



Islamabad POST

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President Joe Biden's order on Afghan fund release an atrocity

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Washington eyes still on North Korea

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Raheem Sterling hat-trick extends City's lead at top

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Briefs

Angry mobs can't be left unchecked

DNA

LAHORE: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Sunday said that angry mobs across country cannot be left unchecked. Addressing the unfortunate incident of Khanewal, the PPP leader said that such incidents are threat to the morals of whole society. Bilawal said that the incident that took place in Mian Channu's area of Tulambha is shameful for the whole country, such incident are thought provoking. The government must ensure to take strict action against those found guilty in the incident.

Media must project Sehat Card benefits

FAISALABAD: State Minister for Information & Broadcasting Farrukh Habib has said that the media must fulfil its social and moral responsibilities by projecting the Sehat Card initiative, so that people could benefit from it through free treatment in hospitals of their choice. He was talking to the media on Sunday after visiting Mian Muhammad Trust Hospital. He also asked the patients at the hospital who were getting treatment through Sehat Card at the hospital. He interacted with a patient who complained that she had deposited Rs 3000 as admission fee in the hospital. - APP

Afridi withdraws from PSL

LAHORE: Pakistan Super League's (PSL) franchise Quetta Gladiators suffered on Sunday a huge blow when the veteran all-rounder and former Pakistan cricketer Shahid Afridi announced to withdraw from the league midway. Afridi's announcement came hours after the Gladiators' win against Islamabad United. In a video message released after the match, the Pakistani sixer king said that his body isn't allowing him to continue playing. - APP

Engaging with Taliban only option: Imran

The Prime Minister says that sooner or later, the Taliban will have to be recognised by the world



SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan on Sunday said that there is "no other alternative to Taliban in Afghanistan," so the "only option the world has right now is to engage with the Taliban for things to move forward." In an exclusive interview with Faraed Faraed Zakaria for CNN, the premier talked about Pakistan's diplomatic relations with the new Taliban government in Afghanistan, the current state of the war on terror, and other issues. PM said that sooner or later, the Taliban will have to be recognised by the world as it is about the well-being and future of about 40 million Afghans. "Forty million people in Afghanistan are in dire straits because of the ongoing situation

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Afghan FM in Qatar in bid to unlock Afghan aid

DOHA: A Taliban delegation arrived in Doha Sunday in a new bid to convince governments to provide humanitarian aid, six months after the hardline Islamists toppled Afghanistan's Western-backed regime, officials said. The delegation, led by Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi, will meet with the EU delegation in Doha, diplomatic missions and officials from Gulf countries, the Taliban's foreign ministry said on Twitter. Their arrival in Doha was confirmed by international sources including a spokesman for the British government, and the trip comes as Afghanistan's aid-starved economy sinks deeper into an unprecedented crisis. The latest bid to unlock aid follows meetings in Oslo late last month between representatives of the Taliban and governments that heavily bankrolled Afghanistan's previous government, which imploded in the face of a Taliban military offensive in mid-August. The Taliban government has yet to gain formal recognition from any country and the UN says that half of Afghanistan's 38 million people face food shortages. - APP

Opposition has no guts to bring no-trust motion

Fawad says Bilawal relying on JUI-F chief for the survival of his politics

YOOSAF BHUTTA

MANDI BAHAUDDIN: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain Sunday came hard on the opposition for another attempt to oust the democratically elected government, saying, "It has no guts and prowess to bring a no-trust motion." The opposition, he added, had made such an abortive bid earlier and its current endeavour would also meet the same fate. "The no trust move can succeed only when the opposition parties are standing on their own feet, but not through beseeching, entreating or hatching conspiracies," the minister said in a media talk here. Fawad said the very next day of their announcement, he had challenged the opposition to table the no-confidence motion. How-

ever, they had not yet given any date for the purpose as they had preempted their defeat. Pakistan, he said, could not be handed over to Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and Maulana Fazlur Rehman, who did not have any political prowess. The people could not be deceived any more as they had tried them earlier. The Pakistan Peoples Party, the minister said, had never done 'religious politics', but its Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari now stood by Maulana Fazlur Rehman who, he believed, could bring out students of seminars for the public meetings and long marches. Bilawal knew that his party was no more a crowd puller and, therefore, he was relying on the Jamiat Ulema-e Islam-Fazl chief for the survival of his politics, he added. The minister held Asif Ali Zardari and Nawaz Sharif responsible for relegating their once mainstream political parties to regional ones, and said now their last hope

Continued on Page 06

Flights to Ukraine halted or redirected

NEWS DESK

MOSCOW: Some airlines have canceled or diverted flights to Ukraine amid warnings from the West that an invasion by Russia is imminent despite intensive weekend talks between Moscow and Washington. In an hourlong call Saturday with Russian President Vladimir Putin, President Joe Biden said an invasion of Ukraine would cause "widespread human suffering" and that the West was committed to diplomacy to end the crisis but "equally prepared for other scenarios," the White House said. It offered no suggestion that the call diminished the threat of an imminent war in Europe. The White House said Biden would talk with Zelensky later Sunday. On Friday, Biden's national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, warned that U.S. intelligence shows a Russian invasion could begin within days. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has played down invasion concerns, urging the country to remain calm. The U.S. picked up intelligence that Russia is looking at Wednesday as a target date, according to a U.S. official familiar with the findings.

U.S. says diplomacy still open

WEB DESK

DONETSK: The United States said diplomacy could still resolve a standoff with Moscow over Ukraine but added that the risk of a Russian invasion was high enough to warrant pulling U.S. embassy staff out of Kyiv. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken was speaking after talks on Saturday with Japanese and South Korean counterparts, following Washington's warning that Russia's military, which has more than 100,000 troops massed near Ukraine, could invade at any moment. Moscow denies having any such plans.

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LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) President Shehbaz Sharif in a meeting with Pakistan Muslim League Quaid (PML-Q) top leaders Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain and Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi at their residence. - DNA

Iranian Minister due in Pakistan today



DNA

ISLAMABAD: On special invitation of Minister for Interior Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed, Iranian Interior Minister Dr. Ahmed Vahidi will arrive in Pakistan on Monday. Sheikh Rashid Ahmed will receive the distinguished guest at Noor Khan Air Base, said a statement issued by the Ministry of Interior here Sunday. During his one-day visit to Pakistan, the Iranian Interior Minister would hold meetings with key government officials. The Iranian Interior Minister would also call on Prime Minister Imran Khan. The Iranian Interior Minister along with his delegation would meet Pakistani counterpart Sheikh Rasheed Ahmed. Talks would be held on Pak-Iran border management and prisoner exchange, the statement further said. Earlier this month, The Saudi interior minister had arrived in Islamabad along with a delegation on a day-long visit, and called on the prime minister after meeting with his Pakistani counterpart, Sheikh Rashid, and President Dr Arif Ali.

Shehbaz Sharif seeks Chaudhry brothers' support

Shehbaz arrived at the residence of PML-Q top leaders after 14 years

ABID RAZA

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) President Shehbaz Sharif has held a meeting with Pakistan Muslim League Quaid (PML-Q) top leaders Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain and Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi at their residence in Lahore on Sunday. Shehbaz Sharif, the Opposition Leader in the National Assembly, arrived at the residence of PML-Q top leaders where he was welcomed by Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi. It is after 14 long years that Shehbaz has visited Chaudhry Shujaat and Chaudhry's Pervaiz Elahi's Gulberg residence. Both Sharifs and Chaudhrys, who

Continued on Page 06

No-confidence move a failed attempt: Asad

STAFF REPORT

BAHAWALPUR: Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives Asad Umar said on Sunday that the Pakistan Democratic Movement's (PDM) planned move of a



Continued on Page 06

Lawmaker's office triggers clashes in Sheikh Jarrah

WEB DESK

JERUSALEM: Fierce clashes have broken out between Palestinians and Israeli police in the flashpoint neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah in the occupied East al-Quds, after a far-right Israeli lawmaker opened an office in the area. A video surfaced on social media on Sunday, showing Israeli settlers, under the protection of the regime's forces, throwing chairs at Palestinians after

Itamar Ben Gvir set up his office on a Palestinian-owned land in the restive neighborhood, Palestine's official Wafa news agency reported. Ben Gvir's provocative move came despite mounting tensions over the forced eviction of Palestinian residents there. He told reporters in Sheikh Jarrah on Sunday that he would remain there until police looked after what he called the security of the settlers. Last night,

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Mob lynches man over blasphemy allegation - Page 08

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Long march to put last nail in govt coffin: Kaira

Says PPP workers have a history of presenting immense sacrifices for the party cause

DNA

LALAMUSA: Former Chairman Municipal Committee Lalamusa and Tehsil Nazim Kharian Nadeem Asghar Kaira has urged PPP workers to do their best in order to make the long march a complete success. He said PPP long march will fix last nail in the coffin of the incumbent government.

Nadeem Kaira expressed these views while speaking during a workers convention held in Kharian. Prominent PPP leaders from Punjab attended the convention. The convention was organized in connection with the long march preparations.

Nadeem further said we have to accord



a rousing welcome to our leader Bilawal Bhutto Zardari when he arrives in our cities adding PPP workers have a history of presenting immense sacrifices for the party cause and this time too they need to rise to the occasion.

The PPP leader said prices of daily use items were taking a heavy toll on the poor masses who had no option but to do ways with their lives. Nadeem said the deal with IMF had adversely affected the Pakistan economy adding govt did not take opposition parties into confidence before signing a deal with the International Monetary Fund.

He added, people were not ready to give more time to this government therefore they wanted it to dislodge sooner rather than later.

PPP long march this month, he said, would surely help get rid of the government. He appealed to the masses to take part in the long march in large numbers.

Bride, groom leave wedding to cast vote

PESHAWAR: Leaving the wedding ceremony, the bride and groom reached the polling station to cast their votes during the ongoing Re-Polling in all 13 districts of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including Peshawar on Sunday. The bridegroom cast his vote at Afridi Garhi polling station Peshawar City.

Talking to APP, Hamza said he is going to cast his vote for the first time. "I will vote first and then I will eat my 'Walima' with the guest," he added. Voting is a national duty, so it is most important, the bridegroom Hamza replied to a question.

Similarly, three brothers wearing identical clothes at Gulbar Polling Station including Shekhar, Amjad and Owais cast their votes and such gestures attracted many present on this occasion at the Polling Booth wherein they were in identical clothes.

However, the re-polling process is being continued peacefully in the city with foolproof security arrangements have been made in and around the polling booths for the voters to exercise the right of vote. A total of 7 polling stations are being re-pollled and the polling stations include four male and three female polling stations have been set up with more than 11,000 male and female voters exercising their franchise.

A special security plan has been drawn up for the re-polling. The election process is being closely monitored by the officials of the security forces including Police, Jawans of Pakistan Army and FC. There are clear instructions for strict action against those who disrupt the election process. The CCPO is giving instant instructions on security and other important issues. - APP

Journalist's death bereaves KP CM's Aide

PESHAWAR: Special Assistant to KP CM on Information and Public Relations (IPR), Barrister Mohammad Ali Saif has expressed profound grief and sorrow over the sad demise of the Wana based senior journalist, Javed Noor Wazir, said an official handout issued here on Sunday morning. In a condolence message, the Special Assistant said that he had recently talked to late Javed Noor and inquired about his health. He said that the journalistic services of Javed Noor Wazir for tribal districts will be remembered for long period.

The Special Assistant prayed for the eternal peace of the departed soul of late Javed Noor Wazir and fortitude to his bereaved family. Late Javed Noor Wazir was a cardiac patient and was under treatment in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of the Mufi Mahmood Hospital D.I. Khan. - APP

Security guard of hospital gunned down in Gujrat

YOUSUF BHUTTA

GUJRAT: Security guard of a private hospital was gunned down by unidentified persons Saturday night. It is reported that one Kareem Khan resident of district Swat (KPK) was working as a security guard in Dr. Faakhra Masud's private hospital at Qamar Sialvi road. He was gunned down by some unidentified persons on Saturday night when he was performing

his duty. It is further learnt that the assassins took away his motorbike with them. Police have registered a case on complaint of the widow of the slain guard Mst. Pasheena Bibi. She told the police that a few days ago nephew of her slain husband argued with him and threatened him of dire consequences. She suspected that the murder was allegedly committed by the nephew of her slain husband. A division police have registered

a case under sections 302, 109 and 404 Cr.P.C.

Cash, jewelry looted

A woman was deprived of cash and jewelry by unidentified robbers in broad daylight here yesterday. It is reported that one Shaista Bibi resident of Shahdula Road was walking through the road in broad daylight when two unidentified robbers snatched his handbag containing cash and jewelry worth rupees 1.63 lakh. Police have registered a case.

Violators of sound system law to be punished

ATTAULLAH CHEEMA

GUJRAT: Government of Punjab pursuing public complaints against the use of loudspeakers by educational institutions particularly private schools that schools use loudspeakers for different activities which causes not only an annoyance but also noise pollution in the vicinity. Further, this malpractice harshly affects the elderly and sick persons. Therefore all those concerned be aware of the law imposed in this matter, according to which section (3) of the Punjab sound system (regulation) act 2015 there is a prohibition on the use of the sound system. The act states that it shall be unlawful for any person to use or assist in using, permit to allow the use of a sound system that generates any loud, unnecessary or unusual noise or any noise, annoy, disturb, injures or endangers the comfort, repose, health, peace or

safety of persons in or beyond the vicinity. All the chief executive officers (district education authority) in the province have been directed to make sure the compliance of the law as well directives of the Punjab government.

NHA to repair motorcycle ramp

The people of Lalamusa has at last been able to convince the National Highways Authority to rectify the existing faulty steep motorcyclist RAMP erected with overhead bridge, railway road chowk on GT Road Lalamusa. Following public/complaints, demands regarding faulty structural existing steep motorcycles ramp, which had resulted in the death and injuring of many people, the NHA has accorded the approval of engineers estimate of amounting to Rs.13,950,302, for the extension of the steep motorcyclist. This project shall be undertaken through RMA, under the structural maintenance budget. The NHA source divulged the other day.

MoU signed between IoBM and PIAIC



KARACHI: A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between IoBM and the Presidential Initiative for Artificial Intelligence & Computing (PIAIC) on Saturday. As an academic partner, IoBM will provide logistics support including its auditorium to PIAIC that will offer courses related to AI and computing. The MoU was signed by Mr. Talib S. Karim, President IoBM, and on

behalf of PIAIC, the signatory was Maulana Bashir Farooqui, Chairman, Saylani Welfare International Trust (SWIT). Present on this occasion were Mr. Zia Khan, COO PIAIC and Mr. Muhammad Ghazzal, COO SWIT. IoBM's Ms. Sabina Mohsin, Executive Director; Dr. Tariq Rahim Soomro, Acting Rector; and Dr. Shujaat Mubarak, Dean CBM also graced this occasion with their presence. - Staff Report

Two secretariats of South Punjab

The people of South Punjab now realize that the game of South Punjab Secretariat was played only to divert their attention from Seraiki and Bahawalpur Province

MUMTAZ AHMED BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The people of South Punjab became shuttlecocks. Instead of resolving the issues, the South Punjab was divided into two parts, half in Multan and half in Bahawalpur. In the cycle of appeasing the people of Seraiki Province and Bahawalpur Restoration Province, the government got angry with both of them. Out of 44 departments in South Punjab, only 15 departmental offices were set up, of which 8 were in Multan and 7 in Bahawalpur. Fifteen secretaries including Additional Chief Secretary have set up offices in South Punjab. Seven secretaries sit in Bahawalpur and eight in Multan. While 44 departments are functioning in Punjab Civil Secretariat. Additional Chief

Secretary South Punjab sits for three days in Bahawalpur and three days in Multan and one day in DG Khan. It is also not known for what purpose he will have to go to Multan and for what purpose he will have to travel to Bahawalpur. Chief Engineer Highway, Chief Engineer Building (South) & Chief Engineer Public Health Engineering (South) Lahore. Chief Engineers sit in their offices in Lahore Similarly, the offices of secretaries of various departments are present in Multan or Bahawalpur but the offices of their Directors Generals are in Lahore. The people of South Punjab have become shuttlecocks. People from Multan are going to Bahawalpur for any government work and people from Bahawalpur have to go to Multan. Many people still do not know where the secretary of the depart-

ment sits. Out of 44 departments, only eight are in Multan and seven in Bahawalpur. Even if people find the office of the secretary, then for more work they have to go to Lahore to meet the junior officers of the secretary treasury. Out of 44 departments, if 15 departments have to work here, then the remaining 29 departments still have to go to Lahore for work. Earlier, the people of South Punjab had to go to Lahore where all the offices of the Secretariat were present and people could do their work easily. Now two civil secretariats are being constructed in South Punjab, one in Multan and the other in Bahawalpur. No effort was made to create Seraiki province, which was played cunningly by the people of South Punjab, nor was any step taken for the restoration of Bahawalpur prov-

ince. By setting up offices of only a few secretaries in South Punjab, an attempt was made to show that the government has taken steps to create Seraiki province or restore Bahawalpur province. In fact, the people of South Punjab have been given a lolly pop in the form of South Punjab Secretariat which is humiliating their work instead of being on their doorstep.

The people of South Punjab now realize that the game of South Punjab Secretariat was played only to divert their attention from Seraiki Province and Bahawalpur Province. People have started asking all the politicians of South Punjab including Khurosh Bakhtiar, Shah Mehmood Qureshi and Tariq Bashir Cheema what your government promised to make South Punjab a province in 100 days. There was no need for the lame South Punjab Secretariat.



KARACHI: Sindh Madarssatul Islam University (SMIU) VC Prof. Dr. Mujeebuddin Sahrai, keenly reading a credible Pakistan's first diplomatic Daily "Islamabad Post" here at his office. - DNA

DC wants daily updates on dengue situation

STAFF REPORT

LODHHRAN: Deputy Commissioner Captain (R) Shoaib Ali has said that all users deployed for dengue prevention should ensure the functionality of their android mobile phones and upload progress daily. In this regard people uploading bogus data should correct themselves while all concerned departments should observe their responsibilities properly. He added that Health Department including all departments should take effective steps in elimination of dengue larva. He expressed these remarks while chairing the District Emergency Response Committee's meeting for dengue prevention.

In the meeting activities for dengue prevention done by Health Department and other concerned departments were reviewed, Deputy Commissioner said that indoor and outdoor hotspots should be monitored especially, he directed MS DHQ and THQ Hospitals to write CNIC, Cell number and Union Council while filling the details form of suspected dengue patients.

He asked to improve dengue surveillance in graveyards, he directed Municipal Officers to access their performance against set targets for cleaning of parks including surveillance of graveyards. He said that strict surveillance of sensitive locations should be done for the elimination of dengue larva. He added that for the public awareness organized dengue prevention campaign's positive results should be attained.

ANF recovers 9.600 kg hashish, held smuggler

PESHAWAR: Anti Narcotics Force (ANF) Peshawar on Sunday conducted an intelligence based operation and recovered 9.600 kilograms of hashish and arrested the smuggler. The ANF team on a tip off checked the alleged smuggler, identified as Ijaz ul Haq, resident of Orakzai near Garhi Qamardin Kohat bridge and recovered 9.600 kg hashish from his possession placed in a hand bag. The recovered narcotics was being smuggled from Peshawar to Punjab. Case has been registered, and further investigation is in progress. - APP

French Archaeologists distributes training certificates to students

NAZIR SIYAL

HYDERABAD: Shaheed Benazir Bhutto University of Veterinary and Animal Sciences (SBBUVAS), Sakrand Organised an award distribution ceremony among talented students who completed the training under the supervision of French Archaeologists here on Friday.

The Certificate ceremony was in connection to the visit of French Archeologists under the MoU signed two years ago, led by Dr. Marjan Mashkour at SBBUVAS.

Dr. David, Dr. Pascal Monge, and Dr. Laura Mankaa also were among the French Archeologists. The French Team distributed certificates to Miss Asma Ayoub Khilji, Mr. Mu-

hammad Awais Soomro, Miss Dua Memon, and Miss Noor Saba Memon.

The French Archaeologists praised the efforts of Worthy Vice-Chancellor Prof Dr Muhammad Farooque Hassan. Additionally, Dr. Marjan offered a Scholarship to Miss Asma Ayoub Khilji (Student) for higher studies at French University through Student Exchange Program.

Moreover, worthy vice-chancellor Prof Dr. Muhammad Farooque Hassan and Prof Dr. Zahid Iqbal Rajput paid thanks to Dr. David, Dr. Pascal Monge, and Dr. Laura Mankaa for their presence and Scholarship offers to the talented students of SBBUVAS and both sides agreed to work together on student and faculty exchange programs in near future.



Police to launch smart city project

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: Faisalabad city police have chalked out a comprehensive plan to launch "Smart City Project" in addition to constituting "FCCI-Police Liaison Committee" to improve the overall law and order situation in this district. Addressing the business community in Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) here today, the City Police Officer (CPO) Mr. Ghulam Mubashshir Mekan paid best tribute to the supportive role of business community and hoped that this cooperation will continue in the future for the best interest of this city and its real stakeholders. About the crime rate in Faisalabad, he said that this metropolis is facing multiple natures of crimes including terrorists' attacks. "160 police officers and Jawans have so far laid down their lives in line with their duty", he said and added that we are fully prepared to continue our efforts in order to reign in the criminal ele-

ments. He said that during recent past crimes were not properly registered to give the impression of peace but this government is now encouraging crime registration and maximum cases are reported through 15. He said that there are 42 police stations in Faisalabad. "Out of these, the crime rate is comparatively high in 11 police stations as compared to the remaining 31 police stations", he said and added that Millat Town, Sargodha Road, Madina Town, Mansoorabad, Batala Colony, Sadar and Civil Line etc are among those police station where crime rate is high.

44 patients under treatment in KTH

PESHAWAR: As many as 44 corona patients are under treatment in Khyber Teaching Hospital Peshawar wherein a total of 122 beds are allotted for corona patients, spokesman Sajad Ahmad said. He said that 44 patients infected with corona are being treated at Khyber Teaching Hospital and they have 28 ventilators reserved for corona patients. Eight patients of Corona in Khyber Teaching Hospital are in intensive care and ventilators, spokesman said. He said, 18 patients infected with Corona are undergoing treatment at HDU and a small amount of oxygen has been allocated for 31 beds on which 18 patients are undergoing treatment. - APP

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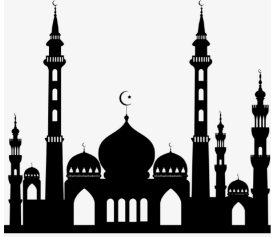
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Islamabad seeks broad-based ties with the US, says Masood

Pakistan wants enhanced economic ties with the US: Ambassador-designate

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Masood Khan, Pakistan's ambassador-designate to the United States had said Pakistan wants to enhance economic, investment and trade ties with the United States and that he will try his best to push the bilateral relations to new heights. He said Pakistan would build better mutual bilateral relationships between the two countries for which every option will be explored and the business community of both the countries will be taken on board for the purpose. Masood Khan said this while talking to the President US-Pakistan International Chamber of Commerce (USPICC) Muhammad Ahmed, Secretary-General USPICC Malik Sohail Hussain and founder member and director of the chamber Hasnain Kazmi. He said that business delegations from Pakistan to the US and from the US to Pakistan will be encouraged to boost bilateral trade, investment and joint ventures. The ambassador-designate



said that Pakistan desires broad-based and multi-dimensional relations with

the US and therefore the business community should utilise their best abilities to

wards further enhancement of Pakistan-US relations. The United States is Paki-

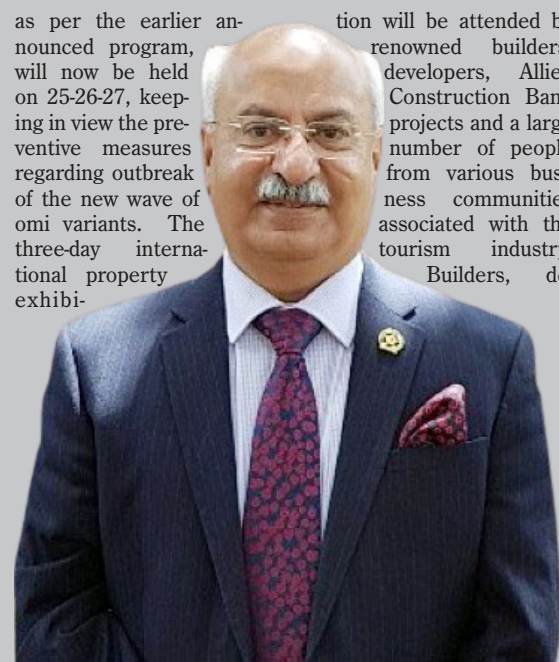
stan's top export destination and a strategic partner, and both countries know

the value of relationships across a number of fronts, Khan added. On the occasion, leaders of USPICC Muhammad Ahmed, Malik Sohail and Hasnain Kazmi appreciated the services of Masood Khan as Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, Pakistan's Ambassador to China, and President of Azad Kashmir and said that his efforts had exponentially pushed Pakistan's exports to China. They said that the Chairman of USPICC Siddique Sheikh and President Sajjad Qamar are very well-connected with Senators, representatives and big business houses. They are waiting for his arrival in the US so that he can assist him in cementing bilateral economic ties to advance the shared agenda and common goals of prosperity. The USPICC officials informed that a delegation of Pakistan entrepreneurs from various sectors will soon visit the US to explore trade and investment opportunities on which Masood Khan assured all-out cooperation.

Property exhibition in Peshawar from March 25

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The exhibition will be attended by renowned builders, developers, Allied Construction Bank projects and a large number of people from various business communities associated with the tourism industry. Builders, developers, real estate agents and companies associated with the real estate sector will be able to display their products exclusively in the exhibition, said Muhammad Khurshed Barlas, Chairman Pakistan Association of Exhibition Industry. He said it would be a great opportunity for investment. This exhibition will play an important role in terms of investment in Pakistan which will boost the economy of Pakistan as major construction companies across the country would participate. He said that the main objective of the expo is to promote construction and business activities in this epidemic of Corona so that the country could move forward on the path of development.

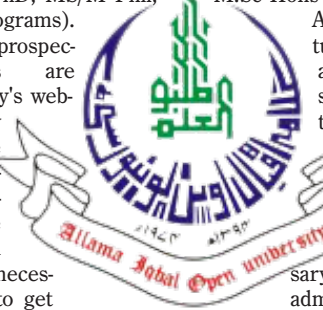


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AIOU closes admissions for MS/MPhil and PhD today

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has set February 14 (Monday) as the last day for admission in the spring 2022 semester including PhD, MS/M.Phil, M.Sc Hons and BS (face to face programs). Admission forms for these programs are available on the University's website. Students can apply through online mode. Admission in BS programs will be purely on basis. It is necessary to get entry test to get admission in M.Sc Hons, MS/M.Phil and PhD. Entry tests are scheduled to be held from 17th to 24th February. The first merit list will be displayed on the website on February 25 whereas the fee submission deadline is March 3. The second merit list will be uploaded on March 4 and the last date for fee submission will be March 11. Special care will be taken for transparency. It is pertinent to mention here that admissions in Matric, FA and I.Com will continue till February 22. Students have the facility to apply manually or through online mode in these programs. In case of online application, it will not be necessary to send the printed admission form to the university.



Police speeds up efforts against violators

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) has accelerated its efforts against those involved in violation of traffic laws especially lane violations (by Bikers), under age bikers, seat belt violations, and not following parking rules. ITP is working on hastening actions against traffic violators under special directives of Inspector General Police (IGP) Islamabad Muhammad Ahsan Younis to reduce accidents and to facilitate the smooth flow of traffic. Senior Superintendent of Police SSP (Traffic) Mazhar Iqbal has advised all zonal DSPs and inspectors to take strict action against all the motorists violating traffic rules, including lane violations, seat belt violations and no-parking violations. ITP has constituted special squads to conduct operations throughout the city, and its education wing will work to improve road safety awareness for the public on several highways of the capital. SSP Traffic has instructed officers to deal with the citizens in a courteous manner as disrespect will not be tolerated and to take unbiased action against rule violators. He said that in-charge beat inspectors will be responsible for their jurisdictions and that strict departmental action will be taken against underperformers while those who work diligently will be rewarded for their efforts. The SSP (Traffic) Mazhar Iqbal has also appealed the citizens to follow traffic rules and assist ITP in maintaining traffic discipline in the city.

IESCO issues notice

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Electric Supply Company (IESCO) on Sunday issued a power suspension programme for Monday for various areas of its region due to necessary maintenance and routine development work. According to IESCO Spokesman, the power supply of different feeders and grid stations would remain suspended for the period from 09:00 AM to 02:00 PM, Adhi, Chatta Bakhtawar, Ghauri Garden, Suhdran Road, Khanna-II, Al-Noor Colony-II, Khanna East, Khanna Dak, Azad Shaheed, New Waheedabad, Burma, Dharek, Kohsar Valley, Brahma, Bahtar, Malhwali, Vani, Kharpa, City, Maniwal, Zeeshan Colony, Lakho, Lohi Bhair, Sohdran, G-9/2, Police Line, Falcon, Jinnah Camp, Noor Muhammad, Al Noor Colony, Kurry Road, Khurram Colony, Muslim Town, Shahpur, Rahara, PHA-1, Bahria Enclave, Treat Feeders, From 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., Lilla Town, Ahmedabad, Safdar Shaheed, Sanghoi, Nathwala feeders and surroundings.

Youth can get free digital skills training

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Admission for free E-Rozgaar Training Programme 2022 has been announced for unemployed youth of the Rawalpindi district. According to Center Manager, Muhammad Shuja, the applications are now open for free training of digital skills and freelancing under E-Rozgaar Training Programme 2022. He informed that the youngsters who have completed 16 years of education can get registered to become part of the training programme for free courses of E-Commerce, Technical, Content Marketing and Advertising, Creative Designing, Digital and Social Media Marketing. The students would be imparted three-month training for freelancing, profile making and order taking skills. He informed that the E-Rozgaar Centers were working here in COMSATS University and Rawalpindi Women University.

Member engineering CDA visits Rawal Dam Project

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In line with the directions of Chairman CDA, Member Engineering of Capital Development Authority (CDA) on Sunday visited CDA Facilitation Center and Rawal Dam Interchange project. On this occasion Officers of relevant departments were also present along with Member Engineering. Member Engineering CDA took a detailed look at

the progress made in the construction work in the projects. on this occasion Member Engineering was briefed that the best facilities are being provided to the people and in this connection lift is also being installed which is in the final stages of completion. Later, the Member Engineering along with the officers of the concerned departments also visited the Rawal Dam Interchange project and reviewed the progress of development works.

Free poultry training to begin on Feb 14

RAWALPINDI: Poultry Research Institute (PRI) would start a week-long, free poultry training program at Murree Road, Shamsabad here from Feb 14. According to Senior Research Officer, PRI, the training program would continue till Feb 18 from 9 am to 1 pm timings. Interested people can contact on 051-9292172 and take prospectus from PRI office to apply for the course. The applications can be submitted till Feb 14 in the office of Director PRI. - APP



ISLAMABAD: A view of construction work of Rawal Dam Flyover underway during development work in Federal Capital. - APP

'Cultural fabric synthesis of multicultural infusion'

– NIHCR Webinar on Discourse of History on Indo-Pak History from Antiquity to Modernity XV: Pakistani Culture & Cultural Narrative

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Culture is human interaction with nature and history; it is an adaptive mechanism, said Prof Emeritus Aslam Syed here on Sunday. Culture is the patterns of learned and shared behaviour and beliefs of a particular social or ethnic group. Humans in turn use culture to adapt and transform the world they live in, he observed while speaking a Webinar on Discourse of History on Indo-Pak History from Antiquity to Modernity XV:

Pakistani Culture and Cultural Narrative of Pakistan. Prof. Emeritus Aslam Syed has been serving the Centre for Religious Studies, Ruhr Universität, Bochum, Germany. He remained Chairman, Department of History, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad and also served the NIHCR as its Director. Responding to a question, Prof Syed said that the anthropological study of culture can be organized along two persistent and basic themes i.e. diversity and change. An individual's upbringing, and environment is what makes them diverse from other cultures. People's need to adapt and transform to physical, biological and cultural forces to survive represents the second theme, change. The Webinar arranged online by the National Institute of Historical and Cultural Research (NIHCR), Centre of Excellence, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, was attended by over 700 participants ranging from students, teachers and researchers to have greater insights into the valuable views of the guest speaker. Replying a question, Prof Syed said that cultural evolution occurred faster than biological evolution had significantly modified the effect of natural selection on humans. Over the last several hundred thousand years, we have developed new survival related cultural skills and technologies at a faster rate than natural selection could alter our bodies to adapt to the environmental challenges that confronted us, he said. It was the 34th consecutive session on the Discourse of History, a brainchild of the NIHCR Director Dr Sajid Mahmood Awan. This activity inculcates interest to learn more and more about history not only among students, scholars and

historians as well as among ordinary people belonging to any field of life to know about nations' ways of running their States in a journey from antiquity to modernity. Responding to a question, Prof Syed said that Pakistan has multi ethnicities and diversified culture. The area which now forms Pakistan attracted people from different parts of the world; these people came here and made this land their permanent homeland. The social system has emerged as a synthesis of Arab, Iranian, Greek, British and a number of other cultural impacts.

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Political storm clouds

THE opposition's decision to bring in a no-confidence motion against Prime Minister Imran Khan in the parliament has brought out the expected derision and challenges from the government. The opposition parties have not announced a date for the motion to be tabled, and it is expected that there will be a lot of background conversations and chatter before the PDM and the PPP finally agree on when they will look to ouster the government.

The opposition parties smell blood in the government's camp. The recent meeting with PTI's allies—PML-Q and MQM—will have given the opposition heart. With BAP also demanding a bigger share at the federal level, the government should be taking Friday's walkout from the Senate and BAP's concerns seriously, given that keeping its allies close will be the best strategy for the ruling party in the days to come.

The allies on their part have not committed to anything with the opposition. This means that the government has the time and the space to woo them back into its camp, but this might come at the cost of some concessions in the remaining tenure of the government.

The political temperature is likely to see an uptick in the days to come. The upcoming indictment of Shehbaz Sharif and his sons on February 18, alongside the planned rallies and marches are likely to give the opposition even more drive in its bid against the government. But its previous attempts to defeat the government in parliament have not worked. The setbacks in both houses will give the opposition benches pause, and lead to careful planning before a date for the no-confidence motion is announced. It is hoped that the opposition does its homework this time, to avoid the embarrassment of losing out in situations where a win seems guaranteed.

The government must not get overconfident either. It still has the time to bring its allies and any dissident parliamentarians back into its fold. The advantage is with the government simply because it has more to offer its allies. But this will require some cajoling and careful manoeuvring in the background.

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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



Possibility of war

THE situation in Ukraine is escalating badly to an alarming degree. The US State Department has ordered non-emergency US embassy staff to leave Ukraine amid rising tensions with Russia. Following this lead, a string of countries have joined the exodus of diplomats and citizens from Ukraine, while oil prices surged and US equities tumbled.

US power circles have been speaking of the possibility of a Russian invasion, that could spiral into aerial bombing in the Ukrainian capital. This is the worst-case scenario. It is also possible that this move by the US administration, of evacuating its diplomatic staff, is a way to put pressure on Russia to step down from its demands. Still the threat of war is there, and in a war, civilians will be collateral. Oil will likely hit \$120 a barrel and the global economy stands the risk of being radically altered if Russia invades Ukraine. The world cannot afford war in the Eurasian region.

Considering that the conflict includes NATO, the US and European countries, this will not be just a small border skirmish, but has the potential of becoming catastrophic. Both the Kremlin and the Western countries need to negotiate a better solution and stand down from their "all or nothing" positions.

The United States' claim that NATO poses no threat to Russia and its complete disregard of Russia's concerns is unreasonable, considering any country would be naturally worried for any militarisation near its borders. Similarly, Russia needs to respect Ukraine's sovereignty and utilise more soft-power diplomatic tactics rather than aggression. It is hoped that both Biden and Putin will be out of concern of the current alarming climate and their next negotiation turns out to be more fruitful.

Turkish gold conversion likely to falter on lack of public trust

James Dorsey

Ms. Esen, probably unwittingly, suggested that convincing Turks to convert their gold could prove to be an uphill battle

WHEN Turkish finance minister Nureddin Nebati this week announced plans to encourage households to convert their gold holdings into Turkish liras in a bid to shore up Turkish central bank reserves, he was targeting people like Esra G. Ms. G., whose last name has been abbreviated to preserve her anonymity, has had a life-long troubled relationship with gold. When she was barely three years old, her distaste for it as an adornment was already so strong that she dumped all her gold rings, bracelets, necklaces, and earrings into the Bosphorus.

Nonetheless, Ms. G. grew up to be an avid collector of gold, including an assortment of five- and 10-gram Credit Suisse coins. As a young woman, Ms. G. preferred antique silver jewelry and wouldn't wear gold but kept her gold collection under her pillow.

"Gold is a tradition. It grows out of a deep-seated distrust of governments and currencies and has been handed down from generation to generation. They didn't take money. They took gold," she said. "I'm a child of that system. ... I want the gold where I can touch it and feel it."

It is the many people like Ms. G. that Mr. Nebati is targeting. The minister told investors in London this week that he hoped his scheme would convert 10 percent of the estimated US\$250-300 billion worth of gold squirreled away in the homes and back yards of Turkey, much of it by women.

Ayse Esen, head of a leading Turkish gold refinery, shared Mr. Nebati's estimate. "We are aware of the fact that there is around 3,000-

5,000 tonnes of gold saved under mattresses, which amounts to an informal economy with a size of \$200-300 billion," Ms. Esen, CEO of Istanbul Gold Refinery (IAR), said. According to the World Gold Council, official Turkish gold reserves dropped from a high of 583 tonnes in July 2020 to 392 tonnes a year later.

Speaking to Sabah, a pro-government daily, Ms. Esen, probably unwittingly, suggested that convincing Turks to convert their gold could prove to be an uphill battle. She noted that a program launched ten years ago by the refinery and commercial banks had so far netted a mere 100 tonnes of hidden gold.

Lack of confidence in the government is only part of the problem. As important is the fact that much of Turkey's gold hoard is non-negotiable because it is held in the form of jewelry. Turkey's 40,000 jewelers turn approximately 150 tonnes of gold into jewelry a year.

Mr. Nebati reportedly told investors that some 30,000 gold shops would purchase privately held jewelry as part of his scheme and sell it to one of five government-contracted refineries that are believed to include IAR. The refineries would convert the jewelry into bullion that could be added to the central bank's reserves.

It's not clear why Mr. Nebati believes his scheme would work this time around when earlier attempts failed. One such effort involved creating a facility that allowed holders of gold to deposit it with banks in exchange for gold certificates that would have been negotiable on a gold exchange. Ms. G., the woman who doesn't like gold jewelry, vowed already decades ago that she would never trust a bank with her gold, even though she doesn't hesitate to deposit money in a bank.

She, like many Turks, is historically suspicious of authority, and many of them see hoarding gold not only as a safe investment but also as a reserve that can't be taken away from them. It also doesn't violate the Islamic ban on interest. In the early 19th century, Turks hoarded gold to evade Ottoman taxes, which were based on what taxpayers physically possessed when the tax collector came around. As a result, Ottoman subjects bought gold and buried it not to be counted and taxed. Despite the Ottomans'

later introduction of paper money, Ottoman subjects continued to view gold as their most secure form of investment because of inflation. "People did not trust it," said a gold trader. "The certificate had no relationship to the gold. It was devalued by inflation, and people have distrusted paper money ever since. . . . Gold has become a symbol of distrust of the state." "I've been in this business for decades and have seen a lot of change. One thing never changes, and that is gold. Our money is worthless; gold is much better. Besides that, gold is part of our history," added a jewelry repair shop owner. Trust as much as tradition may prove to be Mr. Nebati's Achilles heel.

By attracting hidden gold, Mr. Nebati aims to help the government stop the freefall of the Turkish lira, which lost more than 40 percent of its value last year and halt the spiralling out of control of inflation that last month hit 36.1 percent. Many blame the crisis on President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's idiosyncratic push to cut interest rates based on his unorthodox belief that this would lower consumer prices.

Mr. Erdogan has recently suggested that he would halt or slow down the lowering of interest rates as a series of emergency measures helped the lira recover some of its value against the dollar.

The measures pushed Mr. Erdogan's approval rating up by two points to 40.7 percent in January, still far behind the 54.4 percent who evaluate the president's performance negatively. Polls show that Mr. Erdogan would lose to Ankara Mayor Mansur Yavas and Istanbul Mayor Ekrem Imamoglu - both from the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) and Iyi (Good) Party Chairwoman Meral Aksener, at the next elections.

Mr. Erdogan's numbers hardly project the degree of confidence that Mr. Nebati is likely to need to persuade his intrinsically skeptical compatriots from parting with their precious gold. Said a former Istanbul banker: "People are unlikely to put their holdings at risk for a scheme that does not guarantee their ability to preserve whatever wealth they have. Certainly not at a time of economic turmoil and a widening gap in trust."

Righting the injustice of Africa's water crisis

Alex Simalabwi

Though Africa contributes only 4 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions annually, it is among the regions most vulnerable to climate change and climate variability

IMAGINE that a crisis emerges in your home, workplace or community. You neither created it nor benefited from it. And yet you are bearing the brunt of the consequences, while those who did create and benefit from it continue to make the problem worse. For Africa, such an egregious injustice has become all too real.

Though Africa contributes only 4 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions annually, it is among the regions most vulnerable to climate change and climate variability. Already, climate disruptions and crises are severely undermining human well-being and economic development, with water-related disruptions posing some of the most serious risks.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's 2021 report confirmed that global warming intensifies and accelerates the water cycle. Climate change will not only continue to fuel ruinous rainfall and

flooding but will also cause more frequent and extreme drought in many areas. This means reduced access to drinking water in a region where one in every three people already face water scarcity daily. It also means more hunger, malnutrition and even famine. The first climate change-induced famine has already occurred. Last year, following the worst drought in four decades, Madagascar confronted a food crisis that left 1.3 million people facing severe hunger, with tens of thousands enduring life-threatening conditions. But the plight of Madagascar's people received precious little attention in the international media. Madagascar is not alone. In the Horn of Africa, a drought is destroying crops and livestock in Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia. When people cannot access their basic needs at home, they are likely to migrate in search of better conditions, potentially exacerbating economic and political insecurity and compromising future prosperity. That has already happened in Angola, with persistent drought forcing thousands of people to seek refuge in neighboring Namibia. But while those who have benefited the least from the activities that have fueled climate change could lose their homes, health and livelihoods, those who bear the most responsibility for this outcome have not provided nearly enough funding to enable Africa to adapt. In 2009, rich countries pledged to mobilize \$100 billion per year by 2020 to help developing countries cope with climate change. But they fell well short and the lion's share of the funding was allocated for mitiga-

tion, rather than urgently needed adaptation measures. Whereas African governments estimated that they needed \$7.4 billion per year by 2020, the continent received less than \$5.5 billion (roughly \$5 per person) per year between 2014 and 2018, and funding for adaptation amounted to just \$16.5 billion - barely half the total for mitigation.

The so-called WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) initiative, being pursued by the Southern African Development Community with Global Water Partnership support, is also advancing vital water-related objectives. By installing hand-washing facilities at border posts across the region, the initiative will help to stem the transmission of infectious diseases, thereby facilitating intraregional trade and economic activity and, ultimately, contributing to the realization of the African Continental Free Trade Area.

As with all these initiatives, success depends significantly on funding. That is why African countries and their international partners have developed the Water Investment Scorecard, a data-driven approach that, by tracking progress, will help to sustain pressure on decision-makers.

Africa did not cause the climate crisis, but African leaders are taking the initiative in developing strategies for coping with it, including its impact on the continent's water security and sanitation. The question is whether those who are most responsible for climate change will put their money where their mouth is before it is too late.

-Courtesy: Arab News

Biden doesn't get to use our money as 'aid'

Mohsin Amin

Nearly a quarter-million people have died - as a direct result of the war, not including death by disease, poverty, and other factors related to the invasion

THIS is not aid. This is the mass punishment of ordinary Afghans over the US' political rivalries.

I remember visiting my village in Nangarhar, Afghanistan, in 2011 and stopping by two farmers in their 50s in the wheat fields. This was after the surge, when the US deployed an additional thirty thousand troops in Afghanistan, and the annual cost of war had reached over \$100 billion. Ten years had passed since the 9/11 attacks, and the Americans were sliding into an uncertain tunnel, with no sign of light at the end. I asked one of them, who was powerfully built with outward cheekbones. Do you know why the Americans are here? He said with a glazing smile, exposing the wrinkles around his face, indicating poverty and hardship.

"I don't know. I guess they like Afghanistan; it has fertile land."

"Do you know who was responsible for destroying the twin towers in New York in 2001?" I then asked, to understand how a farmer in a remote village would make sense of the US invasion.

"I don't know where New York is. Maybe the Americans would know."

How much would the American know? Afghans had nothing to do with 9/11. Nor would the majority of Afghans be able to explain why the Americans occupied their country for 20 years.

Yet, the Biden administration has still decided to split Afghans' own money between "humanitarian aid" for the country and compensation of the victims of the 9/11 attacks we were not part of. This is an oppressive and tyrannical move to dismantle Afghanistan's economy and inflict harm on 38 million Afghans.

The US has spent over \$2 trillion for the war in Afghanistan over the last 20 years. But ordinary Afghans have seen little of it other than in the form of tens of thousands of bombs raining on them and ill-planned and executed, and ultimately, failed reconstruction efforts. Nearly a quarter-million people have died - as a direct result of the war, not including death by disease, poverty, and other factors related to the invasion. Today, the country is on the brink of famine, with 3.2 million children malnourished. Breastfeeding mothers are starving and are facing lactation insufficiency. The World Food Programme said 23 million Afghans don't know where the next meal will come from.

In September last year, Afghan analysts warned the international community - just weeks after the Taliban takeover - that Afghanistan would drift towards extreme poverty and starvation if sanctions were not lifted and Afghanistan's central bank assets were not released to address the liquidity crisis. Afghan experts raised their voices, against the punishment of ordinary Afghans over the US' political rivalries.

Unfortunately, the international community did not avert the crisis in Afghanistan. The solution was to allow the Afghan economy to breathe. The international community wanted to

choke the economy with one hand and provide humanitarian assistance with the other. And so, Afghans beg for a sack of flour and beans every week. Just one day before Biden decided to split the frozen reserves of the Afghanistan central bank (DAB), the president of the International Rescue Committee (IRC) told the US Senate Foreign Relations Subcommittee: "Sanctions, which are meant to be on the Taliban, have, in fact, chilled almost all economic activity. While those in power in Afghanistan have much to answer for, it is these policy choices of the international community that are the proximate cause of the crisis we face today." He added, "Business as usual will mean that a starvation crisis kills more Afghans than the past 20 years of war."

When a group of Afghan activists, including myself started #UnfreezeAfGMoney - a social media campaign to call upon the US and EU to unfreeze DAB assets - four months ago, we made it clear to all parties that the frozen reserves (\$9.5 billion) of the DAB should strictly be administered by the enacted laws and regulations of the institution. In other words, it is not meant for government spending but for liquidity management in Afghanistan.

It is expected that the unfreezing of the assets will address the liquidity crisis, revive the banking system and eventually the economy, and, most importantly, regain people's trust in the banking sector so it doesn't collapse.

It is going to have catastrophic consequences. This is essentially giving back Afghans their own money as "humanitarian assistance" while throttling the economy. Spending DAB reserves on food or salaries will make the Afghani currency a worthless piece of paper and destroy the banking sector hanging on a thin thread.

Imposing sanctions and starving one million children to death is a blatant vengeance by the US after its withdrawal from Afghanistan. In contrast, the UN and international humanitarian organisations called for reviving the role of DAB to stabilise the economy, contain skyrocketing inflation rates, and prevent the Afghani currency from further depreciation. The UN Secretary-General told the Security Council last month: "We must pull the economy of Afghanistan back from the brink. This means finding ways to free-up frozen currency reserves and re-engage Afghanistan's Central Bank. International funding must be allowed to pay the salaries of public-sector workers." "There are no sustainable workarounds that try to bypass the Central Bank and create parallel, shadow systems. No private bank could effectively take on this role," said the president of IRC.

This bizarre logic of the international community to suspend development projects that are almost complete, deprive people of their livelihoods, and push them towards poverty, and then divert the same funds from development to humanitarian aid to alleviate poverty has been puzzling to say the least. Many Afghans didn't know about the 9/11 attacks and why the US invaded and bombed them for 20 years, but this time, even the villagers, including the two farmers in my village understand that the US is punishing them with hunger and sanctions by targeting commercial activity and suspending ongoing development projects.

But there is still time. The Biden administration must revisit this decision and consider various ways proposed by experts to re-engage the central bank of Afghanistan to prevent the total collapse of Afghanistan's economy.

-Courtesy: TRT World

Briefs

'Freedom convoy' reaches Paris

PARIS: Motorists from the "freedom convoy" defied a ban Saturday to reach the center of Paris at the Champs-Elysees to demonstrate against vaccine mandate and other policies, resulting in several arrests, according to law enforcement agencies.

Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin in a statement on Twitter said 54 people were arrested and 337 were fined for participating in the "freedom convoy." They included Jerome Rodrigues, one of the organizers of the convoy and a leading figure of the gilet jaunes, or the "yellow vests" movement, FranceInfo news reported.

Paris police banned demonstrations and warned it would not tolerate road blocking. Thousands of police armed in riot gear were deployed in and around the main roads leading to the capital to disperse demonstrators. They fired tear gas canisters as participating vehicles reached the Champs-Elysees and refused to move.

Motorists were joined by a large crowd of demonstrators who indulged in vandalism and clashed with police leading to violent skirmishes. The gathering continued late into the evening as police struggled to disperse the crowd.

The French freedom convoy is influenced by the strike in Canada by the truckers who are also opposing that government's vaccine requirements for cross-border movement into the US.

They are demanding "freedom" from the vaccine law, including minor children and lifting restrictions for health providers. - APP

High waves kill 10 during Indonesia beach ritual

JAKARTA: At least 10 Indonesians died after tidal waves swept away a group of people meditating on a beach during Sunday's early hours, police said.

The group of 23 people was holding hands and meditating on Payangan beach, East Java province, shortly after midnight. "They were too close to the sea and could not save themselves when the tidal waves came and swept them away," local police chief HeryPurnomo told TVOne.

Ten bodies had been retrieved from the ocean and 12 people rescued alive. One more person, a 40-year-old man, was still unaccounted for. It was unclear what kind of ritual the group was performing in the predominantly Muslim region, Purnomo said, but it was led by a spiritual guru who survived the incident and would be questioned.

Local media reported that some of the victims, who all came from nearby towns, were related. Regional military commander Batara Pangaribuan told TVOne the beach was usually guarded and closed after dark but the group somehow found a way onto it. - APP

Yemen confirms 3 UN workers kidnapped

ADEN: Yemen's government confirmed Saturday that three UN workers were abducted by unidentified gunmen in Abyan in the south. The Council of Ministers held a meeting in Aden after the abductions, according to the official Yemeni news agency, Saba.

The Council said efforts are underway to release the workers and ensure their safety. "Unidentified gunmen abducted AkemSofiol, the director of the United Nations Office for Security and Safety in Aden, on Friday evening," Adel al-Awsji, the security chief of the Lauder directorate in Abyan province, told Anadolu Agency. He said the office's general coordinator, Mohamed al-Maliki, and security coordinator MazenBawazeer were also kidnapped.

The official said gunmen in the Suwayda area stopped the car the UN employees were in as they were headed to Aden to assess the needs of residents and took them to an unknown destination. A manhunt has been launched for the kidnappers. No group has yet claimed responsibility for the kidnapping. - APP

Canada police clear blockade of the Ambassador Bridge

US President has asked Canadian PM Justin Trudeau to use federal powers to end the blockade of the bridge, North America's busiest land border crossing

AGENCIES

WINDSOR: Canadian police cleared protesters and vehicles that had blocked a vital trade route on the border with the United States, making some arrests, but the bridge was not yet open to traffic on Sunday. The officers moved in after a tense standoff between Canadian police and demonstrators since Friday when a court order and threats of arrest failed to end the blockade of the Ambassador Bridge in Windsor, Ontario, which entered its sixth day on Sunday. "Enforcement actions continue at the demonstration area with arrests being made. Vehicles being towed. Please continue avoiding the area," Windsor Police said in a Twitter post early on Sunday, without saying how many had been arrested. Police stepped up their presence with more than 50 vehicles, including cruisers, buses and an armoured car on Sunday, as the number of protesters dropped to around 45 from roughly 100 on Saturday. Windsor Police tweeted "there will be zero tolerance for illegal activity", U.S. President Joe Biden has asked Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to use federal powers to end the blockade of the bridge, North America's



busiest land border crossing. Since Monday, protesters in trucks, cars and vans have blocked traffic in both directions, choking the supply chain for Detroit's carmakers. The bridge carries about \$360 million a day in two-way cargoes - 25% of the value of all U.S.-Canada goods trade. "It's our hope that it will be open today,"

Windsor City Mayor Drew Dilkens told CBC News, when asked about the reopening of the Ambassador Bridge. "Police are finishing off some activity that they are dealing with... we are also working on plan to sustain control of this roadway moving forward," he added. The "Freedom Convoy" protests, started

in the national capital Ottawa by Canadian truckers opposing a vaccinate-or-quarantine mandate for cross-border drivers, entered its 17th day on Sunday. But it has now morphed into a rallying point against broader COVID-19 curbs, carbon tax and other issues, with people joining in cars, pickup trucks and farm vehicles.

Police moved in early on Saturday, pushing protesters back from the foot of the bridge, but more people streamed into the area in the afternoon and the operation appeared to have stalled.

Protests erupted across several cities in Canada on Saturday, with some 4,000 people in downtown Ottawa. Financial capital Toronto had some 1,000 demonstrators, though the police had shut key access roads to the central business district.

In the west, hundreds of protesters choked intersections along the Pacific Highway with vehicles leading to the Canada-U.S. border crossing in South Surrey, British Columbia. Several, camped out near the border crossing, vowed to stay "as long as is needed" until all COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.

Strangling bilateral trade, protests have spread to three border points, including in Alberta and Manitoba.

Iran CG stresses need for the unity of Muslims



DNA

KARACHI: Hassan Nourian, the Consul General of the Islamic Republic of Iran in Karachi, has said that Imam Khomeini's wish was that the Muslims of the world stand on their feet and be free to make their own decisions, comparing the present to the past, he said that unity is more needed than before because the anti-Muslim forces are more active today than in the past. A few years ago, the United States stated that it would not allow Iran to see the fourth decade of the Islamic Revolution, but Iran is now celebrating the 43rd year of the revolution

of Iran Hassan Nourian, was speaking at a dinner hosted by the Iran Consulate General on the occasion of the 43rd anniversary of the Iranian Revolution in honor of the dignitaries. Apart from other religious and political organizations, journalists, lawyers, and important personalities participated in the event as well. The Consul General said that in preserving the revolution of 1979, more than 300,000 men, women and children lost their lives and a large number of people were injured in the 8 years of war and 17,000 people were martyred in the fight against terrorism. He said that the revolution

in Iran was very different from the Russian and France revolutions because this revolution was based upon Islam. He said that anti-Islamic forces are trying to spread separatism in the Muslim countries at present and it is necessary to be wary of this. He said that Pakistan and Iran are two brotherly and friendly countries. He said also that the visit of Pakistani President Arif Ali and Prime Minister Imran Khan to Iran has further strengthened the ties between the two countries. Furthermore, efforts are being made to further increase economic, social, political, and trade activities. Also from 1947 to 2021,

there was just one border between Pakistan and Iran at Taftan-Mirjawa and now two more borders have been opened at the Ramadan-Gaped and Pishi-Mand. He said, adding that air service to Iran is also being increased and now besides Karachi-Tehran flights, other flights will soon start between the two countries. Media and scholars can play an important role in strengthening the relations between the two countries, the Consul General said that the President of Pakistan Arif Alvi, has invited the President of Iran to visit Pakistan which he has accepted and hopefully, the President of Iran will visit Pakistan.

German leader travels to Russia, Ukraine as tensions grow

BERLIN: German Chancellor Olaf Scholz is flying to Ukraine and Russia this week in an effort to help defuse escalating tensions as Western intelligence officials warn that a Russian invasion of Ukraine is increasingly imminent and Germany has called on its citizens to leave Ukraine as quickly as possible. Ahead of his first visits as chancellor to Kyiv on Monday and Moscow on Tuesday for meetings with the Ukrainian and Russian presidents, Scholz has renewed his warning to Russia, as well as his advocacy of continuing diplomacy in multiple formats "It is our job to ensure that we prevent a war in Europe, in that we send a clear message to Russia that any military aggression would have consequences that would be very high for Russia and its prospects, and that we are united with our allies," Scholz told the German parliament's upper house on Friday. "But at the same time that also includes using all opportunities for talks and further development," Scholz said. Russia has concentrated more than 100,000 troops near Ukraine's border and launched a series of military maneuvers in the region, but says it has no plans to invade the nation. Moscow wants guarantees from the West that NATO won't allow Ukraine and other former Soviet countries to join as members, and for the alliance to halt weapon deployments to Ukraine and roll back its forces from Eastern Europe. The U.S. and NATO flatly reject these demands.

Scholz has repeatedly said that Moscow would pay a "high price" in the event of an attack, but his government's refusal to supply lethal weapons to Ukraine or to spell out which sanctions it would support against Russia have drawn criticism abroad and at home and raised questions about Berlin's resolve in standing up to Russia. Germany's reluctant position is partly rooted in its history of aggression during the 20th century when the country's own militarization in Europe during two world wars led many postwar German leaders to view any military response as a very last resort. Despite this historic burden, experts say it is of utmost importance now that Scholz stresses Germany is in sync with its European and American allies, especially when he meets with Russian President Vladimir Putin. "Scholz has to convey a very clear message in Moscow, and it can really only be: There is unity and oneness in the Western alliance. - APP

Australia evacuates embassy in Kyiv

CANBERRA: Australia said on Sunday it was evacuating its embassy in Kyiv as the situation on the Russia-Ukraine border deteriorated quickly, with Prime Minister Scott Morrison calling on China to not remain "chillingly silent" on the crisis. The United States and Europe stepped up their warnings of an imminent attack by Russia on Ukraine, while the Kremlin, jostling for more influence in post-Cold War Europe, rejected a joint EU-NATO diplomatic response to its demands to reduce tensions as disrespectful. Australia's embassy staff in Kyiv was directed to a temporary office in Lviv, a city in western Ukraine, around 70 kilometres (44 miles) from the border with Poland, Foreign Minister Marise Payne said in a statement. "We continue to advise Australians to leave Ukraine immediately by commercial means," Payne said. Morrison said that the situation "is reaching a very dangerous stage" and added that "the autocratic unilateral actions of Russia to be threatening and bullying Ukraine is something that is completely and utterly unacceptable." Morrison, whose government has frigid ties with China, called also on Beijing to speak up for Ukraine, after China criticised a meeting of the U.S., Australian, Japanese and Indian foreign ministers in Melbourne last week. - APP

Kazakh President pays tribute to those killed in January protests

Official statistics suggest that at least 4,500 people were hurt, and 225 people, including 19 security officials were killed

NUR-SULTAN: A month after Kazakhstan witnessed one of the intense upheavals in the country's history, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev on Sunday attended a commemorative ceremony to mourn the demise of the slain lives in the turmoil. As per the reports President Tokayev said that the Kazakh community have been through a lot this year after a prayer. He further stated that the country's future, as well as the state's integrity and people's safety, were all in jeopardy after the January events and that the attack was successfully repelled. He further said that many people died as a result of the upheaval and that this is a tragedy in every sense of the word. He also said that each matter is thoroughly probed on his orders by the competent authorities. He claims that the protection of human rights is critical to him. He also remarked that the country was shocked by the tragic occurrence. The President also stated that a social foundation called "Kazakhstan halkyna" (to the Kazakh people), which is a

creation of the public social fund has been established on his orders to assist those impacted, according to ANI. He further added that no one will be able to break the togetherness and harmony of the people and that this is a responsibility shared by all citizens, not just the government. He then stated that this tragedy must not recur in the future. - DNA



Hopelessness looms among Afghan refugees

FAISAL FAROOQ

AMEER KHAN starts his long day at 6 o'clock in the morning with the school preparations. He attends a shelter school established by a non-governmental organization in the premises of KachiAbadi (Slum area), in the outskirts of Islamabad, the capital of Pakistan. Born in an Afghan refugee family living in Pakistan, he and his parents don't know their citizenship status. Uncertainty and fear increases among Afghan refugees living in Pakistan, whether legally or illegally, after Taliban's takeover of the country recently. The hopes of returning back to Afghanistan have almost ended with the recent developments in the Kabul as the life of a common man further devastated after the world pulled out their hands from helping the country. Ameer Khan, 8, after attending school helps his father in the afternoon to sell vegetables on a hand-driven cart in the adjacent areas. Talib Jan doesn't know

the status of his son as they don't have any documents with them. Talib Jan said they left Afghanistan to protect their lives. He along with his wife and two children crossed to Torkham Border in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He describes his departure saying they navigated watchful Taliban to cross into Pakistan. The large-scale displacement of Afghan refugees was triggered by the unrest following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. It was sustained by the later advent of the Taliban regime and the enduring conflict and political instability. By the end of 1980, there were more than four million refugees in Pakistan, with that number growing over the next five years. Today, Pakistan is hosting 1,435,445 registered Afghan refugees, making it the third largest host country of refugees in the world. Practitioners estimate that there are approximately one million more unregistered Afghan nationals in the country. The majority (68 percent) live in urban areas, with 32 percent living in "refugee villages," the local, informal, name for refugee camps. It is one of

the most protracted refugee crises in the world, and one that receives little support from the international community. Some arrived as children, grew up in Pakistan, married, and had children of their own who have never lived in Afghanistan. Others have arrived in the decades of turmoil in Afghanistan since then, seeking security, employment and a higher standard of living. Islamabad is watching worriedly to see whether more refugees like Talib Jan and his family come pouring over the border as the humanitarian crisis is increasing in the country with every passing day. Pakistani officials are trying to keep the flow of refugees under strict control at Torkham, the dusty border crossing about 140 miles east of Kabul. Only small groups of people crossed the border, where only Pakistan citizens and Afghans with visas are allowed to cross. The recent movement of refugees may have negative implications for the Afghans already in Pakistan who have been used as a political bargaining chip for decades. The skepticism had left Afghan

refugees in a state of uncertainty. Though Pakistan's law allows those born there to get citizenship, the claims of Afghan children are generally not recognized. Prime Minister Imran Khan pledged to recognize their citizenship after he became prime minister in 2018, but he backed off following a backlash from politicians and the country's powerful military. Human Rights Watch (HRW) said the biggest fear of Afghan refugees is deportation. In 2016, the Pakistani authorities forced more than 500,000 people to return to Afghanistan. The group warned that the move risked adding to a population of hundreds of thousands of people in Afghanistan rendered essentially homeless by poverty and conflict. The Taliban's vengeful ways add to the risks. While the country's new leaders have tried to strike a moderate tone, reports of reprisals against former members of the security forces and other Taliban opponents have trickled out of the country. Wali Khan, another Afghan refugee living in the slum for years, said the police start creating problems with

changing political atmosphere at the highest level between Islamabad and Kabul. He said Afghans living in the country are being treated in hostile way by the authorities after the Peshawar APS massacre Wali Khan, a taxi driver, who had been residing with his family in the slum area of Islamabad since three decades, said he was asked many times to leave the country. He, however, said he doesn't have any other option except living in exile. Experts believe the international community can immediately facilitate large-scale in-country programmatic solutions to avert a large-scale humanitarian disaster and mass displacement depends in part on ongoing negotiations with the Taliban government. In the short-term, the current Afghan government may have financial resources to soften themselves from international sanctions. However, this will not extend to the Afghan people, who will be the ones to suffer the most and potentially for many years to come, especially if the Taliban isolate them in an exile state. (Names changed for the safety of people)

Erdogan to pay 2-day visit to UAE

ANKARA: The Turkish president will embark on a two-day official visit to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Monday. Recep Tayyip Erdogan's visit comes at the invitation of Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Turkey's Communications Directorate said in a statement on Sunday. Bilateral relations between Turkey and the UAE, and steps to deepen cooperation will be discussed during talks, according to the statement. The two sides will also exchange views on regional and international developments with an understanding of establishing and maintaining peace and stability in the region. The two leaders will attend the signing ceremony of a dozen of agreements after meetings to be held one-on-one and with delegations. The agreements will cover various fields, including investment, defense, transportation, agriculture, health, and media. The Turkish leader will also visit the Expo 2020 Dubai on Tuesday, where Turkey's national day will be celebrated. - APP

Woman, 2 children die of hunger in Somalia

MOGADISHU: A woman and her two children died of hunger and thirst in south-western Somalia, as the local administration on Sunday feared more deaths due to the ongoing drought in the Bakool province. Rabbuh District Commissioner Mohamed Kheyr Salaad told local media that the district is severely affected by the drought and that he fears that more people will die as a result of water and food scarcity, as well as malnutrition. The region has been blocked by the al-Qaeda-affiliated terrorist group al-Shabaab for the past eight years, making it impossible for people to receive humanitarian aid by road, he said. "The only way to reach affected people who are suffering from the blockade is by air or roads leading to the Ethiopian border," he said. He added that the current situation is beyond the regional administration's capacity to handle, as humanitarian aid from Bakool province has yet to reach the affected area. - APP

Hamis says settler violence 'playing with fire'

GAZA CITY: Palestinian resistance group Hamas on Sunday condemned Israeli settler attacks on Palestinians in Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in occupied East Jerusalem. In a statement, group spokesman Mohammad Hamada termed settler violence as "blatant aggression and playing with fire." Several Palestinians were injured on Saturday night when Israeli settlers attacked Palestinian homes in Sheikh Jarrah. Hamas called on the Palestinians "to rally support to our people in Sheikh Jarrah" and to confront settler violence. Palestinians in Sheikh Jarrah have complained of repeated attacks by Israeli settlers, who reside next to them in homes taken from Palestinians over past years. Last year, tensions ran high in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood after an Israeli court ordered the eviction of several Palestinian families in favor of Israeli settlers. - APP

Briefs

Women being raped every day in India

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: India celebrates National Women's Day every year on February 13 but women are being raped every day and in most of the cases rape incidents go unreported in the country. India is the worst place in the world to be a woman and is world's leading country as far as crime against women is concerned, said a report released, today, by Kashmir Media Service. It said women are usually considered second-class citizens in India.

New Delhi is one of the most unsafe cities for women in India as it has become the world's rape capital, the report said, deploring that crimes against women have been on the rise in India and it uses rape as a weapon of war in Indian illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

As per India's National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), nearly 77 rape cases were reported across India on an average every day in 2020. The NCRB data shows, besides rape, there were 85,392 cases of assault to outrage modesty and 3,741 cases of attempt to commit rape. It said, NCRB report revealed number of rape cases stood at 28,046 in 2020, 32,033 in 2019, 33,356 in 2018 and 32,559 in 2017.

One woman is raped every 16 minutes, while one woman is gang-raped every 30 hours in India, it said. The report maintained that increasing rape cases in India was a challenge to the civilized world.

Macron, not candidate but campaigning for reelection

MONITORING DESK

PARIS: He has a full campaign team that's fanning out around France, meeting with voters. He makes speeches about his plans for the country in the upcoming years. The problem? French President Emmanuel Macron hasn't officially declared that he's a candidate for April's presidential election yet.

Critics say he's unfairly using his taxpayer-funded presidential pulpit to campaign for a second term while dragging out his widely expected announcement as long as possible. Less than two months before April 10's first round, Macron's intention is no mystery. He said last month that he has "the desire" to run for a second term, but he wanted to wait for the COVID-19 situation to improve before making a decision. The deadline to formally declare candidacy is March 4. Far-right presidential contender Eric Zemmour accused Macron of trying to use the pandemic argument to make French voters forget about what he considers France's decline.

"Is Emmanuel Macron using the health crisis to start campaigning? The answer is yes," Marine Le Pen, the other far-right candidate, charged. Like the U.S. and most European countries, France recently started easing most virus restrictions as the spread of the virus is slowing down. Macron also explained he wanted to focus on the Ukraine-Russia crisis first. On the flight between Moscow and Kyiv last week, he told reporters that he will "think about" declaring his candidacy later. "Everything comes in due time," he said. Yet his recent trips across French regions tend to increasingly look like campaign events.

Mob lynches man over blasphemy allegation

Dozens of people have been detained and arrested over the lynching, which happened on Saturday evening in Khanewal district of Punjab province

DNA

KHANEWAL: A mob has lynched a man in a remote region of Pakistan's Punjab province after he was accused of burning pages of the Quran, the Muslim holy book, the police and officials said. Dozens of people have been detained and arrested over the lynching, which happened on Saturday evening in Khanewal district of Punjab province, according to Tahir Ashrafi, the prime minister's special representative on religious harmony. Law enforcement agencies are also monitoring hundreds of other suspects, he said. Police in Punjab province said at least 15 primary suspects have been arrested in connection with the case. They added that 85 other accused had been detained and raids were being conducted to arrest more suspects. Prime Minister Imran Khan ordered action on Sunday against the mob and any police who acted as onlookers to the killing. "The lynching will be dealt with full severity of the law. We have

Incident to be dealt with full severity of law: PM

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan Sunday while reiterating resolve for zero tolerance over mob lynching incidents, said the elements involved in such acts would be dealt with the full severity of law. In a tweet, the prime minister referring to the latest mob lynching incident in Mian Channu, said that they had zero tolerance for anyone taking the law into their hands. The prime minister also directed the IG Punjab to submit a report over action taken against the perpetrators of lynching in Mian Channu and the responsible police personnel who failed to avert the incident. "We have zero tolerance for anyone taking the law into their own hands & mob lynchings will be dealt with full severity of the law. Have asked Punjab IG for a report on action taken against perpetrators of the lynching in Mian Channu & against the police who failed in their duty," he posted on his Twitter handle. Dozens of people have been detained and arrested over the lynching, which happened on Saturday evening in Khanewal district of Punjab province, according to Tahir Ashrafi, the prime minister's special representative on religious harmony. Law enforcement agencies are also monitoring hundreds of other suspects, he said. — DNA

zero tolerance for anyone taking the law into their own hands," he said in a statement. Khan said on Twitter he had asked Punjab officials for a "report on action taken against perpetrators of the lynching... & against the police who failed in their duty". The killing came just over two months after a Sri Lankan factory manager was beaten to death and set ablaze by a mob over blasphemy in Sialkot city, also in Punjab. The mob gathered at

a mosque on Saturday night after the son of its prayer leader announced that he had spotted the man burning pages of the holy book, police official Munawar Hussain told Reuters. Police arrived to find the man unconscious and tied to a tree, Hussain said, adding that the mob also attacked the police. "The villagers armed with batons, axes and iron rods killed him and hanged his body from a tree," Hussain said. He said that evidence so far gathered by police suggested the dead man, identified as Muhammad Mushtaq, was in his 50s and appeared to have had mental disabilities. "Who could possibly justify the barbaric act of stoning to death a mentally ill person?" Ashrafi, the prime minister's special representative, told a televised press conference in Khanewal district. "The man's family say that he was mentally ill and his mental health wasn't right for the past 10 to 15 years. "This is not the religion of my Prophet, to kill people under your own interpretation of religion," he said. The country's human rights minister Shireen Mazari condemned the lynching.

Saudi FM pays working visit to Cyprus

DNA

NICOSIA: The FM of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, has a working visit to Cyprus on Sunday, during which he will discuss with Foreign Minister, Ioannis Kasoulides, inter alia, about Cyprus-Saudi Arabia bilateral relations, the Cyprus issue, other regional developments, as well as other international issues of common interest. The President of the Republic, Nicos Anastasiades will receive the Prince at the Presidential Palace. Later in the day, the two ministers will have a meeting, in the presence of official delegations. "Discussions are expected to focus on the full range of Cyprus-Saudi Arabia bilateral relations, as well as the prospects for their further strengthening and deepening.



KABUL: The ambassador of Pakistan to Afghanistan Mansoor Ahmad Khan exchanging views with Dr. Abdullah Abdullah. — DNA

Punishing the corrupt NAB's priority: Chairman



STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: National Accountability Bureau (NAB) Chairman Justice Javed Iqbal said the fight against corruption was the top most priority of (NAB) and the cases of those who looted billions of rupees from the country and the nation, would be brought to the logical conclusion as per law. In a statement, he said that NAB gave top priority to fight against corruption by utilising all its resources. He vowed taking the cases of plunderers of billion of rupee to logical conclusion. He said that NAB was an anti-corruption institution,

which has no affiliation with any political party, individual or group but state of Pakistan. NAB officers were considering eradication of corruption as their national duty.

He said that NAB had formulated a comprehensive three pronged anti-corruption strategy of awareness, prevention and law enforcement under the policy of "Accountability for All" which was appreciated by the reputable national and international bodies.

The Chairman NAB said that according to Gilani & Gallup survey, 59 percent of people have shown trust upon NAB. 1,405 accused persons were convicted by different accountability courts throughout the country due to vigorous prosecution of NAB first time in the history recovering Rs 539 billion directly and indirectly during the tenure of present management from Oct 2017 to Dec 2021. No other anti-corruption agency has shown such kind of excellent performance. The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has recovered Rs 821 billion directly and indirectly from 1999 till date. At present 1,237 references worth about Rs. 1353 billion were under trial in various esteemed accountability courts of the country.

US F-22 jets arrive in United Arab Emirates after Houthi attacks

DUBAI: US F-22 fighter jets arrived in the United Arab Emirates on Saturday, part of an American defence response to recent missile attacks by Yemen's Houthi rebels targeting the country. The Raptors landed at Al-Dhafra Air Base in Abu Dhabi, which hosts some 2,000 US troops. American soldiers there launched Patriot interceptor missiles in response to the Houthi attacks last month, the first time US troops have fired the system in combat since the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq. American officials declined to say how many F-22s deployed or the number of airmen supporting the aircraft, citing operational security. However, they identified the unit involved as the 1st Fighter Wing, located at Joint Base Langley-Eustis in Virginia.

A photo later released by the Air Force showed six F-22s in a line on a taxiway at Al-Dhafra. The Raptors presence will bolster already strong partner nation defences and puts destabilising forces on notice that the US and our partners are committed to enabling peace and stability in the region," Lt. Gen. Greg Guillot, the commander of the US Air Force's Mideast command, said in a statement. The deployment comes after the Iranian-backed Houthis launched three attacks targeting Abu Dhabi last month, including one targeting a fuel depot that killed three people and wounded six.

The attacks coincided with visits by presidents from South Korea and Israel to the country. A shadowy Iraqi group claimed launching a drone attack targeting the Emirates in early February, though authorities say they intercepted them. Though overshadowed by the Ukraine crisis, the missile fire targeting the Emirates has sparked a major US response. The American military has sent the USS Cole on a mission to Abu Dhabi.

The spillover of Yemen's yearlong war into the UAE puts American troops in the crosshairs of the Houthi attacks and raises the risk of a regional escalation at a crucial moment of talks in Vienna to potentially restore Iran's nuclear deal with world powers. — Agencies

4 missing Afghan women activists released: UN

MONITORING DESK

KABUL: Four women activists in Afghanistan have been released by the country's "de facto authorities" after going missing weeks ago, the United Nations said Sunday.

"After a long period of uncertainty about their whereabouts and safety, the four 'disappeared' Afghan women activists, as well as their relatives who also went missing, have all been released by the de facto authorities," the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) said on Twitter. Tamana Zaryabi Paryani, Parwana Ibrahimkhel, Zahra Mohammadi and Mursal Ayar went missing after participating in an anti-Taliban rally, but Afghanistan's hard-line rulers had consistently denied detaining them.

AFP reported the release of Ibrahimkhel late on Friday. She went missing along with Paryani on January 19, days after taking part in a rally in Kabul calling for women's right to work and education. Weeks later, Mohammadi and Ayar went missing.

The Taliban, whose government is still not recognized by any country, have promised a softer version of the harsh rule that characterised their first stint in power from 1996 to 2001.

But since storming back to power in August, they have cracked down on dissent by forcefully dispersing women's rallies, detaining critics and often beating local journalists covering un-sanctioned protests.

Paris police hold 81 over anti-vaccine convoy

WEB DESK

PARIS: Paris police said they arrested 97 people who defied a ban on a Canada-style protest convoy over coronavirus regulations to try block traffic in the capital, with 81 still in custody Sunday. Thousands of demonstrators from across France attempted to block traffic in the capital Saturday in a self-proclaimed "freedom convoy" of cars, trucks and campervans. Hundreds of them continued on to Brussels on Sunday.

In Paris, more than 100 vehicles managed to converge on the Champs-Elysees avenue, where police used tear gas to disperse protesters in scenes reminiscent of the "yellow vest" riots of 2018-2019. Dozens of people remained on the famous avenue and in the nearby Bois de Boulogne forest park until early Sunday.

Prosecutors said one of those being held was Jerome Rodrigues, a leader of the "yellow vest" protest movement, which engaged in running battles with the police every weekend for several months in late 2018 and early 2019.

The Paris police department also said an internal inquiry has been opened after a video emerged on social media showing an officer striking a demonstrator on the head on the Champs-Elysees. The protest is one of several worldwide inspired by the truckers' standoff with authorities in Canada.

In France, the demonstrators took aim at the "vaccine pass" required to enter restaurants, cafes and many other public venues implemented as part of President Emmanuel Macron's inoculation drive. "This Covid pass is just the latest in a series of anti-freedom measures in our country - we have freedom of movement in Europe, yet we're being stopped by the police, we don't have the right to be here and carry a flag," Daniel Bravo, 61, told AFP.

Over 400 vehicles camped out at several sites around Paris overnight, and organisers have called for people to head for Brussels for a major demonstration on Monday, a police source said.

However not all are expected to make the trip, the source said.

Biden order on frozen funds an atrocity: Karzai

NEWS DESK

KABUL: Afghanistan's former president on Sunday called a White House order to unfreeze \$3.5 billion in Afghan assets held in the U.S. for families of 9/11 victims an atrocity against the Afghan people. Former President Hamid Karzai at a packed news conference sought the help of Americans, particularly the families of the thousands killed in the 9/11 terrorist attacks, to press President Joe Biden to rescind last week's order. He called it "unjust and unfair," saying Afghans have also been victims of al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden. Bin Laden was brought to Afghanistan by Afghan warlords after being expelled from Sudan in 1996. Those same warlords would later ally with the U.S.-led coalition to oust the Taliban in 2001. However, it was Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar who refused to hand over bin Laden to the U.S. after the devastating 9/11 attacks that killed thousands.

"The people of Afghanistan share the pain of the American people, share the pain of the families and loved ones of those who died, who lost their lives in the tragedy of September 11," said Karzai. "We commiserate with them (but) Afghan people are as much victims as those families who lost their lives. ... Withholding money or seizing money from the people of Afghanistan in their name is unjust and unfair and an

atrocious act against Afghan people." President Biden's order signed last Friday freed \$7 billion in Afghan assets currently held in the United States, to be divided between 9/11 victims and humanitarian aid to Afghans. Sept. 11 victims and their families have legal claims against the Taliban and the \$7 billion in the U.S. banking system. The \$3.5 billion was set aside for a U.S. court to decide whether it can be used to settle claims by families of 9/11 victims. U.S. courts would also have to sign off before the release of humanitarian assistance money. We "ask the U.S. courts to do the opposite, to return the Afghan money back to the Afghan people," said Karzai. "This money does not belong to any government, this money belongs to the people of Afghanistan." Meanwhile, Biden's order calls for the \$3.5 billion allocated to humanitarian aid to be put into a trust and be used to assist Afghans, bypassing their Taliban rulers. But Karzai demanded all \$7 billion be returned to Afghanistan's central bank to further its monetary policy. He argued against giving Afghan reserves to international aid organizations to provide humanitarian aid. "You give us our own money so that it can be spent for those foreigners who come here, to pay their salaries, to give it to (non-governmental organizations)," he said. Afghanistan's economy is teetering on the brink of collapse after international money stopped coming into the country with the arrival in mid-August of the Taliban.

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