



Islamabad POST

Saturday, February 12, 2022

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

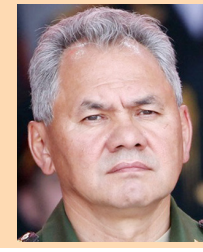
Price Rs. 20

Indian Muslims have been turned into a 'persecuted minority'

Detailed News On Page-07

UK-Russia ties 'close to Zero': Minister

Detailed News On Page-08



Learnt alot from Shahid Afridi, Kumble

Detailed News On Page-06



Briefs

Minorities enjoy equal rights

DNA
RAWALPINDI: General Qamar Javed Bajwa, Chief of Army Staff (COAS) visited Nagar-parkar and spent the day with troops, where he was briefed by local commander on operational readiness of the formation. While interacting with troops, COAS appreciated their state of morale and motivation for fulfillment of assigned mission. He also advised all troops to remain focused on their professional obligations and training for an effective response to counter any emerging challenge. Later on, COAS also met with local hindu community. He said that minorities in Pakistan are equal citizens and it is the job of the state to protect them. The hindu community acknowledged Pakistan's efforts in bringing about secure environment for minorities in the country. They pledged that the hindu community shall contribute with full zeal towards the economic prosperity of the country.

Nawaz' medical report rejected

DNA
LAHORE: A medical board of the Punjab government has termed former prime minister Nawaz Sharif's fresh medical report incomplete. The nine-member board formed by the provincial government to examine the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo's medical record termed the medical report that has lately been submitted in the Lahore High Court (LHC) incomplete. The report is just a doctor's opinion and contains no record of Sharif's health condition, the sources quoted the board as saying. No report of any credible lab or health facility is available on record to substantiate what Dr Fayaz Shawl stated about the former premier's health.

Holiday Notice

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

Inside...

- CM, UNDP agree to work together to reduce poverty - Page 02
- Art exhibition at FO highlights valiant struggle of Kashmiris - Page 03
- Chairman talks about meddling in HEC affairs - Page 04
- Getting our priorities right in the post-pandemic world - Page 05
- Ashurekova, Ugur wins ITF World Jr girls doubles title - Page 06
- Iran marks 43rd anniversary of revolution nationwide - Page 07
- US warns Russia could invade Ukraine 'any time' - Page 08

WHO lauds Pak handling of pandemic

"The donor agencies and the media have played a strong part in fighting against COVID-19," WHO says

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: The representative of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Dr Palitha Gunaratna Mahipala on Friday said that Pakistan has shown a good response in fighting against COVID-19 as 40% of the Pakistani population has been vaccinated, media reported. Addressing a press conference, the WHO representative said that Pakistan has an efficient vaccination system and it has always ensured the availability of 9% of the vaccine in buffer stock. Appreciating the efforts of Pakistan against COVID-19, Dr Mahipala said: "I was surprised to see vaccination centres available in the smallest villages, and it is great to see Pakistan carrying out screening tests," adding that "so far, 25 million coronavirus tests have been done so far, which is a huge number". Talking about

Continued on Page 06

PM directs to expedite vaccination process

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Omicron cases have started declining in Pakistan due to government's measures to ensure strict implementation of Standard Operating Procedures. This was told in a meeting regarding anti-Corona measures, which met in Islamabad on Friday with Prime Minister Imran

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan paid a surprise visit to Sector G 13 to witness pace of development work. He was shocked to see no one was there. The nearby Sector G 14 also needs PM attention as it remains unattended since 2004. G 14 is still occupied by land mafia and illegal settlers, thus challenging the writ of the government and the state institutions. - DNA

100 shops, 200 stalls gutted in Lalamusa

As per reports fire broke out due to short circuit



ATTAULLAH CHEEMA / GULZAR NOSHI

GUJRAT/LALAMUSA: A huge fire destroyed Lunda Bazaar in Lalamusa burning over 100 shops and more than 200 garments stalls and carts on Friday. The bazaar is located on the edge of the Grand Trunk (GT) Road. As reports suggest fire broke out due to some short circuit. The blaze which broke out on Thursday night was extinguished after more than three hours. According to Rescue officials, the fire engulfed the whole Bazaar in a flash. The firefighters have been able to douse the fire in 70 percent of the Bazaar and the rest will also be extinguished soon, the spokesman added. The shocked shopkeepers said that the loss from the fire runs into millions. It may be mentioned here that the same Lunda Bazaar was destroyed in a fire some time back. Two weeks ago, a major fire also flattened the Lunda Bazaar of Dinga town of Tehsil Kharian. However, affected khoka owners and their other sympathiser traders took out protest rallies in the evening and blocked the national highway for more than three hours. As a result, long queues of vehicular traffic, including pedestrians, on both sides of the roads faced

Continued on Page 06

Envoys of four countries present their credentials

Talking to the envoys, the president highlighted the need for further expanding trade ties

ANSAR BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The newly appointed non-resident envoys of New Zealand, Mexico, Ghana, and Uganda on Friday presented their credentials to President Dr Arif Alvi at a ceremony here.

After presenting the credentials, the High Commissioners-designate of New

Zealand, Michael Wehi Mailetonga Walsh, and Uganda, Muhammad Tezikuba Kisambira, and the Ambassadors-designate of the United Mexican States, Guillermo Alejandro Puente Ordorica and Ghana, Eric Owusa-Boateng, made separate calls to the president. Talking to the envoys, the president said

Continued on Page 06



Biden signs order to unfreeze Afghan funds

The order moves to split frozen assets into two parts; humanitarian aid for Afghan people and the other half for 9/11 attacks victims

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: United States President Joe Biden has signed an executive order creating the possibility of splitting \$7bn in frozen Afghan funds held in the US, potentially allotting half for humanitarian aid to the country while keeping the other half available for possible seizure by victims of the September 11 attacks.



The executive order signed Friday said the administration "will seek to facilitate access to \$3.5 billion" of the Afghan assets currently held by the Federal Reserve of New York "for the benefit of the Afghan people and for Afghanistan's future". However, it said the allocation of those funds would be "pending a judicial decision". The White House also referenced legal claims by families of 9/11 victims who say they are entitled to the money following previous default judgements against

Continued on Page 06

NATO warns of 'real risk' for new war in Europe

DNA

BUCHAREST: NATO has raised the alarm over the Ukraine crisis, warning of "a real risk for a new armed conflict in Europe", and promised to reinforce its eastern flank. Speaking on Friday from an airbase in Romania, where the United States has temporarily deployed soldiers, NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg said the Washington-led alliance would consider maintaining a longer-term presence in Eastern Europe in the coming months. He restated Western powers' fears of war, which remain heightened as diplomatic efforts to ease tensions falter while Russia keeps more than 100,000 troops stationed near Ukraine and car-

ries out military exercises in Belarus. Meanwhile, Moscow accused NATO of using the crisis as a "pretext" for increasing its military presence near Russia's borders. Russia is operationally ready to conduct a wide range of military operations in Ukraine after massing "more than 150,000 combat troops" near its neighbour, the head of Norway's military intelligence service says. The Russians "have all they need to carry everything out, from a minor invasion in the east to minor attacks here and there in Ukraine, or a complete invasion, with, possibly, an occupation of all or parts of Ukraine", Vice Admiral Nils Andreas Stensones said at the presentation of the Norwegian intelligence services' annual threat assessment report.

PDM decides no-confidence against govt

Alliance would approach the government's allied parties to get them on board so as to acquire a voting majority in the National Assembly

BUREAU REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman Friday evening announced the Opposition alliance has unanimously decided to move a no-confidence motion against the incumbent PTI government. Speaking during a press conference af-

ter holding a meeting of the PDM, Fazl said the alliance would approach the government's allied parties to get them on board so as to acquire a voting majority in the National Assembly to bring about a no-confidence motion to oust Prime Minister Imran Khan. "We will first do our homework, so we cannot talk about the definite time-frame for this move," he said. "Paki-

stan Democratic Movement (PDM) has announced the no-confidence motion at this stage because we have a firm intention of doing so." Meanwhile, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Vice-President Maryam Nawaz said on Friday that there was no need to approach 'estranged' Pakistan

Continued on Page 06



Shehbaz to be charged in money laundering

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain on Friday said that after a long investigation, finally on February 18, Shehbaz Sharif, Hamza Shehbaz and other accused will be charged in the money laundering case and regular trial will start. Congratulating the nation, in a tweet he said the investigation uncovered astonishing details of 14,000 banking transactions. Maqsood was a peon in Shehbaz Sharif's factory and his salary was Rs 25,000 only, Chaudhry Fawad said. The minister said that an account was opened in his (Maqsood's) name and Rs 4 billion reached the accounts of Sharif family through his account. He said dozens of other such interesting and bizarre frauds were part of Shehbaz Sharif's case. The minister said the case should be shown live. The court has decided to indict Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) President and Opposition Leader in National Assembly (NA) Shehbaz Sharif and his son Hamza Shahbaz in money laundering case on February 18. According to details, special judge central has issued a brief written verdict in this regard. The court has directed Shehbaz Sharif and other accused to ensure presence for indictment. - APP



CM, UNDP agree to work together to reduce poverty

The Chief Minister and UNDP representatives discussed each and every goal and committed to achieve them in true letter and spirit

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) delegation led by its Resident Representative Knut Ostby discussed implementation of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to address the issues of poverty, hunger, provision of best health facilities and quality education and top of its provision of clean water and sanitation facilities in the province. The meeting was attended by Sindh Minister for Social Welfare Sajid Johio, Advisor law Murtaza Wahab, MPAs Pir Mujeeb, Qasim Soomro, Secretary Finance Sajid Jamal Abro, Chief Economist P&D Asghar Memon and others, said a statement.

The UNDP delegation members include Ammara Durani, Umer Khalid, Sajid Ghani, Moin Zaidi, Zafar Qureshi and Shujaa hakim.

The Chief Minister said that the SDGs -2030 would be implemented in true letter and spirit for which a separate unit has been established in the P & D department. With the support of UNDP, the Sindh government is committed to achieve 17 different goals in the province by 2030.

They include poverty reduction, zero hunger, good health and wellbeing, quality education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, affordable and clean energy; decent work and economic growth; industry, innovation, and infrastructure; reduced inequality; sustainable cities and clean energy; responsible consumption, and production; climate action;

life below water, life on land; peace, justice and strong institution; and partnership for the goals.

The Chief Minister and UNDP representatives discussed each and every goal and committed to achieve them in true letter and spirit.

Syed Murad Ali Shah said that provincial Parliamentary Task Force on SDGs has been engaged which has held consultative Sessions on focused legislation, policy & planning, and budgeting & oversight for SDGs. The CM Sindh said that in order to strengthen the capacity of the government's department for operationalization of SDGs Framework the P&D department has organized consultative workshops.

The Chief Minister and the UNDP delegation agreed to keep reviewing the implementation process and pace of every SDG.



KARACHI: Sindh Madarssatul Islam University (SMIU) Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Mujeebuddin Sahrai, grace the meeting with senior Journalist Nazir Siyal Bureau Chief Karachi and also receiving a credible Pakistan's first diplomatic Daily "Islamabad Post" here at his office. - DNA

Students of Gujarat University facing transport problems

Lack of buses for University students is loss of education. Transportation is not available despite paying fees from University of Gujrat

ANWAR CHAUHAN

KHARIAN: Transportation could not be provided to those university students going from Kharian, Galyana, Dinga, Kotla, Arb Ali Khan to study at the University of Gujarat.

Lack of transport is a major concern for male and female students, and lack of transportation is detrimental to education.

According to the details, the University of Gujarat yesterday charged heavy fees for the transportation from students, but due to the shortage of buses and not completing the required number, there is a severe educational loss,

especially for female students, there is an urgent need for two buses. Due to the delay, the parents of the students are facing various fears and mental anguish. Public and social circles have de-

manded immediate notice from the university of Gujarat administration and higher authorities.

Due to lack of buses, especially female students are facing difficulty in reaching University of Gujarat.



Traders arrested for harassing female vaccinators in Gujrat

A minor boy lost his life in a bid to steal sugarcane from a moving tractor trolley

YOOSUF BHUTTA

GUJRAT: Three traders were booked and arrested for refusing to get vaccinated and harassing female vaccination staff here Friday. It is reported that a on the directive of Deputy Commissioner Gujrat, District Health Officer Dr. Ayyaz Nasir sent a two-member vaccination team headed by Lady Health Supervisor Miss Iram Zahra to Timber bazar to vaccinate shopkeepers and their salespersons. Some shopkeepers and salespersons refused to get vaccination and fled away from the spot while others started humiliating and harassing the female staff. When told by the LHS, DHO summoned police. B-division police have

arrested three accused traders including Yaseem, Usama and Arshad. It is further reported that the shops of the accused traders were also sealed by the district administration.

Little boy lost life for just a sugarcane

A minor boy lost his life in a bid to steal sugarcane from a moving tractor trolley here the other day. It is reported that a boy Azad Ali, aged-8, resident of village Moind-din Pur was going to his school when he saw a tractor trolley laden with sugarcane across his village. He ran after the moving tractor trolley and tried to pull out a sugarcane but got hit by the loaded stuff. He fell down and the tractor trolley trampled him down. He was rushed to Aziz Bhatti Shaheed Hospital for first

aid but could not survive.

Kakrali Brothers' land donation for Press Club

Three real brothers and overseas Pakistanis have donated 10 marla land for the construction of a Press Club in Kotla town here on Bhimber Road. It is reported that three real brothers and businessmen of America Choudhary Muzaffar Kakrali, Choudhary Afzaal Kakrali and Choudhary Shehbaz Kakrali alias Kakrali Brothers have donated a valuable piece of land covering ten marla on Bhimber Road near Kotla Arab Ali Khan for local journalists to construct Press Club building. Journalists of Kotla Arab Ali Khan and Kakrali have thanked Kakrali Brothers for their donation of land.

Several illegal structures demolished

PESHAWAR: Charsadda district administration on Friday launched a crackdown against encroachment and demolished dozens of illegally-erected structures at Shabqadard. According to the district administration, the action was taken by Additional Assistant Commissioner Shabqadard in line with directives of Deputy Commissioner Sadat Hassan following public complaints. Supported by police personnel and Tehsil Municipal Administration's (TMA) staff removed encroachments from footpaths at bazaar. - APP

DC asks citizens to help admin keep the city clean

STAFF REPORT

LODHARAN: Deputy Commissioner Captain (R) Shoaib Ali appealed from citizens to cooperate with Administration in keeping Lodhran city clean and beautiful. He said that on special directions from CM Punjab Sardar Usman Buzdar and Chief Secretary Punjab cleanliness drive has been initiated. He expressed these remarks while reviewing the cleaning matters of the city. He said that in this special drive cleaning of streets, roads and canals is in progress, he added that during this drive parks throughout the city will be restored where facilities will be provided for children, women and other people, he directed shopkeepers, fruit and vegetable vendors to keep dustbins outside their

shops and do not spread garbage all over. He said that to make this drive successful and fruitful a proper plan of action has been devised and process of garbage collection from all areas of the city has been improved.

On directions of CM Punjab Sardar Usman Buzdar, Deputy Commissioner Captain (R) Shoaib Ali continue to take action against the overcharging vendors throughout the district. According to report by District Administration, District Price Control Magistrates during the ongoing month 114 overcharging vendors were fined 273,300 rupee, District Price Control Magistrates registered cases against 3 overcharging vendors while arrested 5. According to the report Price Control Magistrates visited several markets and shops checking 2544 samples and imposed fines on 179 violations.

16 more die, 997 new cases confirmed in KPK

PESHAWAR: Coronavirus disease (Covid-19) claimed 16 more lives in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as 997 new cases confirmed in the province during the last 24 hours, said Corona updates shared by the Health Department here on Friday. With 16 more deaths, the toll from the disease in the province has climbed to 6103 while 997 new cases reached the number of the total active cases to 13399.

The highest number of new cases (470) has been reported from Peshawar Region with 352 from district Peshawar. Most of the deaths (11) from the virus have also occurred in the district. Similarly, two deaths with one each occurred in Mardan and Swabi districts of the Mardan Division. Furthermore, one death is reported from Swat, two from Abbottabad of Hazara region respectively. However, 849 Corona patients have also been recovered during the same period. As many as 13557 tests were conducted in the province, out of which 997 were proved positive for coronavirus. - APP

SCCI calls for strengthening Pak-UAE trade

PESHAWAR: President of Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) Hasnain Khurshid Ahmad Friday noted that the mutual economic and trade relationship has been improved between Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). He was talking to a member of the Royal Family of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and a leading Dubai-based businessman Suhail Al Zarooni during a meeting here at the Chamber's House.

He, however, emphasized the establishment of business to business contact and launching of joint ventures to further improve bilateral trade and economic relations between two brotherly Islamic countries. KP is a lucrative destination of foreign investments wherein vast opportunities were available for investors to make investment in hydel power generation, mine and minerals, oil, gas, especially tourism sectors, the SCCI chief said. Furthermore, he noted the significance of KP has been further increased after the changing regional scenario, which is a gateway to neighbouring Afghanistan and Central Asian Republics.

He hoped the national economy would be boosted up after enhancing mutual trade with Afghanistan and the rest of the regional countries. The meeting was also attended by SCCI Senior Vice President Imran Khan Mohmand, Secretary General Sajjad Aziz, KP leading businessman, industrialist Laiq Jan and others. On this occasion, both sides have agreed to make vigorous efforts to further improve bilateral trade and economic relations between the two brotherly Islamic countries. The SCCI president said the law and order situation has much improved in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa that has paved the way for foreign investments as national and international famous companies/brands have made investments in the province. - APP


Anti-dengue seminar held

KAMRAN GUJJAR

JHELUM: To take precautionary measures against dengue fever, under the Zakaah Officer Jhelum, organized a special cleaning campaign seminar to raise awareness in the public at the District Zakat Committee Jhelum office. Special cleaning campaign also organized in which the staff was bound to clean the garbage. Further, Syed Najam Assaeed Shah Jilani District Zakaah Officer Jhelum gave a message to public in the seminar to prevent dengue. He stressed to strictly follow the instructions issued by the government's health department. Pamphlets for Special cleaning campaign against anti-dengue were distributed in the people. Mohammad Ahmed Shahab Audit Assistant District Zakat Committee Jhelum was nominated as a focal person in the office and the office staff was instructed to take care of the complete cleaning around the office.

Argentina, Pak mull collaboration

FAISALABAD: Argentina will collaborate with Pakistan for enhancing cotton production and value addition of different commodities and livestock products. This was stated by Mr. Leopoldo Francisco Sahores, ambassador of the Argentina, in Islamabad. Addressing the business community at Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI), he said Pakistan and Argentina were basically agrarian economies and their future was directly linked with value addition of its commodities. He expressed concerns over decline in cotton production in Pakistan and said that it must enhance the per acre yield of cotton to ensure adequate supply of raw material to the textile sector. He said that his country could help Pakistan in enhancing cotton productivity with innovative technologies in addition to the value addition of different commodities. He said that he had just taken over his diplomatic responsibility in Pakistan, but he was fully aware of the trade related issues. He welcomed the proposal of sending an Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry delegation to Argentina and promised maximum cooperation by arranging a meetings with their counterparts in his country. - APP



ALLAMA IQBAL OPEN UNIVERSITY

(DIRECTORATE OF WORKS)

TENDER INVITATION

Sealed Tender is invited from the Govt. approved Contractors/ Constructors Firms registered with Pakistan Engineering Council, and FBR for the work mentioned below:

Tender Ref No.	Name of work	Tender Fee Rs.	Time Limit	Bid Security
12/Fence and G. Room/2021-22	Installation / Fixing of Barbed Wire Fencing and Construction of Guard Room at AIOU Allotted Plot, Loralai (Baluchistan)	Rs. 2000	3 Months	2%

Kindly Note: Detail requirements of invitation of tenders are available at AIOU (<https://www.aiou.edu.pk/>) and PPRA (www.ppra.org.pk) websites for the above works which are mandatory for issuance of the Tender Documents.

Sealed tenders shall be received in the office of the undersigned on 02.03.2022 (Wednesday) up to 11:00 AM and will be opened at 11:30 AM. on the same day in the presence of Tender Opening Committee and the representatives of the firms who desire to participate.

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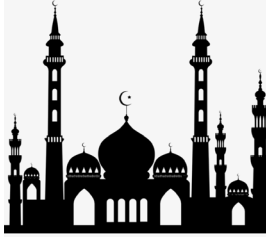
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Namaz Timings

Fajr.....	05:32 am
Zohr.....	12:22 pm
Asr.....	04:10 pm
Maghrib.....	05:48 pm
Isha.....	07:12 pm



Hotels & Restaurants

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



Airlines

Turkish Airlines.....	8494949
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Emergency

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



Enquiry

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



Hospitals

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



Departments

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



Complaints

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

Islamabad Metropolitan Corporation.....	9209224
Potohar Town.....	9209224
Rawal Town.....	5773343

Wasa Water Tank Rawalpindi.....	0331-5022125
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Art exhibition at FO highlights valiant struggle of Kashmiris

FS presented Kashmir Solidarity Day mementos to guest speakers. A song 'Meray Kashmir' was presented by Kashmiri singer Zohaib Zaman to mark the Kashmir Solidarity Day



ISLAMABAD: To honor the valiant struggle of Kashmiris for their right to self-determination and to highlight the widespread human rights violations in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), an art exhibition was held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 10 February 2022 as part of the Kashmir Solidarity Day activities. Young artists from the National College of Arts Rawalpindi, COMSATS

University Islamabad and Rawalpindi Women University participated in the exhibition. Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi graced the event as chief guest. Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Ms. Andaleeb Abbas, Chairman Kashmir Committee of the Parliament, Mr. Shehryar Afridi were guest speakers. Members of the diplomatic corps, Kashmiris, former Ambassadors, civil society,

academia and artists from various academic institutions also attended the event among others. Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs and Chairman Parliamentary Committee on Kashmir in their remarks underscored the important role of arts in highlighting the plight of Kashmiris in IIOJK and called on the international community to deliver on its promise to the Kashmiris for the attainment of their

inalienable right to self-determination as was pledged by numerous UN Security Council resolutions. The Foreign Minister in his keynote address emphasized the importance of harnessing the potential of arts to provide insights into Kashmiris' peaceful resistance movement. He said that despite the sealing of borders, denial of access to neutral observers, and propagating disinformation, Kashmiris could

not be silenced or subdued by Indian occupation forces. The pattern of ongoing atrocities in IIOJK reflected the anti-peace and anti-Muslim 'Hindutva' agenda of extremist RSS-BJP dispensation. The continuing Indian oppression has only strengthened the will of the Kashmiris to stand firm in their just struggle. He highlighted that when people started disseminating reality through arts and music, it made a huge

difference and the process had already begun in IIOJK. He called upon the international community to peacefully resolve the Jammu and Kashmir dispute in accordance with international legitimacy. The Foreign Secretary presented Kashmir Solidarity Day mementos to guest speakers. A song 'Meray Kashmir' was presented by Kashmiri singer Zohaib Zaman to mark the Kashmir Solidarity Day. - DNA

Drug addicts must be treated as sick people

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman Senate Standing Committee on Narcotics Control Senator Ejaz Ahmed Chaudhary feels that drug addicts should be treated as sick people and every possible step needs to be taken for their treatment.

The Chairman during a meeting of the Senate Standing Committee on Narcotics Control which was held here on Friday also paid tribute to the Anti Narcotics Force (ANF) personnel involved in the operation of seizing 360 kg of heroin from Karachi port which was being smuggled to the UK.

In the meeting, Senator Shahadat Awan informed the committee about the seizure of 360kg of heroin by the ANF from Karachi port to which the chairman also recommended a reward from the government for their encouragement. Senator Saifullah Abro informed the committee that 25 people were killed due to drinking raw liquor in Tando Allahyar and Tando Jam areas of Sindh province but no one took notice of the matter. "Raw liquor factories are being run in those area and either people are dying or get blind by drinking the liquor," he said.

PARC develops 6 commercial varieties of beans

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) has developed 6 commercial varieties of beans, which would be available for general cultivation and help in reducing the reliance on imported pulses, besides increasing farm income across the pulses producing areas. This was stated by PARC Chairman Dr Ghulam Muhammad Ali, while addressing an event jointly organized by PARC and Australian Center for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) to mark World Pulses Day on Friday. Speaking on the occasion, Dr Ali said that these beans varieties will be the first commercial varieties of beans produced in Pakistan, adding that pulses cultivation at national level will reduce food import bill and help in sustainable agriculture development in the country. The PARC under Public Sector Development Program had launched a 05 years project to increase the production capacity of pulses and research, he said and added that the scope of the project was to increase the national average production of pulses including chickpea, mung bean, mash, lentils and beans by 30% to reduce the production gap and increase farm profit. He said the council was also making efforts through training workshops, seminars for promotion of pulses and increase production capacity, which will increase local output by 15-20 percent every year. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's ambassador designate to Saudi Arabia Amir Khurram Rathore calls on Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi. - DNA

ICCI President nominated as business advisor in FOSPAH



STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Ombudsman for Protection against Harassment Kashmala Khan on Friday nominated President Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) as Business Advisor in his organization to enhance cooperation with the private sector for providing a safer and secure environment to women at workplaces. Addressing the business community during her visit to ICCI, the Federal Ombudsman said that the better protection of women at workplaces would improve productivity of organizations and bring prosperity

to their personal lives. She urged, all organizations should ensure safe workplaces for women to capitalize on their true potential for national productivity. She said that it was mandatory for all public and private sector organizations to form a 3-member Committee to deal with harassment cases and cautioned that non-compliant organizations would face fines. Kashmala Khan said that the Federal Ombudsman Secretariat for Protection Against Harassment (FOSPAH) has decided 4,000 cases. She stressed that women should raise their voice against harassment and should file an online complaint with FOSPAH for speedy justice. She said

that the government has passed a commendable law for Enforcement of Women's Property Rights and if any woman was facing any issue on property rights, she should approach FOSPAH to get justice within 2 months. Speaking at the occasion, Muhammad Shakeel Munir, President ICCI lauded the role of Kashmala Khan, Federal Ombudsman for Protection against Harassment to make the workplaces safer and conducive for women. He said that women were almost half of our total population, but only 25 percent were in the workforce due to which the country could not realize its full economic potential.

Rescue 1122 retrieves a puppy from a 30 feet deep bore hole

ISLAMABAD: The Rescue 1122 service late Thursday retrieved a puppy from a 30 feet deep borehole dug, late Thursday night here at DHA-2, in a 90-minute long operation. The rescue service, which has earned a hard-earned reputation over the years for swift response and a commitment to save precious lives, in challenging environments, rushed to the rescue as they got a call from a worried neighbour who heard the muffled sound of a puppy barking at night. He discovered that it had fallen in an uncovered borehole in a vacant plot for pre-construction soil testing. The Rescue 1122 staff, stationed at DHA-2, on the Islamabad Expressway, decided to use a rope loop to pull the poor creature out from a less than a foot wide hole. After over 90 minutes they succeeded in placing the rope around the puppy's neck and managed to pull out the whimpering light brown puppy from his deep trap. The dog seemed to have survived the fall but was shivering and had to be covered in a towel to warm up. A young girl from the neighbourhood who waited in the cold throughout the operation offered to provide the puppy find a shelter. Rescue 1122 staff Mohammad Azam said their only option was to use a rope loop to pull out the puppy from the hole and said Tehsin Ijaz, another rescuer from the 4 member team, patiently tried repeatedly and managed to get the rope around the puppy in the light of emergency lights. He eventually pulled him out as the neighbours cheered and lauded the Rescue staff. "We daily face new challenges as these are part of our job, but saving a life always leaves us with a feeling of satisfaction," Azam said.

Cold, dry weather expected in most parts

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) Friday forecast mainly cold and dry weather for most parts of the country during next 24 hours. According to the synoptic situation, continental air was prevailing over most parts of the country. "The weather will remain cold and dry in most parts of Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Sindh, Balochistan, Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan", the met office said. During the last 24 hours, cold and dry weather prevailed over most parts of the country, while very cold in hilly areas. - APP

Punjab govt presents largest development budget

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Chief Minister Punjab Sardar Usman Buzdar here on Friday said that the incumbent government presented the largest development budget in the history of Punjab. Chairing a meeting held at Commissioner Office, the CM said the Punjab government used 54% development fund and set a record as compared to other provinces. The meeting was attended by Federal Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed, Provincial Ministers, Raja Basharat, Fayyaz ul Hassan Chohan, Malik Anwar, Raja Rashid Hafeez, Yasir Humayun and Yawar Bukhari. Other members of National and Provincial Assemblies of Rawalpindi were also present on the occasion. The Ministers from Rawalpindi division and Members of

Assemblies presented suggestions and recommendations on public welfare schemes. Usman Buzdar addressing the participants said that so much work was done in Punjab and all-out efforts were being made to complete ongoing development projects and provide relief to the people. The government would again utilize all available resources and give record development budget during next financial year. "We are going to resume the process of holding meetings with the public representatives while visiting every division of the province," said Buzdar. The public representatives of Rawalpindi always gave unconditional support to us, he added. He informed, "We will bring good and reliable people forward in the local body elections and the candidates for Local government will be de-

vised by the board." The CM said, "I am monitoring the mega projects of all the districts of the province. Usman Buzdar informed that the incumbent government had established 23 new hospitals in Punjab while 158 hospitals were also upgraded. The CM said that the charter of 12 new universities had also been finalized which would be submitted for approval soon, adding, five new dams were also being constructed which would have a water storage capacity of more than 58 dams, built in the past in the province. He informed that the completion of under construction Jalalpur Irrigation Project would bring agricultural revolution in the area. The road infrastructure was being improved in Murree, Usman Buzdar said and informed that Safe City project would also be given.



Briefs

Imran to form govt after 2023 elections, says Faisal

ISLAMABAD: Senator Faisal Javed Khan on Thursday said that Imran Khan would form the government in Pakistan after winning 2023 elections on basis of welfare schemes. The Pakistan Tehreek e Insaaf (PTI), government has initiated several public welfare projects after coming to power in 2018 elections, he said while talking to a private television channel. The popularity graph of PTI is increasing in the country because of Ahsaas program, Kamyabjawan program, housing schemes, and free health insurance cards for poor masses of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab, he said. We have no worries about the long march of Opposition parties, he said. The Opposition leaders are trying to get rid of corruption and money laundering cases, he said. The Pakistan Muslim League-N leaders could not provide evidence of illegal transaction of money found in their accounts, he said. The PTI leadership is sincerely working for common man, he added. He said the PTI would win the next general elections with full support of the masses. - APP

World Radio Day on Feb 13

ISLAMABAD: World Radio Day will be marked on February 13 (Sunday) across the globe including Pakistan to acknowledge the importance of radio one of the most trusted and widely used media. Throughout the years, radio has provided affordable access to information in real time and professional coverage about matters of public interest, as well as guaranteed distance learning and entertainment. Bridging the gap between traditional and state-of-the-art technologies, radio now offers a variety of content through different devices and formats, such as podcasts and multimedia websites. Digital access to information is far from being equal, with huge differences remaining between regions and between communities. In comparison, radio remains affordable and can be listened to everywhere, even when electricity or connectivity are not reliable which is also diverse and inclusive. Community radio, for instance, reaches out to those under-represented in the mainstream and social media, who may feel better understood and fairly portrayed and consequently trust their local station. - APP

SECP specifies Fixed Rate Mutual Fund

ISLAMABAD: To facilitate growth in mutual funds industry, the Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP) has prescribed the regulatory framework for Fixed Rate Mutual Fund through Circular No 3 of 2022. The new category will contribute towards expanding investor base, lead to availability of a low-cost investment product with a low risk factor, said a press release issued here. A fixed-rate mutual fund focuses on investments that typically pay a set and stable rate of return, such as government bonds, money market placements, certificate of deposits etc. It is designed to generate stable returns for passing the investors/unitholder, thus ensuring competitive return on their investments as compared to other fixed-return products. - APP

1st seminary for transgender opened

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's first madrasa, or Islamic religious school for transgender people has opened in Islamabad. Thanks to the efforts of Nayab Ali, a transgender woman who wanted to create a space for members of the LGBTQ+ community to practice Islam. Nayab Ali has experienced discrimination due to her gender identity, which is why she decided to open the madrasa.

Chairman talks about meddling in HEC affairs

The Higher Education Commission (HEC) and the Government refute the unfounded allegations levelled by Chairman HEC

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman HEC Tariq Banuri has accused the govt and other officials interference in the High Education Commission matters adding he was not allowed to work independently as a chairman. Meanwhile, the Higher Education Commission (HEC) and the Government refute the unfounded allegations levelled by Chairman HEC Tariq Banuri that there is external interference in affairs of HEC as well as universities. In a statement, it has been clarified that the Government believes in transparency in the functioning of all Government departments at all levels, be it HEC, universities or any other institution. The statement says that, since the Government took office, it has been ensured that the education sector, and particularly higher education sector, is provided all available resources. Autonomy of the institutions has always been respected. Prime Minister of Pakistan has himself

taken interest in ensuring that every government department is free to function as per its defined mandate. Such unsubstantiated blanket assertions from Mr. Banuri are "inappropriate and irresponsible," the statement said. For appointment of vice chancellor or any other officer in the universities, there are set rules and all appointments are made on merit while following the laid down procedure. Similarly, for overseeing administrative affairs of universities, there are bodies like Syndicate and Senate that ensure implementation of policies in letter and spirit. As far as HEC's funding distribution is concerned, it is put on record that as well known to Mr. Banuri since its inception in 2002, HEC has a funding formula for disbursement of funds to higher education institutions. Likewise, all development projects of higher education sector are duly approved by respective forums like CDWP, ECNEC, etc, and the process involves thorough planning before any project is approved and executed. "Whether it is establishment of university in the PM House or any other project, all projects are being planned keeping in view the national interest and by following all relevant rules and regulations." It said the issue therefore was never about the auditing of accounts or transparency, as has been wrongly portrayed by Chairman HEC in statements to the press. The HEC had proposed to take away the autonomy and merge the budget of the International Center of Chemical and Biological Sciences with that of the University

of Karachi, it added. It said this was not possible as the government has a formal agreement with UNESCO that its financial autonomy will be maintained. This was also pointed out by the Ministry of Education to HEC in writing, it added. This Center is the UNESCO Center of Excellence, the TWAS Center of Excellence, OIC Center of Excellence and the WHO Collaborating Center. Its faculty members have won more civil awards and international prizes than any other academic center in Pakistan, including 1 Nishan-i-Imtiaz, 4 Hilal-i-Imtiaz, 13 Sitara-i-Imtiaz and 8 Tamgha-i-Imtiaz and many honorary doctorate degrees from foreign universities including the University of Cambridge UK. The work of the Center has been lauded by many Nobel Laureates <https://iccs.edu/page-remarks-of-eminient-scientist>. The accounts of ICCBS are regularly audited by the government and are well maintained. The Center is headed by Prof. Iqbal Choudhary, a leading scientist of Pakistan, since 2003.



TAXILA: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi along with Ambassadors of various countries cutting cake to celebrate orange festival organized by Ahsan Shah. - DNA

Weekly inflation goes down by 0.08 percent

ISLAMABAD: The Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI) based weekly inflation for the week ended on February 10, for the combined consumption group, witnessed decrease of 0.08 percent as compared to the previous week, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported Friday. The SPI for the week under review in the above mentioned group was recorded at 169.23 points against 169.37 points registered in the previous week, according to the PBS data. The commodities that contributed in decline in weekly inflation included tomatoes (14.86%), chillies powdered (3.30%), potatoes (2.92%), onions (2.66%), eggs (2.05%), lpg (1.49%), sugar (1.43%), pulse Moong (0.99%), tea prepared (0.50%), pulse gram (0.48%), gur (0.39%), pulse Mash (0.37%), wheat flour (0.15%) and pulse Masoor (0.13%) and LPG (1.49%). On Year-on-Year basis, the commodities that witnessed de-

crease in prices included chillies powdered (31.44%), pulse moong (27.75%), sugar (4.78%), chicken (4.51%), onions (4.16%) and potatoes (1.60%). Meanwhile, the commodities that witnessed increase on WoW basis, included prices of garlic (7.03%), chicken (5.65%), bananas (3.57%) and salt (1.81%). The items that witnessed increase in prices on YoY basis included tomatoes (289.04%), electricity for q1 (74.88%), lpg (51.76%), mustard oil (48.51%), garlic (45.60%), cooking oil 5 litre (40.54%), vegetable ghee 2.5 kg (39.05%), vegetable ghee 1 kg (38.81%), washing soap (38.40%), pulse Masoor (38.00%) and petrol (31.59%). Meanwhile, as compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 18.47 percent. - APP

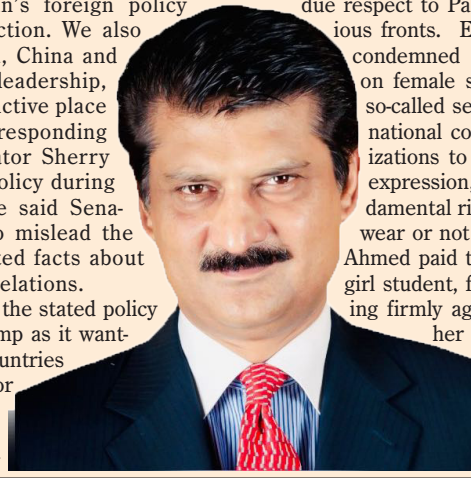
PCRWR, CDA join hands for recharging groundwater levels

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Science and Technology Shibli Faraz on Friday said Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (PCRWR) and Capital Development Authority (CDA) had collectively started a project for recharging groundwater levels. Responding to various questions during questions hour in Senate, the minister said after 18th amendment, the responsibility of provision of safe drinking water as well as improving the quality of water lied with the provinces. He said Pakistan Council of Research in Water Resources (PCRWR) was undertaking water quality monitoring across the country since 2001. The National Water Quality Monitoring (2020) was undertaken in 29 main cities of the country revealed that 61 per cent of the water sources were unsafe for drinking mainly due to microbial contamination. He said the findings and recommendations of country-wide monitoring was undertaken by PCRWR were regularly shared with all stakeholders including provincial governments to undertake remedial actions. The minister told the house that Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa governments had started important projects for provision of clean drinking water. - DNA

Pakistan's foreign policy in right direction: Dr Shahzad

ISLAMABAD: Leader of the House in Senate Dr Shahzad Waseem Friday said Pakistan had a clear foreign policy that was moving in the right direction to yield the required results. "Pakistan's foreign policy is moving in the right direction. We also have relations with America, China and Russia. Under the dynamic leadership, Pakistan is achieving a distinctive place in the world," he said while responding to questions raised by Senator Sherry Rehman about the foreign policy during the Senate proceedings. He said Senator Sherry Rehman tried to mislead the House by presenting distorted facts about the country's international relations. Dr Shahzad said Pakistan had the stated policy that it was not part of any camp as it wanted good relations with all countries including neighbours. Senator Faisal Javed said it was the result of Pakistan's effective foreign policy that successfully

exposed the real face of India before the world, highlighting massive human rights violations in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir. He said the whole world was giving due respect to Pakistan because of its crucial role on various fronts. Earlier, Senator Sherry Rehman strongly condemned the Hijab-wearing restriction imposed on female students in educational institutes of the so-called secular state of India. She urged the international community especially human rights organizations to take notice of the denial of freedom of expression, which was the globally recognized fundamental right of a citizen. "No one can be forced to wear or not wear the Hijab (veil)," Senator Mushtaq Ahmed paid tribute to Muskan Khan, a brave Muslim girl student, for showing exemplary courage by standing firmly against Hindu extremists who surrounded her wearing a Hijab (veil) in the Karnatak state of India. Terming her the daughter of Islam, they said Muskan had become a role model for all Muslim girls and reminded the key role of women in the propagation of Islam. - DNA



Pak to use Saudi oil facility on deferred payment

Shaukat Tarin said Pakistan received three billion dollars from Saudi Arabia in the month of Dec 2021 for a period of one year at four percent interest rate. He said the country's exports and remittances are increasing whilst the trade deficit reduced by 1.5 billion dollars last month

AGENCIES

ISLAMABAD: The Senate was informed on Friday that Pakistan will start using the Saudi oil facility on deferred payment from next month. Responding to various questions during Questions Hour session in Senate, the Minister for Finance and Revenue Shaukat Fayaz Ahmed Tarin told the house that the government has tried not to pass on to the people the full burden of international increase in petroleum products. He said we have reduced the sales tax and Petroleum Development Levy on petroleum products to provide

relief to the masses. The Finance Minister said the foreign exchange reserves of State Bank of Pakistan have increased over the last one year which will help reduce pressure on the rupee. Shaukat Tarin said Pakistan received three billion dollars from Saudi Arabia in the month of December 2021 for a period of one year at four percent interest rate. He said the country's exports and remittances are increasing whilst the trade deficit reduced by 1.5 billion dollars last month. Responding to a supplementary question, the Finance Minister said Pakistan has met twenty seven out of twenty eight

conditions of Financial Action Task Force (FATF). He said we have fulfilled our targets and hoped the country will come out of the grey list in the next review meeting of the FATF. In written reply, the Minister

said that it is a fact that import bill jumped 70% to US\$ 33 billion in July-November, 2021 compared to US\$19.5 billion in the corresponding months of 2020, adding that increase in import is mainly due to

substantial increase in the price of oil, gas, coal and food commodities in the international markets. The minister said moreover, increase in the investment in capital goods, raw material and intermediate goods due to enhanced activity in industrial sector also contributed to increase in the import bill. He said that further, significant increase in the import of vaccine has also impacted the import bill. He said that "the following steps have been for curbing imports: State Bank of Pakistan has imposed 100 per cent Cash Margin Requirement (CMR) on import of 525 items to dis-

courage the import. The government has increased the Regulatory Duty from 15% on import of various vehicles". Replying another question, in written reply, the minister said that Regulatory Duty (RD) has been levied on import of multiple luxury/non-essential items. Responding to various questions, Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs Ali Muhammad Khan said that several projects worth billions of rupees have been launched for the development of Balochistan and Gwadar. He said that the ministry led by women minister has achieved third position in the best performing ministries.



93 new Corona cases reported in RWP

RAWALPINDI: As many as 93 more people were tested Covid positive during the last 24 hours in Rawalpindi district, raising the tally of confirmed cases to 45,610, while four died during this time span. As per the latest data released by the District Health Authority here on Friday, among the new patients, 25 belonged to the Potohar town, 20 from Rawalpindi Cantonment, 13 from Taxila, 11 from Rawal town, 10 from Gujjar Khan, four from Islamabad, two from Kallar Syedan, Kahutta and Attock while one each case was reported from Jehlum, Azad Jammu and Kashmir, Khabar Pakhtunkhwa and Mandi Bahaudin. "Presently, 107 patients are admitted to nine health facilities, including 49 in the Institute of Urology, 41 in the Fauji Foundation Hospital, six in the Benazir Bhutto Hospital, three in the Bilal Hospital, two in the Hearts International Hospital, Holy Family Hospital and Attock Hospital while one of each was admitted in the District Headquarters Hospital and Begum Akhtar Memorial trust." As many as 5,274,100 people, including 44,608 health workers, had so far been vaccinated against the fatal disease since the start of the vaccination drive on March 10, 2021, it informed. The report updated that five patients were on ventilators in critical condition, 27 stable and 75 were on double oxygen support. District Health Authority added that 1,122 were quarantined, including 1,015 at home and 107 at isolation centres. In addition, the report updated that during the last 24 hours, 2006 samples were collected, out of which 1,913 were declared negative, while the positivity rate was recorded as 4.63 per cent. - APP

IESCO notifies 2-day power schedule

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Friday notified 2-day power suspension programme for Saturday and Sunday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period on Saturday From 08:00 AM to 04:00 PM, Nawazish Shaheed, Sher Shah Suri, Army Brigade, Rohan Police, Dina-3 Rohtas Feeders, From 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM, Pandoriyan, Allama Iqbal Open University, International School, H-8 / 2,

I-8/2, Sarka, Shadi Khan, Ara Bazaar, Line Park, Millat Chowk, KSM-2, Islamiya Chowk, Main Bazaar, Qadir Mill, Kariala, Raja Sultan, TB Hospital, Bagh Sardar, Gulshan Abad, Eid Gah, Azharabad, Jhangi, EME Complex, P&T Wani, Carriage Factory, Kallial, Gulshan Abad, Dhok Noor, 502 Workshop, Adiala, Askari-14, Humayun, Humayun-1, Feeders, From 10:00am To 04:00pm, NCI (Toba) Feeder. On Sunday from 09:00am to 02:00pm, X-Lair Colony, AOWHS, Wilayat Colony, Mehboob Shaheed, Morgah, FF Hospital, PCCI Board, Park View, RCCI-1, 2, 3, 4 & 5, Sihala College, Chowk Pandori Feeders, From 08:00 AM to 05:00 PM and surroundings.

Silt cleaning at Khanpur Dam from Feb 14

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi would only be supplied four million gallons of water per day (MGD) instead of the regular supply of 9.40 MGD during the annual silt cleaning of the open water channel from Khanpur Dam which would start from February 14. According to Water and Sanitation Agency (WASA) Managing Director (MD) Raja Shoukat Mehmood, the project would create a shortfall of 5.40 MGD of water in Rawalpindi. He informed that the week-long dredging activity would start on Feb 14 and continue till Feb 20. The MD asked the citizens to use water judiciously as Rawalpindi would only be supplied four MGD of water instead of the regular supply of 9.40 MGD, 70 percent less. He urged the residents to avoid washing floors and cars, watering their lawns every day, and store water to avoid facing difficulties. The WASA would take measures to ensure supply from bowzers and tube wells to fulfill the needs of the locals, he added. - APP

Rupee gains 17 paises against dollar

ISLAMABAD: Exchange rate of the Pakistan rupee appreciated by 17 paise against the US dollar in the interbank trading on Friday and closed at Rs174.70 against the previous day's closing of Rs 174.87. According to the Forex Association of Pakistan (FAP), the buying and selling rates of US dollar in the open market were recorded at Rs 176 and Rs 177.4 respectively. Similarly, the price of the euro was depreciated by Rs 0.74 and closed at Rs 199.11 against the previous day's closing of Rs 199.85. The Japanese Yen lost one paise to close at Rs 1.50, whereas an increase of 05 paises was witnessed in the exchange rate of British Pound, which was traded at Rs236.95 as compared to its last closing of Rs 236.90. The exchange rates of Emirates Dirham and Saudi Riyal decreased by 05 paises to close at Rs 47.56 and Rs 46.56 respectively. - APP

PTCL posts record revenue since 2013

ISLAMABAD: The country's leading telecom and ICT services provider, the Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL) posted 7 percent growth in its revenues, owing to a robust commercial strategy. Briefing media persons here, President and Group Hatem Bamatraf said "PTCL continued its strong performance throughout 2021. PTCL's revenue of Rs 77 billion for the year 2021 is 7 percent higher than 2020, mainly driven by broadband, corporate and wholesale business segments." He said the PTCL group had posted revenue of Rs 138 billion in the year 2021 which was 6.3 percent higher as compared to 2020. He said that PTCL (Ufone) also posted a revenue growth of 4.3 percent despite stiff competition in the market. He said the U Bank continued its growth momentum and had achieved 8.4 percent growth in revenue. The President also disclosed that PTCL group posted a net profit of Rs 2.6 billion during the same period. He said the PTCL registered highest fixed broadband sales and Net Adds in 2021 since 2015, which allowed PTCL to grow in the broadband business segment. He said the PTCL was the fastest growing Fiber To-The-Home (FTTH) operator with highest net adds within FTTH market in 2021. - APP

Marginalising Muslims

THE situation in India, following the Hijab ban in Karnataka remains exceedingly tense. This is to be expected when the state has willingly allowed for religious divisions to be used as a means to sow more hate in the country. The conflict is being framed as a debate between allowing religious symbols or not, much like the one in France, but let us be clear—even though the France case was not justified—this is a very different situation.

It is clear that the ban on hijab does not come from the motivation to see all religious groups as equal, but to single out Muslims in a bid to allow for greater marginalisation. This is made evident by the fact that the saffron shawl—a rarely used and optional religious identifier for Hindus—is being equated to the Hijab, a head covering seen as mandatory by many in Islam. Religious symbols, identifiers that are essentially a display of one's faith, are very different from mandated parts of one's faith that are being adhered to out of devotion.

The hijab should not be equated then, to a saffron shawl or a cross on a chain, but should be seen as a non-negotiable part of one's religious beliefs, much like the Sikh turban. There are levels to this, and the lack of nuance shown by the state in multicultural India is very disturbing.

Muslim women in Karnataka are currently braving mobs of saffron-clad mobs that have naturally taken this decision as a victory of the majority over minority religious groups. The viral pictures of a single girl braving crowds of men confronting her is a powerful image and perfectly encapsulates the situation in India.

The issue has now moved to the Karnataka High Court, but from the way the Supreme Court of India has already backed away from this issue, the appeal for justice might go unanswered. It is hoped that the rights of Muslim women in India are preserved through the courts, or else the violence in India will undoubtedly reach a scale of conflict between Muslims and Hindus in the country that we haven't witnessed since partition, when religious hate was at its peak.

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

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Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

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



Investment in 5G

WHILE the government mulls the strategy of improving mobile internet in Pakistan by offering up 5G licenses, it is important to take stock of how telecom companies have received the news of additional spectrum in recent times, and the subsequent infrastructural upgrades that come with it.

Experts across the world argue that it is not the maximum speed being offered up that counts—it is the lowest common denominator in the overall ecosystem that truly determines how connected we are. This means that there is a need to strengthen the existing 4G spectrum and provide access to all, rather than just offering 5G up to a select few in major urban centres of the country.

With the government planning to open up auction for the new spectrum licenses at the end of 2022 or early 2023, it is unclear whether this will achieve anything beyond the milestone reached in acquiring the technology itself. In all likelihood, the benefits the government wants from 5G in terms of greater connectivity and better speeds can be brought about through proper investment in the existing 4G infrastructure.

A look at our 4G penetration numbers provides an answer to the future course of action as well. Only 43 percent of the existing user base currently has access to 4G—even now, 45 percent of the customer base of telecom providers do not even use broadband. And then finally, there is 15 percent of the population that does not have telecom coverage. These are the areas to address. With a population of over 220 million people, it is important to first ensure that the maximum number of people have access to the base-level technology, rather than improving when only certain segments can benefit.

Pakistan's internet revolution can only fully take place when there is more investment in access to digital technology and developing the necessary skill set for citizens to benefit from this. 4G speeds are good enough for us to run digital markets and maximise the use of the online space; but only if more people are online.

This is also why the government's hopes of getting extra revenue through the sale of 5G licences may not work. With telecom companies already struggling with the costs that come about with investment in internet technology, interest in the auction at the end of the year may remain low. We are still quite a long way from properly using 5G technology and it is hoped that the government brings in the necessary policy adjustments that can eventually bring about its use in Pakistan.

Getting our priorities right in the post-pandemic world

Ishtiaq Ahmad



It is only a matter of time before the World Health Organization declares COVID-19 to be endemic. But its social and economic effects are likely to continue, reinforcing the need to get our priorities right in the post-pandemic world

THE COVID-19 pandemic has impacted us all. How we live, work, study, do business and interact — almost everything seems to have changed. With millions of lives lost, it has left behind painful memories, but also tales of heroism. The pandemic has also ripped our world apart, exposing the fragility and resilience of social structures and political systems, while amplifying the preexisting fissures in the geopolitical and socioeconomic conditions. From the individual and societal levels through to the national and international spheres, the pandemic has compelled us to rethink our thoughts and actions in meaningful ways. The choices we now make in tackling the challenges and exploiting the opportunities produced by this unprecedented crisis will shape the world for decades to come.

The good news is that omicron, the currently dominant variant of COVID-19, is more contagious but less deadly than its predecessors. The emerging consensus among health

experts is that a greater global vaccination drive and community immunity will, over time, transform it into a virus similar to influenza that can be controlled with annual vaccine jabs. It is only a matter of time before the World Health Organization declares COVID-19 to be endemic. But its social and economic effects are likely to continue, reinforcing the need to get our priorities right in the post-pandemic world.

What this means at the individual and societal levels is greater public consciousness about the hazards of life in a world where our insatiable lust for power and resources has put the very survival of the human race at stake. Urban living, in particular, reflects an indomitable spree of unhealthy consumerism amid rising population pressures and eroding civic amenities. Therefore, unless we are willing to reshape our lifestyles in the face of real threats to the global ecosystem and biodiversity, doomsday may not be that far away.

Of course, all governments must render due public services during acute health emergencies like this. But citizens are also expected to empathize with each other and adapt to the new normal in such critical times. In many cases, they have not, with some openly defying COVID-19 restrictions or being in denial mode. A heightened sense of social responsibility has also been in short supply: We were quick to embrace digital behavior through remote working and learning, telemedicine and e-commerce, but were slow to meet our civic obligations in terms of healing the inequalities across ages, genders, ethnicities and geographies. Closely linked with civic responsibility is the issue of public trust in the state. The fact that some countries responded to the pandemic and its socioeconomic effects with great efficiency, while many others failed miserably in tackling this great task, compels us to rethink the role of government and the nature of the political system.

China versus the US and Europe offers an apt case study. China was the first country to be impacted by COVID-19, but it achieved enormous success in combating the virus. Compare Beijing's pandemic response with those of the democratic US and Europe and the dif-

ferences become clear. Consider, for example, their current per capita death tallies: Despite being home to more than 1.4 billion people, China has suffered fewer than 5,000 deaths, while the US and Europe have together lost more than 2.5 million lives from a combined population of about 1 billion.

Finally, the world itself needs to chart a new course in the post-pandemic era. This can happen only if we embrace multilateralism in its truest form. Just think of how beautiful the planet looks from space and then see what a great mess we, Homo sapiens, have created here in the pursuit of Darwinian ambitions: Producing weapons of mass destruction, waging wars of catastrophic proportions and even playing with the natural balance that has sustained our ecosystem and biodiversity since time immemorial.

In recent decades, globalization has allowed us to connect with each other in ways never seen before and to solve myriad common issues. However, a deadly virus has derailed this process by exacerbating economic inequalities, social deprivations and geopolitical tensions. In the face of global supply chain disruptions, inflationary spirals, protectionist policies and other monstrous manifestations of crony capitalism, the divergent national paths to economic recovery threaten to rip the world further apart in the near future.

Our failure to muster the required international solidarity and cooperation to combat a common threat to humanity is both ironic and tragic. But it is never too late. The UN Sustainable Development Goals, which form the cornerstone of global developmental governance, remain our best hope for achieving holistic human progress across time and space. The 17 SDGs promise to end poverty and deprivation, reduce inequality, improve health and education outcomes, and spur economic growth by 2030 — all while tackling climate change and preserving ecosystems and biodiversity. COVID-19 may mean we miss this deadline, but it has certainly reinforced the need for collective action to build greener economies that deliver inclusive economic growth, prosperity and safety for all.

—Courtesy: Arab News

Israel's apartheid and the myth of the democratic Jewish state

Marwan Bishara



No wonder the Israeli government is so furious. Israelis are generally unperturbed by the charge of settler-colonialism and even delight at the comparison with, say, America or Australia, but they abhor the charge of apartheid

LAST week, the London-based Amnesty International joined the New York-based Human Rights Watch and the Jerusalem-based B'Tselem in calling Israel's abusive and cruel system of domination over the Palestinians an apartheid, which amounts to a crime against humanity. Predictably, Israel and its supporters condemned the "libellous" and "anti-Semitic" report, and rejected its detailed and well-documented findings as biased distortions. And like the two reports by B'Tselem and Human Rights Watch, it seems none of the critics bothered to read the 280 pages Amnesty produced, let alone argue against the airtight case in them.

This trifecta of Israeli, American, and British documentation will prove an extremely important breakthrough for Palestinian human rights in terms of its timing, precedence, scope, legality, globality, boldness and ramifications. Indeed, the timing could not have been more critical. These human rights organisations have exposed the apartheid state of Israel as more Arab regimes have embraced it, as Western governments have appeased it, and as the unabashed Palestinian leadership has submitted to it, shamelessly scheming against fellow Palestinians and bartering their rights for Israeli travel permissions for its cronies.

This is, of course, not the first time apartheid has been invoked internationally. A number of Israeli, British, American, and other foreign leaders have warned Israel against undermining the two-state solution by imposing dual legal regimes that "arguably" constitutes apartheid in the Palestinian territories occupied in 1967. But Amnesty, Human Rights Watch and B'Tselem have widened the scope beyond the West Bank and Gaza Strip, and for the first time, made the case against an Israeli apartheid regime imposed on all Palestinians from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. Instead of looking at the Palestinians as separate communities experiencing different sets of circumstances, as the US Department of State's Country Report on Human Rights Practices does to muddy the waters, the three organisations document the totality of the Israeli policies and their implications for all Palestinians. In other words, the problem goes well beyond the occupation of 1967 to the Israeli

dispossession of the Palestinians in 1948. And so, I believe, must the solution.

The Israeli organisation, B'Tselem, has emerged as the torchbearer that inspired and encouraged its American and British counterparts to follow suit. The title of its report will prove a game-changer in the way the world sees Israeli Zionism: "A regime of Jewish supremacy from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea: This is apartheid". No wonder the Israeli government is so furious. Israelis are generally unperturbed by the charge of settler-colonialism and even delight at the comparison with, say, America or Australia, but they abhor the charge of apartheid.

In the spirit of the Bennett government's habitual venom, Foreign Minister Yair Lapid has claimed Amnesty is not a human rights organisation, but a radical entity that relies on "terrorist" groups for information, and said that "if Israel were not a Jewish state, no one in Amnesty would dare argue against it." Alas, the opposite is true.

It is terribly risky, and therefore terribly brave, for B'Tselem, Amnesty and Human Rights Watch to speak so boldly and factually against Israel's institutionalised Jewish supremacy at a time when Israel shows no restraint in the cynical and pervasive use of anti-Semitism claims to condemn, intimidate and even ruin its Western critics. As Paul O'Brien, the director of Amnesty USA has argued, his organisation agrees with the Biden administration that "Israelis and Palestinians should enjoy equal measures of freedom, security, prosperity and democracy" and asserts, "To get there, the system of oppression that exists now must be dismantled. How to get there without calling it what it is. Apartheid."

Alas, US and Western governments have thus far lacked the political foresight and moral courage to call a spade a spade, let alone to act against Israeli apartheid in historic Palestine, as they did against apartheid in South Africa.

It took almost four decades for the US Congress to enact the Comprehensive Anti-Apartheid Act in 1986, and even then, President Ronald Reagan procrastinated in its implementation after his veto was overridden. However, once fully projected, US and wider Western pressure was decisive in dismantling apartheid in South Africa in the early 1990s. Alas, Israel's South Africa moment may still be far off, as it solidifies its apartheid instead of dismantling it. But to paraphrase an infamous Israeli leader, pessimism is a luxury the Palestinians cannot afford.

With an almost equal number of Palestinians and Israelis living side-by-side, Israeli society will eventually have to address the question of decolonisation and equality in this distorted one-state reality and the West will have to take a stand to end Israel's impunity. Last spring's "Unity Intifada", the uprising of young Palestinians from both sides of the Green Line, who overcame geographic and political fragmentation to expose the fallacy of the "Jewish democratic state" and demand an end to Israeli Jewish supremacy, is a preview of things to come. As the battle over Western public opinion rages on, international human rights organisations may well help shift the balance in favour of justice in Palestine. Israel may be a formidable military and economic power, but it is losing international legitimacy and doing so fast.

—Courtesy: Al Jazeera

What did Macron achieve from his Russia visit?

Omer Ozkizilcik



The French president has long argued that independent dialogue and closer ties with Russia and a European army would help assert European autonomy from NATO

Lesson in Putin-omacy. Since Russia started ramping up its military activity along the Ukrainian border region, European NATO states have been unable to formulate a unified stance and policy. French President Emmanuel Macron's recent visit to Moscow did little to ease this disunity.

This is because Macron's trip was not only about attempting to prevent war in Ukraine; it should be read as part of a larger French strategy to establish European autonomy from the US. The visit served as a tactical victory for Russian President Vladimir Putin in driving a wedge into the NATO alliance.

A truly NATO-minded response, which centres around the idea of preserving Ukraine's sovereignty, would have required Macron to visit Ukraine and discuss a negotiation strategy with President Volodymyr Zelensky. Instead, Macron visited Putin first and agreed to deliver Russian demands to Kiev.

He went so far as to discuss matters relating to the sovereignty of Ukraine without consulting with Kiev. Macron also promoted the Minsk agreement — which foresees political special status for the Ukrainian regions of Donetsk and Luhansk and an end to military violence — as the solution to the crisis without problematising the Russian role. This policy of appeasing Putin can only aid Russian propaganda, which casts Ukraine as the source of the problem.

This is not the first time Macron has sidelined NATO while ignoring Russia's wrongs. The French president has long argued that independent dialogue and closer ties with Russia and a European army would help assert European autonomy from NATO. What he actually ends up do-

ing is pushing his European counterparts to ignore Russian aggression in Ukraine, Georgia, and Syria, as well as its assassination attempts. Macron's remarks that NATO is brain dead were well-received in Moscow, which soon after tried to pressure Türkiye in Syria and drive millions of Syrians towards the Turkish-Syrian border. Over the years, Türkiye has learned to negotiate with Russia. The key takeaway is that one needs some leverage — without which Putin will exploit the situation.

Türkiye has built up this leverage through confrontations with Russia in Syria, Libya, Nagorno-Karabakh, and Ukraine; and with cooperation on significant projects like the Akkuyu Nuclear Plant and the Turk-Stream gas pipeline. When Erdogan invited Russia and Ukraine to Türkiye to negotiate a peaceful solution to the situation, Moscow's initial response was negative. Afterwards, rumours reached the media that Türkiye may sell its new model Akinci drones to Ukraine. Shortly after, Putin agreed to the Turkish invitation. Instead of appeasing Russia — and despite Moscow's discomfort — Türkiye went ahead and signed several deals with Ukraine. Among them, the most notable one was the production of the Turkish TB-2 drone in Ukraine. Maybe Macron should learn from Türkiye before his next meeting with Putin.

—Courtesy: TRT World

Briefs

Learnt lot from Afridi, Kumble: Rashid Khan

ISLAMABAD: Afghanistan cricketer Rashid Khan has named Pakistani all-rounder Shahid Afridi and Indian spinner Anil Kumble as players he has learned the most. Currently ranked as the best T20 bowler, Rashid Khan has opened up about his inspirations when he was growing up.

The leg-spinner named Afridi and Kumble as players he learned the most from. He confessed that he still watches their highlights on YouTube from time to time. Rashid said that he hasn't had the chance to meet Afridi as both players were currently playing HBL PSL 7. "I loved watching Shahid Afridi and Anil Kumble and whenever I get time, I watch their videos on YouTube. I have not had the pleasure of meeting him this time around because he was tested positive for COVID-19," cricketpakistan.com.pk quoted him as saying.

Although he was ranked as currently the best T20 player, Rashid explained that he wants to have a small training session where he picks Afridi's brain. "I want to meet him in a training session, to basically pick his brain and talk about the technical things. I have not had that kind of a session with him and I would love to go through that this year." — APP

PDM decides no-confidence against govt

FROM PAGE 01
Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) leader Jahangir Khan Tareen (JKT) group to seek its support for a no-trust motion against the government since it was already ready to oust the government. While talking to a private news channel, Maryam Nawaz said that steps were being taken to further broaden the party's base and to make it more proactive former prime minister and Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif was daily chairing party's meetings from London via a video link. "Whatever role is assigned to me by the party president Shehbaz Sharif, I will perform it diligently and with complete honesty," she resolved. Earlier, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Information Secretary Marriyum Aurangzeb said opposition parties were deliberating on tabling a no-confidence motion against Prime Minister Imran Khan, adding that the nation would "soon hear good news" in this regard. Addressing a press conference, Aurangzeb said an important meeting of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) was scheduled for later today where key decisions regarding a no-trust move and the long march to Islamabad will be taken.

Envoys of four...

FROM PAGE 01
that Pakistan is a very important country with over 220 million population and enormous potential for trade and investment. He highlighted the need for further expanding and deepening economic and trade ties with New Zealand, Mexico, Ghana, and Uganda. The president said that Pakistan wanted to further enhance trade and connectivity between different regions of the world by utilizing its potential as the hub of regional trade and connectivity. He also asked the envoys to encourage the businessmen of their countries to take advantage of the business-friendly environment and invest in Pakistan. Congratulating the envoys on their appointments, the president expressed the hope that they would make efforts to further broaden bilateral relations with Pakistan in different fields. He added that Pakistan attached great importance to the development of its agriculture sector, including the livestock and dairy sectors, and wanted to exchange expertise in these fields for mutual benefit. He expressed satisfaction over the existing level of cooperation with the friendly countries and wished the envoys success for their future endeavours.

Lahore Qalandars won by 52 runs against Sultans



SPORTS DESK

LAHORE: Winning the toss, Multan Sultans elected to bowl first against Lahore Qalandars in their second match of the Lahore-leg of the ongoing seventh edition of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) at the Gaddafi Stadium Lahore. Fakhar Zaman lit the Gaddafi Stadium with his exceptional knock against table-toppers Multan Sultans, scoring a quick 37-ball 60 runs. Kamran Ghulam and Muhammad Hafeez played two spectacular knocks to help the Qalandars set a big total of 183 runs for Multan Sul-

tans. Phil Salt also scored a blistering 13-ball 26. Multan Sultans did a quite decent job but could not properly dismantle the Qalandars batting order. Multan Sultans, who have been the most successful and confident team in this edition of the PSL, will be under a bit of pressure as they have to face the world-class bowling attack of Lahore Qalandars. The Qalandars' bowling attack includes Shaheen Shah Afridi, Rashid Khan, and Haris Rauf. The bowlers of Lahore Qalandars did not allow any batsman of Multan Sultans to get hit due to which Sultan could not chase the required target.

Ashurekova, Ugur wins ITF World Jr girls doubles title

SPORTS CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Second Seed Munisa Ashurekova of Uzbekistan paring with Melissa Ugur from Turkey defeated top seeded duo of Andra Iza-bella from Romania and Olga Sorochkina from Russia in a 3-sets thrilling final to win the girls' doubles title at the ITF Pakistan AJ Towers World Junior Tennis Championship here at the hard courts of PTF-SDA Tennis Complex, Islamabad on Friday.

The three sets thrilling final lasted 1 hour 6 minutes. In the opening set, displayed excellent tennis with a combination of cross court and down the line shots and did not allow their opponent to settle down with breaks of serve in the 3rd, 5th and 7th game of Andra and Olga.

In the second set Andra and Olga fought back aggressively and took revenge in the same fashion by breaking the 4th, 6th and 8th game of Munisa and Melissa.

The deciding super tie break saw

some exhilarating tennis as both the teams played incredible shots. Munisa and Melissa managed to take an early lead 6-3 and continued the winning spree till they took the set and match at 10-7.

In the second session, 3rd Seed Dev Kanbargimath of Romania and Aril Kayra Tuna of Turkey clinched the Boys Doubles title by beating 4th seed Nikita Bortnichek and Ruslan Serazhetdinov of Russia in a well contested three sets match 6-3 4-6 11-9.

In the opening set Dev and Aril took an early lead by 4-1 breaking the 4th game of Ruslan and continued the same pressure to take a lead of 1-0 set. In the second set both teams exhibited excellent tennis by holding their serve 4-4 games all. Nikita & Ruslan managed to break the 10th game of Dev and Aril and leveled the match 1-1 set all.

In the deciding super tie break, Dev and Aril took a flying start to take the lead 6-1 but Nikita and Ruslan fought back aggressively and leveled the score 9-9 all but unable to manage the streak and lost next two points. Match lasted 1 hr 20 minutes.

Following are the results:
Girls Doubles Final
Munisa Ashurekova (UZB) & Melissa Ugur (TUR) beat Andra Iza-bella Sirbu (ROU) & Olga Sorochkina (RUS) 6-1 2-6 10-6

Boys Doubles Final
Dev Kanbargimath (ROU) & Aril Kayra Tuna (TUR) beat Nikita Bortnichek (RUS) & Ruslan Serazhetdinov (RUS) 6-3 4-6 11-9.

Erin Holland praises truck-style commentary box



LAHORE: Cricket presenter Erin Holland has expressed her love for the intricately decorated commentary box which was created specifically for the Lahore-leg of the HBL Pakistan Super League (PSL). The commentary box is shaped like a truck and has been covered with the traditional truck design which is decorated with floral ornaments and abstract version of butterflies. Erin took it to Twitter and labeled the unique commentary box as the "prettiest" one. The Australian presenter has often expressed her love for Pakistan and the league Pakistan Super League. She regularly shares stories, pictures, and snippets on her social media accounts. On the last day of action from the Karachi-leg, Erin was seen holding an appreciation banner at the National Stadium Karachi. — Sports Desk

Bundesliga mulls new play-offs format

WEB DESK

BERLIN: As Bayern Munich continues their march towards a tenth successive Bundesliga title this weekend, the German top-flight has been gripped by a debate about whether to introduce end-of-season play-offs to make the league more exciting. Julian Nagelsmann's Bayern are currently nine points clear at the top of the table, a lead they are expected to defend when they travel to minnows Bochum on Saturday. With the league now facing another year without a serious title race and a decade of dominance from the Bavarian giants, questions are being asked about the possibility of a new format. "There are no taboos for me. If play-offs will help us, then we'll talk about play-offs," new German Football League CEO Donata Hopfen told Bild newspaper in an interview last Sunday. On Wednesday, she got some unlikely support from Bayern, the club who would in theory have most to lose from a new format. "A format with semi-finals and a final would mean more excitement for the fans, so it makes sense to explore these ideas. We're always open to new suggestions," Bayern CEO Oliver Kahn told Kicker magazine. German football decided its champions via a system of regional leagues and national play-offs until the Bundesliga was created in 1963, and smaller European leagues such as the Belgian Pro League have introduced a play-off system in recent decades. The Bundesliga would be the first major European league to introduce such a format, however, and the suggestion has also been met with scepticism in some quarters. German supporter advocacy group "Unsere Kurve" flatly rejected the proposal on Thursday, arguing that stricter financial regulations and fairer distribution of TV money were a better way to improve competition.

GB Scouts clinches National Ski Championship

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Gilgit Baltistan Scouts clinched the winners trophy of 29th edition of National Ski Championship-2022 organised by Winter Sports Federation of Pakistan (WSFP) with the collaboration of Pakistan Air Force (PAF) here at PAF Ski Resort, Naltar. Chairman Pakistan Aeronautical Complex Air Marshal Muhammad Mughees Afzal who was the chief guest of prize distribution ceremony also witness the final competitions of 29th National Ski

Championship. Addressing the ceremony, the chief guest Air Marshal Muhammad Mughees Afzal appreciated the efforts of PAF and WSFP for the promotion of winter sports in Pakistan. He also congratulated all stakeholders for successfully holding the mega event. The Chief Guest also awarded medals among the winning players. Gilgit Baltistan Scouts clinched the winner trophy of 29th National Ski Championship-2022. In the Giant Slalom category, Zahid Abbas, Mir Nawaz and Waqas Azam of Gilgit Baltistan Scouts were

awarded Gold, Silver and Bronze medals respectively. The 5th Snowboarding Championship gold medal won by Khalid Hussain of Gilgit Baltistan Winter Sports Association, Silver medal was earned by Zahid Abbas of Gilgit Baltistan Scouts and Bronze medal was awarded to Ali Hasnain of Hindukash. Earlier, Air Vice Marshal Imran Majid, Air Officer Commanding, Federal Air Command said in his address that PAF is fully committed to not only promote Skiing in Pakistan but also train budding players for participation in international winter sports events.



Yerevan distorting new UNESCO mission agreement

UNESCO emphasized that the Azerbaijani lands were under the occupation of Armenia, and admitted that Armenia prevented the visit

NEWS DESK

BAKU: Baku has said that Yerevan is attempting to misinterpret a recently struck agreement on UNESCO missions to Azerbaijan and Armenia. "The Armenian Foreign Ministry is trying to distort the recently reached agreement on the visits of UNESCO missions to Azerbaijan and Armenia. We condemn the Armenian Foreign Ministry's new attempt to avoid the commitments that this state has accepted," the ministry said in a statement posted on its website on February 11. Despite Azerbaijan's repeated requests to UNESCO and countless letters, the organization's delegation was unable to arrive in the region due to Armenia. UNE-

SCO said this in its 2005 report, the ministry added. From the first day, Azerbaijan welcomed UNESCO's technical delegation, which is scheduled to visit the country. All preparations for it were agreed upon bilaterally by Azerbaijan and UNESCO, the report added. Thus, UNESCO emphasized that the Azerbaijani lands were under the occupation of Armenia, and admitted that Armenia prevented the visit. Concerning UNESCO's mission to Armenia, the Foreign Ministry stressed that Azerbaijan has constantly reminded UNESCO and the world community of the realities of the destruction of Azerbaijani cultural heritage in Armenia. "We consider it necessary to send a mission to Armenia to investigate the facts presented to UNESCO by the Azerbaijani side. We

hope that Armenia, as opposed to its previous policy, will create conditions for the UNESCO mission this time," the statement said. It underlined that Azerbaijani NGOs had recently given extensive information on the destruction, as well as images and other proof, to UNESCO. During a virtual conference on February 4, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev, French President Emmanuel Macron, European Council President Charles Michel, and Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan achieved an agreement on UNESCO missions to be sent to Azerbaijan and Armenia. Azerbaijani NGO leaders have asked UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay to send an expert group to Armenia to assess the current state of Azerbaijan's cen-

turies-old cultural and historical heritage, Azertag has reported. NGOs said that by pursuing a policy of both ethnic and cultural genocide, Armenia has purposefully erased all traces of Azerbaijanis, the historical and ancient residents of these territories, plundered, destroyed, embezzled and distorted the Azerbaijani people's cultural legacy. At the same time, ancient place names in these areas were changed with Armenian ones. "We provided a number of precise facts in our earlier appeals to UNESCO. For example, along with other facts, we have emphasized that the Blue Mosque, the Gala Mosque, the Shah Abbas Mosque, the Tapabashi Mosque, the Zal Khan Mosque, the Sartib Khan Mosque, the Haji Novruzali Bay Mosque, the Damirbul-

agh Mosque, the Haji Jafar Bay Mosque, the Rajab Pasha Mosque, the Mohammad Sartib Khan Mosque, the Haji Inam Mosque and more than 300 other mosques located in Armenia were deliberately destroyed, appropriated or used for other purposes in the early 20th century. Only the Damirbulagh Mosque functioned as intended until 1988, but it has now been completely demolished and replaced by a high-rise building," the statement added. It noted that over 500 Azerbaijani cemeteries in Armenia, such as Aghadada, Ashaghi Shorja, Gulbulagh and Saral have been destroyed. The tomb of great Azerbaijani poet Ashiq Alasgar, whose tombstone was erected in his native village in ancient Goycha district, was also destroyed.

WHO lauds Pak ...

FROM PAGE 01

the Omicron variant, Mahipala said that "even though it's just the flu, [people should] still be cautious". He further said that Pakistan faced fewer hospitalisations during the fourth wave of the pandemic as the country is making the vaccine accessible to everyone. "Pakistan is one of the countries to carry out genomic sequencing, while it has set up 100 testing labs within the duration of three months," said Mahipala, adding that the National Command and Operation Centre (NCO) and the Ministry of Health have shown "great response." He said that about 40% of the Pakistani population has been vaccinated, while 190 million overall — partial and complete — vaccinees doses have been administered to the citizens. "The donor agencies and the media have played a strong part in fighting against COVID-19," he added.

PM directs to expedite...

FROM PAGE 01

Khan in the chair. It was also informed that the number of Omicron patients receiving intensive care is 71 percent less than the fourth wave. Since yesterday, the number of positive cases decreased by 6.8 percent, while hospitalization and the need for intensive care did not increase, which is a positive trend? It was said that the new wave of Corona in Pakistan is causing an average of 42 deaths per day. Besides, the meeting was briefed on the progress made on the corona vaccine. It was said that 90 million out of 150 million population of over 12 years of age have been fully vaccinated so far and by this number will increase to 110 million by next month. In addition, 115 million people have received a single dose and will reach to 130 million by next month. At present, 61,329 teams are working for the first phase of Every Pakistani is Safe vaccination in the country and doses of 2.2 million vaccines are being administered daily. Vaccination Phase II will begin on 7th of the next month. Fifty nine percent of students between the ages of 12 and 17 have been fully vaccinated and 3.4 million people over the age of 18 have been given booster doses. The meeting was further informed that there is sufficient stock in the country for vaccination of the entire population.

100 shops, 200 stalls...

FROM PAGE 01

severe difficulties. Nonetheless, the District administration rushed to a spot and after negotiations with the protesting mob, assuring them their grievances and for financial assistance district administration would write to the provincial government. At this, the protestors opened the roads. Nonetheless, no untoward incident was reported and everything was settled amicably with the protesting mob.

Biden signs order to...

FROM PAGE 01

the Taliban and other groups named in earlier lawsuits. The Biden executive order said that even if the pending judgement allows \$3.5bn to go to the people of Afghanistan, another \$3.5bn would stay in the US and remain "the subject to ongoing litigation by US victims of terrorism". In a statement, the White House said the order is "designed to provide a path for the funds to reach the people of Afghanistan, while keeping them out of the hands of the Taliban and malicious actors". The Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan in August of 2021 prompted governments and international institutions to swiftly freeze Afghan Central Bank assets abroad, totalling about \$10 billion. About \$7 Billion of that was held in the US. The Taliban has repeatedly called on the US and other governments and institutions to release the funds, saying they were needed to stabilise Afghanistan's ravaged economy and prevent a humanitarian crisis.

Briefs

President Erdogan hails jabs for mild Covid-19

DNA

ANKARA: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan appeared in public for the first time since his infection with COVID-19 on Friday. Erdogan said he easily recovered from the infection, thanks to vaccines. Erdogan and his wife Emine Erdogan tested positive for coronavirus last week. The couple, suffering from mild symptoms, self-isolated at their home in Istanbul while the president continued his daily tasks, albeit remotely. After his doctors announced that the president tested negative on Thursday evening, the president left his residence for a meeting and for Friday prayers. The president performed prayers at a mosque in Üsküdar where his residence is located before speaking to reporters outside. "I overcame it very, very easily. It was certainly because of the vaccination. I had two doses of (CoronaVac, a Chinese-made inactive vaccine) and three doses of Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine. It only took a few days before my test turned negative," Erdogan said. He said he did not suffer from fatigue or similar symptoms during his bout with coronavirus. The president said his spouse had not recovered yet and remained in self-isolation. "I believe she will recover by Monday," Erdogan said.

Paris braces for 'Freedom Convoys'

PARIS: Thousands of protesters in "Freedom Convoys" were heading to Paris from across France on Friday, hoping to blockade the capital in opposition to Covid restrictions despite police warnings to back off. Inspired by Canadian truckers paralysing border traffic with the US, the French protesters have been setting off from Bayonne, Perpignan, Lyon, Lille, Strasbourg and elsewhere since Wednesday with the aim of converging on Paris by Friday evening. They include many anti-Covid vaccination activists, but also people protesting against fast-rising energy prices that they say are making it impossible for low-income families to make ends meet. "People need to see us, and to listen to the people who just want to live a normal and free life," said Lisa, a retired 62-year-old, as she joined a convoy of over 1,000 vehicles leaving Chateaubourg in the western Brittany region. Like many protesters, Lisa has been an activist in the "yellow vest" movement which erupted in 2018 over fuel prices, but then became a platform for many other grievances linked to economic hardship. The yellow vests have sometimes clashed with police, but Lisa said she hoped that the protests on Friday would go off peacefully. "It would really piss me off if things got out of hand," she told AFP. After spending a cold night in a parking lot, the drivers in Chateaubourg set off around 9:00 am (0800 GMT) in a long single file of trucks, passenger cars and campers, as sympathetic passers-by waved from bridges and wished them luck. - APP

12 dead in Chad clashes

N'DJAMENA: Twelve people have been killed in clashes between herders and farmers in southern Chad, where ethnic friction over land is common, the authorities said Friday. "A herder who was moving his animals was killed by farmers on Wednesday and in reprisal, herders armed with guns killed 11 farmers," the governor of Moyen-Chari province, Ali Ahmat Akhabach, told AFP by phone. The incident took place on Wednesday in the village of Sandana, about 550 kilometres (320 miles) south of the capital N'Djamena, he said. "The toll is 12 dead, and several armed people were arrested," Ahmat Akhabach said. "The situation is currently under control." In a statement, the Chadian Convention for Human Rights, an NGO, attacked what it called a "savage killing" and "the use of force... as a way to resolve" disputes. - APP



ISLAMABAD: Head of Mission Spouses Group visited National Agricultural Research Council farm on 10 February 2022. Photographed here with Chairman NARC. Madam Zlatomira Yurdakul headed the HMSG delegation to NARC. - DNA

Iran marks 43rd anniversary of revolution nationwide

President Ebrahim Raesi addressed the event during Friday Prayers in the Grand Mosalla mosque of Tehran. The Iranian nation overthrew the despotic regime of Pahlavi, which was fully supported by the US in the winter of 1979

WEB DESK

TEHRAN: Iranians from all walks of life have taken to the streets across the country to celebrate the 43rd anniversary of the Islamic Revolution, which overthrew the former US-backed Pahlavi regime in 1979. The celebrations began in Tehran and elsewhere at 9:30 a.m. local time (06:00 GMT), with motorbikes and cars driving through the streets in the Iranian capital toward the iconic Azadi (Freedom) Square. People were able to attend the rallies on foot in areas where fewer COVID-19 cases per capita have been recorded. Each year, the occasion is commemorated by nationwide mass rallies. However, this is the second year that health protocols changed the format of the rallies. On the eve of the 43rd anniversary, fireworks displays were performed in Tehran and other cities at 9:00 p.m. overnight, as people chanted Allahu Akbar (God is the Greatest) in an expression of support for the Islamic Revolution. More than 6,300 Iranian and some 200 foreign journalists, photographers, and cam-



eramen covered the Friday ceremonies. In Tehran, revolutionary songs played as marchers waved their national flags. Professional parachutists put on a live performance over the Azadi Square, depicting the Iranian flag in the capital's sky. People waived photos of Imam Khomeini, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah

Seyyed Ali Khamenei, and legendary General Qasem Soleimani, who was assassinated in a US terrorist attack in Baghdad two years ago, as well as the martyrs of the Revolution. Demonstrators also burnt the flags of the United States and the Israeli regime. President Ebrahim Raesi addressed the event during Friday Prayers in the Grand

Mosalla mosque of Tehran. The Iranian nation overthrew the despotic regime of Pahlavi, which was fully supported by the United States in the winter of 1979. The struggle against the shah regime reached full fruition on February 11, 1979. By December 1978, millions of Iranians had taken to the streets in protest against the policies of the shah - Mohammad Reza Pahlavi - on a regular basis. Imam Khomeini returned to Iran from exile on February 1, 1979. He was received by millions of people weeks after the departure of the shah in mid-January 1979. The collapse of the Pahlavi regime became certain on February 11 when the military renounced its loyalty to the shah and joined the Revolution. Marking the event, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman said the Iranian nation has made many sacrifices to safeguard its independence. "43yrs ago, the agelong struggle of our nation for self-determination, & a free & independent Iran ended in victory," Khatibzadeh wrote in a tweet on Friday. "Our nation has made many sacrifices to safeguard those values & principles. Our resolve to stand & strive for Iran's rights & interests remains unwavering," he added.

Turkiye's 2nd 'charity train' sets off for Afghanistan



DNA

ANKARA: The second "Kindness Train" carrying 920.8 tons of basic needs and humanitarian aid departed from Turkey for Afghanistan Friday with a farewell ceremony held at the Ankara Train Station. The aid campaign is being conducted with the contribution of civil society and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) under the coordination of Turkey's Disaster and Emergency Management Authority (AFAD) and the Turkish State Railways (TCDD), following President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's instructions to send a "train of kindness" to Afghanistan carrying humanitarian aid. In order to meet the basic needs of the people in Af-

ghanistan, the 45-wagon train is transporting aid that includes food, clothing, blankets, and health and hygiene products. The materials being sent by TCDD wagons will pass through Iran where they will be transferred to Turkmen wagons and will continue to Torghundi, Afghanistan's border station with Turkmenistan. The journey of the second Kindness Train is planned to take 11-12 days like the first one. Deputy Interior Minister Ismail Çatakli, who attended the farewell ceremony, emphasized in his speech that the Turkish nation has always extended a helping hand to the oppressed in the world at all times and is trying to do so today as well. The first "Kindness Train," the charity train carrying 750 tons of emer-

gency goods from Turkey to Afghanistan, reached its destination Monday. Turkish Red Crescent (Kızılay) head Kerem Kinik also visited Afghanistan last week and held high-level meetings to discuss the distribution of humanitarian aid among Afghans. "As the Turkish Red Crescent and Turkey, we will always continue to extend our helping hand to meet the needs of both the needy living in Afghanistan and the people who migrated from Afghanistan for economic reasons and are trying to establish a life elsewhere." The agency head also warned that the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan following the Taliban takeover and the possible migration wave it causes will affect all countries from Iran to Europe, adding: "We have to

Germany to use all means to prevent war in Europe

Scholz said he will travel to Ukraine and Russia next week, as part of diplomatic efforts to find a political solution to the crisis. "All this would serve what we'd like to achieve, to ensure peace in Europe, and it is worth the effort," he said

BERLIN: German Chancellor Olaf Scholz on Friday renewed his plea for diplomatic solution to crisis between Russia and Ukraine, and warned Moscow that any further aggression would incur severe costs. Scholz made the remarks during his speech in Federal Council (Bundesrat), the legislative body representing country's federated states. "It's our duty to prevent a new war in Europe. Our clear message to Russia is, any military aggression would have severe consequences," he said, adding that Germany and its Western allies have a united position on possible sanctions. "But at the same time, we will use all the opportunities to continue our (diplomatic) efforts, through bilateral talks between the US and Russia, NATO-Russia Council meetings, through the OSCE and the Normandy format talks," he added. Scholz said he will travel to Ukraine and Russia next week, as part of diplomatic efforts to find a political solution to the crisis. "All this would serve what we'd like to achieve, to ensure peace in Europe, and it is worth the effort," he said. Ukraine has been plagued by conflict in its eastern regions since March 2014 following Russia's invasion and annexation of Crimea. Moscow recently amassed more than 100,000 troops near Ukraine, prompting fears that the Kremlin could be planning another military offensive against its ex-Soviet neighbor. Russia has denied it is preparing to invade and accused Western countries of undermining its security by NATO's expansion towards its borders. The Kremlin also issued a list of security demands to the West, including a rolling back of troop deployments from some ex-Soviet states, and guarantees that Ukraine and Georgia will not join NATO. - DNA

Macron kept at distance from Putin

Table raised more eyebrows when Putin sat at a tiny table with the Kazakh president

MOSCOW: Russia on Friday said French President Emmanuel Macron was made to sit at an enormously long table for his talks with Vladimir Putin because he refused to take a Kremlin-performed Covid test. The leaders sat at opposite ends of an unusually long table in the Kremlin on Monday, when Macron came to Moscow with a mission to defuse fears of a Russian invasion of Ukraine. The table drew much ridicule online, and raised more eyebrows when Putin sat at a tiny table with the Kazakh president, a close ally, three days later. Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov said the decision to subject Macron to the huge table was taken after the French leader refused to take a Covid test performed by the Kremlin's medics. "Talks with some are being held at a long table, the distance (across the table) is about six meters," Peskov said. "It is linked to the fact that some follow their own rules, they don't cooperate with the host side," he said. In such cases, he said, the Kremlin has to take "additional sanitary protocol on protecting the health of our president and his guests." He said the decision on who is subjected to the long table is not political. - APP

Normandy format talks in Berlin end

BERLIN: Negotiations in the German capital Berlin between political advisers from Ukraine, Russia, France and Germany under the Normandy format ended without yielding any substantial results, Ukrainian presidential sources said early Friday. The second meeting of 2022, in which Ukraine was represented by Andriy Yermak, the head of the Office of the President, lasted over nine hours, said the Ukrainian presidency in a statement. Reiterating Ukraine's commitment to a political and diplomatic settlement of the ongoing tensions, Yermak said the country would continue to take measures to intensify the work of all existing negotiation formats in order to facilitate the peace process. All parties reaffirmed their willingness to continue negotiations in the Normandy format, the statement noted, adding the parties also agreed on the necessity to unblock the work of the Trilateral Contact Group. The Kremlin's Deputy Chief of Staff, Dmitry Kozak, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz's chief foreign policy adviser Jens Ploetner and French President Emmanuel Macron's diplomatic adviser Emmanuel Bonne were the other participants of the meeting who represented their countries. - APP

Thousands protest in Sudan to for civilian rule

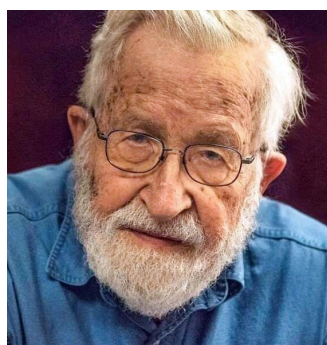
KHARTOUM: Thousands of Sudanese demonstrated in the capital Khartoum on Thursday to demand full civilian rule. The rally was called by the Resistance Committees, a protest group that led demonstrations against the military, and the Sudanese Professional Association (SPA), which spearheaded protests against former President Omar al-Bashir. "A complete civil state", and "Freedom, peace, and justice" were among banners carried by protesters, amid chants against the military, according to an Anadolu Agency reporter on the ground. Demonstrators also called for bringing those responsible for the death of protesters to accountability. Sudan's military has shared power with civilian groups since al-Bashir's ouster in 2019, but the situation escalated when the military dismissed Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok's transitional government on Oct. 25. Ever since, civilian groups have launched almost daily protests against the military, amid calls for the handover of power to civilians. - APP

Indian Muslims turn into a 'persecuted minority'

"The crimes in Kashmir have a long history," he said, adding that the state was now a "brutally occupied territory and its military control in some ways is similar to occupied Palestine"

WASHINGTON: Islamophobia has taken a "most lethal form" in India, turning some 250 million Indian Muslims into a "persecuted minority," Noam Chomsky, the world renowned scholar, author and activist, has said. "The pathology of Islamophobia is growing throughout the West - It is taking its most lethal form in India," Chomsky, who is also Professor Emeritus at Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), said in a video message to a webinar organized by Indian American Muslim Council (IAMC) on Thursday, a Washington-based advocacy organization. Apart from Chomsky, several other academics and activists took part in the webinar

on "Worsening Hate Speech and Violence in India." Chomsky also said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's right wing Hindu nationalist regime has sharply escalated the "crimes" in Kashmir. "The crimes in Kashmir have a long history," he said, adding that the state was now a "brutally occupied territory and its military control in some ways is similar to occupied Palestine." The situation in South Asia, Chomsky said, was painful in particular not because of what is happening but because of what is not happening. There was, however, hope and opportunities to solve South Asian torment but not for long, he added. Annapurna Menon, an



Indian author and lecturer at the University of Westminster, urged the international community to focus on the status of press freedom in India as under the BJP government, the situation has become a cause of concern. "The situation

on ground is extremely alarming as 4 journalists have already been killed in 2022, simply for doing their job," Ms. Menon said, adding journalists, especially women, have been exposed to all kinds of reprisals including harassment, illegal detention, police violence and sedition charges. "The situation in Indian Kashmir is even dire, where the journalists routinely face police questioning, ban on reporting, suspension of internet services and financial constraints in line with BJP's recent 'media policy'." The family of award-winning Srinagar-based photojournalist Masrat Zahra, was subjected to harassment and intimidation by the Indian Police as crackdown on the press in Indian-occupied Kashmir

continues to escalate. Fahad Shah, a renowned Kashmiri journalist who is the founder and editor of "The Kashmir Walla", was arrested recently by the police in Pulwama under terrorism and sedition laws, Ms. Menon pointed out. Similarly, Sajjad Gul, another journalist of "The Kashmir Walla", was also arrested in the beginning of February 2022. John Sifton, Asia Advocacy Director at Human Rights Watch (HRW) said the greatest threat to Indian constitution was the promotion of majority religion by Indian government at the expense of minorities. "BJP and its affiliates are making hateful remarks against Muslims to gain Hindu vote around elections," he said. - APP

Briefs

Govt to increase power tariff by Rs2.8 per unit

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The government has decided to further increase electricity tariff by Rs2.8 per unit. According to details, the authorities have geared up preparations to hike the prices in two phases from February to July this year. The decision was taken as per conditions of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for the collection of an additional Rs292 billion from consumers between February 2022 and June 2023. Earlier, Cabinet Committee on Energy headed by Planning and Development Minister Asad Umar, had approved the revised plan. It is to be mentioned here that the power sector circular debt during Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) reached the highest level of Rs 2,476 billion in the history of the country. The power sector circular debt increased by Rs 196 billion to a record high of Rs 2,476 billion during the first six months (July-December) of the Fiscal Year 2021-22 as compared to the same period of the previous year. The circular debt increased at a monthly average Rs 32.50 billion from July to December. Sources said that the volume of circular debt till August 2018 was Rs 1,148 billion which increased to Rs 2,476 billion by December 2021.

Two foreign journalists detained in Kabul

DNA

KABUL: Two international journalists who were on an assignment for the UN refugee agency have been detained in the Afghan capital, the agency has said. "Two journalists on assignment with UNHCR and Afghan nationals working with them have been detained in Kabul," the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Agency (UNHCR) said in a tweet. "We are doing our utmost to resolve the situation, in coordination with others," it said, adding it would not provide any further information. One of the journalists is Andrew North, a British former BBC correspondent who has covered Afghanistan for about 20 years and regularly travelled to the war-ravaged country to report on its deteriorating humanitarian crisis. "Andrew was in Kabul working for the UNHCR & trying to help the people of Afghanistan," his wife Natalia Antelava wrote in a tweet. "We are extremely concerned for his safety & call on anyone with influence to help secure his release." Taliban government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said the authorities were looking into the matter.

Pakistan reports 3,498 new Covid-19 cases

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan has reported 3,498 fresh cases of COVID-19 during the past 24 hours, lifting the overall number of confirmed cases to 1,477,573. According to the National Command and Operation Centre (NCOC), a total of 58,077 samples were tested, out of which 3,498 turned out to be positive, showing an infection rate of 6.02 per cent as compared to yesterday's 7.1%. As many as 39 patients succumbed to the viral disease in the past 24 hours, taking the death toll to 29,687. The NCOC said the number of patients in critical care in various hospitals across the country currently stands at 1,663. Since the outbreak of the pandemic, Pakistan has conducted overall 25,639,757 tests to diagnose the COVID-19 cases including 58,077 tests during the past 24 hours. 1,365,518 people have got their health back including 5,761 in a single day in Pakistan. Sindh remains top on the list with 555,920 COVID-19 so far since the outbreak of the pandemic in February 2020. Punjab follows with 493,478 cases, while KP has reported 207,820 coronavirus cases to date.

Qureshi, Uzbek FM reiterate vow to expand bilateral ties

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Foreign Affairs Shah Mahmood Qureshi Thursday telephoned Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan Abdulaziz Kamilov and exchanged views on bilateral relations and strengthening of cooperation in diverse fields. Pakistani Foreign Minister said the bilateral ties of Pakistan and Uzbekistan were based on shared history, religion and cultural affinity. The two ministers reiterated their desire to further expand relations between Pakistan and Uzbekistan. Qureshi appreciated the increase in high level contacts between the two countries. - APP



TAXILA: Ambassadors and High Commissioners of Indonesia, TRNC, Sweden, Japan, Thailand, Bangladesh, Maldives, Kazakhstan posing for a picture with Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi on the occasion of Orange Festival held in Taxila. - DNA

US warns Russia could invade Ukraine 'any time'

Russia is holding joint military exercises in ex-Soviet Belarus as well as naval drills in the Black Sea – military activities near Ukraine that have fuelled fears of an impending invasion. Russia denies any plans to attack

DNA

WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has said a Russian invasion of Ukraine could come "any time", as commercial satellite images show fresh Russian military deployments at several locations. "We're in a window when an invasion could begin at any time, and to be clear that includes during the Olympics," Blinken said on Friday. He brushed aside suggestions that Moscow would wait until after the Beijing Games, which end on February 20, to avoid upstaging ally China. "Simply put, we continue to see very troubling signs of Russian escalation," Blinken said after a meeting of counterparts from the Quad countries – Australia, India, Japan and the United States – in Melbourne. He insisted that the United

Joe Biden says US citizens should leave Ukraine now

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden has called on all American citizens remaining in Ukraine to leave the country immediately, citing increased threats of Russian military action. Mr Biden said he would not send troops to rescue Americans if Moscow invades Ukraine. He warned that "things could go crazy quickly" in the region. The Kremlin says it wants to enforce "red lines" to make sure that its former Soviet neighbour does not join Nato. UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson said on Thursday that Europe faced its biggest security crisis in decades amid the tensions. The US State Department urged Americans in Ukraine to leave immediately. "American citizens should leave now," Mr Biden told NBC News. "We're dealing with one of the largest armies in the world. It's a very different situation and things could go crazy quickly." Asked whether there was a scenario that could prompt him to send troops to rescue fleeing Americans, Mr Biden replied: "There's not. That's a world war when Americans and Russia start shooting at one another. We're in a very different world than we've ever been." - DNA

States "would strongly prefer to resolve the differences" with Russia "through diplomacy". "But at the same time, we've been very clear in building deterrence and building defence and making it clear to Russia that if it chooses the path of renewed aggression, it will face massive consequences." His comments come as President Joe Biden urged Americans in Ukraine to immediately leave the country, another strong public signal that war may be drawing closer. Washington-Moscow tensions are at their highest since the Cold War, with some US estimates saying around 130,000 Russian soldiers are grouped in dozens of combat brigades near the border with Ukraine. This satellite image provided by Maxar Technologies shows a close up of tents and a troop housing area in Russia's Kursk, approximately 110 kilometres to the east of the border with Ukraine.

Foreigner held for raping woman, possessing heavy arms

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A foreigner has been arrested in Islamabad on Friday under charges of possessing heavy arms and raping a woman. According to officials at the Kohsar police station, the foreign national has been arrested from a posh sector of Islamabad and heavy arms and ammunition have been recovered from his possession. Detailing the weapons, the police said they found an AK-47, MP-4 gun, MP-161 gun, a pistol and a large cache of ammunition from the house. "An investigation is being launched against the suspect," they said. The foreigner is also blamed for the rape of a woman and a separate case has been registered against it. The police shared that the woman who levelled rape allegations was working at the suspect's office for the last two years and last night went to demand his pending dues. The suspect, who has an import and export business, forcefully took the woman to his home and allegedly raped her.

FM Qureshi, CJCSC discuss national security matters

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi and Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Nadeem Raza met here Friday and discussed matters pertaining to national security. In a meeting held here at the

Joint Staff Headquarters in Rawalpindi, the issues related to regional situation also came under discussion. Earlier this week, Gen Nadeem Raza, while on official visit to Oman called on leadership of Oman including Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq bin Taimour Al Said, deputy prime minister for defence affairs, Gen Sultan bin Mo-

ammed 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.



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi calls on Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee General Nadeem Raza. - DNA

Khalistan group urges 'hijab referendum'

The protestors said that the heinous crime against the Sikh women motivated by gender, religious affiliation, and ethnicity is being covered up by Delhi's police commissioner – who has been hand-picked and appointed by Prime Minister Modi

MONITORING DESK

LONDON/NEW YORK: Citing hijab ban attempts as an existentialist threat to Muslims, pro-Khalistan group Sikhs For Justice (SFJ) has called upon Muslims in India to start a "hijab referendum" to carve out "Urduistan" in the areas of Rajasthan, Delhi, UP, Bihar, and West Bengal, where the Muslim majority will be able to "freely practise their religious beliefs." SFJ General Counsel Gurbatwint Singh Pannun, in a video message, termed the Modi-led government a "Hindu fascist regime" which is adhering to the concept of homogenised majority and cultural hegemony. "Today the ban is on hijab, tomorrow it will be azaan, namaz, and then Quran. Now is the time to stand up for 'Urduistan' – a Muslim-dominated country." Pannun has called on Indian Muslims to "learn from Pakistan" and assured Muslims of India that the

Indian RAW forms Tehreek-e-Taliban India

ISLAMABAD: Indian intelligence agency RAW has created another terrorist organization Tehreek-e-Taliban India (TTI) to start crack down on Muslims. The announcement of the formation of TTI in India has also come to light soon after international community exposed the anti-minority fascist policies of the Modi government. The Tehreek-e-Taliban India (TTI) announced its official activities following a meeting of its leaders in India at an unknown location. The TTI made the announcement on its official twitter handle. TTI is a project of Indian spy agency RAW through which a program has been made to get the Modi government out of pressure. Earlier, the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) was also organized by RAW and provided full financial, military and technical assistance to the proscribed outfit. - DNA

SFJ will help them organise and fund the "hijab referendum" movement to oppose the union of India. Meanwhile, pro-Khalistan Canadian Sikhs gathered at the Indian Consulates in Birmingham, Toronto, and Vancouver to express solidarity with

and ethnicity is being covered up by Delhi's police commissioner – who has been hand-picked and appointed by Prime Minister Modi. On January 26, 2022 – the Republic Day of India – a 20-year old Sikh woman, mother of a three-year-old child was brutally gang-raped, tortured, and then paraded through the streets of New Delhi while the country was jubilantly celebrating national Republic Day. One of the viral video footage shows the victim being beaten and abused by Hindu families, including women and children forcing the victim to walk while onlookers cheer. Pannun said: "The rape of Sikh women in the Indian capital is part of ongoing practice of using rape and sexual violence as a tool against women of religious and ethnic minorities. In 2019 alone, over 32,000 rapes were reported with majority of victims belonging to minorities."

Shehbaz likely to meet Chaudhry brothers

DNA

LAHORE: Opposition Leader in the National Assembly and PML-N president Shehbaz Sharif will likely meet the leadership of the Pakistan Muslim League-Q (PML-Q), a key ally of the PTI government at the centre and in Punjab, on Sunday. They said Shehbaz will visit the residence of the Chaudhry brothers and inquire after the health of PML-Q chief Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain. The current political developments and the opposition's planned move to bring a no-trust motion against Prime Minister Imran Khan in Parliament will likely come under discussion, the sources said. They said the PML-N leader will ask for the Chaudhry brothers' support for the move. The People's Party and the PML-N in a recent summit meeting of their leaders had agreed to establish contacts with the government allies. On Feb 7, former president and Pakistan People's Party (PPP) co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari had met with the Pakistan Muslim League-Q (PML-Q) leadership in Lahore. PML-Q chief Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain, Punjab Assembly Speaker Parvez Elahi, Moonis Elahi, and federal minister Tariq Bashir Cheema were present in the meeting. During the meeting, the current political situation came under discussion.

All efforts to send Shehbaz to jail failed: Marriyum

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The PML-N spokesperson on Friday repeated her claim that not a single charge could be proved against the Opposition Leader in the National Assembly and PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif. Addressing a presser in Islamabad, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz spokesperson Marriyum Aurangzeb said when the government failed to get Shehbaz convicted on the basis of a story published in UK's Daily Mail; it tasked the NCA with finding proofs against him so that he could be sent to jail. "Ex-FIA DG Bashir Memon was asked to file a case against the Sharif family," the PML-N spokesperson said, and added what happened to former adviser to prime minister on accountability and interior Shahzad Akbar was a lesson for the officials presently investigating graft charges against the PML-N president. "Mr. Imran Khan, once you are out of the corridors of power, you will not be on roads rather you will go straight to jail," Marriyum claimed. PML-N spokesperson accused Prime Minister Imran Khan of convening meeting of his aides in order to direct them to spit venom against the opposition parties. She was of the view that frequent transfers of the Punjab government officials had to do with speeding up 'witch-hunt' against Shehbaz.

IHC declares Gandapur, Shah Muhammad eligible for polls

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Friday declared Umar Amin Gandapur and Khyber Pakhtunkhawa's minister Shah Muhammad as eligible to contest the elections while turning down the decision of Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). However, the court upheld the decision regarding imposing fine on Ali Amin Gandapur. Chief Justice Athar Minallah announced the judgment on petitions of Umar Amin Gandapur and Shah Muhammad against the decision of ECP. Chief Justice remarked that first the ECP had to impose fine on Umar Amin, adding that the step of disqualification come after it. How could the ECP bypass the phase of fine, he said. The court, subsequently, allowed Umar Amin Gandapur to participate in Mayor's elections from Dera Ismail Khan. The court also turned down the decision of ECP for declaring Shah Muhammad Khan as disqualify for a period of five years in a complaint regarding creating disorder during local body elections in Tehsil Bakakhel. The court, however, upheld the decision of ECP for disqualifying Mamoon ur Rashid for elections.

Russian minister says UK-Russia ties 'close to zero'

MOSCOW: Russia's Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu said Friday Moscow's ties with London were at a low point as he met with UK Defence Secretary Ben Wallace for rare talks amid soaring tensions over Ukraine. "Unfortunately, the level of our cooperation is close to zero and about to cross the zero meridian and go into negative, which is undesirable," Shoigu said in remarks carried by Russian news agencies. He said he hoped for talks "without any escalation and raising the temperature even higher" in relations between Russia and the NATO bloc. Shoigu also accused the West of "gorging" Ukraine with weapons. "It is coming from all sides and it is done publicly. It is done demonstrably. Not entirely clear why," he said. - APP