



Islamabad POST

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Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Price Rs. 20

World worse now due to Covid, climate, conflict, says UN chief

Detailed News On Page-07

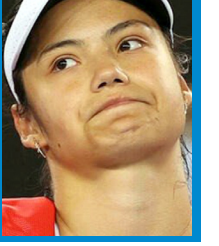
COAS vows to bring 'complete peace' at all cost

Detailed News On Page-08



Raducanu learns she has 'fight in me'

Detailed News On Page-06



Briefs

PM Imran felicitates govt on 5.37% growth

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan Friday congratulated his government on achieving the GDP growth of 5.37% which led to substantial jobs creation and also raised per capita income. The prime minister wrote on Twitter that the success of the government's economic reforms was also recognized globally. He also cited a report of Bloomberg which predicted that Pakistan would sustain high growth trajectory and employment levels. Moreover, the prime minister also said that since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Pakistan had been ranked amongst the top three countries on the normalcy index. He said the Economist magazine, in its latest normalcy index also indicated that during the pandemic, Pakistan simultaneously saved jobs as well as lives.

Border fencing to complete soon

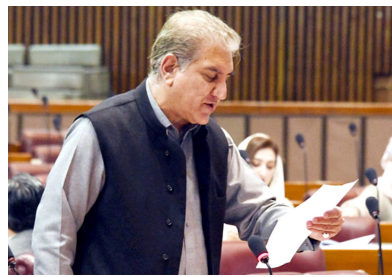
ISLAMABAD: Minister for Interior Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed on Friday informed the Senate that fencing along 2680 kilometers Pak-Afghan border has already been completed except 21 km which would be done soon. Speaking in the Senate, the minister said that efforts were also being made to complete fencing of 200 km remaining Pak-Iran border. Condemning the Lahore's blast, he said investigation into the incident was underway added that no one would be allowed to spoil the peaceful environment in the country. He said a terrorist incident was also occurred in Islamabad on January 18 in which a head constable Munawar embraced martyrdom while two terrorists of banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) were killed. - APP

Holiday Notice

The offices of daily Islamabad POST shall remain closed on Saturday on account of weekly off therefore there will be no newspaper on Sunday. - Editor

Country's foreign policy reshaped

FM Qureshi tells National Assembly Pakistan's economy touching 5.37 per cent growth



SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi has said that the present government has given a new direction to the country's foreign policy from geo-politics to geo-economics for the welfare of people. Speaking in the National Assembly on Friday, he said the country's economy is now touching 5.37 percent growth rate regardless of the contraction caused by COVID-19 to the international economies. He said according to a survey of World Bank, our agriculture sector is growing by 3.3 percent. He said our exports and remittances are reaching record levels besides the statistics show that per capita income is also increasing. The Foreign Minister said regardless of gas shortage, the Urea production has witnessed an increase. He said we are

Continued on Page 06

'Pakistan wants friendly relations with neighbors'

ALI FURQAN

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Office spokesperson Asim Iftikhar Ahmed says Pakistan wants to establish peaceful and friendly relations with all its neighbouring countries, including India. Responding to questions during his weekly news briefing in Islamabad on Friday, he said Pakistan is committed to have meaningful, constructive and result-oriented dialogue with India, but the onus is on New Delhi to take necessary steps to create an enabling environment. Talking about Pak-India relations, he said ties are not good since the unilateral and illegal actions taken by the Indian regime on August 5, 2019 in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. Responding to another question regarding continued oppression by the Indian forces in the held territory, the spokesperson said the international community needs to do more in checking atrocities against the innocent people of Kashmir.

Guthrie's statement Fawad asks Sharif family to clarify position

AGENCIES

DUBAI: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain on Friday asked the Sharif family to clarify their position on the statement by British solicitor Charles Guthrie claiming that former Gilgit Baltistan chief judge Rana Shamim signed the affidavit at the residence of Nawaz Sharif in London. It was an important allegation and "I think the Sharif family should come forward and explain their position," he said while talking to the media.



Continued on Page 06

'Shehbaz never responds to money laundering charges'

LAHORE: Adviser to Prime Minister on Accountability and Interior Barister Shahzad Akbar Friday said that Pakistan Muslim League-N president Shehbaz Sharif had never responded to queries of the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) and National Accountability Bureau (NAB) about facts of the cases against him pertaining to money laundering and corruption. Addressing a press conference at 90 Shahrah-e-Quaid-e-Azam,

Continued on Page 06



MOMBASA: Pakistan Navy Ship Alamgir visited Kenya and established free medical camp for local people of Mombasa. - DNA

CM KPK reaffirms fulfilling PM's vision
Says initiatives taken by the government have resulted in improvement

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan has said that incumbent government as per the vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan is working under short term and long term planning for sustainable development of all tribal districts including Orakzai adding that it was the top most priority of the government to address the decades old deprivations of tribal people and to bring in a visible change in their lives. He said that the initiatives taken by the government in merged areas have resulted in significant improvement and people of the area would benefit from the outcomes of these initiatives very soon further adding that the provincial government was also taking steps to provide employment opportunities to local people by exploring the tourism potentials of tribal districts. This he said while talking to a delegation of PTI workers from District Orakzai which called on him here the other day.

Continued on Page 06

PM to receive phone calls

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Political Communication Dr Shahbaz Gill on Friday said Prime Minister Imran Khan would receive direct phone calls in a programme "Your Prime Minister" from the public around 3 pm Sunday. The prime minister would listen to the complaints and opinions of the people, and would also inform them about the steps taken by the government, he tweeted.

Norway says Taliban team due in Oslo

STAFF REPORT

OSLO: A Taliban delegation is expected to hold talks with Norwegian officials and Afghan civil society representatives in Oslo next week, the Norwegian foreign ministry said on Friday. The visit is scheduled from Sunday to Tuesday, and "the Taliban will meet representatives of the Norwegian authorities and officials from a number of allied countries" for talks on the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan and human rights, the ministry said. The ministry did not specify which allies would attend, but Norwegian newspaper VG said they would include Britain, the European Union, France, Germany, Italy and the US. "We are extremely concerned about the grave situation in Afghanistan, where millions of people are facing a full-blown humanitarian disaster," said Norwegian Foreign Minister Anniken Huitfeldt. "In order to be able to help the civilian population in Afghanistan, it is essential

that both, the international community and Afghans from various parts of society, engage in dialogue with the Taliban," Huitfeldt added. Stressing that Norway would be "clear about our expectations," particularly on "girls' education and human rights", Huitfeldt said the meetings would "not represent a legitimisation or recognition of the Taliban." "But we must talk to the de facto authorities in the country. We cannot allow the political situation to lead to an even worse humanitarian disaster," Huitfeldt said. The Taliban swept back to power in Afghanistan last summer as international troops withdrew after a two-decade presence. A US-led invasion in late 2001 toppled the Taliban in the wake of the September 11, 2001 attacks on the US. The humanitarian situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated drastically since August. International aid came to a sudden halt and the US has frozen \$9.5 billion in assets in the Afghan central bank.



ISLAMABAD: High Commissioner of Canada Wendy Gilmour enjoys local delicacies during her recent visit to Northern Areas. - DNA

US, Russia to keep talking on Ukraine issue

"It can choose the path of diplomacy that can lead to peace and security, or the path that will lead only to conflict, severe consequences and international condemnation"

NEWS DESK

Albares: Europeans are 'united' on Ukraine crisis

GENEVA: The top U.S. and Russian diplomats made no major breakthrough at talks on Ukraine on Friday but agreed to keep talking to try to resolve a crisis that has stoked fears of a military conflict. After the talks in Geneva, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken warned of a "swift, severe" response if Russia invades Ukraine after massing troops near its border and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Moscow was still waiting for a written response to demands for security guarantees. But both said they were open to further dialogue, and Blinken saw grounds to hope that mutual security concerns could be addressed. "Based on the conversations we've had - the extensive conversations - over the past week and today here in Geneva I think there are grounds for and a means to address some of the mutual concerns

MADRID: Spain's foreign minister Jose Manuel Albares said on Friday that Europeans have a united position on the crisis over the Russian military build-up on the Ukrainian border and that Spain is pushing for dialogue. Russia has massed tens of thousands of troops on its borders with Ukraine in what Western states fear is the precursor to a new assault on the former Soviet republic. Russia denies it is planning an attack, but says it could take unspecified military action if a list of demands is not met. Spain has sent warships to join NATO naval forces in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea as tension in the region rises, Defence Minister Margarita Robles said on Thursday. "Let's give dialogue a chance. That is what Spain is pushing for. If dialogue does not bear fruit, of course, Spain will stand with its European partners and its NATO allies united in deterrence," he said on Friday in Madrid. - News Desk



that we have about security," Blinken said. He described the talks as "frank and substantive" and told reporters that Russia now faced a choice. "It can choose the path of diplomacy that can lead to peace and security, or the path that will lead only to conflict, severe consequences and international condemnation," Blinken said, adding that diplomacy would be preferable. "We've been clear - if any Russian military forces move across Ukraine's border, that's a renewed invasion. It will be met with swift, severe and a united response from the United States and our partners and allies." Lavrov said the ball was in Washington's court. Describing the meeting as open and useful, he said Moscow would understand whether talks were on the right track once it had received a written response to its sweeping security demands from the United States. "I can't tell you if we're on the right track or the wrong track. We'll understand this when we receive the Ameri-

can response on paper to all the points in our proposal," Lavrov said. Russia's demands include a halt to NATO's eastward expansion and a pledge that Ukraine will never be allowed to join the Western military alliance. Blinken said he expected to share with Russia "our concerns and ideas in more detail and in writing next week" and said he and Lavrov had "agreed to further discussions after that". Russia and the United States could hold another meeting next month to discuss Moscow's demands for security guarantees, Russia's RIA news agency quoted a source in the Russian delegation as saying. Lavrov said Russia had worries of its own, "not about invented threats, but real facts that no one hides - pumping Ukraine with weapons, sending hundreds of western military instructors". Asked about the possibility of a summit between President Vladimir Putin and U.S. President Joe Biden, Lavrov was circumspect.

Inside...

- SBP's notification suspends clearance at Pak-Afghan border - Page 02
- ICCI for focusing on exports to achieve sustainable growth - Page 03
- Promotion of youth activities priority, says Usman Dar - Page 04
- Biden's policy failures symbolize US leadership crisis - Page 05
- Defending champion losses in Australian Open thriller - Page 06
- VinFuture Prize honours mRNA vaccine researchers - Page 07
- Franco-German Friendship Day marked in Islamabad - Page 08

Briefs

Sri Lankan delegation meets Commerce Secretary

KARACHI: Headed by Sri Lankan Minister for Trade Dr. Bandula Gunawardana, Ministerial business delegation of Sri Lanka on Friday held a preparatory meeting with Federal Commerce Secretary, Suleh Ahmed Faruqi here TDAP Head Office to discuss agenda for detailed formal meeting at the Ministry of Commerce in Islamabad on Tuesday. The meeting will be presided over by Advisor to the Prime Minister on Commerce Abdul Razzak Dawood.

Tade Development Authority of Pakistan was represented by Chief Executive Officer Arif Khan and Secretary Ahsan Mangi.

Other delegates included Sri Lankan Consul General in Karachi, Jagath Abeywardana, Director General of Economic Affairs at the Foreign Ministry of Sri Lanka, Prof. Dr. Saj U.Mendis, Commercial Consular at Pakistan High Commission in Sri Lanka Ms. Asma Kamal, Chairman, Sri Lanka-Pakistan Business Forum Majid Aziz was also present.

The main items of the scheduled meeting will be the review of Sri Lanka and Pakistan Free Trade Agreement and the tariff structure to make this agreement as very strong instrument to boost the bilateral trade to the actual huge potential on both sides. The meeting would also deliberate on modalities to increase investment including joint ventures in potential sectors of the two economies, along with strengthening bilateral economic cooperation. The Secretary Commerce informed Sri Lankan Trade Minister that PM's Advisor on Commerce Abdul Razzak Dawood was keen to meet him for furthering bilateral trade and investment.

Sri Lanka Minister, who is on week-long visit to Pakistan along with his official team and representatives of major Sri Lankan companies since January 20, had meetings with Pakistan's private sector representatives here on the first day, which he described very successful. The next destination would be Islamabad before flying to Lahore. — APP

KP schools directed to ensure arrangements for Zuhar prayer

PESHAWAR: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Education Department in a bid to revive the old tradition of offering the Zuhar (afternoon) prayer at schools has directed the school authorities to make arrangements for the prayer at their respective institutions. The Primary Education Department has also issued directives to the education officers across the province to create time space in their timetable for Zuhar prayer at schools.

In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa students and teachers used to offer Zuhar prayer under the leadership of Islamiyat or Arabic teacher and the tradition was still going on in some of the schools however it was not part of the obligatory assignment. After receiving a formal application regarding arrangement for Zuhar prayer at schools, the Primary Education Department has issued a formal notification to the education authorities to make arrangements for the Zuhar prayer at all the male and female schools of the province. — APP

FIA arrests MEPCO lineman

MULTAN: Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) on Friday arrested MEPCO assistant lineman on charges of taking bribe.

According to official sources, FIA team on a tip off raided and arrested Rashid, assistant lineman MEPCO Pak Gate subdivision. The team has also recovered bribe money of Rs 25,000 from the arrested employee. A case was registered against the accused and further legal action will be taken against him. — APP

SBP's notification suspends clearance at Pak-Afghan border

SBP in its first notification allowed export to Afghanistan after obtaining payment from Afghan traders in dollars

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR Businessmen associated with Pak-Afghan trade have said that commercial activities between the two countries are lying suspended as border authorities stopped clearance of goods laden trucks in the wake of a notification issued by State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). In a joint press statement issued here on Friday, Vice President Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Indus-

try (PAJCCI), Zia-ul-Haq Sarhadi, Chairman Land Route Standing Committee of Sarhad Chamber, Imtiaz Ahmad Ali and Former Vice President SCCT, Shahid Hussain said bilateral trade between the two countries has reduced drastically and urged SBP to review its notification causing stoppage of goods clearance. They said the SBP in its first notification allowed export to Afghanistan after obtaining payment from Afghan traders in dollars.

However, later another notification was

issued wherein last date was changed from December 31 to December 13 causing halt in clearance of goods laden trucks at Torkhem border post, they added.

They said businessmen dealing in Pak-Afghan trade had prepared large consignments which were passing through the process of passage but have now been stuck at border due to change of date in the notification.

Due to non-issuance of Form E and Form I by SBP, a large number of fully loaded trucks are standing in queue at both side

of the border post waiting for clearance.

The border authorities are refusing to clear the trucks in the wake of issuance of new notification from SBP, Zia continued. Zia said exports to Afghanistan from Pakistan has already showed a decrease of around 35 percent during the period starting from September to December 2021.

He said Afghanistan is faced with severe economic crisis and banks there don't have dollars so the SBP should continue its earlier policy for around more six months.



PESHAWAR: Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa being briefed at the Corps Headquarters Peshawar. — DNA

Ghani discusses sewerage projects with Korean NGO

PESHAWAR: Speaker Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly, Mushtaq Ahmad Ghani on Friday held a detailed meeting with a delegation KOICA, a famous South Korean NGO, headed by Country Director Suikong Yung and discussed matters pertaining to Rs3.6 billion modern sewerage system, flood management and other projects for Abbottabad.

On the occasion, the Speaker apprised the delegation about problems related to flood waters and sewerage system in Abbottabad and said the ever growing population needed proper strategy to cope with future challenges.

Engineer Public Health, Adnan Malik gave a detailed presentation to the Korean delegation on the ground situation. The Country Director for Korean NGO said Abbottabad district was bestowed with beautiful natural sceneries and resources, commending the efforts and services of Speaker KP Assembly for reviving the lost beauty of the district. On the occasion he gave formal approval for the projects related to sewerage and flood water threat issues in Abbottabad. He said the feasibility report of these projects would be completed at the earliest so that work on these important projects could be started during next fiscal year. He said a technical team would visit Abbottabad next February to assist in preparation of the feasibility report and offer workable solutions for the confronting issues. — APP



Excise police tighten noose around narcotics dealers

PESHAWAR: Excise, Taxation and Narcotics Control Department has tightened noose around narcotics dealers, seizing about four kilograms of hashish and arresting accused during three separate actions in a single day.

According to the department's spokesperson, the excise police Peshawar region in the first action recovered 2060 grams heroin and arrested two smugglers including Sadiq Khan and Syed Muhammad from Khyber near Haji Camp bus stop.

In the second action, the excise police recovered 70 gram ice-drug and 50 gram heroin and arrested the accused who was identified as Muhammad Azam at Motorway Park. — APP

DC chairs meeting to review projects

SAQIB MUSHTAQ

LODHAN: Meeting of District Coordination Committee was held to review the Annual Development Program in accordance with Health and Population Department Lodhran's Joint project to achieve the desired targets of population welfare. Meeting was chaired by Deputy Commissioner Captain (R) Shoab Ali.

In the meeting District Population Welfare Officer Syed Muddassar Abbas Hashmi briefed about the department's performance.

Deputy Commissioner said while addressing with the meeting that controlling the increasing population is the need of the hour, he added that efforts shall be put to ensure the dissemination of Population Welfare Department's message to the public.

He said that to control the population strong coordination with Health Department

should be established and already available health staff in field can be very effective in spreading the message to the public.

It was told during the meeting that Social Welfare Department's 3 Tehsil Offices, 3 Family Health Clinic, 3 Family Health Mobile Unit, 33 Family Welfare Centers and 24 Social Mobilizers are observing their duties. It was further told that an awareness seminar was also held in Kanjoo Hall to spread awareness among people regarding increasing population.

Under the umbrella of Social Welfare Department awareness regarding Corona vaccination and Dengue prevention campaign is being spread. On topic of Population and Development awareness lectures are being delivered in several schools and colleges while social organizers are holding corner meetings in different union councils in regard to spreading awareness about increasing population and population control.



Women University Swabi starts online activities

PESHAWAR: Women University Swabi has decided to launch online educational activities after corona cases were reported on the campus. According to a statement issued here on Friday, the university's administration has directed officials concerned to prepare themselves for transition to online classes and other online educational activities as quickly as possible to save precious time of students and complete course work of the current semesters. It says the decision was taken following few suspected corona cases were reported and it was not advisable to continue physical classes and other educational activities on the campus. The university has also directed the officials of the examination section to take prompt measures for holding online examinations in the current scenario. However, it added that teachers and other staff would perform their duties at the campus according to need while strictly observing notified corona-specific SOPs. — APP

COMSATS to open campus in Faisalabad

Comsats has been mandated to promote science and technology in the developing country with its presence in 29 different countries including Pakistan

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Comsats (Commission on Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the South) University Islamabad will open its campus in Faisalabad very soon to resolve the complicated problems faced by industrial and business sector of this fastest growing city of Pakistan, said Professor Imtiaz Ali Khan Director Comsats University Islamabad, Abbottabad Campus.

He was addressing a function after inking a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI). He said that Comsats has been mandated to promote science and technology in the developing country with its presence in 29 different countries including Pakistan. He said that this institute was given the status of full-fledged university in 2018 to further expand its activities. "Government also allowed it to set up its sub campuses across the country", he said and added that President Islamic Republic of Pakistan is its chancellor while the Federal Minister for Science and Technology is looking after its affairs as Pro Vice Chancellor.

He said that it is the first public sector university which has been established on the pattern of self-reliance to generate its own funds. He said that it has 600 PhD doctors from diverse fields of emerging sciences that are also playing their pivotal role in problem solving. He said that we are planning to open new campuses under the formula of Public, Private Partnership (PPP) and in this connection a proposal was under



consideration to set up Comsats campus in Faisalabad as soon as possible. Seeking help from the FCCI in this connection, he offered to give representation to FCCI President in BOD, syndicate, Board of studies and other committees of the Comsats. He said that this institute has also enrolled foreign students for PhD courses from China, Tanzania and Sri Lanka etc. Earlier President FCCI Mr. Atif Munir Sheikh underlined the socio-economic importance of Faisalabad and said that it was contributing 45 to 47 percent share in total textile exports of the country. "Similarly, it was also catering to the 80 percent domestic clothing needs of the country", he said and added that despite our best efforts we could not introduce Nano technology for which we need active support of the researchers and academia. He said that he was signing a series of MoUs with local and national research insti-

tutes and universities to transform the textile sector from traditional to the hi-tech mode. He said that "Halal" market is an emerging trend in the Muslim world and Thailand has excelled in it and being a Muslim country, we should also try to get a sizeable share in this sector. About textile, he said that we have to spend 80 cents on import for the export of one dollar hence we should not depend on textile alone and diversify our exports. He said that we harvest an excellent maize crop but we could not extract oil from it or produce a wide range of value-added products from it. He appreciated the excellent performance of the IT sector and said that we earned two billion dollars from its exports but at the same time India is earning 98 Billion dollars which is an eye opener for us.

Mr. Atif Munir Sheikh particularly mentioned two mega industrial estates which are under colonization in Faisalabad. He said that 65 Chinese and 11 other countries have so far invested in it while many more foreign funded projects are in the pipeline. He said that according to the global estimates Faisalabad would be the fastest growing city during 2023-30. He said that we must support the industrial sector in problem solving through research-based institutions in addition to catering to their needs of innovation. He further said that FCCI was also holding a national level economic conference by the end of March this year. "Its objectives will be to identify core issues along with viable solutions", he said and added that leading political, economic and academic personalities would be invited to attend it and give their productive input to gear up the pace of industrial growth.

Court extends interim bail of Shehbaz, Hamza till 28th

LAHORE: A banking of fence court on Friday extended the interim bail of Opposition leader in National Assembly Shehbaz Sharif and his son Hamza Shehbaz in money laundering and sugar scam till January 28. Banking Court Judge Sardar Tahir Sabir conducted the proceedings wherein Hamza Shehbaz appeared and got his attendance marked.

The defence counsel, Advocate Amjad Pervaiz, argued that the court had ordered the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) to file the case challan in the court concerned. He submitted that despite the court orders, the FIA had not submitted challan yet. Which court should be approached for bail in these circumstances, he questioned.

The counsel also filed an exemption application on behalf of Shehbaz Sharif, stating that he was suffering from Corona and tested positive. The court was requested to exempt Shehbaz Sharif from personal appearance for one-day.

At this, the court questioned FIA's counsel as to why the challan had not been filed in the court concerned.

To which, the counsel assured that the challan would be filed soon. Subsequently, the court extended the interim bail of Shehbaz Sharif and his son till January 28 and directed the FIA to file the challan in the court concerned immediately.

It is pertinent to mention here that the court had on January 14 ordered the FIA to submit the challan before court concerned while allowing an application filed by the FIA against the court's jurisdiction to hear the matter.

Shehbaz Sharif and his sons — Hamza and Suleman — were booked by the FIA in November 2020 under sections 419, 420, 468, 471, 34 and 109 of PPC and 5(2) and 5(3) of Prevention of Corruption Act and r/w 3/4 of Anti Money Laundering Act. Suleman is absconding and residing in the UK. — APP

Rs3.12 per unit hike in power tariff on the cards

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Bad news for the people already burdened with record inflation, as the National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) has received a request for raising the power tariff by Rs3.12 per unit.

On the contrary, there is good news for the people of Karachi for whom lowering of electricity rate by Rs1.79 per unit has been suggested.

The Authority will give its decision on February 2 after conducting the hearing on February 1.

The rise in tariff is in connection with the monthly fuel adjustment.

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Namaz Timings

| | |
|--------------|----------|
| Fajr..... | 05:44 am |
| Zohr..... | 12:19 pm |
| Asr..... | 03:50 pm |
| Maghrib..... | 05:28 pm |
| Isha..... | 06:55 pm |



Hotels & Restaurants

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



Airlines

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



Emergency

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



Enquiry

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



Hospitals

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



Departments

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



Complaints

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



Islamabad Metropolitan

| | |
|-------------------|---------|
| Corporation..... | 9209224 |
| Potohar Town..... | 9209224 |
| Rawal Town..... | 5773343 |



Wasa Water Tank

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

ICCI for focusing on exports to achieve sustainable growth

Muhammad Shakeel Munir said that boosting exports was so important for Pakistan to address its economic challenges as exports promotion would improve foreign reserves, finance imports, service debt, stabilize currency

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Muhammad Shakeel Munir, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry has called upon the government to take measures for maximum facilitation of exporters as the export-led growth was the only best option for Pakistan to achieve sustainable economic growth and bring prosperity in the country. He said that the country has achieved over 18 percent growth in exports during the fiscal year 2020-21, however, this performance was still far less than the actual potential as Pakistan could increase exports of many products including marble & granite, pharmaceuticals, IT services, rice and others. For this purpose, strenuous efforts from the government side for the facilitation of exporters were needed. He was afraid that the withdrawal of exemptions worth Rs.343 billion would affect the growth of exports. He expressed these views while addressing a dinner reception organized by Muhammad Naveed Malik, former Senior Vice President ICCI.



mad Naveed Malik, former Senior Vice President ICCI. Jamshaid Akhtar Sheikh Senior Vice President, Muhammad Faheem Khan Vice President ICCI, former MNA Zamurad Khan, former Presidents Baser Daud and Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan, former Vice Presidents Ashfaq Chatha and Saeed Ahmed Bhatti, Executive Member

Azharul Islam, Sateez Abbasi, Shakeel Qureshi, Sheikh Arsalan, Raja Javed, Zeeshan Sadiq, Raja Babar, Umar Sadiq, Ramzan Jutt and others were present at the occasion. Muhammad Shakeel Munir said that boosting exports was so important for Pakistan to address its economic challenges as exports

promotion would improve foreign reserves, finance imports, service debt, stabilize currency and overcome the persistent problem of the balance of payment deficit of the country. He said that small countries like Singapore have annual exports of over USD 300 billion, but Pakistan's exports were still less than USD 30

billion despite the fact that Pakistan has the potential to take its annual exports to USD 50-100 billion. He stressed that the government should provide support for improving the competitiveness of exports in the global market, empower SMEs by providing them easy access to finance at low interest rates, simpli-

fy regulations and reduce high taxes on businesses. He said that Pakistan was the only nuclear power resorting to IMF for coping with its economic challenges and boosting exports up to the real potential was the most viable option to rid the country of economic woes and march towards sustainable development.

Covid claims three more lives

RAWALPINDI: Three more people had died with fatal coronavirus during the last 24 hours, taking the total death toll to 1619 in Rawalpindi district. As per the latest data released by the District Health Authority here on Friday, around 350 more were tested positive for COVID-19 during the last 24 hours, raising the count of confirmed cases to 41,321 in the district, including 38,244 from Rawalpindi and 3077 from outside districts. Among the new patients, 96 belonged to the Potohar town, 92 from Rawal town, 83 from Rawalpindi Cantonment area, 33 from Taxila, 32 from Gujjar Khan, eight from Kallar Syeda, four from Kahutta, three from Murree and two from Kotli sattan. "Presently, 49 patients are admitted to five health facilities, including 15 in the Institute of Urology, 13 in the Holy Family Hospital, ten in the Benazir Bhutto Hospital and Fauji Foundation Hospital and one in Baarmwt Hospital. "The report updated that three patients were on ventilators in critical condition, 13 stable and 33 on double oxygen support. In addition, as many as 4,815,904 people, including 44,574 health workers, had so far been vaccinated against the fatal disease since the start of the vaccination drive from March 10," it informed. - APP

Gallery 6 begins 2022 with winners exhibition

ISLAMABAD: A week-long art exhibition titled "The National Winners 2022" on Friday opened here at Gallery 6. The Ambassador of European Union in Pakistan Androulla Kaminara was the chief guest on the occasion. In 2015, Gallery 6 launched the national biennale "Arjumand Painting Award", with the aim to recognize the outstanding emerging Pakistani artists who possess distinguished talent in painting, said a press release issued here. In the four nationwide competitions held to date, 21 artists (between the ages of 25 to 40) have been the winners of 1st, 2nd, 3rd and Merit Prizes. - APP

Senators give mix reaction to Presidential address

ISLAMABAD: Senators from both side of the divide on Friday gave a mix reaction to the Presidential address to both the Houses assembled together on September 13, 2021. The treasury benches appreciated the President for giving road map to future progress and prosperity of the country while the opposition criticized it. Opening debate on motion of thanks that the House expresses its deep gratitude to the President of Pakistan for his address to both the Houses, Senator Faisal Javed of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) appreciated the President for giving a clear road map for progress and prosperity of the country. He said all the international financial institutions have endorsed that Pakistan has achieved 5.37 per cent growth in the economy during last fiscal year despite COVID-19. The economies of entire world have shrunk due to the pandemic, he said. However, owing the prudent strategy devised by the government under the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan, the Pakistan's economy registered 5.37 per cent growth during last year. World Bank, Bloomberg and Economist magazines have also endorsed Pakistan's sustainable growth. All the economic indicators have shown positive and upward trajectory which indicated the economy has been strengthening, he added. - DNA



ISLAMABAD: Adviser to PM on Overseas Pakistani Ayub Afridi calls on PM Imran Khan. - DNA

Gas theft will not be tolerated in any part of country: Hammad

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Energy Hammad Azhar on Friday said that gas theft will not be tolerated in any part of the country and system losses to be reduced. Responding to a calling attention notice in the National Assembly, he expressed satisfaction that Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited has significantly reduced its system losses from 12.5 percent to 8.5 percent over the last three years. He said there is a need to bring fur-

ther improvement in Sui Southern Gas Company Limited. He pointed out that the country's gas reserves are depleting at the rate of nine percent annually. Minister for Energy Hammad Azhar introduced before the house the Private Power and Infrastructure Board Amendment Bill, 2022. The House adopted two resolutions to extend the Diplomatic and Consular Officers (Oath and Fees) (Amendment) Ordinance, 2021 and the National Rahmatul-Lil-Aalameen Authority Ordinance, 2021 for a further

period of 120 days with effect from February 9, 2022. Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Ali Muhammad Khan presented the statement of contingent liabilities of the Federal Government for the current fiscal year. Parliamentary Secretary for Law Malika Bukhari presented the annual reports of the Council of Islamic Ideology for the period from 2012-2018, and the report on Islamic law of inheritance. Three reports of standing committees on as many legislative proposals were presented in the House.

NA to use its chamber for OIC-CFM's meeting

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly on Friday adopted and passed a resolution, allowing the use of its chamber for the 48th session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers, scheduled to be hosted by Pakistan in March this year. Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi moved the resolution, under Rule 288 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the National Assembly 2007.

PRCS to distribute 27,000 'Panda Packs' among schoolchildren

Abrar ul Haq says Panda Packs are a 'package of love' by China for people of Pakistan

MAHNOOR ANSAR



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) in collaboration with China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation (CFPA) has initiated the "Panda Pack" distribution project and under this initiative 27,000 school bags will be distributed among students of government-run schools in the different districts across Pakistan. A ceremony will be held in Islamabad in coming days to start distribution of 27,000

Panda Packs in government-run schools of Federal Capital Islamabad, Tharparkar, Charsada, Dir, Narowal, Bhawalpur, Zhob, Gwadar and Gilgit Baltistan. In his statement, PRCS Chairman Abrar ul Haq said the economic cooperation between Pakistan and China is fast turning into people-to-people collaboration, adding that the distribution of thousands of Panda Packs by PRCS in collaboration with CFPA, is a proof of the growing multi-faceted relations between the two countries. Abrar ul Haq said around 62 per cent population of Pakistan lives in rural areas, where educational facilities are not up to the mark. He said distribution of school bags among rural students in different districts, is a highly welcomed initiative.

'50 Ehsaas Nashonuma centers opened countrywide'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Poverty Alleviation and Social Protection Dr Sania Nishtar on Friday said that 50 Ehsaas Nashonuma Centers have been opened across the country aiming to address stunting and malnutrition outcomes among children under two years of age and pregnant and lactating mothers. Responding to a question during question hour session in Senate, she stressed for understanding stunting related issues. She said stunting occurred when a child bore shorter height against his or her age, usually due to malnutrition, repeated infections, and poor social stimulation. Dr Nishtar said that stunting was not just related to the poverty as it was also an

issue of lack of awareness. She said that first nutrition survey was conducted in 1965, which was essential to ascertain the health status of the juveniles of the nation. She added that children's mental growth was also affected due to stunting, and it was necessary to know that human capital was the most precious reserve as it cost 60 per cent of total human wealth. She said: "Addressing stunting is very essential and the government's main programme name has been set Ehsaas Nashonuma (nutrition)." The SAPM invited the parliamentarians to visit the Ehsaas center established at G-7 Sitara Market. "The National Nutrition Survey gives only information for children below 5 year. We do not have any data for children of 6-10 years.

JANUARY 2022

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Briefs

ITP hosts farewell for outgoing lady officer

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) hosted a farewell in honor of an outgoing female officer Ayesha Gul who has been promoted to next rank of Superintendent of Police (SP) and to serve in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa from onward.

According to details, a simple ceremony was held here at ITP Headquarters which was attended by SSP (Traffic) Rai Mazhar Iqbal, Station Director ITP FM Radio 92.4, senior police officials and staff. The SSP (Traffic) said that Ayesha Gul was a hardworking and dedicated police officer and hoped for her good performance in future. He also gave a souvenir and bouquet to the outgoing SP and said that the officer had served in Islamabad police with dedication and commitment.

He said that her services to make Islamabad police as an ideal force would be remembered forever. SP Ayesha Gul thanked all staff and her team for their efforts in making ITP an exemplary force. She said that ITP has achieved a great success and asserted it as role model for other forces due to hard work and commitment of its personnel. She hoped for further effective performance in future and more laurels for the force. - APP

NEPRA holds a meeting with licensees

ISLAMABAD: The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) on Friday held a meeting with all respective licensees who did not have acceptable Health, Safety and Environment (HSE) performance as identified in the HSE performance evaluation conducted in 2021, as well as two of the top HSE performers so that they may learn from their experiences.

A large number of HSE professionals from generation, transmission and distribution companies, including from Azad Jammu and Kashmir, attended the meeting to understand the legal requirements of the Power Safety Code, said a press release. They also discussed the identified gaps/shortfalls in HSE performance and recommended appropriate solutions/remedies to improve HSE performance to achieve a zero incident goal.

NEPRA Chairman Tauseef H. Farooqi told the participants in his keynote address that the Authority was actively pursuing its vision of "Power with Safety", and that it would initiate legal proceedings against those companies which showed poor performance in the area of HSE in the second round. - APP

IESCO notifies power suspension programme

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

According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 09:00 AM to 02:00 AM, Gulshan Jinnah, F-Nine Park, G-9/4, H-8, NPCC-1, Carriage Factory, G-11 Center, Railway Road, T&T, Company Bagh, Barian, Patriata, Pir Sohawa, F Block, A Block, Al Noor Colony, Tahmasabad, City, Gulshanabad, Jinnah Road, Dhok Hasso, Khayaban Sir Syed, Abu Bakar, Kayani Road, Race Course, Captain Amir, P&T Wani, Noon, BB Shaheed, Kashmir Road, Rehmatnagar Two, CBR One, Park View, Gulistan Colony, Humayun Road, Gulshanabad, Raniyal, Shah Jeewan, Cantt, Sihala, Kahuta City Two, Color City, Panjar, New Mandira, Hameed Jhangi, LTC, Kaliyam, New Kaliyam, Sukho, Raman, Chak Bailay Khan 2- Nawababad, Jalala, Sher Shah Suri, Shahullah Dutta, Sarai Kharboza, Hazzro, Manser, Nard Topa, Pazo Colony, Marvi, Darul-Salaam Colony, Boliwal, Ishiaq Ahmed, Dhok Fateh, Air University Kamera Feeders, From 08:00 AM to 05:00 PM. Bathar, Charohi Feeders and surroundings. - APP

Promotion of youth activities priority, says Usman Dar



Dar said sports need to be given the status of economy so that players could have employment opportunities as well

SHAJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant on Youth Affairs Usman Dar has said engaging the youth in healthy activities is a priority of the government. Addressing a news conference along with Chief Executive Officer of Lahore Qalandars Atif Rana in Islamabad on Friday, he said sixty-eight percent population in the country is below 30 years of age, and they need to be engaged in healthy activities. The Special Assistant said new sports heroes will be discovered in twelve sports through Kamyab Jawan Sports

Talent Hunt Drive.

He said Kamyab Jawan Program and Lahore Qalandars will jointly hunt talent in cricket and bring forth new heroes. He said Muhammad Zahid is the first hero of this joint venture, who bowls at 92 miles per hour.

Usman Dar said sports need to be given the status of economy so that players could have employment opportunities as well. He also emphasized on promotion of all games including hockey and football. Speaking on the occasion, Atif Rana said that they would conduct talent hunt programmes across the country after the next PSL.

Feasibility study completed for Gwadar Port expansion

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Senate was informed on Friday that a feasibility study for Gwadar Port Expansion Phase II and Free Zone Phase II has been completed which will be prepared in the next five years.

In response to a question during Question Hour in the Senate, the Ministry of Maritime Affairs said in a written reply that the port expansion plan consists of three main parts including

the expansion and reconstruction of the rear storage yard of Gwadar Port Phase-I, the multi-purpose terminal, and the oil and gas terminal including tank area.

Free Zone Phase-II development work has already been started several business ventures have signed agreements with free zone developers to construct the facilities in the next few months. This will create employment opportunities and at the same time create demand for further expansion of port works.

Adverse drug reactions can be reported to DRAP

ISLAMABAD: Adverse drug reactions can be reported to Drug Regulatory Authority of Pakistan (DRAP) via online portal available at DRAP website and smart phone app by patients, healthcare professionals, provincial pharmacovigilance centers and Pharmaceutical companies.

In a written reply to a question during question hour session in Senate, Ministry for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination said that there was no reported case regarding use of medicine/supplements for bodybuilding resulting in death till date as per available data, adding that the regulators were vigilant about their duties and responsibilities. - APP

Govt. taking historic measures to uplift hospitality sector: Awan

It is a matter of great satisfaction that the federal and provincial governments were taking collective steps for development of tourist sites and promotion of tourism

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Capital Development Authority (CDA) affairs, Ali Nawaz Awan Friday said that the government was taking multiple historic measures for uplift of tourism sector for which all available resources were being utilized.

Talking to a private news channel, Awan pledged that special arrangements will be made for the public at tourist sites to promote a positive image of the country, adding, government for the first time in history was identifying and developing places that have potential to draw tourists' attention.

He said it is a matter of great satisfaction that the federal and provincial governments were taking collective steps for development of tourist sites and promotion of tourism, adding, several new destinations have been explored for tourists in rural



areas of the country which is expected to uplift the economy.

Skardu international airport would also boost tourism industry and the economic growth in Gilgit-Baltistan, adding, in line with PM's vision, KPK government was constructing network of road infrastructure for an easy ac-

cess to tourism places.

He said there were serious connectivity and internet-related issues in the region which were being addressed on priority, adding, previous governments had never given priority for promotion of tourism due to that industry has suffered badly.

He said that tourism is booming in the scenic hills of Kumrat and Swat valley, which is a positive sign of improvement in hospitality sector of country. Replying a question, he said that disciplinary action has been ordered against the officers over negligence in the Murree tragedy.

The government had also launched a strict crackdown against the hotels in Murree who were charging high rates and exploiting tourists, he added. The government was committed to make Murree a better tourist destination and will reduce the overcrowding in Murree by formulating better strategies and better road infrastructures, he added.

Senate offers Fateha for martyrs of blast victims

ISLAMABAD: The Senate on Friday offered Fateha for the Shuhada of Lahore blast and martyred security personals including Islamabad Police constable in terrorist attacks.

Chairman Senate Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani asked Senator Faiz Muhammad to lead the Fateha. Speaking on point of or-

der in the Senate Session, Senator Raza Rabbani proposed that Interior Minister should brief the House about the current terrorist attacks on Security Forces in the country.

Leader of the Opposition Senator Yousuf Raza Gilani also expressed concerns over the recent terrorist attacks. He said that this

was very crucial issue and need to be discussed in the House. Responding on point of order, Minister for Railways Azam Swati strongly condemned the recent terrorist attacks on security forces in the country. He said that the House would be briefed about the steps being taken for the law and order in the

country. Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar, Mushtaq Ahmad, Sadiq Abbasi, Tahir Bizenjo, Senator Kamran Murtaza and Irfan Siddiqi also strongly condemned the recent terrorist attacks in the country and demanded that the House should be briefed about the steps taken in this regard. - APP

CDA for promoting non-motorized transport

ISLAMABAD: The Capital Development Authority (CDA) would promote non-motorized transport system to help reducing pollution levels and promoting physical activity in the federal capital. The non-motorized transportation include walking and bicycle, and using small-wheeled transport (skates, skateboards, push scooters and hand carts) and wheelchair which do not rely on an engine or motor for movement. The authority would develop walking and bicycle lanes along major thoroughfares to make the capital city Eco-friendly, CDA officials told a meeting of Islamabad Master Plan Review Commission that met here with authority's chairman on the chair on Friday. The authority officials briefed the members about traffic management system and said a consultant in that regard was being engaged under PC-2. Under the system, they said the installation of road furniture on all roads would be ensured including road signs for pedestrians. It was informed that the use of carpool and public transport service would be promoted under smart traffic management system. Citizens may need to pay the congestion charge for the purpose. The meeting was further apprised that parking plazas would be constructed at six different locations in Islamabad to eliminate parking issue from the city. In this context, two parking plazas in blue area and one each in F-8 Markaz, F-10 Markaz, G-9 Markaz and in I-8 Markaz would be constructed for which sites have been allotted. The construction of one parking plaza in Blue Area has been started while rest of it would be started soon. Similarly, parking areas in the city would be allocated to further improve the parking system with formulation of parking zones and policy.

The meeting was informed that under the mass transit system, the metro bus service to the new Islamabad International Airport would be made operational by March 23, 2022. The work on Islamabad bus service has also been started and in the pilot phase, on three routes i.e "Soan Interchange to Faisal Masjid", "Bhara Kahu to Faiz Ahmed Faiz Metro Station" and "Tarnol Railway Station to N5 Metro Bus Station" has been initiated. The traffic management system will be finalized after the experts feedback. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Daily Wagers standing with their tools on the roadside waiting for clients to be hired for daily work. APP

President for facilitating cross-border trade

Chairman OGRA apprised the participants that the top ten Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs), possessing storage facilities in Balochistan and having valid licenses, had been directed to establish two additional petrol pumps in each district of the province to meet the fuel requirements of province

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has called for further facilitating cross-border trade with neighbouring countries to boost exports as well as provide employment opportunities to the people living near the border areas of Balochistan. He asked the relevant stakeholders to fully equip the existing border stations by upgrading the road infrastructure, providing telecommunication facilities and establishing banking channels at crossing points to enhance border trade and bring prosperity to the remote areas of Balochistan. The President gave these directions while chairing a follow-up meeting on border and trade management in Balochistan, in Gawadar, today. The meeting was attended by the Advisor to Prime Minister on Commerce and Investment, Mr Abdul Razak Dawood, Governor Balochistan, Syed Zahoore Ahmad Agha, Chief Minister Balochistan, Mr Abdul Qudus Bizenjo, Commander XII Corps, Lt General

Sarfraz Ali, Commander Coast of Pakistan Navy, Rear Admiral Javaid Iqbal, Commander West of Pakistan Navy, Rear Admiral Jawad Ahmed, Chairman FBR, Dr Muhammad Ashfaq Ahmed, Chairman CPEC Authority, Mr Khalid Mansoor, Chairman OGRA, Mr Masroor Khan, and Chief Secretary Balochistan, Mr Mather Niaz Rana, and senior officials of the Government. The meeting was updated on the status of various issues raised by the Government of Balochistan in a meeting held on 3rd January 2022, at Aiwan-e-Sadr, Islamabad. The meeting was informed about the border trade issues and illegal fishing in the coastal areas of Gawadar. It was highlighted that necessary groundwork for the provision of basic necessities to the residents of Gawadar would be completed within

06 months. Chairman CPEC Authority apprised that the project for the provision of 1.2 million gallons per day (MGD) of water to the people of Gawadar would be completed within 06 months.

The meeting was also briefed about the progress on the development of Gawadar Airport and the hospital. In order to encourage and facilitate foreign investors, the meeting was told that the process of the issuance of No Objection Certificates (NOCs) to foreign investors had been streamlined that would now be issued in four weeks. Chairman OGRA apprised the participants that the top ten Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs), possessing storage facilities in Balochistan and having valid licenses, had been directed to establish two

additional petrol pumps in each district of the province to meet the fuel requirements of the province. The meeting lauded the Government's decision to reduce the number of security check posts in Balochistan.

Addressing the meeting, the President highlighted that the issues being faced by the traders belonging to border areas of Balochistan should be addressed on a priority basis. He welcomed the State Bank of Pakistan's decision of directing banks to establish banking channels at border trading points. He underlined the need for the skill development of the youth of Balochistan enabling them to fully benefit from the employment opportunities in Gawadar. The President reiterated the Government's commitment to address the sense of deprivation of Balochistan and bring it at par with other provinces of the country. The Governor and Chief Minister of Balochistan deeply thanked the President for taking a keen interest in the development of the province as well as resolving the issues being faced by its people.

Edu Ministry launches SMS awareness service

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training on Friday launched an SMS service campaign for students, teachers and parents across the country to raise awareness against Omicron virus. According to the Federal Education Ministry, the campaign has been launched on the instructions of Minister for Federal Education, and Professional Training, Culture and National Heritage Shafiqat Mahmood.

In the first phase of SMS awareness campaign, the Federal Ministry of Education in collaboration with the telecom company Jazz, will ensure the delivery of its awareness message to 12 million subscribers.

The SMS awareness campaign is being launched from Islamabad while in the second phase, the scope of the campaign will be expanded across the country in collaboration with other telecom companies. Federal Education Ministry in its awareness message to students, teachers and parents would inform them about the rapidly spreading new variant of coronavirus Omicron. During the awareness campaign, the teachers, students and parents would also be guided about the Omicron as well as the implementation of Covid-19 SOPs including periodic hand washing, use of masks, maintaining social distance and avoiding crowds would be ensured. The ministry has also termed the vaccination mandatory for children aged 12 years or above. The purpose of this SMS campaign of federal education ministry is to keep students, teachers and parents aware about the Omicron as well as to continue the educational activities in these difficult times.

Media urged to play role for rights protection

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairperson National Commission for Human Rights Rabiya Javeri Agha has urged the media to play its important role for protection and promotion of human rights in the country. She was talking to Journalists belonging to print, electronic and digital media at a consultation session organized by NCHR in Islamabad. Chairperson NCHR Rabiya Javeri Agha informed the participants that the Commission is currently working on legislative review of mental health regulations, prison rules and laws on minority affairs and state of the implementation of these laws. She said opinions and recommendations of the participants would be taken into account while preparing the NCHR's Strategic Plan and determining next steps for the Commission. Speaking on the occasion, NCHR Member Minority Manzoor Masih urged media to play an effective role in protection of minority rights. He stressed for strong partnership between media and NCHR to highlight the situation of vulnerable groups in Pakistan.

'Around 1,989 authorized OEPs send workforce abroad'

ISLAMABAD: Around 1,989 Overseas Employment Promoters (OEPs) have sent over one million trained labour to different countries across the globe during last three years. An official source told APP here on Friday that a total of 4,582 OEPs were registered with the Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment (BEOE). But due to non-compliance of the procedure and rules of the Bureau office 172 licenses had been canceled including those who failed to get their licenses renewed. It also includes 1,532 expired licenses, 147 invalid licenses and 721 licenses were surrendered. To a question, he said that BEOE was set up on October 1, 1971, by combining three federal government departments namely National Manpower Council, Protectorate of Emigrants and Directorate of Seamen's Welfare under the directive of the Government. - APP

Dr Banuri's reinstatement

THE Islamabad High Court (IHC) earlier this week restored Dr Tariq Banuri as chairman of Higher Education Commission (HEC) and stated that the notifications of his removal were issued without lawful authority and were contrary to the amended provisions of the HEC Ordinance, 2002.

In an unfortunate case of political intervention, Dr Banuri was unceremoniously removed from office by the government in March 2021 when his tenure was shortened from four to three years via an amendment. Given that Dr Banuri challenged his removal in the IHC, no new chairman was appointed till the case was decided. Though the chairman has been reinstated, the HEC saga could continue as some are of the view that a tussle may be on the cards between Dr Banuri and the government's appointed member, Dr Attaur Rahman. The matter became contentious last year following the removal of Dr Banuri as he leveled serious allegations against Dr Rahman and the federal government regarding the lack of accountability and use of funds—which certainly merited proper investigations. Keeping this context in mind, it is possible that the government will challenge this decision by the IHC. Prolonging and politicising this matter any further however will only be to the detriment of the HEC as an institution.

Apart from this, there is still uncertainty surrounding the future of the HEC. This is because after Dr Banuri's removal, several policies initiated by him were reversed by the HEC. Will those be reinstated? Would there be any point to that considering how Dr Banuri's tenure is due to end in May 2022 as per the notification of 2018? Or perhaps, will he be given an extended term by the court in its detailed order as he was restored after 10 months? In addition to these, there are other questions that remain unanswered at this point in time. The hope however is that the matter is put to rest once and for all, with both parties acting gracefully and putting the interests of the country's suffering higher education sector before their parochial interests.

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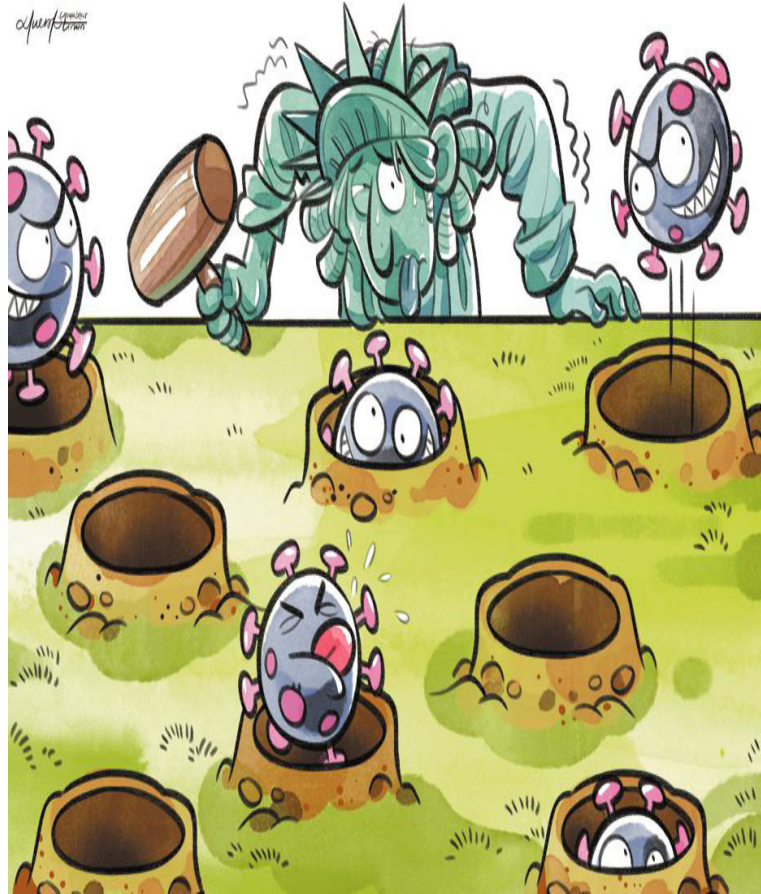
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New SME policy

AT a time when Pakistani policymakers are struggling to increase the economic value of the country, the Prime Minister's announcement of the National Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Policy is certainly welcome. In terms of growth, encouraging existing SMEs to expand operations and always looking for new additions in the sector is a necessary step for a state to take when looking at the expansion of production and exports.

Pakistan has seen growth in this sector over the past decade, with some experts reporting that the industry could have as many as 5.2 million businesses operating. However, the exact numbers are hard to come by given that successive governments have not conducted a thorough survey of economic activity for over a decade and half. If the government wants its own policy to be successful, it must start here and get the data necessary to allow for better servicing of SMEs.

The policy however, will look to provide value in government service by including the provision of credit, an easy tax system and facilitation in business in the new policy. The Prime Minister's own words against the dated No-Objection Certificate (NOC) system will also hopefully lead to an improvement in that mechanism. Importantly, the Prime Minister mentioned startup culture and likened the situation to creating Pakistan's own silicon valley, but in truth the government's policies so far have run against this dream. The heavy-handed ban culture that is becoming more prevalent in regulatory authorities is just one of the many reasons for this. The development of social media rules, the consistent attempts to control the internet and an overall lack of understanding in government circles of what it means to be a tech-friendly country are major reasons.

It is not surprising for instance, that Pakistani authorities are mulling banning cryptocurrency exchanges rather than regulate and tax. While the rest of the world moves towards Web 3.0, we are banning what it functions on. Throughout all of this, we are unable to facilitate companies with technology, beyond making a glitchy mobile application every now and then. It is time for the government to conduct an honest appraisal, and revolutionise all sectors of the economy through more proactive measures.

Biden's policy failures symbolize US leadership crisis

Ishtiaq Ahmad



There is little doubt that Biden's lack of leadership and strategic thinking has put the world at greater risk of conflict

PRESIDENT Joe Biden entered office a year ago with a promise to reclaim America's global leadership by renewing multilateralism, resetting relations with China and Russia, ending the war in Afghanistan and reviving the Iran nuclear deal. However, his subsequent policies aimed at realizing these core foreign policy objectives — pursued with weak deterrence and meek diplomacy — have failed to produce the desired outcomes. Consequently, allies in Europe and the Middle East still doubt if they can fully trust the US. While China has expanded its economic clout in Asia, Russia has raised the security stakes in Europe. Beset by a humanitarian crisis, Afghanistan could implode at any time. And Iran continues to play deadly games in the region, while pursuing brinkmanship in nuclear negotiations. There is little doubt that Biden's lack of leadership and strategic thinking has put the world at greater risk of conflict. Where to begin. Multilateralism: Yes, he has brought America back to global institutions and the Paris climate accord, led the global climate discourse and sponsored a summit for democracy. But on the global issues that really matter, the US has opted to go alone — it backstabbed France by signing a secret nuclear submarine deal with Australia and the UK; it exited Afghanistan without consulting the allied nations in NATO; it debated democracy, while keeping half of the world out; and it appeased Iran, forgetting what Tehran does to America's time-tested

Arab allies in the neighborhood.

Of course, unilateralism at the expense of multilateralism cannot buy America the global goodwill it desires. A democracy in turmoil at home loses the moral high ground to nudge its illiberal variants abroad, be it the coup in Myanmar or the protests in Kazakhstan. Diplomacy is set to fail when its basic premises are wrongly framed. Even deterrence comes to naught when the enemy is cunning to the core. Vladimir Putin has led Russia in the last 20 years with a mastery that only a spook can display. Compare his composure to Biden's frailty and the dynamics of European security become clear. Moscow means business when it says NATO must not enlarge into what it treats as its own post-Soviet sphere of influence. The threat of punitive economic sanctions can work neither here nor in the case of Gazprom, which has already laid down Nord Stream 2. Germany needs Russian gas more than ever. Kiev and Warsaw may cry wolf about Russian blackmail. But against Putin's brinkmanship, Biden will do as he does best: Damage limitation.

What about China, which Biden and the team have made enemy No. 1 for no good reason? It is hard to believe that a supposedly dovish leader would militarily frame the economic competition with China in Asia-Pacific, even rallying his NATO and G7 counterparts to test Chinese patience over Taiwan, Hong Kong and the South China Sea. Beijing has risen economically through a great national effort and under successive visionary leaders. If its edge in critical technologies like 5G is a problem, then why not invest in their research and development? Why push China toward an existential conflict it wants to avoid at all cost? And without stating what the end goal is. Meanwhile, as Washington is busy forging security partnerships such as AUKUS, the Chinese are expanding their geo-economic influence in the region, recently joining the 15-nation Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. The US is not even bothering to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership, whose predecessor was created under its auspices as an economic counterweight to China. Beyond Asia-Pacific, Beijing has done an investment deal with the EU and fostered trade and investment partnerships across the Middle East and North Africa. On the military exit from Afghanistan and

the nuclear talks with Iran, the less said the better. Secretary of State Antony Blinken is particularly fond of passing the buck and blaming the Trump administration for negotiating the fateful peace deal with the Taliban and pushing the Iranians toward resuming their nuclear weapons program. But the buck stops with the Biden administration. In the case of the withdrawal from Afghanistan, by pushing back the deadline but moving ahead with the plan, it paved the way for the Taliban's victory and its tragic consequences. In the Vienna talks on the Iran nuclear deal, who is saber-rattling whom is crystal clear. The Biden administration doesn't even care what its Arab allies say about the danger posed by the clerical regime's ballistic missiles and malign acts. However, it would be unfair to blame Biden alone for the great mess America's relations with the world are in today. All of his foreign policy gaffes are symptomatic of a deepening crisis in American leadership.

This has created an acute leadership dilemma concerning the policy choice between domestic renewal and foreign assertion. In terms of strategic preferences, nationalism has superseded internationalism — Trump's "America First" versus Biden's "Build Back Better" reflects this tendency. This is why, barring some exceptions, major US foreign policies denote continuity along bipartisan lines, such as imposing punitive trade tariffs on China and the security disengagement from the Middle East.

America is in dire need of domestic healing to overcome its bitter political divide, economic meltdown and pandemic battle. However, despite eroding influence abroad and deep divisions at home, the US faces a world with both traditional geopolitical threats and new challenges tied to globalization. Managing them requires adapting to a multipolar world, where China and Russia matter. While competing with them, the US must muster their support, alongside its traditional allies, to reshape the global order in ways that serve common goals. Biden has so far failed to provide the sort of leadership that America and the world need at this critical juncture — one that does not squander global obligations for the sake of domestic renewals or let the latter determine the contours of the former. Will he be any different in the remaining three years of his presidential term? Only time will tell.

Israel continues its violence in Sheikh Jarrah

Nadine Sayegh

They sealed off all access to roads to the house and raided the family home. They physically attacked members of the household and arrested Mahmoud Salhiya as well as other members of the family, who are still held in custody at the time of writing. Immediately after clearing the house, the bulldozers destroyed the family home and in one fell swoop, a family of 15 people, including five children, was made homeless in the dead of winter

DESPITE the gradual dwindling interest of international audiences, Israeli occupation forces have not rested in their ongoing displacement of Palestinians. On January 17, Israeli occupation forces were caught in a standoff with the Salhiya family in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood of Jerusalem. The representative of the household, Mahmoud Salhiya, received numerous "eviction" orders regarding his house and family business, a plant nursery. His property, which he has owned since the 1950s, was razed yesterday to make way for a school for illegal Israeli settlers.

Despite his efforts to contest this decision with the courts, whose jurisdiction, and therefore legality, is strongly refuted, Israeli armed forces, accompanied by a bulldozer and several other large vehicles, approached his home and closed off all surrounding roads on Monday morning. In a last line of defence against homelessness in the middle of winter, he stood on the roof of his house with a large gas canister threatening to self-immolate and burn down his home if they approached. The bulldozer proceeded to destroy the Salhiya plant nursery beside their home. This was witnessed by Palestinian demonstrators, local and international journalists, representatives from the UN and EU, and livestream broadcast viewers watching on social media platforms. The occupation forces denied protestors access into the area, preventing any kind of intervention. Efforts to that end were reciprocated with physical violence.

In the recorded livestream, however, Israeli settlers appear to move within the site freely, even poking around the plants from the nursery sequestered in the parking lot. The standoff with the household lasted well into the evening, when the vehicles withdrew from the area. Mahmoud Salhiya, speaking to the public after the incident, explained that he would rather die with dignity in his home than be a refugee — again — by the occupation. His family were forcefully expelled by the Irgun and sections of the Haganah Zionist paramilitary organisation, from Ein Karem in 1948 and were resettled in Sheikh Jarrah. He said: "I

will burn the house and everything in it, I will not leave here, from here to the grave, because there is no life, no dignity. I've been in battle with them for 25 years. They sent me settlers who offered to buy the house and I did not agree." Another family member added: "We have nowhere to go." However, this fleeting win was quickly crushed in the early hours of Wednesday morning. At around 5:00 am, the occupation forces returned in greater numbers, when the public and the media were not present and the family was completely vulnerable.

They sealed off all access to roads to the house and raided the family home. They physically attacked members of the household and arrested Mahmoud Salhiya as well as other members of the family, who are still held in custody at the time of writing. Immediately after clearing the house, the bulldozers destroyed the family home and in one fell swoop, a family of 15 people, including five children, was made homeless in the dead of winter. Adding insult to injury, Israeli forces quickly shared footage of a female Israeli soldier wrapping a blanket on an elderly female member of the Salhiya household without the context that her unit had flattened her home moments before — a transparent attempt at moral posturing.

Residents of Sheikh Jarrah attempted to rally around the family in support, with prominent activist and journalist, Muna al Kurd, also a resident of the neighbourhood, trying multiple times to livestream the broadcast of the destruction on Instagram. She was repeatedly locked out, highlighting a continuing trend of silencing Palestinian voices. This is only one facet of the Israeli land grab. Only 20 days into the new year, Israel continues to inconspicuously terrorise the Palestinian people. The occupation launched an unprompted airstrike on Gaza on the second day of the new year, committed elderly abuse and murder by beating and elderly man to death and running another over.

They continue to crack down on Palestinian citizens of Israel — while taking selfies — in the al Atrash village in the Naqab desert, protesting against ethnic cleansing by the Jewish National Fund. They have also raided a number of schools, injuring and arbitrarily detaining children in Ramallah and Nablus. Israel persists in its violation of international law and continues to disregard basic human dignity — and, increasingly, international public opinion as well. The international community, from organisations to individuals, now widely recognise the illegality of settlements, but must they be built and occupied to receive condemnation? The Salhiya household is a real-time case study on the process of annexation and the abject harm inflicted on the Palestinian people in the process. It demonstrates a blatant disregard for legality and humanity and an overarching totalitarian approach to occupying what is left of Palestine. This habitual disregard for human life and international law is no longer an affront to the Palestinian people alone. While the whole world is held to a set of standards that it collectively upholds, Israel continues to be the deeply unjustified exception. Families in Palestine are not waiting for their oppressors to show moral character, but they are still hopeful that the world, as a community, will gather around to support a clear-cut need for justice.

—Courtesy: TRT World

US sanctions worsen suffering of Afghan people

Chen Weihua

The lack of international recognition and economic sanctions on the Taliban govt, and the freezing of some \$9.5 bn of the Afghan central bank's assets by the US

NEWS reports about the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Afghanistan in the past weeks are appalling and, at the same time, heart-wrenching: more than half of the 39 million people in the country are starving, thousands of infants suffering from malnutrition, a father selling his kidney in order to feed his children, some parents selling a child for only \$500 so they can feed their other children... This grave crisis has befallen Afghanistan within five months of the United States pull-

ing its troops out of the country after almost 20 years of occupation. The COVID-19 pandemic, the economy in free fall, the worst drought in decades in most parts of the country, the brutal winter, shortage of aid in a country which has largely depended on international aid for years, the lack of international recognition and economic sanctions on the Taliban government, and the freezing of some \$9.5 billion of the Afghan central bank's assets by the US have combined to cause the severe humanitarian crisis. But the US bears much of the responsibility for all of that. Last week, the United Nations launched its biggest humanitarian appeal for any country, calling for more than \$5 billion this year for Afghanistan. UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres warned that the world is "in a race against time to help the Afghan people". "Freezing temperature and frozen assets are a lethal combination for people of Afghanistan," Guterres said in his appeal to the US to unfreeze Afghanistan's assets.

On Tuesday, Bernie Sanders, a Democratic US Senator from Vermont, urged the Joe Biden administration to immediately release the billions of dollars of frozen assets to help avert a humanitarian catastrophe and prevent the deaths of thousands of people in Afghanistan. In the Afghan capital of Kabul, protests have erupted outside the shuttered US embassy, with people calling for unfreezing of Afghan assets, some holding banners reading "Let Us Eat". But such calls are likely to fall on the deaf ears of the Joe Biden administration because the US debacle in Afghanistan is a sensitive political issue at home, especially in a midterm election year. True, the release of frozen assets by the US will not solve all of Afghanistan's problems, but it can help the war-torn nation to address the urgent humanitarian issues. The call on Wednesday by Afghanistan's acting prime minister Mohammad Hassan Akhund for the international community, especially Islamic countries, to recognize the Taliban government is a reasonable one, and the global community and leaders should heed it to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe. The humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan is a shame for the whole international community and for people across the world if we choose to ignore it no matter on what pretext.

—Courtesy: China Daily

Briefs

Tenpin Bowling C'ship rescheduled

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Tenpin Bowling Federation (PTBF) has rescheduled the 14th National Tenpin Bowling Championship 2022 due to the new wave of COVID-19 pandemic. According to PTBF President Ijaz-ur-Rehman, the said championship was scheduled to be held at Leisure City Bowling Club Jinnah Park Rawalpindi from January 25 to 30. "A meeting of PTBF headed by its President Ijaz Ur Rehman and attended by Senior Vice President Khwaja Ahmad Mustaqeem and Secretary General Muhammad Hussain Chatta was held here in which the decision was taken keeping in mind all the circumstances," he said. "It was also decided in the meeting that due to Omicron virus the championship has been rescheduled and will now be held from February 20 to 25," he said. — APP

CM KPK reaffirms...

FROM PAGE 01
The delegation headed by Member of Provincial Assembly Ghazan Jamal discussed various matters related to the preparations for the second phase of upcoming local body elections. The delegates thanked the provincial government especially the Chief Minister for record development works in District Orakzai and invited the Chief Minister to visit to the district. The chief minister accepted the invitation and said that he will soon pay a detailed visit to district orakzai where he will meet with elders and consult them in order to resolve the public issues on sustainable basis. The Chief Minister said that newly appointed provincial president of PTI will visit all the districts of the province and hold consultative meetings with workers to reorganize the party at grass root level. The chief minister made it clear that in the second phase of elections, party tickets would be awarded in consultation with party workers purely on merit and competency adding that the mistakes made in the first phase of local body elections would not be repeated. He urged upon party workers to fully support the party candidates in upcoming local body elections and set aside their personal likes and dislikes and move on collectively to achieve the goal. Mahmood Khan appreciated the unity and consensus among the party workers in district Orakzai and hoped that they will show the same spirit and unity in future.

Fawad asks...

FROM PAGE 01
Chaudhry Fawad said apparently it was a fake story as the affidavit was signed at the residence of Nawaz Sharif. He said, "When Nawaz Sharif and the company was in power, only his films were playing, no one paid attention to the original cinema films." Taking a jibe on Nawaz Sharif, he said the "flop movie" (referring to Nawaz) had gone to London. To a question, he said the overseas Pakistanis were an asset for the nation and particularly those living in the United Arab Emirates. Around 1.5 million Pakistanis resided in the UAE, the biggest contributor in the remittances, and most of them were using the Roshan Digital Pakistan account, he added. The minister said the overseas Pakistanis supported Prime Minister Imran Khan and he also stood with him firmly, and their combination would take Pakistan forward. Fawad said 11 Pakistani films were being screened at the Dubai Film Festival and he was here to support and enjoy the Pakistani stuff.

Shehbaz...

FROM PAGE 01
he said that as per the case facts, payments were deposited to Gulzar's account from Aurangzeb Butt and another front man Masroor Anwar, who was involved in depositing cheques, withdrawing cash and then depositing it to the Sharif Family's account but Shehbaz Sharif had never given any clarification about the facts. — APP

Defending champion losses in Australian Open thriller

"Going into this match I knew I had to be playing sharp if I wanted to give myself a chance," Anisimova said

SPORTS DESK

MELBOURNE, Australia — Naomi Osaka, a four-time Grand Slam singles champion who nearly walked away from tennis last year, was eliminated from the Australian Open on Friday by the unseeded American Amanda Anisimova. Anisimova prevailed in three tense sets, 4-6, 6-3, 7-6 (10-5), after saving two match points in the third set. "Definitely I think I fought for every point and I can't be sad about that," Osaka said. "I'm not God. I can't win every match. So I just have to, like, take that into account and know that it would be nice to win the tournament but that's, like, really special." Osaka, who had not played a competitive match since last summer's U.S. Open, seemed to acknowledge that her game was not yet completely back to where she thinks it can go. "I think the pace of her ball surprised me, but other than that it was fun to play," she said, her hands folded by her left cheek. Appearing at ease and smiling often in a news conference situation that she has admitted makes her uncomfortable, Osaka told reporters that she has been meditating recently. She delivered her answers in a series of calm and measured responses. "I know there are days I'm going to have bad days and days I'm going to have great days," she added. "It's always random, and I never know. But no matter what happens for me, I know I want to leave the court knowing that I've fought for every point. Today there were things I thought I could improve in, but even with that I had two match points and



even with that it is something I can be proud of myself for." Osaka, 24, was returning to major-tournament action in Melbourne after taking an extended break from the game to rekindle her love of the sport. Her return came after an unusually emotional year in which her openness about her mental health struggles had altered the discussion of both her successes and her more recent — and public — disappointments. Osaka was seeded just 13th here but showed plenty of fire and desire in her third-round match against Anisimova: gen-

erating trademark thunder with her heavy groundstrokes and pumping her fist and shouting "Come on!" to commemorate her successes. But Anisimova, long considered one of the most promising young players in the game, held remarkably firm, coming back from an inconsistent opening set and finding her range in her first match against Osaka. "Going into this match I knew I had to be playing sharp if I wanted to give myself a chance," Anisimova said. "Naomi is always going to be playing well, and she's an absolute champion, so I knew that I really had to step up my game and try to be aggressive. I think that's what I started doing in the second set. Honestly, I'm so grateful that I was able to play so well today." A semifinalist at the French Open at age 17 in 2019, Anisimova looked ready to play a leading role in the game consistently in her teens, but that was before family tragedy: the death of her father and longtime coach, Konstantin, of a heart attack in August 2019, shortly before the United States Open. Anisimova said she admired Osaka's openness about her mental health issues, and called her opponent's decision to speak openly of her struggles "inspiring." "Just to spread awareness and try to get rid of a stigma for mental health, I think we're in a completely different time and this generation is becoming more honest about these kinds of things," Anisimova said. "I'm comfortable speaking about whatever. I've gone through a couple hard years, and don't mind posting stuff on social media and spreading awareness for other people who are going through tough things."

Karakoram Winter Lude 2022 at Hunza

The High Commissioner congratulated Altit's Sports Club And Rising Federation for organising the fourth Winterlude festival



DNA

HUNZA: Canadian High Commissioner Wendy Gilmour visited Altit Hunza to promote winter sports. The High Commissioner served as a referee in an Ice Hockey match played between two girls' teams. Some Canadian athletes

also played Ice Hockey along with the local players. The High Commissioner congratulated Altit's Sports Club And Rising Federation (SCARF) for organising the fourth Winterlude festival. Addressing the young players from Hunza and Chitral she said "my colleagues and I had a blast!" What an amazing match. (Another picture on front Page)

FIFA chief Infantino vows to prioritize player welfare

LONDON: FIFA president Gianni Infantino vowed player welfare will be a top priority as the world governing body reshapes the international fixture schedule. FIFA's proposal for a biennial World Cup drew widespread criticism last year amid concern over burn-out due to the increased demands placed on players. Infantino discussed the issue in Manchester on Thursday after accepting an invitation from the Professional Footballers' Association (PFA) to meet leading players and union representatives. The meeting also included Manchester United's Paul Pogba and Juan Mata, PFA chief executive Maheta Molango and FIFA chief of global football development Arsene Wenger. "It was really a great meeting. I was very happy that the players reached out to us, to me in particular, because we want really to listen to everyone," Infantino said. "The players are crucial when it comes to the game. Of course, we need to care about the players, we want to protect the players and, in order to know really what their concerns are, we need to talk to them directly. — APP

Chairman Senate, Ministers greet newly RISJA cabinet

OUR CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Sadiq Sanjrani, Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed, Federal Minister for Religious Affairs Pir Noor-ul-Haq Qadri along with Pakistan Olympic Association (POA), Sports Federations and journalists associations congratulating the newly office bearers of Rawalpindi-Islamabad Sports Journalists Association (RSJA) and hoping that new body will play its vital role for the promotion of sports in the country. In his statement, Chairman Senate Sadiq Sanjrani congratulated Abbas Shabbir on being elected President, Arif Khan Secretary, Asif Naveed as Senior Vice President and other elected members of the newly formed body. The Chairman Senate said that the election

of the newly elected officials was a sign of the confidence of the journalist community in their leadership abilities. "Free, active and dynamic media is essential for strengthening democracy and promoting democratic values", Sanjrani said. Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid and minister for religious affairs Pir Noor ul Haq Qadri also congratulated the new office bearers of RISJA and hoped that the journalists covering sports would work harder for the promotion of sports in the country. Pakistan Olympic Association (POA) President Lt. Gen. (R) Syed Arif Hasan, Secretary General Khalid Mahmood, Pakistan Hockey federation President Brig (R) Khalid Sajjad Khokhar, Secretary Olympian Asif Bajwa also congratulating the Chairman RISJA Abdul Mohi Shah, President Abbas Shabbir,

Secretary Arif Khan and other members of elected body Pakistan Olympic Association president Lt. Gen. (r) Syed Arif Hasan said that all members of RISJA would dedicate their efforts towards the promotion and development of sports by way of their valuable experience, valid observations, workable suggestions and honest reporting. Pakistan Taekwondo Federation President Col (R) Wasim Janjua, Pakistan Judo Federation Col (R) Junaid Alam, Pakistan Squash Federation Senior Vice President Air Marshal Aamir Masood, Secretary PSF Wing Commander Armghan Aziz, Press Association of Supreme Court (PAS), Islamabad High Court Reporters Association, Parliamentary Reporters Association (PRA), Sports Journalists Association of Lahore (SJAL) and other bodies also congratulate.

Premier League top-four race heats up

AGENCIES

LONDON: Manchester City could move 14 points clear at the top of the Premier League on Saturday but erstwhile challengers Chelsea are looking nervously over their shoulders after a slump in form. Pep Guardiola's side travels to Southampton on Saturday looking for their 13th consecutive league win, with second-placed Liverpool not in action until the following day. But the race for the top four is heating up, with third-placed Chelsea suddenly vulnerable after picking up just three points in their past four games. At the other end of the table, Watford host Norwich in a high-stakes relegation battle. AFP Sport takes a look at some of the talking points ahead of the weekend's action. Tottenham are yet to suffer a league defeat under Antonio Conte after their incredible 3-2 victory against Leicester in midweek, in which Steven Bergwijn scored twice in stoppage-time. Spurs are desperate to qualify for the Champions League after missing out for two years in a row and they now find themselves just



one point behind fourth-placed West Ham with three games in hand before their trip to Stamford Bridge. Conte, who has called for reinforcements in the January transfer window, was proud of his side's attitude after the incredible

turnaround at the King Power Stadium on Wednesday. "Don't give up," said the Italian, who took over in early November. "This must be our philosophy — don't give up and fight until the end." But Thomas Tuchel faces a battle to rediscov-

er Chelsea's mojo, unable to hide his frustrations over his under-performing forwards, including record signing Romelu Lukaku. The Blues topped the Premier League table early last month but a dismal run of just two wins from nine top-flight games since has left their title challenge in tatters. German boss Tuchel, whose team are eight points ahead of Tottenham having played four more games, knows he must stop the rot or risk the season unravelling. David Moyes takes West Ham to Manchester United on Saturday seeking a rare win at Old Trafford to boost his team's top-four chances and deal a blow to his former club. West Ham, who have punched above their weight this season, are currently fourth in the table but could slip to seventh if they lose and Tottenham and Arsenal both win this weekend. Old Trafford has not been a happy hunting ground for the Hammers in recent years — they have not won there in the league since 2007. But United, who were indebted to goalkeeper David de Gea for a string of saves in their midweek 3-1 win at Brentford, have not convinced under interim manager Ralf Rangnick.

Barca and Atletico turn attention to La Liga

MADRID: Barcelona and Atletico Madrid will have to put recent struggles behind them this weekend as they continue their scrap to finish in La Liga's top four. Barca's hopes of winning a trophy this season were dealt two blows in a week after they followed up defeat by Real Madrid in the Spanish Super Cup with a surprise loss to Athletic Bilbao on Thursday in the Copa del Rey. Xavi Hernandez's side still have the Europa League, with a tie against Napoli to come next month, but La Liga is surely out of reach given they sit 17 points behind Real Madrid at the top. "We have lost two titles in a week but we still have the league and Europa League," said Xavi on Thursday. "We have no other option but to keep going." Barcelona have shown signs of progress in recent weeks under Xavi. However, talented teenager Ansu Fati could be out injured again after he pulled up against Athletic with a thigh problem while the ugly situation surrounding Ousmane Dembele threatens to become a distraction. — APP

Country's foreign policy reshaped

FROM PAGE 01
providing urea to the farmers at much lower rates than the international market. He said action will be taken against those hoarding the commodity. Shah Mahmood Qureshi admitted that inflation posed a major challenge. He, however, said there are several international factors behind it including that of increase in the price of gas and petroleum products in global markets. The Foreign Minister said we welcome the criticism of the opposition parties but they should not spread despondency amongst the people as it is not in the interest of the country. He said we took painful decisions to stabilize the economy. Taking the floor, PML (N) leader Ahsan Iqbal criticized the government's economic policies. Minister for Energy Hammad Azhar has categorically stated that gas theft will not be tolerated in any part of the country. Responding to a calling attention notice in the National Assembly on Friday, he expressed satisfaction that Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited has significantly reduced its system losses from 12.5 percent to 8.5 percent over the last three years. He said there is a need to bring further improvement in Sui Southern Gas Company Limited. He pointed out that the country's gas reserves are depleting at the rate of nine percent annually. Minister for Energy Hammad Azhar introduced before the house the Private Power and Infrastructure Board Amendment Bill, 2022. The house today passed two resolutions extending the Diplomatic and Consular Officers (Oath and Fees) Amendment Ordinance 2021 and National Rehamat Lil Alameen Authority Ordinance, 2021 for a further period of one hundred and twenty days. The Statement of Contingent Liabilities of the federal government for the current fiscal year was laid before the house. The annual reports of the Council of Islamic Ideology for the period from 2012-18 and the report on Islamic Law of Inheritance were also laid before the house. The National Assembly adopted a motion allowing the use of its hall for the 48th session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers to be held in March. The motion was moved by Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi. At the outset, the house offered feteha for those martyred in yesterday's bomb blast in Lahore. Responding to the points of PML (N) leader Ahsan Iqbal, Minister for Energy Hammad Azhar said that the PTI government has steered the country out of difficult economic situation. He said the previous government left behind a bankrupt economy. He said our growth rate of about 5.4 percent is based on enhanced exports and revenue collection, increase in foreign exchange reserves and reduction in current account deficit. He said the world institutions are appreciating economic outlook of Pakistan.

Briefs

EU ministers
mull climate
policy

PARIS: European Union environment ministers gathered in France Thursday to mull climate policy and the merits of a carbon border tax, while airing differences on whether nuclear energy can be classified as "green". The two-day informal talks in Amiens, hosted by France as it takes the rotating reins of the EU presidency, will look for a unified path toward achieving the 27-nation bloc's ambitious target of slashing carbon emissions 55 percent from 1990 levels. Discussion on overhauling the EU's electricity market and carbon-trading system, already fraught, unfolds against a backdrop of sharp increases in energy prices, especially natural gas. EU energy ministers will join the fray on Friday, and then continue on with separate talks. Since last year, French President Emmanuel Macron has led the charge for the rapid implementation of a "carbon border adjustment mechanism", essentially a tax on imported products made in countries with less stringent rules on reducing carbon pollution. The objective is to avoid shifting Europe's carbon emissions overseas as they are reduced at home - known as "carbon leakage". The sectors affected include steel, aluminium, cement, fertiliser and electricity. China and the United States are both opposed to such a tax, with Beijing saying last year when the plan was unveiled that it would "violate World Trade Organization (WTO) principles." Even within Europe, Germany insists the mechanism can only be implemented gradually, and several countries are outright opposed, mainly because the tax would replace the allocation of free emissions permits. - APP

England to ban
loudspeaker
'spam' on
trains

LONDON: UK transport chiefs on Friday said that bothersome on-board train announcements would be cut in a bid to offer more peaceful journeys, a move it dubbed a "bonfire of the banalities". The measure is likely to be welcomed by commuters all-too familiar with the annoyance of loudspeaker interruptions reminding them to have tickets in hand or - ironically - to keep their voices down. Operating companies will still broadcast important safety messages, but "repetitive and unnecessary on-board announcements" will be removed, the Department for Transport said. The so-called "tannoy spam" - a reference to the public address system - is expected to be removed in the coming months in England. "Banal announcements set to be culled include self-evident instructions, such as having your ticket ready when leaving the station, and contradictory calls for passengers to keep volume levels low while on-board announcements blare out," said the department. - APP

Pakistani
volunteers
fighting Covid
in China

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani volunteers fighting COVID-19 in the Chinese city of Tianjin, China Economic Net reported on Friday. "I hope to do something (in fight against COVID-19) when China needs as Chinese government and people give me the opportunity to study here," said Akhtar Islam, a Pakistani student from Nankai University, China. Akhtar, Yasra Sayyed, a Pakistani, and an Egyptian student made a volunteer team under the guidance of Mr Sun Wei a teacher of Nankai University, to help finish the nucleic acid test at the Jinnan campus. They work outsidies from 12 am to 10.30 pm every day, including keeping people in line for the nucleic acid test, giving instructions for them to keep distance, and cooperating with the volunteers and health workers. Volunteers have to brave the cold weather as it is the coldest period in northern China. When given a bottle with hot water to keep warm, Yasra always hesitates to receive. - APP

VinFuture Prize honours
mRNA vaccine researchers

US scientist Omar Yaghi was awarded a VinFuture Prize for outstanding achievements in emerging fields for his research into water and material science

DNA

HANOI: VinFuture Prize, an international award founded in Vietnam to honour scientific achievements, gave out 4.5 million USD worth of prizes to several global scientists on January 20. Managed by the VinFuture Foundation, which was set up by Vingroup Chairman Pham NhatVuong and his wife Pham Thu Huang, the annual VinFuture Prize is a global science and technology award to recognise groundbreaking scientific and technological discoveries. It comprised a VinFuture Grand Prize valued at 3 million USD and three special prizes, each worth 500,000 USD, for female innovators, innovators from developing countries, and those with outstanding achievements in emerging fields. Three scientists, namely Katalin Kariko and Drew Weissman from the US and Pieter Rutter Cullis from Canada, were awarded with the VinFuture Grand Prize for their contributions to the development of the mRNA vaccine technology. Chinese-American scientist Zhenan Bao



was awarded a VinFuture Prize dedicated to female innovators for her research on "electronic skins" capable of stretching, healing like normal skins and are biodegradable. South African scientists Salim Abdool Karim and Quarraisha Abdool Karim were awarded a VinFuture Prize dedicated to developing country innovators for the in-

vention of a gel with tenofovir, a product for women to prevent HIV infection. US scientist Omar Yaghi was awarded a VinFuture Prize for outstanding achievements in emerging fields for his research into water and material science. Present at the award ceremony, Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh affirmed that Vietnam prioritises the development of

science and technology, considering it a strategic breakthrough for socio-economic development. The Vietnamese State is stepping up the building of mechanisms and policies to materialise the Party's guidelines and promote the mobilisation of resources for innovations. He lauded efforts by the VinFuture Foundation in building and developing VinFuture Prize and expressed his hope for new steps in scientific application in Vietnam. In the first season, the organising board received over 1,200 entries from 654 leading universities, 51 well-known research institutes and 42 national science academies globally. Among the 599 innovations in the competition, about 100 are made by top 2 percent of the most-cited scientists in the world. Female scientists in the event accounted for 34.3 percent of the total, many of them winners of Nobel, Breakthrough, Tang and Japan prizes. The competition drew participants of 60 countries globally, 52.6 percent of their projects are from North America and the European Union. Vietnam also joined in with 17 projects.

Baku, Vienna discuss
regional security, co-op

DNA

BAKU: Azerbaijani Foreign Minister Jeyhun Bayramov and his Austrian counterpart Alexander Schallenberg have discussed regional security and cooperation, the ministry reported on January 20. As part of his working visit, Bayramov briefed his counterpart in Vienna on the situation in the region

following the conflict with Armenia, as well as the large-scale restoration and construction work carried out by Azerbaijan in its liberated lands. Noting that the end of the occupation provided opportunities for the normalization of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the minister emphasized the importance of adhering strictly to international law principles.

The parties also discussed bilateral cooperation, relationship prospects, and the tremendous potential for bilateral economic cooperation and business ties. Government officials emphasized the importance of holding a number of events marking the 30th anniversary of Azerbaijani-Austrian diplomatic relations in 2022. Furthermore, the ministers

discussed Azerbaijani-EU cooperation, as well as other topics of mutual interest. Bayramov left for a working visit to Austria on January 18. As part of the visit, the minister attended the opening meeting of the OSCE Security Cooperation Forum chaired by Azerbaijan. Bayramov was to attend bilateral meetings with OSCE and Austrian officials of OSCE and Austria during the visit.

Crashed WWII
aircraft found
in India

"All I can say is that I am overjoyed, just knowing where he is. It is sad but joyous," Scherer told AFP by email from New York

NEW DELHI: A missing World War II plane has been identified in India's remote Himalayas nearly 80 years after it crashed with no survivors, following a treacherous search that led to the deaths of three guides.

The C-46 transport aircraft was carrying 13 people from Kunming in southern China when it disappeared in stormy weather over a mountainous stretch of Arunachal Pradesh state in the first week of 1945.

"This aircraft was never heard from again. It simply disappeared," said Clayton Kuhles, a US adventurer who led the mission after a request from the son of one of those on board the doomed flight.

The expedition took months and saw Kuhles and a team of guides from the local Lisu ethnic group ford chest-deep rivers and camp in freezing temperatures at high altitudes.

Three guides died of hypothermia at an initial stage of the project while camped out during a September snowstorm. But the team finally stumbled upon the plane on a snow-clad mountain top last month, where they were able to identify the wreckage by the tail number. There were no human remains in what was left of the craft. Kuhles was tasked with conducting the search by Bill Scherer, whose officer father was aboard the plane when it crashed. "All I can say is that I am overjoyed, just knowing where he is. It is sad but joyous," Scherer told AFP by email from New York.

"I grew up without a father. All I can think of is my poor Mother, getting a telegram and finding out her husband is missing and she is left with me, a 13 month old baby boy." Hundreds of US military planes went missing around the theatre of operations in India, China and Myanmar during World War II. While hostile fire from Japanese forces did account for some aircraft losses, Kuhles said the majority are believed to have been brought down by ice damage, hurricane-force winds and other severe weather conditions. - DNA

Pakistan HC
holds reference for
Priyantha Kumara

COLOMBO: A condolence reference in memoriam of Late Diyawadana Don Nandasiri Priyantha Kumara was held today at Pakistan High Commission, Colombo. A number of people from all walks of life, including religious scholars, Sri Lankan Cabinet Ministers, Parliamentarians, senior government officials and media representatives participated. Mrs. Siya Nilushi Dissanayaka and children of Late Priyantha Kumara also graced the occasion. Prayers for the departed soul were offered both in accordance with Buddhist and Islamic traditions. Pakistan High Commissioner-designate Major General (R) Umar Farooq Burki, HI (M), on behalf of the Government and people of Pakistan, offered condolences to the family and people of Sri Lanka and prayed for the departed soul. The High Commissioner emphasized that Islam was a religion of peace, justice and tolerance, and Pakistanis were a loving and hospitable nation. Such tragic incidents in no way represented Islam or Pakistan. He also reiterated that the Government of Pakistan was determined to bring the perpetrators to justice. The High Commissioner further reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to foster deeper and productive bilateral ties and friendship with the Republic of Sri Lanka. Mrs. Siya Nilushi Dissanayaka thanked the Government of Pakistan for facilitating the payment of compensation, as well as assuring an expeditious trial of the case. - DNA

US charges
Belarus
officials with
air piracy

DNA

NEW YORK: The US Justice department charged four Belarus officials with air piracy Thursday for last year's forced diversion of a Ryanair flight in order to arrest a dissident on board. Two top officials of the state air navigation authority and two security officials were accused of conspiracy to commit aircraft piracy for allegedly taking part in a fake bomb scare scheme to force the aircraft to land in Minsk on May 23, 2021, so that the Belarusian government could seize opposition campaigner Roman Protasevich.

Biden, Kishida to
discuss Asia security

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida will discuss deterrence in the Asia-Pacific region and a "united" Western alliance against Russian threats to Ukraine in a virtual meeting Friday, officials said. Biden has made restoring the importance of the US-Japanese relationship a priority since taking office exactly a year ago, following Donald Trump's questioning of the benefit of US relationships with several major allies in both Asia and Europe. Biden and Kishida will discuss economic ties but also security and the "free and open Indo-Pacific," White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said, referring to the US-led drive to maintain the status quo in the Asia-Pacific region, despite rapidly expanding Chinese military and commercial power, including along crucial sea trade routes. According to a senior US official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, Biden considers US-Japanese ties "the cornerstone of peace and security in the Indo-Pacific and around the world." In addition to discussing climate change, Covid-19, and cybersecurity, Biden and Kishida will focus on maintaining "a strong rules based order" - language that typically means pushing back on China. Another security challenge at the top of the two leaders' agenda is North Korea, which has conducted a busy schedule of missile test launches this year - in contravention of UN sanctions - and on Thursday suggested it could even resume nuclear and inter-continental missile tests. The official noted Biden's focus on multilateral alliances, in contrast to Trump's attempt to rebrand US foreign policy as a series of bilateral relationships with countries that he considered as much competitors as allies. The US official highlighted the roles of the Quad group - Australia, India, Japan and the United States - and the trilateral security relationship between the United States, Japan and South Korea, which he credited for "bolstering deterrence in the Indo-Pacific." - Agencies

World worse due to Covid, climate, conflict: UN chief

The secretary-general believes voting should be held in "a relatively short amount of time," and said: "All my efforts have been in creating conditions for bridging this divide and for allowing ECOWAS and the government of Mali to come to a solution with an acceptable delay for the elections"

WEB DESK

NEW YORK: As he starts his second term as U.N. secretary-general, Antonio Guterres said Thursday the world is worse in many ways than it was five years ago because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the climate crisis and geopolitical tensions that have sparked conflicts everywhere - but unlike U.S. President Joe Biden he thinks Russia will not invade Ukraine. Guterres said in an interview with The Associated Press that the appeal for peace he issued on his first day in the U.N.'s top job on Jan. 1, 2017 and his priorities in his first term of trying to prevent conflicts and tackle global inequalities, the COVID-19 crisis and a warming planet haven't changed. "The secretary-general of the U.N. has no power," Guterres said. "We

can have influence. I can persuade. I can mediate, but I have no power." Before he became U.N. chief, Guterres said he envisioned the post as being "a convener, a mediator, a bridge-builder and an honest broker to help find solutions that benefit everyone involved." He said Thursday these are things "I need to do every day." As an example, the secretary-general said this week he spoke to the African Union's envoy Olusegun Obasanjo, twice with Kenya's President Uhuru Kenyatta, and once with Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed in his attempt to get a cessation of hostilities in Ethiopia between the government and forces in the embattled Tigray region. "I hope that we are in a situation in which it might become soon possible to have a cessation of hostilities and that is where I'm concentrating most of my efforts,"

Guterres said. As another example, Guterres said he has also been on the phone to try to get Mali's military leaders who recently delayed elections scheduled for next month to 2026 to reduce the timetable. He said he spoke to Mali's military ruler, President Assimi Goita, three presidents from the 15-nation West African regional group ECOWAS, Algeria's prime minister and the African Union's



leader about "how to make sure that in Mali, there is an acceptable calendar for the transition to a civilian government." Guterres said he hopes Mali's military leaders will understand that they need to accept "a reasonable period" before elections. The secretary-general believes voting should be held in "a relatively short amount of time," and said: "All my efforts have been in creating conditions for bridging this divide and for allowing ECOWAS and the government of Mali to come to a solution with an acceptable delay for the elections." Guterres said the U.N. Security Council, which does have the power to uphold international peace and security including by imposing sanctions and ordering military action, is divided, especially its five veto-wielding permanent members. Russia and China are of-

ten at odds with the U.S., Britain and France on key issues, including Thursday on new sanctions against North Korea. On the issue on every country's front burner now - whether Russia, which has massed 100,000 troops on Ukraine's border, will invade the former Soviet republic - Guterres said, "I do not think Russia will invade Ukraine, and I hope that my belief is correct." What makes him think Moscow won't invade when Biden and others believe Russian President Vladimir Putin will send troops into Ukraine? "Because I do not believe in a military solution for the problems that exists, and I think that the most rational way to solve those problems is through diplomacy and through engagement in serious dialogue," Guterres said, stressing that an invasion would have "terrible consequences."

Russia risks
'quagmire' in
Ukraine: UK

SYDNEY: Russia risks becoming embroiled in a "terrible quagmire" if it invades Ukraine, British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss is to warn Friday in a speech in Sydney. The UK's top diplomat will tell Russian President Vladimir Putin that he is on the brink of making a strategic blunder by launching military action and "has not learned the lessons of history." According to prepared remarks to the Lowy Institute, Truss will urge Putin to "desist and step back from Ukraine before he makes a massive strategic mistake."

"Invasion will only lead to a terrible quagmire and loss of life, as we know from the Soviet-Afghan war and conflict in Chechnya." Tens of thousands of Russian troops have massed on Ukraine's border, and the drumbeat of invasion has been growing for months. Few military experts believe that Kyiv's smaller forces could repel an outright invasion. But Truss will become the latest official to raise the spectre of a protracted and bloody Ukrainian resistance that ensnares occupying Russian forces. The top diplomat is currently on an official visit to Australia alongside British Defence Secretary Ben Wallace. Speaking in Sydney at the conclusion of the talks, Wallace and his Australian counterpart Peter Dutton drew a parallel between rising tensions today and the pre-war 1930s. - APP

China offers
lowest bid
for Gilgit-
Shandoor
Road

ISLAMABAD: A joint venture of China's Ningxia Communications Construction Co. Ltd. (NXCC) and Pakistan's Rustam Associates has emerged as the "most advantageous" bidder for package-1 of Gilgit-Shandoor Road. According to Gwadar Pro, the project is part of Chitral-Gilgit Road on Western alignment of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Work on Chitral-Shandoor Road is already underway. Total cost of the 216 km Gilgit-Shandoor Road is estimated at Rs50 billion, which is also part of the Gilgit-Baltistan Integrated Development Package of Rs370 billion announced by the current federal government. The road will also provide for an alternate route of the historic Karakoram Highway or China-Pakistan Friendship Highway.

After completion of the entire road network, Gilgit will be connected with the Islamabad-Peshawar (M-1) Motorway through at least four different routes. NXCC/Rustam JV has offered to build the 70 kilometres long section of the Gilgit-Shandoor road at a cost of Rs10.24 billion, the National Highway Authority announced the other day. The highest bid for package-I came at Rs15 billion, according to the authority. - APP

'Bat Out of
Hell' singer
Meat Loaf
dead at 74

WASHINGTON: US singer Meat Loaf, famous for his "Bat Out of Hell" rock anthem, has died aged 74, after a career in which he sold more than 100 million albums and appeared in scores of movies. "Our hearts are broken to announce that the incomparable Meat Loaf passed away tonight with his wife Deborah by his side," read a statement on his Facebook page early on Friday. "Daughters Pearl and Amanda and close friends have been with him throughout the last 24 hours." No cause of death was given.

The beefy Texas-born singer distinguished himself in the late 1970s with his soaring vocal range and lavish stage productions. His 1977 "Bat out of Hell" album, which reportedly sold some 43 million copies, is one of the highest-selling ever. After a career run, Meat Loaf enjoyed a revival with his biggest success in 1993: the single "I'd Do Anything for Love (But I Won't Do That)" topped the charts in 28 countries and won him a Grammy Award. "We know how much he meant to so many of you and we truly appreciate all of the love and support as we move through this time of grief in losing such an inspiring artist and beautiful man," it said. - APP

Briefs

Russia wants NATO troops to leave Bulgaria, Romania

MOSCOW: Russia wants Nato to remove all of its forces from Bulgaria, Romania and other ex-communist states in eastern Europe that joined the alliance after 1997, the foreign ministry said on Friday, underlining Moscow's headline position ahead of security talks with the US in Geneva.

Sergei Lavrov, Russia's foreign minister, said in a written Q&A on the ministry's website that Russia's demands included "withdrawing foreign forces, equipment, and armaments and making other steps to return to the condition as of 1997", when Nato began admitting former Warsaw Pact countries.

"That includes Bulgaria and Romania," Lavrov said, adding that Russia's demand was "core" and "deliberately worded as clearly as possible so as not to allow any dual interpretations". Bulgaria's prime minister, Kiril Petkov, responded quickly, rebutting Lavrov. "Bulgaria is a sovereign country, which has made its choice long ago by becoming a NATO member," he told parliament. "As such, we alone decide [how] to organise the defence of our country in coordination with our partners."

Western officials say Russian president Vladimir Putin is closer than ever to launching a renewed invasion of Ukraine after amassing more than 106,000 troops close to its border in recent weeks. In Ukraine's eastern Donbas border region more than 14,000 people have died in a slow-burning conflict since 2014. - APP

Yemen loses internet connection after airstrike

SANAA: Yemen lost its connection to the internet nationwide early on Friday after Saudi-led airstrikes targeted a site in the contested city of Hodeida, an advocacy group said, plunging the war-torn nation offline.

NetBlocks said the disruption began around 1am local time and affected TeleYemen, the state-owned monopoly that controls internet access in the country. TeleYemen is now run by the Houthi rebels who have held Yemen's capital, Sanaa, since late 2014. Yemen was "in the midst of a nation-scale internet blackout following an airstrike on (a) telecom building," NetBlocks said, without immediately elaborating.

The San Diego-based Centre for Applied Internet Data Analysis and San Francisco-based internet firm CloudFlare also noted a nationwide outage affecting Yemen beginning around the same time. The Houthi's Al-Masirah satellite news channel said the strike on the telecommunications building had killed and wounded people. It released chaotic footage of people digging through rubble for a body as gunshots could be heard. Aid workers assisted bloodied survivors. The Saudi-led coalition battling the Houthis acknowledged carrying out "accurate airstrikes to destroy the capabilities of the militia" around Hodeida's port. It did not immediately acknowledge striking a telecommunication target as NetBlocks described, but instead called Hodeida a hub for piracy and Iranian arms smuggling to back the Houthis. - APP

'Pakistan extending maximum facilities to tourists'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi Friday said that the government was extending maximum facilities to foreign tourists including the visa-on-arrival. The foreign minister, in a meeting with Special Assistant to PM on Tourism Azam Jamil, said the foreign tourists were attracted towards Pakistan after some improvement in the COVID situation. He said the tourism promotion was among the priorities of Prime Minister Imran Khan and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and the country witnessed unprecedented growth in tourism in 2019.

However, like other sectors, the COVID-19 pandemic also adversely impacted tourism. Referring to his recent visit to Spain, the foreign minister said he had a fruitful meeting with Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization. SAPM Azam Jamil thanked the foreign minister and hinted at formulating a comprehensive national tourism policy in collaboration with the foreign ministry.

Franco-German Friendship Day marked in Islamabad

Thanks to their unceasing effort, people, regions, cities, schools and universities on both sides are closer today than ever before

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: 22 January 2022 marks the second anniversary of the Treaty of Aachen which raises Franco-German partnership to a new level of closer cooperation and enriched friendship. This new chapter is based on all the constructive developments resulting from the Elysée Treaty signed in January 1963 between Chancellor Adenauer and General De Gaulle, a founding text that sealed reconciliation after the Second World War.

To commemorate this historic event, the German and French embassies in Pakistan meet for a luncheon with the recreated menu of 1963 originally served on the occasion of signing of the treaty at Elysée Palace. It is an opportunity to pay tribute to the countless citizens, students, political leaders, and



civil society activists who over the decades have been building the foundation of the strong and vibrant Franco-German friendship we see today. Thanks to their unceasing effort, people, regions, cities, schools and universities on both sides are closer today than ever before.



Within the European Union, France and Germany have been a major driving force strengthening peace, solidarity, and cohesion through a multitude of joint initiatives. These values are very much in line with the programme of the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union during the first half of 2022: a more sovereign Europe, a new European model of growth and a human oriented Europe.

Israel's 'war of attrition' against Palestinian children

As the battle between the Palestinian Bedouin and Israel continues, children are being indiscriminately arrested

MONITORING DESK

ramallah: They busted down the door before sunrise and about 30 Israeli soldiers swarmed the family home. The subject of their arrest? Twelve-year-old Ammar, whom they accused of attending a protest against the land clearances in the Naqab region. But his mother says the family is still not sure why they took him, as the boy was at home at the time. "We don't know exactly why they arrested him. At 5:30am, 30 Israeli soldiers hit the door with their legs. We freaked out and they asked for him while he was sleeping," recalls Ammar's mother. "He is 12, he can't go to school because he is under house arrest. The Israeli authorities banned him from going to school for 10 days starting from yesterday. I was shocked when they informed us of this. I screamed at them: 'What could a 12-year-old do to you?' I was so afraid they would hit or torture him in prison, he was so scared and cried," she says. Ammar was detained and eventually sent home. He has not spoken a word since he returned, and his family are

worried about what happened to him in custody. For days, protests in the Naqab desert have flared as the Palestinian Bedouin fight for their very existence and resist an aggressive forestation project overseen by the Jewish National Fund (JNF), a Zionist organisation. JNF has been planting non-native pine trees on Palestinian land for decades, with the ultimate aim of expanding Israel's settlement programme. This particular project is worth a staggering \$48m, and has full backing from the Israeli government. The organisation has plans to raze Beer al-Sabe (Be'er Sheva) in the Naqab desert, specifically a village called Sa'wa, and according to Marwan Abu Frie, a field researcher and Naqab (Negev) office coordinator for Adalah, a legal centre for Arab rights in Israel, the Israeli police have begun a campaign of arrests and detained about 150 people, with 40 percent of them legally being minors. Abu Frie says at least 16 are still detained. The Israeli state does not recognise the Palestinian Bedouin's right to the land, despite the fact they hold the deeds pre-

dating the creation of the state of Israel, and their presence on the land has been recorded for thousands of years. The father of schoolgirl Jenin, 16, was not at home when his daughter was arrested. While at work, his WhatsApp pinged like mad with images of Jenin being arrested by Israeli forces at the protests being sent to him. Although afraid of what might happen to his daughter in Israeli custody, he also had a sense of pride that she was fighting for her homeland. "I took permission from work and went to check on my daughter who was arrested for a few hours, and then she was sent home," he recalls. "I asked her how she was arrested and how she felt while she was under arrest, she felt so proud of herself and she had no sense of fear." He says life is difficult in the Naqab with Israelis refusing to allow them to build on their own land or grant recognition, despite repeated attempts by the Bedouin and international campaigns to recognise the Bedouin's claim on the land and leave them alone. The Israeli forces rely on legislation passed in the Knesset and legal precedents that make up the law, which allows

the police to arrest minors as young as 12. Marwan's organisation Adalah acts as defence lawyers for Palestinian arrestees, but find themselves running into difficulties, including working with the documents provided to them. Conditions for children are bad while they are under arrest with many finding themselves infected with COVID-19 and facing physical and psychological abuse. "Even if they were released, they have already suffered from this arrest and its bitter experience for a period of days or a week or more, this breaks their morale and keeps them in a very bad psychological state after all what they suffered from arrest," says lawyer Shahda Ibn Bari, who regularly defends Palestinian minors arrested during protests. "Children are abused during their arrest, and we saw some pictures of these children being strangled," says Marwan. "We also learned that during the investigation, they are threatened with their future, as if they were trying to intimidate the children not to demonstrate or to inform other children of what happened to them, so they spread fear among the children."

IS attacks Syria prison, freeing militants: monitor

BEIRUT: The Islamic State group attacked a Kurdish-run jail in northeast Syria on Thursday, freeing fellow militants, a war monitor reported without specifying how many escaped. Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces confirmed the rare attack in a statement but did not mention any prisoners fleeing. According to the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a car bomb hit the entrance of the Ghwayran prison and a second blast went off in the vicinity before IS militant attacked Kurdish security forces manning the facility. "A number of prisoners managed to escape," said the Observatory which relies on a network of sources inside Syria. It did not specify how they managed to break out. Ghwayran is one of the largest facilities housing IS fighters in a semi-autonomous region controlled by Kurdish authorities in northeast Syria, Observatory head Rami Abdul Rahman told AFP. - APP

Pakistan records highest single day cases

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan registered its highest number of daily COVID-19 cases - 7,678 - in the last 24 hours, up from 6,808, the second-highest daily toll, since the pandemic started in 2020, official figures showed Friday morning. Previously, 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. With the new infections, the overall cases have moved past 1.35 million. Meanwhile, as many as 59,343 tests were conducted in the last 24 hours, and the positivity ratio shot up to 12.93%. The deaths from coronavirus also went up to 23 - highest since October 15 - in the last 24 hours from

five a day earlier, taking the overall death toll to 29,065, official figures showed. The cases are on the rise, but top officials have refused to impose a lockdown, saying that the country's economy could not bear the burden of another. On Wednesday, Prime Minister Imran Khan turned down the possibility of imposing a lockdown. Addressing a launching ceremony of the National Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Policy in Islamabad, he said the government will not shut down the economy but will advise people to strictly observe mandated SOPs for COVID-19. Amid the rapid spread of coronavirus, two major politicians - Leader of the Opposition in the National Assembly Shahbaz Sharif and Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Shaukat Tarin - also tested positive for coronavirus two days back.

Schools in affected areas to be closed for one week

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: All schools situated in areas with a high COVID-19 positivity ratio will remain closed for one week across the country, the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC) announced on Friday. According to a notification issued in this regard, the NCOC said: "Educational institutions, premises, sections, specific classes with high positivity to be closed for ONE week."



KARACHI: Ambassador of Vietnam to Pakistan Nguyen Tien Phong in a group photo with staff of the Mazar-e-Quaid, during his recent visit to Karachi. The ambassador also laid floral wreath at the Mazar of Founder of Pakistan. =DNA

COAS vows to bring 'complete peace'

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Qamar Javed Bajwa vowed that sacrifices of martyrs will not go in vain and "complete peace will return to Pakistan". According to the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), the army chief remarked during his visit to the Corps Headquarters Peshawar on Friday. The COAS was given a detailed briefing on the prevailing security situation, progress on development works in newly merged districts and Pak-Afghan border fencing. General Qamar reiterated the resolve of the Pakistan

Airbus cancels Qatar Airways order

Order cancelled in an escalating dispute over Doha grounding the plane maker's A350

PARIS: Airbus has cancelled an order of 50 A321neo aircraft from Qatar Airways, the company said Friday, in an escalating dispute over Doha grounding the plane maker's bigger A350. "We confirm that we have terminated the contract for 50 A321s with Qatar Airways, in accordance with our rights," an Airbus spokesman told AFP following a Bloomberg report on the decision. - APP

PML-N govt increased growth rate artificially, says Farrukh



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Farrukh Habib on Friday asserted that the previous government of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) borrowed money to artificially increase the growth rate(s). "Our government has not increased growth rate artificially," the minister said in a new statement encompassing the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government's economic reforms that started yielding fruits due to tireless efforts of the economic team led by Prime Minister Imran Khan. Farrukh said the country was at the brink of default due to the past governments' corruption and money laundering through fake accounts. "The foreign exchange reserves were half when we came into the government," he added. Highlighting results of the present government's economic reforms, he said it was manifestation of the successful policies of present government that led to achieve 5.37 percent growth rate of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in the last three years. There had been significant decrease in the circular debts due to our effective measure on economic front, he said while drawing comparison of the present government with the tenure of past government. He said that the coronavirus pandemic had adverse impact on economies of the developing countries, but it was the PTI government whose economic reforms were being acknowledged at the international level. "Recognition of the PTI government's economic reforms at international levels validates our successful policies," he remarked. He said during the last year, agricultural, industrial and services sectors showed growth of 3.48, 7.79 and 5.70 percent, respectively. The GDP at market prices increased to Rs55.5 trillion in 2021 with rebasing and level shifting of the economy, he said, adding the gross national income increased to Rs 59.3 trillion, while the per capita income surged to \$1,666. The minister said the size of economy had reached to \$ 346.76 billion. "2020-21 was year of recovery after the global pandemic of COVID-19."