



Islamabad POST

Wednesday, February 16, 2022

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

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Pakistan, Azerbaijan likely to launch direct flights: Envoy

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EHL, Serena enter into a partnership

Detailed News On Page-04



'Will sacrifice trophies if told to get job'

Detailed News On Page-06



Briefs

Altaf cleared of 2 charges

DNA

LONDON: The Muttahida Qaumi Movement (MQM) leader Altaf Hussain has been found not guilty of encouraging terrorism in Karachi from London contrary to section 1(2) of the Terrorism Act 2006. At the Kingston Crown Court, a majority of the jury (10 out of 12) declared before Mrs Justice May that they had found Altaf Hussain not to be in violation of the UK's Anti-Terrorism laws on 22nd August 2016 when he made two speeches from London to his followers in Karachi.

Bilawal satisfied over opp. unity

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Chairman Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Tuesday expressed satisfaction over the unity of all opposition parties on no-trust motion. Under the chairmanship of Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, a meeting was held at Bilawal House. The meeting was attended by members of National and Provincial Assemblies from Sindh. The meeting was also attended by Faryal Talpur and Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah while former Sindh Chief Minister Syed Qaim Ali Shah, Aftab Shaban Mirani, Nawab Yousuf Talpur, Manzoor Wasan and others were also present.

Country steered out of difficulty

STAFF REPORT

MULTAN: Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi says the incumbent government has successfully steered the country out of difficult situation by dint of its tight decisions. Addressing a ceremony in Multan, he said that ten dams are being constructed to strengthen the agriculture sector and produce cheap electricity, reflecting our long-term planning. He said that we are negotiating the gas pipeline project with Turkmenistan in order to solve the gas shortage in the country.

Recognizing Taliban means isolation: PM

"If Pakistan was the first to grant recognition of Taliban, the international pressure would become too much," he says in an interview

NEWS DESK / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan has said if Pakistan becomes the first country to recognise the Taliban-led government, the international community's pressure on Islamabad would be "too much" to bear. "If Pakistan was the first to grant recognition of Taliban, the international pressure would become too much for us as we try to turn our economy around," he said in an interview with French daily Le Figaro.

"To be isolated by becoming the only state (to recognise the Taliban regime) would be the last thing we would want," the prime minister said, noting that Pakistan wanted the recognition of the Taliban government as a "collective process". He said Afghans were proud people who could not be forced to act in a certain way. "You cannot force them. There is a limit to what foreign pressure can do to a government like the Taliban [...]. Afghans should not be expected to respect women's rights as Westerners understand them," he said. However, the premier said the Taliban had agreed on girls education but needed time. The premier expressed concern over the worsening of the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, the possible reflux

Continued on Page 06

PM for bringing population into formal economy

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan Tuesday while terming the 220 million population of the country as 'the biggest human resource and asset' underlined the need of bringing all into the formal economy through use of modern technology and gadgets. The prime minister was addressing the launching ceremony of "Raast", Pakistan's instant digital payment system, an initiative of the State Bank of Pakistan. The initiative would enable person to person transactions and facilitate free digital banking. The prime minister observed that unless they utilized the modern technological

Continued on Page 06

Stay orders create major administrative crisis

Cabinet approves separate judicial system for overseas Pakistanis



SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Fawad Chaudhry on Tuesday while expressing concern over the number of stay orders in the courts said that it has created a major administrative crisis. Addressing a press conference in Islamabad on Tuesday, he expressed concern over massive stay orders due to which Federal Board of Revenue is unable to collect revenue of over Rs 3 trillion. The minister said that policy issues were discussed at length with the judiciary in the cabinet and the problem at the moment is that the division has created a huge administrative vacuum and at present the situation is that there are about 950 stay orders. He said the FBR has not been able to collect Rs 3 billion due to

Continued on Page 06

Govt seeks reports from Nawaz docs

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The government has decided to write a letter to the doctors of PML-N supreme Nawaz Sharif in order to obtain medical reports of the former prime minister from them. Sources divulged on Tuesday that the federal government decided to write down a letter to the personal physicians of Nawaz Sharif i.e. Dr Lawrence and Dr Fayyaz Shawal asking them to provide Nawaz's medical reports. A few days ago, Attorney General of Pakistan Khalid Jawed Khan had written a letter to PML-N President Shehbaz Sharif asking him to submit his elder brother's medical reports. But Shehbaz in his rejoinder, objected to the epistle saying it was an illegal act on the part of the AG as they had already submitted all reports to the court on time and matter was also sub judice. He further said that AG's letter was an attempt to influence a sub judice matter.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan chairs a meeting of federal cabinet. - DNA

Petrol prices increased

OGRA had recommended an increase in petrol price by Rs12 per litre

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The government on Tuesday threw a major bombshell on the people by increasing the price of petrol by Rs12.03 per litre due to an increase in the prices of crude oil in the international market. Diesel prices are increased by Rs9.53 per litre. According to sources, after the rise in oil prices in the global market, OGRA had sent a summary to the Prime Minister's Office proposing to increase petrol price by Rs12.3 per litre. The proposal was in line with the terms of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Sources further said that PM Imran Khan returned the summary to the Ministry of Finance for review following which on the directive of PM Imran, the Ministry of Finance will reconsider the increase in the prices of petroleum products.

Kaira says govt days numbered

GULZAR NOSHI

LALAMUSA: Senior PPP leader Qamar Zaman Kaira has said the sole purpose of joint opposition is to send this government packing adding PML Q was not the only one who could be a partner in change, there were many other options as well available with the opposition. Kaira expressed these views while speaking in a TV talk show on Tuesday. Qamar Zaman expressed serious reservations on the statement of Monis Elahi who had termed the opposition meetings with the senior PML Q leadership as a drama.

Worry about the economy, not us: Shahbaz tells PM

The PML-N president said that the country's economic situation has never been this worse before

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: PML-N President Shahbaz



Sharif on Tuesday has said that the prime minister should worry about the country's deteriorating economy rather than the Opposition's meetings. Talking to journalists in Lahore, the PML-N president said that the country's economic situation has never been this worse before. "Throughout the history of this country, inflation has never been as high as it is now," he said, adding that no other government in the past had accepted such huge amounts of international loans. Upon being asked by a journalist if the

Continued on Page 06

'No-trust motion to topple govt'

STAFF REPORT

LAYYAH: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman said during an address to 'Tahaffuz Ain-e-Pakistan Conference' (Constitution Protection Conference) in Layyah that the presidential system was a form of oppression. "As per the Constitution, no presidential system can work in Pakistan. It's unfortunate that we do not tell

Continued on Page 06

NCOC relaxes Covid curbs

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: The National Command and Operation Center Tuesday announced relaxation in the corona-related restrictions in cities having less than 10 percent positivity ratio. The NCOC has allowed outdoor gatherings and wedding gatherings with maximum attendance of 300 people but keeps the restrictions on the indoor gatherings. As per the NCOC directions, only 50 percent of people can go to the cinema halls, shrines and recreational places. Indoor gyms are allowed to continue work only with 50 percent capacity. The apex policy making body continued the ban on contact sports. In educational institutions, students up to

12 years can go to schools with 50 percent attendance on alternative days. The NCOC said that above 12-year-old students could only come to the institutions with full vaccination. The NCOC continued 50 percent attendance in the educational institutions in Karachi, Peshawar, Muzaffargarh, Hyderabad, Gilgit and Mardan. After reviewing the coronavirus situation in the country and cities with high disease prevalence in detail, the NCOC has agreed to keep the coronavirus-related restrictions in place in the cities and districts with COVID-19 positivity rate higher than 10% with three days rolling average. The NCOC said that the restrictions will be reviewed again on February 21 and directed all the concerned authorities to notify about the extension of restrictions at priority.

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Russia says it pulls back some of its troops

At a joint news conference with Scholz, Putin referred only briefly to the troop moves and did not go into details

CENTRELINE REPORT

MOSCOW: Russia said on Tuesday some of its troops were returning to base after exercises near Ukraine and mocked Western warnings about a looming invasion, but NATO said it had yet to see any evidence of a de-escalation that could avert a military conflict. Russia did not say how many units were being withdrawn, and how far, after a build-up of some 130,000 Russian troops to the north, east and south of Ukraine that has triggered one of the worst crises in relations with the West since the Cold War. At a joint news conference with Scholz, Putin referred only briefly to the troop moves and did not go into details. Russia has always denied planning to invade Ukraine, saying it can exercise

troops on its own territory as it sees fit. It has been pressing for a set of security guarantees from the West, including a guarantee that Ukraine will never join NATO. Putin told reporters Russia would not be satisfied with talk that the former Soviet republic was not ready to join any time soon and was demanding that the issue be resolved now. "As for war in Europe...about whether we want it or not? Of course not. That is why we put forward proposals for a negotiation process, the result of which should be an agreement on ensuring equal security for everyone, including our country," he said. Scholz said the diplomatic possibilities were far from exhausted. "For us Germans but also Europeans, sustainable security can only be reached .. with Russia. Therefore it

should be possible to find a solution. No matter how difficult and serious the situation seems to be, I refuse to say it is hopeless," he said. In a separate development, Russia's lower house of parliament voted to ask Putin to recognise two Russian-backed breakaway regions in eastern Ukraine as independent. Recognition of the self-declared Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics could kick off the Minsk peace process in east Ukraine, where a conflict between government forces and Moscow-backed separatists has killed 15,000 people. Asked about the move, Putin said the regions' problems should be solved on the basis of the Minsk agreements, which were signed in 2014 and 2015 but have never been implemented. Scholz said all sides should stick to those accords.

NATO urges cautious optimism

BRUSSELS: NATO's chief on Tuesday welcomed signals that Russia may be looking for a diplomatic solution amid a military build-up on Ukraine's border but urged Moscow to demonstrate its will to act. "There are signs from Moscow that diplomacy should continue. This gives grounds for cautious optimism. But so far we have not seen any sign of de-escalation on the ground from the Russian side", NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg told reporters ahead of a two-day meeting of the alliance's defence ministers in Brussels. "Russia has amassed a fighting force in and around Ukraine unprecedented since the cold war. Everything is now in place for a new attack. But Russia still has time to step back from the brink, stop preparing for war and start working for a peaceful solution", Stoltenberg said, calling the current situation the "most serious security crisis we have faced in Europe for decades". - News Desk

Briefs

Govt starts talent hunt for artist

ISLAMABAD: Ministry of National Heritage and Culture has decided to make "National Directory of Artist" to determine size of artist fraternity in Pakistan for devising country's first cultural policy and future endeavors of artistic activities. Talking to APP on Tuesday, Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Culture, Arts and Related Communications Shahzad Nawaz said Pakistan was a land full of colors with different languages, ethnicities, festivals, attires, food, and diverse cultures, but unfortunately country had no cultural policy since the inception of Pakistan. Culture, Arts and Communication secretariat of heritage ministry decided to collect rudimentary data of artist on the direction of Prime Minister Imran Khan to take an idea that how many artists lived in the country and that information would be converted into meta data to chalk out artistic framework and national policy of culture in Pakistan, he added.

"Secretariat has called on-line entries for artists from across the country as national data base of artist is not only confined to renowned or established artist. Every Pakistani who has talent in acting, writing, designing, painting, arts, singing, voice over, photography, production, graphics, animation, audio/ video editing can register himself on pakistancratives@gmail.com" he said. Divulging about the details of the program he said data would be completed by the end of March 2022 as the advertisement of national data base program sent to all art councils, universities, art schools, television channels, production houses and advertisement agencies.

ECP issues code of conduct for second phase of LG polls

PESHAWAR: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Tuesday issued instructions and code of conduct under section 21 for the Local Government election 2022 for printing and display of party banners for election campaigns.

A notification issued here said that all the candidates who would display banners other than the prescribed format and size would be charged strictly under the law. It said that for the seat of Tehsil Council, the size of the poster should be 18x23 inches, pamphlets 9x6 inches, cloth banners 3x9 feet and portraits 2.3 feet. Similarly for the Village Council and Neighbourhood Council seat, the size of poster should be 18x23 inches and cloth banner 3x9 feet. It also directed that all the printers and publishers would print their trade mark office address on printed material. — APP

Measures being taken against corruption

LAHORE: Inspector General of Police Punjab Rao Sardar Ali Khan Tuesday said that eradication of extremism, intolerance and violence from the society was a common national responsibility for which every person performing public service had to play a role in the best possible way. He said that women police officers were given important posts in the field alongside men so that they could easily advance in their public service duties and professional careers.

He expressed these views while talking to a delegation of 16 officers from 30 senior management course from National Institute of Management Peshawar, at the Central Police Office here. Rao Sardar Ali Khan said that free registration of FIRs was a core component of their policy aimed at ensuring elimination of organized crime groups. The IG Punjab said that strict measures were being taken against corruption, misuse of powers and non professionalism. In this regard, delay in registration of FIR was not tolerated at any cost so actions were taken against such negligence, he added. — APP

Malaysian envoy sees trade opportunities with Pakistan

The envoy said that Pakistan and Malaysia had brotherly relationships since 1957. Malaysia and Pakistan have always supported each other at every international forum

DNA

SIALKOT: Charge d'Affaires of High Commissioner of Malaysia to Pakistan Dedy Faisal Ahmad has said that there are vast opportunities for bilateral trade between Pakistan and his country.

He expressed these views while addressing a meeting at Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) here on Tuesday. The meeting was attended by SCCI President Mian Imran Akbar, Senior Vice President (SVP) Sheikh Zohaib Rafiq Sethi, Vice President Malik Qasim and a large number of Sialkot exporters.

The envoy said that Pakistan and Malaysia had brotherly relationships since 1957. Malaysia and Pakistan have always supported each other at every international forum. He said that bilateral trade between Pakistan and Malaysia had increased significantly. He said that trade could be enhanced by utilising the existing capabilities of the two countries which would further strengthened relationships. The charge d'affaires said that the country also ranked 12th globally for ease of doing business by the World Bank Group in 2020. He stressed cooperation in automobiles, education, industries and other fields and thanked the Sialkot chamber for the warm welcome. He also showed keen interest in SCCI's



documentary "Sialkot, the City of Progressive People" which was screened during this meeting. President SCCI Mian Imran Akbar gave

him a detailed briefing about the socio-economic and human development of Sialkot on self-help basis by Sialkot exporters. He said that there is a huge demand for Pa-

kistani products in the markets of Malaysia. He said that Sialkot exporters were playing pivotal role in strengthening national economy by earning US\$ 2.2 billion annually.



LALAMUSA: Former Tehsil Nazim Kharian and Chairman Municipal Committee Lalamusa Nadeem Asghar Kaira reading daily Islamabad POST. — DNA

Luncheon hosted by leading traders on the eve of Hazrat Ali's birthday

YOUSUF BHUTTA

GUJRAT: Birthday of the fourth caliph of the Muslim Ummah, cousin and son-in-law of the last Holy Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (PBUH), Hazrat Ali Ibn Abi Talib (RA) was celebrated here on Tuesday with religious zeal and fervor. Among different ceremonies a big luncheon was arranged by renowned traders and philanthropists Seth Brothers at a local fan manufacturing factory. It is reported that Seth Ali Abid, Seth Ali Akbar and Seth Ali Asghar hosted a grand luncheon for the workers of the factory, dignitaries and common people. The event was

attended by all the staff of factories, industrialists, religious scholars, students, teachers and common people. Brother kills elder brother over domestic dispute

One Aqib Hussain Shah, aged-28, resident of Moindudin pur village has been shot dead by his real brother Saqib Shah over a domestic dispute. The accused Saqib also attempted to kill himself after the murder. It is learnt that Aqib Shah and Saqib Shah had an exchange of hot words over a domestic issue. Saqib Shah fired on his elder brother who died on the spot. Then he fired a bullet on himself and was injured. Police have arrested the accused Saqib and admitted him

in Aziz Bhatti Shaheed Hospital. He is said to be stable. Sadar police are investigating.

Three killed in accidents

Three persons were killed in three different accidents in district Gujrat. In the first incident one Akram, an employee of Metropolitan Corporation Gujrat was hit by a speeding vehicle. He succumbed to injuries on the spot.

In the second incident a woman, mother of four kids was run over by a speeding car when she was waiting for a bus to go back to her house at the bus stop of KhoonanChak near Kunjah. In the third incident a mason Arshad Khan was accidentally

touched with high power transmission lines when he was working on the roof top of an under construction house in MangowalGharbi. He was taken to hospital for first aid but he took her last breath before reaching the hospital.

One gunned down for money One Zaib Khan, aged-30, resident of Mardan was shot dead by two persons in DheroGhunna village over a dispute of money. It is reported that Zaib Khan of Mardan, who was a tenant here, was gunned down by two armed persons at his house. The dispute is said to be a transaction of money. Rehmania police have registered a case.

Few opportunities for young married girls

DNA

ISLAMABAD: "We recently had a troubled learning from one of our interventions that the majority of the marriages of young girls result in complete disconnection from the previous life. The opportunities of staying in touch with former class fellows, continuing education, starting a career or empowerment are lost." These were the views shared by Areebah Shahid, Executive Director Pakistan Youth Change Advocates (PYCA) while moderating a webinar "Married, But Not Excluded". This webinar was organized by PYCA and inHive Global with participation from representatives of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Community Based Organizations (CBOs), educationists and young university going girls.

Afghan delegation appreciates PAJCCI's efforts

DNA

PESHAWAR: Visiting Afghan delegation to Pakistan appreciated the Pak-Afghan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI)'s unrelenting efforts since last five years to build sustainable trade relations between the two countries by involving all chambers and various forums.

According to a press release issued here on Tuesday, the Afghan delegation arrived here on February 14 under the leadership of Khan Jan Alokoza; Co-Chairman PAJCCI comprising leading Afghan businessmen and members of various Afghan Chambers. The delegation will visit Lahore to participate in the first session of stakeholders meeting being held on February 16. Later the delegation will go to Islamabad to attend the second part of series of stakeholders meeting being held on February 17. The delegation's today visit to Sundar Industrial Estate, Quaid-e-Azam Business Park, Quaid-e-Azam Industrial Estate, Kot Lakhpat followed by dinner along with leading businessmen from Lahore and trade associations was termed as highly successful.

The visit to Industrial Estates and meetings with Lahore business community has given first hand exposure of investment & joint venture possibilities to Afghan businessmen. Zubair Motiwala, Chairman PAJCCI commented that the exchange of trade delegations will pave way for sustainable relationship and will increase trust among business community of both countries having interacted in person and by visiting. These kinds of exchanges will not only increase trade volume between the two countries but will open trade ways to Central Asian Republics (CARs) and beyond important for the regional trade balance and closing the gap left by previous trading partners.

He reiterated that PAJCCI will continue to involve all forums at Business to Business and Government to Government levels to facilitate business community on both sides in building strongest possible trade, economic, social and humanitarian relationship.

CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
Environment Directorate (E)

"CORRIGENDUM"

Following addition may please be made as clause No.10 in the tender notice "Beautification / Up-lifting of Shakarparan Parade Ground for Pak Day 35 Parade 23rd March, 2022 in Islamabad" already published on 06.02.2022:-

10. The eligibility criteria of the firms with the relevant experience i.e. at least three number of work in last two financial years may be observed / fulfilled before issuance of tender documents.

Deputy Director Park Division
Env/Dt; (East),

PID (I) No. 5675/21

Maldivian HC meets business community

NAZIR SIYAL

KARACHI: Absence of direct flights, lack of B2B contacts, insufficient governmental facilitation and not targeting the right sectors have been identified as the major reasons for low volume of Pakistani exports to Maldives against big potential market existing there.

"Pakistani traders have not yet been able to tap the true potential that exists in the Maldivian market," said FPCCI Chief Irfan Iqbal Sheikh during a meeting with Maldivian High Commissioner to Pakistan Ms. Farzana Zahir during her visit to the Federation House, the headquarters of Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry here, said FPCCI statement on Tuesday. Chairman of FPCCI's Management Committee, Irfan Iqbal Sheikh has explained the bottlenecks in the realization of the true trade potential that quantifiably exists between Pakistan and Maldives, which currently figures only dollars 9 million. There was a substantive demand for halal Pakistani food exports to Maldives including fresh fruits and vegetables, meat, processed and semi-processed foods, dry fruits, various varieties of rice and organic snacks.

As far as the food products are concerned, Pakistan could well compete in Maldivian market in terms



of prices, quality or taste, he added. Sheikh proposed that a revised, updated and expanded memorandum of understanding should be signed between FPCCI, and Maldives National Chamber of Commerce and Industry to forge B2B alliances; which would eventually translate into a more vibrant government-to-government economic cooperation. He also recommended the formation of an effective and functional Joint Business Council between the two brotherly countries. FPCCI Chief called for launch of direct flights between Pakistan and

Maldives to make it possible for the business communities on both the sides to embark on the much needed business and economic tourism. High Commissioner of Maldives to Pakistan said Maldives was looking to diversify the sources of construction materials imports, including cement and steel coupled with the increasing demand for the halal food products.

She also invited Pakistani entrepreneurs, hoteliers and real estate developers to invest in Maldivian Tourism Industry. Maldives enjoys 74% occupancy in the tourism and hospitality industries; and, that

guarantees a great return on the investments in the industry. Imran Khalil Naseer, a prominent business leader from Pakistan, pointed out that Pakistan can actually learn a lot from Maldives' tourism industry and their infrastructure — as Pakistan has many underutilized and under-marketed tourism hotspots like religious, natural and historical destinations. Mr. Usama Qureshi, an energy and FMCG expert, expressed his profound interest in the open-door policy of Maldives to welcome unsolicited project proposals in the renewable and green energy sectors.

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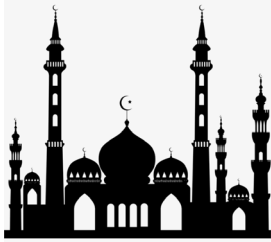
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Fajr.....	05:29 am
Zohr.....	12:22 pm
Asr.....	04:13 pm
Maghrib.....	05:52 pm
Isha.....	07:16 pm



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Monal.....	0334-5421812



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Emergency

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RGH.....	9290301-7
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PIMS.....	9261170-79
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Complaints

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



Islamabad Metropolitan

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



Wasa Water Tank

Rawalpindi.....	0331-5022125
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Kazakh business delegation to visit Pak to tap potential

Muhammad Shakeel Munir, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry said that Pakistan and Kazakhstan enjoyed very cordial relations that should be transformed into growing trade and economic relations between the two countries

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Yezhan Kistafin, Ambassador of Kazakhstan said that a business delegation of his country was coming to Pakistan in the last week of February this year to meet with Pakistani counterparts and tap business opportunities in the Pakistan's market. He said this while interacting with ICCI Office Bearers during his visit to Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry. The envoy said that the delegation would visit ICCI to hold a B2B meeting besides visiting touring industrial units in the Capital to see the potential of their products for Kazakh market. The delegation would also visit Lahore and Karachi. He said that a single country exhibition of Pakistan was planned in Almaty in May this year and ICCI members should consider participating in that event to display their products.

He said that many Pakistani products including sports goods, medicines, surgical instruments have good potential in Kazakhstan. He said that a high powered business delegation led by the President of Kazakhstan was planning to visit Pakistan in September



that would further strengthen B2B relations between the two countries. He also invited an ICCI delegation to visit Kazakhstan

occasion, Muhammad Shakeel Munir, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry said that Pakistan and Kazakhstan enjoyed very cordial relations that should be transformed into growing trade and economic relations between the two countries. He said that the current volume of bilateral trade between the two countries was not reflective of their actual potential and both sides should cooperate with their private sectors to increase trade volume.

He said that Pakistan was producing many high quality products including marble & granites, textiles, pharmaceuticals, steel, cement, leather products, rice etc. and Kazakhstan should import these products from Pakistan for the benefit of its consumers. He said that ICCI would consider sending its delegation to Kazakhstan to explore new avenues of mutual cooperation. Jamshaid Akhtar Sheikh Senior Vice President, Muhammad Faheem Khan Vice President ICCI, Sheikh Ejaz and others also spoke at the occasion and emphasized that both countries should encourage frequent exchange of trade delegations and organize single country exhibitions on reciprocal basis to improve trade ties up to their potential.

HEC to evaluate output of research grant

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: There is a grave need for moving away from the metrics that emphasize on quantity of research papers produced towards the weight of one quality paper, which either solves or contributes meaningfully to solving a problem, being far better than the weight of dozens of papers which do not develop a body of knowledge. This was stated by Chairman Higher Education Commission (HEC) Tariq Banuri while expressing his views as a keynote speaker of a national conference

entitled, "Meeting of the Minds" organized by the National Academy of Higher Education (NAHE) on the premises of the National Institute for Finance and Banking (NIBAF). The conference, held under the leadership of Rector, Prof. Shaheen Sardar Ali, brought together early career researchers/academics who have undergone training at NAHE under the National Faculty Development Pro-

gram (NFDP) and placed at HEIs through the IPPF fellowships. These IPPF Fellows received a Start Up Research Grant (SRGP) for a research project at the institution of their choice. Upon completion of the project, NAHE encouraged them to reflect their research findings in a poster and provided them training on poster making, which was offered by Dr.

Rahman Shah Zaib Saleem from LUMS. Panel members (senior academics) from HEIs in the country evaluated these posters and received a three-minute presentation by IPPF Fellows explaining their research and poster after which authors of the five top ranked posters were announced. A total of 65 IPPF fellows submitted their posters for evaluation. A conference book containing the posters will be published as well and it will contribute towards dissemination of this work not only among the limited NAHE Fellows but also to a wider audience in the higher education sector.

AIOU educational network extends to world over

DNA

ISLAMABAD: 'Allama Iqbal Open (AIOU) has extended its educational network to the entire world. We are highly encouraged and motivated to announce that international students from KSA, UAE, Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, Oman, Malaysia, Italy, Africa, and USA have been admitted to various academic programs offered by the university in semester autumn 2021', said Prof Dr Zia Ul-Qayyum, VC, AIOU in a statement. He, further, added that AIOU is targeting to increase enrollment of the international students to ten thousand within upcoming three years. AIOU has been able to achieve this important milestone because of digitalization of its key academic, administrative and financial operations. Moreover, according to Dr Zahid Majeed, Director, International Collaboration and Exchange Office, admissions are in progress till February 22 for national as well as international students for the programs offered in the first phase of spring 2022 semester including matriculation, FA and I Com. All academic activities for international students will be conducted online ranging from submission of admission application form to the issuance of certificate/degree. Admission application forms and prospectuses for all these programs are available online on the university website (www.aiou.edu.pk). Overseas Pakistanis and international students are required to apply for admission via online mode.

ADB's Country Director visits One Window Ehsaas Center

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Country Director of Asian Development Bank (ADB), Yong Ye Tuesday visited 'One Window Ehsaas Center' in Sitara Market of the federal capital where Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Poverty Alleviation and Social Protection, Senator Dr. Sania Nishtar welcomed him. The visit explored collaborative options to expand the One Window Ehsaas operations all over the country. The ADB Country Director was briefed on the 'One Stop Shop' operations of Ehsaas which integrate all benefits for 14 different target groups in one space. He highly appreciated the integration of wide range of services for social protection, financial inclusion, education, health and nutrition, and poverty graduation education at the One Window Ehsaas Center.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Sania said "Beneficiaries can access all Ehsaas services and benefits at the One Window centre". Following a detailed presentation on the consolidated Ehsaas services at One Window Center of Ehsaas, Country Director ADB was also given a round of the facility wherein he witnessed one window operations and interacted with staff and beneficiaries. From Ehsaas' side, Secretary Ismat Tahira, Additional Secretary Syed Moazzam and Director General Naveed Akbar were also present at the center. The One Window Ehsaas has six pillars: firstly, a one stop shop, the Ehsaas Center; secondly, back office digital interface; thirdly, a public facing digital information and services platform; the fourth component is a mobile app; the fifth component is cognitive API architecture the integrated database; and finally, the Ehsaas One-Window Beneficiary Selection and Targeting Policy.



ISLAMABAD: SAPM Dr. Sania Nishtar visits Ehsaas One Window Center with ADB Country Director, Yong Ye. - DNA

RCCI urges govt for Gems & Jewelry Authority

Chairman Prime Minister's Task Force on Gems and Jewellery Engineer Gul Asghar Khan who attended the meeting as special guest said that the setting up of Gems Authority will be implemented soon with the aim of developing the gems and jewellery sector

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) here on Tuesday urged the Government to establish Gems & Jewelry Authority at the earliest. The draft of the Act for the authority has already been approved by the Federal cabinet. Addressing the standing committee meeting on Gems and Jewellery Nadeem Rauf said that we demand immediate establishment of the Gems Authority so that exports of non-conventional sectors like Gems and Jewellery can be enhanced. The Chamber has always taken effective steps to bring the non-conventional sectors

to the fore. He said that RCCI successfully organized Gems & Jewelry Exhibitions in 2018 and 2019. The third Gems Jewelry & Fashion Expo will be held in May this year, he informed.

Chairman Prime Minister's Task Force on Gems and Jewellery Engineer Gul Asghar Khan who attended the meeting as special guest said that the setting up of Gems Authority will be im-

plemented soon with the aim of developing the gems and jewellery sector. He shared important data analysis in comparison with India where exports in gems and Jewellery sectors crossed 40

billion dollars whereas in Pakistan the exports are only 24 million dollars. Chairman Committee Fayyaz Qureshi spoke in detail about the problems faced by the Gems & Jewel-

lery sector in which cutting, polishing, certification and value addition of precious stones which need to be addressed. Taxes and duties should be reduced. Relevant people from different sectors should be included in the authority, he demanded. Chairman task Force also cut the ribbon of the soft launch of RCCI 3rd Gems & Jewelry Expo to be held in May 2022. Group Leader Sohail Altaf, Senior Vice President Asim Malik, Vice President Talat Awan, Former Presidents Dr. Hassan Saroush, Dr. Shamail Dawood, Mian Humayun Pervez, Small Chamber President Asif Idrees, Members of Task Force, RCCI Executive Committee and members were present on the occasion.



PM Khan to launch first ever instant payment system

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan would launch on Tuesday Pakistan's first-ever instant payment system 'Raast', developed by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), said Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting Farrukh Habib. He, in a tweet, said the purpose of this programme was to facilitate individual payments.

Under the system, Farrukh Habib said the consumers would be able to send and receive money in their accounts through a mobile application.

Customs seizes narcotics worth Rs80m

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Customs of Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) on Tuesday confiscated the narcotics (255 Kgs Opium) of valuing Rs.80 million at (GANZ) Gwadar. The amount of the narcotics along with the seized vehicle in the international market comes to be Rs. 80 million, said a press release issued by FBR here. Building further on its incessant drive against smuggling, Pakistan Customs (FBR) on 13.02.2022 at about 1230 am has conducted yet another successful operation. In pursuance of credible information, the ASO team of Collectorate of Customs, Gwadar has effected seizure of narcotics (255 KGs Opium) at Ganz in the wake of a long chase. During patrolling, Customs Staff spotted a course car around Jiwani which was signaled to stop for search. However, the driver of the vehicle accelerated and attempted to take away the vehicle which was followed and intercepted at Ganz.

IGP listens to complaints of citizens

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Muhammad Ahsan Younas has directed all police officials to resolve the public complaints on priority. During an 'Open Court' especially held on Tuesday with the purpose to listen issues of policemen and citizens, the IGP directed relevant police officials to resolve their issues and gave them time-frame for the purpose. The IGP while listening public complaints strictly directed all zonal officers to take immediate and strict action against land grabbers. "No one would be allowed to grab property of any citizen" he added. Islamabad police chief said that it is our prime responsibility to provide protection to the lives and property of the citizens and resolve their problems on priority. He said that citizens at 'Open Court' should be behaved in a respectful manner and their trust on police department to be won through resolving their issues.

IBCC attests 300,000 documents

ISLAMABAD: Inter Board Committee of Chairmen (IBCC) Secretary Dr. Ghulam Ali Mallah on Tuesday said IBCC had attested 306,093 documents and issued 47,932 equivalence certificates from July 1, 2020 to November 30, 2021. The year 2020 and 2021 were two of the most challenging years for all of us as the annual examinations could not be held due to the COVID-19 crisis, Dr Mallah told APP. He said to mitigate the challenges and to promote students for the continuity of education and ensuring equity and fairness, it was IBCC and its members who played the key role in developing evidence-based recommendations for student promotion policy guidelines, he elaborated. - APP

Briefs

PWAI, PAL
to organize
"Zikr-e-Faiz"

ISLAMABAD: Progressive Writers Association Islamabad (PWAI) in collaboration with Pakistan Academy of Letters (PAL) would organize an event titled "Zikr-e-Faiz" in connection with 111th birthday of Faiz Ahmad Faiz on February 17. Organizer Imdad Akash told APP that eminent scholar Amer Sindh will preside over the ceremony while Salima Hashmi will be guest of honour on the occasion, said a press release issued here. Chairman PAL Dr. Yousuf Khushk, Haris Khaleeq, Masheel Fatima will also shed light on the life and literary contributions of Faiz Ahmad Faiz. Dr. Anwar Ahmed, Arshad Mahmood, Arshad Waheed, ex Chairman PAL Dr. Qasim Bughio, Akhtar Usman, Dr. Salahuddin Darwesh, Dr. Arshad Mehraj, Faqeer Sain, Wasif Arshad, Najma Rehana, Farheen Khalid, Mahafia Sheikh, Fatima Usman, Tahir Islam Askari and others also pay tribute to Faiz Ahmad Faiz in their copies. Meanwhile Dr. Anwar Ahmad, Rahat Saeed, Dr. Najeeb Jamal, Dr. Shah Muhammad Marri and Prof. Noor ul Amin Yousafzai will attend the event online via zoom. "Kalam-e-Faiz Naqsh-e-Kamal" would be launched on the occasion. A video clip Kalam e Shayer Ba Zaban e Shayer would be played. - APP

Tanzara
exhibition
to start from
February 17

ISLAMABAD: Tanzara Art Gallery would organize a solo exhibition under the titled 'Life & some other beautiful things' by Irfan Cheema on Thursday February 17 aiming to showcase the hidden talent of artistic work. The exhibition will continue till Feb 23 under complete Standard operating procedures (SOPs). Tanzara Gallery takes pleasure in presenting 'Life and some other beautiful things' a solo exhibition by Shanghai based Pakistani artist Irfan Cheema who is known for his timeless still life paintings, said a press release issued here. He is a classical realist painter, but his paintings are more than an imitation of what is seen. He has the magic of capturing the essence of the vignette that he replicate on canvas. - APP

Motorbike, 3
wheeler sales
decrease

ISLAMABAD: The sale of motorbikes and three wheelers in the country has witnessed a decrease of 1.94 percent during the first seven months of financial year (2021-22) as compared to the corresponding period of last year. During the months under review, as many as 1091,795 motorbikes and three wheelers were sold in July-January (2021-22) against the sale of 1113,435 units in July-January (2020-21), showing decline of 1.94 percent, according to the Pakistan Automobile Manufacturing Association (PAMA). However, the sale of Honda motorcycles went up by 9.10 percent from 732,041 units in last year to 798,657 units during the period under review whereas the sale of Suzuki motorcycles also rose by 67.48 percent from 12,682 units to 21,240 units. - APP

IRSA releases
88567
cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) Tuesday released 88567 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 41648 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in the Indus River at Tarbela Dam was 1419.31 feet, which was 27.31 feet higher than its dead level 1392 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 16800 and 59000 cusecs respectively. The water level in the Jhelum River at Mangla Dam was 1145.60 feet, which was 95.06 feet higher than its dead level of 1050 feet whereas the inflow and outflow of water was recorded 9813 and 14532 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Talasa and Sukkur was recorded as 67016, 47794 and 30005 cusecs respectively. - APP

Serena, EHL hold hospitality
management program

This partnership was announced at the inaugural ceremony of the hospitality management second module attended by the participants and the senior management of Serena Hotels - hosted at the Islamabad Serena Hotel

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Serena Hotels entered into mandate agreement with Ecole hôtelière de Lausanne - EHL the world's best hotel management/hospitality business school in Switzerland, founded in 1893. With consistently high performance, EHL is ranked the best hotel management school by QS World

University Rankings for 3 years in a row. This partnership was announced at the inaugural ceremony of the hospitality management second module attended by the participants and the senior management of Serena Hotels - hosted at the Islamabad Serena Hotel. The Proficiency Hospitality Management Certificate Program consist of 7 modules that aim to build

and explore the capacity of local talent in the hospitality management field while keeping in view the country's growth potential in tourism and service industry, syncs well in line with government objective with the focus on hospitality management. The program has been well received by key institution stake holder in hospitality, banks, hospital and education sector.

The first module was focused on People Management and the second module is on E-Tourism and Customer Care. The certificate program is expected to complete by end of 2022. Mr. Jochen De Peuter, a Consultant at EHL, expressed his gratitude to the Serena Hotels' management for holding the face to face on premises training sessions. "Today people are using their screens more

and more. Be it mobile phones or surfing the Internet, streaming or holding teleconferences on Zoom. So, what we did, we added digitalization in the module of this session hence now e-tourism makes much more sense as compared to two years ago. At EHL we always think from the customer's perspective and this is a part of our philosophy." - Mr. Jochen De Peuter, EHL

Consultant. Mr. Aziz Boolani encouraged the participants to take the full advantage of the certificate program as Pakistan is the destination of opportunities, that can only be achieved with the capacity building at the middle and senior level. Serena Hotels Pakistan collaboration with EHL is the right step to develop talents at the middle and senior levels.

'Timely diagnosis vital to
check breast cancer cases'

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Begum Samina Alvi on Tuesday said every year, around 100,000 women in Pakistan were being diagnosed with breast cancer and stressed timely diagnosis as the major solution to the alarming situation. Speaking here at the breast cancer awareness event held at Islamabad Model College for Girls, she said every 13 minutes, a woman in Pakistan was being diagnosed with breast cancer with an alarming 45 percent mortality rate. Begum Alvi emphasized that 90 percent of such women patients could recover from the disease with help of early screening and diagnosis. She said raising awareness among women about self-diagnosis could save thousands of precious lives. Not only the women patients, she said, the painful disease with expensive treatment also affected their close ones in form of psychological and financial trauma.



She expressed satisfaction that her awareness drive about breast cancer was going on successfully across the country and urged the women to spread the word to at least 10 women. Samina Alvi said the awareness campaign would not only limit to the month of October but would continue

throughout the year. She also urged the male members of the family to realize the suffering attached with the disease and support women to get proper medical care. Begum Alvi said women in the country were playing a vital role in all fields of life, adding that it was important

to be concerned about their well-being. She urged upon all cross-sections of society, particularly men to join hands in raising awareness about breast cancer. She lauded the role of media in spreading the word on breast cancer through special television programmes and newspaper articles.

Potohar cultural
festival concludes

ISLAMABAD: A two-day festival to promote the culture and heritage of Potohar concluded successfully at the Arts and Crafts Village, Shakarparian. The cultural fair, which was organized by the Directorate of Sports, Culture & Tourism of Capital Development Authority (CDA), and Metropolitan Corporation Islamabad (MCI), the other day and saw the attendance of hundreds of visitors from the twin cities. The event held from February 13 to 14 unveiled a variety of stalls pertaining to the Potohar culture including clothing and food, besides fun activities for children. Participants, who belonged to Potohar, were happy to have earned well and for the opportunity to share their crafts and heritage. Saqib Saleem, who displayed handmade crafts at his booth, shared, "I am very glad to have participated. A lot of people shopped from us. Insha'Allah I will participate in the future too." The function wrapped up with performances from local artists singing tunes and playing melodies in their mother tongue. Deputy Commissioner ICT Muhammad Hamza Shafiq, Chief Metropolitan Officer Capt Syed Ali Asghar, and Director Sports Culture and Tourism MCI Amir Shehzad were the special guests, who visited the cultural gala. - APP

President KYA condoles
with Nahida Nasreen

ISLAMABAD: Nephew of Syeda Asiya Andrabi and President Kashmir Youth Alliance Dr Syed Mujahid Gilani has expressed profound grief over sad demise of mother in law of Kashmiri leader and Secretary General of Dukhtran e Millat Nahida Nasreen who is behind bars in Tihar Jail. He demanded immediate release of Naheeda Nasreen so that she can take part in the last rites of the deceased. Expressing heartfelt sympathies with the bereaved family, Dr Syed Mujahid Gilani prayed for the high ranks of the departed soul. He also prayed for the bereaved family to bear the loss with fortitude. - DNA

DC visits THQ
hospital Taxila,
inspects facilities

RAWALPINDI: Deputy Commissioner Tahir Farooq on Tuesday visited Tehsil Headquarter Hospital (THQ) Taxila and checked the attendance of staff, stock of essential medicines and Outdoor Patient Department (OPD) in detail. He was accompanied by Assistant Commissioner Taxila Marhaba Namat, Medical Superintendent (MS) of Deputy District Health Officer and other officials of the Health Department. The DC interacted with the patients and directed the hospital's administration to ensure cleanliness in hospital. He directed the MS to give special attention to the cleanliness of wards, doctor's rooms and OPD and encouraged the patients to opt for cleanliness through awareness posters. "By keeping the environment clean, we can avoid many diseases at first hand," he added. He directed to ensure the availability of the required medicines, and all the necessary machinery should be kept functional in the hospital. Tahir advised the AC Taxila to visit the hospital regularly to ensure that the best medical treatment was being provided to the general public. - APP

Kashmiri women optimistic
about success: Shamim Shawl

The UNHCR reports of 2018 and 2019 are witness of this growing awareness about gross human rights violations in Kashmir," she said

ISLAMABAD: Kashmiri women, who are soft target of Indian atrocities, are optimistic about the success of their freedom struggle, says Representative of International Muslim Women Union Geneva Shamim Shawl. Highlighting the Kashmiri women's struggle for freedom and resistance against Indian atrocities in an exclusive chat with APP on Tuesday, Shawl said they were successfully operating international women advocacy group to highlight Kashmir issue.

The world was now fully aware of the cases of Asifa Bano and Insha Mush-taq, highlighted by the group's activists in the British Parliament, EU forums and other relevant forums. She said that they were reaching out to all global forums to share the pain and sufferings of vulnerable Kashmiri people specially women and children. Shawl said that social media and other relevant platforms were being used to fight the case of Kashmir effectively.

Kashmiri women, she said, especially Aasia Andrabi, Farida Behniji and Zam-arud Habib, suffering in jail for their just cause, were the true inspirational forces for the youth. From Kunnan-pishpora to Sopore, Indian troops were using Kashmiri women as weapons of war, a shameful act of world's so-called largest democracy, she remarked. The government up to the level of

Prime Minister Modi was active partner in crimes in Kashmir which by every recognised definition were in fact crimes against humanity, said Shawl. "They want a Muslim minority state in Kashmir and all that they do is a step towards that direction. There is nothing new in their tactics. Freedom struggles world over have been familiar with these tactics and have ultimately been successful because of their unwavering belief in their just cause and commitment with struggle. Indian media may continue to blackout the truth but the world knows exactly what is happening in Kashmir. The UNHCR reports of 2018 and 2019 are witness of this growing awareness about gross human rights violations in Kashmir," she said. Shawl expressed the hope that this support would continue to increase from all those who believe in justice and freedom. - DNA

Govt approves Rs 39b for Kamyab Jawan loans: Dar

The SAPM said the government has allocated Rs100 billion for the disbursement of soft loans under the Kamyab Jawan Program and was distributing three to four billion rupees per month to around 3,000 young entrepreneurs which would be expanded to disburse eight to 10 billion rupees

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Youth Affairs Muhammad Usman Dar Tuesday said the government has approved Rs 39 billion for Kamyab Jawan Business Loans to benefit around 25,700 youth who have qualified for the soft loans under the Kamyab Jawan Programme. In a press conference, the SAPM urged the youth engaged with media industry to become part of Kamyab Jawan Programme (KJP) to apply for soft loans to establish their own businesses with a kick start amount.

Dar said under the programme over 2,000 tractors were distributed among the youth working in agriculture sector in order to facilitate the farmers with the aim to boost the sector. The tractor distribution scheme would be expanded to 10,000 tractors in the first phase, he added. He said, as per the vision of Prime Minister Imran Khan, the government was working on youth development initiatives and also ensuring best employment opportunities. The SAPM said the government has allocated Rs100 billion for the disbursement of soft loans under the Kamyab Jawan Program and was distribut-



ing three to four billion rupees per month to around 3,000 young entrepreneurs which would be expanded to disburse eight to 10 billion rupees. He said that in the third phase of "Skills for All" (Hunarmand Pa-

kistan) scholarships program, over 400,000 youth has applied whereas around 60,000 youth would be provided scholarships for various courses in traditional and high-tech trades. He said the federal gov-

ernment has supported the youth of Sind province and allocated 13,000 skills scholarships for them that has exceeded to 35,000 whereas as soft loans of worth Rs8Billion had been disbursed among the qualifying youth. Dar said, "We want sports to become a part of the national economy, so that it may attract and provide jobs to the youth in this sector." Pakistan's target was to participate at the Commonwealth Games and bring laurels for the nation whereas three sports talent hunt drives would be initiated to select best athletes of hockey, wrestling and weight lifting that would be trained to

participate at global foras, he added. He said the Program has conducted football trials across the country and chose 20 football stars, whereas the trials concluded last week in Karachi. He said the disbursement of business loans under the Kamyab Jawan Programme has been accelerated to facilitate maximum number of youth in the country. "Prime Minister Imran Khan is working for the development and prosperity of the youth", he mentioned. Usman said KJP was ensuring the distribution of loans on purely merit basis and thousands of young people were running their businesses through these loans.

FM condoles
over death of
FO SPOX's
father

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi Tuesday expressed his condolences on the deaths of father of Foreign Office Spokesperson Asim Itikhar and Haji Khayal Zaman, late Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf member of the National Assembly from Hangu district. In his separate messages of condolences, he expressed sympathies with the foreign office spokesperson and other members of the bereaved family, a press release said. PTI's vice chairman expressing his deep grief and sorrow over the death of Haji Khayal Zaman, said that late MNA was a sincere and courteous personality and his valuable contributions towards the party would be remembered for long. The foreign minister also prayed for the high ranks of the departed souls.

PML-Q to
support PTI:
Shehbaz Gill

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to Prime Minister (SAPM), Dr Shehbaz Gill on Monday said that Pakistan Muslim League-Q, had made an agreement with ruling party of Pakistan Tehreek e Insaf (PTI) to support for completing five years tenure. The coalition partners including PML-Q are standing behind the PTI government, he said while talking to a private television channel. Prime Minister Imran Khan, he said would not make any deal with corrupt leaders. He said PM Imran Khan and the government are committed to eradicate corruption from the society. Commenting on no-confidence move being launched by the opposition, he said the courts are going to impose indictment against the leaders of Pakistan Muslim League-N and this reason has forced the opposition leaders to launch the fresh drive against the government. Despite political pressure of opposition benches, he said PM Imran Khan would not grant any relief or national reconciliation ordinance to corrupt politicians.

QAU to
organize int'l
conference on
Pak-US ties

ISLAMABAD: Quaid-I-Azam University (QAU) Islamabad in collaboration with Attorney Dawood Ghaznavi (Founder "Dawood Law Associates") to organize here a One-Day International Virtual Conference, "PAKISTAN - U.S. TIES: THE WAY FORWARD" on Wednesday (today) to discuss Pakistan's current relations with the U.S. and offered a beneficial way forward for both countries. The One-Day International Virtual Conference is being organized by Area Study Centre for Africa, North & South America QAU, to assess this new foreign policy orientation and how it can provide opportunities to the U.S. and Pakistan to bring a new chapter in their relationship. Pakistan is keen to revisit its relationship with the U.S. under the newly pronounced National Security Policy (NSP) doctrine, which prioritizes geo-economics as the pivot of Pakistan's foreign policy. The most prominent speakers at the Conference were including US Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, Congressman Al Green, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Ali (T.I), VC QAU, Islamabad, Angela Aggeler, Chargé d'affaires US Embassy Islamabad, Cameron Munter, Ex-USA ambassador to Pakistan, Michael Kugelmann, Deputy Director and Senior Assistant for South Asia, Wilson Center, Washington, Zahid Hussain, award-winning journalist, and author, Ambassador Aizaz Chaudhry, Director General, Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad, Mr. Irfan Nooruddin, Senior Director, South Asia Center, Atlantic Council, Washington, USA, Mudassar Tipu Director-General Americas, Foreign Office, Ambassador Nadeem Riyaz, President, Institute of Regional Studies, Islamabad, Attorney Dawood Ghaznavi, Author, Analyst, Speaker US/Pakistan Relations at US Think-Tanks, Dr. Sadiya Sulaiman, Assistant Prof. ASC, QAU, Islamabad. - APP

Financial assistance

WHILE chairing a meeting of the National Coordination Committee (NCC) on Housing, Construction and Development, PM Imran Khan approved \$1.4 trillion as assistance for those needing financial help for their businesses, homes and agricultural ambitions. The assistance being offered includes over 70,000 housing projects that many will be able to own through mortgages and low-interest loans. In fact, the project is expected to add an inflow of Rs.7.3 trillion to various related industries like construction and will create over 1.2 million jobs. The opportunities that are being offered to the people seem plentiful and if Rs.46 million has already been disbursed, there is no doubt that the remaining amount will benefit the people and will work efficiently and the way intended.

It is vital that the banks are incorporated within this initiative to reduce burns on the state. The primary focus must be on improving the economic standing of the majority and for this to happen, we must alter the way our financial markets function.

This kind of distribution of funds is required for financial institutions like banks to step in and regulate the market, keeping in mind that the interests of those belonging to low-income groups must be kept in mind.

The mortgages and loans given should either be interest free or should amount to one month's rent so that repaying the amount does not pose too much of a hardship for anyone. We cannot trap the people in an endless cycle of debt and if many are wanting to become house owners or are working towards making their entrepreneurial dreams a reality, they must be supported. The authorities must alter the market in a way that this is made possible and providing such assistance in a sustainable manner is vital.

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Healthy competition

THE letter sent by Pakistan International Airlines to PM Imran Khan to reconsider a reported decision to allow for an international carrier to fly domestic routes is a display of how poor management and years of lacklustre service have led the national carrier to be unable to handle any competition whatsoever.

This is not an argument against protectionism; governments often allow for restricted international access to certain markets to protect local industry. But the situation with PIA is very different. As the only state-owned airline service—one that has been in losses for over a decade—the yearly bailouts and financial injections themselves are a lot more than the protective measures most states offer to any industry, especially when continuous loss without any foreseeable public benefit is a constant. If the government were to consider protecting local airline operators, the focus should be on those private-run businesses that at the very least, end up turning a profit at the end of a financial year. But even in that case; protectionist practices are generally brought in to help an industry that is either nascent or struggling—private carriers have been thriving for years and there is no indication that this will change if an international competitor were to enter the market.

At this point, Pakistan's air industry could do with some healthy competition. There is a dire need for more jobs in this industry ever since PIA's own trim down began. There must also be impetus for private airlines and the national carrier to offer better services to consumers. Unless the PIA can provide a legitimate reason, or even proof of its turnaround—which would be hampered by the inclusion of a new player into the market—the government should continue on the path it is currently on and allow for more competition and job creation in this industry.

Ukrainian ripples: Turkey and Israel eye cooperation

James M. Dorsey

Turkish-Israeli gas cooperation would strengthen Mr. Erdogan's bid to position Turkey as an alternative energy hub for Europe

A recent dinner in Washington suggests that a seemingly forthcoming visit to Turkey by Israeli President Isaac Herzog could be about more than putting an end to strained relations between the two erstwhile allies. Engineered by an influential American Jewish leader, Malcolm Hoenlein, vice-chair of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, the dinner was attended by the Washington ambassadors of Israel, Turkey, Uzbekistan, and Kazakhstan and hosted by the envoy of Azerbaijan.

It was designed to find a pathway to closer economic and security cooperation between Israel and the Turkic countries, which have diplomatic relations with the Jewish state. The significance of the dinner lies not only in the fact that it occurred in advance of Mr. Herzog's visit. The ambassadors met as the Ukraine crisis threatened to force Turkey to choose between NATO and Russia.

Moreover, Turkey, Azerbaijan, and Central Asian states attempted three months earlier to blow new life into their Cooperation Council of Turkic Speaking States. A NATO member with close ties to Russia that has bought a Russian anti-missile system, Turkey has backed Ukraine, tightened military cooperation with the embattled East European state, and condemned Russia's occupation in 2014 of Crimea.

Mr. Erdogan visited Kyiv earlier this month but saw his offer to mediate Ukraine's conflict with Russia rebuffed by Moscow. The Turkish president has since said he

would like to resume talks with Israel on transporting Israeli gas to Europe. Europe's gas supply could be in jeopardy if the West sanctions Russia in response to a potential Russian military operation in Ukraine. The sanctions could halt Russian gas sales to Europe. Sanctions could also affect TurkStream, a gas pipeline that bypasses Ukraine by running from Russia under the Black Sea to Turkey, from where gas is pumped to Europe. Turkish-Israeli gas cooperation would strengthen Mr. Erdogan's bid to position Turkey as an alternative energy hub for Europe. Azerbaijan has said it was ready to supply Europe with emergency gas that would flow through Turkey should the Ukraine crisis disrupt Russian shipments.

Although Israel has yet to confirm the trip, Mr. Herzog appears set to become the first Israeli head of state to visit Turkey in 15 years. Mr. Herzog's brother, Michael, is the Israeli ambassador in Washington who attended the dinner. Relations between Israel and Turkey broke down after the killing in 2010 by Israeli commandos of 10 Turkish activists onboard a ship that was part of an aid flotilla attempting to breach the Israeli-Egyptian blockade of Gaza. Last month, a phone call between Yair Lapid and Mevlut Cavusoglu was the first confirmed conversation between the two countries' foreign ministers in 13 years.

The arrest in November on espionage charges and the subsequent release of an Israeli tourist couple for taking pictures of Istanbul's Dolmabahce Palace, one of the city's major tourism attractions, prompted the call and paved the way for an Israeli-Turkish rapprochement. The palace on the shores of the Bosphorus served as the administrative headquarters of Ottoman sultans in the 19th century and the place of death in 1938 of Kemal Mustafa Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey. The couple's release also triggered the first phone call between Mr. Erdogan and top Israeli leaders in nine years, with Mr. Herzog and Prime Minister Naftali Bennett phoning the Turkish president separately to thank him. The release of the Israeli couple and Mr. Erdogan's outreach served multiple purposes. The Turkish leader did not want the incident

to scare off badly needed tourists at a time of severe economic crisis. The incident also provided Mr. Erdogan an opportunity to break through to Israel and reduce the United Arab Emirates' geopolitical advantage in maintaining close ties to the Jewish state. From Mr. Erdogan's perspective, the Ukraine crisis has only increased the utility of improved relations with Israel. Mr. Erdogan this week arrived in the UAE for a two-day visit as part of a regional balancing act in which various Middle Eastern states are trying to ensure that their differences and multiple regional conflicts do not spin out of control.

UAE Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed heralded the visit, Mr. Erdogan's first in almost a decade, as the start of a "prosperous new phase" of cooperation with Turkey. The UAE is Turkey's foremost trading partner in the Gulf. Meanwhile, Sabah, a flagship pro-government Turkish daily, reported in recent days that Turkish intelligence had last autumn foiled an attempt to assassinate Turkish-Israeli businessman Yair Geller.

Mr. Erdogan has to balance improving relations with countries like Israel, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE perceived by their critics as having abandoned the defence of Muslim causes, including the plight of the Palestinians, with projecting himself as the Muslim leader who cares about his co-religionists.

As a result, Mr. Cavusoglu, the Turkish foreign minister, made a point of saying last week that "any step we take with Israel regarding our relations, any normalization, will not be at the expense of the Palestinian cause, like some other countries."

At about the same time, Turkey charged 16 people arrested last fall on charges of being part of an Israeli spy network. Israeli intelligence sources have denied the existence of such a network. "Ankara's accusations of 'espionage' and apparent threats to raise the price for the detainees show that it was using hostage diplomacy involving innocent tourists. This is how Hamas, which is backed by Ankara's ruling party, has also behaved... Normal regimes don't detain innocent people," thundered Seth J. Frantzman, the right-wing Jerusalem Post's Middle East correspondent, shortly after the arrests last fall.

Anti-Palestinian assault in German media comes as no surprise

Denijal Jegic



The latest events constitute further repression of public communication and the lack of freedom of speech when it comes to questions of Palestine, human rights, Israeli crimes, and German identity

ALLEGATIONS of antisemitism are weaponised to stifle freedom of speech and serve to uphold Germany's constructed narrative of alleged guilt and moral dedication to Israel. German media is stepping up its silencing of Palestinians and pro-Palestinian voices. Adding to the ongoing marginalisation of Palestinians in Germany, state-owned and taxpayer-funded outlet "Deutsche Welle" (DW) has fired numerous Palestinian and Arab journalists.

The latest events constitute further repression of public communication and the lack of freedom of speech when it comes to questions of Palestine, human rights, Israeli crimes, and German identity. They also suggest that now, any public visibility of Palestinians can easily be condemned as antisemitic.

The Euromed Human Rights Monitor recently expressed concern over the "anti-Arab purge in German media." In October 2021, award-winning Palestinian-German journalist Nemi El-Hassan was fired by public broadcaster WDR. In December 2021, DW suspended several Arab employees from its Arabic-language outlet and later fired five journalists, including Palestinian journalists Farah Maraqa and Maram Salem. In each of these cases, accusations of antisemitism were cited by the employer but dismissed by the journalists. Journalists of Palestinian origin have been smeared in the media in what can only be described as a witch hunt. A far-right online activist released footage showing El-Hassan attending an anti-Zionist protest in Berlin in 2014, for which she even apologised. She was also attacked because she liked posts from the organisation "Jewish Voice for Peace" on Instagram.

A German journalist accused Maram Salem of antisemitism and anti-Israel bias based on a Facebook post that was apparently taken out of context. Ironically, Salem's post, which criticised the lack of freedom of expression in Europe, had no reference to Israel. While these latest developments further increase the alarming policing of Palestinians and pro-Palestinian voices in Germany, they do not come as a surprise.

In Germany, criticism of Israeli policies is more often than not considered "antisemitic" by default. Public expressions about Israeli human rights violations are generally blocked by a policing of language and ad hominem – and oftentimes racist – attacks against people

who publicly voice criticism of Israeli and German crimes.

After Palestinian journalist Ali Abunimah criticised the German government's complicity in the Israeli massacres of Palestinians during a programme on DW's English-language programme in 2021, DW removed the interview and claimed that the guest had made "antisemitic remarks" and intended "to justify acts of terrorism." DW later issued an internal guide, evoking the Holocaust and instructing its employees to use particular language when referring to Israel. Terms such as "apartheid" or "colonialism" were not to be used. The continuous controversies are not necessarily about Israel, and even less about alleged antisemitism. Germany has now reached a point where anyone and anything "Palestinian" can easily become synonymous with "antisemitism." Palestinians are constantly required to explain themselves, while their voices and lived experiences are excluded from the dominant discourse.

In an open letter to the German office of Amnesty International, pro-Palestinian activists expressed their disappointment about the organisation's announcement that it would not campaign on this report. The activists further stressed that the "cowardly passive attitude" of human rights organisations in Germany "in the face of the overwhelming burden of evidence" constituted a "new low point in this country." Amnesty International does not position itself as anti-colonial and, in fact, regularly condemns Palestinian resistance. Yet, the report stirred controversy in Germany, where mainstream media accused the organisation of antisemitism.

The government was also quick to reject the term "apartheid." Germany's ambassador in Tel Aviv, Susanne Wasum-Rainer, protested "a one-sided focus on criticism of Israel" and claimed that "human rights advocates also have responsibility to not voluntarily encourage a worrying rise in anti-Semitism in Europe."

This is just one example of how potential conversations about human rights are blocked in advance through language policies and allegations of antisemitism. It is, in fact, Germany and its media that are boycotting Palestinian human rights and showing an obsessive and one-sided focus on Israel. In Germany, there is hardly any public opposition to the racist targeting of Palestinians. Palestinians in Palestine are thus always condemnable perpetrators because they dare to exist and stand in the way of the German-backed Israeli colonial conquest. In Germany, there is a general fear of the visibility of Palestinians who represent a potential destabilisation of the engineered German national narrative.

In this context, the German public broadcaster's latest silencing of Palestinians perfectly reflects the country's perpetuation of Israeli tactics. A critical conversation should not only focus on Germany's protection of Israel but also on Germany's direct responsibility for settler-colonialism in Palestine, as well as the issue of censorship and control in German media.

In Germany, Palestine is not understood as a question of human rights, colonial oppression, or a struggle for liberation, but as a contestation of German identity and as a safe space for the continuation of the construction of racist hierarchies.

—Courtesy: TRT World

Climate accountability now

Mary Robinson

Tens of millions of people who were not even born in 1992 are suffering the worst of the climate crisis

IT has been 30 years since world leaders gathered in Rio de Janeiro and agreed on a set of measures to start the global mobilization against human-caused climate change and to meet the imperative of a more sustainable development model. Their Rio Declaration affirmed that "human beings are at the center of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature." Today, tens of millions of people who were not even born in 1992 are suffering the worst of the climate crisis. In a world already plagued by economic inequality and social injustice, the coronavirus pandemic has exposed and exacerbated the policy failures of the past three decades. Political leaders have not lived up to their previous commitments. To overcome inertia, policymakers everywhere would do well to listen to those on the front lines of the climate crisis who are demonstrating real leadership and innovation. Among them are Yvonne Aki-Sawyer, the mayor of Freetown in Sierra Leone, and young activists such as Elizabeth Wanjiru

Wathuti from Kenya, and Mitzi Jonelle Tan from the Philippines, with whom I discussed future challenges at Project Syndicate's recent Generation Green event.

These intergenerational debates are critical for driving progress and upholding one of the Rio Declaration's central principles, namely, "the right to development must be fulfilled so as to equitably meet developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations."

One of Rio's strongest legacies is the creation of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. The UNFCCC has been the key multilateral body in the international community's effort to strengthen the political consensus on climate action through annual Conference of the Parties summits. At COP26 in Glasgow in November, there was some progress toward strengthening the 2015 Paris climate agreement's nationally determined contributions to emissions reduction, closing the gap in financing for climate adaptation, and ending the use of coal. But these advances were nowhere close to sufficient, given the existential threat posed by rising emissions and temperatures.

That is why 2022 must be the year of accountability, with all major emitters delivering on the promises of the so-called Glasgow Climate Pact. That declaration maintained a lifeline for limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, relative to pre-industrial levels, as agreed in the Paris accord. All countries at COP26 promised to step up their ambitions and revisit their emis-

sions-reduction targets as soon as this year. In concrete terms, those who still have not set Paris-aligned 2030 targets should do so by COP27, due to be held in the Egyptian city of Sharm El-Sheikh in November.

An effective loss and damage fund is increasingly important for climate-vulnerable states. At COP26, the Scottish government and the Belgian region of Wallonia took the first step by pledging \$2.7 million and \$1 million, respectively, for loss and damage (with matching funds from philanthropic organizations). But this money currently has nowhere to go. Another encouraging development was the deal concluded by South Africa, the EU, the UK, the US, France, and Germany to support South Africa's just transition away from coal. This now needs to be built upon – and emulated elsewhere.

The spirit of multilateralism that animated the Rio summit and its outcome remains indispensable today, even though the geopolitical climate is fraught with tensions, mutual suspicion, and weak institutions. As my fellow Elder Ban Ki-moon told the Generation Green audience, "we all have a part to play in addressing the climate crisis – especially those with the power needed to bring about change."

To honor the legacy of the Rio summit, to meet the needs of those already living with the consequences of the climate crisis, and to limit the repercussions for future generations, we all must strive to go further and faster to protect our shared home. And 2022 must be the turning point.

—Courtesy: Arab News

Briefs

Worry about the...

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prime minister was worried about PML-N's political meetings, Shahbaz replied: "The prime minister should focus on the country's inflation rate, unemployment and the catastrophic situation of the economy." He also criticised the sugar and wheat scams, saying that "corruption worth billions of rupees is happening under the nose of the government."

No-trust motion...

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people what Constitution is," he said. The JUI-F chief said that no dictator could forcefully occupy the country, adding that children of the Saraiki belt would have the right to Saraiki province if it was made. The JUI-F supremo also pointed out that the Constitution bound the country, and according to the Constitution, Islam would be the state religion of Pakistan. He also said that people would elect a government in a democratic way. The Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) chairman has said that the opposition will send the government packing through no-confidence motion. Maulana Fazl said that the government's the constitution's basic structure has four elements and Islam is part of the basic structure of the constitution, while the second element is democracy, which means that dictatorship cannot come in Pakistan. The PDM chairman said that no dictator can seize power in Pakistan, adding that the third element of the constitution is the federal system of the country, while the fourth element is the parliamentary style of government. Fazlur Rehman went on to say that the children of the province have a right to the resources of Punjab. "Parliamentary style of government means no presidential system will work and Presidential system is a symbol of dictatorship," he said adding that Ayub Khan sold our three rivers to India and in Zia-ul-Haq's system, Siachin was handed over to India.

Stay orders create...

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court decisions of and stay orders. Fawad Ch said that the law ministry has been asked to take up this matter with the Chief Justice of Supreme Court and the chief justices of high courts, adding that it has been recommended that there should be a separate forum to resolve such policy issues. The cabinet hoped that the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court will present a serious point of view of the judiciary over this matter, he said. He went on to say that the federal cabinet has approved formulation of a separate judicial system for Overseas Pakistanis to ensure summary trial. "The cabinet called for enacting stringent laws against use of filthy language and hate speech on social media," he said. The minister further said that the country's first ever Digital Cloud Policy also got cabinet's nod. Besides, export of 34,500 metric tons of Mung beans to Afghanistan under World Food Programme. He said the cabinet approved reducing prices of Remdesivir injection from Rs 3967 to Rs 2308 for the treatment of Covid-19 patients, adding that it is a matter of great satisfaction that Pakistan has now become a major exporter of Covid related material, including Remdesivir injection. "The cabinet approved 15 percent increase in the salaries of civil armed forces and a disparity allowance for the employees of the federal government from scale one to 19," he said and added cabinet also congratulated the prime minister for PTI's victory in local bodies elections in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Regarding the prices of petroleum products, Fawad Chaudhry said that the cabinet does not decide to increase the prices of petroleum products, adding that the petrol prices in international market are rising due to Europe, America tensions. "Obviously petrol prices will go up," he said adding that how long can we stop petrol prices.



LAHORE: A view of PSL-7 match between Peshawar Zalmi and Quetta Gladiators. Zalmi won the match by 24 runs. – DNA

WHO Europe warns of COVID rise in east

COPENHAGEN: The head of the World Health Organization's Europe office said Tuesday that health officials are turning their attention to growing rates of COVID-19 infection in Eastern Europe, where six countries – including Russia and Ukraine – have seen a doubling in case counts over the last two weeks. Dr. Hans Kluge said the 53-country region, which stretches to former Soviet republics into central Asia, has now tallied more than 165 million confirmed coronavirus cases and 1.8 million deaths linked to the pandemic – including 25,000 in the last week alone. "Today, our focus is towards the east of the WHO European region," Kluge said in Russian at a media briefing, pointing to a surge in the highly transmissible omicron variant. "Over the past two weeks, cases of COVID-19 have more than doubled in six countries in this part of the region (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Russian Federation, and Ukraine)." "As anticipated, the omicron wave is moving east: 10 eastern Member States have now detected this variant," he said. Omicron, however, is milder than previous variants and health care systems in most countries around the world aren't under strain. Kluge sought to put an emphasis on improving vaccination rates, which have lagged in Eastern Europe compared to the rest of the region. He said less than 40% of people over age 60 in Bosnia, Bulgaria, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan have completed a full COVID-19 vaccine series. He called on governments and health officials "to closely examine the local reasons influencing lower vaccine demand and acceptance, and devise tailored interventions to increase vaccination rates urgently, based on the context-specific evidence." He also said it was "not the moment to lift measures that we know work in reducing the spread of COVID-19." The WHO Europe chief also highlighted his "message of hope" – pointing to high levels of immunity through vaccination or recovery from infection, and the looming end of the winter season that causes many people to gather indoors, where the virus can spread more easily. – Agencies

'Not anti-vax but will sacrifice trophies if told to get jab'

AGENCIES

LONDON: Novak Djokovic has said he would rather miss out on future tennis trophies than be forced to get a Covid vaccine. Speaking exclusively to the British media, he said he should not be associated with the anti-vax movement, but supported an individual's right to choose. Djokovic was asked if he would sacrifice taking part in competitions such as Wimbledon and the French Open over his stance on the vaccine. "Yes, that is the price that I'm willing to pay," he said. The 20-time Grand Slam winner was deported from Australia last month after the government cancelled his visa in a row over his vaccine status. Djokovic, who is the world's number one men's tennis player, said he had obtained a medical exemption to enter the country to play in the Australian Open as he had recently recovered from Covid-19. However, the country's immigration minister, Alex Hawke, personally cancelled the 34-year-old's visa, on the grounds that his presence could incite "civil unrest" and encourage anti-vaccine sentiment. "I was never against vaccination," he told the BBC, confirming that he'd had vaccines as a child, "but I've always supported the freedom to choose what



you put in your body." In a wide-ranging interview, his first since he was detained in Melbourne in January, Djokovic addressed speculation about the timing of his positive Covid case in December and discussed his own attitude towards the vaccine. Djokovic said he hoped vaccination requirements in certain tournaments would change, adding that he was hoping that he "can play for many more years". But he also confirmed he was willing to forego the chance to become statistically the greatest male tennis player of all time because he felt so

strongly. Djokovic's rival, Rafael Nadal, has won 21 Grand Slam singles titles - the most of any male competitor. Asked why, he replied: "Because the principles of decision making on my body are more important than any title or anything else. I'm trying to be in tune with my body as much as I possibly can." Djokovic said he had "always been a great student of wellness, wellbeing, health, nutrition," and that his decision had been partly influenced by the positive impact that factors such as changing his diet and his sleeping patterns, had had on his abilities as an athlete.



BAKU: Pakistan ambassador to Azerbaijan Bilal Hayee received Rector of Azerbaijan Medical University. AMU has received international accreditation. On the request of ambassador requirement of Foundation Course for Pakistani students will also be exempted. – DNA

Man City 'deserve' to win Champions League: Cancelo

WEB DESK

LONDON: Joao Cancelo believes Manchester City deserves to win the Champions League, saying the team are "embracing" the pressure of trying to go one step further than last season when they lost to Chelsea in the final. The Premier League leaders have dominated English football under Pep Guardiola, winning three league titles in four years, but success in Europe has proved elusive. Portugal defender Cancelo, speaking ahead of the first leg of City's last-16 tie

away to Sporting Lisbon on Tuesday, said the club, who lost 1-0 to Chelsea in the 2021 Champions League final, had the quality to lift the trophy. "We are a very strong team," he said. "The players know how to deal with the pressure of getting to the final but we are going up against the best teams in Europe. "It is very difficult but we embrace this pressure. This club deserves to win the Champions League. That is what we play for and that is what we are trying to do this season." Cancelo, 27, has been outstanding for City this season, operating on either the right or left of defence, and recent-

ly signed a new contract keeping him at the club until 2027. He admitted it took him some time to adapt to Guardiola's demands after he joined the club in 2019. "I came from Juventus who had another way of playing, another big club," Cancelo said. "I wanted to show my quality. "It was more my fault, not the coach. I had to adapt to the team's style of play. With my desire to win, I am happy that I managed to become the player I am today." Cancelo's recent fine performances have come despite a distressing experience off the field in December when he was attacked during a burglary at his house.

Sterling's future to be decided by club

LONDON: Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola praised the "outstanding" contribution of forward Raheem Sterling this season, adding that any decision over the England international's future will be taken by the club. Sterling scored a hat-trick in Saturday's 4-0 Premier League win at Norwich City as the champions extended their unbeaten run in all competitions to 12 games. The 27-year-old, City's top scorer this season with 10 league goals, is under contract with the club until June 2023 but said in October he would be willing to leave them and move abroad. "I have known Raheem for six seasons. I know him perfectly well. This season he was outstanding in goals and assists and his contribution to the team," Guardiola told City's website on Sunday. "If we count the amount of games he played since we are together, it is a lot. He was a key player. In the future? I don't know what will happen. The club decides. "When the club extends contacts, I give my opinion, but the club takes the decision, always." City are top of the league table on 63 points after 25 matches, nine points above Liverpool who have a game in hand. – APP

Hales pulls out of PSL remainder

LAHORE: Islamabad United opener Alex Hales has pulled out of the remainder of HBL Pakistan Super League (PSL) season seven. According to details, the Englishman has withdrawn from the rest of the tournament due to personal reasons. Yesterday, Quetta Gladiators' Ben Duckett also withdrew from the competition due to personal reasons. Hales has been in sublime form for United and is also their leading run-scorer in the competition. In seven innings, he has scored 255 at an average of 42.50. Earlier, United also lost Ireland's Paul Stirling, who left HBL PSL 7 due to international duties. Afghanistan's Rahmanullah Gurbaz will also leave United on February 19 due to the series in Bangladesh. – APP



Greece considers arms deals with France

AGENCIES

ATHENS: Greece's government is seeking parliamentary approval Tuesday for a 3 billion euro (\$3.4 billion) agreement for three new French-made frigates that defense officials say are vital for addressing ongoing tensions with neighboring Turkey. Lawmakers are also debating whether to add six new Rafale fighter jets to an existing order for 18 planes – six of them newly built and 12 that were previously in service in the French air force. NATO members Greece and Turkey remain at odds over maritime boundaries and mineral exploitation rights in the Aegean Sea and the eastern Mediterranean. A Turkish oil and gas survey in 2020 resulted in a tense naval standoff between the two countries. Defense Minister Nikos Panagiotopoulos said the Greek military needs to modernize following repeated funding cuts during the country's acute 2010-18 financial crisis.

"There is no armament program that is 'slightly necessary' or 'somewhat necessary'," Panagiotopoulos told lawmakers Monday during a committee-level debate in parliament. "All of the armament programs that we have submitted for approval, in one way or another, are abso-



lutely necessary for the armed forces – extremely necessary, urgently necessary." Greece's center-right government has 157 lawmakers in the 300-seat parliament, and the proposed purchases are expected to be approved without dissent within the ruling party. The left-wing main-opposition party opposes the additional purchase of French fighter jets. Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis and French President Emmanuel Macron finalized the frigate deal last year along with an enhanced defense cooperation agreement between their countries. Mitsotakis denied claims by political opponents that the purchases could rattle the Greek economy, which is already saddled with huge deficits due to pandemic spending and a huge national debt worth more than twice the country's annual output. "The program addresses the needs of the armed forces, it helps maintain our strong alliances, it's being implemented at a fast pace and it mobilizes forces in our national economy, but it will not upset the necessary fiscal balance," he told lawmakers.

Recognizing Taliban...

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of refugees, and the US administration's decision to free only half of the Afghan funds on the United States soil. He mentioned that before the fall of the former regime, three organisations were operating from Afghanistan – the Pakistani Taliban, the Baloch terrorists, and a group of Daesh. "We believe that the more stable the Afghan government is, the less these groups can operate. That is why we are so concerned about the stability of Afghanistan," he said. Asked if Pakistan trusted the Afghan Taliban when they claim they would not let extremists strike from their territory, he said: "Yes, the Taliban were able to restore security when they took over in the 1990s." He emphasised if terrorists operated from Afghan soil, the Taliban would suffer. "It is in their interest to stop international terrorism," he added. The prime minister also played down joining hands with US President Joe Biden to strike extremists in Afghanistan from bases in the region. "We do not want international terrorism to operate from Afghanistan, but this can only be done with the help of the Taliban government," the premier noted. He mentioned that Pakistan had already lost 80,000 lives in the war against terrorism after 2001 and did not want a conflict with the Afghan government. "We will be partners with the US in peace, not in war." Apart from Afghanistan, the prime minister talked about Pakistan's other neighbour, India and said the possibility of ending the current stalemate with New Delhi was subject to the restoration of Kashmir's autonomy. "Talking with India would be a betrayal of the Kashmiri people who have suffered so much and who live in an open-air prison environment with 800,000 troops deployed in the region," he said.

PM for bringing...

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revolution to bring the whole population into the loop of formal economy, this huge asset would, otherwise, become a burden. Appreciating the efforts of SBP to facilitate people over the banking system, he said the common man often hesitated in visiting the banks, stressing that steps at 'bottom up' would bring the commoners into formal economy by easing their modes of payments and transactions through opening of accounts through Raast. The prime minister said the performance of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf government would be judged in the year 2023 on the basis of its measures to reduce poverty. The UNDP report had placed Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as the only province in the country where the PTI's government during its first term had successfully reduced poverty, he added. The prime minister said due to such achievement, the people in KPK voted for the PTI in the 2018 elections. He further opined that it would be the great success of his government to lift the people out of poverty. The Covid pandemic had affected the world population alike but the government in Pakistan took measures to save its people from the economic meltdown and inflation, he added. The prime minister noted that saving rates and tax-GDP ratio was low in Pakistan when compared with the rest of the world and it could be increased by making technological advances and by fine tuning the formal economy. For increasing tax revenue, he said, usage of technology was being ensured by the Federal Board of Revenue as out of 220 million population, only 2 million were paying taxes. The prime minister said that they had collected data of those people who were living a luxurious life but not paying any taxes. Referring to 9 million overseas Pakistanis as valuable assets for the country, the prime minister suggested establishment of a cell to further facilitate them in sending their remittances to Pakistan. He said their remittances had helped in supplementing the country's foreign reserves. The prime minister stressed that they must make efforts to ensure direct financial support to the lower segments of society through use of modern technology and cited the rolling out of Ehsaas ration programme in this regard.

Briefs

Cyprus to ease Covid access restrictions

NICOSIA: Cyprus is lifting COVID-19 restrictions on access for the unvaccinated to bars, restaurants and other venues following a leveling off of new coronavirus cases in recent days that has eased the pressure on the health care system. Health Minister Michalis Hadjipantela said Tuesday that unvaccinated people can enter nightclubs, soccer stadiums, theaters, hotels and cinemas starting Feb. 21 as long as they show a valid COVID-19 rapid test taken within the previous 24 hours. The maximum number of people permitted in nightclubs and other venues is being raised by 50 to 250, while single-table seating increases from eight to 12. The number allowed to gather in private residences doubles to 20. Maximum capacity at soccer stadiums and cinemas is being raised to 70% and 75%, respectively. The percentage of private sector employees required to work from home is being halved to 25%. Hadjipantela also said that the "test-to-stay" measure under which primary, junior high school and high school students are required to undergo regular rapid tests to attend classes is also being expanded to teaching staff and government workers. Cyprus has seen daily COVID-19 cases taper off in recent days to hover at an infection rate of around 2.2% as have hospital admissions of serious cases. - APP

Spanish fishing boat sinks off Canada

MADRID: A Spanish fishing boat sank Tuesday off Newfoundland, in eastern Canada, killing at least four people, Spain's maritime rescue service said. Three crew members were rescued and 15 others were missing. Search operations were ongoing to locate other members of the 22-strong crew of the sunken vessel, Spanish government spokeswoman Isabel Rodriguez said, adding that authorities were following the incident "with concern." A Canadian helicopter had reached the area, which is about 450 kilometers (280 miles) off the island of Newfoundland, and a rescue vessel was on the way to the site, a spokeswoman of the Spanish rescue service said. The boat, called Villa de Pitaxo, operates out of northwest Spain's Galicia region and sank around 0600 GMT (1 a.m. EST) in rough seas, the regional representative of the Spanish government, Maica Larriba, told Spanish public radio. She said that the crew included 12 Spaniards, eight Peruvians and two from Ghana. A Spanish fishing boat working not far from the site was the first to arrive in the area and found three survivors and four bodies in one of the four lifeboats of the fishing vessel, the Spanish rescue center's spokeswoman said. Two of the emergency boats were empty and the fourth was reportedly unaccounted for, Larriba said. - APP

Myanmar won't attend ASEAN FMs meeting

BANGKOK: Myanmar will not participate in this week's meetings in Cambodia of foreign ministers from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, spurning an invitation to send a non-political representative instead of its chief diplomat, its government said Monday. Cambodia, the current ASEAN chair, said earlier this month that members of the regional group had failed to reach a consensus on inviting Myanmar Foreign Minister WunnaMaungLwin to its meetings on Wednesday and Thursday in Cambodia's capital, Phnom Penh. WunnaMaungLwin was appointed foreign minister after the military seized power in Myanmar last year, ousting the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi. The decision to restrict Myanmar's participation reflected a disagreement over Myanmar's lack of cooperation in implementing measures agreed upon by the 10-member group last year to help ease that country's violent political crisis following the army's takeover. - APP



KARACHI: High Commissioner of Maldives Farzana Zahir along with embassy staff visits Indus Valley School of Art and Architecture in Karachi and interacted with the faculty members to explore cooperation. - DNA

Pakistan, Azerbaijan likely to launch direct flights

MONITORING DESK

NEWS.AZ: Mr Ambassador, Azerbaijan and Pakistan are mentally close to each other countries. We would like to hear more about historical and strategic ties from you. There have been a lot of historical, cultural and political reasons behind the strong relationship between Azerbaijan and Pakistan. We have had historical economic linkages if we look back at history. Pakistan and Azerbaijan have been parts of the enriched Silk Road. One example of this historical linkage is the presence of the Caravanserai Multani in Icherisheher [or Old City] is the historical core of Baku. You see that the caravans from the ancient Pakistani city of Multan used to travel to and would stay here in Baku and would meet with the businessmen of that era. We have also strong cultural and economic linkages. As Azerbaijan became independent in the 1990s, we see that the territories of Azerbaijan were invaded and occupied by your enemy. At a time when Azerbaijan, being a new country, is faced

with the turbulence of great troubles, Pakistan helped Azerbaijan in the international fora, particularly in the United Nations in New York where the relevant resolutions of the UN Security Council were adopted. At that time, Pakistan was a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council and played an important role in the adoption of these resolutions which provided a legal stance to Azerbaijan on the issue of Karabakh. Our relationship is based on a very strong foundation, and we hope that it will flourish in the months and years ahead.

NEWS.AZ: How is the feeling to see your country's flag everywhere in the country that you are sent as an ambassador? How are you feeling yourself in your friend country? B.H: Seeing the Pakistani flag in a foreign country is a unique and amazing experience. Normally, we understand that in a foreign country the flag of another country is not usually flown. But we see the Pakistani flag on a number of buildings here, even in faraway regions of Azerbaijan, which give us immense pleasure. This shows the respect and



love of the Azerbaijani people for Pakistan. This is, indeed, a unique experience and makes us very happy. There is a strong bond between the peoples of the two countries. NEWS.AZ: How does Pakistan deliver to the world information about Kashmir? What is the situation there right now? B.H: You know that the issue of Kashmir has been a tragic event if we look at the profile of South Asia. It is, what is called, an unfinished agenda of the parties, it is the oldest agenda item for the United Nations. There have been pending resolutions since 1948. So, it is very unfortunate that the Jammu and Kashmir

regarding the issue of human rights, women's rights and children's rights not to close their eyes to what is happening in occupied Jammu and Kashmir.

NEWS.AZ: What is the plan for making people-to-people contacts between Azerbaijan and Pakistan more closely? Are there any upcoming cultural programs on the way?

B.H: This is a very important question. I believe that the relationship between Pakistan and Azerbaijan cannot be really strong and sustainable until this relationship is between the peoples, business communities, academia and journalists of the two countries. Currently, we are working on a number of projects. Last year, we established the Pakistani Cultural Center in Azerbaijan University of Languages. We continue to organize events, seminars and exhibitions at the center. Next week, we will launch a painting competition at the Cultural Center. Very Azerbaijani youth painted numerous pictures to show the friendship between Pakistan and Azerbaijan. This year, as you know, is very important for our relationship. In June, Pakistan and

Azerbaijan will be celebrating the 30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. So, this is an important year for us, we have envisaged a number of programs and we hope to hold some cultural events. We are also planning to issue joint postage stamps to celebrate the 30th anniversary of our diplomatic relations. But very importantly, I believe that unless people from countries are able to travel to respective countries, cultural cooperation and people-to-people contacts will remain limited. We hope that in the next couple of months, we will be able to resume and start direct flights between Pakistan and Azerbaijan. This will be a big breakthrough in terms of bringing the peoples of two countries closer. The direct flights will be between Baku and the major cities of Pakistan. It will be just a three-hour flight, and we hope that many Azerbaijani friends will be able to travel to Pakistan for tourism, business and other purposes. Similarly, we hope that a large number of Pakistanis will also travel to Azerbaijan for tourism and business purposes. All this will bring the transformation of our relationship.

Ethiopia lifts state of emergency

NAIROBI: Ethiopian lawmakers have voted to end the country's three-month state of emergency early as mediation efforts continue to end the deadly war in the north. Tuesday's vote by lawmakers came after Ethiopia's Council of Ministers, chaired by Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, decided on Jan. 26 to end the state of emergency originally imposed for six months, citing recent developments in the conflict. The state of emergency was imposed in early November as Tigray forces fighting

Ethiopian and allied forces moved closer to the capital, Addis Ababa. They withdrew back into the Tigray region in late December amid mediation efforts and under pressure from a drone-supported military offensive carried out by the government. Thousands of mainly ethnic Tigrayans were detained under the state of emergency, according to witnesses, lawyers and human rights groups. Many were released after December's shift in the war. There was no immediate word Tuesday

on when the rest of the people detained under the state of emergency would be released. They include a freelance video journalist accredited to The Associated Press, Amir Amankiyaro. The state-affiliated Fana Broadcasting reported: "The state of emergency investigation board is instructed to finish any outstanding works within a month and report back to the relevant body. Judicial bodies are also instructed to finish emergency law-related cases within the regular judicial process." - APP

Belgium approves 4-day week

BRUSSELS: Workers in Belgium will soon be able to choose a four-day week under a series of labour market reforms announced on Tuesday. The reform package agreed by the country's multi-party coalition government will also give workers the right to turn off work devices and ignore work-related messages after hours without fear of reprisal. "We have experienced two difficult years. With this agreement, we set a beacon for an economy that is more innovative, sustainable and digital." - APP

Kremlin critic Navalny stands new trial in prison

MOSCOW: A new trial against Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny opened Tuesday at the penal colony where he faces another lengthy prison term, a further step in a yearlong, multi-pronged crackdown on Russia's most ardent Kremlin critic, his allies and other dissenting voices. Navalny, President Vladimir Putin's longtime foe, is charged with fraud and contempt of court. His allies denounced the case as an effort by the Kremlin to keep the politician in prison for as long as possible. Authorities moved the trial to the prison colony hours away from Moscow, where Navalny is serving a sentence for parole violations. The move received criticism for effectively limiting access to the proceedings for the media and supporters. Navalny, 45, appeared in the make-shift courtroom on Tuesday wearing a prison uniform. "It is just that these people, who ordered this trial, are really scared," he said during the hearing. "(Scared) of what I say during this trial, of people seeing that the case is obviously fabricated." - Agencies

S Korean presidential campaign begin

SEOUL: Candidates for South Korea's presidential election began on Tuesday their formal campaigns in a race tainted by intense political strife over allegations involving the main candidates and their families. Liberal governing party candidate Lee Jae-myung and his conservative opposition rival Yoon Suk Yeol are the front-runners of the 14 candidates registered with South Korea's election authorities. Recent opinion surveys show them running neck-and-neck. The March 9 vote comes as South Korea faces a range of critical issues such as an economy hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, an advanced North Korean nuclear program and an intensifying rivalry between the U.S. and China. In his first outdoor rally in Seoul on Tuesday, Yoon highlighted issues of national security, alongside vows to support small business owners and resolve soaring housing prices. "I'll sternly respond to North Korean nuclear and missile threats and other provocations to protect the lives and safety of our citizens," Yoon told a cheering crowd shouting his name. Yoon, a former prosecutor, has said he plans to bolster South Korea's military alliance with the U.S. to neutralize North Korean nuclear threats. - APP

Bomb blasts military bus in Damascus

DAMASCUS: A bomb attached to a bus carrying Syrian troops in Damascus exploded Tuesday morning, killing one soldier and wounding 11, state TV reported. The blast occurred during rush hour at a customs roundabout near the capital's landmark Omayyad Square, according to the report. It gave no further details. There was no immediate claim of responsibility. Such attacks have occurred in Damascus in recent months amid an otherwise calm period in the capital. Government forces captured rebel-held eastern neighborhoods of the city in 2018. Government forces now control much of Syria with the help of President Bashar Assad's allies Russia and Iran, while rebels are mostly cornered in the country's northwestern province of Idlib. U.S. and Turkish troops, meanwhile, are deployed in parts of the country's north and east. In October, two bombs attached to a bus carrying Syrian troops exploded in Damascus, killing 14. It was one of the deadliest bombings in the capital in years. A little-known group calling itself the Qasioun Brigades claimed responsibility for the attack at the time. In recent years, attacks in Damascus have been rare. One of the last major explosions to take place was in 2017 - when suicide bombers hit a judicial office building and a restaurant, killing nearly 60 people. - APP

Afghan assets should be returned

BEIJING: The Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson on Wednesday said that Afghan assets belonged to Afghan people and should be returned to Afghanistan for benefit of its people. The United States should not exacerbate the suffering of the Afghan people. It should unfreeze their assets, lift unilateral sanctions on Afghanistan as soon as possible, and assume due responsibility to ease the humanitarian crisis in the country, Wang Wenbin said during his regular briefing held here while commenting on the executive order signed by US President Biden regarding the \$7 billion frozen assets of the Central Bank of Afghanistan. The Afghanistan's caretaker government has already objected to actions of using half of the frozen assets of the Afghan Central Bank to compensate victims of the September 11, 2001 attacks. The September 11 attacks had nothing to do with Afghans, the Taliban said in a statement, adding that any attempt to seize the property of the Afghan people under the pretext of the incident is a clear violation of the Doha peace agreement with Afghanistan. - APP

Bulgaria considers Pak as an important partner

Ms. Mariam Aftab also briefed the two Bulgarian dignitaries on the constructive role played by Pakistan in tackling the Afghan crises and ensuring peace and stability in the region

DNA

SOFIA: Ms. Mariam Aftab, Ambassador of Pakistan to Bulgaria met with Ms. Vessela Tcherneva, Foreign Policy Advisor, and Mr. Petar Petrov, Security Advisor to the Prime Minister of Bulgaria. Ms. Tcherneva and Mr. Petrov welcomed the Ambassador in the Council of Ministers and said that Bulgaria considered Pakistan as an important partner in the South Asia and, therefore, was desirous of further strengthening bilateral relations. During the meeting, the two sides reviewed ongoing collaboration between the two countries and discussed ways and means to further enhance them in diverse fields, especially in trade/investment, culture/education and defence collaboration. She also requested for support of Bulgarian Members of European Parliaments in supporting Pakistan's ongoing GSP+ review in



the EU. Ms. Mariam Aftab also briefed the two Bulgarian dignitaries on the constructive role played by Pakistan in tackling the Afghan crises and ensuring peace and stability in the region. In this regard, she stressed upon the fact that the international community needed to play a proactive role in order to avoid impending humanitarian disaster in Afghanistan by providing urgent food/medical aid. She also sensitized the Bulgarian officials on the ongoing human right abuses by India in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir and the importance of allowing observatory missions from United Nations Human Rights Council and international human rights groups to IIOJK to assess the severity of issue. On their part, the two dignitaries thanked the Ambassador for the briefing and assured their full support on all endeavours of the Embassy to enhance bilateral relations.

Briefs

India's hijab dispute reaches Uttar Pradesh

AGENCIES

NEW DELHI: A dispute over restrictions on the wearing of the hijab by female students in a southern Indian state has now reached India's most populous state of Uttar Pradesh, with a group of youngsters asking a college to ban the head covering. Authorities closed colleges in Karnataka in India's south last week after a new uniform policy barred students from wearing headscarves in classrooms, leading to protests by Muslim students and counter-protests by Hindu students. Muslims have criticised the ban as another way of marginalising a community that accounts for about 13 per cent of Hindu-majority India's 1.35 billion people.

In Uttar Pradesh, in the country's north and bordering New Delhi, a group of more than two dozen young men reached the Dharma Samaj College in Aligarh district on Monday and handed a memorandum to its officials seeking a complete ban on the hijab within its compound. They had saffron shawls around their necks - typically worn by Hindus - said the college's chief proctor, Mukesh Bharadwaj, adding he did not recognise the people. Currently, religious garb is not allowed in classrooms but can be worn elsewhere on campus. "Two years ago the same issue was raised and it has been raised again. We do not allow any type of religious uniform and we have a civil code of uniform for everyone," Bharadwaj told Reuters by phone on Tuesday.

WHO urges increased vaccination in E. Europe

GENEVA: A new wave of COVID infections from the highly transmissible Omicron variant of the coronavirus is heading towards Eastern Europe, the World Health Organization (WHO) has warned. The WHO's European office on Monday called for authorities to boost vaccination efforts in the region, warning that a "tidal wave" of infections was approaching. WHO Europe director, Hans Kluge, said the number of new daily COVID-19 cases had more than doubled in six countries in the region in the past two weeks. Kluge said the 53-country region has tallied more than 165 million confirmed coronavirus cases and 1.8 million deaths linked to the pandemic - including 25,000 in the last week alone. "Today, our focus is towards the east of the WHO European region," Kluge said in Russian at a media briefing, pointing to a surge of Omicron cases. "Over the past two weeks, cases of COVID-19 have more than doubled in six countries in this part of the region [Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Russian Federation, and Ukraine]," the director said. "As anticipated, the Omicron wave is moving east: 10 eastern member states have now detected this variant," he added. Kluge noted vaccine uptake was still relatively low in parts of the region. Less than 40 percent of those aged above 60 have completed their COVID-19 vaccine series in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. He added that in Bulgaria, Georgia and North Macedonia, less than 40 percent of healthcare workers had received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine. - APP

Malaysian FM to lead delegation at ASEAN meet

The AMM Retreat will be chaired by H.E. Prak Sokhonn, Deputy PM and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Int'l Cooperation of Cambodia, with the participation of ASEAN FM, Secretary General of ASEAN and representative of Myanmar

DNA

PUTRAJAYA : Minister of Foreign Affairs of Malaysia, YB Dato' Sri Saifuddin Abdullah will lead the Malaysian delegation to the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' (AMM) Retreat from 16 to 17 February 2022 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The AMM Retreat is the first scheduled meeting of the year in 2022 for ASEAN Member States. The Retreat will be preceded by the ASEAN Senior Officials' Meeting (SOM) from 15 to 16 February 2022. The Malaysian delegation to the ASEAN SOM will be led by YBhg. Tan Sri Muhammad Shahrul Ikram Yaakob, Secretary-General

of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and SOM Leader of ASEAN-Malaysia. Cambodia helms the Chairmanship of ASEAN in 2022 with the theme "ASEAN A.C.T.: Addressing Challenges Together". The AMM Retreat will be chaired by H.E. Prak Sokhonn, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Cambodia, with the participation of ASEAN Foreign



Ministers, Secretary General of ASEAN and representative of Myanmar. Among the issues that will be discussed by the Foreign Ministers are updates on the implementation of the decisions reached during the 38th and 39th ASEAN Summits and Related Summits, as well as ASEAN's external relations. In addition, the Foreign Ministers will also discuss initiatives to take forward

the agenda and key priorities of Cambodia's ASEAN Chairmanship in 2022; and exchange views on regional and international issues of mutual interest. As ASEAN Member States set sights towards developing the ASEAN Community's Post-2025 Vision, Malaysia as the Co-Chair and Permanent Shepherd of the High-Level Task Force on the ASEAN Community's Post-2025 Vision, remains committed in upholding ASEAN Centrality and fully supports Cambodia as Chair in ensuring ASEAN's continuous progress at the regional and international level. The visit will be conducted in full compliance with the COVID-19 Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) that have been set by the Government of Malaysia and Cambodia.

Khaqan Abbasi claims PML-N still has contacts with govt allies



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former prime minister and senior Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Shaheed Khaqan Abbasi said on Tuesday that today the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government was so fragile that it had to depend on phone calls from its 'backers' for its stay in the office. Talking to the media outside an accountability court in Islamabad where he had gone to attend the hearing of LNG reference, he asked the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) chairman as to how much amount his department had been able to recover from what he alleged 'corrupt' PTI leaders. He claimed that the opposition parties had reached a settlement with the parties allied to the PTI at Center. Calling the government 'incompetent', he said not a single project it had launched so far was without flaws. "The country's economy is in ruins," Abbasi said, adding that the government was doing the politics of 'revenge'. Shaheed Khaqan Abbasi has said that there is no democracy in the country and the government stands only on the basis of telephone calls. He said that Imran Khan did this to the country despite not having a majority, what would he have done if he got two-third majority. Shaheed Khaqan Abbasi said that our demand is to install TV cameras and show the process of accountability to the people. He said that it was not appropriate to talk about domestic affairs of others.

Peaceful, stable Afghanistan vital for region

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser has said that Pakistan and Germany enjoys cordial relations. He said that both countries have vast opportunities of cooperation in spheres of investment, manufacturing, education and energy. He also said that Pakistani and German people have longstanding affinity with each other. He expressed these views during his meeting with German Ambassador in Pakistan Mr. Bernhard Stephan Schlagheck who called on him in the Parliament House Tuesday. Speaker Asad Qaiser has said that National Assembly of Pakistan strongly desires to intensify cooperation with German Parliament (Bundestag).



ISLAMABAD: Speaker National Assembly Asad Qaiser in a meeting with German Ambassador in Pakistan Bernhard Stephan Schlagheck. DNA

'Govt to announce package for lower middle, salaried class'

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Shaukat Tarin said here on Tuesday that the government intended to announce relief package for the middle, lower middle and salaried class within days to help them cope with the current wave of inflation. The relief package would be announced within next 10 to 15 days, he said this while addressing the launching ceremony of 'Raast Digital Payment System'. Talking about the digitization, the federal minister said, with public-private coordination, the government was ready to introduce digitalization of transactions to pace up the e-commerce drive in the country. "I consulted with all stakeholders including the relevant players of e-commerce industry and also got feedback from free lancers to resolve the issues faced by

the e-commerce sector including the money channel and provide them banking channel to ease their e-trading," the federal minister said. He said that after the implementation of digitization through 'Raast Digital Payment System' the country's exports in information technology and commerce would increase. He said that Raast system would improve overall efficiency that would reduce cash circulation and resultantly improve deposits held by the banks and ultimately would lead to increase saving rates from current 15 percent to 28-30 percent. He said, commonly the cash settlements were being made through cheques, which is time taking, but with the help of Raast digital payment system, the transfers could be made within seconds now. - DNA

\$500 bln e-banking transactions in FY21, says SBP Governor

ISLAMABAD: Governor State Bank of Pakistan (SBP), Reza Baqir said Monday that owing to the revolutionary initiatives introduced by the central bank, the e-banking transactions were recorded at around \$500 billion during the last fiscal year (2020-21). Addressing the launching ceremony of Raast Digital Payment Programme, he said that e-banking transactions were considerably more than country's total Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which currently stands at \$370 billion. He said, the e-banking transactions were showing growth of around 30 percent annually. "If it is \$500 billion now, you can imagine at which pace we are digitizing," he remarked. Reza Baqir said that Raast digital platform, the person-to-person transaction system, was made by SBP under the Prime Minister's vision to ensure outreach of banking system to all citizens of the country. Raast is part of national payment strategy which was launched by SBP in November 2019. The World Bank President had launched it and helped in developing this strategy. He said, it was technologically advanced system and was currently executed only in a few countries including Malaysia, Turkey, Australia, United Kingdom and partially in United States. He said that there were around 190 million mobile subscribers in the country whereas only 80 million people were having bank accounts, meaning that there were over

100 million people, who have mobile phone but do not possess bank accounts. So there is a huge potential for enhancing financial inclusion, he said and expressed the hope that Raast programme would bridge this gap. The SBP Governor said that Raast was different from other programmes as it would facilitate free-cost transactions within seconds. He expressed the hope that people would like the new system and take benefit from it. He said that the SBP had taken many initiatives for pacing up the process of digitization. The Point of Sales (POS) machines also witnessed growth of 50 percent and are expected to grow at more fast pace. Reza said that the state bank would give 5 licenses for establishing digital banks to cater to the needs of common people and facilitate them to open bank accounts remotely. He said that the SBP with the collaboration of NADRA would facilitate people to do remotely their bio-metric verification, upload documents and open bank accounts. He said that this banking system would be established on the lines of Roshan Digital Account that was introduced for Overseas Pakistanis. He said, the bank had recently launched low cost housing, under which the central bank facilitated those who were unable to take bank loans, adding Rs131 billion loans were approved by banks this year, showing 100 percent growth against last year.

British HC launches mentoring programme for budding journalists

Participants benefitted in a wide range of areas, enabling them to become thought leaders and to drive positive change

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The British High Commission on Tuesday announced the launch of the Chevening Mentoring Scheme for budding journalists. The three-month mentorship programme has been designed to target

women and minorities working for media outlets or as freelance journalists across Pakistan. Fellows from the flagship Chevening South Asia Journalism Programme will act as mentors for those picked to join the scheme, and will share their knowledge and experience with young journalists on one-on-one coaching sessions, as well as group discussions. The British High Commission inaugurated a successful, similar mentorship programme targeted at lawyers and entrepreneurs in 2020. Its second phase was launched last year during which Chevening alumni mentored a group of eight women and two men. The participants benefitted in a wide

range of areas, enabling them to become thought leaders and to drive positive change in their chosen field. 2022 marks 75 years of UK-Pakistan relations with a programme of joint activities planned throughout the year. Fouzia Younis, Head of Communications and Public Diplomacy at the British High Commission Islamabad, said: "To mark 75 years of Pakistan's independence this year, I am pleased to launch a new mentoring programme aimed at backing and bringing up talented women and minority journalists. They will get to learn from some of the best journalists in their profession, and bring their stories to readers in Pakistan, UK and around the world. We are ek saath."

NAB files references only after enough evidence

Justice Javed Iqbal chairs the Executive Board Meeting (EBM) held at NAB Headquarters



STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Executive Board Meeting (EBM) was held at NAB Headquarters under the chairmanship of Honourable Justice Javed Iqbal. Zahir Shah Deputy Chairman NAB, Syed Asghar Haider, Prosecutor General Accountability, Masood Alam Khan, Director General, Operations Division NAB and other senior officers of NAB attended the meeting. It is years long prescribed policy of NAB to inform the people about the details of decisions taken in the EBM. NAB does not want to hurt anyone as all inquiries, investi-

gations were initiated on alleged allegations which are not final. NAB is a human friendly organisation. NAB only decides to go ahead with after knowing the point of view of the accused So that all the requirements of justice are met. The EBM authorised filing of two references against various persons. The meeting of the Executive Board of the National Accountability Bureau approved the filing of references against the officers / officials of the Federal Board of Revenue and others. Alleged accused persons had allegedly illegally awarded contract a foreign company by misusing their power and caused loss of 11.125 million to the national exchequer.

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