



Islamabad POST

Friday, February 11, 2022

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Century will be shaped by the Indo-Pacific region

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Turkish FM slams West for sowing panic

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Hasnain opens up after ban on bowling action

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Briefs

Prince Charles infected with Covid

LONDON: Prince Charles, the eldest son and heir to Queen Elizabeth II, is isolating after testing positive for coronavirus for the second time, his office said on Thursday. "The Prince of Wales has tested positive for Covid-19 and is now self-isolating," said a message on the prince's official Twitter page. "HRH (His Royal Highness) is deeply disappointed not to be able to attend today's events in Winchester and will look to reschedule his visit as soon as possible," it added. He was due to unveil a statue in the southern city later Thursday. - APP

Fawad launches public survey

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain Thursday launched a survey regarding the 'defamation law' on the social media networking platform Twitter. The survey asks, "Knowing that defamation law has lost its effectiveness, is it not necessary to devise a new legal system to deal with false and slanderous news?" Within 10 minutes of the start of the survey, nearly 2,000 votes were received, with 93% of the respondents saying "yes" and only 7% saying "no". - APP

Shujaat wants GST removed

DNA
LAHORE: PML-Q supremo Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain on Thursday said that the government should reconsider putting taxes on key items like formula milk, lifesaving medicines, pulses used by the poor man. The businessmen and shopkeepers increased the prices and blamed it on General Sales Tax (GST), the PML-Q chief said. In a statement, Chaudhry Shujaat said that the salaried class cannot increase their salaries on their own. Shujaat urged the government to show care for the salaried class.

Americans misjudged Afghanistan

Prime Minister Imran Khan refutes suspicions about CPEC

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan has dismissed Western countries' suspicion of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the Gwadar port, adding that the projects were a great opportunity for regional development. He expressed the views during an interview with Dr Eric Li, the director of the advisory committee of the China Institute at Fudan University. The interview, which was filmed during the premier's recent trip to Beijing, was released on Thursday with Urdu subtitles. "I do not understand why there is suspicion about CPEC and the Gwadar port. It makes no sense because, as far as Pakistan is concerned, my number one priority is the country's 220 million people," PM Imran said. He said that almost 25-30 per cent of the country was below the poverty line, adding that Pakistan had suffered greatly due to past corrupt

Appreciation certificates for 10 ministers

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan has awarded appreciation certificates to ten ministers for their outstanding performance. A ceremony to this effect was held in Islamabad on Thursday. Those who received the certificates from the Prime Minister included Minister for Communications Murad Saeed, Minister for Planning and Development Asad Umar, Special Assistant on Poverty Alleviation Sania Nishtar, Minister for Education Shafiqat Mahmood,

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan awarding performance certificate to Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed. - DNA

Karnataka: Schools to reopen sans religious dress-code

NEWS DESK

KARNATAKA: The Karnataka High Court on Thursday said that it would pass an interim order restraining the petitioners in the Hijab ban matter and other students from wearing any religious garment or headdress, till the matter is disposed of. The Bench of Chief Justice Ritu Raj Awasthi and Justices Krishna S Dixit and JM Khazi orally remarked, "We will pass an order that let the institutions start, but till the matter is pending, these students and stakeholders will not insist on wearing any religious garment or head dress. We will restrain

everyone. We want peace and tranquility....Till the disposal of the matter, you people should not insist for wearing all these religious things. We will restrain everyone (in the interim) from adopting all these practices." The Court was hearing a batch of petitions filed by Muslim girl students in the State claiming that they are not being allowed to enter colleges on account of the government order which effectively bans the wearing of hijab (headscarves). After hearing the lawyers, the Bench adjourned the matter for February 14. In the interim, it said that the petitioners would not be allowed to wear hijab or any other religious garment to colleges.



KARACHI: Spanish Ambassador Manuel Duran Gimenez-Rico calls on Sindh Governor Imran Ismail at Governor House. - DNA

LHC terms blacklisting of passports illegal

Says no provision for blacklisting in the Passport Act

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Lahore High Court (LHC) on Thursday declared the blacklisting of passports illegal. LHC's Justice Tariq Saleem Sheikh declared the blacklisting illegal while issuing his judgment on the petition against the non-renewal of the passport of a blacklisted fugitive. The court said in its judgment that there was no provision for blacklisting in the Passport Act. However, the deputy attorney general warned that ending the process will have a huge impact. But the court ruled that protection of fundamental constitutional rights against state interference based on concerns is a priority, adding that if there is a flaw in the law then the Parliament

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Governer eyes more Spanish investments

He expressed this resolve in a meeting with Spanish Ambassador Manuel Duran Gimenez-Rico

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Spanish Ambassador Manuel Duran Gimenez-Rico on Thursday called on Sindh Governor Imran Ismail at Governor House. Honorary Consul General of Spain at Karachi Ghous Akbar was also present on the occasion, said a statement. During the meeting, bilateral relations, trade, investment and multilateral cooperation in tourism as well as regional and global issues were discussed. Talking to the

Spanish Ambassador, the Governor Sindh said Pakistan was an attractive market for foreign investment in textile, housing, construction, pharmaceutical, renewable energy, agriculture and sports industries. The governor of Sindh also apprised the Governor of Sindh of the situation in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). Talking to Imran Ismail, the Spanish Ambassador said they were committed to enhance bilateral relations, trade activities and improve the situation in the region.

Bilawal dares PM Imran to arrest Zardari

Says Imran Khan will also have to face a similar fate like Musharraf

BUREAU REPORT

MULTAN: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari challenged Imran Khan by saying that he along with President Zardari and Aseefa Bhutto Zardari is in Pakistan, if Imran has the courage then he can come and arrest them. From Quaid-e-Awam to Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto and President Asif Ali Zardari, all were exonerated from fake corruption charges, he said. Chairman PPP was addressing a charged crowd of his party workers' convention in Multan on Thursday.

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No-confidence motion now favorable

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: PML-N Vice President Maryam Nawaz on Thursday said the situation for tabling a no-confidence motion



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- Romania offers exchange of technical knowledge - Page 08

Alvi stresses cooperation with friendly countries

High Commissioner-designate of Brunei Darussalam, Ambassadors-designate of Algeria and Greece, and non-resident Ambassadors-designate of Mauritania and Albania present their credentials to the President

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi has said that Pakistan highly values its ties with all friendly countries and wants to further expand bilateral cooperation with them in the areas of economy, trade and culture. He said that Pakistan was emerging as an attractive business and investment destination and foreign entrepreneurs needed to benefit from the investment-friendly business regime of the country. The President expressed these views while talking to the High Commissioner-designate of Brunei Darussalam, Ambassadors-designate of Algeria and Greece, and non-resident Ambassadors-designate of Mauritania and Albania, who made separate calls on him, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. The High Commissioner-designate of Brunei Darussalam, Mr Pengiran Ab-

dul Samad bin Pengiran Haji Metasan, Ambassadors-designate of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria, Mr Brahim Romani, Greece (Hellenic Republic), Mr Konstantinos Moatsos, the Republic of Mauritania, Mr Mohamed Vall Bah, and the Republic of Albania,

Mr Kastriot Robo, presented their credentials to President Dr Arif Alvi at a ceremony. Congratulating the newly-appointed ambassadors, the President expressed the hope that they would play their role to further strengthen bilateral relations

during their stay in Pakistan. Talking to the envoys, the President highlighted that Pakistan had introduced various reforms to bring improvements in the country's business climate that would encourage foreign businesses to invest in Pakistan. He stated that Pakistan was

focusing on utilizing its unique geo-economic location to develop its economy. The President remarked that Pakistan wanted to increase its trade volume with all friendly countries and was making efforts to enhance its exports. He stressed the need to broaden the base of bilateral cooperation by establishing institutional frameworks with friendly countries for meaningful engagement in diverse areas. The President also highlighted the human rights violations being committed by India in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir and urged the international community to hold India accountable and help resolve the dispute in accordance with the UNSC resolutions. He also apprised the envoys about the grave humanitarian situation in Afghanistan and urged the international community to support the people of Afghanistan to save them from human catastrophe.



Briefs

Ahsan Saleen
meets
German
ambassador

SIALKOT: Special Assistant to the Chief Minister Punjab on Punjab Board of Investment and Trade Ahsan Saleen Baryar met with German Ambassador Bernhard Schlagheck here on Thursday. Chairman Talon Group Chaudhry Saleem Baryar, former president Chamber of Commerce and Industry Chaudhry Qaiser Iqbal Baryar and Chaudhry Muqaddas Saleem Baryar were also present. On this occasion, Ahsan Saleen Baryar said that Germany had close economic ties with Pakistan and thousands of Sialkot exporters used to attend the expo in Germany every year. He said there were vast investment opportunities in Pakistan especially in Punjab, adding that Germany was a developed country in the field of technology. Baryar said the Punjab government wanted help of Germany about modern technology besides setting up institutes for training of the youth. German Ambassador Bernhard Schlagheck said leather products, sports equipments and surgical instruments manufactured in Sialkot were up to international standards and these products had a great demand in the world, including Germany. - APP

FESCO
issues
shutdown
program

FAISALABAD: Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO) has issued shutdown program for Saturday due to repair, maintenance and expansion of electricity lines. According to the program issued by the company, power supply from Fateh Abad feeder emanating from 132-KV OTP Canal Road grid station will remain suspended from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. while Yasrab and Canal feeders originating from 132-KV OTP grid station, new Sabzi Mandi, FIG, Loona, Al-Fareed, Kamal Fabrics, Malik Abad, Hussain Abad and Mujtaba Saood feeders emanating from 132-KV Thikriwala grid station, new Darul Ehsan, Khawaja Garden, Khan Street, Sarfraz Colony, Data Street, LCM, Gate Chowk and Hilal Road feeders originating from 132-KV Faisalabad City (GIS) grid station, People's Colony No.2 and new Dost Street feeders emanating from 132-KV Factory Area grid station and Babar Chowk feeders originating from 132-KV Khanuana grid station will observe shutdown from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday (February 12). Similarly, electricity supply from Saeed Colony, DHQ, Civil Line, Jubilee, Amin Town, Pepsi, Farooq Abad, Rafhan, Abdullah Pur and Susan Road feeders emanating from 132-KV Old Thermal grid station, Marafco, Best Export, New Madina Town, National Silk Mills, Dastgir Colony feeders emanating from 132-KV FIEDMC grid station will also remain suspended from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. on February 12, 2022. - APP

53
shopkeepers
fined over
profiteering

FAISALABAD: The price control magistrates imposed Rs 83,000 fine on 53 shopkeepers on the charge of profiteering in the district during the past 12 hours. A spokesman for the administration said on Thursday that price control magistrates inspected various shops in different markets and bazaars of Faisalabad and found dozens of shopkeepers involved in profiteering and overcharging. The magistrates imposed fine on them and warned that they would be sent behind bars if they did not mend their way of profiteering, he added. - APP

Lost & Found

I have lost Greenfield Developer Pvt (LTD) allotment letter in F-10 Markaz. If anyone found, please call, Nadeem Akhter, 03219666955

Malaysia keen to increase
trade volume with Pakistan

"This city is contributing 45% share in the total textile export of Pakistan in addition to catering 80% domestic needs of clothing"

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Malaysia has been put on a growth trajectory as 36% increase was recorded in its bilateral trade between Pakistan and Malaysia, said Mr. Deddy Faisal Ahmad Salleh Charged Affair of the Malaysian High Commission. He was addressing the business community in Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) here today. He expressed his pleasure over the similarity in his name with the city of Faisalabad and said that it has almost doubled his pleasure to it. He said that Pakistan and Malaysia have enjoyed good diplomatic relations since 1957 which has now gained strategic importance. He also mentioned the recent visit of Malaysian Foreign Minister Mr. Saiful Din Abdullah and said that with the visit of Mr. Mahathir Mohamad our relations have enhanced at the multilateral stages. He said that in 2021 bilateral trade recorded a phenomenal growth of 36% while according to the World Bank report Malaysia is heading towards a "high income economy" and its benefits are also being enjoyed by the people of this country. He said that the Malaysian Government is heavily investing in its human resource capital which would help it to achieve sustain-



able economic goals very soon. He further said that our growth is around 4.5% which is expected to jump to 5% during next year. He said that Malaysia has huge potential for foreign investment as it provides a huge ASEAN market of 15 countries comprising 39% population of this economic block. He said that Pakistani investors should also benefit from these opportunities in the current scenario. He said that he is just completing his diplomatic stay in Pakistan but he will always remain accessible to the business community of Pakistan. Mr. Faisal Salleh also appreciated the initiative of the FCCI to hold a national level economic conference

and requested President Atif Muneer to send him a formal invitation so that he could convince Kuala Lumpur and other chambers of Malaysia to participate in it. He said that he would also request concerned Malaysian ministries to send their representative to participate in it. Regarding coconut, he said that he could arrange a meeting between importers and exporters of the two countries dealing in this commodity. He also appreciated the excellent performance of Pakistan in the IT sector and said that Malaysia has also excelled in animation. Earlier Mr. Atif Muneer Sheikh introduced Faisalabad and FCCI and said that this third

major city of Pakistan is playing a key role in the national economy. "This city is contributing 45% share in the total textile export of Pakistan in addition to catering 80% domestic needs of clothing", he said and added that two major industrial estates have been established which are providing international level facilities to the prospective industrialists and investors. He said that 65 Chinese units are already operative in addition to 11 other countries. He said that many more are in the pipeline and we are expecting that these units would start their production within the next couple of years. He also underlined the importance of the need for

B2B meetings between the businessmen of two countries in addition to the regular exchange of delegations. Executive member Muhammad Azhar Chaudhry briefed about the proposed economic conference and said that being Muslim countries Pakistan and Malaysia should launch joint ventures for the production and export of Hilal products across the globe. Later Mr. Atif Muneer Sheikh along with SVP Mr. Imran Mehmood Sheikh and VP Rana Fayyaz Ahmad presented FCCI shield to the Malaysian Charged Affairs Mr. Deddy Faisal Ahmad Salleh. Mr. Faisal and Mr. Naeem were also decorated with special FCCI collar pins.

Over 7mn
people
vaccinated in
Faisalabad

FAISALABAD: Over 7 million (7,008,397) people have so far been vaccinated against COVID-19 in the district. District Health Officer Dr Ataul Mun'im said on Thursday 4,188,933 citizens were injected first dose while 2,745,496 were administered the second dose of vaccine. He further said that 38,538 health workers were also given first dose while 35,430 received the second dose of vaccine. He said that sufficient stock of coronavirus vaccine was available in the district. He said that 37 vaccination centers and 20 mobile vaccination camps were operational in Faisalabad where registered people were being vaccinated. In order to facilitate the people these centers had been established in various areas of the city including Allied Hospital, District Headquarters Hospital, Government General Hospital, Faisalabad Institute of Cardiology, Government General Hospital Samanabad, Children Hospital, Sports Complex Samanabad, Tehsil Headquarters Hospital Jaranwala, Samundri, Tandlianwala, Chak Jhumra, Sports Complex Chak Jhumra, Sports Complex Jaranwala and Government General Hospital Chak 224/RB. He further said that timing of these vaccination centers was 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. - APP



PESHAWAR: Editor daily Islamabad POST Ansar Mahmood Bhatti visited Benazir Bhutto Women University Peshawar and met with the Vice Chancellor Dr. Razia Sultana. Also seen in the picture are Vice Chancellor Hazara University (Extreme left) and Syed Ali Nawaz Gillnai. - DNA

65% population completely
vaccinated in Gujrat: DC

YOOSUF BHUTTA

GUJRAT: Deputy Commissioner Dr. Khurram Shehzad has revealed that 65% population of above 12 years has been completely vaccinated against Covid-19 in district Gujrat while another 16% have yet taken first dose. The overall coverage has reached 81% in the district. He further told, "We are expecting to administer at least first covid-19 vaccination dose to at least 90% of the population by 14th February under Reacher Every Door (RED) program." DC Dr. Khurram Shehzad disclosed these details in a meeting of district administrative officers at his office. He further told that 1,399,459 persons above 12 have been completely vaccinated while another 1,727,664 persons of the same age group have got first dose so far. He further said that one con-

firmed and 26 suspected patients of Covid-19 are admitted in Aziz Bhatti Shaheed Hospital while another 217 patients are isolated at their homes. It is worth mentioning that there have been 1,474,075 infections and 29,648 coronavirus-related deaths reported in the country since the pandemic began.

Expired and prohibited drugs
recovered

Gujrat, Drug Inspector has recovered expired, illegal and prohibited medicines from a pharmacy in Gohar Plaza here today. It is reported that drug inspector Rana Muhammad Akram suddenly raided the Sole Plus pharmacy and found many expired, prohibited and illegal medicines being distributed to medical stores. He took the said medicines into custody. On his complaint Shaheen Chowk police have registered a case under Drug Act sections against Ziullah,

the owner of the pharmacy. Police are further investigating.

Goods worth rupees 1mn stolen

Goods worth rupees one million were stolen from a sanitary shop here last night. It is reported that unidentified thieves broke into Madni sanitary store at Shadiwal Road and took away goods worth one million rupees. The shop owner Muhammad Asif has filed a written complaint in Lorry Adda police station. Police have registered a case and started investigation.

Smartphone snatched

Rupees one lakh and an expensive smartphone were snatched in two different incidents here Thursday. In incident thirty thousand rupees cash and an expensive smart phone were snatched on gun point by an unidentified dacoit from Arslan Aslam in a nearby village Harbaspur.

120000 Saudi
Riyals seized
at Peshawar
airport

DNA

PESHAWAR: The Airport Security Forces (ASF) claimed Thursday to have foiled a money laundering bid by seizing 120,000 Saudi riyals from a flyer at Peshawar's Bacha Khan Airport. A spokesperson for the ASF said the flyer was to board a Sharjah-bound flight. During checking, 120,000 Saudi riyals were recovered from a jacket kept in his bag. The passenger identified as Bakhsh Muhammad was taken into custody and handed over to the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) after questioning.

GCWUF holds seminar on waste management

"It is our national and moral duty to keep our surroundings clean"

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: In observance of Mah-e-Safi, the GCWUF organized an awareness seminar on Sanitation Campaign regarding "Cleanliness and Hygiene for General Public". Mr. Muhammad Bilal Feroze Jolya, Chief Executive Officer FWMC addressed the audience about "The campaign objectives and its implementation through Solid waste management". Mr. Muhammad Ijaz Bandesha, Senior Manager Operations FWMC addressed the audience about "Solid waste management system. He described the issues and current initiatives to address those issues discussed along with their future prospects.



Talking to the students, Bilal Feroz Jolya said that the process of change always starts from our self and he

wants to take a pledge from all the students that they themselves will take care of the cleanliness of the

environment and in their home, college and university, they will also encourage those around them. GCWUF Registrar Asif Malik in his closing remarks said that GCWUF students and faculty would take part in ground-level activities to clean up the city. "It is our national and moral duty to keep our surroundings clean," he said. "Women are better equipped to deal with these issues and they also play an important role in educating the society," he added. So they believe that such training sessions will not only be useful for these students but will also lead to social change. Shields were distributed among the guests and speakers at the end of the Seminar.

NCHD, UNICEF
join hands for
feasibility study on
KP's education

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: National Commission for Human Development (NCHD) Thursday signed an agreement with United Nations International Children's Fund (UNICEF) to carry out a feasibility study that will provide in-depth analysis on the requirement of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) for ensuring children education. The agreement signing ceremony was held at NCHD Head office where Chairman NCHD and UNICEF Official signed the agreement, Officials from UNICEF, DG NCHD, Head Office directors and KP Provincial team were also part of the ceremony, said a media release here received.

On the occasion, Chairman NCHD Colonel (R) Amirullah Marwat said, "This study will help to determine potentiality of location for a specific subcomponent or as a package approach to implement all components related to SDG 4. The firm will also guide data collection in the pockets having high number of out of school children. The data collection exercise will be done by NCHD in 20 districts of KP." He further briefed that although significant progress in education has been made by almost every country in the last 50 years, 773 million youth and adults around the world still lack basic reading and writing skills, two third of whom are women. In addition despite an increase in education enrollment, approximately 100 million youth between the ages 15 to 24 also lack these basic skills. DG NCHD Hassan Baig while briefing about NCHD said, "NCHD is the only Federal Entity after the 18th Amendment with the constitutional responsibility of working at national level with coverage of 124 districts of Pakistan, under the umbrella of Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training for Literacy & NFE."

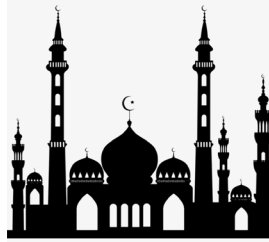
The institution is aimed at enhancing and improving literacy rate through its two pronged strategy to provide access to education i.e. Adult Literacy Programme for the mothers and Universal Primary Education through its Feeder Schools in the remote areas for the unprivileged children. He informed about NCHD's other important intervention in Madrasa Feeder Schools i.e. 100 Madrasa Feeder schools are functional in Punjab, Sindh, KPK and Balochistan where 2,411 students have been enrolled to receive contemporary education along with the religious education.

NCHD has recently launched a literacy project named 'Promoting literacy in Rural Areas of Pakistan' 3000 literacy centers will be established to educate 75,000 illiterates across the country. First phase is in progress, this project is sponsored by Pakistan Human Development Fund.

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Namaz Timings

Fajr.....	05:33 am
Zohr.....	12:22 pm
Asr.....	04:09 pm
Maghrib.....	05:47 pm
Isha.....	07:11 pm



Hotels & Restaurants

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



Airlines

Turkish Airlines.....	8494949
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Islamabad Metropolitan

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

Wasa Water Tank

Rawalpindi.....	0331-5022125
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Experts for transparency, accountability in banking

Dr Shamshad Akhtar maintained that the 'SBP Amendment Act, 2021' was a welcome development considering that the Act of 1956 had outlived its life

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: "Transparency, accountability, and communication are hallmarks of good central banking, more so than independence." This was the key message of leading economists at the Webinar on 'Central Bank Independence: Reformation or Deformation?' organised by the Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies (CASS) in Islamabad. The discussion focused on the global evolution of the Central Bank Independence (CBI) debate and merits and demerits of CBI in Pakistan's context. Eminent speakers included Prof. Dr Paul Wachtel from the Leonard N. Stern School of Business at the New York University, USA; Dr Shamsah Akhtar, former Governor State Bank of Pakistan; Prof. Dr Shahida Wizarat, Dean, College of Economics & Social Development, Institute of Business Management (IOBM); and Dr Usman W. Chohan, Director, Economic Affairs & National Development, CASS. The webinar was chaired by President CASS Air Marshal Farhat Hussain Khan (Retd), while Mubashir Ehsan, Researcher at the Centre



moderated the proceedings. Speaking from New York, Prof. Dr Paul Wachtel provided a comparative assessment of Central Bank Independence (CBI) in advanced and emerging economies and stated that CBI (or even the perception of it) should not be taken for granted in emerging market countries. He stressed that CBI was developed with the monetary policy role first and foremost, but reflection on post-global economic crises calls for more nuanced understanding. As a consequence of crisis experiences (including the recent COVID-19 pandemic), discussion on the

principles of central bank governance had moved away from CBI and now emphasize goal setting, transparency, and accountability. In his assessment, the global financial crisis added financial stability to a central bank's role which involved close interaction between an independent central bank and the government as CBI cannot be cleanly separated from a country's political institutions, he stressed. Dr Shamsah Akhtar maintained that the 'SBP Amendment Act, 2021' was a welcome development considering that the Act of 1956 had outlived its life. Moreover, she commended

the Act for its streamlined objectives of price stability, financial stability and economic growth, and for the clear characterisation of the Bank's functions. Nonetheless, she stressed that no matter how complex, maintenance of expansionary policy would require monetary tightening as well as lowering and scaling back inflation expectations. In her view, the State Bank's independence needs to be accompanied by institutionalised mechanisms for monetary and fiscal coordination and greater accountability backed by more robust transparency. Sharing her concerns about the 'SBP Amendment Act, 2021' Dr Shahida Wizarat argued that the Act was not about the State Bank of Pakistan's autonomy, rather its main goal was to control and manage Pakistan's economy and to stop it from pursuing its strategic goals and objectives. In her analysis this included sabotaging CPEC and regional integration; increasing debt-to-GDP ratio through borrowing from commercial banks at exorbitant rates and over the long-term making it difficult to provide resources for defense and development; reducing Pak-China and South-South trade; while increasing the financial portfolios of IMF shareholders.

British Deputy HC hosts returning Chevening scholars

The UK is committed to promoting quality higher education, particularly for women and girls

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The British High Commission on Thursday organised a virtual welcome back reception for Pakistani scholars who were awarded the prestigious Chevening and Commonwealth scholarships 2020/21. British Deputy High Commissioner Alison Blackburne welcomed the Pakistani scholars who have returned from the UK after completing a full-

ly-funded one-year master's programme. The event was attended by officials of the British High Commission, returning scholars, and Chevening alumni. The Deputy High Commissioner congratulated scholars on completing their master's degree and welcomed them into the British alumni family, which has around 10,000 members across Pakistan. Chevening and Commonwealth scholarships bring together some of the brightest minds from across the world to UK's renowned universities where they are able to realise their educational aspirations and experience all that the UK has to offer. The scholarship not only brings immediate benefits to individual schol-

ars, but also delivers long-term benefits for both Pakistan and the UK. British Deputy High Commissioner Alison Blackburne said: "The UK is committed to promoting quality higher education, particularly for women and girls. We have worked hard over the years to encourage more women to apply for Chevening scholarships, and more than half of the scholars last year were women. The scholars returning from their year of study have benefitted from world class education and also had the opportunity to learn more about the UK. They are part of the deep people to people ties which we are celebrating during this year marking 75 years of UK-Pakistan relations."



RAWALPINDI: Zobia Jalal, Federal Minister for Defence Production presenting a souvenir to Wada Mitsuhiro, Ambassador of Japan. – DNA

AIOU extends assignments submission deadline

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has extended assignments submission deadline till February 28 for the students enrolled in matriculation and intermediate programs offered in autumn 2021 semester.

According to Dr Tauqeer Ahmad Khan, DRS, all those students who could not submit any of their first, second or third assignment (s) are allowed to submit it with their fourth assignment on or before February 28, 2022.

He, further, added that Directorate of Regional Services (DRS) is striving hard to facilitate the students across the country on the special directives of Prof Dr Zia Ul-Qayyum, VC, AIOU. Therefore, all regional directors have been communicated to inform tutors to accept students' assignments till the extended deadline.

Furthermore, in case a student has not yet received information about their tutor (s), they are advised to contact their regional offices to resolve their issue and submit their assignments.

ITP continues crackdown against wrong parking

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) started taking strict action against vehicles over wrong parking for smooth flow of traffic in the Federal Capital. A special campaign was underway, following the directives of Senior Superintendent of Police (Traffic) Mazhar Iqbal to ensure safe road environment besides reducing traffic accidents in the capital city, a news release said.

The Senior Superintendent of Police (Traffic) directed all Zonal DSPs to ensure implementation on traffic laws through courteous attitude with citizens. He said that people should be treated politely and briefed them about traffic laws.



ISLAMABAD: British High Commissioner Dr. Christian Turner calls on National Security Advisor Dr. Moeed Yousuf. – DNA

PM was right not to shake hands with Shehbaz, says Gill

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Political Communication Dr Shahbaz Gill Thursday said Prime Minister Imran Khan's decision not to shake hands with opposition leader Shehbaz Sharif was right as now more documented proofs of his and his sons' corruption had started to surface. "We are asked as to why the prime minister does not talk to Shehbaz Sharif. We are asked to abandon the accountability process and move ahead through dialogue. However, the new documentary proofs about Shehbaz and his sons has once again proved that the prime minister's decision

of not talking and shaking hands with a corrupt individual was absolutely right," he told a press conference here at the PTV Headquarters. He said the total worth of Shehbaz Sharif and family's assets in 1990 was Rs 2.1 million, but surprisingly they collectively paid Rs 14.8 million tax in 1998 as per their returns. Then, in 2018 each and every member of his family owned property worth around seven to eight billion rupees. "And this is all what they themselves have declared," he added. He said it was not wise to expect that the prime minister would shake hands with a corrupt individual like Shehbaz Sharif. "Whatever the loss may

be, it is quite clear that the prime minister is not going to do that (talk with the corrupt leaders). Gill also shared the recent documents, submitted by the United Kingdom's super anti-corruption force National Crime Agency (NCA) in a court against the corruption of Shehbaz and his son Suleman Shehbaz. It was the agency of the same country where the Sharifs preferred to go for medical checkup and treatment, he added. "You (Sharifs) trust them and even for hair transplantation you go there." He said according to the NCA, Suleman stated that he did not have pocket money and someone with the name of Zulfiqar was supporting him. He said as per an

NCA document, Suleman took millions of rupees from Zulfiqar to meet his day to day needs. The minister also shared another NCA document according to which Shehbaz purchased a flat in Central London for which he had received a loan from a British Pakistani Aneel Musarrat. "According to this document when that flat was sold its amount did not go back to Aneel but was transferred to Suleman's account." "There are thousands of such others documents about their corruption and they will keep on appearing with the passage of time." He said the documents revealed that even their peon with the name of Malik Maqsood owned property worth billions of rupees.

Opp. join hands to blackmail govt: Shafqat Mahmood

ISLAMABAD: Federal Education Minister Shafqat Mahmood on Thursday lashed out at the opposition and said that the group of the 'looters' have joined hands together to blackmail the ruling party of PTI. Addressing a convention at a private marriage hall in Narowal, the education minister said that the opposition has been using tactics of 'vote of no confidence' and 'Long March' only to blackmail the government. Shafqat said that the PTI-led will complete its five-year constitutional term. He allegedly said that the opposition parties looted Pakistan for the last 30 years. He added that the PTI-led government is the ambassador of progress as it is working to make Pakistan a better country for every Pakistani out there. Shafqat alleged that PML-N failed to build a single hospital for the public and for its own leaders. "PM Imran Khan, on the other hand, has developed cancer hospitals of high standard," the Education Minister added. The minister said that the Sharif family is always in a rush to travel to the foreign countries for their medical treatment. Shafqat said that the PTI-led government will make Pakistan a 'welfare state'. Shafqat said that the people of the country still stood by the side of the PTI-led government. Lauding the premier, Shafqat said the PM Imran has no personal agenda. – DNA

CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

(CAPITAL HOSPITAL)

TENDER NOTICE

Capital Hospital invites Sealed Bids on Single Stage One Envelope Procedure for supply of Janitorial (Cleaning & General items) through rate running contract basis from reputed Firms having experience in the relevant field/registered with Sales Tax Department. Earnest Money 3% of Bid value in shape of Call Deposit in favour of Drawing & Disbursing Officer (D.D.O.), Capital Hospital, CDA must be attached with Tender Documents. The detail of Purchase, Tender Cost, and opening date is mentioned below:-

TENDER NO.	DESCRIPTION	ESTIMATED COST	COST OF TENDER	BID SUBMISSION DATE & TIME	BID OPENING DATE & TIME
No.CDA/CH-2 (4)/Janitorial/2021-22/119	Supply of Janitorial (Cleaning & General items)	Rs.9,249,200/- million	Rs.2000/-	28-2-2022 AT 11:00 HRS	28-2-2022 AT 11:30 HRS

2. Tender documents containing complete specifications, terms and conditions can be obtained on payment mentioned against each tender (non-refundable) from (Drawing & Disbursing Officer) D.D.O., Capital Hospital, CDA Sector G-6/2, Islamabad. The same are also available at CDA website. In case tender document is downloaded from website, pay order amounting to tender cost in favour of D.D.O., Capital Hospital, CDA must be attached at the time of submission of tender document.

3. Tenders without/less earnest money will not be considered in any case. The successful bidder will deposit security @ 3% of the contract value in the shape of Call Deposit at the time of signing the contract.

4. No. tender will be sold on the date of opening of tenders. "The Authority reserves the right to reject all bids or proposals at any time prior to the acceptance of a bid or proposal".

5. The Bid must have six months (180 days) validity period.

6. Tender advertisement is available at PPRA website www.ppra.org.pk & CDA websites www.cda.gov.pk.

Briefs

PAL chairman
condoles
death of
Rohi Kunjahi

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Academy of Letters (PAL) Chairman Dr Yousof Ikushk on Thursday expressed grief and sorrow over the sad demise of Rohi Kunjahi, a poet, writer and novelist. In his condolence message, PAL chairman said that the services of Rohi Kunjahi for Urdu literature are unforgettable. He prayed may Almighty Allah rest the departed soul in eternal peace and grant courage to the bereaved family to bear the irreparable loss with fortitude.

Examining
current audit
paras' top
priority of PAC

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman, Public Accounts Committee (PAC), Member National Assembly, Rana Tanveer Hussain on Thursday said examining current audit paras of 2019-20 was the top priority of the committee. Talking to media after postponing PAC meeting, he said committee had received 28,000 audit objections out of which 5,000 have been disposed off so far.

He said on the PAC directives, maximum departments had started holding regular Departmental Accounts Committee (DAC) meetings. He also lauded the sub-committees of PAC for disposing off maximum audit paras. Chairman Committee also issued directives for holding a meeting with the convenors of the sub-committees in which their performance would be reviewed.

Earlier, the committee also offered Fateha for the departed soul of father of member of Public Accounts Committee Member National Assembly Hina Rabbani Khar. Chairman of the committee and members of the committee also separately condoled with MNA Rabbani. Later, the committee unanimously decided to postpone the meeting due to the absence of Chairman Federal Board of Revenue (FBR), Revenue Division.

Chairman Public Accounts Committee said, Chairman FBR had conveyed that he was unable to attend today's meeting but his presence was essential to proceed the agenda. Members of the committee including Senator Mushahid Hussain-Sayed, Senator Muhammad Talha Mahmood, MNA Shahida Akhtar Ali, MNA Hina Rabbani Khar, MNA Munaza Hassan, MNA Syed Hussain Tariq, MNA Syed Naveed Qamar, MNA Sheikh Rohale Asghar, MNA Khawaja Muhammad Asif and MNA Riaz Fatyana also attended the meeting.

IRSA releases
69245
cusecs water

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) Thursday released 69245 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 48852 cusecs.

According to the data released by IRSA, water level in the Indus River at Tarbela Dam was 1436.37 feet, which was 44.37 feet higher than its dead level 1392 feet.

Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 21700 and 48700 cusecs respectively.

The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1145.00 feet, which was 95.00 feet higher than its dead level of 1050 feet whereas the inflow and outflow of water was recorded as 10607 and 4000 cusecs respectively.

The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, and Sukkur was recorded as 47652, 43594, and 24070 cusecs respectively.

Similarly, from the Kabul River a total of 6600 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 9945 cusecs released from the Chenab River at Marala.

ICCI demands industrial zone in the capital

President ICCI paid tributes to the valuable services rendered by the Chairman Founder Group M Akram Farid for the betterment of the business and industrial community and expressed hope that he would continue to do so in future as well

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Founder Group ICCI and Former President Islamabad Chamber M Akram Farid hosted a reception in honor of the former Presidents ICCI. Speaking on the occasion, M Akram Farid stressed that the government should establish a new industrial zone for the Islamabad region to encourage new investment, promote industrialization, increase exports and create more jobs the youth.

M. Akram Farid said that due to the efforts of former Presidents ICCI, the Chamber has now emerged as one of the premier Chambers of Pakistan and has achieved many milestones to mark its name at home and abroad. He further said that he did his best to represent and patronize the business community and act as a bridge between the government and the business community. He said that the former Presidents ICCI have played



a significant role in strengthening and activating the institution during their tenure which is commendable. He hoped that the present and incoming Presidents of ICCI would play their part in making it a stronger and more effective institution so that it could play a more active role in better protecting their interests. Speaking at the occasion, President Islamabad Cham-

ber of Commerce and Industry Muhammad Shakeel Munir paid tributes to the valuable services rendered by the Chairman Founder Group M Akram Farid for the betterment of the business and industrial community and expressed hope that he would continue to do so in future as well. He said that as per vision of the Founder Group, discounts have been obtained

for ICCI members from hospitals, laboratories, schools, colleges, universities, PIAs and other institutions. He further said that with the guidance of the Founder Group, facilitation desks of FBR, Police, District Administration, Pakistan Customs and Federal Tax Ombudsman have been set up in ICCI that are resolving issues related to these institutions from the Chamber.

During the ceremony, prayers were offered for the forgiveness of the deceased Presidents ICCI including Khalid Masood Bhola, Raza Khan, Munawar Mughal, Muhammad Sabir, Siddique Butt and Chaudhry Aslam (Lates). Former Chairmen of Founder Group Zubair Ahmad Malik, Abdul Rauf Alam, Khalid Javed, Sheikh Tariq Sadiq, Current President ICCI Muhammad Shakeel Munir,

Former Presidents ICCI Inayatullah Mirza (Founding President), Mian Shaikat Masood, Zafar Bakhtawari, Khalid Iqbal Malik, Muhammad Ejaz Abbasi, Nasir Khan, Zahid Maqbool, Basir Dawood, Waqar Aslam Hamidi, Yasir Sakhi Butt, Mahfooz Elahi, Mohsin Khalid, Sheikh Amir Waheed, Shaban Khalid, Muhammad Ahmad Waheed and Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan attended the reception.

Pakistan to send over 3000 medical staff to Kuwait soon

ISLAMABAD: Overseas Employment Corporation— an attached department of Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development would send over 3000 medical staff including doctors and paramedical staff to Kuwait soon. Talking to APP here on Thursday, an official said Pakistan has sent more than 3500 doctors, nurses, and medical technicians to Kuwait during the pandemic and 3000 more were in the pipeline. To a question, he said the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia was also recruiting hundreds of medical professionals. Qatar being old ties to Pakistan must also explore such an offer, he added.

He informed that the Qatar government would open new offices in Peshawar and Lahore soon to facilitate people of both nations. He said the incumbent government was taking various steps to produce skilled labour to meet the requirement of international labour market and generate more job opportunities for them. He stated that more than 53 security agencies of Qatar had contacted for security personnel for their newly built stadiums, adding, more than 5000 Pakistani security personnel were being hired on five-year contract. — APP



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Kazakhstan to Pakistan Yezhan Kistafin met Malik Muhammad Ehsan Ullan Tiwana, Chairman of Foreign Affairs Standing Committee, and Muhammad Asif Noor. — DNA

COMSTECH team performs 490 eye surgeries in Niger

ISLAMABAD: COMSTECH and LRBT team completed 8-day visit to Niamey, Niger. During the visit it organized an eye camp and training workshop at National Hospital, in Niamey. The team conducted 490 eye surgeries and one training workshop. After having training local doctors performed 28 surgeries. A seven-member team of experienced ophthalmologists from Layton Rahmatulla Benevolent Trust (LRBT), Pakistan visited Niger from January 31 to 7 February 2022. This visit was arranged by COMSTECH and LRBT in collaboration with Islamic Development Bank (IsDB), and coordination of Pakistani mission in Niger. All the consumables and

medicines for this eye camp were transported from Pakistan and the accommodation was provided by the Ministry of Health, Niger.

This was the second visit of COMSTECH and LRBT team. It visited Niamey during third week of November last year and conducted 25 cataract surgeries, serviced and repaired all the faulty equipment and made it available for screening and cataract surgeries. Niger authorities are highly satisfied with the performance of COMSTECH-LRBT team and requesting for regular visits of the ophthalmologists to conduct cataract surgeries. These visits are part of COMSTECH program of health and higher education for Africa.

The objectives are to provide free high-quality sight-restoring cataract surgeries, provide post-operative treatment, reduce blindness related poverty and eliminate reliance on assistance of others, build the capacity of local health professionals during the campaign to identify eye problem, screen, and provide care. LRBT is the largest NGO of Pakistan, fighting blindness and transforming lives. COMSTECH is an OIC Ministerial Standing Committee on Scientific and Technological Cooperation headquartered in Islamabad with the objective to enhance scientific and technological cooperation among OIC member states to achieve socio-economic development in the Muslim world. — DNA



Citizens of twin cities flout ban on kite flying

ISLAMABAD: A significant number of kites continue to hover over the skies in twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad despite a ban on kite flying but the citizens are flouting the ban, as the administration fails to ensure complete compliance of the restriction. While some citizens have asked for a complete crackdown on the dealers and stressed for an effective implementation of the ban to prevent the loss of precious lives in the name of celebration of a spring festival "Basant", there are also people who are fully prepared to celebrate it without any worry.

Amjad Ali, a resident of Rawalpindi said that kite-flying was a dangerous activity. A crowd of people including children run after falling kites hoping to catch them. "In doing so, they blindly enter roads, as their eyes are glued on the kites high above them, and more often end up getting seriously injured, or even losing their lives in an accident." A young girl named Irum expressed her concerns over aerial firing that had become integral part of almost all celebrations. Kite flying is no exception. Whenever a kite was cut, it was followed by intense firing. She told APP that such people had no regard for others' safety. "Sounds of fire was annoying and disturbing for law abiding citizens. Moreover, stray bullets posed threat to their lives." She called for the ban to be implemented wholly and effectively to protect people from the dangers connected with kite-flying. Talking about the dangers of using string containing metallic component (dhatidior), a man who spoke on the condition of anonymity, recalled his narrow escape from getting electrocuted. "There have been numerous incidents where bikers had their throats slit open with kite strings. Not only do these razor sharp strings pose danger to humans, but also to birds," stressed a worried mother.

Not everyone is a law-abiding citizen. Also, not everyone is concerned about the safety of others or about the consequences of one's actions. Sheraz, a university student, did not feel any legal or moral obligation to comply with the ban. He was proudly boasting his preparations for the festival. One person was of the view that banning a festival was not a feasible solution. — APP

11 Japanese Films to be virtually screened in Pakistan

Masafumi Konomi, the producer of JFF, in his message to the audience, expressed hope saying, "this film festival can provide some small sense of relief, and help people to live with a positive outlook on the future" while passing through the current coronavirus pandemic

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Japan Foundation, in cooperation with the Embassy of Japan in Pakistan will hold a virtual Japanese Film Festival (JFF) from February 14 to February 27. Featuring 11 films including some of the big hits in Japan, depicting various aspects of Japanese culture through the different genres of movies ranging from documentary, fiction, animation, to thrillers, said a press release issued here. This online Japanese Film Festival will be held in 25 countries simul-

taneously for two weeks showing 20 films (11 films for Pakistani friends) with subtitles for free of charge. The 11 Japanese films to be screened for Pakistani movie lovers include "Masked Ward", "AWAKE", "Ito", "Patema Inverted", "SUMODO-The Successors of Samurai", "The God of Ramen", "Happy Flight", "OZLAND", "Until the break of Dawn", "The Chef of South Polar", and "Bread of Happiness".

H.E. Mr. WADA Mitsuhiro, the Ambassador of Japan to Pakistan told APP that although the movement of people and other activities have been restricted to a great extent in



recent years due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this virtual film festival will provide a great opportunity for the people of Pakistan to learn more about Japan and its society. The Ambassador said as this year marks the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Japan and Pakistan and they would like to celebrate this historic occasion as a momentum to further strengthen Japan-Pakistan relations in many fields such as politics, economy, business, culture and people-to-people exchanges. Masafumi Konomi, the producer of JFF, in his message to the audience, expressed hope saying,

"this film festival can provide some small sense of relief, and help people to live with a positive outlook on the future" while passing through the current coronavirus pandemic. JFF is a project of the Japan Foundation created with the aim to share the excitement of Japanese cinema with the world. During the festival, besides screening the popular films and documentaries, interviews and talk sessions with directors and cast members, as well as a variety of events in each participating country are planned of which the details will be published on the JFF website.

NUST develops Air Quality Monitoring Station

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) has developed a modern air quality monitoring station and become the only varsity in the country to possess such a sophisticated piece of latest equipment.

The NUST through its indigenous and US Embassy assisted initiatives managed to develop a locally made conventional air quality measuring gadget in collaboration with local technicians/engineers, also received latest low-cost sensors given by the US State Department under its project of the Duke University and imported Japanese made air quality monitors worth around Rs 50 million. Head of Department, Environmental Sciences NUST Institute of Environmental Sciences and Engineering (IESE) Dr Muhammad Fahim Khokhar told APP that the endeavor was a decade long effort that started in 2012 and got accomplished in the ongoing year.

"The effort has been started from a scratch that succeeded in establishing an international standard air quality monitoring lab at the varsity," Dr Khokhar said.

He told that the lab had recently received certification of the Pakistan Environmental Protection Agency (Pak-EPA). The university has received four low cost sensors to assess particulate matter of 2.5 microns (PM2.5) from the Duke University through US Embassy. However, two of them were installed at the NUST station and two of them were placed at the Pak-EPA to get real-time data of PM2.5 and analyse the performance of latest technology in air quality monitoring, he added.

PTI govt's popularity unites opponent parties

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Ali Muhammad Khan Thursday criticised that the opposition parties have been united against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government to hide their corruption. Talking to a private news channel, the minister said due to Prime Minister Imran Khan's efforts, the country is moving on right track to achieve its real destiny.

He said the opposition parties were afraid of PTT's popularity amongst the masses and therefore, they were propagating against the party and its leadership. He expressed his confidence that the whole nation is standing with Imran Khan and will continue staying with him against corrupt mafia. PTI under the strong leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan was taking pragmatic measures to resolve the issues of common man besides putting the country on a path of development and prosperity. — APP

WAPDA starts 5 dams construction after years halt

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA), after a hiatus, has started working on five dams-cum-hydropower projects besides building two mega dams, Mohmand and Diamer-Basha to meet the country's growing water needs. Sources told APP that the under construction hydropower projects included Dasu, Keyal Khwar, Kurram-Tangi, Warsak power and Mangla rehabilitation initiatives.

Similarly, they said currently scores of hydropower projects were under operation of WAPDA which were providing thousands of megawatt cheap hydel electricity to the national grid.

The projects which were currently under operation included Kurram-Garhi Hydropower, Chitral Hydropower, Dubar-Khar, Golen-Gol, Tarbela, Tarbela 4th Extension, Mangla, Neelum Jhelum, Ghazi Barotha, Jinnah, Rasul, Chashma, Dargai-Khan-Khwar, Allai-Khwar, Satapara, Renala, Shadiwal, and Chichoki hydropower schemes.

Preserving wildlife

BACK in 2003, the International Union for Conservation of Nature classified leopards to be critically endangered in Pakistan considering that there were only a few hundred left. Ever since, the authorities have launched programmes through which conservation of the species is prioritised and the objective is set to increase numbers all the while protecting their natural habitat from human encroachment and pollution. However, clashes with humans have resulted in the deaths of over 10 leopards last year, and two up in 2022 so far.

A group of angry villagers were responsible for stoning and strangulating a leopard to death in Jhelum valley in Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) on Tuesday. They were already fuming at the animal for killing some of their livestock recently and decided to launch an attack of their own when it was allegedly causing injuries to fellow humans after infiltrating a residential area. Videos of the incident are all over social media and activists are speaking out about the act of brutality against an innocent and thought-less creature.

Any village that is near the natural or conserved habitat of various forms of wildlife is bound to have a number of clashes occurring. It is natural for the animal to transgress its boundary once in a while and every individual should be made aware of the fact that it does so without premeditated thought. In fact, the animal may be as scared as the human population may be—as evidenced by the videos of it hiding under a bridge. These are creatures without the ability of human thought and as such, must be treated more gently.

The wildlife conservation teams have put forth protocols in all areas of the world in such an instance according to which each individual is advised to remain indoors until the experts arrive at the scene and relocate the animal. This is the route that should have been taken rather than the violent one adopted by the villagers. There is a dire need for education and awareness to be given to those who live nearby places where such wildlife resides so that not only are their lives protected from the risks that come with engaging but the animals' itself. Without this, our efforts to conserve may be redundant.

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Snowy start paves way to prosperous year

Lapses in policy

DESPITE Pakistan finally getting approval of the International Monetary Fund (IMF)'s sixth review, resulting in the release of a \$1 billion tranche under the \$6 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF), all is not well in IMF-Pakistan relations.

The IMF's Staff Report on Pakistan, published last week under Article IV of the IMF's Articles of Agreement through which the IMF Staff collects economic and financial information and discusses with officials the country's economic developments and policies, acknowledged Pakistan's progress since the start of the pandemic, but also identified many weaknesses and called on the government to do more. The essence of the IMF's message is that Pakistan should not be limited to taking measures related to tax alone, but it should also find other ways to enhance the competitiveness of the economy.

It must be noted that the report this year has a different tone from last year's, where the IMF praised Pakistan's commitment to the medium-term objectives under the EFF. This year, however, the report grieved that the rebounding of economic activity in the latter half of 2020 suffered from inconsistent macroeconomic policies.

The recent tranche has not come easily—the government has had to make several unpopular decisions to allow price hikes and tax increases in order to bring the economy up to date with global inflation. However, the government must realise that passing these difficult decisions is not the only work required.

The IMF EFF Pakistan signed on to is a long-term responsibility, which requires commitment. The Staff Report has correctly identified that Pakistan has a long history of stop-and-go economic policies and weak implementation of structural reforms.

Whether the decision to go to the IMF in the first place was the right one does not matter now—what is of importance is that programme implementation is even and consistent. The government needs to focus on fiscal discipline and debt sustainability—otherwise, the system will remain dependent on temporary relief releases, forcing the country to inevitably rely on IMF assistance again.

No, Russia will not invade Ukraine

Harun Yilmaz



Russia, undoubtedly, made these cost calculations before the 2008 Georgia war, in which it intervened on the side of separatist forces in the breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia against the Georgian government

OVER the past year, as Russia amassed troops along its border with Ukraine, there have been growing fears of an imminent invasion. A number of Western leaders have repeatedly warned of this possibility. Moscow has denied that it is making such plans, although it has not withdrawn its troops. Some observers have interpreted these Russian statements as untruthful and even accused the Russian authorities of preparing a false-flag operation. A closer examination of Russia's geopolitical behaviour in the past two decades, however, demonstrates that its officials might not necessarily be trying to deceive the international community. A full-scale war in Ukraine does not really fit into how the Kremlin has used hard power in its geopolitical games. The examples of Georgia, Syria, Libya, and (so far) Ukraine, show that it pursues a cost-efficient policy. In each case, the Russian government has had a clear understanding of the risks on

the ground. It has made a careful cost-benefit analysis and established clear and limited goals for the use of hard power. The cost-effective policy is a conscious choice because the Russian decision-makers know well that they do not have the means to maintain a large-scale war. Russia, undoubtedly, made these cost calculations before the 2008 Georgia war, in which it intervened on the side of separatist forces in the breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia against the Georgian government.

Back then, the Russian forces did not really face a formidable adversary and were able to easily defeat the Georgian forces in South Ossetia in days. The Russian troops then crossed into Georgia proper, ransacked the city of Gori and halted. Once the limited goal of pushing back Georgian forces from South Ossetia and Abkhazia was achieved, Moscow was open to European mediation. The Russian troops could have completely cut Georgia in two, gained control of the precious transit oil and gas pipelines from Azerbaijan to Turkey, and paralysed the economy and political system. All these gains would have been valuable bargaining chips to force the Georgian government to recognise the independence of the separatist regions. Yet, the regional and global costs of these advancements would have been too high for Russia, so it stopped at a limited military operation. A similar calculation was made before the intervention in Syria to prop up Bashar al-Assad's regime in 2015. Moscow did not deploy a massive land force—as, for example, the US did in Afghanistan and Iraq—and instead limited its hard power to fighter jets, special forces, mercenaries, military advisers, and navy ships. In order to lower the risk further, the Russian diplomats engaged with various stakeholders, such as the US, Israel, and Turkey at different stages of the war. This engagement ensured that rebel forces were not supplied with anti-aircraft weapons, which guaranteed the air supremacy of Russian and Syrian forces. Russia's extensive bombardment of areas under rebel control provided effective air cover for Syrian regime forces and enabled

them to shift from defence to offence. In a matter of months, Damascus, backed by Russian and Iranian forces, was able to regain control of large swaths of territory and, in the following three years, forced rebels out of several strongholds and limited their presence to the northwest of the country. Russia achieved its goal—preserving al-Assad's regime—with minimal costs, both in terms of casualties and funding, and even made diplomatic gains against Western powers on the international scene.

Therefore, the amassing of troops along the Russia-Ukraine border is not targeting Kyiv, but the West. Moscow wants to force Western countries to finally sit down for negotiations on issues of European security. And this strategy seems to be working. Since 1991, this is the first time the West has engaged seriously with Russia to discuss European security. Russian officials undoubtedly understand that Ukraine will not enter NATO, as there is no enthusiasm for it within the military organisation right now. What the Kremlin worries about is whether the US will deploy missiles or missile defence elements on Ukrainian soil. Moscow wants arrangements to be made on several issues, including halting the deployment of intermediate-range ballistic missiles in Europe and limiting military exercises in close proximity to Russian borders. On December 17, it put out a proposal outlining its demands to both NATO and the United States. Until the Kremlin feels that it has received the necessary security guarantees, it will likely continue to keep military pressure on the Ukraine border. It might deploy intermediate-range ballistic missiles in Belarus or even escalate in other hotspots in its immediate neighbourhood, such as Georgia. It may organise war games closer to Western Europe, as it did with recent naval exercises near Ireland. It could even show off military capabilities closer to US borders, by deploying hypersonic missiles on its submarines or setting up long-range missiles in Venezuela, for example. All these measures, however, will fall within Russia's cost-effective calculations. That means that a large-scale invasion or war is highly unlikely.

—Courtesy: Al Jazeera

US lawsuit threatens lie that criticism of Israel is anti-Semitic

Ray Hanania



Pro-Palestinian activists have waged a campaign to confront the illogical assertions of the extremist pro-Israel movement, but they have so far been largely unsuccessful in correcting the moral injustice of this specious argument

THE campaign to smear anyone who criticizes Israel's policies as being anti-Semitic is a powerful deterrent that has allowed the Israeli government to continue its discriminatory policies against the Palestinians. The idea that criticizing a government is a heinous moral crime that rises to the level of anti-Semitism is absurd, but it has long been one of Israel's greatest weapons in forcing its American supporters to close their eyes to its wide range of injustices and rule of law violations that enable it to unjustly oppress a civilian population. Pro-Palestinian activists have waged a campaign to confront the illogical assertions of the extremist pro-Israel movement, but they have so far been largely unsuccessful in correcting the moral injustice of this specious argument. It has gotten so bad that Nobel Peace Prize-winning global human rights organization Amnesty International was last week denounced as anti-Semitic not just by extremist Israeli leaders, but by many American politicians.

While the "criticism of Israel is anti-Semitic" movement has succeeded in encouraging blind loyalty from its supporters, including many in the US Congress, it has also blurred the line between real anti-Semitism—the hatred of Jews—and the legitimate right of individuals to criticize, challenge and hold governments accountable, including the one in Israel. Instead of being a moral judgment, anti-Semitism has been turned into a political weapon. In the long term, that will backfire and cause great harm to the Jewish people. This concerns many Jews, including Jessie Sander, who filed a lawsuit after she was fired as a teacher at a New York synagogue last summer because she criticized Israel in a personal blog co-authored with another Jewish woman. They wrote that they believed Israel and the Jewish people to be far better than what the Israeli government had become. I spoke with one of Sander's attorneys for a story on the lawsuit and he explained that their intent was not only to win her job back with backpay and compensation to alleviate the suffering she has been put through, but also to correct the falsehood that criticism of Israel's government is anti-Semitic. In her blog, Sander criticized Zionism

and Israeli government policies. This upset her employers at the Westchester Reform Temple in Scarsdale, New York, even though the post did not criticize Judaism or other people because they were Jews. When asked about the blog, Sander assured the synagogue that her personal views would not be part of her teachings. One of the synagogue's associate rabbis even expressed sympathy with what she wrote. Days later, however, she was called into a Zoom meeting and fired by the same rabbi and the synagogue's executive director. Some might see this lawsuit as merely an employment grievance. But it is not. A court ruling could affirm what activists for justice and human rights have been saying for years: That unjust Israeli government policies must be challenged not just for the sake of the international rule of law and human rights, but for the sake of the Jewish people themselves.

The irony is that this lawsuit is a greater threat to the pernicious lie that criticism of Israeli government policies is a form of anti-Semitism than the hundreds of protests that have been made by activists. Those protests have put the issue in the court of political opinion, which is dominated by Israel's massive public relations propaganda and in which even an honorable institution like Amnesty International has had its name dragged through the mud.

The genius of the Sander lawsuit is that it lifts the issue out of the murky waters of the never-ending Arab-Israeli political brawl and sharply defines it as a moral imperative. The attorney I spoke to, Robert Herbst, explained that the lawsuit has significant merit because New York is one of the few US states that has a law "which prohibits an employer from firing an employee because of a legal recreational activity performed without compensation, off the premises of the employer, and without reference to the employer's property." Sander's case has attracted the support of more than 80 prominent Jewish leaders and rabbis, from New York to California, as well as individuals who insist there is a difference between anti-Semitism and criticizing the political policies and actions of a government.

What needs to happen, though, is for more organizations and activists, Jewish and non-Jewish alike, to stand up and speak out. The right to criticize governments is fundamental to democracy. Not every country embraces democracy, but those nations that claim to support it can play a significant role in separating fact from fiction. The UN should also offer its support to the lawsuit. So should the many foreign governments that believe in achieving justice and peace through nonviolence and truth. And the members of Congress who claim to support Israel should recognize the important principles that are the foundation of Sander's lawsuit and support it too.

If I were a leading official at Amnesty International, I would showcase this lawsuit as the quintessential argument against one of the most vicious libels of all time: That just because I disagree with Israel's policies, I am somehow anti-Semitic. Only an apartheid state would make that kind of argument. A democratic state would allow itself to be held to a high standard of accountability as the representative of its citizens and accept criticism as an inalienable right.

—Courtesy: Arab News

The rise of illiberalism and desecularization in India

Mustansar Siam



Ethno-religious forces in the country compromise the constitutional commitment to diversity and religious freedom

REPORTS from New Delhi since the 2014 elections have shown that democracy in India is passing through some serious consequential troubles. It has repeatedly been proved that illiberal movements tend to be more powerful when democratic institutions leave space for them. Resultantly, these illiberal movements constitute menaces and hazards on the way of ensuring fundamental rights to all

citizens. India's comprehensive experience with stable democracy, ethnic and religious diversity and democratic governance remained satisfactory until 2014 compared to Pakistan. But, since the BJP is in power, the secularist tradition and basic principles of liberalism have largely been compromised. Ethno-religious forces in the country compromise the constitutional commitment to diversity and religious freedom. In his scholarly work *The Rise of illiberalism*, Thomas Main has argued that such movements that are based on illiberalism reject foundational ideas of liberal democracy.

The case of India remained quite intricate. Firstly, the Congress party of the country started compromising on secular ethos. Additionally, this phenomenon was adopted and then exploited by the BJP. The party misused the ideology of Hindu nationalism and introduced new strains of populism, de-secularism and illiberalism. BJP pundits have successfully taught the country's nationals that Indian culture is more contiguous to Hindu culture. The Guardian in October 2015 revealed that more than 40 authors had handed their awards back as a result of deliberate assaults on mutual religious toleration. This event was very unfortunate for democracy and intellectual growth in the country. Nehru's niece, NayantraSahgal also returned her award to SahityaAkademi, an esteemed literary insti-

tution. Moreover, other incidents, including increasing mass lynching's, upsurge in sectarianism, the building of detention camps in Assam, Citizenship Amendment Bill and appreciations of hate speech at the state level imply that democracy and religious toleration in India are under massive threat.

Additionally, the news coming from the southern state of Karnataka over the past few years are more shocking. MalleshappaMadivalappaKalburgi, an award-winning scholar and former vice-chancellor of Kannada University, was gunned down by far-right Hindu extremists in the southern state of Karnataka in 2015. The recent incident of a young Muslim girl, Muskan Khan, who landed in front of a religiously excited Hindu mob and called "Allah u Akbar" (Allah is Great) depicts that the country's basic democratic principles are being compromised. The girl was not worried when she was asking about her fundamental and constitutional right to wear hijab. News about banning headgear in India has exposed the rise of far-right ideology and an increasing tendency to become illiberal. Because liberalism includes freedom of choice and strong adherence to religious tolerance, one should be free to choose what to wear and what to not. The international community must play its role to address this increasing tendency of far-right ideology in India.

Briefs

Army Chief visits Karachi

DNA

RAWALPINDI: General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) visited Karachi. COAS attended the Colonel Commandant Ceremony at Ordnance Centre, Malir. COAS installed Major General Syed Shahid as Colonel Commandant of Ordnance Corps. COAS appreciated the Corps for their role in war and peace, especially during war against terrorism. A large number of serving and retired officers and soldiers from Ordnance corps attended the ceremony. COAS visited PAF Air War College Institute at Karachi. Addressing the participants of 35th Air War Course, COAS appreciated thorough professionalism of PAF and its enviable achievements. COAS urged the officers to make consistent efforts to keep abreast with modern developments and maintain cutting edge advantage. COAS said that superiority in modern day battlefield can only be maintained if we remain alive to contemporary challenges and are prepared to tackle them in line with emerging modern concepts. COAS reiterated that we must remain vigilant to respond befittingly to any misadventure by the adversary. COAS also visited Fauji Foundation (FF) setups at Karachi. COAS was given a detailed brief on ongoing and future projects of FF. COAS appreciated the performance and commitment of FF towards provision of quality services and contributing immensely to the national exchequer. Earlier on arrival at Karachi. COAS was accompanied by Lieutenant General Muhammad Saad, Commander Karachi Corps.

Americans misjudged...

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governments and the 'war on terror'. "Pakistan should never have participated in the war. While the US lost 4,000 people in the 20 years since 9/11, Pakistan lost 80,000 people and [suffered] a loss of over \$100 billion to the economy." He reiterated that the government's top priority was to look after the people, adding that the emphasis was on geo-economics. "We want to build our economy and lift our people out of poverty," he said, adding that Pakistan looked towards China as a role model in this regard. "We see CPEC and Gwadar as a great opportunity for geo-economics." He noted that the initiative was not exclusive to China and Pakistan and said that other countries were also welcome to invest in CPEC projects. Commenting on Afghanistan, PM Imran said that the United States did not study the history of the war-torn country. "There is a saying that those who do not learn from history are condemned to repeat it again. So anyone who understood the history of Afghanistan would never have done what the Americans did."

Bilawal dares PM Imran...

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He said that Imran Khan has committed a great injustice to Multan for not conferring a certificate to the foreign minister who hails from Multan while distributing performance certificates to his lackeys. He said that on one hand, the government boasts about a successful foreign policy and the recent Chinese visit but on the other deprives the foreign minister of a certificate. He said that Imran Khan's mantra of corruption has lost all credibility the same way as his mentor, General Musharraf who is a traitor and absconder. Imran Khan will also have to face a similar fate like General Musharraf. Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that the Central Executive Committee of the PPP has announced a war against this incapable, selected and puppet government. Every worker of the party is a soldier of this war. The PPP has started its protests all over the country on every issue, including the petrol, gas, sugar and urea crises.

Hungary won't accept more NATO troops on its soil: FM

US has sent extra soldiers to Poland and Romania while Germany has bolstered troop numbers in Lithuania – NATO troops are already stationed in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as well as Poland

FOREIGN DESK

BUDAPEST: Hungary will not accept further NATO troops on its soil as part of manoeuvres over the Ukraine crisis, its foreign minister has told media. The US has sent extra soldiers to Poland and Romania while Germany has bolstered troop numbers in Lithuania – NATO troops are already stationed in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania as well as Poland. But Péter Szijjártó said no extra troops would arrive on Hungarian soil. "No, we have not agreed to that and we will not agree because we have already NATO's troops on the territory of the country, which is the Hungarian army and the Hungarian armed forces, [they] are in the proper shape to guarantee the security of the country. So we don't need additional troops on the territory of Hungary." Russia has massed troops near

Ukraine's border and the US has warned it is preparing to invade. Moscow has repeatedly denied the allegations. Szijjártó used the interview to urge the US, Europe and Russia to continue to talk to avoid "a worst-case scenario" over the Ukraine crisis, stressing that Central Europe will be the biggest loser if a conflict erupts. He said the current crisis brings back memories of the Cold War and the "many decades where we suffered". "That's why we don't want these times to come back. We ask, we urge the international community to do its best in order to avoid the Cold War to return, avoid even the psyche of the Cold War to return because we have learnt it from history, unfortunately very very clearly, that whenever there is an East-West conflict, the countries of Central Europe lose and we don't want to be losers anymore," he said. "We have to invest in diplomacy, we have to invest in dialogue. That's why we urge the

Russian Federation and our Western allies, the big countries, the strong countries, not to give up hope of peaceful settlement, to the contrary, to talk to each other because once again, I want to underline that for us, rather small Central European countries, it can be extremely dangerous if violent action take place," he added. Washington and European capitals have warned Moscow that any military incursion into Ukraine would have "massive" consequences for Russia, including punitive economic sanctions. But Szijjártó said he believes these types measures "do not work," pointing to the fact that Russia has been subject to Western sanctions since 2014, when it illegally annexed Crimea and started backing separatists in east Ukraine. "If you look at the sanctions themselves, it's a failure. They don't work out. They are unsuccessful," he continued, adding that "trade between Germany and the Russian Federation has increased since the sanctions have been

in place." Those EU sanctions limit certain Russian banks and companies from accessing EU primary and secondary capital markets; ban Russian financial institutions from receiving certain forms of financial assistance and brokering; and bar the indirect import, export or transfer of all defence-related material. The EU sanctions – which must be approved by all member states – have been regularly renewed since 2014. They were last extended in January. "My position is that if we speak about further sanctions, it's absolutely necessary to see an honest analysis of the impacts of the sanctions which have been in place." Szijjártó's comments echoed those of his Prime Minister. Viktor Orban told reporters last week during a joint press conference with Russian President Vladimir Putin that the EU sanctions have caused "more damage to Hungary than to Russia."



LAHORE: Multan Sultans' players celebrating after taking a wicket against Peshawar Zalmi. Sultans won the match. – DNA

Hasnain opens up after action ban

Karachi: Young pacer Mohammad Hasnain expressed himself for the first time after his bowling action was found illegal by Cricket Australia (CA). The 21-year-old's bowling action was found illegal by the CA's independent expert and Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) disallowed Hasnain to further participate in season seven of HBL Pakistan Super League (PSL). Hasnain's elbow extension for his good length delivery, full-length delivery, slow bouncer and bouncer exceeded the 15-degree limits. Hasnain, in a video released by his franchise Quetta Gladiators, said that he never thought that his arm is exceeding the 15-degree limits. "I didn't expect this," said Hasnain. "When I received a call for the first time over, I had no idea how to react as I was watching my videos to analyze whether this thing is happening or not." "I returned to Pakistan and gave my bowling action test, in the middle of PSL I was banned from bowling. This time is quite difficult for me," he added. Hasnain also recalled when he was told that he won't be playing the match against Islamabad United as PCB has temporary ban him. – APP



Turkish FM slams west for sowing panic

NEWS DESK

ANKARA: Statements by some Western countries that Russia may allegedly invade Ukraine only lead to an increase in panic and a worsening of the economic situation in the region, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu stated in an interview with TRT television on Thursday. "Unnecessary statements should be avoided. Comments that Russia will invade Ukraine today will cause unrest in Ukraine tomorrow. It also causes economic damage to Ukraine and its national currency," he emphasized. "We see that this picture does not correspond to reality. Are there tensions? Yes, there are. Is there a possibility for a conflict? Yes, there is. But we don't need to voice this with megaphone diplomacy, as some Western countries do." According to Cavusoglu, Turkey is in favor of dialogue with Russia. "As a state that maintains good relations with both sides, we continue to take steps to reduce tensions between Moscow and Kiev," he added. At the same time, Cavusoglu stressed that some of the steps Ankara is taking are "public," and some of them are "carried out through diplomatic channels." Ankara's chief diplomat reiterated that Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan "first wants to de-escalate the tension and then to take steps for long-term stability in the region." Concerns over Moscow's alleged preparations for an 'invasion of Ukraine' have been increasingly echoed throughout the West and in Kiev recently. Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov castigated these statements as an 'empty and groundless' escalation of tension, emphasizing that Russia posed no threat to anyone. At the same time, the Kremlin press secretary did not exclude some possible provocations to justify such claims and warned that any attempts to resolve the Ukrainian conflict by force would carry extremely serious consequences.

Aldiyar, Ivan moves in World Jr Tennis C'ships finals

SPORTS CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Kazakhstan's Aldiyar Abzhan and Ivan Iutkin of Russia moved in the finals of the ITF Pakistan AJ Towers World Junior Tennis Championships at PTF-SDA Tennis Complex on Thursday. Abzhan struggled hard to win his semifinal against unseeded Nikita Bortnichek from Russian in an exciting three set match. In the first set, both the players held their respective serves till 6-6 all and the set was decided in a tie break, which was won by Abzhan by taking the early break in the tie break at 7-2. In the second set, Nikita changed the pattern of game and broke the 8th game of Abzhan to take the lead 5-3 and then played some excellent shots down the line to hold the serve and leveled the match 1-1 set all. In the final set, both the players played excellent long rallies; after losing the 3rd game of final set, Abzhan came back aggressively and did not allow his opponent to settle down and placed couple of aces in the set and finally broke the 6th game of Nikita and by holding the 7th game, took the lead 5-2. In the 9th game, Abzhan played some excellent cross court shots to confirm a place in the final. In the second semifinal, Iutkin played excellent tennis throughout the match and his opponent from Poland Maciej Zarebski was unable to match his excel-

lence. The match lasted 59 minutes. In the Girls event, Top seed Andra Iza-bella Sirbu of Romania proved too good against her opponent 4th Seed Olga Sorochkina of Russia to seal a place in the final. She won the match 7-5,6-2. In the second semi-final, Tamara Ermakova of Russia beat Melisa Ugur of Turkey in a thrilling see-saw match which lasted 2 hrs 12 minutes 4-6, 6-1 7-5. Melisa Ugur (TUR) played very measured and calculate, 4 game till 4-4 games all, and broke the 10th game of Tamara to win the 1st set.



In the second set, Tamara fought hard to draw level before Melisa regained control and took the set comfortably 6-1. The deciding set saw some exhilarating tennis as both the players reached 5-games all and then in the 12th game Tamara played some excellent shots and broke Melisa to seal her place in the final. In the Boys Doubles, Nikita Bortnichek (RUS) & Ruslan Serazhetdinov (RUS) caused a major upset to defeat top seed Iranian duo Amirali Ghavam and Yunes Talava in an exciting three sets encounter 6-4 4-6 10-7. In the second Semi-final, Dev Kanbargimath (ROU) & Aril Kayra Tuna (TUR) also upset the 2nd seed Russian pair of Ivan Iutkin and Nikita Safonov in a straight sets match 7-6(6) 7-5. In the Girls Doubles, Munisa Ashurkeekova (UZB) & Melisa Ugur (TUR) proved too good to Taira Abildayeva (KAZ) & Artina Gashi (GBR) in a one sided affair 6-0 6-2. Boys Singles semifinals, Ivan Iutkin (RUS) beat Maciej Zarebski (POL) 6-2 6-1; Aldiyar Abzhan (KAZ) beat Nikita Bortnichek (RUS) 7-6(2) 3-6 6-3. In Girls Singles semifinals, Andra Iza-bella Sirbu (ROU) beat Olga Sorochkina (RUS) 7-5 6-2; Tamara Ermakova (RUS) beat Melisa Ugur (TUR) 4-6 6-1 7-5. In Boys Doubles semifinals, Nikita Bortnichek (RUS) & Ruslan Serazhetdinov (RUS) beat Amirali Ghavam (IRI) & Yunes Talavar (IRI) 6-4 4-6 10-7; Dev Kanbargimath (ROU) & Arila Kayra Tuna (TUR) beat Ivan Iutkin (RUS) & Nikita Safonov (RUS) 7-6(6) 7-5. In Girls Doubles semifinals, Munisa Ashurkeeva (UZB) & Melisa Ugur (TUR) beat Taira Abildayeva (KAZ) & Artina Gashi (GBR) 6-0 6-2; Andra Iza-bella Sirbu (ROU) & Olga Sorochkina (RUS) beat Sa Rang Lim (KOR) & Seo Hyeon Park (KOR) 6-2 4-6 11-9. The Doubles Finals of Girls and boys would be played on Friday followed by the qualifying Sign-in for the 2nd ITF Pakistan Elaan Syed Dilawar Abbas Memorial World Junior Tennis Championships.

LHC terms blacklisting...

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should play its role. "In the case of PML-N, the Supreme Court in 2007 had given priority to basic human rights over state intervention for a free society. Fundamental constitutional rights are the heart and soul of the Constitution," said the order. The judge also ruled that travelling is considered a fundamental right, internationally, adding that any citizen's wish to travel and go abroad is a human right. The court ruled that the Passport Act 1974 and ECL Ordinance 1981 is related to travelling abroad.

Pak rejects India's...

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"baseless" and highlighting that there was "irrefutable evidence" of India's designs to sabotage the CPEC. "New Delhi's baseless claims over Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJK) can neither change the facts of history nor the legal status of the Jammu & Kashmir dispute. IOJK never was and never will be India's 'integral part,'" the FO said. The FO expressed Pakistan's resolve to continue to extend all possible support to the people of occupied Kashmiri in their just struggle against India's illegal occupation. Meanwhile, Pakistan strongly condemned the drone attack launched by the Houthis to target Abha International Airport in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which caused several injuries. "Such attacks not only violate international law but also threaten peace and security of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the region. Pakistan calls for immediate cessation of these attacks," said a FO statement. Pakistan reaffirms its full support and solidarity with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia against any threats to its security and territorial integrity.

No-confidence...

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against Prime Minister Imran Khan was now "favourable", and asked PTI members to stop backing the party in view of the "changed situation". Maryam, in her press talk in Islamabad, admitted that Nawaz was initially not in favour of a no-confidence move against the government. But, she said, "party members pressed him that people's wishes ought to be listened to as it is the only way to steer the country out of crisis." However, she did not say whether Nawaz had given the go-ahead for the move. Turning her guns on the prime minister, she said recent speeches by Imran Khan reflected his frustration due to a lack of public support, failure to deliver and his inability to govern the country. To a question, the PML-N leader said it was too early to talk about Imran Khan's successor. "First we have to reach the stage of tabling a no-confidence motion, then a consensual decision on the next premier would have to be taken," she added.

Appreciation certificates...

FROM PAGE 01

Minister for Human Rights Shireen Mazari, Minister for Industries and Production Khusró Bakhtiyar, Advisor on National Security Division Dr Moeed Yusuf, Advisor on Commerce Kazak Dawood, Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed, and Minister for National Food Security Fakhar Imam. Speaking on the occasion, the Prime Minister stressed that improved performance of ministries is very critical to achieve the country's self-sufficient target. He said the government is fully focusing on ensuring good governance and the main objective is to improve the lives of the people. The Prime Minister said performance assessment is very imperative to bring improvement in the bureaucracy. He said incentives will be increased for best performing ministries in future. Imran Khan called for exploring non-traditional ways to meet economic challenges.

Chelsea reach Club World Cup final

"We lacked a bit of rhythm but the players fought very hard to win this game and get to the final"

SPORTS DESK

ABU DHABI: Romelu Lukaku scored a much-needed goal as Chelsea beat Saudi Arabia's Al Hilal 1-0 on Wednesday to advance to the Club World Cup final against South American champions Palmeiras. Chelsea's club-record signing had failed to score in five games before arriving in Abu Dhabi, and the Blues are looking for the 28-year-old to find his best form in the second half of the season. The Belgium international swept in from close range on 32 minutes after a defensive lapse to send Chelsea through to Saturday's final, the second in three years between English and Brazilian teams. "Everybody's very happy that Romelu scored," said Chelsea assistant Zolt Low, who is helping to fill in for coach Thomas Tuchel after his positive Covid-19 test. "He fights very hard and tried very hard in the last game to give everything. That's why we give him the chance all the time game to game, and we hope that he has a bit of luck to score. "He scored a goal today and we're very happy, he's very happy and we



hope he continues and then scores again in the final." Chelsea can join Manchester United and Liverpool as the third English side to win the Club World Cup, having finished as runners-up to Corinthians on their first appearance in 2012. They may yet have Tuchel in the dugout come the weekend, with the

German still hoping to fly out if he returns a negative test. Low said Tuchel was in touch with the team at half-time, telling his players to calm down. "We lacked a bit of rhythm but the players fought very hard to win this game and get to the final," added Low.

"This competition is very important for the club. Chelsea have never won this competition, and that's why myself and the players also feel the pressure." Al Hilal, coached by former Monaco boss Leonardo Jardim, will contest the third-place play-off against Egypt's Al Ahly as Chelsea's win

made it 12 from 12 for Europe against Asian clubs in the tournament. Despite the presence of former Manchester United and Watford forward Odion Ighalo alongside ex-Porto striker Moussa Marega in attack, Al Hilal struggled initially to test Kepa Arrizabalaga in goal. The Spaniard kept his place in the line-up despite the return of Edouard Mendy following his Africa Cup of Nations triumph with Senegal. Hakim Ziyech fired a shot narrowly over and Lukaku failed to make proper contact with Cesar Azpilicueta's low ball across goal, but there was no shortage of service for the Belgian. He held off a defender only to strike straight at Abdullah Al-Mayouf, but Lukaku was presented with the simplest of chances when Yasir Al-Shahrani's failed clearance left him to turn in the opener. Kai Havertz, whose cross led to Lukaku's goal, clipped an effort against the outside of the post after jinking into the area early in the second half. Ziyech then drew a good stop from Al-Mayouf before Al Hilal, who put six past Al Jazeera in the previous round, belatedly sparked into life around the hour.

Briefs

Libya's PM survives attempt of life

WED DESK

TRIPOLI: Libya's Prime Minister Abdul Hamid Dbeibeh escaped unharmed from an assassination attempt in the capital Tripoli, local media reported on Thursday. A "barrage of bullets" was fired at Dbeibeh's car early on Thursday, Libya Al-Ahram TV news channel quoted a government source as saying. The premier was not injured in the attack, the report said. The assassination attempt comes amid an ongoing tussle for power in Libya as Dbeibeh, who has been heading Libya's UN-backed government since last March, faces a bid by parliament to replace him. The Tobruk-based House of Representatives is scheduled to convene on Thursday to elect a new prime minister, a development that would deal a major blow to efforts to years of chaos in the oil-rich nation. However, Dbeibeh vowed on Wednesday that his government will keep working to ensure that Libya does not go through a "new transitional phase," and will not allow the "dominant political class of the past to continue in the coming years."

WHO lauds Baku's rapid vaccination against Covid

Baku: World Health Organization representative Hande Harmanci has said that the vaccination process against COVID-19 is progressing rapidly in Azerbaijan and the organization is pleased with this, Trend has reported.

She stressed that WHO is always ready to support Azerbaijan in this sphere.

"Health workers from Azerbaijan were registered in 2021 to participate in the OpenWHO platform courses. This platform is being implemented as part of the 'Solidarity for Health' and 'Support for COVID-19 Vaccine' initiatives," she added. Health Minister Teymur Musayev stated that a single call center will be created under the ministry.

He noted that every citizen will be able to solve their medical problem by applying to the call center. According to him, every citizen will be able to solve his medical problem by applying to the call center of the ministry. "Appeals will be also accepted at the new website of the ministry. They will be answered immediately," he said. Noting that some 90 million people around the world have been infected with the Omicron strain of COVID-19 over the past 10 weeks, the minister emphasized that the situation with coronavirus in Azerbaijan is currently under full control. - APP

US inflation hits 40 year high

WASHINGTON: Consumer prices in the United States rose solidly in January, leading to the biggest annual increase in inflation in 40 years, which could fuel financial markets speculation for a 50 basis points interest rate hike from the Federal Reserve (Fed) next month.

The consumer price index (CPI) gained 0.6% last month after increasing 0.6% in December, the Labor Department said Thursday. In the 12 months through January, the CPI jumped 7.5%, the biggest year-on-year increase since February 1982. That followed a 7% advance in December and marked the fourth straight month of annual increases in excess of 6%. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast the CPI rising 0.5% and accelerating 7.3% on a year-on-year basis. Effective with the January report, the CPI was re-weighted based on consumer expenditure data from 2019-2020.

The economy is grappling with high inflation, caused by a shift in spending to goods from services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Trillions of dollars in pandemic relief fired up spending, which ran against capacity constraints as the coronavirus sidelined workers needed to produce and move goods to consumers. - APP

Russian troop build-up at 'dangerous moment': NATO

"We must resist, we must oppose any return to the days when fates of nations are decided over their heads by a handful of great powers," he said

WEB DESK

MOSCOW: Russia's deployment for a military exercise in Belarus and on the borders of Ukraine marks a "dangerous moment" for European security, NATO's chief has said. "We are closely monitoring Russia's deployment in Belarus, which is the biggest since the end of the Cold War," NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg told reporters on Thursday at a news conference with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson. "This is a dangerous moment for European security. The number of Russian forces is going up. The warning time for a possible attack is going down." Stoltenberg and Johnson both warned Russia that NATO is deploying more forces to its eastern member states, such as Poland and Romania, and that Russia's behaviour would not deter them. "Renewed Russian aggression will lead to more NATO presence, not less," Stoltenberg said, thanking the British leader for sending troop reinforcements to Poland. Both leaders said NATO is ready to engage with Russia in talks on de-escalation and



arms control, but warned that the alliance will not compromise on its open-door policy. "When the Berlin Wall fell, the people of Europe made clear that they wanted their freedom and their security to be inextricably tied together," Johnson said. "We must resist, we must oppose any re-

turn to the days when fates of nations are decided over their heads by a handful of great powers," he said.

Stoltenberg said he had written a letter on Thursday to Russia's Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, urging Moscow to resume a dialogue under the revived format of the NATO-Russia Council. Stoltenberg added that NATO is considering strengthening its posture in the eastern part of the alliance by deploying battle groups in Romania and the Black Sea region, similar to the ones in Poland and the Baltic region.

Earlier, ahead of a meeting with British foreign minister Liz Truss, Lavrov had warned that western threats would do nothing to ease tensions over Ukraine. "Ideological approaches, ultimatums, threats - this is the road to nowhere," Lavrov said, adding that Britain's ties with Moscow were "at their lowest point in recent years". There have been several attempts to reach out to Russia's President Vladimir Putin since the start of the Russia build-up, most recently by President Emmanuel Macron of France and Germany's Chancellor Olaf Scholz. But Russia has continued to increase its presence and battle-readiness, conducting exercises in Belarus and the Black Sea, while NATO is still shoring up its eastern flank. Moscow has denied preparing for a military offensive and said its troops are in the Ukrainian border and Belarus for regular exercises.

Russia begins joint military drills with Belarus

MOSCOW: Russia and Belarus launched joint military drills Thursday despite concerns in Western countries that Moscow is plotting a major escalation of the conflict in Ukraine.

The exercises, scheduled to continue until February 20 in Belarus, had begun and would centre around "suppressing and repelling external aggression," Russia's defence ministry said in a statement. Soldiers would practise beefing up sections of the Belarus border to block the delivery of weapons and ammunition into the country, among other scenarios, it said.

The games have exacerbated deeply strained ties between Russia and the West, which accuses Moscow of massing approximately 100,000 troops around the borders of Ukraine for a potential invasion.

British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss was in Moscow Thursday for talks with her Russian counterpart to urge the Kremlin not to attack or face "massive consequences" from Western sanctions. Moscow and Minsk have not disclosed how many troops are participating in the drills, but the United States has said Russia was planning to dispatch 30,000 troops personnel to several regions in ex-Soviet Belarus. Responding to Western concerns, the Kremlin has insisted that it has no intention of leaving the troops permanently on Belarusian territory. - APP

Latin America reports new Covid cases

BOGOTA: Countries across Latin America late Wednesday released fresh data on cases of COVID-19 infection and coronavirus-related fatalities. At least 1,264 people in Brazil lost their lives in the last 24 hours due to the virus, bringing the total number of deaths to 635,074, the country's Health Ministry said.

During the same period, 178,814 more people tested coronavirus-positive, raising the total number of cases to over 26.95 million. After the US, the number of recoveries in Brazil, where the most deaths have been registered in Latin America, exceeded 23.3 million. Mexico's COVID-19 case tally surpassed 5.19 million with 24,898 new additions, according to the Health Ministry.

Fatalities increased by 743 in the last 24 hours, bringing the death toll to 310,627. The country has also reported over 4.4 recoveries to date. Colombia's Health Ministry reported 207 more virus-related deaths in the last 24 hours, bringing the nationwide toll to 136,404. The total number of cases neared 6 million with 8,785 new infections, while the number of recoveries rose to over 5.79 million. With 27,252 new infections in the past 24 hours, Argentina's caseload increased to over 8.67 million, according to the Health Ministry data. - APP

France to strengthen laws to prosecute war criminals

PARIS: France will initiate legislative changes to provide extraterritorial jurisdiction to the country's courts in matters of international crimes, paving the way to prosecute perpetrators of crimes against humanity committed during the war in Syria, the government said Wednesday.

Last week, the National Assembly - the lower house of parliament - adopted a bill authorizing international judicial cooperation between the French government and the United Nations mandated International, Impartial and Independent Mechanism (IIIM) for Syria. The bill will be put before the Senate before the final approval of parliament.

More than 40 proceedings are underway before the French courts to prosecute the perpetrators of the most serious crimes committed in Syria. "The co-operation with IIIM will allow France to fight against impunity for perpetrators of international crimes," a joint statement from the Justice Ministry and Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs said Wednesday. - APP

South Korea extends another offer of dialogue to North Korea

SEOUL: South Korean President Moon Jae-in on Thursday extended another offer of dialogue to North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, saying he is willing to meet Kim Jong-un anywhere, local media reported. His statement came after Pyongyang's latest missile test, which heightened tensions on the Korean Peninsula. "As long as there is a willingness to engage in dialogue, whether the summit will be held face-to-face or virtual does not matter. Whatever method North Korea wants will be acceptable," Yonhap News Agency quoted Moon as saying during an interview with foreign and local media. Moon added that he wants to move forward with dialogue before the end of

his current term, set for this May. "Also, it is not desirable to place prerequisites for dialogue. I believe that it would be beneficial to discuss even such prerequisites at a negotiating table," Moon said. Earlier, the US said it is willing to engage Pyongyang in unconditional dialogue. However, North Korea has so far not responded to the US and South Korea offers. Last month, Kim warned that US threats "have reached a dangerous line that cannot be overlooked," pushing defense officials to start "immediately bolstering physical means" to counter Washington's "hostile moves." The US has held "hundreds of joint war drills ... and conducted tests of all kinds

of strategic weapons, while shipping ultra-modern attack means into South Korea and nuclear strategic weapons into the region around the Korean Peninsula, seriously threatening the security of our state," Kim said, accusing the US of undermining the progress made in Pyongyang-Washington talks. Last month, the Biden administration announced more restrictions in response, angering Pyongyang, which threatened "a stronger and clearer response" if the US continued its "attitude of confrontation." North Korea conducted seven confirmed missile tests in January, including one of a newly developed hypersonic missile. "If North Korea's series of

missile launches go as far as scrapping a moratorium on long-range missile tests, the Korean Peninsula may instantly fall back into the state of crisis we faced five years ago," Moon warned. He also lamented the failure of a deal between the US and North Korea in 2018 and 2019 during Donald Trump's term as president. "It is very regrettable that the summit ended in 'no deal' when the continuation of dialogue should have been ensured at least," Moon said, referring to the Kim-Trump meeting in Hanoi in 2019. He added that Seoul and Washington are ready to move on with Pyongyang to end the current tensions on the Korean Peninsula. - APP

Indonesia inks Rafale fighter jet deal with France

JAKARTA: Indonesia's defense minister on Thursday announced that a deal has been signed with France to buy six Dassault Rafale fighter aircraft. Another 36 jets are expected to be bought as part of the agreement. "We agreed on the purchase of 42 Rafale. The contract signed today is for the first six, which will be followed by 36 others," said Prabowo Subianto. The agreement was announced as French Defense Minister Florence Parly met with Subianto in Jakarta. Parly said Indonesia had chosen the specific warplane due to its "technical excellence" and its demonstrated "operational capabilities." French President Emmanuel Macron took to Twitter to express his delight. "42 Rafale! Indonesia chooses French industrial excellence! The know-how of the more than 400 French companies and thousands of workers who design the Rafale is recognized." The move is a sign of strengthening relations between Paris and Jakarta. It follows last year's submarine purchase debacle which saw Australia back out of a multibillion-dollar deal with France in favor of one with the US. The move soured relations with Paris, with Macron saying in October that Canberra "had broken the relation of trust between our two countries." France proceeded to recall its ambassadors in Australia and the US before sending them back again. - Agencies

NADRA Chairman opens facilitation desk at Toronto

TORONTO: Chairman NADRA, Mr. Tariq Malik, inaugurated the NADRA Facilitation Desk at the Consulate General of Pakistan, Toronto, Mr. Tariq Malik also interacted with the visitors present in the Consular Hall of the consulate General and briefed them about the various services that will be available at the NADRA Facilitation Desk. He said that the expatriate Pakistanis are an asset for the country. On the instructions of Prime Minister Imran Khan, NADRA is ready to facilitate expatriate Pakistanis by digitalization of services relating to identity documents.

Consul General Abdul Hameed said that the reopening of NADRA desk at the Consulate General Toronto will facilitate Pakistan origin Canadians in more ways than one. The facilitation desk is meant to assist those applicants who cannot process their applications from their homes. It will provide services relating to identity documents, succession certificate and power of attorney. The NADRA Facilitation Desk will become operational at the Consulate General of Pakistan, Toronto in the third week of February 2022.

Chairman NADRA Tariq Malik along with Consul General Abdul Hameed inaugurating NADRA Facility Center at Pakistani Consulate in Toronto. - DNA



Kazakh leader thanks Putin for help during January unrest

MOSCOW: Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev thanked his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin on Thursday for helping to prevent a coup in the Central Asian nation last month, which both leaders blamed on international "bandits" and "terrorists". Putin said Kazakhstan, Moscow's close ally, was now firmly standing on its feet and expressed hope the two countries would continue their cooperation. A Russia-led security bloc sent troops to Kazakhstan last month amid the worst unrest in the former Soviet republic's post-Soviet history. - APP



Armenia fired at Azerbaijani military positions

BAKU: Azerbaijani army positions have been subjected to fire by Armenian forces, the Azerbaijani Defense Ministry said on Thursday. Starting from Wednesday evening, the Armenian armed forces units in the YukhariShorhza settlement of the Basarkechar region opened fired periodically at the Azerbaijani army positions in the Zeylik settlement of the Kalbajar region, the ministry said. Azerbaijani units fired in retaliation, the statement added, noting that for now the situation is stable. Relations between the former Soviet republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan have been tense since 1991,

when the Armenian military occupied Nagorno-Karabakh, also known as Upper Karabakh, a territory internationally recognized as part of Azerbaijan, and seven adjacent regions.

New clashes erupted on Sept. 27, 2020 with the Armenian army attacking civilians and Azerbaijani forces and violating several humanitarian cease-fire agreements.

During the 44-day conflict, Azerbaijan liberated several cities and over 300 settlements and villages that were occupied by Armenia for almost 30 years.

Prior to that, about 20% of Azerbaijan's territory was under illegal occupation.

The fighting ended with a Russian-brokered agreement on Nov. 10, 2020 which was seen as a victory for Azerbaijan and a defeat for Armenia. Two months later, the leaders of Russia, Azerbaijan and Armenia signed a pact to develop economic ties and infrastructure to benefit the entire region. It also included the establishment of a trilateral working group on Karabakh. - Agencies

'Century will be shaped by Indo-Pacific region'

Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne, who will chair the Quad meeting, said the agenda would include Covid-19 vaccine distribution, cyber and critical technologies, countering malicious and dangerous disinformation, terrorism, maritime security and climate change

CANBERRA: The United States remains focused long-term on the Indo-Pacific region despite concerns over Russian aggression toward the Ukraine, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Thursday. Blinken is in the Australian city of Melbourne for a meeting on Friday with his counterparts from Australia, India and Japan. The four nations form the so-called "Quad," a bloc of Indo-Pacific democracies that was created to counter China's regional influence.

"There are a few other things going on in the world right now, some of you may have noticed. We have a bit of a challenge with Ukraine and Russian aggression. We're working 24/7 on that," Blinken said in his first public address since arriving in Australia on Wednesday. "But we know, the president knows better than anyone else, that so much of this century is going to be shaped

by what happens here in the Indo-Pacific region," he added. The Indo-Pacific is the fastest growing region in the world, accounting for two-thirds of global economic growth over the past five years and home to half the world's population, Blinken said. What matters in the region matters around the world and challenges like climate change and COVID-19 can't be tackled by any nation alone, he said. "More than ever before, we need partnerships, we need alliances, we need coalitions of countries willing to put their efforts, their resources, their minds into tackling these problems," Blinken said. "What really drives us is a shared vision" of a "free and open society," he added. Blinken's trip is designed to reinforce America's interests in Asia and its intent to push back against increasing Chinese as-

sertiveness in the region. He will also visit Fiji and discuss pressing concerns about North Korea with his Japanese and South Korean counterparts in Hawaii. Blinken said like-minded countries were standing up for shared values rather than against China. "This is not about standing against anyone in particular, it is about standing up for a rules-based order," Blinken



told Australian Broadcasting Corp. Asked whether the Biden administration viewed Russia or China as the greater threat to global security, Blinken replied: "These are ... very different challenges. Russia right now poses an immediate challenge." Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne, who will chair the Quad meeting, said the agenda would include COVID-19 vaccine distribution, cyber and critical technologies, countering malicious and dangerous disinformation, terrorism, maritime security and climate change. India will be represented by External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar and Japan by Foreign Minister Hayashi Yoshimasa. "As a network of liberal democracies, we are committed to very practical cooperation and ensuring that all Indo-Pacific nations - large and small - are able to make their own strategic decisions and make those decisions

free from coercion," Payne said. In Beijing on Wednesday, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian responded to a question about Blinken's visit with a lengthy attack on American democracy and a defense of China's contributions to the global order.

"With its so-called democracy having collapsed long ago, the U.S. is forcing other countries to accept the standards of the American democracy, drawing lines with democratic values and piecing together cliques. That is a complete betrayal of democracy," Zhao told reporters. Blinken is expected to address threats posed by a growing partnership between authoritarian Russia and China, particularly after the Sunday meeting in Beijing between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese leader Xi Jinping at the opening of the Winter Olympics.

Briefs

Qureshi for strengthening Pak-Egypt ties

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Egypt Tarek Dahroug, called on Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi on Thursday. The focus of discussion was on further strengthening Pakistan-Egypt relations. Expressing satisfaction at the growing cooperation between Pakistan and Egypt, the Foreign Minister emphasized the importance of enhanced interactions at leadership level, greater people-to-people contacts, and increased institutional engagements. The Ambassador appreciated the support extended to Egyptian Embassy in Islamabad in performance of its official functions. Pakistan and Egypt enjoy excellent fraternal relations rooted deep in shared faith and values. The two countries closely collaborate bilaterally, as well as on regional and international issues of mutual interest.

EU close to launching probe into Pegasus spyware

MONITORING DESK

BRUSSELS: The European parliament is preparing to launch a committee of inquiry into the Pegasus spyware scandal after evidence emerged of government critics in Poland and Hungary being targeted with the surveillance software. The cross-party body will seek testimony from member states' intelligence services, elected politicians and senior officials, with a previous inquiry into alleged European facilitation of CIA "black sites" providing a model. The move is the most significant yet from Brussels since a group of media organisations including the Guardian revealed that Pegasus software was being used against journalists, activists and politicians in numerous countries across the world including in Europe.

It follows the announcement from the Israeli government earlier this week that it would investigate reports of Israeli policing Pegasus against its own citizens. Local media reports claimed the list of targets included people involved in the corruption trial of the former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Pegasus allows an operator to take control of a target's mobile device, access all data even from encrypted messaging apps and turn on audio or video recording.

Covid-19 kills another 47 people in Pakistan

SHAHEEN HANIF

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan registered another 3,914 COVID-19 cases in a single day, the National Command and Operation data showed Thursday morning. However, there were no critical cases reported during the last 24 hours. Today's NCOC stats suggested that the new infections were detected after the testing of 54,638 samples in the last 24 hours, placing the country's coronavirus positivity ratio at 7.1%, and the number of total cases at 1,474,075. Meanwhile, 47 people suffering from the disease died overnight, taking Pakistan's nationwide COVID-19 death tally to 29,648. Moreover, the country's active case count stood at 84,670 as per the latest data after 5,459 coronavirus patients recovered in a day. Despite an irregular graph of the deaths and fresh cases, the number of COVID-19 recuperation have witnessed a steady rise, which took the total recoveries to 1,354,298. Pakistan has registered a new coronavirus vaccination record as more people follow the advice of Pakistan's Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Health, Dr. Faisal Sultan, who requested the Pakistanis to get vaccinated. — APP

Libyan parliament appoints new prime minister

WEB DESK

TRIPOLI: Libya's parliament on Thursday said it had "unanimously approved" a new prime minister, in a challenge to the war-torn country's interim government. Parliamentary speaker Aguila Saleh said former Interior Minister Fathi Bashaga had been tipped to head the government. Libya has not had a stable government since former ruler Moammar Gadhafi was toppled in 2011. Since then, ongoing power struggles between rival political factions have kept the country in chaos. The most recent attempt at a presidential election, which was slated for December, fell through after political rivals failed to agree on electoral rules.

Romania offers exchange of technical knowledge

Ambassador of Romania to Pakistan Nicolae Goia called on Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Syed Fakhar Imam and discussed ways and means to promote bilateral cooperation

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Romania to Pakistan Nicolae Goia on Thursday offered to exchange technical knowledge and mechanical expertise with Pakistan in order to promote agriculture sector of the country. The ambassador called on Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Syed Fakhar Imam and discussed ways and means to promote bilateral cooperation in different sectors, particularly in agriculture and livestock. The minister said that Pakistan has immense export potential with respect to citrus fruits, rice, mangoes, onion, potatoes, fisheries and livestock, adding that Pakistan can meet the entire demand rice demand of Romania. Pakistan has 8 million tonnes of rice, which can be exported, he said adding that about 144,000 tonnes of mangoes exported from the country during last year, hence its export to Romania also has huge potential. He said that Roma-



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Romania to Pakistan Nicolae Goia calls on Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research Syed Fakhar Imam. — DNA

nia has mechanization expertise which can benefit Pakistan, adding that Netherlands has the biggest floriculture production in the world which should be taken

as an example. Pakistan faces a number of challenges but with the right policy interventions under the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan, agriculture

sector has transformed, he said adding billions of rupees have been invested in agricultural research which has led to record production of wheat, maize and rice.

CJCSC calls on Omani leadership

DNA

ISLAMABAD: General Nadeem Raza, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, while on official visit to Oman called on leadership of Oman including H.E. Mr Sayyid Shihab Bin Tariq Bin Taimour Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, H.E. General Sultan Bin Mohammed Al Namani, Minister of the Royal Office, Vice Admiral Abdullah Bin Khamis Al Raisi, Chief of Staff Sultan's Armed Forces, Rear Admiral Saif Bin Nasser Bin Mohsin Al Rahbi, Commander of Royal Navy of Oman and Air Vice Marshal Khamis Hammad Al Ghafri, Commander of Royal Air Force of Oman. During the separately held meetings, both sides deliberated upon various areas of interest, bilateral cooperation including security, counter-terrorism and prevailing regional environment particularly with reference to Afghanistan. The dignitaries also dilated upon measures to enhance the level and scope of military engagements between both countries and reaffirmed to continue to forge deeper strategic ties. Chairman JCSC said that Pakistan and Oman are two brotherly Islamic countries who are constructively engaged in widening and deepening bilateral defence ties and are taking measures to promote peace and stability in the region.

UK's foreign secretary gets frosty reception in Russia

Truss urged Moscow to abide by its international agreements that commit it to respecting Ukraine's independence and sovereignty

NEWS DESK

MOSCOW: Diplomatic moves to ease tensions over Ukraine intensified on Thursday — but so too did military manoeuvres on both sides amid the biggest security crisis between Russia and the West since the Cold War. In Moscow, the UK's top diplomat openly clashed with her Russian counterpart in an encounter that gave little sign of a thawing in relations between their two countries — or of progress on the Ukrainian issue. Meanwhile, NATO's chief said he had reiterated an offer to Moscow for renewed dialogue. It came as thousands of Russian troops began joint exercises in Belarus as part of a military buildup near Ukraine. Also on Thursday, foreign policy advisers from Germany, France, Russia and Ukraine were due to meet in Berlin in the "Normandy format" to explore a potential revival of peace efforts. Moscow wants guarantees that NATO will halt its eastward expansion, rule

out membership for Ukraine and other ex-Soviet countries, and roll back military deployments in Europe.

Russia's troop deployments to Belarus and on its own border with Ukraine have prompted threats of more sanctions from the West should Russia attack its neighbour. Moscow denies planning an invasion. Britain's foreign secretary Liz Truss, on a two-day visit to Russia's capital, again warned that an attack on Ukraine would "have massive consequences and carry severe costs".

"I can't see any other reason for having 100,000 troops stationed on the Ukrainian border apart from to threaten Ukraine. And if Russia is serious about diplomacy, they need to move those troops and desist from the threats," she told a joint news conference following talks with her Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov. Truss urged Moscow to abide by its international agreements that commit it to respecting Ukraine's independence and sovereignty. Russia's foreign minister retorted that Moscow would not accept Western

lecturing. "Ideological approaches, ultimatums and moralising is a road to nowhere," Lavrov said.

He rejected the UK's demand for a Russian military withdrawal as inappropriate and pointed at British and NATO troop buildups in Eastern Europe, accusing Western politicians of fanning tensions for domestic political purposes.

The foreign secretary's visit, accompanied by her defence minister, is the first to Moscow by a top UK envoy in more than four years. Ties were particularly badly strained by the March 2018 poisoning of former Russian spy Sergei Skripal in England. In Brussels, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said he had reiterated an offer to Russia for continued dialogue on how to "find a diplomatic way forward", in a letter to the Russian foreign minister. But, he stressed, the military alliance would not compromise on core principles, "the right of each nation to choose its own path and NATO's ability to protect and defend all allies".

King Salman, US president discuss Houthi aggression



WEB DESK

King Salman also said Saudi Arabia supports United States efforts to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons

RIYADH: King Salman received a call from US President Joe Biden on Wednesday, the Saudi Press Agency reported. The leaders discussed the need to strengthen cooperation and achieve stability in the region. The actions of Yemen's Houthi militia against civilian targets in the Kingdom was also on the agenda.

The king praised the US' commitment to supporting the Kingdom in its defense of its land and citizens. On Jan. 17, a drone-and-missile attack by the Iran-backed terror militia hit an Abu Dhabi National Oil Co. fuel depot, killing three people and wounding six others. The militia often target the southern provinces of the Kingdom with drone and missile attacks, which are destroyed by Saudi air forces, often without causing much damage. King Salman also said Saudi Arabia supports US efforts to prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons. Talks on reviving the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action agreement, which collapsed in 2018, restarted this week as Iran announced a new missile with a range of 1,450 kilometers. The pair also discussed the need to strengthen mutual security cooperation to confront terrorism and its financing. The king stressed the importance of maintaining balance and stability in the oil markets, and the role of the historic OPEC+ agreement and the need to maintain it.

Probe into woman nailing her head is underway

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: The Peshawar Police has traced the woman and her family who hindered nail on the advice of spiritual guide and paraded her husband along with two children before media on Thursday. During a press conference, Haroon Ul Rashid, Senior Superintendent of Operations, Peshawar Police, said that the victim woman was identified as Baz Gala, who is wife of Ahmad Sabir. The couple according to police belong to Afghanistan and apparently the women is facing psychiatry problems. During the press conference, the police officer also paraded husband and two children of concerned women, namely Baz Gula. Baz Gula is the second wife of Ahmad Sabir and the couple having already three kids. Sabir said that he has 11 children from both wives. SSP Operations Haroon Ul Rashid said that the woman came to Lady Reading Hospital Peshawar on February 4, with a nail driven into her head. And on February 8, the incident went viral on social media. In the light of viral video, the police initiated investigations. For the purpose, they checked the Hospital and market cameras and as a result the woman was traced, he remarked. The police officer said that except name

there was no any other record or details of concerned woman in hospital.

Haroon Ur Rashid said that according to the initial investigation and the statements of the husband Sabir, the woman seems mentally ill and had injured her by nailing her head. During the investigation process, the husband said, "he is constantly getting his wife checkup from doctors." According to Police officer, Sabir said, "the demons also have an effect on Bazgala and the nails were driven into her head by the demons." Sabir also endorsed such a statement before media personnel and said that on the day of incident, "I was not at home at that time. When he came, my wife had a nail in her head." On such grounds, the police officer said that the nail-biting incident was accidental. However, he said that it has now been decided to conduct a detailed examination of the victim by psychiatrists to further the investigation. However, he said that other issues would also be investigated in this case. Peshawar's Capital City Police Chief Abbas Ahsan, responding to a query, said it was a purely police case and doctors should not have diagnosed the case without filing a case or filing a report. He said that the management and doctors of Lady Reading Hospital in Peshawar were also being investigated in this regard.

166 health projects worth RS 23 Billion approved

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

PESHAWAR: A total of 166 development projects are being implemented in the Health Sector of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for which more than Rs. 23 Billion had been allocated in the budget of the current financial year. Out of these projects, 48 are due for completion which would be completed by the end of June this year. These projects include Establishment of Bannu Medical College, Fountain House Peshawar, KMU Institute of Nursing and Medical Technology, Rehabilitation of Woman and Children Hospital Bannu, Establishment of Type-D Hospital at Tirah Bagh Maidan, revamping of Basic Health Units at merged areas and other projects of establishment and upgradation of

hospitals. Besides, work is also in progress on various projects of strengthening and revamping of Rural Health Centers and Basic Health Units across the province under which 47 RHCs and 200 BHUs would also be converted into 24/7 health facilities. Similarly, work on a number of other mega health projects including Taimar Gara Medical College would be completed by the end of this financial year. This was told in a progress review meeting of health department held here on Thursday with Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan in the chair. Provincial Minister for Health Taimur Salim Jhagra, Chief Secretary Dr. Shehzad Bangash, Principal Secretary to CM Amjad Ali Khan and higher authorities of health and other relevant departments attended the meeting.



LAHORE: Korean Ambassador in Pakistan, Suh Sangpyo calls on Federal Minister for Water Resources Moonis Elahi. — DNA