



Islamabad POST

Friday, January 21, 2022

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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RUDA, CBD projects essential to control pollution, says PM

Detailed News On Page-04

EU chief warns Russia on trade ties

Detailed News On Page-08



Glad to know that Batik is famous in Pakistan: envoy

Detailed News On Page-08



Multiple deaths in Lahore blast

Federal Minister for Interior Sheikh Rasheed says that there was a "threat of terrorism; Terrorist behind Lahore blast identified from CCTV footage"



ABID RAZA

LAHORE: A blast near Lahore's Anarkali Bazaar area on Thursday killed at least two people – including one child – and injured 28 others. Police officials said that an improvised explosive device (IED) was used in the blast. Windows of nearby shops and buildings were left shattered by the explosion, while motorcycles parked near the site of the blast were damaged. Speaking to the media, Punjab Health Minister Dr Yasmin Rashid said that at least two people lost their lives in the blast, including a child. She said that a total of 28 people were brought to the hospital, out of which one was already dead, while a child lost his life in the hospital during treatment. The injured included three women, who are now in stable condition, she said. The minister further informed the media that four patients are currently being operated on and are in critical condition.

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PM Imran summons report

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan has condemned a blast in Lahore that resulted in the loss of at least two lives and injuries to 28 people and immediately summoned a report from the Punjab government. The prime minister took notice of the incident and directed the concerned authorities to immediately arrest those responsible for it. Imran Khan expressed regret over the loss of precious lives in the attack and condoled with the families. At least two persons including a child were killed and 28 others were injured in a bomb blast in busy Anarkali area of Lahore. The injured were transferred to the city's Mayo Hospital. Around eight injured persons were in a precarious condition, the hospital's Medical Superintendent said. The deceased included a nine-year child who had arrived from Karachi to relatives in Lahore.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Japan Wada Mitsuhiko called on Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Syed Fakhar Imam. – DNA

Spain leads calls for Covid-19 to be treated like flu

Spain is in a good position to open the debate, having one of the world's highest vaccination rates

MADRID: Spain is spearheading calls for governments to start tackling Covid-19 as any other endemic respiratory virus like seasonal flu, despite WHO opposition and warnings that the approach is premature. With governments and populations worldwide desperate for an end to the pandemic, discussion about when the virus might be reclassified has intensified. "Spain wants to lead this debate because it is timely and necessary to do so," Health Minister Carolina Darias has said, adding that Spain asked the European Centre for Disease Prevention (ECDC) to "study new strategies" to deal with Covid.

Spain is in a good position to open the debate, having one of the world's highest vaccination rates with 90.5 per cent of its population over the age of 12 fully immunised. But the question has sparked disagreement between governments seeking some sort of normality and some parts of the medical community which advocate keeping its guard up. Spain's left-wing government has been a prominent advocate of reclassifying Covid as an endemic disease with milder seasonal outbreaks that humanity can live with, like the flu. The country is working with the scientific community to eventually shift from "managing a pandemic to managing a disease which we hope science will reclassify as an endemic illness", Spanish PM Pedro Sanchez said this week. Although Omicron has triggered a surge in infections, there have been fewer deaths and lower rates of hospital admissions, with many governments easing restrictions, reducing isolation times and loosening border controls. – APP

Pakistan, Japan agree to boost bilateral trade

Ambassador Wada also called on Minister Hammad Azhar and discussed matters of mutual interest

'Pak-Dutch excellence centers established'

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Wouter Plomp, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Netherlands to Pakistan accompanied by representatives from the embassy of Netherlands called on Minister of State & Chairman BOI, Mr. Muhammad Azfar Ahsan and Secretary BOI Ms. Fareena Mazhar in Islamabad.

PICTURE ON PAGE 2

BOI leadership sensitized Mr. Plomp about Pakistan's liberal investment regime and the incumbent government's commitment towards investment promotion. H.E was apprised on BOI's role as the apex investment promotion agency and was also briefed about the Special Economic Zones along with the generous set of incentives available there. The Ambassador shared that a Dutch delegation from Dairy & Cheese sector will be visiting Pakistan from 23-24th March to explore investment opportunities and will have

SHUJAAT HAMZA
ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan Mitsuhiko Wada called on the Federal Minister of National Food Security Syed Fakhar Imam in Islamabad on Thursday. Speaking on the occasion, Fakhar Imam said that the two countries can immensely benefit from exchange in agriculture research and value-added technologies. He praised the quality of mechanization in Japan and said that Japan and Pakistan have huge trade potential. The two dignitaries agreed to enhance bilateral trade especially agriculture trade. Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan told the federal minister that Pakistani agricultural products have huge potential if they are converted into value added products through processing. He said that Pakistan is one of the biggest exporters of Shrimp, Mangoes, Dates and Rice to Japan. The Ambassador of Japan showed great interest in importing Rice from Pakistan in addition with fisheries. He said that Japan imports rice from Pakistan and has a substantial market for fisheries. He said that Japan was greatly interested in increasing trade between the two countries.

B2B meetings in Pakistan. He further added that FrieslandCampina has established Pakistan-Netherlands dairy excellence center in Lahore which will be inaugurated during the visit of a Dutch delegation from 31st January to 1st Feb 2022.

Briefs

'2022 to be year of revival of Pak cinema'

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Husain said on Thursday that 2022 would be the year of revival for the Pakistani cinema. In a tweet, he said that Pakistan Film Week was starting in Dubai Expo from today. He said that 11 Pakistani films would be screened in Pakistan Enclosure from March 21 to 26. The minister said that this year PTV's film division has also been set up which would make ten films through public-private sector cooperation. – APP

PML-N alleges corruption

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Spokesperson Marriyum Aurangzeb Thursday alleged the reason why the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) did not publish the audit general of Pakistan's report on the coronavirus relief fund was because it had pointed out an 'embezzlement' of around Rs40 billion. Addressing a press conference in Islamabad, she said it was strange that the government had, what she claimed, rejected the findings of its own auditor general by not making them public. "This is the report not compiled by me or the PML-N, but by the auditor general of Pakistan (AGP)," she said, adding it had been made binding by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on the government to make the report public, which, unfortunately, it had not done so far.

Govt has put country on way to prosperity: Asad



ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development, Reforms and Special Initiatives Asad Umar on Thursday said record economic growth had put the country on the road to progress and prosperity despite of corona pandemic and global inflation. Addressing a press conference at the Circuit House here, he said that National Accounts Committee in its meeting had made two major decisions and fixed financial base year from 2005-06 to 2015-

16. "This proposal was floated about three years ago and today we explicitly discussed the GDP growth for the financial year 2020-21," he added. He said during the first three quarters of the last year the GDP growth was 3.94 per cent which jumped to 5.37 per cent during the last quarter of 2020-21. It was the fastest ratio of growth second time during the last 14 years in the country, he added. About the COVID-19, he said it had contracted the global economies but in Pakistan national economy made

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Jan 20 a symbol of Azeri peoples' unshakable will

Ambassador Khazar speaks at seminar on "20th January 1990 – Bloody and Glorious page of Azerbaijan's history" dedicated to the January 20 Martyrs of Azerbaijan

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Azerbaijan Khazar Farhadov has said the day of January 20, which will live forever in memory of Azerbaijanis, became not only a tragedy, but also a symbol of unshakable will in the name of national independence, freedom of Azerbaijani people. The reasons of January tragedy go deep into history, beginning from the territorial claims of Armenians against Azerbaijan. Everything began when Baku residents came out to protest against the policy pursued the then USSR leader Mikhail Gorbachev, since Armenian nationalists demanded joining the Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous region of Azerbaijan to Armenia. The ambassador expressed these views on the occasion of a seminar jointly organized by the SZABIST University and Azerbaijan embassy, at the premises of the Institute of Regional Studies. Ambassador Nadeem Riaz President of IRS also spoke on the occasion. The ambassador further said, back in 1987 the Armenian academics and official figures claimed to the Karabakh

region of Azerbaijan and conducted propaganda in this direction. Taking advantage of Soviet Union's last leader, Mikhail Gorbachev's reconstruction policy, Armenians once again resumed their insidious policy towards Azerbaijan. Then, the Soviet government had an intention to realize the Armenian policy by diplomatic means in 1988, but failed because millions of Azerbaijanis headed to the streets to protest Armenian aggression and separatist forces fueling unrest in the ancient land of Azerbaijan – the mountainous Karabakh region.

Azerbaijani people launched the square movement to defend their rights and motherland. Indeed, the Central government sent military forces to suppress the national movement and even crushed the protestors by force. But that was temporary. Azerbaijanis were determined to protect their territorial integrity and did not step back, showing their sacrifice and vigor for the national freedom. But the protests received totally inadequate answer – the Soviet troops committed unimaginable atrocities in Baku from the late hours of January 19 into January 20.

Ambassador Khazar said, in 1990, the night of January 19 to 20, the former Soviet military troops attacked Baku by the land and sea and carried out the punitive measures with unprecedented cruelty. As a result of this accident, 147 innocent civilians including the children, women and the old were killed, 744 wounded and 841 were illegally arrested. The terrorist savagery attack of Soviet army against Azerbaijani people, that carried out by the order of USSR President Mikhail Gorbachev was written in

the history of mankind in black letters as one of the worst crimes committed against the humanity. During the 20 January tragedy, the news was put under a blockade in the country, a power block of radio and television was brutally exploded by armed militants, the media was banned. The aim was to make the people unaware of this terrible tragedy. Immediately after the tragedy, on January 21, 1990, Heydar Aliyev, the National Leader of Azerbaijan arrived in

Continued on Page 06



Briefs

New spell of rains in KP from Friday: PDMA

PESHAWAR: A new spell of rains and snowfall in mountainous areas has been predicted for most parts of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa from Friday evening, the Meteorological Department said on Thursday.

DG Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA), Sharif Hussain said an alert has been issued to all the departments concerned for taking preemptive measures to avert rain-related mishaps across the province.

According to the Met Office, Chitral, Dir, Swat, Malakand, Kohistan, Shangla, Buner, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Haripur, Swabi, Mardan, Nowshera, Peshawar, Charsadda, Kohat, Bajaur and Kurram districts would receive rains with intermittent intervals.

In Galiyat, Naran, Kaghan, Chitral, Swat, Mallam Jabba, Dir, Shangla, Buner, and mountains of Mansehra there were chances of snowfall during the spell.

DG PDMA said an alert has been issued to all the district administrations and departments concerned to take precautionary measures to deal with any emergency situation.

In upper parts of the province, the rain and snowfall may cause landslides and the closure of roads. — APP

ECP announces schedule for 2nd phase of KP LG polls

BUREAU REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan on Thursday announced the schedule of second phase of local body elections in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's 18 districts.

According to ECP, the second phase of elections would be held in 18 districts on March 27, 2022. The nomination papers could be submitted with the election body between 7-11 February, according to a schedule. The initial list of the candidates will be issued on February 12 and scrutiny of the nomination papers will continue until February 22. "The candidate could file an appeal against the scrutiny process conducted by the Returning Officer by February 19," the ECP said adding that the candidates would be allotted election symbols on February 28. The polling in 18 KP districts would be held on March 27, while the election commission will announce final results by April 1, the ECP notification stated. It is pertinent to mention here that the first phase of the LG polls was held in 17 districts on Dec 19.

PM Imran Khan's phone call with Bill Gates

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan had a telephonic conversation with Mr. Bill Gates, Co-Chairman of Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, today and discussed matters of shared concern including Polio Eradication in Pakistan and the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. The Prime Minister expressed appreciation for the work of Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in fighting poverty, disease, and inequity around the world. He in particular lauded the work of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in Pakistan. The Prime Minister reaffirmed that eradication of Polio from Pakistan remains a key priority of the government and efforts are underway to intensify the anti-Polio campaign across the country despite challenges related to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. He also underscored that Pakistan witnessed a continued positive progress with sharp reduction in Polio cases in 2021 and recorded only one Polio case in the whole year.

FTO assures to address taxpayers' grievances

Dr. Asif Mahmood Jah said that FTO was acting as a bridge between the taxpayers and the tax authority and reiterated that his institution would continue to fight for resolving the genuine grievances of taxpayers against the tax department

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Dr. Asif Mahmood Jah, Federal Tax Ombudsman said that the business community was the backbone of the economy and his institution was working to provide them speedy, fair and cost free redressal of tax grievances. He said that the maximum time limit for redressal of a tax complaint was 60 days, but efforts were being made to do this job in 60 hours to provide prompt relief to the taxpayers. He said this while addressing the business community during his visit to Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry. FTO Advisors and FBR Officers were also present at the occasion.

Dr. Asif Mahmood Jah said that FTO was acting as a bridge between the taxpayers and the tax authority and reiterated that his institution would continue to fight for resolving the genuine grievances of taxpayers against the tax department. He said that the network of FTO Offices was being expanded for the advocacy of taxpayers with a business friendly approach. He said that the FTO portal was linked with We-BOC and PRAL and a mobile application has also been launched to facili-



tate the taxpayers in registration of their tax complaints with FTO. He urged that the business community should take maximum benefit of FTO services to get its tax grievances resolved in a prompt and hassle free manner. He also re-launched FTO Facilitation Desk at ICCI to facilitate the business community. Speaking at the occasion, Muhammad Shakeel Munir, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce

and Industry (ICCI) lauded the efforts of FTO institution for providing speedy justice to taxpayers by addressing their tax complaints. He said that FTO was creating positions of Business Coordinators, which was a very positive step as it would contribute more effectively towards solving the grievance of taxpayers. He said that the current tax system of Pakistan was very complicated and was not effective in broadening the tax base. He

urged that the tax system should be formulated in a way that it should facilitate the promotion of business and investment activities which would ultimately increase the tax revenue of the country. Jamsheed Akhtar Sheikh, Senior Vice President and Muhammad Faheem Khan, Vice President ICCI also lauded the role of FTO in resolving the tax complaints of business community and hoped that close liaison between ICCI

and FTO would further facilitate the taxpayers.

The members of the business community from different sectors highlighted various tax issues and stressed that FTO should take up them with FBR for their better solution. They also gave many suggestions to further improve the prevailing tax system and bring tax reforms in order to promote the ease of doing business in the country.

Federal tax Ombudsman (FTO) office inaugurated at Abbotabad

PESHAWAR: Federal Tax Ombudsman (FTO) Dr Asif Mahmood Jah paid a visit to the Abbottabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) and inaugurated an FTO office. He also recommended the name of Haji If-tikhar as "honorary advisor" for Abbottabad FTO office, for early redressal of taxpayers' grievances, in light of the recommendations by the business community.

During the visit, he also addressed a public awareness session on the issue of 'Rectifying Tax Network' and said that FTO has directed the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to rectify the maladministration at customs check posts as multiple complaints were filed regarding harassment leading to corruption at various Customs check-posts on a country wide basis.

He was of the view that unnecessary checking of duty paid goods was causing hindrance and delay in the smooth flow of duty and taxes paid goods and was contrary to the government policy of creating ease in doing business.

On the occasion, FTO Dr Asif Mahmood Jah assured the business community to highlight their grievances with the relevant departments and get them resolved on priority basis. "FTO office is a business and taxpayers friendly institution, which has always played an important role in addressing the problems of traders in a short span of time," he remarked.

Acknowledging the contributions of businessmen towards economic development, he underlined that their concerns regarding mistreatment by tax officials would be addressed and their "respect will remain intact". — APP

Awareness walk held against drugs

PESHAWAR: An awareness walk was held here on Thursday to raise awareness against drug use.

The walk was attended by Kohat Anti-Narcotics Force, Pakistan Zinda Bad Movement, Police Force, Traffic Police, All Traders Alliance officials, and a large number of Kohat social figures.

The participants were holding placards inscribed with slogans against narcotics and the speakers were calling for making collective efforts to wipe out the menace from society. Shakeel Bangash, chairman of the Pakistan Zinda Bad Movement Kohat District, said drugs were a curse and it was a collective duty to protect the younger generation from them.

"Drug dealers are the enemies of the young generation who are destroying the future of the generation by spreading drug addiction among the youth," he said. He said that this rally would help a long way in raising awareness along the youth. — APP

Federal tax Ombudsman visits ACCI

PESHAWAR: The Federal Tax Ombudsman (FTO), Dr. Asif Mahmood Jah paid a visit to the Abbottabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) and addressed a public awareness session on the issue of 'Rectifying Tax Network'. According to a press release issued here, Dr. Asif also inaugurated the "FTO Office" at Abbottabad on Wednesday. He said that FTO has directed the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) to rectify the maladministration taking place at customs check posts as multiple complaints were filed regarding harassment leading to corruption at various Customs check-posts on a countrywide basis.

As unnecessary checking of duty paid goods was causing hindrance and delay in the smooth flow of duty/taxes paid goods and was contrary to the government policy of creating ease in doing business.

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Spurious medicines worth Rs 3.5m recovered

PESHAWAR: The district administration of Mardan accompanied by the officials from the Health Department on Thursday recovered a huge quantity of counterfeit medicines during an action and arrested accused involved in its business.

Deputy Commissioner Habibullah Arif while talking to media said the action was taken on a tip-off regarding sale of counterfeit medicines in MC Plaza Mardan.

He said counterfeit and unregistered medicines worth Rs 3.5 million were recovered during the action that was supervised by the Assistant Commissioner and Drug Inspector. He informed the bogus med-

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Industry-academia links must be promoted: FPCCI

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Industry-academia linkages must be promoted to utilize the academic and research activities of the universities for the resolution of industrial problems in order to give a quantum jump to the industrial growth, said Mr. Atif Munir Sheikh, President FCCI and Jhang University of Commerce & Industry (FCCI).

He was addressing a function after inking a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the University of Jhang. He said that our growth is directly linked with the promotion of knowledge-based economy and in this connection, all concerned institutes must make concerted, organized and comprehensive efforts to prepare Pakistan to enter into fourth generation industrial revolution with dignity and pride. Mr. Atif Munir Sheikh quoted his manifesto and said that his primary objective was to encourage industry-academia linkages and immediately after his election, he visited the local universities and convinced its vice chancellors to collaborate with FCCI. He expressed concern that most of our PhD scholars depend on sec-

ondary data available on Google. He said that our scholars must create new and innovative knowledge by depending on primary data so that they could introduce new technologies according to the ground realities and resolve the issues faced by the industrial sector. He termed MoU between FCCI and Jhang University as a new milestone and assured that it would not be treated as just a piece of paper but would be practically utilized for the immediate needs of the current age.

Professor Dr. Shahid Munir Vice Chancellor of the University of Jhang fully endorsed the vision of FCCI and said that he intends to organize a student's fair in collaboration with the FCCI and Jhang University so that students of this backward area could also be brought into the mainstream of national development.

"I personally believe in applied sciences as its benefits are of instant nature", he said and requested President FCCI to allocate a slot in its website for the uploading of research theses produced by the students of this alma mater. He hoped that interested industrialists could also benefit from the research ef-

forts of our talented students. He said that FCCI should also invite our faculty and students to important functions so that they could know about the overall working of this premier chamber in addition to interacting with leading business entrepreneurs. "This step would also help our students to know about the various financial schemes launched by State Bank of Pakistan exclusively for the young and educated start-ups", he added.

Engineer Asim Munir said that FCCI has already signed a number of MoUs while more are in the pipeline with the Kinnaird College, LUMS, Punjab University and NUST to further enhance interaction between the industry and academia. Later Mr. Atif Munir Sheikh President FCCI and Professor Dr. Shahid Munir Vice Chancellor University of Jhang inked the MoU on behalf of their respective organizations. Mr. Atif Munir Sheikh also presented FCCI shield to Dr. Shahid Munir Vice Chancellor University of Jhang. Engineer Ahmad Hassan Chairman FCCI Standing Committee on R & D, Haji Gulzar Ahmad and other executive members were also present during this meeting.

Health card facility started in district Jhelum

KAMRAN GUJJAR

JEHLUM: Naya Pakistan health facility card has been started in Jhelum district as part of its release in Rawalpindi division. Opening ceremony of health facility card was held at THQ hospital. Health card facility will be available in 3 government and 4 private hospitals of district Jhelum, relevant counters have also been established in all approved hospitals. Citizens of Jhelum district can go to the established counters along with their identity card and register themselves. Under the health facility card program, the citizen's identity card will be considered as a health card. During the opening ceremony of naya Pakistan health card program at teshil headquarters hospital Sohawa, Provincial assembly Raja Yawar Kamal was the chief guest, meanwhile the ceremony was attended by concerned MS and DHOs including CEO health Dr Waseem Iqbal. Under the health card program, permanent residents of Jhelum dis-

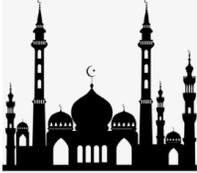


trict can get free treatment facility up to Rs 1 lakh. The health card is one of the best steps of the Punjab government. The current government has given the top priority to the health sector in its priorities and now it has completely free the treatment facilities for the dis-

turbed people of the country. Regional Officer visits rescue station Jhelum Regional Emergency Officer Punjab emergency service department rescue 1122 Dr. Abdul Rahman visited rescue station Jhelum. District emergency officer rescue

1122 Jhelum Engineer Saeed Ahmed welcomed the regional officer. The regional emergency officer said that the main purpose of the visit was to check the capacity of rescue 1122 Jhelum and to know the available resources as well as the requirements.

SERVICES



Namaz Timings

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



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Islamabad Metropolitan

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

Wasa Water Tank

Rawalpindi.....	0331-5022125
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ISLAMABAD: Chakkrid Krachaiwong Ambassador of Thailand hosted ASEAN Committee in Islamabad (ACI) Meeting at the Royal Thai Embassy. The Meeting discussed ways and activities to further enhance ASEAN-Pakistan relations and cooperation. – DNA

Webinar expresses solidarity with China on Xinjiang

Dr Shirin Mazari says US playing 'Xinjiang Card' against China while silent on Kashmir & Palestine

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan-China Institute (PCI) organized a first-of-its-kind webinar on the "New Cold War? Playing the Xinjiang card against China" under its flagship event series, "Friends of Silk Road (FOSR)". The Webinar was attended by over 35 participants online, and featured six speeches, including Dr. Ejaz Akram, Chairman of the Rehmat ul Lil Alameen Authority, Dr. Shireen Mazari, Federal Minister for Human Rights, Professor Li Xiguang, Director of the Center for Pakistan Cultural and Communication at Tsinghua University, Allama Tahir Ashrafi, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Religious Affairs, Sabah Aslam, Founder and Executive Director of the Islamabad Institute of Conflict Resolution, and Senator Mushahid Hussain Sayed, Chairman of the Senate Defence Committee and the Pakistan-China Institute.

The dialogue was moderated by Mustafa Hyder Sayed, Executive Director of the Pakistan-China Institute. Mr. Mustafa Hyder Sayed highlighted that the US has weaponized human rights and is engaged in the selective application of human rights principles. He emphasized that Pakistan should continue to support China on Xinjiang since China has always supported Pakistan on its core interests. The panelists discussed how the 'Xinjiang card' is used by the Western world, particularly the United States, to achieve their foreign policy objectives of pressuring China. The speakers stressed that laws such as the 'Uyghur forced labor bill', and other legislation and policies concerning Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Tibet, are part of a larger 'China containment' policy. Dr. Ejaz Akram stated that issue of Xinjiang is a flashpoint, which



is used by Western groups to rally certain parts of the Muslim world against China. He mentioned that the CIA has a history of blackmailing countries into submission via color revolutions, similar to what they did in countries like Syria, Libya. He emphasized that Pakistan is in a twilight zone between US and China. He advised the Government to support China in its quest for truth, in its quest of protecting its interests and in protecting the region. A brief video was played which discussed how the US took a politically-motivated decision to

remove the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM), which is recognized as a terror outfit by the United Nations, from its list of terror groups. It discussed the double-standards on the part of the US to demonize China, despite being at war in the Muslim world for a couple of decades. Dr. Shireen Mazari, the Federal Minister for Human Rights, stated that the United States is involved in starting a New Cold War with China, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, which requires greater international cooperation. She asserted that the United

States has created laws, such as the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, to sanction China using the 'Xinjiang card'. She questioned why the United States failed to take action against the genocide of innocent Kashmiris by the Indian occupation forces. She asked why the US failed to speak out against the elimination of Palestinians from their homeland by the Israeli regime. She emphasized that the US is losing power internationally due to its imperialist approach. It also created the military alliance, AUKUS, centered on countering China in the Asia-Pacific region. Efforts to combat China in South Asia include massive military hardware influx and military cooperation. She pointed out that the US is seeking a New Cold War and trying to militarize global politics as well as economics, whereas China strives to share economic prosperity and open up the world through trade routes and infrastructure in Pakistan and African countries, so that all countries can prosper via international trade. Pakistan faces a challenge of whether it will move towards economic prosperity, which is now a central norm of Pakistan's National Security policy, or whether it will be sucked into the militarization being pushed by the United States.

'Financial inclusion must for women's economic empowerment'

ISLAMABAD: Besides civil societies, the financial institutions should go the extra mile for women economic empowerment in the country, said Free and Fair Election Network (FAFEN) Chairperson Mossarat Qadeem on Thursday. In an exclusive talk with APP, she said that the lending institutions should provide easy and hassle-free loans to women entrepreneurs so that they could manage to build their positions in the open market with their products and compete like opposite sex without any discrimination. Qadeem said the banks providing loans to micro, small and medium enterprises had complicated conditions which sometimes were difficult to fulfill by women

entrepreneurs. Therefore, they had to express some documentary leniency to the female applicants, she suggested. She said without economic empowerment, women could not have a sustainable future in the male-dominated society. She was of the view that the women should be imparted skill-based education as it would help perform their professional obligations efficiently and effectively both in the formal industrial and services sectors. Qadeem urged the women in parliament and decision-making corridors to come up with feasible plans to uplift the social, political and economic status of women in all spheres of life. – APP

President for better water management

DNA

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has called for adopting comprehensive solutions for the effective management of water in the country. He said that climate change and rapid population growth had reduced the per capita availability of water that required efficient water management systems to address the challenge of water scarcity. He underlined the need for employing integrated satellite services

for better monitoring and efficient utilization of water resources. He made these remarks while chairing a meeting on "Employment of Integrated Satellite Communication and Artificial Intelligence Techniques for Water Management in Pakistan", at Aiwan-e-Sadr, today. The meeting was attended by the Federal Minister for Water Resources, Mr Moonis Elahi, Secretary Water Resources, Dr Kazim Niaz, and senior officials of the Government. Professor Dr Kashif Kifayat,

Coordinator of AIR University, Islamabad, gave a detailed presentation on the overall water situation in the country. The meeting was informed that Pakistan was facing the challenge of water scarcity, and the floods and droughts caused losses of approximately \$12 billion a year to its economy. The meeting discussed various solutions to address the challenge of water scarcity and its management. It was agreed to identify and approach the relevant stakeholders to develop a

Asad Qaisar calls for more job opportunities

RANA FARRUKH

ISLAMABAD: National Assembly Speaker Asad Qaisar has said that the more our youth are in the global job market, the more we will be able to achieve economic growth and save the country from expensive interest bearing loans from IMF and World Bank. It will also help in eradicating poverty and unemployment from the country. He was speaking as chief guest at a special ceremony held here on Thursday in a local hotel under the auspices of Bureau of Immigration and Overseas Employment, Government of Pakistan for the appreciation and awarding of shields to the best performers of Overseas Employment Promoters (OEPs). Advisor to the Prime Minister on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Muhammad Ayub Afridi, Federal Secretary of the Ministry Ishrat Ali, Director General of Immigration and Overseas Employment Mr. Waseem Barak Ullah, Chief Executive Officer of Knight Human Management (KHM) Shalaaan GL Pakistan Mr. Khalid Nawaz and a large number of OEPs were present on the occasion. Asad Qaisar said that the government is striving very hard to double the overseas

jobs for our youth. "The role of Overseas Employment Promoters is crucial in making the government's efforts fruitful in this regard", he added, saying more that without their support, the target set by the government of sending one million people abroad for jobs annually cannot be achieved. He asked the promoters to find more paying international jobs for our youth with an aim to reduce poverty and unemployment from the country. Advisor to the Prime Minister on Overseas

Pakistanis and Human Resource Development Muhammad Ayub Afridi has said that poverty reduction through various practical steps including generation of employment opportunities for the youth in and abroad is the top most priority of our government. Overseas Employment Promoters are our active partners as they are doing their best to search and place our youth on decent jobs in the international job market. Muhammad Ayub Afridi applauded the role of OEPs in reduction of poverty and promot-

ing employment opportunities. He said the remittances from overseas Pakistani workers are constantly increasing and swelling our foreign reserves. "Rapid economic growth and employment generation have also accompanied higher households' income and reduction in poverty", he added. Afridi also announced to issue licenses to overseas employment promoters within ten days and said that he will request the Prime Minister to appoint Labour Welfare Attaches in Pakistani embassies in Gulf, Europe and other countries for resolving the problems of our overseas workers. The government will issue easy loans for the candidates of overseas jobs to easily meet the expenses.

Asad Qaisar and Muhammad Ayub Afridi gave shields of excellence to the promoters who sent a large number of young people abroad for employment while maintaining transparency. KHM Shalaaan & GL Pakistan from Rawalpindi Region was awarded first prize which was received by Khalid Nawaz. Asad Qaisar also urged the promoters to train the youth in line with the global job market and to make good pay agreements with foreign companies for skilled and unskilled people and ensure full protection of workers' rights in addition to job security.



'Ehsaas Rehriiban' Initiative, sigh of relief for street vendors

ISLAMABAD: "Ehsaas Rehriiban" initiative has dismantled the monopoly of shopkeepers who used to charge a handsome rent to street vendors on monthly basis in Sector G-11 Markaz. Despite paying a good portion of their monthly income to the shopkeepers, the street vendors business was not secure. The Capital Development Authority used to conduct anti-encroachment operations time and again to clear the footpaths for smooth movements of pedestrians and shoppers and confiscate goods of the poor sellers. The "Ehsaas Rehriiban" initiative has provided a sigh of relief to the unattended segment of the society, which could not afford to have a shop on rent.

The beneficiaries of vendor-friendly project, during a talk to this scribe on Thursday, appreciated the incumbent government of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) to give a legal cover to their small businesses, which is bread and butter for their children. Syed Tahir Sardar, a vendor providing watchmaking service, said, he used to pay Rs12,000 monthly to the shopkeeper for his small counter. – APP

Shahbaz Gill felicitates Justice Ayesha Malik

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Political Communication Dr Shahbaz Gill on Thursday felicitated Justice Ayesha Malik upon her elevation as a judge of the Supreme Court of Pakistan. "Justice Ayesha Malik is the best daughter of the nation and Insha Allah she will become best judge of the Supreme Court," he tweeted. He said the whole nation welcomed and congratulated her upon her elevation to the Apex Court.

NPO to organize webinar on 'PPIC'

ISLAMABAD: The National Productivity Organization (NPO) would organize a webinar on "Production Planning and Inventory Control (PPIC)" on January 27. The PPIC helps organization to reduce cost of production by managing the resources and effectively controlling the inventory, according to NPO document. The workshop provide information about introduction to operation and production management, design of goods and services, facility layout and design, production scheduling and lean management, human resource, job design, work measurement, inventory management and inventory control techniques. The programme has been designed for senior management, middle management, team leaders, supervisors and students. – APP

Over 33, 964 workers sent to abroad

ISLAMABAD: Overseas Employment Corporation (OEC) is an attached department of Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development has sent over 33, 964 workers to abroad from August 2018 to January 17, 2022. An official source told APP here on Thursday said that Pakistan is the sixth most populous country of the world, possesses highly skilled, skilled/semi-skilled and unskilled workforce which can cater world's demand in different skill categories. He said that it was OEC's mandated to promote overseas employment, facilitate overseas employers in selection of work force and provide competent, reliable and cost-effective human resource from Pakistan for international labour market. – APP

Briefs

Gallery 6 to inaugurate exhibition "The Winners" today

ISLAMABAD: Gallery 6 will inaugurate a week-long exhibition entitled "The Winners" on January 21 and will continue till January 27. Dr. Arjumand Faisal, Curator of Gallery 6, told APP on Thursday that EU Ambassador Andrew Kaminara will be the special guest on this occasion. He said that the exhibition would continue till January 27. He said that Gallery 6 prioritizes the promotion of art over profit and guests are welcome to come and appreciate the art at any time. Eminent artists including Asghar Ali, Ahsan Javaid, Bushra Khalid, Irfan Gul Dhari, Javed Iqbal, Kiran Saleem, Karim Ahmad, Khadija S.Akhtar, Naqsh Raj, Saba Zahid, Sana Iqbal, Samra Cheema, Syeda Unab Sumbal, and Zakir Baloch will also participate in the opening ceremony of the exhibition. — APP

MoU signed for production of serial on Tipu Sultan

ISLAMABAD: A Memorandum of Understanding was signed on Thursday among Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Pakistan Television and Bigger Picture Consulting to produce a historical serial on "Tipu Sultan: famous freedom fighter of subcontinent". Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain, Information Secretary Shaira Shahid, representatives of MD PTV and Bigger Picture Consulting were also present during the signing ceremony. The initial season of this serial based on 6 seasons with 78 episodes will be released in one year. Bigger Picture Consulting would produce a drama serial on the life and times of famous Muslim personality Tipu Sultan under the MoU. The memorandum of understanding would be for two years while the expected timeline for production will be one year. The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting would co-produce, market and broadcast the series on Tipu Sultan, a great Muslim historical figure, on state television channel (PTV). Bigger Picture Consulting would bear the entire cost of production of the said production. The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting would conduct technical review of the said serial from time to time as well as review the script before preparing the serial. — APP

AIOU announces merit-based admissions

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University has commenced admissions in merit-based programs offered in the first phase of spring 2022 semester including BS, MSc, MS/MPhil and PhD, deadline for the submission of admission application form is February 14, 2022. According to admission department of the University, prospectuses and admission forms for these programs are available online on the university website (www.aiou.edu.pk) and admission can only be applied via online mode. Online admission procedure is presented in the prospectuses in detail. Admissions to BS programs will be granted purely on merit basis whereas the candidates will appear in entry test to qualify for admission in MSc, MS/ MPhil and PhD. These entry tests will be conducted in university's academic complex from February 17-24, 2022. First and second merit lists will be displayed on the university website on February 25 and March 4 respectively. On the other hand, deadline for depositing fee for first and second merit lists will be March 3 and March 11 respectively. Transparency in the entire admission procedures will be strictly ensured on the special directives of Prof Dr Zia Ul-Qayyum, VC, AIOU. — APP



ISLAMABAD: Women taking interest in Azerbaijani literature displayed on the occasion of a seminar at the Institute of Regional Studies. — DNA

RUDA, CBD projects essential to control pollution, says PM

The incumbent government had revitalized dead capital to earn revenues and had initiated landmark construction projects that no previous government planned during last two decades

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan Thursday said that the Ravi Urban Development and Central Business District projects would substantially reduce pollution levels for featuring green spaces, waste management, clean energy sources and eco-friendly international best practices. The prime minister, chairing a meeting to review progress on the said projects, emphasized that the said projects were of vital importance for the country and particularly Lahore. He said the Government had no self-interest rather it was working for the welfare of

citizens of Lahore. The prime minister said that the incumbent government had revitalized dead capital to earn revenues and had initiated landmark construction projects that no previous government planned during last two decades. He directed that disciplinary action would be taken against officials who did not adhere to timelines that cause delay in projects' implementation. He also directed the Punjab government to actively pursue legal cases pending against these projects. Earlier, the meeting was briefed that green spaces had been re-



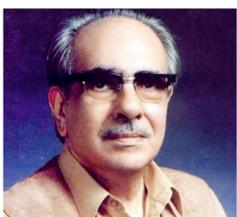
served in all projects and clean technologies would be used to ensure eco-friendly construction. It was apprised that seven interna-

tional groups have participated in establishment of a waste treatment plant in Ravi Urban Development project and agreements had been reached with international organizations including UN-HABITAT to comply with international green standards. The meeting was also updated regarding components of RUDA projects to be considered for inclusion in CPEC projects. It was informed that 1500 kanals Chaharbagh Residential project has been launched with 3000 apartments and 1000 low cost apartments for which 17,500 applications had been received and bal-

loting would be held next month. Regarding CBD, it was apprised that Rs. 15 billion revenue was expected from sale of seven mixed used plots. It was informed that leveling and excavation work had started in Walton. The meeting was attended by Chairman of Naya Pakistan Housing and Development Authority Lt. Gen. (R) Anwar Ali Haider and senior officials. Punjab Housing Minister Mian Mehmood-ur-Rashed, Advisor to CM Punjab Dr. Salman Shah, Chief Secretary of Punjab and senior provincial government officials joined via video link. — APP

'Jamiluddin Aali' remembered

ISLAMABAD: Iconic poet, lyricist, scholar columnist, creator of several popular national songs Nawabzada Mirza Jamiluddin Ahmed Khan commonly known as Jamiluddin Aali was remembered on his 97th birth anniversary to pay homages for his literary services. He was born to a literary family in Delhi, India on 20 January 1925. His father Sir Ameer-ud-Din Ahmed Khan was also a poet while his mother Syeda Jamila Begum belonged to the family of renowned Urdu Sufi poet Khawaja Mir Dard. Aali started composing poetry at an early age and wrote many books as well as songs. He wrote the song "Jeevay Jeevay Pakistan" during 1965 Indo-Pak war which became highly popular, private channels reported. Jamiluddin Aali was married in 1944 to Tayyba Bano. He had three sons and two daughters. Aali was suffering from diabetes and respiratory illness and was admitted in a hospital in Karachi and he died of heart attack on 23 November 2015 in Karachi. His contribution towards promotion of Urdu and establishment of Urdu University in the country, a dream and mission of Baba e Urdu (Maulana Abdul Haq), is also duly acknowledged by many. One of the longest poems in the Urdu literature, "Insaan," comprising 4000 verses also goes to Aali's credit and this is besides several poems and ghazals contributed by him to the Urdu poetry. — APP



Islamabad police to conduct audit of its resources

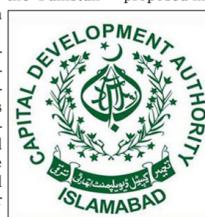
ISLAMABAD: Islamabad police have decided to conduct audit of its resources including motorbikes, cars and other vehicles in use of the force and to ensure proper maintenance of inoperative assets. According to police source, newly appointed IGP Islamabad Muhammad Ahsan Younus has directed to conduct survey of all available resources with various wings of the force and to report him in this regard. In the first phase, special inspection team of Islamabad police conducted audit of Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) and found 22 motorbikes non-functional. Following the report in this regard, the IGP directed SSP (Traffic) Rai Mazhar Iqbal to ensure repair and well-maintenance of these bikes. ITP sources confirmed about the broken down bikes and said that these have been repaired and made functional. — APP

I-12 allottees hail CDA for initiating sector uplift after decades of delay

ISLAMABAD: The allottees of Sector I-12 Thursday appreciated the Capital Development Authority (CDA) for initiating development work after decades of halt which would commence after getting environmental approval from the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA). The public hearing for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the development of Sector I-12 was held here chaired by Deputy Director EPA Khalid Mehmood on behalf of the Director General co-chaired by Deputy Director EPA Dr Mohnsina Zubair whereas Director Sector Development CDA Kashif Afridi and Sector I-12 allottees also participated in the hearing. The public hearing is a process where the regulatory agency (Pak-EPA), project proponent (CDA), the community and stakeholders express their opinions and recommendations that are noted and recorded to persuade the Agency for issuing the no objection certificate (NOC) for the project. Speaking on the occasion, Environmental

Engineer Ali Abdullah of Project Procurement International (PPI) made a detailed presentation on the project's EIA Report that highlighted the assessment of ecological impacts of the project on the site and proposed mitigation measures.

He informed that the Sector I-12 project was intended to provide small size residential plots for low-income groups in order to cope with increasing population and burden of overcrowded housing in the federal capital. Abdullah informed that the project site was as per the Islamabad Master Plan and any change in the location would be the violation of the Master Plan. He informed that the area which was under solid waste disposal in the sector would be rehabilitated to ensure human friendly usage for development purpose. The total area of Sector I-12 was sprawling over 745.87 acres and would comprise of 6,040 residential plots of various sizes of 3, 5, 6, and 7 Marla that was planned on the same grid iron pattern like other residential sectors of the Capital, he added. — APP



Around 4451 acres of Railways land leased out

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Railways has leased out around 4,451 acres of its land during the last three years to transform the department into profitable entity by generating more revenue. According to an official, leased-out land was located in seven divisions including Lahore, Karachi, Peshawar, Quetta, Rawalpindi Multan and Sukkar. The official also divulged details of a plan, aimed at exploiting 25 mega sites of Pakistan Railways commercially under public-private partnership. An expression of interest to hire the consultant for the purpose was given in the newspapers last year, he said. Likewise, a second phased was also on the cards under which some 111 new commercial sites were identified for commercial use through public private partnership. To a question, he said Pakistan Railways has also decided to accelerate its ongoing anti-encroachment operation against land grabbers across the country to recoup its land from different individuals, groups and even business organizations using it for residential, commercial and agriculture purposes for decades. "The encroachment operation will be launched with the assistance of Railway Police and district administrations of the provincial governments," he added. He said that PR has retrieved over 478 acres precious land worth billion of rupees from illegal occupants under its anti-encroachment operation across the country during the present government tenure. — APP

Chinese multipurpose EVs arrive in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD: Tesla Industries Islamabad has introduced commercial multipurpose electric vehicles (EVs) in Pakistan, Gwadar Pro reported on Thursday. The company has imported the EVs from China and has plan to start their assembling in Pakistan from the next year. The inauguration ceremony of EVX Tourer 250, an 11-Seater Mini Bus, was held in Faisalabad on Tuesday. In Faisalabad city, in a joint venture, Sitara Engineers Faisalabad will provide after sale services. The vehicle can be converted into semi-cargo seven-seater or to full one-ton cargo with two seats. Tourer 250, with full load and air conditioner, can cover a distance of 250 km with one charge. The maximum range is about 300 km. Battery life of Tourer 250 is at least one million kilometers, according to the company. Amir Hussain, CEO at Tesla Industries, said that the vehicle is cost effective with all basic safety features. According to him, in the next step, Tesla has the program of introducing SUVs in three different ranges including city range of 400km, 500km and extended 600km range. — APP

Soyabean oil imports decrease

ISLAMABAD: The imports of soyabean oil into the country during first-half of current financial year reduced by 4.11%, where as palm oil increased by 65.84% as compared the corresponding period of last year. During the period from July-December, 2021, about 37,172 metric tons of soyabean oil valuing \$46.328 million imported to fulfill the domestic requirements of edible as compared the import of 72,760 metric tons costing \$48.313 million of same period last year, according to the data of Pakistan Bureau of Statistics. However, imports of palm oil into the country witnessed 65.84% growth as 1,855,199 metric tons of palm oil valuing \$1.843 billion imported as against the imports of 1,629,768 metric tons worth \$1.111 billion of same period of last year. Meanwhile, country spent \$346.065 million on the import of about 582,543 metric tons of pulses during last 06 months as compared the imports of \$287.596 million of

same period last year. The imports of pulses into the country also recorded about 20.22% increase in first-half of current financial year as compared the corresponding period of last year. The overall food group imports into the country also grew by 22.88% in first two-quarters of current financial year as compared with the imports of same period last year. During the last six months food commodities worth \$4,798 million were imported as compared to the imports of \$3,905 billion of corresponding months of last year. However, imports of food group on month basis decreased by 11.58% in December, 2021 as food items valuing \$781.380 million were imported as against the imports of \$885.963 million of the same month of last year. Meanwhile, food group exports from the country during the first-half of current fiscal year increased by 22.28% as compared to the exports of the corresponding period of last year. — APP

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Attracting investments

WITH desperate hopes to revive the IMF's \$6 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF), the government of Pakistan has launched the \$1 billion Islamic Sukuk Bond with the intention to help improve the balance of payments, correct the current account deficit and stabilise the depreciating currency so as to prove that the country can meet the international body's performance criteria in the future. This was a necessary step that was needed to work towards securing the economic condition of the country.

The IMF recently announced that it would reconvene to discuss the prospects of reviving the deal on January 28 which added immense pressure onto the authorities that have been struggling to meet the performance criteria. We have done well in fulfilling prerequisites like approving and passing the mini-budget as well as the State Bank of Pakistan Amendment Act but the promise of being financially secure enough to pay over \$8.6 billion is still up in the air.

With the Sukuk Bond being launched, the country can expect over \$1 billion in inflows from investors looking to contribute to our economy. According to specialists, the demand for the bond is relatively high considering the enhanced yields the Eurobonds are also giving investors.

This also stands to improve the foreign reserves of the country and ensure that there are enough funds circulating nationally. If put to good use, the money collected through the bonds may also produce profits that will go into reassuring the IMF of the ability to repay international loans.

The hope is that during the meeting, the IMF takes into account the speed with which our government adhered to their demands for releasing the package and that these new efforts to attract investments will show our commitment to fulfilling promises. At the very least, our requests for waivers of the observance of the performance criteria and the re-phasing of access should be given due weight. The deal may not yet be approved but such developments will bring us closer to the release of the funds that we are in dire need of.

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War crimes investigated

WHILE international bureaucracies may have been compelled to turn a blind eye to the atrocities being committed by the Indian state in Indian Illegally-Occupied Kashmir (IIOK), private institutions, NGOs and civil society in the West have not been so silent.

A London-based law firm, Stoke White, conducted a year-long investigation into the conflict in IIOK, through its investigations unit instructed its in-house lawyers at the start of January to begin legal proceedings and on Tuesday filed an application with the British police seeking the arrest of India's army chief and a senior Indian government official over their alleged roles in war crimes. Despite the Indian state's efforts to censor any news coming from IIOK and actively clamping down on the voices of IIOK residents, it seems that Stoke White has committed thorough investigation of the extent of human rights abuses, providing extensive evidence to the Metropolitan Police's War Crimes Unit to document how Indian forces headed by Gen Manoj Mukund Naravane and Home Affairs Minister Amit Shah were responsible for the torture, war crimes and human rights violations IIOK including extrajudicial killings, torture, pellet gun violence, enforced disappearance and arbitrary detention.

The report focuses particularly on the case of Zia Mustapha, a minor who has been detained by Indian authorities for 18 years without any successful charges or prosecution against him, and the systematic torture of a human rights defender, Muhammad Ahsan Untoo, by Indian authorities in IIOK. The application has been filed with the British Police on the legal reasoning that the United Kingdom has "universal jurisdiction" on war crimes under the Geneva Conventions Act 1957—including other grave offences—which enables the prosecution of those accused of committing international law violations in IIOK, despite the offence taking place outside the UK and irrespective of nationality.

Precedent and diplomacy dictate that this case will most likely not be taken up by the British Police. However, this effort is commendable and shows that the rest of the world is waking up to the atrocities being committed against the residents of IIOK by the Indian state.

Israel expanding its Palestinian occupation into digital realm

Ramzy Baroud

Facebook's involvement in Israeli efforts to silence the Palestinian voices that call for justice, freedom and an end to the occupation comes from an agreement the company reached with Tel Aviv in September 2016

IT is ironic that even right-wing former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rejected a Knesset bill that proposed giving the government greater power to control and suppress online content. This was in 2016, when the bill was introduced by Netanyahu's Likud party rival, Gideon Sa'ar. Some analysts argued that Netanyahu feared that a law aimed at suppressing Palestinian freedom of speech online could be exploited by his enemies to control his own speech and incitement. Now that Netanyahu is no longer in the picture, the bill is back, and so is Sa'ar.

Sa'ar is currently Israel's justice minister and deputy prime minister. While his boss, Naftali Bennett, is moving rapidly to expand settlements and worsen the already horrific realities for Palestinians on the ground, Sa'ar is taking the Israeli military occupation of Palestinians into the digital realm. What is known as the "Facebook law" is set to grant "Israeli courts the power to demand the removal of user-generated content on social media content platforms that can be perceived as inflammatory or as harming 'the security of the state,' or the security of people or the security of the public," according to the Palestinian Digital Rights Coalition. The PDRC and the Palestinian Human Rights Organizations Council stated last month that Israeli censorship of Palestinian content online has deepened since 2016, when Sa'ar's

bill was first introduced. In their statement, the two organizations highlighted the fact that Israel's so-called cyber unit had submitted 2,421 requests to social media companies to delete Palestinian content in 2016. That number has grown exponentially since and the cyber unit alone has requested the removal of more than 20,000 Palestinian posts. The groups suggest that the new legislation, which was last month approved by the Ministerial Committee for Legislation and will next go before the Knesset, "would only strengthen the relationship between the cyber unit and social media companies."

However, that relationship is already strong, at least with Facebook, which routinely censors Palestinian content and has been heavily criticized by Human Rights Watch and other similar organizations. After examining numerous allegations of censorship, Deborah Brown, senior digital rights researcher and advocate at HRW, concluded that "Facebook has suppressed content posted by Palestinians and their supporters speaking out about human rights issues in Israel and Palestine." Facebook's involvement in Israeli efforts to silence the Palestinian voices that call for justice, freedom and an end to the occupation comes from an agreement the company reached with Tel Aviv in September 2016. Then, the Israeli government announced that it had signed a deal with the social media giant "to work together to determine how to tackle incitement on the social media network." Within days, the accounts of many prominent Palestinian journalists and activists reportedly began being deleted.

The proposed Facebook law does not just pertain to controlling content on Facebook-owned platforms, including Instagram. According to a Haaretz editorial published on Dec. 29, the impact of this particular bill could be far-reaching, as it would grant district court judges throughout the country the power to remove posts "from any website at all." Unsurprisingly, Israel's censorship of Palestinian content is justified under the typical pretense of protecting "national security." We all know how Israel interprets this elusive concept to include anything from a Palestinian calling for Israel to be

held accountable for its crimes in the Occupied Territories to another demanding the end of Israeli apartheid and a third writing a poem. A case in point was the humiliating imprisonment of Palestinian poet Dareen Tatour. The Israeli citizen was jailed in 2018 for writing a short poem entitled "Resist, My People, Resist Them."

Moreover, the Israeli Pegasus spyware, which has recently made headlines throughout the world for its use against numerous high-profile figures, has also long been used to monitor Palestinian activists. Expectedly, what applies to Palestinians demanding their freedom online does not apply to Israelis inciting violence and spreading hatred against those same Palestinians. According to the Arab Center for Social Media Advancement's "Index of Racism and Incitement," published last June, "incitement in Hebrew against Arabs and Palestinians increased by 15 times" during the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip and subsequent anti-Palestinian violence in May 2021 when compared to the same period the previous year. Much of this has gone unnoticed and it is hardly the subject of the proposed Facebook law or the sinister activities of the cyber unit. For Sa'ar and his ilk, anti-Palestinian incitement, along with the daily violence meted out against the occupied Palestinians, is a non-issue.

While Israel is permitted, thanks to the deafening silence of the international community, to maintain its military occupation of Palestine, cement its apartheid and deepen its control of Palestinian life everywhere, it should not be permitted to expand this matrix of control to the digital realm. Civil society organizations, activists and ordinary people everywhere must speak out to bring an end to this travesty. Moreover, as our experiences of the Pegasus spyware and the facial recognition surveillance technologies have taught us, what is usually first applied to Palestinians is eventually normalized and applied everywhere else. Israel should, therefore, be confronted over its abuses of human rights in Palestine. If they are allowed to become normalized, they will become a part of our daily lives, regardless of where we are in the world.

— Courtesy: Arab News

Pandemic is birthing billionaires and killing the poor

Nabil Ahmed

As we grieve all those killed by virus – over 5.5 million deaths have been officially reported, but the pandemic's true death toll is estimated at over 19 million lives lost – we see that greed has been busy at work

AS we enter year three of this cruel pandemic, amid its turmoil, we are still tempted to reimagine our world.

When the pandemic first struck, rich and poor united in fear. Mighty politicians decried nationalistic selfishness, chided "greedy as hell" corporate conduct, and promised a vaccine would be a public good. It felt like there was solidarity. But only at first.

As we grieve all those killed by virus – over 5.5 million deaths have been officially reported, but the pandemic's true death toll is estimated at over 19 million lives lost – we see that greed has been busy at work.

We enter 2022 witnessing the biggest increase in billionaire wealth since records began. A billionaire was created every 26 hours during this pandemic. The wealth of the world's 10 richest men alone has doubled, rising at a rate of \$15,000 per second. But COVID-19 has left 99 percent of humanity worse off. Our malaise is inequality. Inequality of income is now a stronger indicator of whether you will die from COVID-19 than age. In 2021, millions of people died in poorer countries with scant access to vaccines as pharmaceutical monopolies, protected by rich countries, throttled their supply. We minted new vaccine billionaires on the backs of denying billions of people access to vaccines. Because inequality harms us all, we are all put at risk from the variants that inevitably emerge from man-made vaccine apartheid. In the same way, we all lose in our democracy from elite power and from a climate crisis driven by the over-consumption of the top 1 percent, who are responsible for double the emissions of the bottom 50 percent. This is not rich versus poor anymore: It is the super-rich versus us all.

New Oxfam estimates show that inequality contributes to the death of at least one person every four seconds. And that is a conservative figure. This economic violence exists not in spite of extreme wealth, but because of it.

It would be tempting to view this all as simply business-as-usual rich-doing-well once again. But these data, compiled and calculated in Oxfam's new paper "Inequality Kills", are off the charts. Billionaire wealth, for example, has risen more since the pandemic began than in the previous 14 years combined. The IMF, World Bank, Crédit Suisse, and World Economic Forum (WEF) all project a spike in inequality within countries. The super-rich are having a great pandemic. So much of the trillions of dollars, pumped by central banks into financial markets to save economies, have ended up in the pockets of billionaires riding a stock market boom, while the surge in

monopoly power, growing privatisation, the erosion of workers' rights and wealth and corporate tax rate and labour market liberalisation have continued in full speed. In parallel, billions of people face the impact of deepening inequality. In some countries, the poorest people have been nearly four times more likely to die from COVID-19 than the richest. Some 3.4 million Black Americans would be alive today if their life expectancy was the same as white Americans', which is up from an already shocking 2.1 million pre-pandemic. Gender parity is set back by a generation, while women in many countries face a second pandemic of increased gender-based violence. Vaccine apartheid fuels every inequality. And now the prospect of IMF-backed austerity in more than 80 countries threatens to make matters much worse. We are making history for all the wrong reasons. Inequality is now as great as it was at the pinnacle of Western imperialism in the early 20th century. The Gilded Age of the late 19th century has been surpassed. Hoping that change can come from the failed, narrow straitjacket of neoliberalism is the definition of insanity. The unprecedented nature of today's crisis demands extraordinary, systemic action – and a shift in imagination of the politics of the possible.

We can start by redirecting trillions of dollars to the real economy to save lives. It is achievable and necessary for governments to immediately begin to claw back huge gains made by the super-rich during the pandemic through one-off solidarity taxes, taking the example of countries like Argentina. That is a start. To address wealth inequality on a more fundamental level, we need permanent progressive taxes on capital and wealth. History offers inspiration: US President Franklin D Roosevelt set a top marginal income tax rate of 94 percent in the wake of World War II (until 1981, that rate would average 81 percent). Governments can invest revenues raised from progressive taxation in the proven, powerful means to create more equal, healthier and freer societies, such as universal healthcare – as Costa Rica has done – and universal social protection. Nobody should pay a health user fee again. We can invest in ending gender-based violence and creating a fossil-fuel free world. Imagine the lives saved, the opportunities created. But redistribution alone is not enough. We must change the rules of the market, the private sector, and globalisation so they do not produce such huge inequality in the first place. This means shifting power: strengthening workers' rights and protecting them; abolishing the sexist laws that legally prevent nearly 3 billion women from having the same choice of jobs as men; and addressing monopolies that menace democracies. At this moment, the most urgent task is for rich governments to break the pharmaceutical monopolies held over COVID-19 vaccines, so we can get vaccines to the world and end this pandemic. How we exit this global emergency is up to us. It could be more of the same: violent economies in which billionaire wealth booms, inequality is ever-deadlier and self-defeating greed reigns. Or, if we demand it, there could be profound change: economies centred on equality in which nobody lives in poverty, nor with unimaginable billionaire wealth, in which inequality no longer kills... in which hope reigns. It is up to us.

— Courtesy: Al Jazeera

World cannot ignore the effects of long COVID-19

Sara Al-Mulla



Overall, the virus seems to affect patients' general well-being, with more than half experiencing weight loss, fatigue, fever or pain

SINCE the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, we have come across many harrowing and tragic stories about people struggling in a variety of ways. One particular theme is gaining more attention these days, as emerging evidence is published on the lingering symptoms known as long COVID-19. In the past year or so, many newspapers have published personal stories from people who have revealed their prolonged battles with a number of unexplained

health conditions following their infection with the virus.

The global research community is now endeavoring to explain the scientific theories behind such claims, propelling it into global and national policy agendas. A distinguished study published by Penn State College of Medicine noted several debilitating symptoms experienced by COVID-19 patients that last from one month to six months or more. Overall, the virus seems to affect patients' general well-being, with more than half experiencing weight loss, fatigue, fever or pain. Other symptoms include decreased mobility, reduced concentration or "brain fog," shortness of breath, chest pain, palpitations, muscle ache, stomachache, vomiting, and lack of appetite. With such an exhausting set of health conditions, it is no wonder many people have felt unable to return to full-time employment, perform daily tasks, take care of themselves or care for their dependents. As a result of their lack of economic self-sufficiency, isolation and ongoing health challenges, it is no wonder that many patients have reported increased anxiety, depression, suicide contemplation or post-traumatic stress disorder.

It is estimated that more than half of the approximate 269 million people who have survived infection since December 2019 will experience long COVID-19 up to six months after recovery, according to the re-

search published by Penn State College of Medicine. With such an alarming number of people suffering from long COVID-19, it is a problem that is already imploding and manifesting in devastating ways.

In another example, Post-COVID-19 Rehabilitation at Medical Park in Germany offers a range of services for long COVID-19 patients. First and foremost, a comprehensive assessment plan covers cardiology, neurology, orthopedics and psychosomatic medicine in order to conclude the diagnosis and arrive at a customized treatment plan.

With notable reductions in the quality of life of patients, it is vital that a range of care services be urgently made available. These include childcare services to care for their young dependents and social care services to assist them with their daily activities. Additionally, as many are finding it difficult to return to full-time employment, it is important that some form of temporary financial assistance is dispensed until a full recovery is made. It is also vital to provide counseling services to patients, especially those who are suffering from mental health conditions as a result of facing such tumultuous challenges.

Considering the debilitating effects of long COVID-19 on vast populations, it is critical that policymakers urgently include this issue on their national agendas.

— Courtesy: Arab News

Briefs

Mehsud ready to hold 2 more World records

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani trailblazer of Kung Fu in Tribal areas and Martial Artist Irfan Mehsud holds 43 Guinness world records has tightened up his shoes to add two more feathers of pride to his cap.

Mehsud, who broke 13 world records of Indian athletes, submitted two new videos of most squats with 100 pounds and most jump squats with 80 pounds in one minute before the reviewing committee of Guinness World records.

Talking to APP on Thursday, he said he had had to wait six to eight months after the submission of records as two to three million rupees were required for on spot review and he did not have any sponsor.

He said my target was to achieve half century of world records in coming years as Kung Fu and Martial Arts was my passion since childhood and I would leave no stone unturned to hold new records.

"We do not have proper indoor space and facilities for game practice and we are bound to drill open air, but I am determined to win pride for Pakistan and striving every nerve to manage" Kung Fu master said. — APP

Jan 20 a symbol of Azeri peoples'...

FROM PAGE 01

Azerbaijan's representation in Moscow. He expressed solidarity with his people, sharply condemned the Soviet leadership for committing the bloody tragedy and exposed those who led the operation: "I consider the events that took place in Azerbaijan as a violation of law, democracy, and of humanity and the principles of constitutional state building. Had necessary measures been taken by the top party leadership at the beginning of the Nagorno-Karabakh events, we would not have faced escalated tensions that led to the deadly military assault launched on civilians on the night of 19 - 20 January 1990. Everyone involved in this crime must be appropriately punished."

At a session of the Milli Majlis of the Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic on November 20, 1990, National Leader Heydar Aliyev described the January tragedy as an assault on the Azerbaijani people's sovereign rights: "I think this tragedy, which took place on January 19-20, is a result of the great fault of the political leadership of the Soviet Union, namely Gorbachev and his dictatorial ambitions, as well as of the then Azerbaijani leadership's betrayal and crimes against their own people. 'As I know, since the end of the Great Patriotic war there have never been internal mass killings of this gravity in the Soviet Union - nowhere, not in any territory of any region. And it is the Soviet army that committed this. The gravity of this crime is evidenced by the fact that the Minister of Defense of USSR Yazov and Minister of Internal Affairs of the USSR Bakatin came to Baku in advance and commanded these military operations. The defense minister was rarely seen on the forefront during the war, but look just how important these operations were deemed, how large-scale they were considered, that marshal Yazov came to Baku and personally led the operations. All of these facts confirm that this was military aggression, an insult, as well as a crime against the Azerbaijani people'". He further said, in 1993, after the return of the National Leader Heydar Aliyev to political power, important steps were taken on the investigation of the causes of the outbreak of the January 20 events and the sentence of the offenders. The significant measures were implemented in informing the world community about 20 January tragedy, its place and role in the history of Azerbaijan and the perpetuation of this tragedy.

Through the Azerbaijani people suffered military, moral and political aggression, they displayed their ability to maintain the traditions of historical heroism and resist the cruelest attacks for the sake of the freedom and independence of their motherland, even at the cost of losing their lives, the ambassador concluded.

EU states urge Israel to stop E. Jerusalem plans

In a statement, the European countries said that the hundreds of new buildings would "constitute an additional obstacle to the two-state solution," referring to international peace efforts to create a state for Palestinians

NEWS DESK

PARIS: The foreign ministries of France, Germany, Italy and Spain urged Israeli authorities on Wednesday evening to stop the construction of new housing units in East Jerusalem. Earlier in the month, Israeli authorities approved plans for the construction of around 3,500 homes in occupied East Jerusalem, nearly half of which are to be built in the controversial areas of Givat Hamatos and Har Homa.

In a statement, the European countries said that the hundreds of new buildings would "constitute an additional obstacle to the two-state solution," referring to international peace efforts to create a state for Palestinians. They said that building in this area

would further disconnect the West Bank from East Jerusalem and that these settlements are a violation of international law. The Israeli ministry of foreign affairs did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment.

Israel captured East Jerusalem including the Old City in a 1967 war and later annexed it, a move not recognized internationally. Palestinians want East Jerusalem for the capital of a state they seek in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, which abuts the city, and the Gaza Strip. Israel views the entire city as its indivisible capital.

Most world powers deem the Israeli settlements illegal for taking in territory where Palestinians seek statehood.

The four countries also expressed concern about the evictions and demolitions

in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah, where residents say they are being displaced.

Earlier Wednesday, Israeli police evicted a Palestinian family from their East Jerusalem home - which they say they had lived in for decades - before a digger tore down the property, prompting criticism from rights activists and diplomats. Israeli police demolished the home of a Palestinian family and arrested at least 18 people as they carried out a controversial eviction order in the sensitive east Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah early on Wednesday.

The looming eviction of other families from Sheikh Jarrah in May last year partly fuelled an 11-day war between Israel and armed Palestinian factions in Gaza.

Before dawn, Israeli officers went to the

home of the Salhiya family, who were first served with an eviction notice in 2017, after courts ruled the house had been built illegally. Jerusalem authorities have said the land will be used to build a school for children with special needs, but the eviction may raise tension in a neighbourhood that has become a symbol of Palestinian opposition to Israeli occupation.

Jerusalem deputy mayor Fleur Hassan-Nahoum said the dispute surrounding the Salhiya's home is "completely different" from the events in May, when Palestinians risked being forced to hand over plots of land to Jewish settlers.

Israeli police said they had "completed the execution of an eviction order of illegal buildings built on grounds designated for a school for children with special needs".

Andy Murray out of Australian Open

SPORTS DESK

MELBOURNE: The hurt from disappointing defeats "does not get any easier" said Andy Murray after a



subdued display against Japan's Tarō Daniel saw him knocked out of the Australian Open in round two.

Britain's Murray lost 6-4 6-4 to qualifier Daniel - ranked below him at 120 in the world - on John Cain Arena. It was a far cry from the 34-year-old's performance in Tuesday's victory over 21st seed Nikoloz Basilashvili. "When you know you've not got many years left it is frustrating," he said.

"I put a lot into the off-season for practising and preparing, hopefully to not play like that in the big tournaments. "So it is especially disappointing when you perform like that."

Former world number one Murray, now ranked 113th, had never previously lost a Grand Slam match to an opponent ranked as low as Daniel. For 28-year-old Daniel, victory meant he reached the third round of a major for the first time in his career. Murray shot a disconsolate look towards his box after Daniel clinched victory with a crisp backhand volley on his first match point.

The three-time Grand Slam champion walked off court shaking his head before giving a quick thumbs up to a crowd glad to see him back at Melbourne Park and appreciative of his efforts.

Multiple deaths in Lahore blast

FROM PAGE 01

Shedding light on the details of the injuries, Rashid said that no burnt cases were reported; however, all injured had orthopaedic injuries. The deceased include a man identified as Ramzan, 31, who was a resident of Ferozewala and a 9-year-old child identified as Absar, who hailed from Karachi.

The police official said the blast caused a 1.5 feet-deep crater in the ground. The injured have been shifted to Mayo Hospital. Scores of visitors throng to the Anarkali area every day where a number of markets and a variety of business centres are located.

Deputy Commissioner Lahore Umer Sher Chhattha said the blast took place at 1:45pm, while the safe city cameras would be used to track down the culprits. Federal Minister for Interior Sheikh Rasheed told that there was a "threat of terrorism". "I am going [to the area] and will collect more information; once I have more updates, I will let [people] know." Meanwhile, Lahore deputy inspector-general of operations, Dr Muhammad Abid Khan, had said that no security alert had been issued.

Govt has put country...

FROM PAGE 01

tremendous progress only due to prudent policies of the government.

He mentioned the three surveys conducted by renowned UK periodical and said that Pakistan was ranked third in the first survey; then it jumped to first position in second survey and now it was at the second position in third survey. "It indicates an excellent performance of national economy as Pakistan remained among the top three economies of the world, which made phenomenal progress during pandemic." He particularly mentioned auto manufacturing sector and said that it sold record vehicles during the first nine months of last fiscal year. The growth of this sector stood at 9.29 per cent while in the last quarter it jumped to 15.27 per cent. This sector contributed its share of 1.12 per cent in total GDP growth rate.

State Minister for Information and Broadcasting Furrukh Habib, Chairman NA Standing Committee on Finance Faizullah Kamoka, Provincial Minister for Culture & Colonies Khayal Ahmad Kastro, Member National Assembly Sheikh Khurram Shahzad and others were also present.



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's Ambassador-designate to Sudan, Mir Behrose Reki Baloch called on Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. — DNA

Women's Ashes McGrath helps Australia thrash England

SPORTS DESK

ADELAIDE: England were thrashed in the opening match of the Women's Ashes as Tahlia McGrath's outstanding all-round performance fired Australia to a nine-wicket win in the first T20. McGrath blasted an unbeaten 91 from 49 balls after taking 3-26 as Australia chased down 170 with 18 balls to spare at the Adelaide Oval.

She shared a brutal 144-run stand with captain Meg Lanning, who finished with 64 from 44 balls, to help Australia register their highest chase in T20s. England had posted a seemingly threatening 169-4 from their 20 overs, led by 70 from Danni Wyatt.

A ragged bowling and fielding display cost England, who were unable to maintain any pressure on the brilliant McGrath and Lanning. Victory gives Australia two points in the multi-format series, with the second of three T20s taking place at the Adelaide Oval on Saturday.

That Australia was able to drop Ellyse Perry, an icon of



Australian cricket, and still register such a crushing victory shows how much depth they have. While Perry has struggled for consistency in T20s in recent times, McGrath excelled in Australia's series against India and offers more power with the bat. Her batting was astonishingly threatening 169-4 from their 20 overs, led by 70 from Danni Wyatt. A ragged bowling and fielding display cost England, who were unable to maintain any pressure on the brilliant McGrath and Lanning. Victory gives Australia two points in the multi-format series, with the second of three T20s taking place at the Adelaide Oval on Saturday. That Australia was able to drop Ellyse Perry, an icon of

RISJA elects Abbas Shabbir as new President

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Senior Journalist Abbas Shabbir of Samaa TV elected president of Rawalpindi Islamabad Sports Journalists Association (RISJA) unopposed while Arif Khan and Sohail Raja were elected as general secretary and finance secretary respectively during electoral meeting of the association on Thursday.

The electoral general council meeting of RISJA was held here at Islamabad Tennis Complex, under the supervision of chairman RISJA Abdul Mohi Shah in which more than 40 members were present during the important meeting.

Former president RISJA Ayaz Akbar and secretary Arif Khan presented the performance report of the association and paid rich tribute to members for staying united and working for the noble cause of promoting sports.

During meeting a resolution was passed appreciating the services of former President Ayaz Akbar as well as former president Ayaz Akbar and chairman Abdul Mohi Shah suggested the names of senior journalist Abbas Shabbir to the president and other post too as after consultation a new body unanimously elected for one year under the president-ship of senior journalist Abbas Shabbir.

The other newly elected office bearers are Asif Naweed (AAJ TV) Senior Vice President, Faheem Akhtar (92 TV) and Hafiz Ubaid (NNI) vice presidents, Faisal Mansoor (Daily 92) and Samra Athar (Sports Life) Joint Secretaries, Khurram Shehzad (Daily Musliman) were elected as Information Secretary while Seasonal sports journalist Faheem Anwar Khan, Afzal Javed, Nasir Abbas Naqvi, Asim Nawaz Abbasi, Raza Abid Mustafa, Rizwan Malik, Rehan Sheikh, Gabriel De Souza and Farooq Ahmed were elected in

the executive body of the association. Addressing the meeting, RISJA chairman Abdul Mohi Shah appreciated the services of former president Ayaz Akbar and said that the newly elected president Abbas Shabbir would play a key role in the welfare of the association and RISJA Will continue to play its role in the promotion of sports in the country. Newly elected President Abbas Shabbir said that he would raise voice for the rights of sports journalists in every forum, hoping that all his colleagues would work together for the welfare of the association. He said that we will expand the scope of RISJA activities and will serve his best abilities for the welfare of the association.

On this occasion, former President Ayaz Akbar while congratulating the newly elected body said that Abbas Shabbir is a big name in the sports world and all will work together for the welfare of sports journalists.



Shadab v Wahab: battle for domination continues

Shadab picks majority of his wickets in the middle overs, helping his team keep a lid on the opposition's flow of runs

LAHORE: Islamabad United and Peshawar Zalmi have been the most successful HBL PSL sides since the league's inception in 2016. They were the first two sides to win the title: Islamabad United made history in Dubai by winning the inaugural edition and Peshawar Zalmi bagged the title with a commanding win over Quetta Gladiators in 2017 at the Gaddafi Stadium in what was the first-ever HBL PSL match to be held on Pakistan soil.

Islamabad United are the only side to bag the HBL PSL title twice and boast win percentage of 56.15 - which is the best amongst the six sides. Peshawar Zalmi, who have played four finals, have won 55.07 per cent of their matches.

Shadab Khan, who became the youngest captain in the tournament history when he was appointed at the role in 2020, has won 12 of 23 matches for Islamabad United and experienced pacer Wahab Riaz has 50 per cent success-rate in 18 matches as Peshawar Zalmi's skipper. The two had been at the forefront of their teams' successes. Shadab made a mark in his debut HBL PSL season in 2017 with his versatile leg-spin and electrifying fielding, and earned maiden call-up for the national side for the limited-overs tour of the West Indies, where he bagged player of the match awards in his first two international T20s.

Shadab picks majority of his wickets in the middle overs, helping his team keep a lid on the opposition's flow of runs. The leg-spinner has 41 scalps in overs 7-16 - which are the most for any bowler in the tournament. He has also come handy as a batter, scoring three half-centuries and accumulating 532 runs at a strike-rate of 128.

Wahab has continued to stamp his credentials as a reliable short-format bowler in the HBL PSL. The left-arm quick has snared 94 wickets - the most in the tournament - at 19.61 runs apiece. His searing pace and scorching reverse swing

has garnered him 44 scalps in the last four overs. The next best in this phase is Sohail Tanvir with 31 wickets. The battle for domination will continue when the two teams will meet on 30 January and 17 February at National Stadium and Gaddafi Stadium, respectively. To date, Islamabad United have won eight of the 15 matches between these two sides - which include the final of the 2018 edition in Karachi - while Peshawar Zalmi have won seven.

Islamabad United captain Shadab Khan said on Thursday: "The HBL PSL and Islamabad United hold great significance in my life. This tournament propelled me to the national side and has a great role to play in my progression. "It is a great platform where youngsters can rub shoulders with the seniors and it has benefited many cricketers, including me. Since my debut in the HBL PSL, Islamabad United have put their faith in me and given me the atmosphere in which I can express myself and that has helped me

grow as a cricketer. "Peshawar Zalmi are one of the toughest sides in the HBL PSL and we have had some exciting matches against them. The upcoming tournament will be no different. We have won eight matches against them and will try our level best to stretch the lead." Peshawar Zalmi captain Wahab Riaz said: "The HBL PSL has proved to be the most exciting brand come out of Pakistan and it enjoys a massive following all around the world. This is because of the quality of cricket that it produces and each season has brought forward new talent. "Over the years, we have seen some extraordinary youngsters in the Zalmi colours and they have done brilliantly to repay the faith the team has put in them. Our team has gelled brilliantly, and each individual, whether senior or junior, has delivered. "Facing Islamabad United is always an exciting proposition. They are a great bunch of sportsmen and

play the game with good spirit. Our matches always bring together Islamabad and Peshawar fans, and I am sure both red and yellow fans are looking forward to our games." **Squads (in alphabetical order):** Islamabad United - Shadab Khan (c), Alex Hales, Asif Ali, Ather Mahmood, Azam Khan, Colin Munro, Danish Aziz, Faheem Ashraf, Hasan Ali, Marchant De Lange, Mohammad Akhlag, Mohammad Wasim Jr, Saqib Mahmood, Musa Khan, Paul Stirling, Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Reece Topley, Zafar Gohar, Zahir Khan and Zeeshan Zammeer/Mohammad Huraibra Peshawar Zalmi - Wahab Riaz (c), Aarish Ali Khan, Arshad Iqbal, Ben Cutting, Haider Ali, Hazratullah Zazai, Hussain Talat, Kamran Akmal, Liam Livingstone/Matthew Parkinson, Mohammad Harris, Mohammad Umar, Salman Irshad, Sameen Gul, Saqib Mahmood/Pat Brown, Sherfane Rutherford, Shoib Malik, Sirajuddin, Sohail Khan, Tom Kohler-Cadmore and Usman Qadir. — APP

Briefs

Afghanistan women losing jobs

NEWS DESK

KABUL: In a small tailoring workshop in Kabul, 29-year-old Afghan entrepreneur Sohaaila Noori looks on as her dramatically reduced workforce of around 30 women sew scarves, dresses and baby clothes. A few months ago, before the Taliban movement seized power in August, she employed more than 80 people, mostly women, across three different textile workshops.

"In the past, we had so much work to do," said Noori, who was determined to keep her business running in order to employ as many women as she could. "We had different types of contracts, we could easily pay a salary to our master tailors and other workers, but currently we have no contracts."

With Afghanistan's economy deep in crisis – billions of dollars in aid and reserves have been cut off and ordinary people have little money even for basics – enterprises like Noori's are struggling to stay afloat.

Making matters worse, the Taliban will only allow women to work subject to their interpretation of Islamic law, prompting some to leave jobs out of fear of punishment by a group that severely restricted their freedom the last time it ruled. Hard-won gains in women's rights over the last two decades have been quickly reversed, and reports from international rights experts and labour organisations this week painted a bleak picture for female employment and access to public space.

Though the economic crisis is hitting the entire country – some agencies predict it will leave almost the entire population in poverty in the coming months – the effect is disproportionately felt by women.

"The crisis in Afghanistan has made an already challenging situation for women workers even worse," said Ramin Behzad, Senior Coordinator of the International Labour Organization (ILO) for Afghanistan.

Another pig-to-human kidney transplant

WASHINGTON: A US medical team on Thursday announced it had carried out the second-known kidney transplant from a pig to a human, the first inside the body of a brain dead recipient.

The procedure, which was described in a scientific paper, comes on the heels of the successful implantation of a porcine heart into a person earlier this month. It is hoped that advances in the field of so-called xenotransplantation, or cross-species organ donation, could one day solve the chronic shortage of organ donations.

"Today's results are a remarkable achievement for humanity and advance xenotransplant into the clinical realm," said Selwyn Vickers, dean of the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) Heersink School of Medicine, which carried out the procedure.

The first pig kidney was transplanted in a human by a team at New York University (NYU) Langone on September 25 2021, and involved a brain dead patient on a ventilator whose family had given permission for the proof-of-concept experiment. That procedure involved attaching a kidney to blood vessels on the top of one of the patient's legs, so that scientists could observe it and take biopsy samples. – APP

Pentagon releases footage of Kabul drone strike

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: The Pentagon for the first time publicly released drone footage of a botched strike in Kabul that killed 10 members of a family, including seven children, amid the chaotic US withdrawal from the country.

The footage was initially obtained through a Freedom of Information Act lawsuit by The New York Times and was subsequently released by US Central Command on Thursday. It appears to underscore how, by the Pentagon's own account, limited intelligence, a heightened state of alert, and rushed decision-making led to the killing of civilians.

The fuzzy footage, which officials told the newspaper was recorded by two MQ-9 Reaper drones, shows the moments before the fatal drone strike on a car in a courtyard in Kabul on August 29. One segment of footage appears to show a shorter, blurry figure in white next to a taller figure in black in the courtyard as the targeted car backs in to park, according to the analysis by the Times. While footage also shows figures moving around the courtyard in the minutes before the strike – and one person open the passenger door to the targeted car – the Times notes the heights of the figures cannot be determined from the murky footage. A flash of fire indicates the moment of the strike and people can be seen running in the aftermath.

The US military initially stood by the attack, which they said targeted an operative of Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISIS-K).

Glad to know that Batik is famous in Pakistan: envoy
Says Pakistani youth has immense talent and potential

STAFF REPORT

LAHORE: Adam M. Tugio, Ambassador of the Republic of Indonesia to Pakistan has stated that, 'Batik' is Indonesia's most developed and ancient art forms, it is an expression through which one can express and convey their inspiration, feelings and message. He highlighted that this art form can be modified and used with many other art forms, mentioning the example of Pakistani truck art and the art of Pakistan's provinces, the ambassador stated that BATIK can be connected to all of them.

Furthermore, to introduce BATIK in Pakistan and to boost cultural connectivity and people to people contact, he announced a BATIK competition for students of Pakistan. He emphasized that winners will be invited to Indonesia so they may have a first-hand experience of being trained in BATIK and exploring the culture of Indonesia. He said, 'I'm very proud to know that BATIK is already very popular in Pakistan as it is now part of the curriculum of University college of Arts and Design, University of the Punjab, Lahore. He appreciated the talented young students of the University and was of the view that Pakistani youth has immense talent and potential to excel in different fields and make Pakistan part of the global supply chain.

While discussing about the shared religious, cultural and historical ties, he shared an interesting video about the similarities between Pakistan and Indonesia. Prof. Dr. Saleem Mazhar, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, University of the Punjab, Lahore expressed his gratitude to His Excellency Adam M. Tugio for praising the students and motivating them to do more. He further stated that, in the contemporary times international and national connectivity is of great



significance. In this regard, CGSS has been a huge support for University of the Punjab, Lahore as it has been instrumental in promoting the students and academia, internationally. Prof. Dr. Sumera Jawad, Principal, University College of Arts and Design, University of the Punjab, Lahore emphasized that students of University College of Arts and Design have worked really hard for the exhibition. She states that they are excited and passionate to further introduce innovative ideas and creative mediums by using BATIK. Dr. Fozia Hadi, Director, Regional Integration Center (RIC), University of the Punjab, Lahore shared that the word Batik is derived from the Javanese word 'amba', means 'to write', the suffix 'titik' means little dot or to make dots. Dr. Ansa Mubashra, Incharge, Textile Design Department, University College of Arts and Design, University of the Punjab, Lahore delivered the closing remarks.

Pak records highest daily Covid count
Indoor dining banned in Islamabad

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan recorded 6,808 new COVID-19 cases, the second-highest daily case count since the coronavirus pandemic started in 2020, official figures showed Thursday morning, as the country witnesses a rapid rise in infections due to the Omicron variant. The highest daily toll was recorded on June 13, 2020, when the country reported 6,825 coronavirus cases, the National Command and Operation Centre's (NCOC) data showed.

The positivity rate in the country jumped to a nine-month high Thursday morning as the infection rate was reported at 11.55% after 58,943 tests were conducted, the NCOC's data showed. The active cases, too, shot up and now stand at 51,094 from just 44,717 in the last 24 hours, official figures showed, with total deaths standing at 29,042 after five more people succumbed to the virus. The NCOC had on Wednesday finally issued revised coronavirus guidelines and SOPs for the education, restaurant, entertainment, and other sectors as Pakistan struggles to contain the spread of the Omicron variant.

1,131 fresh Covid-19 cases reported in capital

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD, Health officials on Thursday said that 1,131 new Coronavirus cases were reported in the federal capital during the last 24 hours. According to an official of the National Command and Operation Center (NCOC), as many as 702 cases were reported on Wednesday while 479 cases were reported on Tuesday. He said so far 113,688 cases were reported from the federal capital and 969 deaths were reported from Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) while 108,253 patients had recovered completely. Meanwhile, on the direction of the Ministry of National Health Services, the district administration of Islamabad continues surveillance of different areas of the capital to reduce transmission of the infection in the selected streets and other sectors.

IHC indicts ex-chief judge GB Rana Shamim
Indictment of journalists deferred

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday indicted former chief justice Gilgit Baltistan Rana Shamim in contempt of court case pertaining his allegation against ex-chief justice Saqib Nisar in an affidavit. However, the court decided not to frame charges against owner of a media house Mir Shakeelur Rehman, senior journalists Ansar Abbasi and Aamir Ghauri. IHC's Chief Justice Athar Minallah heard the case regarding the above mentioned matter. Framing charges against the accused, the court said it couldn't give license to anyone to disrespect it. It may be mentioned here that the IHC had initiated a contempt of court case after a news story was published in an English daily newspaper leveling allegations on ex-chief justice of Pakistan Saqib Nisar for holding a telephonic conversation about the cases of ex-prime minister Nawaz Sharif and her daughter Maryam Nawaz. – APP

Romania ready to host French troops: president

"I welcome the explicit announcement of President Joe Biden to increase the US military presence in Romania, on the eastern flank, if the security situation deteriorates further", Iohannis said.

BUCHAREST: Romanian President Klaus Iohannis on Thursday welcomed French counterpart Emmanuel Macron's announcement of a possible troop deployment on NATO's Eastern flank as fears rise of a Russian attack on Ukraine.

Macron on Wednesday expressed France's "readiness to go further, and within the framework of NATO to commit to new missions ... in particular in Romania".

"I warmly welcome President Emmanuel Macron's announcement on France's readiness to participate in NATO's forward military presence in Romania," Iohannis tweeted. "The Romania-France strategic partnership will thus be reinforced on the Eastern flank, in the Black Sea region", he added.

Across Europe fears are mounting that a major conflict could break out as Russia has tens of thousands of troops massed on the Ukrainian border.

Moscow insists it has no plans to invade but has at the same time laid down a series of demands – including a ban on Ukraine joining NATO – in exchange for de-escalation. Romania, a NATO member since 2004 and which already hosts around 1,000 US troops on its territory, also said it was ready to welcome more American soldiers.

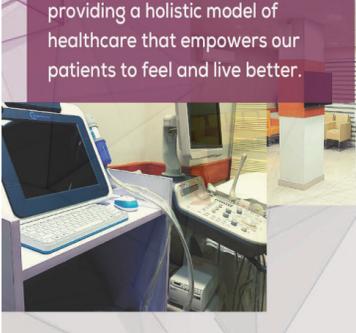
US President Joe Biden said on Wednesday that Washington would "actually increase troop presence in Poland, in Romania, et cetera, if in fact he (the Russian president) moves because we have a sacred obligation in Article 5 to defend those countries. They are part of NATO". "I welcome the explicit announcement of President Joe Biden to increase the US military presence in Romania, on the eastern flank, if the security situation deteriorates further", Iohannis said. – APP



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