



# Islamabad POST

Thursday, January 20, 2022

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Price Rs. 20

### English Prime Minister Boris Johnson faces demands to resign

Detailed News On Page-08

### Iran eyeing higher level cooperation in CPEC: envoy

Detailed News On Page-01



### Amb. Sajjad visits elarusian State University

Detailed News On Page-07



## Briefs

### 'Start-up friendly eco system priority'

SHUJAAT HAMZA

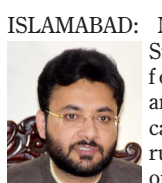
ISLAMABAD: "Government is focused on creating start-up-friendly ecosystem to unleash huge potential of e-commerce in the country," said Prime Minister Imran Khan while chairing a meeting of Young Entrepreneurs/Startups. "The future of business in the world is technology-driven e-commerce platforms. Cognizant of its importance, we are working to clear all kinds of impediments hindering its growth", he added. The PM appreciated the role of Startups in generating employment opportunities for our huge tech-savvy young population, which is 2nd largest in the world.

### Macron for new security framework



STRASBOURG: French President Emmanuel Macron said Wednesday that Europeans needed to build a new "security and stability framework" that would require "strategic rearmament" as well as "frank and demanding" talks with Russia. "We need to build it between us Europeans, share it with our allies in NATO, and propose it for negotiation to Russia," he told lawmakers at the European Parliament in Strasbourg, eastern France. - APP

### Farrukh asks ECP to reconstitute committee



ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Farrukh Habib on Wednesday appealed to Election Commission of Pakistan to reconstitute scrutiny committee so that the process of scrutiny of Pakistan People's Party and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's accounts could be completed. Talking to the media persons here, he asked the ECP to write a letter to the State Bank of Pakistan to get data of bank accounts of all political parties registered with the commission. - DNA

# Omicron spread Curbs in high risk localities

In cities and districts with positivity higher than 10%, the classes for children under 12 years will continue on "staggered" days

KHYAM ABBASI/DNA

ISLAMABAD: After a brief delay, the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) finally issued Wednesday revised coronavirus guidelines and SOPs for the education, restaurant, entertainment, and other sectors as Pakistan continues its battle against a fifth wave of the pandemic and struggles to contain the spread of the Omicron variant of COVID-19. In cities and districts with positivity higher than 10%, the classes for children under 12 years will continue on "staggered" days, while classes will be conducted daily for fully-vaccinated students above 12 years of age.

In the cities and districts which have a positivity ratio of up to 10%, classes will continue as usual, but with stringent COVID-19 protocols intact, as per NCOC's guidelines. With effect from February 1, at least one dose for

Continued on Page 06

### Shahbaz, Tarin test positive



STAFF REPORT

LAHORE/ISLAMABAD: Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Shahbaz Sharif has tested positive for coronavirus and Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue

Continued on Page 06



RAWALPINDI: Ambassador of China Nong Rong called on COAS General Qamar Javed Bajwa. - DNA

### Chinese envoy calls on COAS

Nong Rong satisfied with CPEC progress

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Mr Nong Rong, Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan called on General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) at GHQ, today. During the meeting matters of mutual interest, regional security situation and measures to further enhance bilateral cooperation were discussed. COAS said that Pakistan remains committed to cooperate with its international partners for peace in the region.

The visiting dignitary thanked COAS for special measures taken for provision of safe and secure environment to CPEC projects in Pakistan and efforts towards regional stability. The visiting dignitary also expressed satisfaction over progress on CPEC and reaffirmed the need for timely completion of remaining projects.

### UK asked to nab Indian army chief

DNA

LONDON: A London-based law firm has filed an application with the British police seeking the arrest of India's army chief and home minister over their roles in war crimes in disputed Jammu and Kashmir. The law firm Stoke White has said that it submitted extensive evidence to the Metropolitan Police's War Crimes Unit documenting how Indian troops headed by General Manoj Mukund Naravane and Home Affairs Minister Amit Shah were responsible for the torture, kidnapping and killing of activists, journalists and civilians. The law firm's report was based on over 2,000 testimonies taken between 2020 and 2021. It also accused eight unnamed senior Indian military officials of direct involvement in war crimes and torture in Kashmir. "There is strong reason to believe that Indian authorities are conducting war crimes and other violence against civilians in Jammu and Kashmir," the report stated. The request to London police was made under the principle of "universal jurisdiction."

# Taliban govt asks for recognition

### "Short-term aid is not the solution; we must try to find a way to solve problems fundamentally"

NEWS DESK

KABUL: Afghanistan's PM Mohammad Hassan Akhund also made an appeal for a loosening of restrictions on money flows into the country, blaming the country's growing economic crisis on the freezing of funds. The Taliban's prime minister has called on Muslim nations to be the first to officially recognise its government as aid-dependent Afghanistan faces economic collapse.

"I call on Muslim countries to take the lead and recognise us officially. Then I hope we will be able to develop quick-

ly," Mohammad Hassan Akhund told a conference in Kabul on Wednesday. "We don't want it for the officials. We want it for our public," he said, adding that the Taliban had fulfilled all necessary conditions by restoring peace and security. Akhund and other Taliban administration officials made an appeal at the news conference, also attended by United Nations officials, for a loosening of restrictions on money into the country, blaming its growing economic crisis on the freezing of funds. "Short-term aid is not the solution; we must try to find a way to solve problems fundamentally," he said.

# Erdogan to mend ties with Israel

### Turkey's relations with Israel entered a deep freeze after the death of 10 civilians in an Israeli raid on a Turkish flotilla

DNA

ANKARA: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Tuesday he is open to mending Turkey's frayed ties with Israel following a reported drop in US support for a controversial Mediterranean gas pipeline. Erdogan's comments follow a year in which Turkey - battered by an economic crisis at home - has taken steps to improve relations with a host of regional rivals. Turkey's relations with Israel entered a deep freeze after the death of 10 civilians in an Israeli raid on a Turkish flotilla destined for the

Gaza Strip in 2010. Israel and a group of countries, including Turkey's historic rival Greece, then began work on a joint pipeline to bring eastern Mediterranean Sea gas to Europe. Turkey strongly opposed the project and staked its own territorial claims on the region's energy wealth. The pipeline was also supported by the former administration of US president Donald Trump. But Israeli and other media have reported that Washington privately informed Greece last week that current US President Joe Biden's team no longer backed the pipeline project because it created regional tensions with Turkey. "I think the US decided to pull back

Continued on Page 06

# Pakistan, Indonesia to work closely

### Foreign Minister Qureshi talks to his Indonesian counterpart

ANSAR BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi held a telephonic conversation with the Foreign Minister of Indonesia, Ms. Retno L.P. Marsudi, expressing satisfaction at the deep-rooted and fraternal relations between Pakistan and Indonesia, the Foreign Minister underscored Pakistan's strong desire to further intensify these multi-dimen-



sional ties across the entire spectrum. The Foreign Minister stressed that the strong political goodwill between the

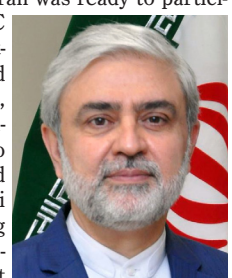
Continued on Page 06

# Iran eyeing higher level of cooperation in CPEC

### Ambassador of Iran Ali Hosseini says that bilateral trade between Pakistan and Iran was not up to the mark

MAHNOOR ANSAR/DNA

ISLAMABAD: 'Iran was ready to participate in the CPEC and has repeatedly declared so in the past', said Ambassador of Iran to Pakistan, Seyed Mohammad Ali Hosseini, adding that, the project would not only help bring harmony and peace but economic prosperity in the region also. While talking in a webinar on 'Iran-Pakistan relations' organized by the Institute of Regional Studies, Amb. Hosseini said that Chahbahar and Gwadar ports com-



plement each other rather than compete with one another as rivals. Ambassador Hosseini regretted that bilateral trade between Pakistan and Iran was not up to the mark, therefore, serious efforts were required such as streamlining banking channels between the two countries, he said. Removal of barriers was essentially required to reap the full benefit of the proposed bilateral Free Trade Agreement and realization of bilateral trade target of 5 billion dollars, he stressed. While considering the importance of the geographical position of the two countries, the transportation and transit trade sectors could be a potential area of cooperation between the two countries, said Ambassador Hosseini added that this would expedite the

Continued on Page 06

## Inside...

KPK CM wants power transmission system upgradation - Page 02

Govt urged to allow trade with Afghanistan in Pak Rupees - Page 03

1405 accused convicted during Chairman NAB tenure - Page 04

Putin's post-Soviet world remains a work in progress - Page 05

Blinken urges Russia to take peaceful path - Page 06

Territorial integrity is the foundation of our statehood - Page 07

England announces end to most Covid restrictions - Page 08

## JANUARY 2022

Pakistan's Premier News & Diplomatic Affairs Magazine

Find us on:  
www.centrelines.com.pk  
www.dnaneews.com.pl  
www.islamabadpost.com.pk

@Postislamabad/ @Editordnaneews

A sister concern of

# Islamabad POST

11# Block 18-A, Awan Plaza,  
G-8 Markez, Islamabad-Pakistan  
Ph: 051-2261960, 051-2266165



# KPK CM wants power transmission system upgradation

Elected public representatives from merged districts, chief executive officer (TESCO) Qazi Tahir and other high ups attended the meeting

## FROM CORRESPONDENT

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan has directed the authorities of Tribal Electric Supply Company (TESCO) to devise short-term, mid-term and long-term plans to strengthen the overall power transmission system in the Newly Merged districts in order to ensure uninterrupted supply of electricity to the people of area adding that the provincial government would provide all out support and required resources for the implementation of those plans. He also directed them to chalk out a fixed schedule for load-management at feeder's level in Tribal Districts and to take necessary steps to reduce the duration of load-shedding to the minimum possible level. He was chairing a meeting held here on Wednesday to improve power supply system in the merged areas.

Elected public representatives from merged districts, chief executive officer (TESCO) Qazi Tahir and other high ups attended the meeting. Elected public representatives apprised the chief minister about power related issues of their respective districts. The chief minister directed the quarters concerned to take solid steps to ensure physical progress on the ongoing projects to improve power infrastructure in merged areas and assured that the provincial government will ensure timely provision of resources to complete the ongoing projects within the stipulated timelines. Briefing about the progress on power related projects in merged area, TESCO authorities informed that under the Accelerated Implementation Program (AIP) work on 8 number of projects of grid stations and transmission lines worth Rs. 5.5 Billion was in full swing, adding that two of them have been completed whereas remaining

six projects would also be completed by June 2022. Similarly, they informed that under the Annual Development Program (ADP) 6 number of projects out of 9 have been completed so far in the merged areas whereas remaining projects would be completed by June 2022. It was further informed that 3 projects of grid stations and transmission lines worth Rs. 2.5 Billion were also being implemented in merged areas through foreign funding out of which one project had already been completed whereas remaining two projects would be completed till the end of this year. Talking the participants, the chief minister said that it was the top most priority of the incumbent government and Prime Minister Imran Khan to provide maximum relief to the people of tribal districts adding that the provincial government was not only committed but was also taking result oriented steps to this end.

## 9 officers of grade-18, 19 transferred, posted

PESHAWAR: The Establishment Department Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Wednesday transferred and posted nine officers of grade-18 and 19 in the larger public interest, said two separate notifications here. According to the notifications, Muhammad Kabir Afridi (PMS BS-19) who was awaiting posting in Establishment Department has been posted Additional Secretary, Home and Tribal Affairs Department against the vacant post. Muhammad Ali Khan (PMS BS-18) who was awaiting posting in Establishment Department has been posted Additional Secretary Labor Department in his own pay and scale against the vacant post. Hassan Abid (PAS BS-18) posted as Additional Secretary Finance Department has been directed to report to the Establishment Department. Ms Neelam Sultana Khattak (PAS BS-18) working as Additional Secretary Finance Department has been directed to report to the Establishment Department. Muhammad Shoaib (PMS BS-18) who was awaiting posting in Establishment Department has been posted Additional Secretary Sports Department in his own pay and scale against the vacant post. Similarly, according to the notification, Wisal Khan (PMS BS-18) Additional Secretary Irrigation Department has been transferred and posted as Deputy Commissioner Kurram, Afaq Wazir (PAS BS-18) DC Kurram has been directed to report to Establishment Department. Khalid Iqbal (PMS BS-18) DC South Waziristan has also been directed to report to Establishment Department and Amjad Miraj (PMS BS-18) Additional Secretary Home and Tribal and Tribal Affairs has been posted as DC South Waziristan.

## DPCC re notifies the prices

FAISALABAD: The District Price Control Committee has re notified the prices of essential items with the consultation of wholesalers, retailers, traders and consumer representatives. During the meeting, reviewing the current market prices of various essential commodities and fluctuations in their availability rates, the prices of various essential commodities for the general markets were unanimously fixed. According to the detailed the Basin would be sold at Rs 145 per kg in wholesale while the retail price was Rs 148 per kg. Similarly, gram white(mota) Rs 195 per kg and Rs 200 per kg respectively White gram(break) at Rs 182 and Rs 185 per kg, black gram(mota) at Rs 138 and Rs 140 per kg, black gram(break) at Rs 130 and Rs 132 per kg, pulse gram(moti) at Rs 143 and Rs 145 per kg. Pulse gram break Rs 136 and Rs 140 per kg, Pulse mash washed foreign Rs 250 and Rs 254 per kg, Pulse mash unwashed foreign Rs 223 and Rs 225 per kg. — DNA

## Students distribute gifts among deserving people



### KAMRAN GUJJAR

JHELUM: Students of Presentation Convent High School Jhelum, Cantt in order to reach the deprived and deserving people brought sweets, chocolates, other eatables, stationery items, warm clothing and shoes. Principal Sr. Bina, junior sisters, coordinators, teachers and representative students from all classes, visited the Govt Special Education Center Jhelum, Apna Ghar (Old Age Center) Saiya Homes (Orphanage) Slums and beggars (around the city).

All the people who received these gifts, on behalf of school, were so obliged and sent prayers to all the students. It was a great pleasure and indescribable experience, seeing tearing smiles on their faces and listening to the words of thanks. Head girl, Zainab Zafar expressed her views by saying that the different experience of bringing laughter on the children's faces, was like achieving the purpose of her life. Vice head girl Anna appreciated the efforts of such institutions which are doing a commendable job, in providing the best health and social services.

## FM invites opposition leaders for South Punjab

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi on Wednesday invited all the opposition leaders to develop a consensus and support efforts for the creation of South Punjab province. In a series of tweets, the foreign minister said that the constitutional amendment in this regard required unity by all the political parties. "I welcome all opposition leaders to put the longstanding desire of the people of South Punjab foremost. Together we must reach consensus on passage of a constitutional amendment for the creation of a separate province for South Punjab," the foreign minister said. He posted, "PTI's manifesto, promises

the creation of a separate province for the people of South Punjab. Irrespective of political affiliation, national interest requires unity on a constitutional amendment. As vice chairman of PTI, I invite opposition leaders to join us in making this a reality." Enumerating PTI's steps to deliver on its promise, the foreign minister said that as a party they continued to work consistently on recognition of South Punjab as a province. "We have instituted separate admin, structure, budgets, jobs & benefits w/ over 35% devpt (development) budget for S Punjab & ring fencing to stop financial re-appropriation," he added in a related tweet. Through reform, he further posted that their focus was on the socioeconomic uplift.

## Prudent use of electricity imperative

### ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Prudent use of available electricity is imperative to bring a marked reduction in "Cost of Production" and focused policies must be designed and implemented particularly for the industrial sector, said Mr. Atif Munir Sheikh, President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry. Addressing a National Stakeholder Consultation (Punjab) on Draft of the National Energy Efficiency and Conservation (NEEC) Policy-2022, he said that Faisalabad is one of the major energy load centers of the country. He said that two mega industrial estates are in the process of colonization and foreign and local investors are contemplating to set up their hi-tech industrial units in Faisalabad which would further enhance its demand. Tracing the history of electricity generation in Pakistan, he said that cheap hydel electricity was available in abundance in 1958 immediately after the construction of major dams in Pakistan. "No doubt it proved a game changer in the history of Pakistan with rapid industrialization", he said and added that we used or rather abused this fuel relentlessly and now we are forced to use electricity generated with costly hydrocarbon fuels which are also fomenting environmental pollution. "Similarly, Allah Almighty had blessed us with gas which was considered sufficient to meet our needs up to 2080 but we have used it ruthlessly and our



gas reserves have depleted at a much faster pace and we are facing acute shortage of electricity by the year 2015", he said and expressed concern that no serious efforts were made to dig out new oil or gas reservoirs. President FCCI said that industry was worst hit with the high cost of electricity and gas in the global markets which further enhanced our cost of production and exporters have to face daunting challenges in the international markets. He said that the R & D department of the FCCI took serious note of this situation and evolved a new computerized system to identify the wastage of electricity in consultation with the University of Engineering & Technology (UET). He said that it was a very effective tool to check the unnecessary wastage of electricity but we could not make it popular among the indus-

trialists due to the poor marketing strategy. He said that Pakistan has potential to save at least 17% of electricity by plugging the leakage and wastage. He said that to provide efficient human resources in this sector, a training center was established in collaboration with National University of Science & Technology (NUST) which is producing certified energy auditors and management professionals. He said that we must utilize their services to minimize the wastage of electricity by energy audit of each and every industrial unit on a voluntary basis. "However, in a later phase it could be declared mandatory to save precious and costly electricity", he said and added that FCCI is ready to cooperate and collaborate with Enercon and NEEC in its energy conservation drive. He appreciated the introduction of energy

saver bulbs and now LEDs instead of old versions of bulbs with filament. "Introduction and manufacturing of starred motors, fans and energy efficient air conditioners are also a right step in the right direction", he said and hoped that these measures would be expedited to save costly electricity in addition to reducing our dependence on imported fuel. He also welcomed the construction of new dams and said that we could also generate 240MW of electricity from the proposed Chiniot dam in the close vicinity of Faisalabad. "This dam could also cater to our needs of portable and irrigation water", he said and added that we must also switch over to solar energy. He said that in the plains of Punjab and Sindh sunlight is available for 17 hours and we must capitalize this gift of Allah Almighty to meet our energy needs.



FAISALABAD: Deputy Commissioner Ali Shahzad gives prizes to Tennis Player. — DNA

## DC meets young tennis star

### BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: Deputy Commissioner Ali Shahzad met with young tennis star Abubakar Talha at his office, here on Wednesday. According to a handout, the father of player and District Sports Officer Sajida Latif were also present on the occasion. The DC presented bouquet of flowers, sports track suit and cheque of Rs.10,000 to the tennis player. The tennis player, belonging to Faisalabad, was the part of winner Pakistan team which had won the ITF U-12 Asia Cup played at Kazakistan for the first time in the history. DC Ali Shahzad congratulated the tennis player and hoped that he would continue practicing with more hard work to brighten the name of Pakistan at international level. Abubakar Talha and his father thanked the DC for motivation.

## Registrar GCWU meets Traffic Police Officer

### BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: Registrar, Government College Women's University Asif A. Malik held a meeting with In-charge Traffic Police Officer Madina Town Major Akhtar Saleem and Muhammad Mubashir on 17th January 2022. In which the matter to control heavy traffic around the university area in an emergency situation was discussed. They also decided that city traffic police will train our university staff to control the traffic in a professional way. So that university security staff may be able to control the traffic in the best possible way after getting complete training from traffic wardens. Training Workshop for the Security Guards of GCWUF is going to be held at Police Lines dated 22 January 2022. Registrar Asif A.malik further emphasized the importance of training sessions about traffic rules, signals, crossing, and parking of vehicles in an accurate manner.

## 15 officials suspended over negligence in Murree tragedy

### NEWS DESK

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister Sardar Usman Buzdar has suspended 15 officials and issued an order for disciplinary action against them in the light of an inquiry report over the Murree tragedy that claimed the lives of 23 people earlier this month. The nation was left stunned when the news of 23 deaths owing to a deadly blizzard in Murree hit the mainstream and social media. The deaths of the tourists, including women and children who had flocked to the scenic spot to witness the snowfall, were nothing short of the tragedy. The visitors 'froze to death' in their vehicles, amidst tonnes of snow in the surroundings as a snowstorm gripped the valley. A five-member inquiry committee set up in connection with the Murree tragedy had recorded the statements of government officials and surviving tourists and prepared a report on January 16 which was presented to the Punjab CM the next day. Addressing a press conference later, CM Buzdar said, "15 officers have been suspended and disciplinary action has been ordered against them over Murree tragedy. Commissioner Rawalpindi has also been recommended to be removed from his post while Assistant Commissioner Murree has been removed from his post." The Punjab chief minister said, "I've fulfilled my promise of a transparent investigation into the tragedy to the nation".

The chief minister said that the tragedy that took place in Murree was extremely painful in all respects. He said that a high-level inquiry committee headed by Additional Chief Secretary was constituted to determine the causes and those responsible for this mishap. "I had promised a transparent inquiry into the tragedy along with action against those responsible which has been fulfilled." Provincial Law Minister Raja Muhammad Basharat and SACM Hasaan Khawar were also present during the presser. The investigation report revealed that the officers of the concerned departments kept informing each other about the situation through WhatsApp and did not take any action. The officers could not understand the situation nor did they take the situation seriously. Due to this the rescue plan could not be implemented, it added. The committee, led by Punjab Additional Chief Secretary Zafar Nasarullah with Punjab Food Secretary Ali Sarfraz, Agriculture Secretary Asad Gillani and Additional Inspector General of Police Farooq Mazhar as members, in its report said that many officers also saw WhatsApp messages late, CCPO, CTO, Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner and Assistant Commissioner showed irresponsibility while the local office of Rescue 1122 including Forest Department took no action. In the report, the inquiry committee held the administration responsible for the Murree tragedy and wrote that the incident occurred due to administrative negligence.

## Stop demolition of public library

To Editor, Daily Islamabad Post, Sir,

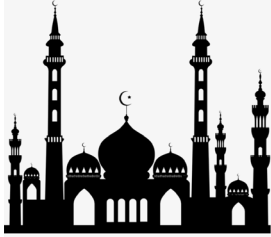
With due respect, it is stated that I am Ali Ullah, a resident of Parachinar City, tehsil Upper Kurram District Kurram. Today I'm writing this letter to you to take your focus on a serious social problem which the people of our area have been dealing with for a long time. Books are an important need of the time. Through books, nations and countries become developed. For a good society, it is important that its people are educated and love books. European countries are on the path of development today and have left Muslim countries behind. The main reason is the love of books. People who love books have very few problems. Kurram Parachinar District is a small area of Pakistan. Its people are very intelligent and educated. But there is no government library in this area. Public Library built in 1982, is now being converted into an officer's quarters. The demolition of the library building is underway. Library books are being moved to an unknown location. This is a big injustice to book lovers in Parachinar. Through your newspaper, I would like to implore the concerned institutions and responsible people to stop the demolition of the library building immediately and make it a modern library on this site. Thank You.

Your Sincerely,  
Ali Ullah Turi  
Parachinar, District Kurram

## 45 police officials suspended

FAISALABAD: City Police Officer (CPO) Ghulam Mubasshar Mekan has suspended 45 police officers and officers on charge of patronizing the criminals. Police spokesman said on Sunday that among these policemen SHO Kur police station Inspector Muhammad Arshad, Incharge police post Madanpura Asad Jameel, Incharge police post 208 Chak Waseem Tariq, Muharrar Rail Bazaar police station Ata Ullah, Muharrar Sargodha Road police station Saeed Inman, Muharrars police posts 208 Chak, Channan Kay, Gulistan Colony, Tariq Abad and Nisar Colony, Reader Circle People's Colony Tariq Rasheed, Naib Muharrar Khurrianwala police station Faizan Majeed, ASI Atif Munir, ASI Liaqat Ali, one head constable, 3 drivers and 26 constables. — APP

## SERVICES



## Namaz Timings

Fajr.....	05:44 am
Zohr.....	12:18 pm
Asr.....	03:48 pm
Maghrib.....	05:26 pm
Isha.....	06:53 pm



## Hotels &amp; Restaurants

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



## Airlines

Turkish Airlines.....	8494949
-----------------------	---------



## Emergency

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



## Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....	115
PIA Flight Info.....	114
PIA Cargo.....	9280979
Railway Inquiry.....	117
Railway Exchange.....	9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi.....	5555489
CAA.....	9281092



## Hospitals

CMH.....	5611111
MH.....	5611116
Cantt Hospital.....	9270907-11
DHQ.....	5556311-4
RGH.....	9290301-7
Holy Family.....	9290322-7
PIMS.....	9261170-79
Polyclinic.....	9218300-09
Shifa International.....	4603666



## Departments

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



## Complaints

Water Tanker Service E-7, F-10 & F-11.....	9204654
G-5, G-6, G-7, G-8.....	9203883
G-9, G-10, G-11, G-12, H-8.....	9266316
Wapda Islamabad.....	9217579
Wapda Rawalpindi.....	111-309-309



## Islamabad Metropolitan

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



## Wasa Water Tank

Rawalpindi.....	0331-5022125
-----------------	--------------

## Govt urged to allow trade with Afghanistan in Pak Rupees

Muhammad Shakeel Munir, President, ICCI said that Afghanistan was already facing problems of food items and the latest move by the commercial banks to stop receipt of payments in foreign currency would adversely affect the export

## STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Haji Muhammad Hashim Khan Achakzai, President, Chaman Chamber of Commerce & Industry (CCCI) visited Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry and shared the issues with Muhammad Shakeel Munir, President ICCI being faced by the business community in doing trade with Afghanistan. Jamsaid Akhtar Sheikh Senior Vice President and Muhammad Faheem Khan, Vice President ICCI were also present at the occasion. Haji Muhammad Hashim Khan Achakzai said that the local banks have suddenly stopped receiving payments in foreign currency and refused issuing E-Form for export and import with Afghanistan due to which the business community was facing great problems. He said that this situation



has resulted in a massive halt of vehicles at Pak-Afghan border loaded with various products and called upon the government to take urgent notice of this problem to resolve this critical issue. He said that trade of millions of dollars per day was taking place between Pakistan and Afghanistan

through the Chaman border and emphasized that the government should keep the Chaman border crossing point open for 24 hours in order to further facilitate trade promotion between the two countries. He further stressed that the government should address payment issues for doing trade with Afghanistan on

priority basis so that Pakistan may not lose its market in Afghanistan. Speaking at the occasion, Muhammad Shakeel Munir, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) said that Afghanistan was already facing problems of food items and the latest move by the commercial banks to

stop receipt of payments in foreign currency would adversely affect the export of food items to Afghanistan creating more problems for Afghan people. He urged that the government should allow trade with Afghanistan in Pak Rupees that would greatly facilitate in promoting bilateral trade between the two

countries. He said that if this issue was not resolved urgently, other regional and international countries would capture the market in Afghanistan that would be a big blow for Pakistan. Jamsaid Akhtar Sheikh Senior Vice President and Muhammad Faheem Khan Vice President ICCI said that Afghanistan was a gateway for Pakistan to Central Asian countries and emphasized that the government should take all possible measures to provide maximum facilitation to the Pakistani business community in promoting trade with Afghanistan. He stressed that a joint bilateral mechanism should be worked out with Afghanistan for a win-win situation. It would keep the employment and production activities of our export-oriented industries steady and help them further enhance exports with Afghanistan.



ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Farrukh Habib talking to media. – DNA

## NAB requests IHC to trash Maryam's acquittal plea

ISLAMABAD: National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has asked the Islamabad High Court (IHC) to trash an acquittal plea filed by PML-N Vice President Maryam Nawaz Sharif over her conviction in the Avenfield reference by an accountability court. The NAB in its reply submitted before the IHC said that the acquittal plea filed by Maryam Nawaz is not fit for hearing and should be rejected with exemplary fines imposed against the petitioner. "The Supreme Court of Pakistan has already decided over allegations in the acquittal plea and later the accountability court also fulfilled legal merits while deciding the Avenfield case," it said. The NAB said in its report that the father of Maryam Nawaz, Mian Muhammad Nawaz Sharif and her brothers Hassan and Hussain are already absconders in the case and had even not provided the money trial of Avenfield apartment. "Nawaz Sharif should first provide details regarding the source of money used for purchasing the London properties," the NAB reply stated and added that allegations on a supervising judge appointed on the apex court's order were a contempt of court. Meanwhile, IrfanQadir Advocate will submit a reply on the acquittal appeals from Maryam Nawaz and Capt (retd) Safdar on February 10. – APP

## Singing, painting fixtures at arts council

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Punjab is a land of art and culture where culture has always flourished. The colors of Punjabi, Saraiki, Pothohari and Balochi culture are prominent in Punjab. With the efforts of Chief Minister Punjab, Talent Hunt Program 2022 is an important step for the promotion of arts and culture.

These views were expressed by Principal Post Graduate College Attock Professor Majid Waheed Bhatti on the occasion of organizing the first phase of district level competitions of Punjab Talent Hunt 2022. In the first phase, a large number of young people participated in singing, painting and short story writing competitions. Director Punjab Arts Council Rawalpindi Waqar Ahmad said that Punjab Talent is a unique program of its kind which is bringing a special image of Punjab and Pakistan to the world. He said that the purpose of the Talent Hunt program is to motivate the youth as the future of Pakistan is connected with these youth.

In the competitions held at Government Post Graduate College Attock, Hubble, Robin Gulzar and Muhammad Usman won first, second and third positions in singing competitions. In the painting competition, MuqaddasNazir came first, while Um-e-Salma came second and ShamsaKanwal remained third. In the short story writing competition, Noman Younis won the first prize, while AzmaParveen came second and Abdul Ra-fay got third position.

## Tariq Banuri re-assumes charge as Chairman HEC

ISLAMABAD: In the light of court decision, Tariq Banuri has re-assumed charge as Chairman Higher Education Commission (HEC), Pakistan with a renewed commitment to safeguarding the students' right to quality education. In a statement on Wednesday, Chairman HEC Tariq Banuri extended gratitude to the Islamabad High Court (IHC) for upholding the rule of law and maintaining the autonomy of a premier institution of the country.

He said he is looking forward to resuming work with all the stakeholders of the higher education sector, including the Vice Chancellors, senior government officials, and HEC staff to enhance the quality and research in the higher education institutions. He said he will resolve the issues facing the HEC employees, assuring that he is always available to help them resolve their issues. It is to note that Chairman HEC Tariq Banuri remained out of office since March 26, 2021 and has rejoined the office after a hiatus of around 11 months. – APP

## Imam for making easy credit facility

ISLAMABAD: Minister for National Food Security and Research Syed Fakhar Imam on Wednesday stressed the need for ensuring easy access to credit facility for growers in order to promote and develop agricultural sector in the country. The Minister chaired a meeting of the National Coordination Committee of Agriculture Transformation Plan to discuss the progress so far made under transformation programme. The meeting also discussed about the subsidy being provided to farmers on different agriculture inputs, said a press release issued here. Imam said that accessibility to credit was important for achieving sustainable agriculture development and economic growth in the country. He said the agriculture sector development and prosperity of farming community across the country was top priority of the government, adding the government was taking measures to enhance per-acre crop output in the country for enhancing food safety and security. – APP

## PTI government will complete its tenure: Kanwal Shauzab

ISLAMABAD: Member National Assembly and Parliamentary Secretary for Planning and Development Kanwal Shauzab on Wednesday said Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government would complete its five-year constitutional tenure despite opposition's hue and cry. Talking to a private news channel, in a response to Maryam Nawaz's remarks, she said making tall claims as government of serving the people under the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan was taking all possible steps to address the challenges including economic and social issues. She said PML-N's politics of chaos and anarchy would not succeed, adding that those engaged in marches would not succeed in their mission. She expressed the resolve that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf would clinch the general elections 2023 with thumping majority. Kanwal said Nawaz Sharif had looted the national exchequer ruthlessly, adding, the spokespersons of PML-N were defending a corrupt mafia which had been involved in corruption. – DNA



## Over Rs27 will be charged on mobile card Consumers will not get Rs72.77 from Rs100 mobile phone card

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The government has slapped over 27 rupees tax on a Rs100 mobile phone card. According to the sources, the govt will now charge Rs13.04 as withholding tax from the consumers while Rs14.19 will be deducted as sales tax from the consumers. The sources further said that the withholding tax on a Rs100 mobile phone card has been raised to 15 percent from 10 percent whereas the sales tax will be 19.5 percent. The consumers will not get Rs72.77 from Rs100 mobile phone card.

## Senate body lauds information ministry

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Standing Committee on Information and Broadcasting Senator Faisal Javed Khan Wednesday lauded the Information Ministry to carry out fast-track digitization of state media institutions under PM's 'Digital Pakistan' vision. Presiding over meeting of Standing Committee on Information and Broadcasting, FaisalJaved said it was imperative to transform the state media organizations on modern lines to meet new era tasks. Managing Director Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) MobashirHasan apprised the meeting that a project worth Rs 786.79 million had been launched for upgrading and digitalization of APP. Out of the total amount, some Rs 671 million would be spent to

procure equipment for the overall transformation of APP from textual to digital mode. Data centres and new state-of-the-art studios were also being set up for the purpose, he added. Senator Faisal Javed appreciated the MD APP for transforming the state news agency on modern lines and in accordance with the vision of the prime minister. The meeting was also briefed on overall functioning, human resource and financial portfolio, current strength and footprint of the state news agency, mandated to create, develop and disseminate content for public consumption through different media. The MD APP apprised the Senate body that there had been over 400 subscribers of the news agency which had bilateral news exchange

agreements with 50 international news agencies. It also had international clients including Agence France-Presse (AFP), Gulf News, Khaleej Times, BBC Monitoring, China Economic Net, Al-Jazeera and others. He said the APP was offering news services to its clients in multiple national and regional languages including Arabic and Chinese and English. Its services for different forms of news media included textual, digital, pictorial, video, features etc, he added. The meeting was informed that the APP had its correspondents in foreign countries to disseminate Pakistan related news to the local subscribers, and their deployment was made on merit under a transparent process. – APP

## Pakistan played major role for the peace

Pakistan saved Afghanistan from being isolated, he said, during his participation in the ECO summit, he had talked to its members whereas during extraordinary meeting of the foreign ministers of OIC in Islamabad, Pakistan portrayed actual picture of the war-torn country

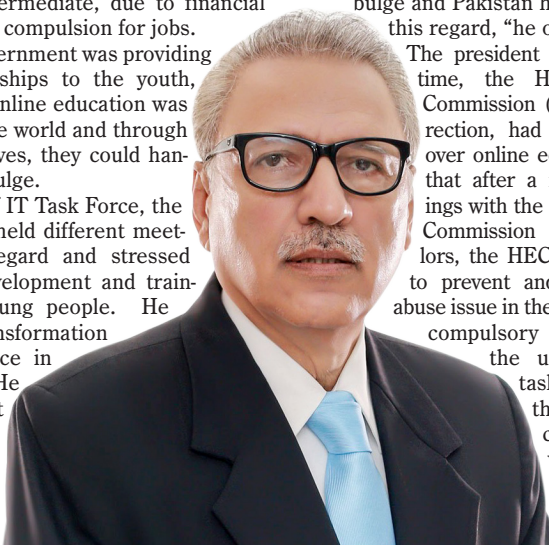
DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi, on Wednesday, said that Pakistan played a major role in the peace and stability in Afghanistan. During an interview, the president said the world recognized Pakistan as 'a peaceful and responsible nuclear state, governed by morality and moral values'. Pakistan saved Afghanistan from being isolated, he said, during his participation in the ECO summit, he had talked to its members whereas during extraordinary meeting of the foreign ministers of OIC in Islamabad, Pakistan portrayed actual picture of the war-torn country. Contrary to Pakistan's role, the president said India's profile was diminishing due to its antics. Today, the world recognized Prime Minister Imran Khan's initiatives. The president also stressed upon the adequate training and increased enrollment of students in the IT sector. He said the AIU was imparting online education. The Virtual University had granted 48,000 admissions this year. Such mode of education was in-

expensive and correlated with the changes taking part at the global level. The president observed that 10 per cent of the youth could not progress to the next levels after doing their intermediate, due to financial constraints and compulsion for jobs. He said the government was providing 50,000 scholarships to the youth, stressing that online education was the future of the world and through modern initiatives, they could handle the youth bulge. As Chairman of IT Task Force, the president also held different meetings in this regard and stressed upon skills development and training for the young people. He said huge transformation was taking place in the IT sector. He projected that the country's IT exports could swell to \$8 to 10 billion by the year 2025.

"IT is a new industry of the world which requires a trained youth bulge. The world requires such human resources. Japan, Germany, US and China all require the youth bulge and Pakistan has huge scope in this regard," he observed. The president said for the first time, the Higher Education Commission (HEC), on his direction, had framed a policy over online education. He said that after a number of meetings with the Higher Education Commission and vice-chancellors, the HEC devised a policy to prevent and eradicate drug abuse issue in the universities. The compulsory committees of the universities were tasked to look into the issue and take certain steps whereas effective legislation was enacted. President Dr

Alvi said through strenuous efforts, they created awareness for the issues confronted by the differently abled persons. Physically retarded persons were mentally equal to normal human beings so efforts should be made to ensure their access to public places, he added. The president said that they should be imparted education with job opportunities so that they could work as independent and earn their livelihood. About the efficacy of the Federal Ombudsman office, the president said a public complaint was being resolved within 58 average days period. Decisions were made swiftly over a wide range of complaints arising out of utility bills, CDA, WAPDA, NHA, universities, tax, insurance, banks and federal institutions, women harassment and inheritance rights. The process required no lawyer and fee. About 150,000 cases had been decided last year. To another topic, the president observed that minorities were protected in Pakistan and enjoyed equal rights. The executive and judiciary and other organs of states had taken prompt actions in the recent past to protect minorities.



## Briefs

## SMEDA to organize webinar

ISLAMABAD: The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) will organize a help desk on Human Resources Management (HRM) trends and challenges for SMEs for profitable business growth on 25 January. The session will be organized by SMEDA under National Business Development Program (NBDDP) for SMEs, to extend non-financial advisory services to small and medium businesses, according to sources in the authority.

The training program will provide information about role of HR in SMEs, changes in key function of HR in relation to SMEs, employer branding through HR, hiring, training, appraisal and performance function in SMEs, policy formulations structure for SMEs, behavioral studies and role of HR, HR automation for SMEs, HR skills required with changing facets of business environment, HR agility a need of SMEs and how it can be achieved.

The session would be attended by CEOs, Directors, management representatives, small business owners, potential entrepreneurs, students and the personnel who wish to pursue a career in the field of HRM. - APP

## Gwadar Old City Master plan in making

ISLAMABAD: Gwadar Old City Master Plan is in making on fast-track promising new avenues of progress and prosperity for local community. This has been stated by Director General of Gwadar Development Authority (GDA) Mujeeb-ur-Rehman Qambrani during a public hearing at GDA auditorium organized by Gwadar Development Organization.

According to Gwadar Pro, Gwadar, old City Master plan features conservation of historical places, old markets including Shahi Bazaar, Janaat Bazaar, rehabilitation of city arteries, revamping of drainage and sewerage system, skill education for Gwadar's boat-makers.

GDA DG Mujeeb Ur Rehman said that GDA has a pivotal role in Gwadar Old City Master Plan on modern lines. In order to take local people on board seeking their insights in the formation of Gwadar Old City Master Plan, open court has been held, he added.

## Railways transport 25,054 tons per day from Karachi

ISLAMABAD: The freight sector has shown considerable improvement through transporting 25,054 tons per day from Karachi during the year 2020-21 as compared to the 23,051 tons per day during 2019-20 due to the consistent efforts of Pakistan Railways.

The official said that competitive freight rates to attract more traffic have been introduced while high capacity trucks have been inducted in the current fleet for swift movement/unloading of coal, an official told APP. He said the outsourcing of freight trains has also been initiated under Pakistan Railways Freight Transportation Company (PRFTC) to earn more revenue for the department. "The commercial management of luggage vans and brake vans with different trains has been outsourced under public private partnership and online e-ticketing through Jazz Cash, UBL Omni and credit cards has been introduced to facilitate traveling passengers at their door steps and to attract more passengers," he added. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Members of Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry in a group photo with Asif Mahmood Jah Federal Tax Ombudsman. - DNA

## 1405 accused convicted during Chairman NAB tenure

Effective National Anti Corruption Strategy and Accountability for All policy of NAB have started yielding remarkable excellent results as compared to previous years

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Honorable Mr. Justice Javed Iqbal, Chairman NAB chaired a meeting to review overall performance of NAB especially convictions made during the tenure of Honorable Mr. Justice Javed Iqbal, Chairman NAB from October 10, 2017 till Dec 31, 2021 under Section 10 of National Accountability Ordinance (NAO)-1999 and under Section 25 (b) of NAO-1999 at NAB Headquarters. Zahir Shah, Deputy Chairman NAB, Syed Asghar-Haider, Prosecutor General Accountability (PGA), Masood Alam Khan, DG Operations, other senior officers of NAB besides all Director General (DG's), Regional Bureaus of NAB attended the meeting via video link.

The Honorable Mr. Justice Javed Iqbal, Chairman NAB appreciated the excellent performance of all Regional Bureaus of NAB for putting excellent work in bringing the corrupt elements to justice as per law where the Learned Accountability Courts of the country convicted 1405 accused persons due to vigorous prosecution of all Regional Bureaus of NAB in coordination with Operations and Prosecution Divisions, NAB Headquarters. Chairman NAB said that NAB always believes in working in accordance with Law. The effective National Anti Corruption Strategy and Accountability for All policy of NAB have started yielding remarkable excellent



results as compared to previous years. During the meeting, it was informed that 10x accused persons were convicted in 2021 till Dec 31, 2021 by learned Accountability Courts Rawalpindi/Islamabad on the basis of solid evidence through vigorous prosecution of NAB Rawalpindi under section 10 of NAO-1999 through vigorous prosecution. Similarly in the year 2020, 13x accused persons, in the year 2019, 09x accused persons, while in the year 2018 and 20x accused persons were convicted by learned Accountability Courts under section 10 of NAO-1999. It was further informed that during 2021, 24x accused persons were convicted by different learned Accountability Courts Rawalpindi/Islamabad on the basis of solid evidence

through vigorous prosecution of NAB Rawalpindi under section 25(b) of NAO-1999. Similarly in the year 2020, 21x accused persons, in the year 2019, 23x accused persons while in the year 2018, 08x accused persons were convicted by different learned Accountability Courts under section 25(b) of NAO-1999. During the meeting, it was informed that 7x accused persons were convicted in the year 2021, on the basis of solid evidence through vigorous prosecution of NAB Lahore in learned Accountability Courts, Lahore under section 10 of NAO-1999. Similarly during the year 2020, 12x accused persons, in the year 2019, 03x accused persons, in the year 2018, 28x accused persons, while in the year 2017, 12x accused persons were convicted by learned Account-

ability Courts under section 10 of NAO-1999. During the meeting, it was further informed that 23x accused persons were convicted by learned Accountability Courts, Lahore during 2021 on the basis of solid evidence through vigorous prosecution of NAB Lahore under Section 25(b) of NAO-1999. In the year 2020, NAB Lahore got 26x accused persons convicted, in the year 2019, 59x accused persons and similarly in the year 2018, 62x whereas in the year 2017 from Oct 10, 2017 to Dec 31, 2017 13x accused persons were convicted by different learned Accountability Courts under section 25(b) of NAO-1999.

During the meeting, DG Operations informed that during 2021, 53x accused persons were convicted by different learned Accountability Courts of Karachi on the basis of solid evidence through vigorous prosecution of NAB Karachi under section 10 of NAO-1999. In the year 2020, 24x accused persons, in the year 2019, 56x accused persons, similarly in the year 2018, 72x accused persons while from October 10 to 31 December 2017, 13x accused persons were convicted by different learned Accountability Courts under section 10 of NAO-1999. DG Operations further informed that during 2021, 23x accused persons were convicted by different learned Accountability Courts of Karachi on the basis of solid evidence through vigorous prosecution of NAB Karachi under section 25(b) of NAO-1999.

## FM invites opposition leaders to support efforts for South Punjab

Enumerating PTI's steps to deliver on its promise, the foreign minister said that as a party they continued to work consistently on recognition of South Punjab as a province

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi on Wednesday invited all the opposition leaders to develop a consensus and support efforts for the creation of South Punjab province. In a series of tweets, the foreign minister said that the constitutional amendment in this regard required unity by all the political parties. "I welcome all opposition leaders to put the longstanding desire of the people of South Punjab foremost. Together we must reach consensus on passage of a constitutional amendment for the creation of a separate province for South Punjab," the foreign minister said. He posted, "PTI's manifesto, promises the creation of a separate province for the people of South Punjab. Irrespective of political affiliation, national interest requires unity on a constitutional amendment. As vice chairman of PTI, I invite opposition leaders to join us in making this a reality." Enumerating PTI's steps to deliver on its promise, the foreign minister said that as a party they continued to work consistently on recognition of South Punjab as a province. "We have instituted separate admin, structure, budgets, jobs & benefits w/ over 35% devpt (development) budget for S Punjab & ring fencing to stop financial re-appropriation," he added in a related tweet. Through reform, he further posted that their focus was on the socioeconomic uplift. - DNA

## Ministry for all out efforts to complete low-cost project in Alipur Frash

ISLAMABAD: The Ministry of Housing and Works are making all out efforts to complete low-cost project in AlipurFrash, a project of the Naya Pakistan Housing Development Authority (NAPHDA). The excavation work for 26 blocks has been carried out and the raft was prepared in two blocks while a steel cage for columns was developed for 16 blocks to be established under the project, an official in the Ministry

of Housing and Works told APP. He said that under the project a total of 2,400 flats were being constructed, out of which 400 flats were reserved for rehabilitating dwellers of KatchiAbadis (slum areas) of the federal capital. The official said that currently around 1,000 workers were deployed on the project site and the number would be increased from 3,000 to 5,000 in coming days, which would not only help in completion of project in time, but will also enhance employment opportunities. He said that a site laboratory was set up at the project site to test the quality of construction material, which would help not only test the material used in construction but also save time. The ministry was taking various steps to facilitate low income people of the country by restarting stalled schemes, constructing new apartments worth Rs109b, he added. - DNA

completion of project in time, but will also enhance employment opportunities. He said that a site laboratory was set up at the project site to test the quality of construction material, which would help not only test the material used in construction but also save time. The ministry was taking various steps to facilitate low income people of the country by restarting stalled schemes, constructing new apartments worth Rs109b, he added. - DNA



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Qatar Sheikh Saoud Bin Abdulrahman Al Thani offering Fataha on sad demise of the brother of Chairman Senate, Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani at his residence. - DNA

## New taxes to increase people's miseries: RCCI

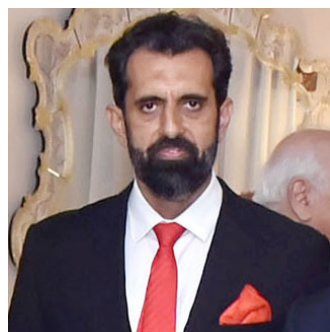
Sales tax has also been imposed on all types of machinery. This will increase business costs and reduce investment, reduce employment opportunities and further reduce the economy

DNA

RAWALPINDI: A meeting of the Standing Committee on Tax Affairs was held at the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI). The meeting expressed grave concern over the Finance Supplementary Act 2022 and the mini-budget. Chamber President Nadeem Rauf said that for the first time it has been seen that so many amendments have been made in the Supplementary Bill. Usually such amendments are made in the finance bill. He said that the business community is not against documenting the economy. A number of unnecessary amendments have been made in the Supplementary

Bill aimed at increasing harassment rather than documentation. The existing taxpayers are overburdened, he added. Withdrawal of exemptions and imposition of 17% sales tax will increase people's miseries and cause the economy to shrink and stagnate, he said.

The meeting was chaired by President NadeemRauf and Chairman Committee FarazFazal. Group Leader SohailAltatf, Vice President Talat Awan, Former Presidents Kashif Shabbir, Asad Mashhad, Mian Humayun, Executive Members and Committee Members were also present on the occasion. Nadeem Rauf said that there are serious concerns over digital payment of Rs. 2.5 lakhs to the business community as at present banks do not



have the capacity to adopt digital payment methods. Keeping ground realities, this is neither applicable nor implementable, he said. Sales tax has been increased to 17% for food items, machinery, solar, poultry, bakery items, steel, gold and silver, hospitals, medi-

cines, milk, eggs on which there was tax exemption or minimum tax. The common man and the businessman are already suffering with inflation. Inflation has now jumped to double digits. This would cause the economy to shrink and stagnate, he cautioned.

He said that unfortunately budgeting and policy making is done without consulting stakeholders. In the health sector, taxes have also been levied on medical devices, raw materials used in medicines, which will make treatment more expensive. In the field of education, the imposition of sales tax on books, pencils and stationery will also make education more expensive. Sales tax has also been imposed on all types of machinery. This will

increase business costs and reduce investment, reduce employment opportunities and further reduce the economy. Group leader SohailAltatf said that the Rawalpindi Chamber would not remain silent. The concerns on supplementary finance bill will be raised at every forum to bring relief to the business community and the public. Committee Chairman FarazFazal answered the questions of the participants regarding ID card requirement, POS system, online and digital payments. He said that for the economic development of the country, it is necessary to increase business opportunities and facilitate, economic growth is not possible by setting tax targets or raising tax rates. The FBR needs to increase its capacity.

## Two schools sealed over covid cases

RAWALPINDI: The District Health Authority has sealed two schools in Rawalpindi after detection of Coronavirus positivity among nine students. The health authority spokesman DrWaqar Ahmed informed Wednesday that Government Boys Higher Secondary School, Khahyban-e-Sir Syed and Govt girls high school, DheriHasanabad were sealed as the samples of three and six students were diagnosed with positive symptoms, respectively. DrWaqar said that the schools have been closed for ten days and added that the samples of 15 student's have also been taken, results of which would be received on January 20. He said the health authority had also launched a crackdown on those violating the government-prescribed standard operating procedures (SOPs) to prevent the spread of the virus. "Please wear masks and get everyone around you vaccinated as soon as possible", the health officer stressed. - APP

## WB Country Director calls on Energy Minister

ISLAMABAD: World Bank's Country Director for Pakistan Mr. NajyBenhassine called on Federal Minister of Energy HammadAzhar here Wednesday and reviewed progress about the World Bank funded projects going on in the energy sector. Mr. NajyBenhassine appreciated the energy sector reforms undertaken by the Government, said a press release. Appreciating World Bank's support in economic development of Pakistan, Minister HammadAzhar said Pakistan values its partnership with the World Bank and other financial institutions. HammadAzhar lauded the World Bank's role in support of various development initiatives of the Government of Pakistan, especially in the energy sector. He underscored importance of the Bank's assistance for Pakistan's energy sector reform programme. The Minister hoped that continuous engagement with the World Bank for bringing improvements in the power sector will further promote governance, efficiency, service delivery and shall bring benefits for the common people. - APP

## IESCO notifies power suspension programme

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Wednesday issued a power suspension programme for Thursday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work.

According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 09:00 AM to 04:00 PM, Kiar, Sihala College, New Rawat, Basali, RCCI, Red Co, RCC-2 & 3, DHA Homes, PindJatla, HPT-1, Modern Flour Mill, Mil-latabad, Chakra, Neuros Course , Dhok Chowdhury, KTM, Range Road, Zircon Heights, DG Khan Cement Factory, Mathial Feeders, 09:00 AM to 02:00 AM, Bani Gala, Khanna Dak, TufailShaheed, Sohdran, F-10, G- 10/3, H / 8/2, MH Steel, G-11/4, NPF, NIH, Guldana, Gharial, TDCP, Golf City, MahfoozShaheed, LohiBhair, Athal, Sixth, Sixth Road, Faizabad, Airport , Committee Chowk, Major Masood, Mangtal, Quaidabad, BaghSardaran, TenchBhatta, Dhok Chowdhury, Officer Colony, Nest Road, Lakho Road, Mohanpura, Haider Road, Adam G Road, Bostan Khan Road, Hamk, Murree Brewery, AskariSeon, Chontra, Dhamyal, Gulshan-e-Saeed, Old Rawat, Kahuta City-1, AbrarShaheed, Ghazan Khan, Nara Motor, Mandira, JhattaHathial, KarnabKaswal, Syed Qasran, Bhal, Ghazi Kohli, Salargah, BohiGhar, Wahdat Colony, GarhiAlghana, Industrial, Col. Sher Khan, PatharGarha, Hatian, Ghorghashi, FawaraChowk, Aminabad, Shadi Khan, IshtiaqShaheed, Soni, SajjadShaheed, Fateh Jang City, MahfoozShaheed, Khor, Brut Gala, Darbar Mai Toal, Khoi Rata S, T, Dana Bhal, CharohiDongi, Siri, City, Kariala, JandrutDabsi, Dutto, Mojan, Nomanpura feeders and surroundings. - APP

## Blanket Crypto ban

THE FIA Director-General Dr Saanullah Abbasi has said that the agency will approach the PTA for blocking websites dealing in cryptocurrencies to prevent fraud and possible money laundering. Recently, the SBP's "risk-benefit analysis" committee recommended that since cryptocurrencies were depleting national foreign reserves and encouraging illicit financing, there should be a complete ban on virtual currencies and other related activities in Pakistan. It is unfortunate that a decision regarding a blanket ban has been taken by a group of individuals who have little to no understanding of what they are dealing with in the first place. This however, does not come as a surprise given our history of banning platforms such as YouTube and TikTok only to the detriment of our people and economy.

The SBP's rationale for this recommendation is that existing laws governing electronic crimes, foreign exchange remittances and anti-money laundering lack provisions for criminalising the misuse of cryptocurrencies. The issue of fraud however, is also prevalent in other sectors and spaces; this does not mean that they must be closed off completely. Regulatory mechanisms could have been worked out and implemented if the authorities had made an attempt to understand the issue at hand and also had the expertise to do so at their disposal. After all, there are examples of other countries that are doing the same. Experts and business leaders are right in pointing out that a blanket ban will only backfire and further damage an already struggling economy. This approach and mindset of imposing bans to deal with emerging risks or uncertainties is highly flawed and the authorities should have evaluated the impact such a decision will have on the huge investments people have made in the digital economy.

It is very much possible that a few months down the line this decision may be revised or reversed. The damage will be done regardless. This is another instance where our decision makers have been exposed for being behind the curve and out of their depth. There is clearly a generation gap that needs to be addressed here and it is imperative that our investigative and regulatory agencies are provided with the requisite training so that they are up-to-date with developments in the digital space. Otherwise, Pakistan will continue to suffer and the dream of transitioning to a digital Pakistan will only be fulfilled on paper.

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti  
Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

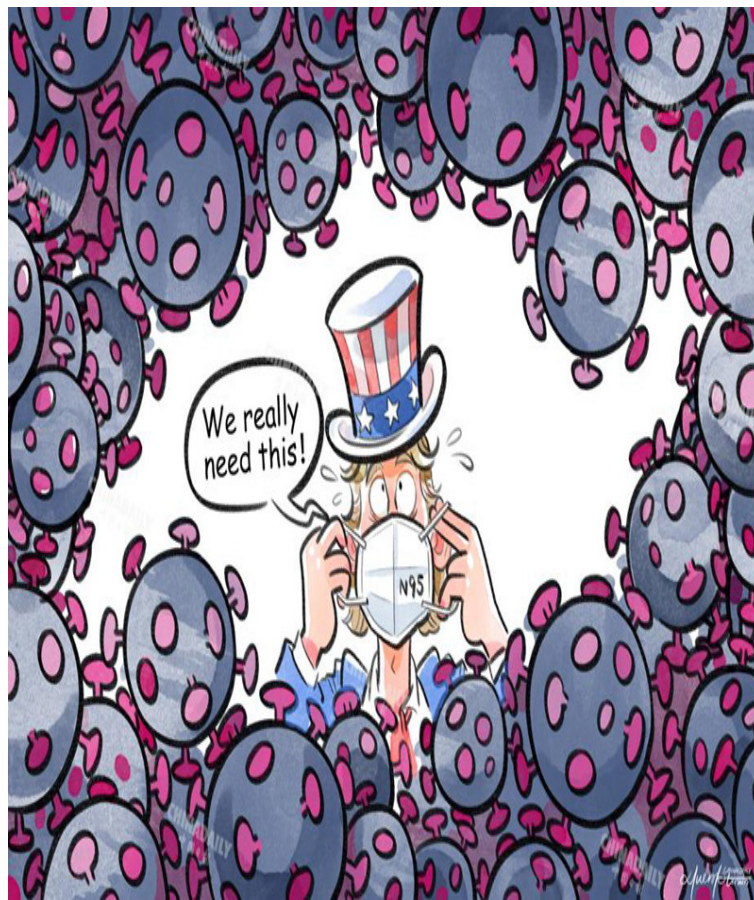
Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 02 Issue: 217

Email: [dailyisbpost@gmail.com](mailto:dailyisbpost@gmail.com)

Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad



## Negligent Parliamentarians

THE new year would not be inaugurated without the yearly custom of parliamentarians failing to file their returns on time. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has issued a notification against 150 lawmakers for their suspension due to not submitting the details of their assets to the ECP, thus violating ECP rules.

Section 137 of the Elections Act 2017 mandates members of the Assembly and the Senate submit details of their assets before the close of the year, or risk having their membership suspended. It is unfortunate that despite extensions of the deadline from late December to mid-January, 150 lawmakers still could not be bothered to follow the law and submit their details to the ECP.

It is even more regrettable that this list of suspended lawmakers does not only include newcomers or junior politicians who perhaps could be excused because of their inexperience, but veteran politicians who have been in government institutions for decades, including MQM Pakistan chief Dr Khalid Maqbool Siddiqui, federal ministers including Noorul Haq Qadri, Hammad Azhar, Shafiqat Mahmood, Fehmida Mirza, and ministers of state including Farukh Habib and Shabbir Ali Qureshi. The majority of the offenders, who were unable to fulfil this basic annual legal requirement belonged to major political parties, who, one would think, should have various guidelines and checks on members to comply with their duties of retaining their membership.

This is not just a small bureaucratic issue—it reflects a larger problem of people in power skirting the laws requiring documentation, transparency and accountability themselves while preaching to the public. No private citizens will pay heed to the government's call to join the tax network when a large number of parliamentarians themselves don't bother to submit details of their assets, and when certain government figures themselves are not registered with the FBR. A majority of those suspended this year also had their membership suspended last year for the exact reason—showing the current measures in place are not having a deterrent effect, and need to be made more stringent.

## Putin's post-Soviet world remains a work in progress

James Dorsey

The generals face African and Western sanctions that could make incorporating what bits of the country they control into the Russian world an attractive proposition

RUSSIAN civilisationalism is proving handy as President Vladimir Putin seeks to expand the imaginary boundaries of his Russian World, whose frontiers are defined by Russian speakers and adherents to Russian culture rather than international law and/or ethnicity. Mr. Putin's disruptive and expansive nationalist ideology has underpinned his aggressive approach to Ukraine since 2014 with the annexation of Crimea and the stoking of insurgencies in the east of the country. It also underwrites this month's brief intervention in Kazakhstan, even if it was in contrast to Ukraine at the invitation of the Kazakh government. Mr. Putin's nationalist push in territories that were once part of the Soviet Union may be par for the course even if it threatens to rupture relations between Russia and the West and potentially spark a war. It helps Russia compensate for the strategic depth it lost with the demise of communism in Europe and the collapse of the Soviet Union. However, equally alarmingly, Mr. Putin appears to be putting building blocks in place that would justify expanding his Russian World in one form or another beyond the boundaries of the erstwhile Soviet Union. In doing so, he demonstrates the utility of employing plausibly deniable mercenaries not only for military and geopolitical but also ideological purposes. Standing first in line is the Central African Republic. A resource-rich but failed state

that has seen its share of genocidal violence and is situated far from even the most expansive historical borders of the Russian empire, the republic could eventually qualify to be part of the Russian world, according to Mr. Putin's linguistic and cultural criteria. Small units of the Wagner Group, a private military company owned by one of Mr. Putin's close associates, entered the Central African Republic once departing French troops handed over to a United Nations peacekeeping force in 2016. Five years later, Wagner has rights to mine the country's gold and diamond deposits. Perhaps surprisingly, the Russian mercenary presence persuaded President Faustin-Archange Touadera that the African republic should embrace Russian culture.

As a result, university students have been obliged to follow Russian-language classes starting as undergraduates in their first year until their second year of post-graduate studies. The mandate followed the introduction of Russian in the republic's secondary school curriculum in 2019. Mr. Touadera is expected to ask Mr. Putin for Russian-language instructors during a forthcoming visit to Moscow to assist in the rollout. Neighbouring Mali could be next in line to follow in Mr. Touadera's footsteps. Last month, units of the Wagner Group moved into the Sahel nation at the request of a government led by army generals who have engineered two coups in nine months. The generals face African and Western sanctions that could make incorporating what bits of the country they control into the Russian world an attractive proposition.

While it is unlikely that Mr. Putin would want to formally welcome sub-Saharan and Sahel states into his Russian world, it illustrates the pitfalls of a redefinition of internationally recognised borders as civilisational and fluid rather than national, fixed, and legally enshrined.

For now, African states do not fit Mr. Putin's bill of one nation as applied to Ukraine or Belarus. However, using linguistics as a monkey wrench, he could, overtime or whenever convenient, claim them as part of the Russian world based on an acquired language

and cultural affinity. Mr. Putin's definition of a Russian world further opens the door to a world in which the principle of might is right runs even more rampant with the removal of whatever flimsy guard rails existed.

To accommodate the notion of a Russian world, Russian leaders, going back more than a decade, have redefined Russian civilisation as multi-ethnic rather than ethnically Russian. The Central African Republic's stress on Russian-language education constitutes the first indication in more than a decade that Mr. Putin and some of his foreign allies may expand the Russian world's civilisational aspects beyond the erstwhile Soviet Union.

Some critics of Mr. Putin's concept of a Russian world note that Western wars allegedly waged out of self-defense and concern for human rights were also about power and geopolitical advantage. For example, pundit Peter Beinart notes that NATO-led wars in Serbia, Afghanistan, and Libya "also extended American power and smashed Russian allies at the point of a gun." The criticism doesn't weaken the legitimacy of the US and Western rejection of Russian civilisationalism. However, it does undermine the United States' ability to claim the moral high ground.

It further constrains Western efforts to prevent the emergence of a world in which violation rather than the inviolability of national borders become the accepted norm. If Russian interventionism aims to change borders, US interventionism often sought to change regimes. That is one driver of vastly different perceptions of the US role in the world, including Russian distrust of the post-Soviet NATO drive into Eastern Europe and independent former Soviet states such as Ukraine.

"People with more experience of the dark side of American power—people whose families hail from Guatemala, Chile, Brazil, Haiti, or Mexico, where US guns have sabotaged democracy rather than defended it—might find it easier to understand Russian suspicions. But those Americans tend not to shape US policy towards places like Ukraine," Mr. Beinart said.

## Race to become sole leviathan

Muhammad Zubair

The Second World War not only exhausted the European colonial powers but also created an open threat in the form of the USSR because of its expansionist policies

MANY political and social theorists are of the opinion that we were living in a unipolar or bipolar or a multi-polar world. But if we look at history, then we see that power shifting is a permanent phenomenon similar to temperature's variation. We start our discourse from the First World War which gave birth to the USSR. This was the time when the European colonial powers exercised their rule and continuously shifted the wealth from their colonies to their homelands. History saw another world war and that was the time when the axis of power shifted from the Europeans to the United States of America, the land of aliens. The Second World War not only exhausted the European colonial powers but also created an open threat in the form of the USSR because of its expansionist policies. Then under the umbrella of NATO and Marshall Plan, America forced the European colonial powers to decolonize the world and stop protectionism to avoid any other such havoc. After the Second World War, the multi-polar world was replaced by a bipolar world. One pole led by NATO was owned by the capitalist America and the other pole was led by the Warsaw Pact owned by the communist USSR. America and its allies defeated the communist USSR by engaging her in the proxy wars throughout the world and with the help of its regionalism policies. During the cold war, the American Foreign Secretary Henry Kissinger and President Richard Nixon with the help of Pakistan brokered out detente successfully between the chronic pragmatic America and the People's Republic of China. After the deal between the United States of America the People's Republic of China, America recognized the communist regime of the Peoples Republic of China as de jure regime, announced the one China policy, stated bilateral trade between China and the American led bloc. Moreover, China became a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council. After the thaw between America and China, the West began started calling the communist China a good communist. After the US-China detente, the Soviet Union set aside his detente with America in the name of SALT-1 (Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty) and invaded Afghanistan, the graveyard of the super powers, in 1979. Both the proxy wars and regionalism policies of the NATO led by America to victory and the USSR was disintegrated in 1991, thus Fukuyama's dystopian world. As a result, the new uni-polar world order emerged after the demise of the Union of Soviet States of Russia. The resurrection of the early 1970s detente was the wish of the CIA, the Pentagon and their ghost sister MI-6 of the Great Britain. But unfortunately, the Putin-led Russia did not shake hands with America. On the one hand, Russia denied his archival America to become party against his

neighbor, the people's Republic of China, to settle score. On the other hand, Russia took advantage of the dying superpower's engagements which successfully annexed the Crimea in 2014, now proclaimed herself and by Russia, the Autonomous Republic of Crimea. During that aggression Russia began arming and abetting separatists in the Donbas region in the country's southeast. It is necessary to mention here that Russia's seizure of Crimea was the first time since the World War II that a European state annexed the territory of another. More than seven-thousand people died in the conflict, the bloodiest in Europe since the Balkan Wars of the 1990s. By annexing Crimea, Russia is now easily sailing into the Mediterranean Sea and in international waters.

In this event, Russia not only saved the Tartus Port but also saved Assad regime. This adventure of the big guns left hundreds of thousands of people dead and millions of them reduced to living in refugee camps. Similarly, after the adventure of Saddam, may be world again received sorry, against all the miseries humanity is facing. If we conclude our discourse of the thesis, antithesis and synthesis of the world politics, then it is obvious that the power around the globe is shifting from the West to Asia, and of course this phenomenon is amassing the power of the Peoples Republic of China. As per my assumption, American plan A, to sandwich the dragon between the two heavyweights Russia and India to bleed Chinese wealth or GDP has failed so far.

One meaning of war or uncertainty is the flight of capital from war-torn country or region into the safe heavens which are most likely comprised of America and European countries. The Middle East is facing havoc only due to the stagnant economies of the American-led West need wealth to boost up their economies. In my view the new world order or the phenomenon of the rise and fall of the superpowers or status quo is in transitional phase. And after this transitional phase, if the communist China replaced the United States of America, what would Fukuyama say? I do not know. It is hopeful that strong trade and investment connections between the United States and China means that whatever their differences, a significant level of economic interdependence remains central to their relationship which is an idealistic hope. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), launched in 2013, spans more than 60 countries and involves investment plans totaling more than a trillion dollars. Due to economic interdependence of America and China, obviously America will also be the beneficiary of the project. So, America and its allies should accept it as reality for the sake of humanity. The political or strategic rationale or high-level collective wisdom of the American led bloc knew very well that any hot persuasion of the people's Republic of China by America and its allies will meet with the same fate because of interdependent phenomena or mutual assured destruction (MAD), and here destruction means by all dimensions. Any miscalculation or expedition by the losing side or the gaining side will destroy life on earth. American-led bloc needs to be more idealistic and more rational in the interest of our lively earth planet. Joe Biden's America should practically follow the verdict of Biden that China is not their enemy but a competitor and set aside the racist Donald Trump's ideology that China is our enemy and should concentrate and lead the environmental front.

## What's in a name: Who called the lands 'Palestine'?

Zachary J Foster



For decades, the conventional wisdom was that the word Palestine fell out of use in the Arab world after the 11th-century Crusader conquest until its mid-late 19th-century revival

IT'S time to put to rest the false idea that Palestine was forgotten.

"Palestine never existed and never will." So read a 2017 poster in the Jewish settlement of Hebron, located in the heart of the Occupied Palestinian Territories, or Palestine. For decades, Zionist propa-

gandists have tried to convince us all that throughout history, Arabs never called the place Palestine (spoiler alert: they did). Mainstream American politicians like Ted Cruz, Mike Huckabee and Newt Gingrich have regurgitated the talking points that "there was no Palestine" and "there were no Palestinians". And if they never call the place Palestine, and they never thought of themselves as Palestinians, so the nationalist logic goes, then what claims do they have to an independent Palestinian state in the first place? This is the narrative I grew up with in Jewish Zionist schools, summer camps and youth groups. That's what led me down the Palestine history rabbit hole and why I ended up writing my PhD dissertation on the name, Filastin, or Palestine. I was desperate to know: were the pro-Israel affectionados correct? What did people call the place? For decades, the conventional wisdom was that the word Palestine fell out of use in the Arab world after the 11th-century Crusader conquest until its mid-late 19th-century revival.

Even some pro-Palestine historians held this view, including Beshara Doumani, who wrote in his 1995 classic, "Rediscovering Palestine Merchants and Peasants in Jabal Nablus, 1700-1900", that: "It is doubtful whether the name Palestine was commonly used by the native population to refer to a specific territory or nation before the late

19th Century." When Muslims conquered the Middle East in the 7th Century, they converted the Byzantine districts of Palaestina Prima and Secunda into a district called Jund Filastin. For the next three centuries, Palestine was thus an administrative district, with Ramla as its capital. The famous 17th-century jurist from Ramla, Khayr al-Din al-Ramli (d. 1671), used the word Palestine at least three times in his collection of fatwas, or legal interpretations. He mentioned, in one case, that Palestine's northern border was either "Uyun al-Tujjar or Acre", a definition of Palestine I've not seen elsewhere, suggesting he had his own unique image of Palestine in mind. His son, Najm al-Din (fl. 1718), lived his entire life in Ramla and also used the word Palestine very casually multiple times in a collection of religious certificates he wrote for his father. The 18th-century Arab Orthodox priest, Yusuf Jahshan (c. 1760s), born and raised in Ramla, wrote a copy of the Book of Daniel, mentioning the word Palestine more than a dozen times in 90 small folios of text. So Palestine was known to intellectuals and scholars as the erstwhile name of the place, while it was known to people in Ramla and its surroundings as the name of the place they were born in, raised in and died in. Alas, it's time to put to rest the false idea that Palestine was forgotten.

—Courtesy: TRT World

## Briefs

**ACA confident all selected players will tour Pakistan**

## SPORTS DESK

ISLAMABAD: Australian Cricketers' Association (ACA) was confident that all selected players for the month-long tour of Pakistan would not have any reservations touring the country in March-April this year. Australia would play three Tests, an equal number of ODIs and a one-off T20 International on the tour beginning with the first Test at the National Stadium in Karachi on March 3. This would be Australia's maiden tour of Pakistan since 1998, when the Mark Taylor-led side won a three-Test series 1-0. New Zealand had abandoned their limited-overs tour of Pakistan in September last year. Later, the England men's and women's teams also called off their trips to Pakistan before the ICC T20 World Cup in the UAE. "I think everyone will go. It's a very significant tour with three Test matches. Talking to (the) players, they want to test themselves against the very best in the world and they want to play in different conditions," CEO Todd Greenberg told sen.com.au as quoted by dajjworld.com. After Australia wrapped up their Ashes assignment with a 4-0 series win against the Joe Root-led England side, the focus has now turned to the tour of Pakistan, which was significant for several key members of the Australian Test squad, including Marnus Labuschagne and Usman Khawaja.

**Shahbaz, Tarin test positive**

FROM PAGE 01  
Shaukat Tarin tested positive for coronavirus on Wednesday, as the country battles a fifth wave of the pandemic. News of Shahbaz and Tarin testing positive comes as active coronavirus cases in Pakistan shot up from 39,881 to 44,717 in the last 24 hours, the highest since October 6, according to official figures released Wednesday morning. The PML-N president, a cancer survivor, who had last tested positive for COVID-19 in June 2020, is now isolating at home and resting as per his doctor's advice. PML-N spokesperson Mariyum Aurangzeb said in a statement. "Shahbaz Sharif has asked the masses and PML-N workers to pray for his health," she added. Meanwhile, the finance minister has suspended all his engagements, while the meeting of the Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) has also been deferred. In recent days, President Arif Alvi and Federal Minister for Education Shafiqat Mahmood had tested positive for coronavirus again as well. The president has recovered from the virus six days after testing positive. Dr Rana Muhammad Saffar, the director-general of health, had warned that coronavirus infections in Pakistan are doubling every week on average and could strain the country's healthcare system in two weeks' time. In the last 24 hours, the country registered a positivity ratio at 9.48% as 5,472 new cases were detected after 57,669 tests were conducted, said the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC), the forum leading Pakistan's COVID response.

# Blinken urges Russia to take peaceful path

Blinken's visit to Kyiv on Wednesday was described as a bid to "reinforce the United States' commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity"

## FOREIGN DESK

KYIV: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has called on Russia to take a "diplomatic and peaceful path" as fears mount of a new invasion of Ukraine. An estimated 100,000 Russian troops have been deployed near Ukraine's borders and Mr Blinken, visiting Kyiv, said Russian plans were in place to beef them up at short notice. Russia has repeatedly denied planning to invade neighbouring Ukraine. But senior US officials say Moscow could attack at "any point". Mr Blinken will meet his Russian counterpart in Geneva on Friday, after talks with European allies in Berlin. Ahead of his visit to Kyiv, senior state department officials indicated that Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov may be offered the option of a "diplomatic off-ramp" in Geneva. The White House said no option was off the table. Russia has made a raft of demands to Western governments, including that Ukraine should never join Nato and that the defensive alliance's military activities should be limited in member states including Po-

## US announces fresh military aid to Ukraine

WASHINGTON: The Biden administration has said it's providing an additional \$200 million in defensive military aid to Ukraine amid soaring fears of a Russian invasion. The announcement came on Wednesday as US Secretary of State Antony Blinken opened a hastily arranged visit to Kiev amid warnings about a possible Russian invasion of Ukraine. "We are committed to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and will continue to provide Ukraine the support it needs," a senior US State Department official, who spoke on condition of anonymity said. The official did not detail the contents of the aid package. The official said the assistance was approved in late December as part of American efforts to help Ukraine protect itself. Until Wednesday, however, the administration had refused to comment on it. The White House said on Tuesday that Russia could at any point launch an attack in Ukraine. The Biden administration and its European allies have accused Putin of creating the crisis by massing troops along Ukraine's borders. Blinken's visit to Kiev follow inconclusive diplomatic talks between Moscow and the West in Europe last week that failed to resolve stark disagreements over Ukraine and other security matters. - Agencies

land. Talks between the West and Russia last week failed to reach a breakthrough, with some of Moscow's demands rejected as non-starters. "I strongly, strongly hope that we can keep this on a diplomatic and peaceful path, but ultimately, that's going to be President Putin's decision," Mr Blinken told reporters in Kyiv. Although Russia says it has no plans for an invasion, tensions remain high near

Ukraine's borders - with Russian troops deployed in neighbouring Belarus for what have been termed joint military exercises. Mr Lavrov also rejected US claims that Russia was preparing a pretext for a military operation in Ukraine as "total disinformation." Mr Blinken's visit to Kyiv on Wednesday was described as a bid to "reinforce the United States' commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity", before talks in Berlin on Thursday with German, French and British counterparts. The German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock, who visited Moscow on Tuesday, has warned that any further military escalation "would carry a high price for the Russian regime - economic, political and strategic". Media caption, Ukraine ambassador Vadym Prystaiko says they are "facing the biggest army in Europe by ourselves" Ukraine's Defence Minister Oleksii Reznikov has urged Western governments to impose immediate sanctions on Moscow. Speaking to the BBC's HardTalk programme, he warned that a Russian invasion of the country could lead to bloodshed and a refugee crises for Europe.

**Pakistan, Indonesia to work...**

## FROM PAGE 01

two countries should be fully utilized towards deepening mutually beneficial trade and economic ties and expanding cultural and people-to-people exchanges. Commending Indonesia's prominent role in advocating and advancing causes of the Islamic Ummah, the Foreign Minister thanked the Indonesian Foreign Minister for her active participation during the 17th Extraordinary Session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, in Islamabad, on 19 December 2021. Affirming the important role of women in society, the Foreign Ministers emphasized the role of women parliamentarians in promoting and cementing democratic values. Pakistan and Indonesia agreed to work closely on all issues of mutual interest.

**Erdogan to mend ties...**

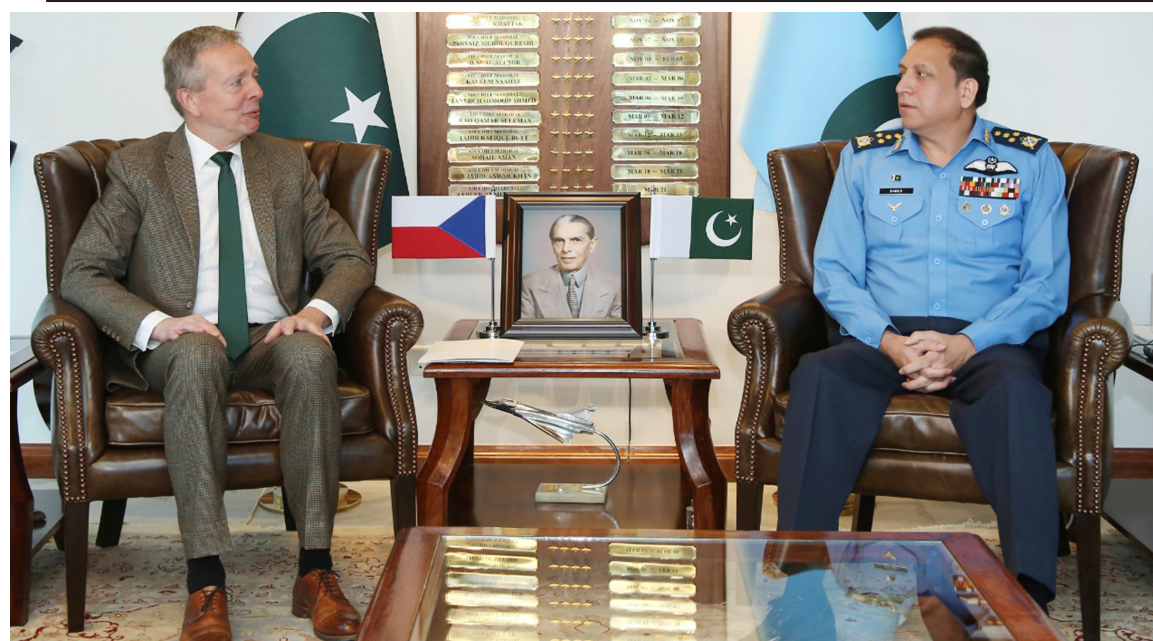
## FROM PAGE 01

after looking at (the project's) finances," Erdogan said during a joint media appearance with visiting Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic. Erdogan said he was rescheduling talks with Israel on an old idea to bring Mediterranean gas to European clients via Turkey. "We can still do that," Erdogan said.

**Iran eyeing higher level of cooperation...**

## FROM PAGE 01

process of integration in the region and help establish Pakistan and Iran's linkages with Asia and Europe. Apart, there was a need to enhance cooperation in tourism, sports, science and technology, health, academic, and urban management, for that, Iran was open to any agreement with Pakistan. Speaking on the occasion, Lt. Gen (ret'd) Abdul Qayyum said that the CPEC and the Chahbahar ports needed to be interlinked through ferry service and railway lines to get the maximum economic benefits out of the two ports. On security, Gen. Qayyum argued that the bilateral cooperation between Iran and Pakistan in the wake of US withdrawal was crucial for regional peace and security. He appreciated that Iran had talked to the Taliban, which he said was a step in the right direction, and hoped that both Iran and Pakistan would devise a coordinated mechanism for stability in Afghanistan. Lt. Gen. Qayyum suggested that there must be frequent visits of the leadership of both countries. Since parliament diplomacy was important to remove misunderstandings between the countries, there was a need to establish strong ties at the parliament level between Iran and Pakistan, he stressed. Prof. Dr. Rashid Ahmad Khan of the University of Punjab lamented that 'despite numerous avenues of cooperation between the two countries the level of bilateral trade had terribly gone down and we need to go beyond making pledges and promises'. There have been irritants between the two countries, but 'today's situation demands high-level cooperation to give a much-needed boost to both countries' economies, he emphasized.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of the Czech Republic Tomas Smetanka Wednesday called on Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force (PAF) Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmed Baber Sidhu. - DNA

## Maxwell hits record 154 for Melbourne Stars

## SPORTS DESK

MELBOURNE: Glenn Maxwell broke the record for the highest individual score in Australia's Big Bash League when he made an astonishing unbeaten 154 in Melbourne Stars' win against Hobart Hurricanes. Maxwell faced 64 balls for his 154, which is the ninth-highest individual score in all Twenty20 cricket. He smashed four sixes and 22 fours to help the Stars reach 273-2, the highest total by a T20 franchise team. It is five runs short of Afghanistan's record T20 team total against Ireland. Maxwell broke the Big Bash record of 147 held by Marcus Stoinis, who coincidentally was his batting partner for the second half of his extraordinary innings at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. The Australia all-rounder, playing in his 100th Big Bash match, took just 20 balls to reach 50 before bringing up his century from just 41 deliveries, two short of equalling the Big Bash record. Maxwell and Stoinis put on 176 for the second wicket to help set the Hurricanes an imposing total. Ben McDermott hit a rapid 55 from 33 balls in reply but the Hurricanes never threatened to pull off an unlikely victory, with Brody Couch's 3-30 helping to restrict the visitors to 167-6 from their 20 overs. Despite Maxwell's record-breaking heroics in the game, the Stars were unable to qualify for the play-offs even with their emphatic 106-run victory.



## Tuchel: Chelsea are 'mentally and physically tired'

## WEB DESK

LONDON: Thomas Tuchel said Chelsea's players are "tired mentally and physically" after their 1-1 draw at Brighton left them with just one win in seven Premier League games and 12 points adrift of leaders Manchester City. The Blues led against the run of play at the Amex Stadium through Hakim Ziyech's low drive, but failed to hold on, conceding a second-half header to Adam Webster from a corner. They have now taken just three league points from a possible 12 in a 21-day period that has seen them play seven matches in all competitions. While they continue to fight on other fronts - including the Carabao Cup, in which they qualified for the final last



week - their attempts to keep pace with an imperious City look forlorn. They must also now be mindful of the sides below them, with Arsenal nine points behind and Tottenham 11 having played three and five fewer games respectively. "We look tired because we are tired and we play against a strong, well-prepared

Brighton team," Tuchel told BBC Radio 5 Live. "If you look at our schedule, look at where we come from, we struggle with it. When you're tired - mentally and physically - you have a lack of position and a lack of focus. You can see it in our game but we know where it comes from. "I can even feel it myself. At some point you sit on the bus and think 'where are we going?' You have to re-focus and think where we are going, when we are there, which time do we play and when is the next meeting? "It's like this since November. We are the team that plays and plays and plays so you feel it, of course. That's why we need to de-connect, recharge the batteries and come back with hunger and joy to fight these matches. It's necessary."

## Osaka, Barty advance toward Australian Open showdown

## SPORTS DESK

MELBOURNE: For the first set, Naomi Osaka's rediscovered love of the game meant it was anything but fun for Madison Brengle in the second round of the Australian Open. The defending champion conceded only four points in the first four games Wednesday and rifled forehand winners seemingly at will as she breezed to 6-0 in a mere 20 minutes. The second set started with Brengle celebrating a service hold like she'd finished a long-distance race, but gradually the No. 54-ranked American's keep-the-ball-in-play strategy ground down Osaka to a stage where she final-



ly converted a break-point opportunity - after missing her first nine chances. That triggered a change in the former No. 1-ranked Osaka, who responded by breaking back immediately and reeling

off the last nine points to complete a 6-0, 6-4 victory. She finished with 37 winners and 32 unforced errors. Osaka will next face Amanda Anisimova, a 20-year-old American who beat Olympic gold medalist Belinda Bencic 6-2, 7-5. The winner of that is likely to face top-ranked Ash Barty in the fourth round. Osaka won the Australian Open last year, her fourth Grand Slam title, but then withdrew from the French Open and skipped Wimbledon as she took a break for her mental health. She then was ousted early at the U.S. Open. After a long off-season to reset, she's unbeaten in five matches in Australia this year. Asked how she rated her form, Osaka said that's not how she's approaching things.

# Curbs in high risk localities

FROM PAGE 01  
students above 12 years will be mandatory and no exemption other than medical reasons will be entertained, the NCOC guidelines stated. "Aggressive sentinel testing in educational institutions will be carried out for targeted closures in high disease prevalence education institutes," the NCOC said. Federating units in consultations with health authorities will set a number of cases or infection rate as the benchmark for closure of education institutes, the forum stated. The decisions were taken during an NCOC session held today in Islamabad with Federal Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives Asad Umar in the chair, a statement from the forum said. The forum took a "detailed review" of the current trend of the pandemic in the country and after a "deliberate and consultative process", it has agreed

upon the following non-pharmaceutical interventions:  
For cities/ districts with positivity above 10%:  
Gatherings/Weddings:  
• Indoor gatherings of all types, including weddings, will be banned from January 24.  
• Outdoor gatherings, including weddings, will be allowed with a cap of fully vaccinated 300 guests - applicable from Jan 24.  
Dinning  
• There will be a complete ban on indoor dining. However, outdoor dining for fully vaccinated citizens and takeaway service will be allowed.  
Gyms  
• Indoor Gyms at 50% capacity for fully vaccinated individuals will be allowed.  
Cinemas  
• Cinemas will be allowed to open at 50% capacity for fully vaccinated individuals only.

Shrines  
• Shrines are allowed to open at 50% capacity for fully vaccinated individuals only.  
Amusement Parks  
• Allowed to open at 50% capacity for fully vaccinated people only.  
Sports  
• There would be a complete ban on contact sports like karate, boxing, martial arts, water polo, kabaddi and wrestling.  
Education sector  
• Schools will be allowed to open with 50% attendance (staggered days) for students below the age of 12 years. For students (fully vaccinated) over 12 years, the NCOC has recommended 100% attendance.  
Cities with less than 10%  
Gatherings/weddings  
• Indoor gatherings are allowed with a maximum limit of 300 guests (fully vaccinated), while outdoor

events can be held with a maximum limit of 500 guests.  
Dining  
• Indoor and outdoor dining is permitted for fully vaccinated individuals only, while takeaways are allowed 24/7.  
Gyms  
• Indoor gyms are open for fully vaccinated individuals only.  
Shrines  
• Open for fully vaccinated individuals only.  
Parks  
• Open for fully vaccinated individuals only.  
Sports  
• All types of sports are allowed for vaccinated individuals.  
Education  
• Children will continue to attend schools with strict SOPs, while those above 12-years of age must have to be fully vaccinated.

Restrictions imposed across Pakistan  
Business timings  
• Businesses will continue without time restrictions  
Public transport  
• Public buses will be allowed to operate with 70% of their seating capacity. Wearing masks will be mandatory throughout the journey, with a complete ban on serving meals/snacks. Restrictions will come into force from January 20.  
Railways  
• Railways will operate with 80% occupancy level from January 24.  
Office Routine  
• Offices will be allowed to operate at 100% capacity with normal working hours. However, work from home is encouraged.  
Domestic Air travel/meals  
• There will be a complete ban on meal/beverages serving during the in-flight journey for domestic travel.  
Education sector

• With effect from February 2022 vaccination for students above 12 years will be mandatory (at least one dose). No exemption other than medical reasons will be entertained.  
• Aggressive sentinel testing in educational institutions will be carried out for targeted closures in high disease prevalence education institutes.  
• Federating units in consultations with health authorities will set a number/percentage for closure of education institutes.  
Mask wearing  
• Compliance to compulsory mask wearing while incorporating innovative measures for enforcement. Strict adherence to SOPs in mosques and other places of worship be ensured by all federating units.  
Extended lockdowns  
• Targeted lockdown with stringent enforcement protocols based on risk assessment will continue.

## Briefs

## Victims of twin Afghan quakes await aid

QADIS: Afghanistan, Jan 19 (AFP/APP):Survivors of twin earthquakes in Afghanistan were waiting Wednesday for aid to arrive after spending their second night exposed to sub-zero temperatures following tremors that killed at least 22 people and wrecked homes. Rescuers continued to comb through debris in search of survivors from Monday's quakes, which jolted Qadis district in the western province of Badghis, damaging hundreds of buildings. The United States Geological Survey (USGS) said two earthquakes hours apart of magnitudes 4.9 and 5.3 rocked the district, a rural area not easily accessible by road. Many survivors spent a second straight night out in the open while some took shelter in tents on Tuesday night, an AFP correspondent reported. Scattered aid has begun to reach the area but the vast majority of victims are still awaiting assistance. "We lost everything that we had. We are homeless. Everything is buried under the rubble," Abdul Rahman, a survivor whose house in Qadis was damaged, told AFP late Tuesday.

When the tremors began "everybody started screaming", he said. "Everyone from every house just ran out from their homes and fled." Footage of the earthquake's aftermath showed completely destroyed mud houses, with survivors including children searching the ruins for their belongings. One man, his face covered in mud, could be seen walking through the debris carrying an infant, as clothes, carpets and household items lay scattered around. "We were buried under the walls... only our heads were out of the mud," said Khair Mohammad, another resident. "We are alone here. We all live far from each other." Many fear that rain could make houses even more vulnerable to collapse, exacerbating the crisis. - APP

## Germany's inflation hit 30-year high

ISTANBUL: Germany's annual inflation reached 5.3% in December, hitting a 30-year high, according to official figures released on Wednesday. The country's statistical department Destatis said the monthly inflation was 0.5% last month.

The high annual inflation stemmed from high monthly inflation rates in the second half of 2021 and the base effects caused by the low prices in 2020, it added. The prices of energy products soared 10.4% in 2021 on a yearly basis, while they dropped 4.8% in 2020, it noted. "Consumers had to pay markedly more in 2021 for heating oil (+41.8%) and motor fuels (+22.6%)," Destatis said. Meanwhile, food prices also fueled the inflation rate by rising 3.2% in 2021 versus 2020, according to the statistical department. "The prices of goods (total) were up 4.3% on an annual average in 2021 on 2020," it said. - APP

## Nursing home fire kills 6 in Spain

MADRID: Six residents of a nursing home in eastern Spain died after a fire broke out in the night, authorities said Wednesday. Another 17 residents were hospitalized, with three in serious condition, the regional leader of Valencia, Ximo Puig, said. Firefighters said a total of 70 residents were evacuated from the nursing home in the municipality of Moncada, just north of the city of Valencia. Firefighter chief José Basset told Spanish news agency EFE that the fire appears to have started in a bedroom on the second floor.

"There was a large number of people asking for help who were trapped by the smoke" when firefighters arrived, he said. Puig said Spain's Civil Guard police force was investigating the cause of the fire and investigators think it might have started with a short-circuit in a mechanism linked to an oxygen tank. "The most important thing now is the recovery of those who have been injured," Puig said. - Agencies

## Azerbaijan commemorating National Mourning Day

## Territorial integrity is the foundation of our statehood

The Soviet Army deployed to the country in order to prevent the national movement and break the will of the Azerbaijani people for independence

BAKU: On the night of January 19 to 20, 1990, by order of the USSR leadership, 26,000 Soviet troops invaded Baku, Sumgait, as well as other cities of Azerbaijan. As a result of this military intervention, 147 civilians were killed and 744 were seriously injured. This event went down in the history of modern Azerbaijan as "Black January".

Before these tragic events, the groundless territorial claims of Armenia against Azerbaijan in late 1980s, the aggressive separatist activities of Armenian radicals in the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Region of the former Azerbaijan SSR and the Soviet leadership's support to this illegal activity, as well as the violent and brutal deportation of hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis from Armenia spurred the expansion of the movement against the Soviet Government in Azerbaijan. The Soviet Army deployed to the country in order to prevent the national movement and break the will of the Azerbaijani people for independence, committed massacre against the peaceful population, violating the norms of international law, the Constitutions of the former USSR and the Azerbaijani SSR. At a press conference at the Permanent Representation of Azerbaijan in Moscow immediately after the tragic events, National leader Heydar Aliyev strongly condemned



this atrocity and demanded political assessment of the massacre against our people and punishment for the perpetrators. At a special session of the MilliMajlis (Parliament) in February 1994, the brutal murder of innocent people on January 20, 1990 was regarded as military aggression and crime, and as a result of the deliberations in March 1994, decision "On the tragic events com-

mitted in Baku on January 20, 1990" was adopted. Since then, 20 January has been commemorated as National Mourning Day. 32 years passed since January 20, 1990 tragedy, but this gross violation of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and other international legal documents, and which was one of the serious

crimes of the 20th century by its essence and scope, had not received an international political and legal assessment. The former Soviet leadership is directly responsible for this crime. According to international law, the events of January 20 must be described as a crime against humanity, and its initiators and perpetrators must be brought to justice. Under the leadership of Victorious Supreme Commander-in-Chief, the brave Azerbaijani Army ensured the territorial integrity of our country as a result of the 44-day war and the Republic of Azerbaijan, in its 31st year of restoration of independence, is currently a reliable and responsible member of the world community. Strengthening the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan is the foundation of our statehood, and our struggle for the constant uphold of these basic principles is persistent. Any possible threats to the independence and integrity of our state will continue to be resolutely answered, and all necessary steps will be taken to bring to justice those responsible for various crimes against the people and state of Azerbaijan. We commemorate with deep respect and gratitude the memory of all our heroes who gave their lives for the independence of Azerbaijan, as well as for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of our country. - Agencies

## Ambassador Sajjad visits Belarusian State University

DNA

MINSK: Ambassador Sajjad Haider Khan accompanied visited Belarusian State University (BSU) and held a meeting with the honourable Rector Mr. Andrei Korol. The meeting

was also attended by the Deputy Rector for Academic Affairs and Internationalization of Education Mr. Konstantin Kozadaev and Head of International Relations Department Mr. Alexander Zhuk. The two sides discussed the development of coop-

eration in higher education between the two countries. The Ambassador emphasized the need to avail opportunities of adding some practical programmes in the context of the existing MOUs. It was also agreed to process signing/renewal of MOUs between several

Pakistani higher education establishments and BSU. The BSU has signed MOUs with the COMSATS University, Foreign Service Academy, University of Punjab, Quaid-e-Azam University, while MOUs are under consideration with several other universities.



## Pakistan's exports to China hit record levels in 2021: Spokesperson

BEIJING: Bilateral trade between China and Pakistan, as well as Pakistan's exports to China, hit record levels in 2021. China-Pakistan economic and trade cooperation is mutually beneficial and has delivered tangible benefits to the people of both countries, it was reported by China Economic Net (CEN) on Wednesday quoting Chinese Foreign Ministry's spokesperson Wang Wenbin.

The latest figures from China's General Administration of Customs showed that the total value of China's imports and exports to Pakistan was increased by 59.1 per cent year-on-year in 2021, with exports up by 57.8 per cent and imports up by 68.9 per cent. At present, China is the second-largest export destination and the largest source of imports for Pakistan. In 2021, China tops the list of countries in terms of Pakistan's exports to its neighbors, leaving other populous countries India and Bangladesh behind, according to Pakistani media Dawn.com.

The recent upward trend in exports to China is encouraging both for the two countries' governments and enterprises. Multiple factors have contributed to this remarkable rise. Under the first phase of the free trade agreement (FTA), Pakistan had been already enjoying zero duties on exports of over 700 products to China. While the second phase of the pact allowed Pakistan to export 313 new items to the Chinese market on zero duty. In addition, the construction of special economic zones has also helped Pakistan export goods to other countries including China. - APP

## UN calls for ensuring women's participation in peace processes

WEB DESK

NEW YORK: Women seeking to participate in shaping and building peace and defending human rights face a "vastly worse" situation now than they did before the coronavirus pandemic, the United Nations human rights chief has said. Michelle Bachelet, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, was participating in a UN Security Council debate dedicated to the theme "Protecting Participation: Addressing violence targeting women in peace and security processes". She said that, between 1992 and 2019, only 13 per cent of negotiators, 6 per cent of mediators and 6 per cent of signatories in major peace processes worldwide, were

women. In terms of support, barely 1 per cent of funding in fragile or conflict-affected countries goes to women's rights organizations. "And that was before the pandemic struck, and before a wave of intensifying conflicts, undemocratic political transitions and disastrous humanitarian crises took hold in many societies, further reducing women's rights", MsBachelet told the 15-member Council on Tuesday. In 2020, the High Commissioner's Office (OHCHR) verified 35 killings of women human rights defenders, journalists and trade unionists in seven conflict-affected countries. The number, which is certainly an undercount, surpassed the confirmed numbers of killings in 2018 and 2019. OHCHR have also document-

ed patterns of attacks against women working on gender equality; sexual and reproductive health and rights issues; corruption, labour rights and environmental and land disputes. According to MsBachelet, in every region, women have been subjected to arrests and detention; intimidation, sexual violence, and harassment via smear campaigns. Intimidation and reprisals by State and non-State actors against people who cooperate with the UN, also remain high, she said, including in countries which are on the Council's peacekeeping agenda. The High Commissioner then highlighted the situation in Afghanistan, Africa's Sahel region, Myanmar and elsewhere, saying violations of women's rights "significantly undermine global efforts to

prevent conflict and sustain peace." In Afghanistan, she pointed to a "humanitarian disaster of unprecedented proportions", arguing that the "denial of the fundamental rights of women and girls is massively damaging the economy and the country as a whole."

In recent months, many Afghan women human rights defenders, journalists, lawyers and judges have been forced to flee or to go into hiding, often after repeated threats. Many have lost all sources of income. They have also been excluded from decision-making that affects their lives and prevented from fully exercising their rights. Ms. Bachelet urged the Security Council to ensure that the perpetrators of these violations are held accountable.

## A sharp decline in Pakistan's rice export earnings

SARAH MASOOD

THE data provided by the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) indicated the incompetencies of exporters and government led agencies. According to the State Bank of Pakistan's (SBP) foreign trade statistics Pakistan's rice exports earned \$2.27 billion in 2019-20 with an annual growth rate of five per cent. According to PBS, this rise occurred when Pakistan's aggregate food export bill of \$4.36bn was down more than 5pc from \$4.61bn in 2018-19. The government was warned by the exporters about the damage to the paddy fields due to the second pest attack. The government said that it is combating the second locust attack more effectively than it did before. It stated that the second locust attack has insign-

nificantly damaged the paddy crop that is at the final stage of growth. However, the exporters said that damage to the paddy fields were somewhat ignored by the authorities, especially in Sindh. They stated that in July 2020 the rice millers started factoring this and increased the prices of different kinds of rice for commercial exporters who, in turn were unable to export as much as they did in July 2019. The mills that export rice directly even they were unable to receive as big orders as they did in July 2019. Due to inflation their own cost of rice processing rose and also because of increased paddy crop prices paid to growers who were predicting the crop's destruction under the second pest attack. Moving forward, future earnings of this vital export depended on exporters being able to export 1m-1.2m tonnes of Basmati and

3m tonnes or more of other varieties of rice. According to the July 2020 data of the PBS, around \$955 per tonne was the average export price of Pakistani basmati rice and around \$453 per tonne of non-Basmati rice. The average export price for Basmati could have rose to \$1,100-1200 per tonne and for non-Basmati to \$500-600 per tonne, with just some effort of the rice exporters. The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) forecasted that during the coming year Pakistan's milled rice output could be 7.4m tonnes against the target of 8m set by our Federal Committee on Agriculture. The government could allocate 4.4m tonnes to exports as domestic consumption and the rest 3m tonnes would have been enough for contingency reserves. Finding buyers of 4.4m tonnes depended on the Ministry of Commerce and our exporters. As lock-

down in parts of India persisted this was not an issue. Nevertheless, even if Pakistan would have taken advantage of this opportunity and get some share of Indian rice exports, particularly in the region of gulf, overall competition globally seemed to be tough with Vietnam having huge exportable surplus and with stricter rules at ports of purchasing countries for clearance of import consignments following Covid-19 safety measures. A straight 17pc rise in Vietnam's aggregate rice output was forecasted by the USDA. Continuation of brisk shipments to the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia was also an important factor in maintaining growth trends in rice exports. They are one of Pakistan's important markets and according to SBP our rice export earnings from these two countries were 18pc of the total. Export to China also decided to

a great extent how our rice exports will grow in the coming year as China is our second largest market after U.A.E and it did suffer in 2019-20 due to Covid-19 triggered lockdowns. Exporters said that in China Pakistan's rice demand fall easily on price considerations unlike in U.A.E, Saudi Arabia, US and UK. This indicated that exporters will have to be more competitive in the previously mentioned countries in order to boost rice exports to China. It was an uphill struggle, mainly because in China our non-Basmati varieties are more in demand than our Basmati rice. Also the damage done to paddy fields during the second locust attack and the rise in transportation cost caused by rise in domestic fuel prices increased the cost of procurement of non-Basmati rice for commercial and industrial exporters.

## Japan widens Covid-19 restrictions

FOREIGN DESK

TOKYO: Japan on Wednesday widened coronavirus restrictions to over a dozen provinces, including the capital Tokyo, as the country reported record new infections driven by the omicron variant. After chairing an anti-virus task force meeting, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said: "This has been a fight against an unknown virus, but we hope to overcome this situation by preparing sufficiently without fearing excessively."

Tokyo, where a quasi-state of emergency will be imposed as of Friday along with 12 other provinces, reported a record 7,377 cases on Wednesday. Authorities will now be empowered to ask "restaurants and bars to close early and stop or limit the serving of alcohol," according to the Kyodo News Agency. Earlier this month, Japan had imposed a quasi-emergency in at least three provinces.

"We need to quickly prevent the spread of infections, given the potential for a major strain on the medical system in the near future," said Daishiro Yamagiwa, who is in charge of COVID-19 responses. Japan recorded over 32,000 cases on Tuesday, the highest daily spike since the beginning of the pandemic. Shigeru Omi, the Japan's chief advisor on COVID-19 response, said: "I think we don't need to have eateries close if people dine in a group of about four and speak quietly while wearing face masks."

## Tension in Spain over use of EU recovery funds

MADRID: The Spanish government is increasingly under fire over its use of the European Union's massive economic recovery funds, with critics blasting the distribution of aid as too slow and arbitrary. Spain is due to receive 140 billion euros (\$160 billion) from the fund by 2026, half of it in grants, making it the programme's second-biggest beneficiary after Italy. The landmark 800-billion-euro recovery plan was approved by Brussels in July 2020 to help the bloc rebound from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, and make its economy greener and more digitalised.

"We are talking about extraordinary amounts," Socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said earlier this month, calling the funds "a historic opportunity for Spain". Spain and Portugal were the first nations to receive money, with Madrid collecting 19 billion euros during the second half of 2021.

The funds are at the heart of the economic and political strategy of Sanchez's government after the economy contracted by a whopping 10.8 per cent in 2020 under its watch as the pandemic hit. The government faces elections by the end of 2023. - APP

## France delivers first 6 Rafale jets to Greece

ATHENS: Greece will welcome its first six Dassault-made Rafale jets on Wednesday at the Tanagra Air Base in a ceremony that will be attended by Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis. In January of last year the country had ordered 18 jets. In September of the same year, it added six more units to its fleet.

The aircraft which will cost 2.5 billion (\$3.03 billion) are scheduled to take off from Istres in France and will land at the air base after flying over the Acropolis at noon. Greece is looking to boost its defense capacity by acquiring three more French Belhara frigates which will be delivered in 2025 and 2026.

A 5-billion budget has been billed to the Greek Navy of which 3 billion will go to the procurement of Belhara frigates and another 1.5 billion will be spent for the purchase of four corvettes. A contract has also been signed with Israel for the training of Greek pilots as well as agreements of cooperation in defense have been signed with the United Arab Emirates and the US. The country's annual defense budget in 2021 reached 5.5 billion euros, a 41% increase compared to 2020. - APP

**Briefs**

**Israel offers UAE intelligence support**

TEL AVIV: Israel has offered security and intelligence support to the United Arab Emirates against further drone attacks after a deadly strike by Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthi group, according to a letter released by Israel's leader. Three people were killed and six wounded on Monday when three tanker trucks exploded in Abu Dhabi, the UAE capital. A Houthi military spokesman said the group fired "a large number" of drones and five ballistic missiles in the attack. On Twitter, Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett condemned what he described as a "terrorist drone attack". His spokesman attached a copy of a condolence letter he sent on Monday to the UAE's de facto leader, Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan. "We stand ready to offer you security and intelligence support in order to help you protect your citizens from similar attacks," Bennett wrote. "I have ordered the Israeli security establishment to provide their counterparts in the UAE with any assistance, should you be interested." The UAE, along with Bahrain, signed US-brokered normalisation agreements with Israel at the White House in 2020. The two Gulf nations and Israel share common concerns about Iran and its allied forces in the region. "Israel is committed to working closely with you in the ongoing battle against extremist forces in the region, and we will continue to partner with you to defeat our common enemies," Bennett said in his message to Sheikh Mohammed. Bennett and Sheikh Mohammed held talks in Abu Dhabi in December last year, the first-ever public meeting between the two men. - APP

**PIA flight safely lands amidst heavy snowfall**

**NEWS DESK**

KARACHI: A Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) aircraft safely landed at Toronto amidst heavy snowfall. As per details, the PIA plane survived a major incident at Toronto airport as the vigilant pilot safely landed the flight in the heavy snowfall. PIA sources said that the Boeing 777 plane was near Toronto airport when heavy snowfall started and the plane was hit by a blizzard. However, the vigilant captain controlled the plane and landed safely at Toronto airport. The PIA flight-797 had reached Toronto from Lahore. As soon as the plane landed, Toronto Airport Authority staff covered the runway and surrounding area and began removing snow using machinery on an emergency basis. Meanwhile, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Pakistan International Airlines, Arshad Malik commended the captain and the flight crew for their performance in landing the flight safely. CEO Arshad Malik also thanked the Toronto Airport administration for immediately removing snow from the runway to help the plane in parking. It is to be noted that the City of Toronto has declared what it calls a "major snowstorm condition" to ensure its crews can remove the snow on city streets left by a winter storm on Monday.

**Ukraine Embassy to mark Day of Unity on Jan 22**

**DNA**

ISLAMABAD: Every year on January 22 Ukrainian people commemorate two significant historical events including the Proclamation of Independence of the Ukrainian People's Republic in 1918 and the Act of Unification of Ukrainian lands a year later in 1919. National unity is not only a basic value on itself, but also is an essential prerequisite for viability of any state, its ability successfully resist internal threats and external aggression. Therefore, the Day of Unity is an occasion to remind that despite the temporary occupation Crimea and territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions, Ukrainian Nation remains united, said a press release here on Wednesday. Despite all the threats, Ukrainian people, the leadership of the country hand to hand with international partners will make each and every effort to restore the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukrainian state by all available means, including political, legal and diplomatic. Ukraine is committed to diplomacy. It is seeking peace, justice and security not only for itself, but also for the entire Europe. The Ukrainian People's Republic was the first Ukrainian state in the 20th century, so August 24, 1991, not the acquisition but the restoration of Ukrainian statehood took place.



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaisar speaking during a seminar organized by the Bureau of Immigrations and Overseas Employment. In the inset Muhammad Ayub Afridi Prime Minister's Adviser on Overseas Pakistani and Human Resource Development answering questions of the promoters and general audience. - DNA

**England announces end to most Covid restrictions**

The prime minister also said the government would immediately drop its advice for people to work from home

LONDON: England's Plan B measures are to end from next Thursday, with mandatory face coverings in public places and Covid passports both dropped, Boris Johnson has announced. The prime minister also said the government would immediately drop its advice for people to work from home. The PM said England was reverting to "Plan A" due to boosters and how people had followed Plan B measures. He told MPs that scientists believed the Omicron wave had peaked nationally. In a statement to MPs in the House of Commons, the prime minister confirmed mandatory Covid passports for entering nightclubs and large events will end, though organisations can choose to use the NHS Covid pass if they wish. Mr Johnson said from now the government will no longer advise people to work from home, and that people

**UK's Johnson faces demands to resign**

LONDON: British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Wednesday dismissed calls to resign from opponents and some of his own lawmakers, fighting to save his premiership amid a deepening revolt inside his party over a series of lockdown parties in Downing Street. Johnson, who in 2019 won his party's biggest majority in more than 30 years, is now fighting to shore up his authority after a series of revelations about parties in his Downing Street residence during COVID lockdowns. Johnson has repeatedly apologised for the parties and said he was unaware of many of them. However, he attended what he said he thought was a work event on May 20, 2020 to which staff had been told to "bring their own booze". Johnson said on Tuesday that nobody had told him the gathering was against COVID rules. "I expect my leaders to shoulder the responsibility for the actions they take," Brexit-supporting Conservative lawmaker David Davis told parliament. Davis cited a quote from a Conservative lawmaker, Leo Amery, to then Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain over his handling of war in 1940: "You have sat there too long for the good you have done. In the name of God, go." Asked directly by an opposition lawmaker if he would resign, Johnson said: "No". - DNA

should discuss their return to offices with employers. And face masks will no longer be mandated, though people are still advised to wear coverings in enclosed or crowded spaces, particularly when meeting strangers. From Thursday, secondary school pupils will no longer have to wear face masks in classrooms and the Department of Education will remove guidance on their use in communal areas "shortly", the PM added. The prime minister also said the government intended to end the legal requirement for people to self-isolate after they test positive for Covid. He said while self-isolation regulations remain in place for now, as Covid becomes endemic they would need to be replaced with advice and guidance. When the current self-isolation regulations expire on 24 March, Mr Johnson said he expected not to renew them. - Agencies

**Pakistan, Iran mull judicial cooperation**

**AGENCIES**

ISLAMABAD: The Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Iran to Pakistan and Chief Justice of Pakistan stressed the importance of developing legal and judicial cooperation between the two neighboring countries through sharing experiences and bilateral visits. Chief Justice Gulzar Ahmed met with Iranian Ambassador Mohammad Ali Hosseini, in Islamabad. During the meeting, the two sides discussed the latest situation in Iran-Pakistan relations in political, economic, social and cultural dimensions. Referring to the importance of strengthening cooperation between the two neighbors in the legal and judicial fields, the Iranian ambassador to Pakistan stressed the need for enhanced visits and meetings between the officials of the two countries. He said that such visits would provide a suitable ground for the promotion of cooperation between the two countries, exchange of experiences in the legal and judicial fields, as well as the signing of a judicial agreement between the two countries.



ISLAMABAD: Chief Justice Gulzar Ahmed presenting a souvenir to Iranian Ambassador Mohammad Ali Hosseini. - DNA

**Pakistan, UAE express resolve to strengthen existing relations**



**DNA**

DUBAI: Pakistan and United Arab Emirates (UAE) have expressed determination to further strengthen the existing fraternal ties between the two countries. The resolve was expressed during a visit of Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Arab Emirates Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan to Pakistan Pavilion at Expo 2020 Dubai where he was received by Pakistan's Ambassador to the UAE Afzaal Mahmood.

Speaking on the occasion, Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan said Pakistan and UAE have supported each other throughout history of their relationship. He praised Pakistan Expo Team for effectively displaying the potential of its country at the Expo. Expressing condolence over the demise of a Pakistani national in a terror attack in Abu Dhabi on Monday, the UAE Foreign Minister conveyed condolences and assured of every possible support in repatriation of dead body of the deceased and treatment of the two Pakistanis injured in the attack. He greatly appreciated the expression of support and solidarity from the government of Pakistan in the wake of heinous terrorist attacks. On his part, Ambassador Afzaal Mahmood strongly condemned the terror attack and conveyed condolences and expressed solidarity by the government and the people of Pakistan with the leadership and people of the UAE. The Ambassador thanked the government of UAE for its sympathy for the family of Pakistani national who was victim of the attack and support to the injured. He also conveyed gratitude to the UAE for extending fullest support to Pakistan Expo Team.

**UAE calls on UN to condemn Huthi attacks**

**NEWS DESK**

UNITED NATIONS: The United Arab Emirates demanded on Tuesday an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council to address the deadly drone attack on its capital by Yemen's Huthi rebels. Earlier in the day, the Saudi-led military coalition - of which the UAE is a member - received harsh criticism from the UN secretary-general for launching deadly counterstrikes against the Huthis. "The United Arab Emirates calls on the Security Council to speak with one voice and join in firmly and unequivocally condemning these terrorist attacks," said the UAE's ambassador to the UN, Lana Nusseibeh, in a letter to the Security Council's president. This illegal and alarming escalation is a further step in the Huthis' efforts to spread terrorism and chaos in our region," she added. The Huthis used drones to drop explosives on Abu Dhabi, the UAE's capital city, killing three people and injuring six. The Saudi-led military coalition launched aerial counterattacks in the night between Monday and Tuesday, killing at least 14 and injuring about a dozen more.

**Trade with Afghanistan and CAR badly affected**

**SHAMIM SHAHID**

PESHAWAR: Chairman PAJCCI, Zubair Motiwala has requested urgent meeting with Minister of Finance and Governor State Bank of Pakistan to discuss the issue of declining trade with Afghanistan as a result of recent change in policy and to explore innovative solutions while keeping international conditions imposed by FATF and other global entities. Business community from both sides has shared their concerns regarding non-issuance of E-Form and EIF halting both exports and imports whereby creating congestion at borders due to non-clearance of trucks as a result of restrictive banking policies. It may be noted that EIF is also not being issued since 2 months even for CARs. The traders demand abolishing the said documents till the appropriate procedure may be devised, as non issuance of these forms lead to decline of transaction by WeBoC, halting consignments and also affecting refund requests made by the traders. The sectors that are churning major revenues for Pakistan like coal, cement, soapstone and other consumerables are facing the hit and uncertain to reap benefits from recent opening with CARs. Zubair Motiwala, in his recent meeting has also apprised the Advisor on Commerce & Industry 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. Chairman PAJCCI also urged setting up bank counters at borders so payments can be made at the spot without delaying shipments and creating congestion. It is public knowledge that at present Afghanistan has no operational banking nor they have USD reserves, traders cannot bring more than PKR 10,000 while crossing borders while consignments value 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. Traders cannot bring USD from Afghanistan due to unavailability, additionally Afghan government has restricted USD movement. PAJCCI most vociferously demands that Pakistan should and must take all measures to become the reliable and dependent trade, economic and social partner of Afghanistan and not to leave trade gap which can be filled by hostile elements and will give rise to illegal means. This will also have ripple effect on trading with Central Asia, as number of consignments are stuck at border due to payment confusions.

**Punjab to hold local govt elections on May 15**

**ABID RAZA**

LAHORE: Government of Punjab has decided to hold local government elections in the province on May 15. Minister of Local Government and Community Development Mian Mahmood Ur Rasheed said that a plan has been formulated to finalize the arrangements and the polls will be held on May 15. He further said that government is trying to give powerful system to local governments. Before PTI, no government allowed the local bodies to perform their duties and clipped their wings. Ministers and lawmakers are doing what is actually job of local representatives, he added.

**NCOC allows 25% crowds in PSL matches**

**AFZAL JAVED**

ISLAMABAD: The National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) has approved 25 per cent crowd attendance for the HBL Pakistan Super League 2022 Karachi-leg matches, which will be played at the National Stadium from 27 January to 7 February. The decision means around 8,000 spectators will be allowed inside the venue each match day however, to ensure their health and safety as well as others attending the matches, the spectators' entry will be subject to strict Covid-19 protocols. As per Covid-19 protocols meant for cricket fans as all individuals above the age of 12 years must be fully vaccinated with valid vaccination certificates must be shown at the time gaining access to the stadium. Wearing of masks inside the venue is mandatory and any person who is violating the NCOC guidelines shall be liable to be evicted out of the stadium. Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) Chief



Operating Officer and HBL PSL Tournament Director Salman Naseer said that spectators are the essence of any sport event and in this background and we now hope to set the stage with 25 per cent crowds to attend the Karachi matches of the HBL PSL 2022. "As a responsible organisation, we completely understand our obligations in relation to health and safety of the fans and will leave no stone unturned in strictly implementing the NCOC guidelines", he said adding that we will also require complete and unconditional support from the spectators so that they and others can continue to enjoy the matches in a safe and secure environment. This is something they can do by simply following the guidelines.