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US must lift sanctions to revive nuclear deal, says President Raisi

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Russia must 'stop playing with people's lives'

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Hockey great Abdul Waheed passes away

Detailed News On Page-06



Briefs

Alvi wishes Brit Queen speedy recovery

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Monday wished a speedy recovery to Britain's Queen Elizabeth II after she tested positive for COVID-19. The president on his official Twitter account wished the Queen on behalf of the government and people of Pakistan. "On behalf of the Government and people of Pakistan, I wish Her Majesty The Queen a speedy and complete recovery from COVID," he said. The Buckingham Palace in a statement on Sunday had announced that the 95-year-old queen was tested positive for COVID-19. — APP

Corruption among 'most important' issues

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Hussain on Monday said corruption and money-laundering were among the 'most important' issues confronted by countries like Pakistan. He, in a tweet, said Prime Minister Imran Khan had been raising his voice consistently on the issue (s) asking the rich countries to stop this exploitation [accommodation of laundered money] of the poor countries. "Panama, Pandora and now the story of Swiss accounts . . . First, steal the [public] money and then move it abroad," Fawad said.

PECA based on ill intent

NEWS DESK

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Khawaja Saad Rafique on Monday said that the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) and Elections Act ordinances are based on ill intent. While talking to the media in Lahore, the Member of National Assembly (MNA) said that the government is making these new laws just to silence the voices of the opposition.

PM's historic Russia visit from Feb 23

During the summit meeting, the two leaders will review the entire array of bilateral relations including energy cooperation



SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Imran Khan, at the invitation of Russian President Vladimir Putin, will pay an official two-day visit to Russia from February 23-24. Bilateral Summit will be the highlight of the visit of PM Imran Khan, who will be accompanied by a high-level delegation, including the members of his cabinet, a statement from the Foreign Office said. During the summit meeting, the two leaders will review the entire array of bilateral relations including energy cooperation, the FO statement said. "They will also have wide-ranging exchange of views on major regional and international issues, including Islamophobia and the situation in Afghanistan," the statement added.

Pakistan and Russia enjoy friendly relations marked by mutual respect, trust and

Continued on Page 06

Turkish head of Religious Affairs calls on PM

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Head of Presidency of Religious Affairs of Turkey, Prof. Dr. Ali Erbas, called on Prime Minister Imran Khan today. The Prime Minister expressed satisfaction over the excellent bilateral relations enjoyed by Pakistan and Turkey spread across a broad spectrum of religious, cultural, linguistic, and educational linkages, people-to-people contacts, and commonality of interests – a relationship that is without any parallels.

PICTURE ON PAGE 7

The Prime Minister appreciated the Turkish model of systematic and institutionalized religious education system and stressed bilateral cooperation to exchange best practices and information in this arena. He underlined that Dr. Erbas's visit will help in strengthening linkages between the religious institutions of the two

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Bilawal says govt has backtracked on all promises

Says we are not a party that attacks the judiciary or approaches other institutions with a request to topple a government

BUREAU REPORT

PESHAWAR: PPP Chairperson Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Monday lashed out at the PTI government for allegedly "backtracking on all its promises", saying people were suffering from unprecedented economic devastation during the PTI rule. Addressing a party workers' convention in Peshawar, Bilawal said PPP had already announced "waging a war against this incompetent government", adding that the party's planned long march would initiate from Karachi on Feb 27 which, he said, would be difficult to handle for the PTI once it reached Islamabad. "This government had promised a change but it only pushed masses into economic crisis. The PTI after coming to power had vowed to provide 10 million jobs, but it rendered several people jobless in its three and a half years of power," Bilawal said. He said the PPP would use its "democratic



power" to shake the government and send it home. "We are not a party that attacks the judiciary or approaches other institutions with a request to topple a government. We are also not a party that storms the PTV headquarters or parliament to get its demands accepted." He also called out Prime Minister Imran Khan, saying if his

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Poland to Pakistan Maciej Pisasinski called on Leader of the House in the Senate Dr. Shahzad Waseem. Both sides discussed matters of mutual interest. — DNA

Qureshi, German FM's talk region

FM informed that Pakistan had so far facilitated over 90,000 evacuations



SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany Annalena Baerbock on Monday exchanged views on the bilateral relations as well as important regional issues. Foreign minister Qureshi, during a telephonic call, said that Germany was a valued, longstanding partner of Pakistan. Pakistan was committed to further enhancing bilateral relations in all dimensions, particularly in the fields of trade and investment, energy,

Continued on Page 06

Captain embraces shahadat

NAZIR SIYAL

RAWALPINDI: Based on intelligence information about presence of Terrorists in a Hideout near District Kohlu, Balochistan, Security forces conducted a clearance operation in the area. As soon as troops started cordoning the area, Terrorists, while fleeing the

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Pakistan, Poland enjoy excellent bilateral ties

Polish ambassador calls on leader of the House in Senate, Dr. Shahzad Wasim

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Poland Maciej Pisasinski called on the Leader of the House in Senate, Senator Dr. Shahzad Wasim at his residence. During the meeting, issues of mutual interest including the overall situation of the region and situation in Afghanistan in particular were discussed in detail. Senator Dr. Shahzad Waseem also congratulated the Ambassador of Poland on assuming diplomatic responsibilities in Pakistan and expressed his best wishes. He said that Pakistan values its relationship with Poland which is based on mutual trust. Senator Dr. Shahzad Waseem said that Pakistan values its relations with Poland and diplomatic relations between the two countries have been established for decades. The Pakistani community in Poland is acting as a bridge between the two

countries. He said that there was a need to make the political, diplomatic and parliamentary relations more active and there was ample scope for increasing the trade volume. Accelerating the exchange of business and trade delegations can boost trade activities. Senator Dr. Shahzad Wasim said that Polish investors could invest in Pakistan by taking advantage of the Pakistan government's geo-economics policy. The Leader of the House in the Senate said that the growing trend of Islamophobia in India is a matter of concern. Ongoing atrocities, barbarism, erosion of fundamental human rights is a serious violation of international law committed by the Indian armed forces in occupied Kashmir. The Polish Ambassador while agreeing with the Dr. Shahzad wasim's views said that Pakistan and Poland are good friends and both the countries are further enhancing their economic cooperation.

Australian Chief of Defence calls on CJCSC



STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: General Angus J. Campbell, Chief of Defence Forces Australia, who is on official visit to Pakistan, called on General Nadeem Raza, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, at Joint Staff Headquarters, Rawalpindi today. Matters of bilateral professional interest

with particular reference to global and regional security environment and cooperation between the two Armed Forces were discussed during the meeting. Later 11th Round of Pakistan - Australia, Defence and Security Talks and 8th Round of 1.5 Track Security Dialogue were held at Joint Staff

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Germany urges Russia to 'stop playing with people's lives' — Page 07

UNICEF chief lauds Pakistan covid handling — Page 08

Putin must decide on 'possible' Biden summit

Russia's foreign minister will meet his French counterpart Jean-Yves Le Drian in Paris Friday

PARIS: France on Monday called on Russian President Vladimir Putin to make a decision on meeting US counterpart Joe Biden in a summit proposed by Paris to ease soaring tensions over Ukraine. "It is today possible to move towards a summit and to bring the interested parties together. Now it is up to President Putin to make his choice," a French presidential official, who asked not to be named, told reporters. The official described the situation as "very dangerous" and the parties as "walking a fine line". The comments from the official came after 24 hours of frenetic diplomacy which saw President Emmanuel Macron speak to Putin twice by telephone and also to Biden in a bid to broker the summit plan. "Against this background of very high volatility, of very great danger, we are making our last efforts, our most intense efforts, to avoid the worst," said the official. President Macron is "not resigned to defeat or the worst outcome. He is taking risks as it is customary for

him to do," said the official. The Elysee released a statement in the early hours of Monday morning indicating that both Biden and Putin had agreed "in principle" to the summit. The White House said that such a meeting could take place so long as Russia did not invade Ukraine. The Kremlin then described talking about a summit as premature and that there were no concrete plans. The French official did not dispute the Kremlin's assessment, saying an "objective had been set – but not reached – to create an occasion to speak". "We are not there yet. We are in a very volatile context but bit-by-bit we are changing how things are going."



Continued on Page 06

Ukraine hopes summit can lead to Russian pullback

BRUSSELS: Ukraine's foreign minister on Monday welcomed a French initiative for a summit between US President Joe Biden and Russia's Vladimir Putin, saying Kyiv hoped it would result in Moscow pulling back its troops. "We welcome this initiative. We believe that every effort aimed at diplomatic solution is worth trying," Dmytro Kuleba said ahead of a meeting with EU counterparts in Brussels. "We hope that the two presidents will walk out from the room with an agreement about Russia withdrawing its forces from Ukraine." — APP

EU will not impose sanctions on Russia

BRUSSELS: The European Union will not impose sanctions on Russia just yet, its foreign policy chief said on Monday, rebuffing a call from Kyiv to take such steps now to avert a war rather than wait until after any possible Russian invasion. Western countries fear a build-up of Russian troops near Ukraine in recent weeks is a prelude to an invasion, which Moscow denies. The United States and European allies have said any attack would trigger severe sanctions against Moscow, but Kyiv wants these to be imposed now. "We expect decisions," Ukraine's Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said in Brussels before addressing a regularly scheduled meeting of EU foreign ministers. — Agencies

Briefs

SBP to
organise
expo on
renewable
energy

BUREAU REPORT

FAISALABAD: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) will organize a "Renewable Energy Seminar & Expo" in the local marquee on Monday March 7, 2022.

Mr. Atif Munir Sheikh, President Faisalabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (FCCI) said that Pakistan has been facing a double edge challenge of high cost of energy and environmental Deterioration. He said that costly energy results in high cost of doing business that leads to adverse competitiveness in the global markets.

He said that carbon emission by our industrial sector not only pollutes the environment but also causes loss of export business due to sanctions by environment protection agencies. He said that in these circumstances the use of renewable energy has become inevitable and hence SBP has been organizing this seminar and expo to give information about a wide range of renewable energy resources with necessary facilitation by the financial institutions.

He said that the object of the expo is to disseminate information regarding financing opportunities for SMEs, presentation of SBP's Refinance Schemes for renewable energy, presentation by commercial banks regarding required documentation, display of bank's products at their respective stalls, registration of existing and potential SMEs and other prospect beneficiaries of renewable energy in addition to encouraging the SMEs to avail the financing for renewable energy.

He said that this expo cum seminar would be participated by SBP, regional heads of different banks and financial institutions, SMEs heads and other dealing staff from banks of this region and potential SMEs along with renewable solution providers and vendors.

639 illegal
Afghan
refugees
arrested

PESHAWAR: The district police arrested as many as 639 illegal Afghan refugees during the first one and half month of the current year and registered 564 cases against them.

A report issued by Capital City Police Officer (CCPO), Abbas Ahsan here Monday stated that the arrests were made during search and strike operations conducted in different areas of the city, adding that the action were taken against those refugees who were residing without Refugee Card and without having other travel documents.

The police had registered 564 cases against the illegal migrant and further legal action was in progress, the report said. — APP

COURT NOTICE

OFFICE OF THE
CHAIRMAN
ARBITRATION
COUNCIL

Union Council No.2
Kala Gujran, Jhelum
Ref_100/2022
Date:16-2-2022
To,

Sana D/o Talat
Mehmood
R/O Haji Aima P/O
Kala Gujran, Jhelum
C.R United Kingdom
Subj: Hearing Of
Divorce Case No.16

It is Written that Divorce Case No. 16/2021 has been registered by Adil Mahmood To Sana on 26-11-2021 is being heard in this office. Notices Were Sent to you by registered mail but you did not present. The Last notice is notified by the newspaper advertisement and you are advised to present yourself or your arbitrator on 01-03-2022 at 10:00 am. In case of non-compliance, Appropriate action will be taken.

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LALAMUSA: Students of Naveed-e-Sehar Model School Lalamusa posing for a picture with Tanvir Akhtar Principle after getting awards. — DNA

PTI enjoys full parliamentary,
public support: Shafqat

PTI remained in touch with masses. "Now we are further strengthening our relationships with the people by reorganising the PTI at the grassroots level"

ISHFAQ MUGHAL

FAISALABAD: Federal Minister for Education & Professional Training Shafqat Mahmood Monday said that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government was safe, in the saddle with the overwhelming parliamentary and public support and a booster dose of its allies.

He was addressing a press conference at Circuit House, along with Raja Yasir Human-yun Sarfraz, Provincial Minister for Higher Education and General Secretary Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Punjab.

The minister said, "The opposition had started making hue and cry immediately after the PTI came to power". They hurled repeated threats of resignation from assemblies, and long march to intimidate the government, but all their threats fizzled out, and now they were staging a new drama of 'No confidence motion', which was just to keep themselves alive in the media, he added. He termed the opposition day-dreamers, adding that the government had no threat from the defeated elements, who had been rejected by masses. The PTI government



would completes its constitutional term, and continue to serve masses with the active support of its allies, he added.

He said that objective of his visit to Faisalabad was to take the party workers into confidence and to get feedback from them regarding his ministry. "We also discussed the issues relating to the upcoming Local Government (LG) elections," he added. He said that the public gathering in Mandi Bahauddin and Vehari was a great success which gave a clear and sound message to

the opposition that they still stand steadfast with the PTI. He said, "The PTI is the biggest parliamentary party, and people have full confidence in its leadership". This gathering should be an eye-opener for the opposition, who were trying to deceive masses on one or another pretext of long march, people's movement and now "No confidence motion". All the previous moves proved a total failure as masses refused to support their negative agenda, he added.

He said people were fully aware that Asif Ali Zardari and Nawaz Sharif had looted the country. It is a clique of looters and plunderers, who are dependent on each other, not only in corruption but also in enjoying power, he added.

The minister said the PTI government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Imran Khan, would complete its five-year term. He said, "We have initiated a number of projects to transform Pakistan into a true Islamic welfare state".

He particularly mentioned the Sehat card scheme and said that each and every individual could get best medical treatment up to Rs.1 million in the private or public hospitals of his own choice.

He thanked the people of Faisalabad, who reposed full confidence in the PTI during last elections and hoped that they would once again vote it to power for the accomplishment of its innovative and mega welfare projects. Responding to a question, he said that the opposition had no public backing to hold gatherings like the PTI.

He said the PTI remained in touch with masses. "Now we are further strengthening our relationships with the people by reorganising the PTI at the grassroots level," he added. Responding to yet another question about Jahangir Tareen, he said he had given no statement against the PTI as he was still part of the party. Regarding his meetings with the opposition leaders, the minister said that it was a routine matter, but it could not be said that he (Tareen) would support the opposition.

"The PTI government is also fighting against mafias, nurtured by the previous rulers and are committed to weeding them out to give maximum relief to the masses," he added. About the government allies, he said they had proved their commitment with the PTI and they would remain part of the government.

Tajikistan, KP govt agree to
increase bilateral trade volume

BUREAU REPORT / APP

PESHAWAR: The Ambassador of Tajikistan Ismatullah Nasruddin along with a delegation Monday visited Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Investment (KPBOIT) and called on Special Assistant to Chief Minister on Industries Abdul Karim Khan, Vice Chairman Said Mahmood and CEO KPBOIT Dr Hassan Daud Butt. The ambassador invited a business delegation from KP to visit Tajikistan and hold an exhibition of Pakistani local products in Dushanbe and assured all the support for the visit.

The ambassador emphasized that 4 to 5 areas of mutual cooperation must be identified before the visit to work on. CEO KPBOIT proposed a few recommendations including forming a working group to enhance trade cooperation between the two countries as the two countries are good neighbors and have good political relations.

Furthermore, he said that a visit of official delegation from KP led by the business community will be scheduled in May 2022 and an exhibition of industrial and cultural products will be the part of the official visit.

Former Vice President Sarhad Chamber, Manzoor Elahi also gave recommendations to enhance bilateral trade with Tajikistan. Vice Chairman KPBOIT Said Mahmood welcomed the delegation and in his introductory remarks gave an overview about KP and potentials of bilateral trade with Tajikistan.

Dr. Hassan Daud Butt, CEO, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Board of Investment, gave a detailed presentation on investment opportunities in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in key sectors including tourism, IT, SEZs, Agriculture and Livestock, Mines & Minerals, IT and Hydel Power. During the briefing, he also highlighted top exports and imports of Pakistan with Tajikistan and emphasized on the need to enhance the bilateral trade.

Special Assistant to CM for industry and trade welcomed the Ambassador of Tajikistan and assured full cooperation from the provincial government in promoting bilateral trade activities and in the province's vast minerals, hydropower and tourism sectors.

Elaborating investment opportunities, he said that Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has a vast untouched natural potential that needs to be explored.

Ambassador in his remarks, emphasized the importance of boosting bilateral trade ties, and highlighted the recent efforts to boost trade activities between the two countries and said that launching air services for commercial purposes is the need of the day as the two countries share common values. The briefing at KPBOIT was followed by the visit of the Ambassador and the delegation to Torkham Border Crossing where senior officials from Pakistan Custom gave a detailed briefing on bilateral trade.

PECA is likely
to eliminate fake
journalists

YOUSUF BHUTTA

GUJRAT: New law has ignited heated debate among the media persons, political parties and social media activists across Pakistan. Media persons here, have widely hailed PECA while opposition parties' activists have termed it a "black law".

While Pakistan Government has toughened laws to curb so-called fake news by regulating posts on social media platforms; the has been perceived by journalists, political workers and common people differently. Haji Usman Tayyab, former president of Gujrat Press Club said, "PECA is likely to eliminate blackmailing, yellow journalism as well as fake journalists. The ordinance also states the informant or the complainant shall be "aggrieved person, his authorized representative, or his guardian, where such person is a minor or a member of the public in respect of a public figure or a holder of public office". He said false propaganda had been spread in the past, particularly against the sitting judges, political leaders and government officers.

"Those behind such malicious campaigns knew very well that the honorable persons associated with the judiciary would never come forward to initiate lawful action against those involved in tarnishing their reputation," he added.

Police lines
Jhelum organizes
general parade

KAMRAN GUJJAR

JHELUM: District Police lines Jhelum organized a general parade on the orders of Sardar Ali Khan Inspector General of Police Punjab, under the supervision of District Police Officer (DPO) Jhelum Rana Tahir Rehman Khan and Raja Zahid Naem DSP. Officers, office staff and officers, employees of traffic police attended the parade. Zahid Naem DSP headquarters inspected the parade.

Minister for timely
completion of projects

PESHAWAR: Minister for Education Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Shahram Khan Tarakai has said that all the ongoing development schemes in schools should be timely completed to provide a better learning environment to students. He issued these instructions while presiding over the education department review meeting which was attended by Secretary Education Yahya Akhwanzada, Special Secretary Education, Additional Secretary Akhlaq Ahmed and other officials of the education department. — DNA

First Lady calls for
concerted efforts to empower
persons with disabilities

First Lady also visited "the Inclusion Academy", the school for children with and without disabilities

KARACHI: First Lady Begum Samina Arif Alvi on Monday called for collective efforts by all segments for the welfare of the persons with disabilities (PWDs) for their positive contribution for the society.

She said in her address on the occasion of wheel chairs and financial assistance cheques distribution ceremony organized by Network of Organizations Working with Persons with Disabilities (NOWPDP) here. She said that present federal government is making all out efforts to facilitate the PWDs through trainings so as to help them get job and serve them with assistance as well as necessary facilities to ensure their easy mobility.

Appreciating the welfare activities of NOWPDP, she said that the team of NOWPDP is doing a great job for PWDs because these special persons need support to cope with the challenges they face due to disabilities.

She also referred her recent visits to the Kiran Hospital and IBA Campus Karachi and said that she is trying hard to create awareness among the masses about breast cancer through her nationwide breast cancer awareness campaign.

She also urged upon the students to play their vibrant role to create awareness in the society about the breast cancer. First Lady Begum Samina Arif Alvi said

that though the PWDs were being provided financial assistance but making them self-reliant is more important.

Speaking on the occasion, Member of the Sindh Assembly MPA Khurram Sher Zaman lauded the efforts of First Lady Begum Samina Arif Alvi for welfare of PWDs and for creation of awareness about breast cancer.

He called upon all segments of the society to realize the problems and challenges of PWDs and play due role to help them. Speaking on the occasion, Director Pakistan Bait-ul-Mal (PBM) Sindh, Dr. Adnan Majeed said that as many as Rs 57 million have so far been distributed this year in terms of financial assistance of PWDs. He assured every possible support on behalf of PBM for assistance of PWDs.

Later, First Lady Begum Samina Arif distributed financial assistance cheques among the persons with disability on the occasion and also talked to some of the persons with disability on the occasion.

First Lady Begum Samina Arif Alvi also visited "the Inclusion Academy", the school for children with and without disabilities between the ages 5-9 established by NOWPDP. Earlier, a video was also screened to brief the First Lady Begum Samina Arif Alvi and audience with regard to the welfare activities of NOWPDP. — APP

KP 5-days
anti-polio
campaign
kicks off

ISLAMABAD: A five-day anti-polio campaign kicked off in six southern districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa from Monday (today) to administer anti-polio and Vitamin-A drops to children under the age of five years.

According to Coordinator Emergency Operation Centre Abdul Basit the workers of the anti-polio vaccination campaign will be provided with the necessary protective gear against coronavirus infection, and will be following all WHO recommended protocols to keep themselves and others safe from Covid-19, electronic channels reported.

During the five-day campaign, five thousand seven hundred mobile teams of health department will administer anti-polio drops to more than one million children up to five years of age. Polio teams will also be available at railway stations, bus stands and other public places to ensure administering anti-polio drops. — APP

Role of
media, civil
society
imperative

PESHAWAR: Provincial Election Commissioner, Muhammad Razik here Monday said free, fair and transparent election was the prime responsibility of Election Commission of Pakistan.

He also underscored the need of proactive role of media, civil society organizations and academia to mobilize voters for the second phase of local bodies' elections scheduled on March 31 in the province.

Addressing the concluding session of the 'dialogue with media and civil society for inclusive elections,' the provincial election commissioner said media, academia and civil society organizations existed in every district of KP and its constructive role was important in mobilization of voters for the second phase of LG elections which would be held in 18 districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on March 31, 2022. Farid Afridi, Joint Secretary Provincial Election Commission (PEC), Zulfiqar Ahmed, Director Local Government and Senior Public Relation Officer PEC, Sohail Ahmed gave detailed presentations on local government election system in KP, role of media and civil society organizations in awareness of general public regarding local government's election process, code of conduct, rules, regulations and functions of ECP.

The aim of these workshops, he said, is to create awareness among voters and the general public about six different types of ballot papers for different categories including general, women, minorities and youth that would be used during LG elections. He said every citizen of Pakistan including persons with disabilities and transgender having national identity card are eligible to exercise their right of franchise in election. "My doors are open for everyone for resolution of their problems," he said, adding that the ECP has full powers to order re-poll in any constituency in case of a report of violation of election laws. — APP

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

FEBRUARY

Feb 04/ Sri Lanka

National Day

Feb 06/ N. Zealand

National Day

Feb 06/ Uganda

Army Day

Feb 11/ Iran

Revolution day

Feb 16/ DPR Korea

National Day

Feb 16/ Lithuania

National Day

Feb 18/ Gambia

National Day

Feb 19/ Nepal

Democracy Day

Feb 23/ Uzbekistan

National Day

Feb 23/ Brunei

National Day

Feb 23/ Guyana

National Day

Feb 23/ Russia

National Army Day

Feb 23/ Tajikistan

Armed Forces Day

Feb 25/ Kuwait

National Day

Hotels & Restaurants

Serena Hotel.....111 133 133

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& Rescue Services.4451122

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MH.....5611116

Cantt Hospital...9270907-11

DHQ.....5556311-4

RGH.....9290301-7

Holy Family.....9290322-7

PIMS.....9261170-79

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Shifa International.4603666

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CDA.....9221334-43

CDA.....9208301-04

Met Office.....9250360-6

RDA.....5555864

TMA.....5770886

Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Islamabad Metropolitan

Corporation.....9209224

Potohar Town.....9209224

Rawal Town.....5773343

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

IMF program has become controversial in Pakistan

Speakers support autonomy to SBP

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Centre for Strategic Perspectives (CSP) at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) organized a webinar on “The State Bank of Pakistan Amendment Act 2021.” The guest speaker at the talk was Dr. Ishrat Husain, Former Governor, State Bank of Pakistan. The talk was moderated by Dr. Neelum Nigar, Director CSP, ISSI. In his welcome remarks, Ambassador Aizaz Ahmed Chaudhry Director General ISSI said that there are multiple shades of opinion with regards to the amendment act with some linking it to the conditionalities put forth by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). While some remain highly critical of this move, others argue that it's not the IMF program itself but an important step to ensure independency of the central bank. Dr. Ishrat Husain

while shedding light on the State Bank of Pakistan amendment Act 2021 stated that State Bank act since 1960 has been amended several times till 2020. As the conditions change it is important to try to adapt the central bank according to the circumstances instead of reaming isolated to what is happening internationally.

Dr. Husain highlighted that around the world, central banks have been given autonomy and operational independence in order to carry out their functions without any interference from the parts of the government. However it does not mean autonomy from the government but the idea of autonomy is within the gov-

ernment. On the issue of IMF, Dr. Husain was of the view that the IMF program in Pakistan has become highly contentious and controversial. The question of the IMF dictating the central bank should be taken in a larger perspective. The board of the IMF looks at the internal working of the IMF and does not concern itself

with pointing directions to any member country, unless that country enters into an agreement with the IMF for financial assistance. Hence, it is imperative to correct the misconception that the central bank will become subservient to the IMF. Further in his remarks Dr. Hussain stressed that the act had a lot of vagueness

and had to be clarified. He highlighted multiple areas of motivation behind the set of amendments including; clarity of objectives; change and clarity in functions of the central bank; development financing to be done through federal budget resources instead of the State Bank; financial resources and capital strength; functional and administrative autonomy; audit by the Auditor General of Pakistan; transparency and governance in functioning and isolation of external influence in decision making and directives. Chairman BoG, ISSI Ambassador Khalid Mahmood the State Bank Amendment Act 2021 has been under a lot of talk and controversy and to address the issue it is important to understand the trigger point and the reasoning behind the amendments introduced in the act. He was of the view that the basic issue is with respect to the autonomy versus accountability.

Ayaz Gul’s poetry has a unique style

ISLAMABAD: Famous poet of Sindh Ayaz Gul’s poetry has a unique style. His poems for children are also unique like his other poetry. Ayaz Gul is a poet of feelings. His latest book “Nind Ki Pari” for children will be as popular as his other books. There are many hopes in literature for a new generation of writers. Nasira Zubair is a poet of fresh accent. These views were expressed by Iftikhar Arif at a function organized by the Idara Adab -O- Saqafat in honor of guest poets Ayaz Gul, Nasira Zubair and Dr. Naveeda Katohar from Sindh. Ayaz Gul’s new book of poems for children “Nind ke Paari” was also discussed on the occasion. Ayaz Gul said that the book “Phool or Sitare” written for children was published in 1979. My writing for children is out of love for children. Another name for children is love and I love love. It is a great pleasure to write for children. Very few books are being written for children in Sindhi literature. Writing is very important for children. Children are our future. We should pay attention to their literature and also government level work should be done on children’s literature. Thanking the guests, Tariq Shahid said that Ayaz Gul, Nasira Zubair and Dr. Naveeda Katohar are important names in Sindhi and Urdu literature. Ayaz Gul’s Sindhi poetry and poems are written especially for children are the assets of our literature. Afshan Abbasi, President, Idara Adab -O- Saqafat, thanked the guests. Hafeez Khan, Akhtar Tazeen, Akbar Hussain Akbar, Mazhar Barlas, Dr. Rashid Hameed, Afshan Abbasi, Manzoor Ali Veesiro, Bilal Dar, Muhammad Inam, Saeeda Tariq, Farzana Khan, and Owais Jan attended the function. – DNA



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Uzbekistan Aybek Osmanov in a meeting with Secretary Commerce Muhammad Sualeh Ahmed. – DNA

Finance Minister briefed on Kamyab Pakistan Programme

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Shaukat Tarin was given detailed presentation on the progress of Kamyab Pakistan Program (KPP). While presiding a Steering Committee meeting of Kamyab Pakistan Program (KPP), the minister was informed that KPP was going successfully and applications for the award of loans were being received through SMS. Adviser to the Prime Minister on over-

seas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, Ayub Afridi, Secretary Finance, Secretary Overseas Pakistanis and HRD, President Bank of Punjab, Chairman SECP, CEO Akhuwat Foundation and other senior officers attended the meeting, said a news statement issued here. The meeting was informed that loans were being disbursed among deserving applicant after meeting the requirements, the state-

ment said. It was appraised that loans of more than Rs. 2.5 billion had been disbursed whereas small loans for business, farmers and construction of houses were included under the program. Finance Minister, Shaukat Tarin appreciated all the stakeholders for their contributions in the success of the Kamyab Pakistan Programme and directed for the expansion of Kamyab Pakistan Programme throughout

Pakistan. The meeting also discussed inclusion of prospective Pakistani migrant workers into the programme and directed the stakeholders to frame modalities for the disbursement of interest free loans to Pakistani overseas workers. The Minister stressed that Kamyab Pakistan Program was a milestone project, having exponential potential to transform the lives of the lower strata of the society. – DNA

Study finds cause of inflammation, clotting in severe Covid patients

ISLAMABAD: Scientists have discovered that rogue antibodies found circulating in the blood of Covid-19 patients have the potential to cause cells to lose their resistance to clotting. A team from the University of Michigan found higher-than-expected levels of antiphospholipid autoantibodies, which can trigger blood clots in the arteries and veins of patients with autoimmune disorders, including lupus and antiphospholipid syndrome. Antibodies typically help the body neutralise infections. Autoantibodies are antibodies produced by the immune system that mistakenly target and sometimes damage the body's own systems and organs, Medical Daily reported. In a 2020 study, the research group found that autoantibodies from patients with active Covid-19 infections caused "a striking amount of clotting" in mice. For the new study the team studied the blood samples of nearly 250 patients hospi-

talised for Covid-19. The team found that the autoantibodies appear to stress the endothelial cells that make up the inner lining of blood vessels and, in doing so, cause the cells to lose their ability to prevent blood clots from forming. The results are published in Arthritis and Rheumatology. "This provides an even stronger connection between autoantibody formation and clotting in Covid-19," said Hui Shi, lead author and rheumatology research fellow at Michigan Medicine. "When endothelial cells are activated, they cause healthy blood vessels to become 'sticky', attracting other cells to the vessel walls and becoming more prone to thrombosis. This can affect many of the body's essential organs," Shi added. The researchers found that when they removed the antiphospholipid autoantibodies from Covid-19 blood samples, the endothelial cell activation that promotes clotting was lost. – APP

PMD forecasts rain-wind

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) Monday advised all the concerned authorities to remain vigilant in wake of rain-wind/thunderstorm expected in upper and central parts of the country from Tuesday. A westerly wave is likely to enter western parts of the country on Monday (night) and likely to persist in upper parts of the country till Thursday. Under the influence of this weather system, rain-wind-thunderstorm with snow over hills is expected in Quetta, Ziarat, Qila Saifullah, Pishin, Zhub, Musa Khel, Waziristan, Dera Ismail khan, Bannu, Bhakkar and Layyah on Tuesday. Rain-wind-thunderstorm with isolated hailstorm is expected in Chitral, Dir, Swat, Malakand, Kohistan, Shangla, Buner, Mansehra, Abbottabad, Haripur, Gilgit-Baltistan and Kashmir from Monday night to Friday. Rain-wind-thunderstorm with isolated hailstorm is expected in Swabi, Mardan, Nowshera, Charsadda, Peshawar, Bajaur, Kurram, Khyber, Kohat, Islamabad, Rawalpindi, Attock, Jhelum, Chakwal, Mianwali, Bhakkar, Sargodha, Faisalabad, Kasur, Sheikhupura, Jhang, Khushab, Hafizabad, Gujranwala, Gujrat, Sialkot, Narowal and Lahore on Tuesday and Wednesday. Moderate with isolated heavy snowfall is expected in Murree, Galliat, Nathiagali, Naran, Kaghan, Dir, Swat, Shangla, Buner, Neelum valley, Bagh, Haveli, Astore, Skardu and Hunza Tuesday to Friday.

ECP requested to hear petition filed against Gilani

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentary Secretary for Law Maleeka Bukhari says Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has been requested to immediately hear the petition filed against former Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani last year over his election on the Senate seat. Talking to the media persons along with other party leaders, she said the election of Yousaf Raza Gilani on the Senate seat is a question mark on the democratic system. She said we have no personal enmity against Yousaf Raza Gilani and his son but our aim is to bring the influential people under the domain of law. PTI leader Kanwal Shauzab said the PPP leaders should not use delaying tactics in this case. She said there is a video showing the son of Yousaf Raza Gilani buying votes ahead of Senate elections. PTI leader Aliya Hamza said her party firmly believes in free, fair and transparent elections. She said this case will be taken to logical conclusion.

Government committed to welfare of people, says Shafqat

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Federal Education and Professional Training Shafqat Mehmood has said Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government is committed to the welfare of the people of the country. Addressing a press conference in Faisalabad on Monday, he said the Prime Minister has no political agenda except the development of the country and prosperity of its people. The Federal Minister said the government is transforming Pakistan into a welfare state. He said the government is introducing various public welfare schemes which will bring reforms in the society. He said Kisan Card and Kafalat Card are some new initiatives by the present government. He remarked the National Health Card as a revolutionary step by the government as through this, the rich and the poor both will have free healthcare facilities for the first time in the history of Pakistan.

EU representative on HR calls on Dr. Mazari

The ambassador of the EU to Pak Ms. Androulla Kaminara was also present in this meeting, said in a press release

DNA

ISLAMABAD: European Union Special Representative for Human Rights H.E. Mr. Eamon Gilmore Monday called on the Federal Minister for Human Rights Dr. Shireen Mazari at her office here. The ambassador of the EU to Pakistan Ms. Androulla Kaminara was also present in this meeting, said in a press release. Both sides broadly discussed the ongoing EU funded development and humanitarian projects in Pakistan. They had a discussion, specifically, on the project of 'Haqooq-e-Pakistan'- a project for the promotion of Human Rights in Pakistan.



Briefs

**SMEDA to
organize
workshop on
Wednesday**

ISLAMABAD: The Small Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) will organize a one day training program on "Small Business Opportunities and Start up Management" for profitable business growth on 23 February (Wednesday). The session will be organized by SMEDA under National Business Development Programme (NBDP) for SMEs, to extend non-financial advisory services to small and medium businesses, according to sources in the authority. The training programme will provide information about entrepreneurial opportunities, idea generation and scanning of the best suitable ideas, determination of the business objectives and product analysis and market research. The workshop will also provide information of determination of form of ownership, completion of promotional formalities, raising necessary funds, processing machine and material, recruitment of HR and understanding the business operation. The session would be attended by CEO's, directors, management representatives, small business owners, potential entrepreneurs, students and the personnel who wish to pursue a career in the field of business. – APP

**Singers
demand
resuming of
Talent Hunt
music edition**

ISLAMABAD: Amateur singers on Monday demanded resuming of Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) Online Talent Hunt music edition, a popular platform for emerging singers. PNCA talent hunt edition was aimed to promote music through weekly music competitions among young singers. The programme was an initiative to discover melodious voices and used to be held on weekly basis audition. The online talent hunt was helping those who were eager to sing but they lack a proper or available platform to perform. He said that LokVirsa would continue its efforts to provide opportunities to talented singers. Tabla player Iqbal Ali said that the new talent from across the country was participating in the competitions in various categories. "The categories include, instrumental performance and singing," he said. – APP

**'PPP, PML-N
failed to
play role as
opposition'**

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Senator Faisal Javed on Monday said that the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) were not playing a constructive role as an opposition beyond personal interests. Talking to a private news channel, he said that opposition parties have no role in the development of the country under PDM, adding that these parties have done nothing but money laundering and open fake bank accounts. Faisal said the opposition PDM was only united and wanted a National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO). – APP

ICCI signs agreement with CEC to promote role of SMEs

Shakeel Munir, President, ICCI and Mobin Rafiq, Founder & Chairman, CEC signed the agreement during a ceremony held at ICCI

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) and the Commonwealth Entrepreneurs Club (CEC) based in the UK have signed an Agreement of Cooperation (AoC) to promote SMEs and enhance their role in the economic development of the country. Shakeel Munir, President, ICCI and Mobin Rafiq, Founder & Chairman, CEC signed the agreement during a ceremony held at ICCI. Former Presidents ICCI Mian Shaukat Masud, Sheikh Amir Waheed and Shaban Khalid, Mansoor A. Sheikh Global President CEC, Brig. Anjum Saeed Vice President CEC Pakistan Chapter, Majid Aziz former President Overseas Chamber of Commerce, Muhammad Irfan and others were present at the occasion. By signing the AoC, ICCI has been nominated to act as a hub-organization for the acceleration of CEC activities in Pakistan and to look after the economic interests of SMEs and entrepreneurship development at global level with a particular focus in the Commonwealth region. The sitting President of ICCI was nominated as the Global Ambassa-



dor of CEC to help promote SMEs and entrepreneurship culture. The key objective of the agreement was to work for building partnerships of Pakistani SMEs with the SMEs of commonwealth countries for business collaborations and technology transfer to Pakistan. Both sides will work to develop proposals for the enhanced role of SMEs and give suggestions to the government for policy reforms. They will also work for increasing Pakistan's exports, and attractive FDI to the country. Both parties

will also sensitize the youth and especially women for becoming entrepreneurs and play an active role in the economic development of Pakistan. Speaking at the occasion, Muhammad Shakeel Munir, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry lauded the efforts of Commonwealth Entrepreneurs Club for the betterment of SMEs in the commonwealth countries. He assured that ICCI would work closely with CEC to strengthen SMEs in Pakistan so that they could promote trade, improve

exports, reduce poverty, create more jobs for youth and play an increased role in the economic development of the country. He appreciated Mobin Rafiq for founding CEC, which was growing rapidly in commonwealth countries and hoped that its cooperation with ICCI would contribute to strengthening the SME sector in Pakistan. Mobin Rafiq, Founder & Chairman, Commonwealth Entrepreneurs Club in his address said that he has dedicated his life to help SMEs of the commonwealth region. He said

that he was also planning to initiate global sustainable projects aimed at inclusivity and empowering marginalized communities with skills and enabling them with the power of SMEs to create jobs and end poverty. He wanted to realize these goals by connecting 5K+ highly successful entrepreneurs from across 54 commonwealth nations to open up new markets, facilitate trade and enhance regional connectivity. He hoped that the cooperation of ICCI with CEC would yield beneficial outcomes for SMEs in Pakistan.

**CPPA seeks
Rs 6.10 per
unit increase**

ISLAMABAD: The Central Power Purchasing Agency (CPPA-G) has sought Rs 6.10 per unit increase in power tariff for January under monthly Fuel Cost Adjustment (FCA) mechanism. According to the petition submitted to National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA), the CPPA-G maintained that actual cost remained Rs12.61 per unit against the reference fuel charges of Rs6.51 per unit during January. A total of 8,797 GWh electricity was generated worth Rs107.53 billion during the said period while 8,420.73 GWh net electricity was supplied to the power distribution companies (DISCOs). Out of total generation, as many as 5.83 per cent electricity was generated from hydel, 33.15 per cent from coal, 6.73 per cent from high speed diesel, 14.07 per cent from furnace oil, 14.37 per cent from local gas, 7.12 per cent from RLNG, 14.37 per cent from nuclear, 1.22 per cent from Bagasse and 2.22 per cent from wind. – APP

**ITP's
campaign in
full swing**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The campaign of Islamabad Traffic Police (ITP) to check violation of traffic rules is in full swing and special efforts are being made to maintain traffic discipline in the city. The main objective of this road safety campaign is to ensure safety to people while road users are being educated for lane discipline during drive. Following directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Muhammad Ahsan Younis, Senior Superintendent of Police (Traffic) Rai Mazhar Iqbal has constituted special teams to control lane violation on various roads and ensure smooth flow of traffic in the city. Strict checking is being made against those not using helmets during bike ride, using mobile phone and not fastening seat belts during drive.

**Around 800,000 scouts
to chip in 540 mln trees
plantation target: Amin**

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister (SAPM) on Climate Change Malik Amin Aslam on Monday announced that around 800,000 scouts of Pakistan Boys Scouts Association would be engaged for the planting of 540 million trees under the Ten Billion Tree Tsunami Plantation (TBTP) project's Spring season activities. The SAPM, after the signing ceremony of a letter of Understanding (LoU) between the Ministry of Climate Change and a private education services group having countrywide network of schools to become part of the government's Clean Green Pakistan Movement and TBTP, said the College students have the opportunity to join Clean Green Champions national level competition to spearhead climate action. Amin said there were almost 100,000 students enrolled in this private school chain and there participation in Clean Green Pakistan campaign would help divert their energies towards healthy and positive activities of nature preservation. He said the Spring plantation drive under TBTP would kick start tomorrow where scouts from all across the country would be joining plantation activities to achieve the largest plantation target of 540 million trees from February to April. – APP



ISLAMABAD: Students from Government Girls College Killa Saifullah, visiting Senate museum at Parliament House. – DNA

COMSTECH and IUIU Uganda sign MoU

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Rector of the Islamic University in Uganda (IUIU), Prof. Dr. Ismail Simbwa Gyagenda and the Coordinator General COMSTECH, Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) at COMSTECH Secretariat. The intent of this MoU is to promote and strengthen the cooperation between COMSTECH and IUIU by providing a platform for collaborative activities such as sharing experiences and best practices, development of methodologies and mobility of experts in the relevant fields of mutual interest. Under the MoU, COMSTECH will help IUIU in

developing linkages with the institutions in OIC region, and will develop a programme in association with IUIU through which young researchers/ students from IUIU and different least developed OIC member countries from Africa may visit Pakistan and conduct research for 6 to 12-month duration. COMSTECH will also arrange the visit of distinguished scholars to IUIU to deliver lectures, conduct workshops and training courses. The MoU enables IUIU to get consultancy from COMSTECH Advisory Council. IUIU will be able to collaborate in organizing national and international events such as workshops, conferences, symposia, and exhibitions in different fields.

IUIU will become the member of COMSTECH Consortium of Excellence along with registration on COMSTECH technology portal. IUIU will support COMSTECH in organizing medical training in the fields of ophthalmology and telemedicine in least developed OIC member countries in Africa along with conducting eye surgery camps. The Islamic University in Uganda was established in 1988 by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation under a bilateral agreement with the Government of Uganda. COMSTECH is Pakistan based ministerial standing committee on scientific and technological cooperation of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation established in 1981.

**AIOU
announces
admissions in
Spring 2022
semester
by Feb 22**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) has set February 22 as the last day for admission in the programs offered in the Spring 2022 semester including Matric, FA and I.Com. According to AIOU, the admission in second phase will commence from March 1 across Pakistan. BA (Associate Degree), B.Com, BS (ODL), B.Ed and Masters programs will be offered in second phase. Overseas Pakistani and international students can also take admission in these programs. All academic activities for international students will be conducted online. Admission application forms and prospectuses for all these programs will be available online on the University's website (www.aiou.edu.pk) from March 1. Admission tests and interviews are in progress for MS, MPhil and PhD programs offered in the first phase.

Pakistan, China step up cooperative partnership on cotton research

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan and China step up cooperation on cotton research under climate change plan, Gwadar Pro reported on Monday. The National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC) and Pakistan Science Foundation (PSF) are working together to establish a model through the study of the changes in climate characteristics and the corresponding changes in cotton and wheat production varieties, and to put forward breeding suggestions for climate change in the next 30-50 years. This is a message conveyed by Ms. Zhang Rui, Biotechnology Research Institute, Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences on the International Training Workshop on Climate Smart Water Fertilizer Intelligent System for Cotton and Wheat organized by the MNS University of Agriculture, Multan. The model is developed under the APSIM (Agricultural Production Systems Simu-

lator) intelligent regulation and decision-making system, which can simulate the biophysical process in farming system under the climatic risk, describe crop structure, crop sequence, yield prediction, and quality control as well as erosion estimation under different planting pattern, and predict the future design direction of wheat and cotton varieties and water, fertilizer and salt management measures. "Compared with traditional breeding, the use of genetic engineering methods can produce crop varieties that adapt to different types of environmental conditions more quickly", she said. Pakistan stands 5th in cotton production among the 60 major cotton-producing countries of the world and occupies the 3rd position in consumption. The cotton industry in Pakistan, with the longest value chain system in the country, has 60% share in foreign exchange earnings and engages 38% of labour force directly or indirectly. But there is a gap of about 5-6 million bales between

production and consumption of local cotton industry, informed Dr. Saghir Ahmad, Chief Scientist on Cotton at the Cotton Research Institute (CRI), Multan. "Major challenges include climate change, obsolete Bt. Technology, seed quality, pests and diseases, quality issues, shortage of water, soil health, production technology awareness, and limited profitability", he said. In particular, climate change is a common challenge faced by both Pakistan and China, posing threats to cotton cultivation. Data of CRI Multan show that both the highest and the lowest temperatures in Punjab display upward trend during the past two decades, with a marked 1.5° surge from 2020 to 2021. "Without strategies and measures, most areas in Punjab will be attacked by pink bollworm by 2040", warned Dr. Saghir Ahmad. In China, the average annual temperature rose by 0.24 every ten years in the past seven decades. The past 20 years were the warmest period since the beginning of the 20th century.

BRT bringing Pakistani urban dwellers into a modern life: Cheng Xizhong

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Bus Rapid Transit Systems (BRT) bringing Pakistani urban dwellers into a modern life, reports China Economic Net, quoting Chinese scholar Cheng Xizhong. Cheng Xizhong noted that in recent years, with China's technical and financial cooperation, the Pakistani government has been committed to the development of the Lahore Orange Line Metro Train and Bus Rapid Transit Systems (BRT) in Lahore, Karachi, Rawalpindi, Islamabad, Multan, Peshawar and Faisalabad by leaps and bounds. Now the urban transportation has taken on a whole new look and the urban

dwellers have entered a modern life. From a technical point of view, these urban transportation facilities jointly constructed by China and Pakistan are at the world leading level. According to Prof. Cheng Xizhong, the BRT system of Peshawar with its unprecedented services to the citizens has been ranked as Gold Standard Service - the highest internationally recognized standard that any BRT system can achieve - by the Technical Committee of BRT Standard. It is a great honor for Peshawar, capital of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the federal and provincial governments of Pakistan to have achieved the world highest possible BRT ranking and Peshawar is the first city in South

Asian Subcontinent, third in Asia and seventh worldwide to have received the Gold Standard Service Ranking Award. Peshawar BRT constructed by China Hualu Group Co. LTD. is recipient of this award due to its passenger-oriented services, bus routes based on passenger needs, adopting clean technology for buses, improving safety, promoting non-motorized traffic and utilization of all possible resources to facilitate the public. Chinese Jinlv Bus has won the bid in the international open bidding, becoming the only vehicle supplier of BRT project in Peshawar. These buses are specially customized according to the local needs of Peshawar, and the highest internation-

al standards are adopted in the process and reliability design of the whole vehicle. The vehicle is equipped with air conditioning, Wi-Fi, USB interface, barrier free access facilities, etc., providing the local citizens of Peshawar with a comfortable travel experience unimaginable in the past. The completion and operation of the Lahore Orange Line Metro Train and BRT systems in major cities in Pakistan have greatly alleviated the local traffic congestion, reduced the environmental pollution and resource waste, increased the local per capita income, played a great role in boosting the employment rate and reducing public crimes, and had far-reaching social and economic benefits.

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Crime in Karachi

CRIME in Karachi has seen a significant surge in recent times which has raised fears among the citizens about the security situation deteriorating to what it was prior to 2013. Street crimes are being reported across the city every other day and very recently a journalist was also shot dead. The Sindh Chief Minister Syed Murad Ali Shah has stated that this is a core challenge and that the government will be establishing its writ.

Back in 2013, a crackdown was conducted with the help of Rangers to rid the city of militant groups and the crime rate went down in the city following those operations. Following the recent spike in crime, the senior police leadership has been reshuffled and more drastic measures will now be taken to bring the situation under control. While matters of corruption and accountability within the police department are important to address, there are more structural issues at play over here.

The Sindh CM is right in pointing out that the ongoing economic crisis is contributing to the rise in crime. Street crimes in particular are a broad category and some are born out of opportunity while others out of necessity. It is also pertinent to note that crime has been on the rise in both Islamabad and Lahore as well. The 2013 Karachi operation worked to clamp down on violent crimes, but other types of incidents are strongly linked to the broader socio-economic situation.

Reactionary changes within the police department will only help to a certain extent since policing is a limited response which is not preventative. Prevention requires targeting structural problems in a society, such as income inequality, unemployment, class-based discrimination, and a lack of political representation and empowerment of the working class. Keeping this in mind, we will need to consider more long-term structural solutions to these societal issues.

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Troubling amendments

PECA and defamation laws have already received criticism for their wide scope of misuse. We have seen genuine survivors of harassment be silenced with defamation notices. It is surprising that the government is planning on introducing such consequential laws when the government's previous attempts on regulating freedom of speech has not gone over well.

Previously the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) government had to roll back its plan to establish one authority to regulate all media, including social media, after facing strong resistance from almost all the stakeholders, including journalist bodies and civil society organisations. International technology companies have also fiercely resisted attempts to control data, particularly the Removal and Blocking of Unlawful Online Content (Procedure, Oversight and Safeguards) Rules, 2021, by threatening to discontinue their services in Pakistan if the rules were not amended, saying the regulations would make it difficult for them to continue their operations.

What is troubling is that these amendments appear to be introduced not with the intention to improve cyber security and protect genuine victims of cyber harassment and abuse, but as a response to political controversy. Defamation laws should not be drafted keeping the priorities of political players in mind—these laws are meant to help the weak. They should not be used as a tool to counter petty politics. This is not just a political matter—these amendments will be noted internationally and will have an impact on Pakistan's Ease of Doing Business rankings, freedom of speech rankings, and most importantly on the growing digital and tech industry.

Erdogan's UAE visit, Turkey's multipolar foreign strategy

Nagehan Alçi

The move is significant since Turkey and the UAE had estranged themselves from each other for years over several issues, including the situation in Libya and the approach to the results of the Arab Spring. From Turkey's side, the UAE supported elements of the July 2016 coup attempt and from the UAE's side, the Erdogan government was siding with forces against the established Arab regimes

ANKARA normalizing its relations with its neighbors and regional partners is the keystone for a positive era for the entire region. A new chapter for Turkey and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) was opened with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's visit to the UAE last week. Erdogan's visit, which

came after Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan's (MBZ) Ankara visit in November, will open a way for the renewed cooperation between the two countries in trade and defense.

The move is significant since Turkey and the UAE had estranged themselves from each other for years over several issues, including the situation in Libya and the approach to the results of the Arab Spring. From Turkey's side, the UAE supported elements of the July 2016 coup attempt and from the UAE's side, the Erdogan government was siding with forces against the established Arab regimes.

However, these problems seem to have been put aside, which I think is an advantage for both sides. The UAE needs a strong partner like Turkey in the region and Turkey benefits from the good relations in terms of economy and security. So, I see the rapprochement as a win-win situation for both sides.

Erdogan's visit "opens a new positive page in bilateral relations between the two countries," Anwar Gargash, MBZ's senior foreign policy adviser, said, adding that the meeting should be seen in the context of strengthening channels of communication with various countries in support of regional stability and cooperation.

UAE Economy Minister Abdulla bin Touq Al Marri stated that the economic relations between the two countries are founded on solid ground and continued to improve despite regional and international challenges. There was a very big and prosperous welcoming for the Turkish president and his delegation. The world's tallest tower, Burj Khalifa, featured a projection of Turkey's flag and a grand reception was organized in

Qasr Al Watan, the UAE's presidential palace. Erdogan and MBZ arranged the signing of 13 agreements, including on trade, industry, defense, health, transportation and the climate. The boost to renew the relations will yield investment accords worth billions of dollars. Both sides encouraged their actors to engage in more cooperation, and Erdogan called on business leaders to invest in Turkey.

In November, the UAE stated that it has reserved a \$10 billion (TL 136.50 billion) fund to support mainly strategic investments in Turkey. Last month, the two countries agreed on the \$4.7 billion swap deal in local currencies. The UAE said that it hopes to double or triple its trade volume with Turkey. I think these are very positive developments for Turkey. Ankara is trying to accelerate its relations with many countries and overcome the existing problems, which I believe is to the advantage of Turkey.

Moreover, Israeli President Isaac Herzog's upcoming visit will also be a good step in accelerating relations. I think that a Turkey having good relations with Egypt, the UAE, Israel and the rest of the world is much stronger and better off than a Turkey having troubles with its neighbors and countries in the region.

The world is facing many challenges, from the Ukraine crisis to the economic problems stemming from the coronavirus pandemic and the accelerating tension between the U.S. and Russia. Since strategic partnerships and multipolar alignments are very precious in such a period of time, Turkey will continue to pursue them in the near future.

— Courtesy: Daily Sabah

Egypt is fast becoming France's closest MENA ally

Rami Rayess



France's contribution to the Alexandria Library as part of its cultural standing is not a coincidence as well. The French-Egyptian love story dates back to the pre-French revolutionary wars and the Napoleon expedition to Egypt in 1798, staying until 1801. The emperor accompanied 160 scholars and scientists who worked for years to produce a milestone research book entitled: Description of Egypt. It first appeared in 1809, with the 20th volume published in 1829

FEBRUARY 13th marked the sixth commemoration of Operation Sirli, an Egyptian military campaign close to the Libyan border in the Western Desert. The famous Egypt Papers revealed that French intelligence officers, pilots, and technicians escorted the Egyptian Army. This was only one of several other collaborative operations between the two countries. The focus of many is to counter terrorist threats. It is one of the essential pillars of their bilateral relations. Yet, the deep cooperation that achieved additional leaps when General Abdul-Fattah Sisi assumed the presidency in 2014 failed to attain any international standing. True, it had positive regional effects and improved bilateral relations, but Egypt directly cannot now alter the balance of power or advance its proper position globally.

France is politically irrelevant in Lebanon, Syria, Tunisia, and Gaza. Its relations with Algeria fall under the old boundaries of colonial history. Its ties with Saudi Arabia have never peaked to the extent that Riyadh would give up on its historical strategic relations with Washington. Would anyone?

France is one of the world's largest manufacturers and exporters of military equipment. A partner willing to sign enormously huge arms contracts is tremendously beneficial for Paris. As described by President Emmanuel Macron, Egypt has risen to become a strategic and "except-

tional" partner for France.

Between 2016 and 2020, French arms exports increased by 44 percent compared to the period stretching from 2011 to 2015. Egypt's spending on defense placed France second for imports, with India first. Cairo purchased the expensive high-end French Rafale jets in two mega arms deals in 2015 (worth 5.2 billion Euros) and 2021 (worth 4.5 billion Euros). Negotiating new arms deals continues to reflect this strategic partnership.

France's economic interests in Egypt are not restricted to arms deals. French companies have executed mega projects in different sectors in the country. A phenomenon Sisi adores as he regularly inaugurates new projects in infancy ceremonial occasions sitting posing on a beautiful couch.

The Cairo Metro construction, the Nile Sat satellite launch, the mobile network installation, and the thermal power station construction are a few examples of such works.

Like other Western capitals, Paris has overlooked accusations of human rights abuses in Egypt. Except for issuing occasional articulate press releases on such violations, few concrete steps have been taken. This has always been the West's view of Egypt. Washington overlooked a similar accusation to the Mubarak regime (1981- 2011) for almost thirty consecutive years. If political interests are attained, turning a blind eye is standard policy.

Combating political Islam is another area of cooperation between Paris and Cairo. Both countries supported the East-based government in Libya against the UN-recognized government based in West Libya. The latter happened to be backed by Turkey. Neither Macron nor Sisi would appreciate the creation of a Muslim Brotherhood government in Libya.

Macron described the religious standing of Islam as a "religion in crisis." At the same time, Sisi called for an Islamic renewal as the French General Assembly issued an anti-radicalism bill that increased the authority's oversight on mosques, schools, and sports clubs.

Sisi aimed to diffuse any potential rise of new social or religious platforms that might hinder his grip on power in the country.

France's contribution to the Alexandria Library as part of its cultural standing is not a coincidence as well. The French-Egyptian love story dates back to the pre-French revolutionary wars and the Napoleon expedition to Egypt in 1798, staying until 1801.

The emperor accompanied 160 scholars and scientists who worked for years to produce a milestone research book entitled: Description of Egypt. It first appeared in 1809, with the 20th volume published in 1829.

Put history aside, and the present seems far more complicated. The impediments to assuming broader roles for both countries are numerous, but they can still develop their mutual ties and take it further.

— Courtesy: Al Arabiya News

To recognize or not to recognize, that is the question

Andrei Kortunov



The impression arises that, regardless of who is to blame for the recent escalation, events in Donbas might unfold as they did in Georgia in 2008. Under this scenario, Moscow would recognize the independence of the self-proclaimed republics then send its troops into the region, thereby guaranteeing that the conflict in Donbas would last for years, if not decades to come

THE situation in the Donbas conflict zone has reached a critical phase. Russia and the world wait in tense expectation of what deci-

sion Moscow will make.

Only a week ago, there was good reason to think the most dangerous phase of the crisis over Ukraine had passed and that the situation was starting to improve.

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov assured President Vladimir Putin when they met on Feb. 14 that the possibility for a diplomatic solution to the security crisis remained and that Russia should continue its dialogue with the West. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz sounded a generally positive note during his visit to Moscow on Feb. 15 and suggested that an agreement might be reached on some kind of moratorium on Ukraine joining NATO.

The Russian Defense Ministry also announced that several units of the western and southern military districts had completed exercises near the Ukrainian border and were being sent back to their original posts. Of course, the Russian State Duma's proposal that Putin recognize the independence of the breakaway Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics in Eastern Ukraine looked somewhat out of place against this backdrop.

However, the president responded to this suggestion very evasively, citing the importance of fulfilling the Minsk agreements. Many observers concluded that Putin was simply leveraging for more bargaining power over Kyiv. But all of this has changed in the last few days.

The epicenter of the crisis shifted from the Russian-Ukrainian border to the Donbas, where hostilities began esca-

lating rapidly on the morning of Feb. 17. Shelling increased sharply along the entire line of contact between the opposing forces, with both sides accusing the other of ceasefire violations and the use of heavy weaponry.

The next day, DPR and LPR heads Denis Pushilin and Leonid Pasechnik announced the start of a general mobilization and the evacuation of the region's civilian population across the border into Russia. Moscow blamed Kyiv for the events, while Washington held Moscow responsible.

The impression arises that, regardless of who is to blame for the recent escalation, events in Donbas might unfold as they did in Georgia in 2008. Under this scenario, Moscow would recognize the independence of the self-proclaimed republics then send its troops into the region, thereby guaranteeing that the conflict in Donbas would last for years, if not decades to come.

The other option of evacuating the entire population of the DPR and LPR into neighboring regions of Russia and returning the now-depopulated territory of Donbas to Kyiv appears much less likely. Apparently, by stepping directly into the conflict on the side of the self-proclaimed republics, Russia could intimidate Kyiv into refraining from any more armed clashes in Donbas. But this is about the only advantage of granting formal recognition to the self-proclaimed republics.

The inevitable negative consequences of such a move would be both numerous and varied.

— Courtesy: The Moscow Times

Briefs

Qureshi,
German FMs
talk region

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climate change, radicalization etc, he added. Discussing Afghanistan, the foreign minister reaffirmed Pakistan's resolve in supporting the international community in its efforts to strengthen peace and stability in Afghanistan. He also highlighted Pakistan's role in evacuation operations from Afghanistan. The foreign minister informed that Pakistan had so far facilitated over 90,000 evacuations. The urgent need was to avert a humanitarian crisis and economic meltdown in Afghanistan, which would adversely impact stability in the region and beyond, he stressed. The two foreign ministers exchanged views on the situation in Ukraine. Foreign minister Qureshi also briefed his German counterpart on the grave human rights violations in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK), being committed by India after its illegal, unilateral action of 5 August 2019. Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock appreciated Pakistan's assistance in its evacuation operations from Afghanistan and hoped for Pakistan's continued support in this regard. The foreign minister invited the German foreign minister to visit Pakistan at the earliest convenience, adding that her visit would be helpful in preparing for the Prime Minister's visit to Germany. He also congratulated his German counterpart on recently assuming her office. Pakistan and Germany have maintained a good trajectory of bilateral relations and remain committed to further enhance our cooperation. The two countries celebrated 70 years of establishment of diplomatic relations in 2021.

Putin must
decide on...

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substance to discuss. France's Europe Minister Clement Beaune told LCI TV earlier the summit idea showed that "a political solution could be possible". "If there is still a chance to avoid war, to avoid a confrontation and build a political and diplomatic solution, then we need to seize it," he said. Meanwhile Russia's foreign minister will meet his French counterpart Jean-Yves Le Drian in Paris Friday to lay groundwork for a mooted summit between US President Joe Biden and Russia's Vladimir Putin, France's foreign ministry said Monday. Sergei Lavrov agreed to a meeting "to hold preparatory consultations for the summit agreed in principle" in a Sunday phone call between Putin and France's Emmanuel Macron, said a ministry statement. — APP

Australian
Chief...

FROM PAGE 01
Headquarters, Rawalpindi. Pakistan side was headed by Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee whereas the Australian side was headed by Chief of Defence Forces Australia. Both sides reviewed the ongoing cooperation between Pakistan and Australian Defence Forces in the fields of mutual exchange, training programs, joint exercises and other Defence related activities. Both sides reiterated the resolve to further strengthen and enhance security and defence cooperation between the two countries. Defence and Security Talks were instituted in 2006 and have since been held regularly in Pakistan and Australia on alternate basis. Under the framework of this forum, the defence relations between the two countries are progressively expanding with greater substance. The Australian dignitaries remained appreciative of the high professional standards of Pakistan Armed Forces, their achievements in fight against terrorism and continued efforts for regional peace and stability specially for peace in Afghanistan. Earlier upon arrival at Joint Staff Headquarters, General Angus J. Campbell, was presented "Guard of Honour" by a smartly turned-out tri-services contingent.

US must lift sanctions to
revive nuclear deal: Raisi

The draft text of the agreement also alluded to other issues, including unfreezing billions of dollars in Iranian funds in South Korean banks, and the release of Western prisoners held in Iran

WEB DESK

DOHA: Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi said on Monday that talks in Vienna on reviving Tehran's 2015 nuclear deal with world powers cannot succeed unless the United States is prepared to lift sanctions on the Islamic Republic. Reuters reported last week that a U.S.-Iranian deal is taking shape in Vienna after months of indirect talks to revive a pact Washington abandoned in 2018 under then-President Donald Trump. "The United States must prove its will to lift major sanctions," Raisi said in a joint news conference with Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani in Doha. "To reach an agreement, guarantees are necessary for negotiations and nuclear issues." The draft text of the agreement also alluded to other issues, including unfreezing billions of dollars in Iranian funds in South Korean banks, and the release of Western prisoners held in Iran. "Aggression is bound to fail. Resistance has



brought results and none of the regional issues have a military solution," Raisi said. Raisi was more cautious than Iranian foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh, who said earlier that the Vienna negotiations had made "significant progress". Khatibzadeh also said that "nothing is agreed until everything is agreed" in the Vienna talks. "The remaining issues are the

hardest," he told a weekly press briefing. Khatibzadeh said that Iran's top security body, the Supreme National Security Council, handles the Vienna talks. It reports directly to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. The 2015 deal between Iran and world powers limited Tehran's enrichment of uranium to make it harder for it to develop material

for nuclear weapons, in return for a lifting of international sanctions against Tehran. Iran is ready to swap prisoners with the United States, Iran's foreign minister said on Saturday, adding that talks to revive the nuclear deal could succeed "at the earliest possible time" if the United States made the necessary political decisions. Speaking from Doha on the sidelines of a gas conference, Iranian Oil Minister Javad Owji called the sanctions a violation of international law and a threat to global energy security, the semi-official Tasnim news agency reported. Iran has violated some of the deal's nuclear limits since the United States withdrew from it and reimposed sanctions under Trump. Israel, Iran's arch-foe and widely believed to have its own nuclear arsenal, has been closely watching the Vienna talks. It is pressing Washington about the terms of an emerging Iranian nuclear deal, Israeli officials said on Monday, raising the prospect of a bilateral day-after agreement with Washington to address their worries.

Hockey great Abdul
Waheed passes away

KARACHI: Former hockey Olympian Abdul Waheed Khan has passed away at the age of 85 in Karachi. According to details, Waheed was rushed to hospital after his health deteriorated on Monday morning. However, he breathed his last even before reaching the medical facility. He will be laid to rest on Tuesday. Waheed played for Pakistan as a centre forward. He was a member of the team that beat India at the 1960 Rome Games final to secure Pakistan's first-ever Olympic medal. Waheed scored the first goal of the match on that historic day. He also won gold medal for Pakistan at the 1958 Asian Games in Tokyo with victory over arch-rivals India in the final. He also represented the Pakistan team that topped the podium at the 1962 Asian Games in Jakarta. Waheed also served as coach and manager of the Green-shirts. He was the manager of the team that won the 1978 World Cup in Argentina. — DNA



LAHORE: Peshawar Zalmi stun Lahore Qalandars in a thrilling Super over. — DNA

PM's historic
Russia visit...

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convergence of views on a range of international and regional issues. The visit of the prime minister will contribute to further deepening of the multifaceted Pakistan-Russia bilateral relationship and enhancement of mutual cooperation in diverse fields, it added. On February 24, PM Imran Khan will lay a floral wreath at the monument of heroes killed in World War II. Following this, the prime minister will meet with the Russian president at 1 pm. During the meetings, PM Imran Khan will reiterate his resolve to complete the Pakistan Stream Gas Pipeline (PSGP) project, sources told Geo News, adding that the project is very important for Islamabad and the county is committed to the speedy completion of the project. Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi, Energy Minister Hamad Azhar, Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry, Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Reforms Asad Umar, Abdul Razak Dawood, Moeed Yousuf and others will be accompany the premier during the visit.

Turkish
head of...

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countries. The Prime Minister thanked the Turkish Government and leadership for Turkey's steadfast support to Pakistan on the Jammu and Kashmir dispute. He also appreciated Turkey's close cooperation with Pakistan on the joint initiative to combat rising Islamophobia. Prof. Dr. Erbas reiterated Turkey's principled position on IIOJK. He commended the establishment of Rahmatul-lil-Alameen Authority by Pakistan and extended Turkish assistance in this respect. He also conveyed cordial greetings of Turkish leadership to the Prime Minister and reaffirmed Turkey's desire to strengthen bilateral relations with Pakistan in all fields.

Bilawal says
govt has...

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government wanted to hold out an olive branch to terrorists "then it must do so with the consultation of the parliament, otherwise any such talks will have no legitimacy". The PPP chairperson said that "terrorists" must first apologise to the nation for spilling the blood of citizens and personnel of armed forces. "If you let loose these terrorists, your state will be in a great disorder," he said. Bilawal also lambasted the government for issuing health cards, saying the PPP government would instead provide free treatment at all hospitals after being elected to power. "We will not let people suffer problems due to acceptability issues related to cards." The PPP chief told his party workers to work with unity if they wanted to form government in the province. "Let me tell you if there is one place where people [PPP workers] do not work with unity, it is KP. Leg pulling is widespread in KP. This should end. It is most important to work in unity. If you can stop this practice, I assure you that no one can stop you from forming government."

Captain
embraces...

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hideout, opened indiscriminate fire. During ensuing heavy exchange of fire, Captain Haider Abbas embraced shahadat in pursuit of the terrorists. A deliberate follow up operation, however, continues in the area to deal with the perpetrators who have suffered casualties but were able to escape into nearby mountains. Security forces operations to eliminate the terrorists will continue and they will not be allowed to sabotage hard earned peace in Balochistan. Namaz e Janaza of Shaheed Capt Haider Abbas was offered at Karachi. Corps Commander Karachi, Lieutenant General Muhammad Saeed attended the funeral. Serving officers, soldiers, relatives of Shaheed and large no of people attended the Namaz e Janaza. Shaheed was buried with complete military honour.

Pakistani squad
felicitates China
on winter games

BEIJING: The members of Pakistani delegation have expressed their appreciation of China's efforts in organizing a successful Winter Olympic games in Beijing. "I have been doing skiing for the last 18 years, and I have been to so many places. But, I would say the it is the best infrastructure available here in China," Pakistan's Coach, Muhammad Qamar Mirza said in an interview. Expressing his excitement to be in China and being a part of the Winter Olympic Games, he remarked that the management of the Beijing Olympics was very good. He said that despite the ongoing pandemic situation, they had been doing an excellent job and we have really enjoyed a lot in the Olympic Village. Qamar Mirza also appreciated the love received from Chinese people during their stay and mentioned the warm welcome accorded to the Pakistani contingent by the Chinese audience at the opening ceremony of the games. He said it showcased that the ironclad friendship was deeply rooted in the hearts of the people of the two countries. "As we all know, Pakistan and China are good friends. We received a very warm welcoming response from Chinese brethren when they see us, they requested an exchange of Flags and Pins," he added. — APP



LAHORE: US Consul General Lahore William K. Makaneole giving trophy to the winning team of Newage Cables after final match of Ittihad Punjab Polo Cup 2022. — APP

'Happy' Auba helps Barca beat Valencia

"It's a luxury to have a player like him arriving for free," said Sergio Busquets

SPORTS DESK

MADRID: Pierre Emerick-Aubameyang marked his first La Liga start for Barcelona with a hat-trick on Sunday as the Catalans thrashed Valencia 4-1 to climb back into La Liga's top four. Aubameyang scored twice in the first half either side of a Frenkie de Jong tap-in as a free-flowing Barca hit Valencia with three goals in 15 minutes before the interval. And while Valencia briefly raised hopes of a comeback when Carlos Soler headed home Bryan Gil's cross, a long-range Pedri strike flew in off Aubameyang's back to complete an impressive victory. In his post-match interviews, Aubameyang believed the fourth goal was Pedri's but Barcelona later confirmed the referee had attributed it to Aubameyang, giving the Gabonese striker his hat-trick. It is the 32-year-old's first treble since August, when he put three past West Brom for Arsenal, and the first time anyone has hit a hat-trick for Barca since Lionel Messi scored four against Eibar in February 2020. "It's a luxury to have a player like

him arriving for free," said Sergio Busquets. "When he arrived he hadn't played many minutes but he's getting them now and I hope he helps us like he has today because he's a great player." Aubameyang had made two substitute appearances in La Liga before

starting against Napoli in the Europa League on Thursday, but this was his first league start for Barcelona since having his contract terminated by Arsenal last month. The third goal might have been Pedri's in all but name but Aubameyang was at his pin-point

best for the first, as he raced clear and unleashed an emphatic finish. Xavi singled out Pedri for special praise. "There's nobody in the world with his talent and he's only 19," Xavi said. Barcelona's quick-fire treble began with a simple chip over the top

from Jordi Alba but Aubameyang still had work to do, the striker taming the ball on its third bounce before firing it high into the net under pressure from Omar Alderete. The second was more intricate, a superb team goal going through Busquets and Alba before Ousmane Dembele generously side-footed across for De Jong to finish. Dembele was key to the third too, as his through ball released Gavi, who crossed to the back post where Aubameyang tapped in a third. Valencia thought they had a goal back before half-time through Soler's acrobatic finish but replays showed the ball had rolled out for what should have been a throw-in during the build-up. Soler, though, scored shortly after the restart, heading in Gil's whipped cross from the left to revive Valencia, who pushed for a second, with Soler going close with a long-range drive. But Pedri killed their momentum with his wonder-strike from distance, the youngster curling a stunning shot from 40 yards off Aubameyang's back and into the top corner, even if goalkeeper Giorgi Mamardashvili might have done better.



Briefs

Iranian fighter jet crashes, three killed

TEHRAN: An Iranian fighter jet crashed Monday in a residential area of the north-western city of Tabriz killing three people, including two crew, state television reported. The head of the local Red Crescent organisation said the plane smashed into a school and that one of the dead was a resident of the neighbourhood. Local official Mohammad-Bagher Honarvar told state television that the school was closed at the time due to the coronavirus pandemic. He identified the plane as a F-5 fighter aircraft and said it went down at around 9:00 am (0530 GMT) in the central Tabriz neighbourhood of Monajem. An investigation is underway, the state broadcaster said. The official news agency IRNA posted on its website video footage showing firefighters putting out a blaze at the crash site. — APP

“Justice for Khojaly” billboards installed in Kyiv

DNA

KYIV: As part of the “Justice for Khojaly!” international awareness campaign, billboards dedicated to the 30th anniversary of the tragedy have been placed in the center of the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, Azertag has reported. The purpose of the billboards, which was initiated by the Rada of Azerbaijanis of Ukraine (UAR), is to inform local residents and foreigners about the Khojaly genocide. Billboards are located in the busiest central areas of Kyiv - Victory Avenue, Glibochitska, Sichovich Striltsa, Lesi Ukrainki streets, Kyiv-Borispol highway. The billboards depict the “Mother’s Cry” statue, which represents the Khojaly genocide, as well as the slogan “Justice for Khojaly!” The billboards will remain in Ukraine until late February. Armenia committed genocide against the 7,000-person population of Azerbaijan’s Khojaly town on February 26, 1992. A total of 613 peaceful Azerbaijanis were killed, including 63 children, 106 women, and 70 elderly people. At the same time, 487 civilians were seriously injured and 1,275 people were taken hostage. The fate of 150 hostages, including 68 women and 26 children, is still unknown. During the genocide, 56 people were killed with special cruelty, people’s heads were peeled off, various limbs were cut off, their eyes were removed, and pregnant women’s bellies were pierced with bayonets. As a result, eight families were completely destroyed, 25 children lost both parents and 130 children lost one parent.

Thailand’s economy rebounds in fourth quarter

BANGKOK: Thailand’s economy rebounded in the fourth quarter of last year on the back of rising exports and the easing of coronavirus restrictions that allowed tourists to return, senior officials said Monday. The 1.9 percent on-year expansion was more than double what was forecast and marked a strong bounce after a 0.2 percent contraction in the previous three months. For the whole year the economy grew 1.6 percent, according to the National Economic and Social Development Council, and also beat expectations. South East Asia’s second largest economy was hit with a 6.1 percent contraction in 2020 – its worst economic performance since the 1997 Asian Economic Crisis. The NESDC said it saw growth of 3.5-4.5 percent this year as tourism picks up and government spending kicks in. Council secretary general Danucha Pichayanan said re-opening the border to fully vaccinated foreign tourists in November had made some impact. — APP

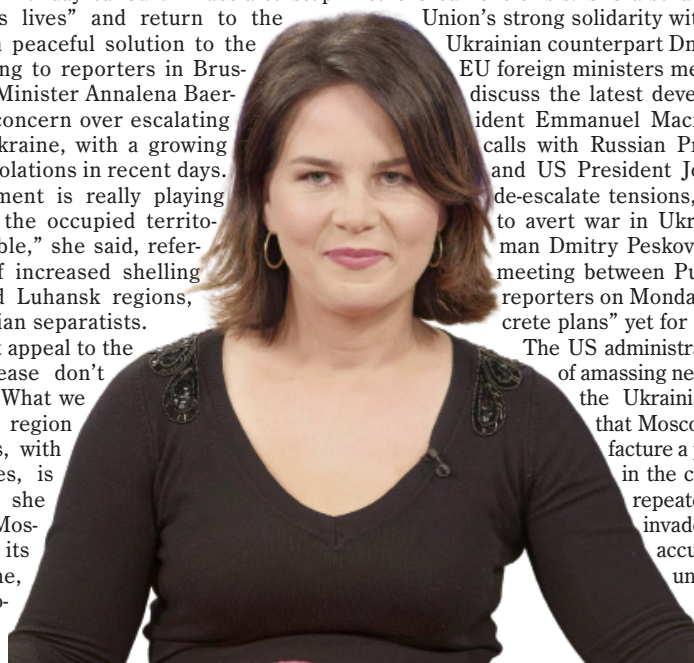


ISLAMABAD: Head of Presidency of Religious Affairs of Turkey, Prof. Dr. Ali Erbas, called on Prime Minister Imran Khan. — DNA

Germany urges Russia to ‘stop playing with people’s lives’

French President Emmanuel Macron held several phone calls with Russian President Vladimir Putin and US President Joe Biden on Sunday to de-escalate tensions, and organize a summit to avert war in Ukraine

BERLIN: Germany on Monday called on Russia to stop “playing with people’s lives” and return to the negotiating table for a peaceful solution to the Ukraine crisis. Speaking to reporters in Brussels, German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock expressed deep concern over escalating tensions in eastern Ukraine, with a growing number of cease-fire violations in recent days. “The Russian government is really playing with people’s lives in the occupied territories, this is irresponsible,” she said, referring to the reports of increased shelling from the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, controlled by pro-Russian separatists. “I am making an urgent appeal to the Russian president, please don’t play with human lives. What we have witnessed in the region over the last 72 hours, with attacks, violent clashes, is really concerning,” she said. Baerbock urged Moscow to step back from its threats towards Ukraine, and return to the negotiating table, to find a diplomatic solution



to the current crisis. She also underlined the European Union’s strong solidarity with Ukraine, and said her Ukrainian counterpart Dmytro Kuleba will join the EU foreign ministers meeting later in the day to discuss the latest developments. French President Emmanuel Macron held several phone calls with Russian President Vladimir Putin and US President Joe Biden on Sunday to de-escalate tensions, and organize a summit to avert war in Ukraine. Kremlin’s spokesman Dmitry Peskov did not rule out a new meeting between Putin and Biden, but told reporters on Monday that there are no “concrete plans” yet for such a summit. The US administration has accused Russia of amassing nearly 150,000 troops along the Ukrainian border, and claimed that Moscow was planning to manufacture a pretext to invade Ukraine in the coming days. Moscow has repeatedly denied any plan to invade Ukraine and instead accused Western countries of undermining Russia’s security through NATO’s expansion toward its borders. — Agencies

Ukraine reports fresh shelling from Russia

KRAMATORSK: Ukraine on late Sunday reported 74 incidents of shelling from the Russian army. Out of these, 64 incidents occurred from arms prohibited under the 2015 Minsk agreement, aimed at stopping the conflict between pro-Russian separatists and Kyiv in eastern Ukraine. The terms of the agreements included a cease-fire in the region, prisoner exchanges, and withdrawal of pro-Russian groups, while also allowing Kyiv to make a constitutional amendment that would give Donbas special status.

However, their implementation has been hindered by repeated allegations of violations by both sides. The Ukrainian territories which reportedly came under fire included Stanytsia Luhanska, Shastia, Novotoshkivske, Zolote, Popasna, Svitlodarsk, Pivdenne, Avdiivka, Pisky, Maryinka, Bohdanivka, Hranitne, and Mariupol. Tensions have risen dramatically in eastern Ukraine, with a growing number of cease-fire violations, multiple shelling incidents and the evacuation of civilians from the pro-Russian separatist regions of Donetsk and Luhansk. — Agencies

Syria hails Tehran-Riyadh dialog as necessary for stability

Turkey has also deployed forces in Syria in violation of the Arab country’s territorial integrity

FOREIGN DESK

DAMASCUS: Syria’s Foreign Minister Faisal Mikdad has welcomed the ongoing dialog between Iran and Saudi Arabia aimed at mending bilateral ties severed in 2016, stressing that the Tehran-Riyadh talks in Baghdad are key to the stability in the region. “We call for deepening this dialogue and support it, and we wish that it yields results as the situation in the [Persian] Gulf region can’t be stabilized without an Iranian-Arab understanding,” Mikdad said during an interview with Russia’s RT television. “Thus, we encourage all sides to continue to hold such meetings to reach solutions that

serve regional cooperation and construction within the framework of relations based on respect for sovereignty and principles,” he added, according to Syria’s official news agency (SANA). Saudi Arabia severed diplomatic relations with Iran in January 2016 after Iranian protesters, enraged by the Saudi execution of prominent Shia cleric Sheikh Nimr Baqir al-Nimr, stormed its embassy in Tehran. For years, the kingdom pursued a confrontational foreign policy toward the Islamic Republic, but since last year, the kingdom appears to have changed tack. The two Middle East heavyweights have held four rounds of talks since April, including a meeting last December under the Iranian administration of President Ebrahim Raeisi. In an interview with Al Jazeera published on January 6, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said Tehran and Riyadh have so far held four rounds of “positive and constructive” talks in Iraq. He expressed Tehran’s readiness

to restore relations with Riyadh at any time, adding that Iran welcomes the re-opening of the two sides’ embassies and consulates. Commenting on the future of relations between Syria and some Arab states, Mikdad noted that there are many communications between Damascus and those nations with the aim of restoring ties that have been affected by the Syrian conflict and by the support given by some of those countries to terrorist groups fighting against the Damascus government. “We are looking at the present and future with an eye full of optimism and we are happy with the visits made by some Arab delegations to Damascus and the visits we have made to some Arab states,” He stressed that “We, as Arab countries, are concerned with reconciling things because this [conflict] would affect all of us.” Since 2011, Syria has been gripped by foreign-backed militancy, leading to the emergence of Daesh and other terrorist groups in the Arab country.



BAKU: Pakistan ambassador to Azerbaijan Bilal Hayee received Asgar Alakbarov, Chairman Board State Historical Architectural Reserve, Ichersheher and his team to discuss plans to hold Pakistan Cultural Festival in summer to celebrate 30 years of diplomatic relations. — DNA

Pak-Uzbek experts discuss C-S. Asia connectivity

Sanjar Valiyev noted that the signing of a trilateral agreement (Uzbekistan - Afghanistan - Pakistan) on the implementation of Trans-Afghan Transport Corridor was an important event

NEWS DESK

TASHKENT: A videoconference was held between the Institute for Strategic and Interregional Studies under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan (ISMI) and the Center for South Asian and International Studies of Pakistan on the topic: “Central and South Asia: Policies and measures to strengthen cooperation in trade and regional security.” During the online dialogue, experts from the two countries discussed the current state and prospects for the development of Uzbek-Pakistani relations as part of the process of restoring interregional interconnectedness between the states of Central and South Asia. Opening the webinar, Deputy Director of the ISMI under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sanjar Valiev noted that recently cooperation between Uzbekistan and Pakistan has grown significantly and has acquired a qualitatively new form - a strategic partnership. This was primarily due to a significant increase in the intensity of political



partners, Uzbekistan and Pakistan are especially interested in establishing lasting peace and stability in neighboring Afghanistan. Therefore, the parties are making significant efforts in this direction. Sanjar Valiev noted that the signing of a

trilateral agreement (Uzbekistan - Afghanistan - Pakistan) on the implementation of the Trans-Afghan Transport Corridor was an important event. According to him, “this unique infrastructure project will help to radically increase the transit potential of Central Asia, attract significant car-

go flows, and also revive the historical role of the region as a bridge connecting Europe and Asia by the shortest land route. Assessing the current state of Uzbek-Pakistani cooperation, Director of the Center for South Asian and International Studies Mahmoud Ul Hassan Khan noted that thanks to the joint efforts of the President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev and the Prime Minister of Pakistan Imran Khan, a fundamentally new dynamics of bilateral relations in all areas of cooperation has been observed in recent years. “There are many points of contact between the interests of both states in a wide range of areas of practical cooperation in the political, economic, scientific and technological, cultural, humanitarian and other fields. This serves as a significant factor in the development of interstate relations, strengthening mutual understanding and cohesion between the two countries and peoples,” the expert emphasized. At the same time, Mahmoud Ul Hassan Khan emphasized that thanks to the initiatives of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev, today the regions of Central and South Asia are moving towards a prosperous future through the integration of trade, economic and transport and transit ties within the framework of large-scale interregional interconnectedness.

Australia reopens borders for vaccinated tourists

CANBERRA: After nearly a two-year hiatus, Australia on Monday reopened its international borders for the fully vaccinated tourists and visa holders. “It’s a very exciting, a very exciting day, one that I’ve been looking forward to for a long time,” Prime Minister Scott Morrison told reporters in Tasmania, one of country’s tourism destination.

“From the day that I first shut that border right at the start of the pandemic, which enabled us to have one of the lowest death rates from COVID anywhere in the world, one of the strongest economies to push through this pandemic, and one of the highest vaccination rates in the world, we are set up as a country now to really take advantage of the economic opportunities ahead of us, and Tasmania in particular,” Morrison said. On Feb. 7, the prime minister had announced that the borders will be reopened to all fully vaccinated visa holders, welcoming the return of tourists, business travelers, and other visitors from February 21. Those visa holders who are not fully vaccinated will still require a valid travel exemption to enter Australia, and will be subject to quarantine requirements. The country’s tourism industry that generated more than \$60 billion in 2018-19 was badly affected by COVID-19 restrictions and border closures. “Many of the companies that were involved overseas in bringing tourists to Australia, the people who were working there are gone. — APP

Greece resumes search for ferry fire survivors

CORFU: Greek rescuers on Monday resumed the search for 10 people still missing from a ferry fire that has killed at least one truck driver, with three survivors still in hospital. Television footage showed smoke still billowing from the Italian-flagged Euroferry Olympia, more than three days after a fire ripped through the vessel as it sailed from Igoumenitsa in Greece to Brindisi in Italy with nearly 300 people aboard. Most of the passengers were quickly evacuated within an hour on Friday, and a 21-year-old Belarusian truck driver emerged alive on Sunday. The Belarussian and two other men from Bulgaria and Romania remained hospitalised Monday with breathing difficulty, Corfu hospital director Leonidas Roubatis told reporters. But 10 other truck drivers – seven Bulgarians, two Greeks and one Turk – remain unaccounted for. — APP

China sanctions Raytheon, Lockheed over Taiwan deal

TAIPEI: China said Monday it will impose new sanctions on U.S. defense contractors Raytheon Technologies and Lockheed Martin due to their arms sales to Taiwan, stepping up a feud with Washington over security and Beijing’s strategic ambitions. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin announced the move at a daily press briefing, citing a newly passed Anti-Foreign Sanctions Law that took effect in 2021. It was in response to a \$100 million deal approved by the U.S. for maintenance of Taiwan’s missile defense systems by the two companies. “China once again urges the U.S. government and relevant parties to . . . stop arms sales to Taiwan and sever military ties with Taiwan,” Wang said. “China will continue to take all necessary measures to firmly safeguard its sovereignty and security interests in accordance with the development of the situation,” he said without giving any details. Taiwan is a democratically self-governed island that communist-ruled China claims as its own territory. The two sides split amid civil war in 1949. The U.S. has no formal relations with Taiwan but is its main ally. It has increased weapons sales in recent years, angering China with the sales. U.S. law requires the government to ensure Taiwan can defend itself. — APP

Briefs

Mohsin Baig case: IHC issues show-cause to FIA official

AGENCIES

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) issued on Monday a show-cause notice to the Federal Investigation Agency's (FIA) cybercrime wing over the "misuse of power", during a hearing in a case related to journalist Mohsin Baig case. The FIA had raided the journalist's house last Wednesday in the federal capital, along with the police, and took him into custody on a complaint, containing allegations of defamation, filed by Communications and Postal Services Minister Murad Saeed. A bench, headed by IHC Chief Justice Athar Minallah, was hearing the petition filed by Baig's wife through the Journalist Defence Committee. During the hearing, the court declared the raid on Baig's house abuse of power. The court observed that the FIA is continuously misusing power on the directives of public office holders, which is alarming. "Such a role by an agency or the state in a democratic country is not tolerable," IHC CJ Minallah remarked. Justice Minallah inquired from the FIA officials about the standard operating procedures (SOPs) and undertaking they had given to the high court and Supreme Court to deal with the defamation cases. Responding to a query by the court, the cybercrime wing director apprised the court that Murad Saeed lodged the complaint in Lahore on February 15. At this, Justice Minallah inquired if the minister was visiting Lahore on the day he filed the complaint. When asked if the FIA issued a notice to Baig upon receiving the complaint, the cybercrime wing director said that no notice had been issued.

Swiss envoy meets Speaker Punjab Assembly

LAHORE: Ambassador of Switzerland to Pakistan Benedict de Cerjat on Monday met with Speaker Punjab Assembly Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi at Punjab Assembly to discuss matters of mutual interest besides economic and trade situation. During the meeting, it was agreed to further enhance the cooperation between both the countries in tourism and other sectors. Addressing on the occasion, Punjab Assembly Speaker Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi said that there were vast opportunities present in hydel power projects in Pakistan, adding that 10 dams of hydel power besides other hydel projects were being established to increase the ratio of hydel power production into national grid. The Speaker said that both government and opposition were taken on board pertaining to legislation of Local Bodies' elections. He said that Pakistan had always valued its relations with Switzerland, adding that mutual cooperation between both countries was needed in education, health, trade and investment. The Speaker also underlined the importance of strengthening relations in education including medicine, clinical science, psychology and economics & management. - APP

Kazakhstan detains former defence minister

NEWS DESK

NUR SULTAN: Kazakhstan has detained former defence minister Murat Bektanov after prosecutors launched a probe against him for failing to fulfil his duties during violent unrest last month. The country's prosecutor general's office announced his arrest on Monday. President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev has described the deadliest unrest in the oil-rich Central Asian's post-Soviet history as an attempted coup, and another senior security official, a former head of the national security committee, has been arrested on charges of treason and abuse of office. Tokayev sacked Bektanov as minister last month, saying he had shown no initiative during the unrest. Bektanov is reportedly in pretrial detention in Nur-Sultan, the capital of the post-Soviet Central Asian republic of around 19 million people. The authorities say they are still investigating the January events; they have named no culprits aside from the former security boss and a few of his deputies. Protests in the remote town of Zhanaozen in early January over a sudden fuel-price hike quickly spread across Kazakhstan and led to violent clashes in the country's largest city, Almaty, and elsewhere. After announcing his resignation in March 2019, the former Kazakh president Nursultan Nazarbaev left Tokayev in his stead.

UNICEF chief lauds Pakistan covid handling

UNICEF Executive Director Calls on the Foreign Minister

ANSAR BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The UNICEF Executive Director Ms. Catherine Russell has acknowledged Pakistan's efforts for the realization of rights of child and progress towards achievement of SDGs. She appreciated the COVID-19 response of the Government of Pakistan. She affirmed continued collaboration with Pakistan for the realization of child rights and sustainable development agenda, in line with the Government's priorities and UNICEF's mandate. She also expressed gratitude for Pakistan's support to UNICEF in facilitating its humanitarian operations in Afghanistan. Earlier, Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi received the Executive Director of United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF). It is the Executive Director's first visit abroad after assuming office. The Foreign Minister congratulated Ms. Russell on her appointment and expressed the hope that collaboration between Pakistan and UNICEF would further strengthen during her tenure. He outlined the Government's commitment to the promotion and protection of rights of child and recalled the proactive role played by Pakistan inter-



ISLAMABAD: The Executive Director of UNICEF Ms. Katherine Russell called on Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi on Monday. - DNA

nationally in furthering this cause. The Foreign Minister appreciated the vital work being carried out by UNICEF, both globally and in Pakistan, for the realization of UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) especially those related to children. He shared the steps

taken domestically to strengthen the protection and welfare framework for women and children in the country such as the Ehsaas program and Naya Pakistan Qami Sehat Card. He highlighted that Pakistan's COVID-19 response was fully inclusive covering its citizens and

refugees alike. The Foreign Minister emphasized that despite progress over the years, children remained vulnerable across the globe particularly in places of protracted conflicts and foreign occupation such as in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK).

CM KP reviews foreign funded projects

FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT

PESHAWAR: A high level meeting regarding Foreign Funded Development Projects was held here on Monday with Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan in the chair. The meeting reviewed progress so far made on foreign funded development projects being executed in the province and made a number of decisions to further expedite pace of work on the projects and to remove hurdles in the implementation of certain projects. Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Umar Ayub and other concerned Federal Authorities also attended the meeting via video link whereas Additional Chief Secretary Shahab Ali Shah, Principal Secretary to CM Amjid Ali Khan, Administrative Secretaries of concerned departments and other relevant high ups of the provincial government were present in the meeting. Briefing about the foreign funded development projects in the province, it was informed that a total of 60 development projects worth Rs. 687 Billion were in progress in the province including Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Cities Improvement Project worth Rs. 97 Billion, KP Hydro Power Project worth Rs. 42 Billion, KP Reconstruction Program worth Rs. 9.5 Billion, KP Integrated Tourism Project worth Rs. 14 Billion, Khyber Pass Economic Corridor worth Rs. 11 Billion and other important projects. The forum was informed that pace of implementation on most of aforementioned project was satisfactory. It was decided on the occasion to hold special meetings with the relevant donor agencies in order to improve coordination with the aim to further expedite progress on the projects. The chief minister underlined the need to further improve coordination amongst the relevant provincial and federal entities and donor agencies to ensure progress on the projects as per the stipulated timelines and directed the departments concerned to take necessary steps to remove the hurdles in the implementation of certain projects. He said that timely completion of foreign funded projects in the province including merged areas was one of the priority areas of his government adding that concerned quarters should go all out to complete those projects within the timelines.

Media Houses walk out of meeting with Information minister

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The media Joint Action Committee (JAC) comprising All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS), Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors (CPNE), Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ), Pakistan Broadcasters Association (PBA) and Association of Electronic Media Editors and News Directors (AEMEND) today walked out of the meeting with Information Ministry calling the engagement a farce. The Joint Action Committee announced that all discussions are being suspended until the draconian amendments to the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act (PECA) are reversed.

Information Minister is toying with the media fraternity in guise of engagement and keeps passing ordinances against freedom of speech while giving the impression that media fraternity is being engaged. There is a grave trail of examples after a example where the ministry of information is tampering with freedom of speech, muzzling the journalists right to report, financially crippling media to influence journalism. The fraternity had warned of this before and appealed to the PM previously as well that a dangerous trend

PPP leadership to challenge PECA ordinance

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Opposition Leader of Senate and leader of Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Syed Yousuf Raza Gillan Monday announced that they will challenge Prevention of Electronic Crimes (PECA) Amendment Ordinance in court. Former prime minister Yousuf Raza Gilani, while addressing a press conference, said that the government wants to restrict the media out of fear and the PTI is doing all of this to conceal its incompetency. PPP leader also bashed the incumbent government and said people were promised 10 million employments, 5 million houses and devaluation of dollar but all promises of the government have been false and common man's life has become very difficult due to inflation.

had been emerging which is creating a distance between the Government and the Public as well as the media work-



Yousuf Raza Gillan further said that PTI's government does not believe in the institution of Parliament and that we should not ignore the parliament. Talking about the opposition parties, he said that they are reunited both inside and outside the parliament house and this is a win for democracy in the country.

All media bodies stand united to defend freedom of expression and people's right to information, it added.

Government urged to frame 'business-friendly' policies

SHAMIM SHAHID

PESHAWAR: Traders associated with the Pharma sector and export sector voiced concern over proposed changes in drugs law, collection of professional tax, unnecessary actions by departments concerned and non-seriousness toward resolution of other long-standing issues and demands. They urged the government to frame business-friendly policies to give a boost to businesses and exports. These, issues were taken up during a meeting of traders' community attached with drugs and medicine, meat business, exports-oriented sectors, like gemstones, jewelry in Namak Mandi Peshawar, which was chaired

by President Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) Hasnain Khurshid Ahmad here at the Chamber's House on Monday.

Besides, senior vice president of SCCI Imran Khan Mohmand, vice president Javed Akhtar, former president and Anjuman e Tajaraan Peshawar Haji Muhammad Afzal, executive members Muhammad Arshad Siddique, S Minhajuddin, Muhammad Aurangzeb, Pakistan Chemsits and Druggists Association Secretary General Aslam Pervaiz, former chairman All Pakistan Commercial Exporters Association Muhammad Fayyaz, Fazal e Wahid, a large number of traders associated with medicines, beef business and exporters were present during the meeting. The traders thoroughly discussed mat-

ters pertaining to changes in drugs rules, restrictions on relevant examinations for the chemists, hurdles in export, especially delay in visas to exporters, collection of professional tax in Dabgari Garden Market Peshawar, re-auctioning of Auqaf plaza, lack of parking facility and other issues. Hasnain Khurshid while speaking on the occasion said that traders' community has played a vital role in economic development of the country. Therefore, he urged the government to take pragmatic steps to facilitate taxpayers and to avoid unnecessary actions to intact their dignity. He viewed that SCCI is solely a forum of the business community, which had always made vigorous efforts to resolve the community issues.

Hundreds of Pak citizens in Swiss bank leak

The data reveals that 1,400 Pakistani citizens are linked to approximately 600 Credit Suisse accounts. It also included information about accounts that were closed but were still operational in the past

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: A leak from a Swiss bank has revealed the hidden wealth of its clients, including hundreds of Pakistanis, ranging from business people to politically exposed individuals and those who have been investigated, and in some cases convicted, in connection with various criminal actions, The News reported. The data reveals that 1,400 Pakistani citizens are linked to approximately 600 Credit Suisse accounts. It also included information about accounts that were closed but were still operational in the past. Details relating to around 18,000 accounts and 30,000 account holders holding in excess of \$100 billion in one of the world's largest private banks, Credit Suisse, are included in the breach. This is not all of the data available about the bank, which has 1.5 million private banking clients. Suisse Secrets is the only recorded leak of client data from a major Swiss bank to the media.

According to the report, the accounts of Pakistanis are diverse in nature. Additionally, they include individuals who have been or are currently under investigation by the National Accountability Bureau. Additionally, there are instances where the accused opened accounts while the investigation was ongoing and NAB was unaware of the transaction. Numerous politically exposed individuals opened their accounts while holding public office and failed to disclose this fact in their asset declarations submitted to the Election Commission of Pakistan. One such individual received a substantial sum of money from Credit Suisse, at the height of his political career. One of the wealthiest accounts held by a Pakistani at the bank was also owned by a politically exposed individual. Additionally, the data contained details about several cases currently under investigation in Pakistan in which investigators were given incorrect information about the assets under scrutiny. While many believe that the phenomenon of fake accounts is limited to Pakistani banks, it has emerged that Pakistanis have also used Credit Suisse to open accounts in their proxies' names in the absence of the bank conducting proper due diligence.

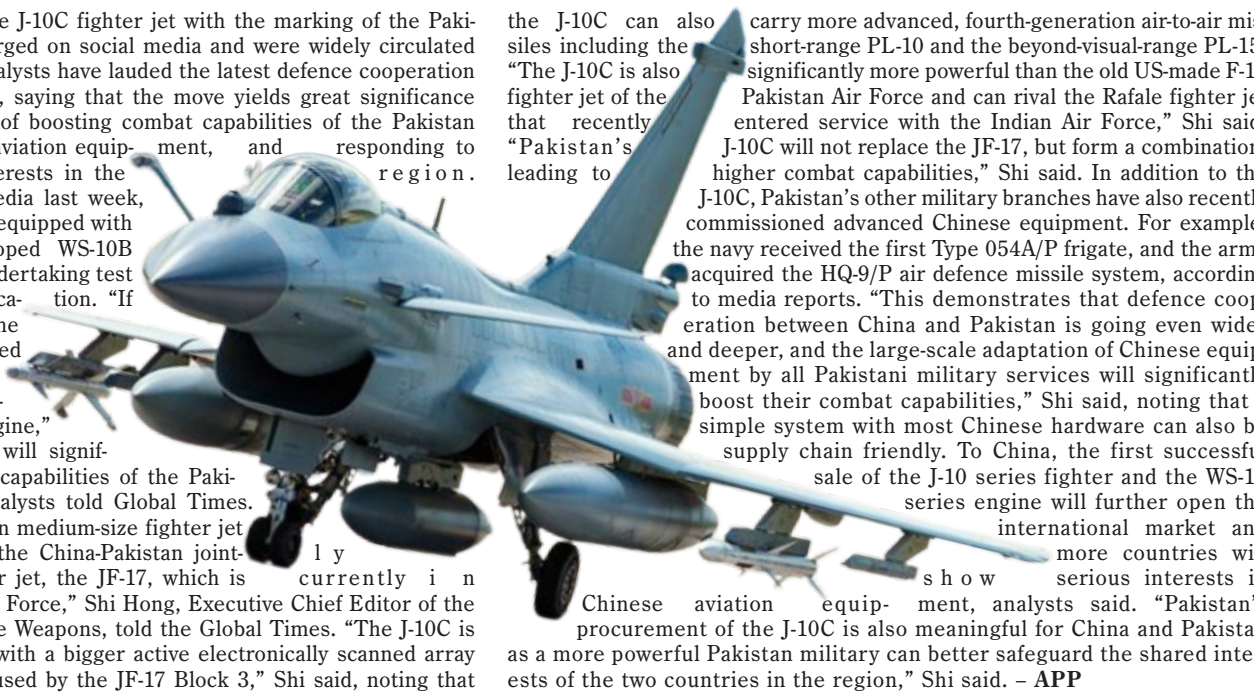


The average maximum balance in Pakistanis' accounts was 4.42 million Swiss francs (Rs841 million), compared to the leaked data's overall average of 7.5 million Swiss francs (Rs1.42 billion). Almost two hundred clients worth more than 100 million Swiss francs (Rs19 billion) were discovered in the data, and more than a dozen had accounts worth billions.

A whistle blower shared this data with German newspaper, Süddeutsche Zeitung, which coordinated the project along with the Organised Crime and Corruption Reporting Project, the world's biggest investigative journalism organisation with its presence in all continents. In a statement, the whistleblower declared the secrecy laws of Swiss banking as immoral. He said: "The pretext of protecting financial privacy is merely a fig leaf of covering the shameful role of Swiss banks as collaborators of tax evaders." Credit Suisse responding to questions sent by journalists rejected the allegations and said the details uncovered by reporters are based on "selective information taken out of context, resulting in tendentious interpretations of the bank's business conduct." More than 160 journalists from 48 media outlets in 39 countries across the world spent months analysing bank account information leaked from Credit Suisse, Switzerland's second-largest lender. While some accounts in the data dated back to the 1940s, more than two-thirds were opened from 2000 onward. Many of them were still open well into the last decade. News Desk adds: The client rosters of Swiss banks are among the world's most closely guarded secrets, protecting the identities of some of the planet's richest people and clues into how they accumulated their fortunes, the New York Times reported.

Acquisition of J-10C jets significant for Pak

BEIJING: After images of the J-10C fighter jet with the marking of the Pakistan Air Force recently emerged on social media and were widely circulated by media outlets, Chinese analysts have lauded the latest defence cooperation between China and Pakistan, saying that the move yields great significance to both countries, in terms of boosting combat capabilities of the Pakistan military, promoting China's aviation equipment, and responding to both countries' security interests in the region. First published on social media last week, the images show two J-10Cs, equipped with China's domestically developed WS-10B Taihang turbofan engines, undertaking test flights at an undisclosed location. "If confirmed, this could be the first time China has exported the J-10 series fighter and also the first time it has exported the WS-10 series engine," observers said. "The J-10C will significantly enhance the combat capabilities of the Pakistan Air Force," Chinese analysts told Global Times. "The J-10C is a 4.5-generation medium-size fighter jet and is more powerful than the China-Pakistan joint-developed lightweight fighter jet, the JF-17, which is currently in service with the Pakistan Air Force," Shi Hong, Executive Chief Editor of the Chinese magazine, Shipborne Weapons, told the Global Times. "The J-10C is larger and can be equipped with a bigger active electronically scanned array (AESA) radar than the one used by the JF-17 Block 3," Shi said, noting that



the J-10C can also carry more advanced, fourth-generation air-to-air missiles including the short-range PL-10 and the beyond-visual-range PL-15. "The J-10C is also significantly more powerful than the old US-made F-16 fighter jet of the Pakistan Air Force and can rival the Rafale fighter jet entered service with the Indian Air Force," Shi said. "J-10C will not replace the JF-17, but form a combination, higher combat capabilities," Shi said. In addition to the J-10C, Pakistan's other military branches have also recently commissioned advanced Chinese equipment. For example, the navy received the first Type 054A/P frigate, and the army acquired the HQ-9/P air defence missile system, according to media reports. "This demonstrates that defence cooperation between China and Pakistan is going even wider and deeper, and the large-scale adaptation of Chinese equipment by all Pakistani military services will significantly boost their combat capabilities," Shi said, noting that a simple system with most Chinese hardware can also be supply chain friendly. To China, the first successful sale of the J-10 series fighter and the WS-10 series engine will further open the international market and show more countries will show serious interests in Chinese aviation equipment, analysts said. "Pakistan's procurement of the J-10C is also meaningful for China and Pakistan as a more powerful Pakistan military can better safeguard the shared interests of the two countries in the region," Shi said. - APP