount	06 Month	10,000/-

- Registration with Pakistan Engineering Council (PEC) along with valid relevant code ME-01, ME-03, ME-04, EE-02, EE-04, EE-11 having category C-3.
- Conditional application will not be entertained.
- Tender documents will be sold to the sole proprietor of the firm or duly authorized partner or authorized person by providing authority letter on the judicial paper.
- Each bidder is required to fulfill the eligibility criteria, otherwise the bids will not be considered even for qualification.
- TOR and bidding document can be obtained from the office of the undersigned on any working day at the cost of Rs.10,000/-.
- The pre bid meeting will be held on 24/01/2022 at 2:30PM in the office of the procuring agency.
- Under Rule 33(1) of PPRA rule 2004, the procuring agency reserves the right to accept or reject any of all bids proposal at any time prior to acceptance of bid/ Proposal.
- The intending bidder will attached their bid security of the above mentioned amount with the technical bid, in case of non-submission of bid security with technical bid, the bid will stand rejected.

(Muhammad Sohail Iqbal)
Executive Engineer, Central E/M Division No. III
Pak PWD, Islamabad.

PID (I) No. 4776/21

Briefs

'NDMA responsible for Murree tragedy'

USMAN CHAUDHRY

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) heard a petition filed by Hamad Abbasi, a resident of Murree, seeking investigation into the Murree tragedy and action against those responsible.

The petitioner took the position that when the tourists were dying from the toll plaza, why no one helped them. The administration is to blame for all this tragedy.

During the hearing, Chief Justice Athar Minallah said that tourists visit Murree every year. NDMA is such a big body. Has any meeting been held in this regard and timely steps have been taken? If not, tell the court why not. The Chief Justice declared the petition admissible and summoned the NDMA officials.

When the NDMA members appeared before the court, the Chief Justice expressed his anger and said that it was unfortunate that precious lives would not have been lost if the meeting had been planned in advance. It was the responsibility of the NDMA to convene a meeting to formulate and implement a national management plan for Murree. Had this plan been implemented, not a single civilian would have been killed.

The Chief Justice said that everyone is cursing the people of Murree. What is their fault? All the people are lying behind the dead for no reason.

Chief Justice Athar Minallah said that how could a hotelier take more money when a district plan was made. In eleven years, they have not been able to say whether there is a district plan or not.

Russian strikes in Syria kill 11 IS fighters: monitor

WEB DESK

BEIRUT: Russian air strikes in desert areas of eastern Syria have killed 11 suspected members of the Islamic State group, following deadly attacks by the militants, a war monitor reported Thursday.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which monitors casualties of the decade-old conflict, said the overnight strikes focused on an area between Palmyra and Al-Sukhna.

"The militant organisation's members hide in caves in this area," Observatory chief Rami Abdel Rahman said. The strikes killed 11 IS fighters and wounded around 20 others, some of them seriously, he said. They came after five Syrian pro-regime fighters were killed and 14 others wounded on Wednesday in an IS attack on their position in the city of AlBukamal near the border with Iraq.

The Britain-based Observatory said some of the militants burned the bodies of some victims after the assault. Earlier on Wednesday, a similar IS attack killed three pro-regime fighters and wounded five others in Deir Ezzor province, according to the monitor.

Thursday's strikes were the deadliest of their kind since November, when the Observatory reported 16 killed in militant ranks.

Abdel Rahman said he had counted a total of 229 Russian air strikes against targets in the Syrian desert already this year. More than 1,636 pro-regime fighters have been killed since March 2019, compared to 1,128 IS militants, according to the Observatory. The Islamic State group's self-declared caliphate once stretched across vast parts of Syria and Iraq and administered millions of inhabitants.

CCI approves conducting seventh census

ISLAMABAD: The Council of Common Interests (CCI) held a meeting on Thursday and greenlighted the seventh population and housing census, media reported.

The 49th meeting of the CCI was presided over by Prime Minister Imran Khan, while all provincial chief ministers were in attendance.

The CCI approved conducting the seventh population and housing census, including the establishment of the "Census Monitoring Committee" that will be chaired by the deputy chairman of the planning commission, all provincial chief secretaries, the chairman of the National Database and Registration Authority (NADRA), the chief commissioner of Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT), and other senior officials.

The committee will supervise and monitor census activities to ensure expeditious, transparent, and credible census operations. — APP



ISLAMABAD: Ms. Shahera Shahid Federal Secretary Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in a group photo with Information Ministry officers after their training session at the Information Service Academy. Director General ISA Saeed Javed and PIO Sohail Ali Khan and others also present. — DNA

'FM's Romania, Spain visits highly successful'

Prime Minister Imran Khan launched the Pak-China Business Investment Forum, which is aimed at increasing investment in Pakistan and promoting business-to-business industrial cooperation

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Spokesman Ministry of Foreign Affairs Asim Iftikhar Ahmed has said Foreign Minister's visit to Romania and Spain served to reinforce our longstanding friendship and cooperation with the two countries.

During weekly press briefing he said, in Bucharest, the Foreign Minister called on the Romanian Prime Minister, held meetings with the Romanian Foreign Minister, Minister for Economy and other dignitaries. Two MoUs were signed - relating to Award of scholarships to Pakistani students; and Cooperation between the Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FPCCI) and the Romanian Chamber of Commerce &

Industry (RCCI). The Foreign Minister interacted with the Pakistani community, and also inaugurated 'Pakistan Cultural & Trade Exhibition Center' at the Pakistan Embassy.

On the next leg in Madrid, the Foreign Minister held meetings with his Spanish counterpart, Minister of Industry, Trade and Tourism, members of the Foreign Relations Committee of Congress of Deputies and called on the President of Congress of Deputies of Spain. He also interacted with members of Academia, and the Pakistani community. While in Madrid, Foreign Minister Qureshi also met the Secretary General of UN World Tourism Organization to exchange views on benefiting from WTO's expertise for development and digital transformation of Pakistan's tourism sector.

On 3 January, Prime Minister Imran

Khan launched the Pak-China Business Investment Forum, which is aimed at increasing investment in Pakistan and promoting business-to-business industrial cooperation. The forum would endeavour to promote sustainable investment, export industry and the development of modern technology in Pakistan.

On 5 January, Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), HE Nayef bin Falah Al-Hajraf, visited Pakistan on the invitation of the Foreign Minister. Besides delegation-level talks with the Foreign Minister, the Secretary-General met with the Minister for Finance and Revenue, and Prime Minister's Advisor for Commerce and Investment. The visit provided an opportunity to review Pak-GCC relations and foster enhanced collaboration in diverse fields, with a

renewed focus on trade and economic cooperation between Pakistan and GCC Member States.

A strong business delegation led by the Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industries visited Pakistan. The delegation called on the President, Prime Minister, Foreign Minister and other dignitaries. The visit imparted further impetus to bilateral economic relationship.

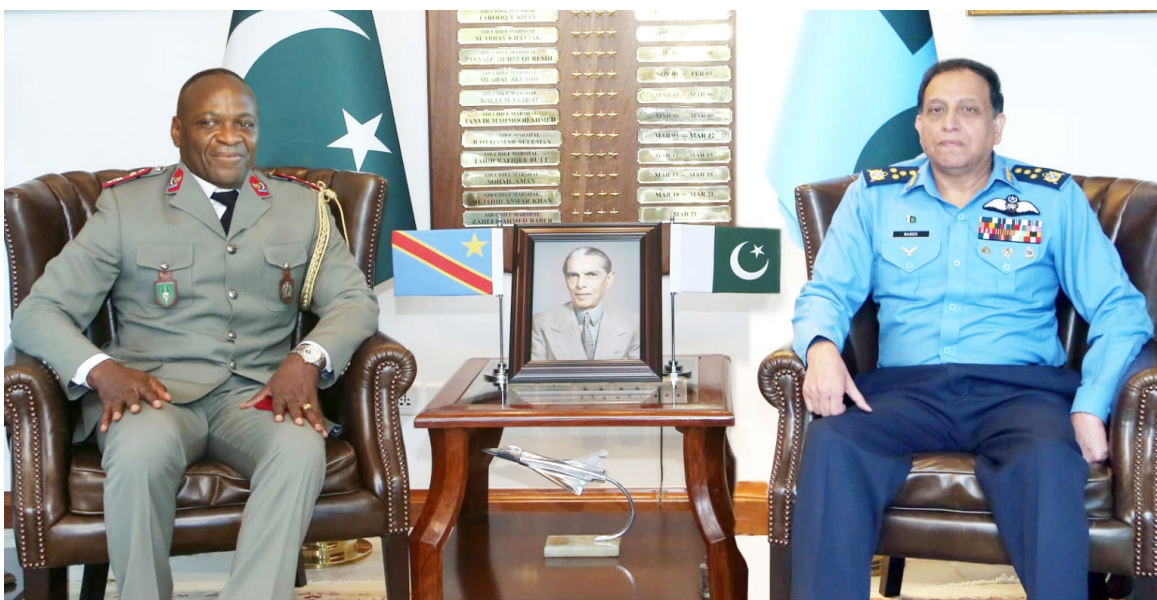
The spokesman further said, Foreign Minister Qureshi inaugurated International Seminar on the theme of "Combating Corruption - A Prerequisite for the full enjoyment of all Human Rights and Sustainable Development", organized by the Government of Pakistan and the OIC Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission in collaboration with the UN, in Islamabad on 6-7 January 2022.

Congo Army Chief lauds PAF professionalism

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Lieutenant General Sikabwe Asinda Fall, Chief of Land Forces, Democratic Republic of Congo called on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force in his office. The visiting dignitary lauded professionalism of PAF personnel and exceptional progress made by PAF over the years, especially through indigenization. The Air Chief highlighted the cordial relations between the two countries and reiterated his resolve to further augment the existing cooperation between the two Air Forces.

Various matters of mutual interest and professional cooperation also came under discussion during the meeting.



ISLAMABAD: Lieutenant General Sikabwe Asinda Fall, Chief of Land Forces, Democratic Republic of Congo called on Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force in his office. — DNA

PM Imran Khan, Khattak engage in heated exchange

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Defence Perviz Khattak left the ruling Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) parliamentary party's meeting held in Islamabad on Thursday in fury following an 'altercation' with Federal Minister for Energy Hamad Azhar on the severe gas crisis in the country.

According to sources, when at last he was brought back to the meeting room, Khattak did not spare Prime Minister Imran Khan either whom he also severely criticized. He said this in the parliamentary party meeting held in Islamabad ahead of the National Assembly session to get the Finance Supplementary Bill 2021 approved. "We, the people

of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) got you elected as the country's prime minister. But it is sad that there is an extreme gas shortage in the province. KP has the largest gas reservoirs. We also produce electricity. And still, we are deprived of these resources," he reportedly said to the prime minister in anguish. "And if the same situation persists, people of the prov-

ince will not vote for you," he told PM Imran in clear and unambiguous terms. "If this is your attitude then we will not be able to vote," he added. Upset over the 'rebellious' tone of his minister and a close confidante, the prime minister left the room, saying, "If you are not satisfied with my 'governance', I appoint somebody else as my successor."

Hungary to offer fourth virus jab

BUDAPEST: Hungary said Thursday it will offer a fourth coronavirus vaccine dose to citizens, after a consultation with a doctor amid a rapid rise in Covid-19 infection cases. Denmark is the first EU country to offer a fourth dose to citizens.

"Anyone can get a fourth coronavirus jab based on a consultation with a doctor," said Gergely Gulyas, Prime Minister Viktor Orban's chief of staff. "The (government) decree about this will be published this week," Gulyas told a press briefing in Budapest. — APP

Info Group officers must project national narrative

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Secretary Information and Broadcasting Shahera Shahid said on Thursday that the officers belonging to the Information Group were assigned the most important task of projection of national narrative and it was necessary to equip them with the latest knowledge. Addressing the graduation ceremony of the Domain-Specific Training Programme of 32nd MCMC here at Information Service Academy (ISA), she said that the officers of the Information group have to update their knowledge on daily basis as they have to deal with various situations every passing day. She said that training and capacity building was vital for officers as they added to their knowledge and gave them options to address various issues during service.

Shahera Shahid said that under-training officers should also give their input on the syllabus of the training so that its deficiencies could be improved in the future. Earlier in his welcome address, Director General ISA Saeed Javed said that the academy had the vision to inculcate a sense of responsibility and duty among all officers to serve the nation to the best of their ability. In the end, the chief guest distributed certificates among the participants of the training course. Besides Principal Information Officer Sohail Ali Khan and Chief Information Commissioner Muhammad Azam, senior officers from the ministry also attended the ceremony.

US inflation surges to record high in four decades

WASHINGTON: US consumer prices in December continued to rise at the fastest annual pace in almost 40 years, which could push the Federal Reserve to raise interest rates earlier, the U.S. Labor Department reported on Wednesday. The consumer price index (CPI) last month rose 0.5 percent from the previous month and 7.0 percent from a year earlier, the largest 12-month increase since June 1982, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the department.

The latest data marked a new high after the CPI in November rose 0.8 percent from the previous month and 6.8 percent from a year earlier. The so-called core CPI, which excludes food and energy, rose 5.5 percent over the last 12 months, up from 4.9 percent over the 12 months ending November, the report showed. The energy index rose 29.3 percent over the last year and the food index increased 6.3 percent.

The inflation data came one day after U.S. Federal Reserve Chair Jerome Powell said that the central bank will have to raise interest rates more if inflation remains elevated.

"If we see inflation persisting at high levels longer than expected ... if we have to raise interest rates more over time, we will," Powell said at his confirmation hearing before the Senate Banking Committee, noting that U.S. inflation is running "very far above" the central bank's target of 2 percent. Fed officials' median interest rate projections released mid-December showed that the central bank could raise the federal funds rate, the benchmark interest rate, three times this year from its current record-low level of near zero. — APP

Rs 258 bln to be incurred on EVMs, ECP told

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) was informed on Thursday that a sum of Rs 258 billion would be incurred on procuring and other related expenditures of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs).

The meeting of the ECP chaired by Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Sikandar Sultan Raja was briefed about the roadmap and plan of action right from procuring to use the EVMs in the elections. The ECP decided to conduct pilot testing of EVMs, consult all stakeholders and take them into confidence regarding the EVMs' use.

The forum was briefed about plans of storage, selection, maintenance and configuration of EVMs and difficulties and stages of delivery at polling stations. The Commission was further informed that the establishment of Project Management Unit had been approved and the services of three officers were being hired in this regard. The Commission expressed satisfaction over the report and decided to ensure completion of RFP for procurement of EVMs and tendering process for pilot project.

The forum decided to complete the process of procuring EVMs keeping in view the quality, secrecy and security of machines that too by complying with the relevant rules and regulations.

The three committees constituted to implement the recently passed laws related to use of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) and Internet voting for overseas Pakistanis presented their reports to the forum. The secretary election commission briefed the commission on those reports of the committees. — APP

No Ukraine talks under pressure from Russia

The statement came from EU foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, ahead of a meeting of EU defence and foreign ministers

WEB DESK

BRUSSELS: The European Union will not negotiate with Russian authorities over the fate of Ukraine so long as Moscow is massing troops at the country's border. The statement came from EU foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, ahead of a meeting of EU defence and foreign ministers on Thursday.

"Russian movements are part of the pressure," Borrell said, insisting that there "should not be negotiation under pressure." "There will not be any decisions taken today because this is an informal meeting", Borrell added, though he indicated that a political statement is likely. The meeting comes after tense negotiations between US and Russian officials in Geneva on Monday. "We have received assurances that nothing will

Talks between Russia, US and NATO deadlocked

MOSCOW: No reason to resume talks with Washington in the near future, since the negotiations between Russia, the US and NATO on security guarantees have deadlocked, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov stated on Thursday. "The US and its allies are actually telling us 'no' relating to the key points of [the proposals]. They are telling us 'yes' or agree to discuss further the issues that <...> are secondary compared with the non-expansion of NATO. To some extent, this is a dead end, a difference in approaches. <...> So far, I see no reason to <...> negotiate further," the senior diplomat noted. "By and large, we need not just some comments and verbal statements but something more familiar to diplomats, for example, texts or statements put on paper. If our colleagues follow this direction, it will be possible to resume a formal dialogue," the senior diplomat said, noting that Russia was seeking to reach an agreement with the US and NATO in the field of security. "Dialogue is better than confrontation, better than silence or some kind of imitation <...>. Everything is possible, we need to vigorously pursue the right way," Ryabkov insisted. On Wednesday, the meeting of the NATO-Russia Council took place in Brussels, marking the second stage of consultations on security guarantees. — APP

be decided nor negotiated without the Europeans, and the coordination with the Americans is absolutely excellent," Borrell said. The negotiations on Monday failed to produce an agreement on de-escalating the conflict but saw both sides offer to continue talking.

Washington and its allies have accused Russia of planning an invasion after deploying some 100,000 troops in several areas along Ukraine's border. The move has stoked fears of a repeat of 2014, when Moscow seized the Crimea peninsula and a pro-Russian insurgency broke out in eastern Ukraine that has since claimed more than 13,000 lives. As tensions have spiralled, Russia has also demanded that NATO must not admit new members, including Ukraine. Moscow has also called for the United States to be barred from establishing new bases in former Soviet republics.