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Europe must limit dependence on the US for security

Detailed News On Page-07

Pak, Indonesia sign \$1mn flood grant agreement

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Lewandowski wins Golden Foot award

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Briefs

NAB laws targeted innocents

STAFF REPORT

DERA ISMAIL KHAN: Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI) chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman said Thursday that the laws of National Accountability Bureau (NAB) were against the universal principles of justice under which a citizen was arrested and asked to prove his innocence despite the fact the responsibility of proving accusation lay on the shoulders of the complainant. While talking to a private television channel, the JUI chief said that the citizens of Pakistan were oppressed under the black laws of the NAB for 22 years, but the international human rights organisations and the civilised world remained silent.

Ch Shujaat meets Asif Zardari

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League Q u a i d (P M L - Q) President Ch a u d h r y S h u j a a t Hussain called on former President Asif Ali Zardari at Bilawal House on Thursday night. According to the media, Chaudhry Salik Hussain and Chaudhry Shafi Hussain were also present in the meeting. The media reported that the political situation of Punjab was discussed in the meeting.

Bilawal 's statement will start a new war

SAIFULLAH

RAWALPINDI: AML chief S h e i k h R a s h i d said that Bilawal Bhutto's statement in US will be the beginning of a new war in the country. In his message on Twitter on Thursday, he said that Bilawal is giving an indication of the implementation of foreign wishes. "Along with the economic crisis, the political crisis has also intensified," Sheikh Rashid said that leaving the assemblies is a right. "The dollar is expensive, the stock market continues to decline, inflation is more than 20 percent and there is no money for bills and medicines.

Geneva to host conference Donors moot on Jan 9 for flood victims

France had proposed to hold this conference to help Pakistani flood affected people

ANSAR M BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The International donors conference to help the flood victims of Pakistan is scheduled to be held in Geneva on January 09, 2023. The UN Secretary General AntónioGuterres and Pakistan Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif shall chair this conference. The President of France Emanuel Macron had proposed to hold this conference during his meeting with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on the sidelines of the 77th Session of the UN General Assembly in New York. Macron had said that Paris will help the South Asian nation in its current difficult situation. Prime Minister of Pakistan Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif launched the Resilient, Recovery, Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Framework (4RF) for Pakistan Floods. The report is prepared by the World Bank in consultations with the Pakistani authorities including the Ministry of Planning and Development spearheaded by Ahsan Iqbal. The report is to be presented during the upcoming donors' conference for the perusal of the participating countries. It is likely that various countries would pledge support for Pakistan. Sources privy to this develop-

ment are of the view that most of the aid is likely to be channeled through different UN agencies in order to ensure transparency. Pakistan needed at least \$16.3 billion for the post-floods rehabilitation and reconstruction, a new report of Post-Disaster Needs Assessment (PDNA) revealed in October. The PDNA report, released by the representatives of the government and the international development institutions, calculated the cost of floods at \$30.1 billion - \$14.9 billion in damages and \$15.2 billion in losses. The figure is \$2.2 billion less than initially announced by the government at a donors' roundtable in the US. The scope of the report was limited to 94 calamity-hit districts, excluding the areas that were affected by the floods but have not been declared as calamity-hit. The U.N. had increased its international humanitarian aid appeal to \$816 million from \$160 million for Pakistan after reviewing the scale of the disaster and fearing a surge in water-borne diseases, as well as growing food insecurity, could pose new challenges for the impoverished country. Even despite the UN call only 23 percent of the appeal was pledged for the reconstruction and rehabilitation work. Keeping in view the past experience, even at the Geneva donors conference Pakistan may not get enough support.

Banned TTP is our redline:FM Bilawal "We will not ignore if found that Taliban are not stopping TTP"

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Thursday said the banned TTP is Pakistan's redline and Islamabad's relationship with Kabul will be affected if the terrorist outfit is not controlled. Speaking to the media at the Pakistan Embassy in Washington, Bilawal Bhutto said, "We will not ignore if we found out that Taliban are not stopping TTP." The rising number of terror incidents has put the security apparatus in the country on alert as the Bannu hostage crisis sent shockwaves across the country. Over 120 policemen were martyred and over 125 others were wounded in different kinds of attacks on the police force in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa during the current year. The top Pakistani diplomat is in the US where he held meetings during which he met with the UN chief, chaired a G77 meeting and spoke at Atlantic Council in Washington. Expressing his concern over the deteriorating law and order situation in the country due to rising TTP attacks from Afghan soil, Bilawal said if the Taliban carry out operations against the extremists, Pakistan will provide help if needed.

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Pakistan in touch with Afghanistan: FO

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan is in constant touch with the interim government of Afghanistan regarding the resurgence of terrorist incidents and cross-border violence, the Foreign Office said Thursday. "We have agreed to continue established institutional mechanism with Afghanistan to prevent such incidents," Foreign Office Spokesperson Muntaz Zahra Baloch said at a weekly press briefing, in response to a question on the clashes between the security forces of Pakistan and Afghanistan in Chaman-Spin Boldak area. The spokesperson said Pakistan had reiterated to the Afghan authorities that the protection of civilians was the responsibility of both sides. "Pakistan remains

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RAWALPINDI: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif inquiring about wellbeing of an injured soldier of CTD Bannu Operation during his visit to CMH Rawalpindi. - DNA

PM enquires after injured officers, soldiers Injured soldier, Sepoy Haleem Khan embraces martyrdom

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Prime Minister of Pakistan, Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif met officers and soldiers at CMH Rawalpindi who got injured during CTD complex Bannu Operation, said a statement issued by Inter Services Public Relations Thursday. PM paid tribute to the courage and valour of troops who cleared CTD complex Bannu. The Prime Minister said writ of the state will be established at every cost and no one will be allowed to disrupt the hard earned gains of war on terror achieved through unparalleled sacrifices of the nation and the valiant armed forces. Meanwhile, a Pakistan Army soldier identified as Sepoy Haleem Khan, who was injured during a clearance operation at CTD complex Bannu, embraced martyrdom on Thursday at CMH Rawalpindi. According to ISPR, the martyred soldier had received severe injuries due to terrorists' fire during the clearance operation. Shaheed Sepoy Haleem, 29, a resident of Hijira of Ponch district, was survived by three children. Paying tribute to the courage and valour of troops who cleared CTD complex Bannu, the Prime Minister said that the martyrs and their families have rendered supreme sacrifices for ensuring safety and security of people of country. "Writ of state will be established at all cost and no one will be allowed to derail the hard earned gains of war on terror achieved through unparalleled sacrifices of Nation and valiant Armed Forces," PM said.

PM Shehbaz bars governor from denotifying CM

The PML-N leaders considered the constitutional options

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

LAHORE: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif restrained on Thursday Punjab Governor BalighurRehman from denotifying Chief Minister ParvezElahi. The development comes after the legal team of Pakistan Muslim League Nawaz (PML-N) advised the party to refrain from denotifying Chief Minister PervaizElahi as the matter can be challenged in court. The legal team presented a suggestion during a meeting held at the Governor House. The meeting was attended by the senior leadership of Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N). The legal team said "how the chief minister could be denotified, considering the fact that he did not refuse to take the vote of confidence." On the legal team's recommendation, the prime minister has stopped Punjab governor from denotifying

Elahi no more 'constitutional' CM, says Rana

DNA

LAHORE: Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah has declared that Chaudhry PervaizElahi is no more "constitutional" chief minister of Punjab as he had failed to obtain vote of confidence from the provincial assembly as directed by the governor. Talking to media in Lahore on Thursday, Rana Sanaullah warned "We are all prepared if they take any wrong step." The interior minister maintained that there was no political crisis in Punjab.

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Things to get out of hand sans snap polls, warns Khan

"This is everyone's battle, but not of those whose money is lying abroad," Khan said

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan on Thursday reiterated his call for holding early elections, urging the "establishment" and "judiciary" to play their role to avoid further economic destruction and political instability in the country. "We are afraid that everything will get out of hand if [general] elections are not held soon," he said while addressing his workers and supporters via video link from his Zaman Park residence in Lahore. Imran Khan, who was removed from power through a vote of no-confidence in the National Assembly in April this year, also reminded his supporters about the PTI's winning by-election despite alleged rigging. He added that his assassination was decided as a result of his party's victorious stride.



PTI to thwart govt's bid to delay LG polls

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) hammered out a well-thought-out strategy to foil the imported government's nefarious design to use the parliament forum undemocratically to delay the local government polls in the federal capital. The well-crafted plan was finalized in a high level meeting of the party meeting held with PTI Central Secretary General Asad Umar in the chair here on Thursday. In the meeting, they decided to approach the court immediately and formally instructed the party's legal team to prepare a constitutional petition in this regard.

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Pirzada inaugurates resource center for Autistic children

The worthy Minister emphasized the need of expansion of such services and provision of state of the art facilities to the children with Autism

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Honorable Federal Minister for Ministry of Human Rights Islamabad Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada inaugurated the Resource Centre for Autistic Children at Rehabilitation Centre for the Children with Developmental Disorder, H-8/4, Islamabad under the Directorate General of Special Education (DGSE) on 21st December, 2022. Representatives of M/O Human Rights, Govt. officials, renewed NGOs, social workers, parents,

representative of Planning Commission and staff of this centre attended the ceremony. While talking to audience Chief Guest Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada said that the children with Disabilities are facing the challenges of accessibility, education, rehabilitation and inclusion in main stream. Mr. Pirzada appreciated the efforts of Director General Special Education, Sheikh Azhar Sajjad for Children with Disabilities and said that the Ministry of Human Rights is working on priority basis for these children. The worthy Minister was

happy on the occasion of inauguration of Autistic Unit and said that through such facilities inclusion of children with disabilities in main stream will change their life. The worthy Minister emphasized the need of expansion of such services and provision of state of the art facilities to the children with Autism. He further talked about the need of new avenues and projects for facilitation of Persons with Disabilities across the country under Ministry of Human Rights. Sheikh Azhar Sajjad Director General of Special Education in his welcome address said

that the Resource Centre for Autistic Children was initiated as PSDP Development Project and today it has been shifted to Non-Development on permanent footings. He further talked about that the number of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is increasing day by day, therefore he emphasized on the need of establishment of more autism units to fulfill the needs of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. He appreciated the role of Ministry of Human Rights for catering the needs of children with special needs.



ISLAMABAD: Participants of International Maritime Symposium (IMS), on the topic Geo-economic Dimensions of Indian Ocean Region Ocean Region posing for a group photo. — DNA

Pakistan needs to ensure fool proof maritime security

The government is well aware of this imperative and is providing all out support to maritime security apparatus especially to Pakistan Navy

DNA

ISLAMABAD: National Institute of Maritime Affairs (NIMA), Islamabad organised two-day International Maritime Symposium (IMS), on the topic "Geo-economic Dimensions of Indian Ocean Region (IOR) - Opportunities for Region and Beyond" on 20 and 21 December 2022. Experts from home and abroad presented their views about the geo-economic importance of IOR. The focus of second day proceeding was on maritime security in the context of regional connectivity. Air Marshal Zahid Mahmood, vice chief of Air Staff was the chief guest. Whereas Vice Admiral Abdul Aleem (Retd) moderated the session discussion. Vice Admiral (Retd) Iftikhar Rao spoke about the Maritime Threats & Challenges in Regional Perspective. He talked about the

Malacca strait choke point and its importance to the world, especially to China. He also emphasized that Gwadar is a commercial port and its security is vital for economic dividends. Dr. Christian Beuger, of University of Copenhagen, talked about the Security of Seelines of Communications (SLOCs) and emphasized collaborative strategy in IOR to meet the non-conventional threats, particularly to SLOCs. He opined that Pakistan is in a position to take the lead in this regard. While delivering talk, Prof. Dr. Azhar Ahmed, of Bahria University, was of the view that Geo-Economics is an instrument to achieve objectives of Geo-Politics. He underscored that without political stability no country can progress. Air Marshal Zahid Mahmood highlighted the importance of maritime security and its linkage with national security. He

emphasized on the need of developing operational strategies to meet the maritime security threats. Dr. Hassan Daud Butt, of Bahria University, spoke about the need of regional connectivity, both on land and over sea. Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed, key note speaker, while deliberating on the current global security scenario, opined that it is the most dangerous decade after World War II. World is witnessing historic changes; economic and global powers are emerging from East. He was of the view that next war is expected to be at sea and not on land, therefore, Pakistan needs to ensure fool proof maritime security. The message of Prime Minister of Pakistan was also read out during the session. While emphasizing the Maritime Security of Pakistan, PM opined that Pakistan is heavily dependent on its sea lines of communications because over 90% of Pakistan's

trade and almost 100% energy imports are through sea. Therefore, any disruption in maritime trade has serious repercussions for the national security. The government is well aware of this imperative and is providing all out support to maritime security apparatus especially to Pakistan Navy. Vice Admiral Faisal Rasool Lodhi, Vice Chief of the Naval Staff was the chief guest of the closing session. He emphasized that effective security is essential to protect the expanding maritime economic activities in Pakistan, region and beyond. Pakistan, therefore, needs proactive diplomacy, well considered economic policies and risk management as important ingredients to harness and sustain the pace of development and potential growth. The symposium was well attended by maritime professionals, security experts, academia, think tanks and media personnel.

CCP takes notice of mobile apps offering micro personal loans

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Competition Commission of Pakistan (CCP) has taken notice of the various emerging concerns regarding mobile applications on Google Playstore offering nano/micro personal loans to vulnerable customers, mostly belonging to the lower to middle income class customers. After the appearance of a news report in a leading newspaper, a preliminary probe was conducted, and it was noted that these mobile applications on Google Playstore were offering nano-loans without fulfilling the legal requirements of Non-Banking Micro Finance Companies (NBFC's) law.

The NBFC law offers a framework to regulate nano-loans only above PKR 10,000/-, whereas most of these applications are only offering loans smaller than this. As per the initial findings, these applications have well over 10 million downloads by the general public. The preliminary findings inter alia revealed that these mobile applications had contradictions between interest rate/processing fee charged from the borrower versus the rates advertised. There are also instances of faulty claims of data privacy and security, collecting personal data on the pretext of offering loans, the discrepancy in repayments, and credit range advertised vis a vis those actually offered. The Commission is the first regulatory

body that formally initiated an enquiry into the matter in September '22, to probe possible violations by these mobile applications with regards to Section 10 of the Competition Act 2010, i.e., Deceptive Marketing Practices. Based on the preliminary findings, the enquiry committee is authorized to thoroughly probe and submit an enquiry report to the Commission with respect to any or all possible contraventions under the Act against all nano-loan mobile applications. The enquiry committee has been working on the case rigorously, consulting all the concerned stakeholders and seeking relevant information for deliberating the matter objectively.

PRCS always help humanity in time of need

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) is the only humanitarian organization that always ensures to help and facilitate humanity in times of need through active responses. This was stated by the Chairman PRCS Sardar Shahid Ahmed Laghari while addressing the inaugural ceremony of the newly constructed prefabricated structure of the Basic Health Unit (BHU) Chagmalai in District South Waziristan. The Basic Health Unit was established with the support of the Pakistan Red Crescent (PRCS), Norwegian Red Cross and PRCS of the Merged Areas. Shahid Laghari said it was the first-ever visit of any PRCS head to South Waziristan. He said that the 08 rooms of BHU building were constructed at a cost of Rs 11 million and this health unit will facilitate the local communities by providing of free health services. He informed that male and female doctors, psychologists, LHVs, child facilitators, and hygiene promoters have been appointed to ensure the provision of best health services at grass root level. — APP

Emirati CG for awareness of Thalassemia across Sindh



DNA

KARACHI: An event organized by H.E. Bakheet Ateeq Al Remeithi, Consul General of the UAE, Karachi in collaboration with Dr. Asim Qidwai, Founder & CEO, Atzaal Memorial Thalassemia Foundation, for the Awareness of Thalassemia across the Province. CG Bakheet Al Remeithi said to provide his continuous support to AMTF for Thalassemia Free Pakistan, while Dr. Qidwai gave the message to the youth to

"get yourself screened against Thalassemia before marriage". Dr. Qidwai said to add Thalassemia Awareness Campaign in the curriculum of school textbooks. Sindh Information Minister Sharjeel Inam Memon, Local Government Minister Syed Nasir Hussain Shah, Officials from Sindh Blood Transfusion Authority, Sindh Ministry of Health, and Board Members & High Officials from AMTF, Mr Ateeq-ur-Rehman, Rehman Yaseen, Anis-ur-Rehman, Rashid Aziz, Abdullah Abid, Ubaid-ur-Rehman, and Zain Bashir attended the event.

APNS condoles with Shamsi Ali

LAHORE: "Sarmad Ali, President and Nazafreen Saigol Lakhani, Secretary General of the All Pakistan Newspapers Society have expressed profound grief on behalf of APNS Office Bearers over the sad demise of father-in-law of Mr. Javed Mehr Shamsi, Chief Editor, Daily Kaleem, Sukkur. The APNS offered condolence to the bereaved family and prayed that Almighty Allah rest the departed soul in eternal peace and give them courage and patience to bear the loss. — DNA

NUMS, South Korean Research Center to set up vaccines production unit

RAWALPINDI: NUMS and South Korean biopharmaceutical company Research and Development of Eyegene Inc have agreed in principle on setting up preventive vaccines production units in Pakistan on the basis of Public Private Partnership to further enhance cooperation between the two institutions. This understanding was reached during a meeting of Vice Chancellor NUMS Lt Gen Wasim Alamgir HI(M) with Dr Seo-Hyun Kim, Head of R&D Center of Eyegene Inc and their teams, in South Korea, said a message received from Seoul here on Thursday. The Vice-Chancellor also visited the R&D center and was given a detailed briefing by Professor Dr H. Christian Hong Chief Scientific Officer Renhain Therapeutics. He met scientists and researchers working on the development of mRNA and other vaccines at the center. Both sides also identified other potential areas of collaboration including conduct of clinical trials for various therapeutic vaccines for the mutual benefit of the two countries, said the message. Earlier NUMS also entered into collaboration with the South Korean International Vaccine Institute (IVI) and the School of Medicine Gachon University to collaborate in indigenous development of vaccines through transfer of technology and by building capacity of Pakistani scientists. Lt Gen Wasim Alamgir during his visit to South Korea held separate meetings with DG of International Vaccine Institute (IVI) South Korea Dr Jerome H. Kim and with Kee-Jong Hong PhD, Director General and Prof. School of Medicine of Gachon University, an understanding was reached for collaboration in this regard, said a message received here from Seoul Thursday. — APP

PTA hosts workshop on digital gender inclusion strategy



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), in collaboration with UNESCO Pakistan, hosted the fourth consultative workshop for the development of digital gender inclusion strategy. The workshop was held in Karachi. The workshop, organized at

PTA's Karachi Zonal Office, is the last in the series of consultative workshops that have been held to gather multi-stakeholder experts' recommendations for a strategy to reduce digital gender divide in Pakistan. The consultative process will continue for another

month through surveys and interviews. Director Wireless PTA and the head of PTA's initiative for gender inclusion in ICTs, briefed the participants that these workshops have been conducted to capture insights of experts and local communities from Punjab, Sindh,

Balochistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The workshop was conducted by Ms. Sadaf Khan, UNESCO consultant. Experts from various stakeholder groups attended the workshop. Representatives from Global System for Mobile Communications Association (GSMA), National

Incubation Centre Karachi, Careem, telecom operators, academia, banking sector, social enterprises, women entrepreneurs, and non-governmental organizations such Association for Progressive Communications (APC), Aurat Foundation etc. also participated. PTA's gender inclusion strategy is being developed with support from UNESCO Pakistan. It aims to recommend specific amendments and additions in policies that can help achieve gender parity in use of internet, mobile phones and digital skills in line with International Telecommunication Union's 2030 goals. This strategy will help PTA, along with other public and private sector stakeholders, to tackle various barriers to women's use of mobile and ICTs and bridge the digital gender divide in Pakistan. — DNA

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3. Pre-qualification proposals, prepared in accordance with the instructions provided in the Pre-Qualification Documents, must reach at following address on or before **10th January, 2023 at 1500 Hrs.** Pre-Qualification proposals will be opened on the same day at **1530 Hrs.** In case the day of Pre-Qualification proposals' submission and opening falls on a public holiday, the next working day shall be considered as the deadline for the same.

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PID NO 3884

Briefs

IRSA releases 60,300 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Thursday released 60,300 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 41,500 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1489.70 feet and was 91.70 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 18,500 cusecs while outflow as 27,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1117.50 feet, which was 67.50 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 9,700 cusecs and 20,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded 30,200, 27,700, 20,800 and 7,100 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 8,300 cusecs of water released at Nowshera and 2,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

Govt releases Rs 4.21b for IT project

ISLAMABAD: The government has released funds amounting to over Rs 4.21 billion to execute Information Technology related projects during the first four months of the current fiscal year under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP 2022-23). According to official data available with APP, the government has authorized the utilization of development funds amounting to Rs 4,211.21 million out of a total allocation of 5,731.70 for various ongoing and new projects of the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication. Out of the total authorized/dispensed amount, the total amount spent on the development projects during the corresponding period (July-October) stood at 3,487.32 million. According to the disbursement mechanism of the Planning Division, the development funds allocated in the federal budget are released at the rate of 20 percent in the first quarter (July-September), followed by 30 percent each in the second and third quarters, and the remaining 20 percent in the last quarter (April-June) of a fiscal year.—APP

18 anti-social elements held

RAWALPINDI, Dec 22 (APP): Rawalpindi District Police on Thursday managed to net 18 law-breakers including drug peddlers, bootleggers and illegal weapon holders and recovered 10kg charras, 20 liters liquor, 10 liquor bottles, two pistols, ammunition, cash of Rs 145,000 and other items from their possession. According to a police spokesman, Rataamral, Waris Khan, New Town, Naseerabad, Morgah and Gujjar Khan police held Atif, Usman, Faiz Ahmed, Adnan, Nasir, Sohail, Nabeel, Mualam, and Azdar and recovered 10 kg charras from their possession. In other raids, City, Westridge, Gujjar Khan, Dhamial, Kalar Syedan, Airport and Patriata police rounded up Fayyaz, Numan, Zeeshan, Ali Raza, Shehzad, Asad Qamar, Sakar, and Khizer Hayat on recovery of 20 liters liquor, two bottles of liquor, two 30-bore pistols and ammunition. The spokesman informed that Waris Khan police also arrested two fraudsters involved in looting the citizens in a lucky draw. Police also recovered cash Rs 145,000, two mobile phones and other items from their possession. Meanwhile, Rawalpindi police in their ongoing operation against professional beggars conducted raids in different areas and netted 26. Separate cases have been registered against all the accused while further investigations are underway. Senior Superintendent of Police Operations said no one would be allowed to violate the law and the violators would be treated with iron hands. He directed the police officers to accelerate ongoing operations against drug peddlers, bootleggers and illegal weapon holders.—APP



ISLAMABAD: A Chairman CDA Capt (R) Usman Younis cutting cake along with the Christian community to celebrate Christmas.—DNA

US rate hikes to affect Pakistan's economy: Report

This is mostly due to the rupee's devaluation and the country's efforts to borrow to build up its foreign exchange reserves

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Rising inflation rate in the US is expected to trigger global repercussions, especially in developing economies, such as Pakistan, that are deeply linked to the US economy in terms of exports and the Greenback. The Pakistani rupee is pegged to the U.S. dollar, hence its value has decreased, albeit a few other factors have also contributed to the rupee's downfall, said Yasir Masood, an Islamabad-based Political Economist in an article carried by Gwadar Pro on Thursday. He stated that in recent months, the rupee has fallen by over 36% against the dollar, with the dollar's rise accounting for about 12% of the rupee's depreciation. Pakistan's foreign reserves have been significantly drained in recent years due to a number of factors, including a drop in exports and remittances, rising imports of oil and food items, debt repayment, supply disruptions, and reduced reserves due to foreign exchange liquidity disparities. Growing concerns about continuing the uncertain

IMF rescue package, and political instability have further compounded the problem. This has led to a significant current account deficit, which the central bank has been unable to handle with the meagre foreign exchange inflows at its disposal. In addition, investors have also pulled out funds from the market amid uncertainty over domestic economic policy. To make matters worse, due to sluggish global growth, Pakistan received less government development assistance this year than projected. Pakistan is therefore unable to prevent diminishing foreign reserve holdings, and attract adequate assistance from foreign lenders. Even if these other factors are rectified, dollar strength, owing to U.S. interest rate hikes would continue to affect the value of the Pakistani currency. Due to a steep reduction in oil prices, the rupee has recently risen to roughly 224 rupees to the dollar, from a high of 240 rupees to the dollar a few months ago. Theoretically, rate hikes by state-owned banks might increase yields on government bonds and bills, but economic volatility has deterred

foreign investment amid these uncertainties. Equivalent to U.S. dollars, Pakistan's total external debt stayed at USD 127 billion over the past year due to improved relations between Pakistan, International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and Washington. However, Pakistan's overall external debt increased by Rs 6.8 trillion or 35% year on year to Rs 26.5 trillion at the end of September this year. In a single year, the external debt of the federal government, excluding IMF loans, rose to 18 trillion rupees. External debt surged by Rs 1,300 billion in net amounts. This is mostly due to the rupee's devaluation and the country's efforts to borrow to build up its foreign exchange reserves. The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) reported that Pakistan's IMF debt reached Rs 1.7 trillion by September, up 44% from a year earlier. This is despite the IMF spending USD 2 billion less than planned during this period. Total domestic debt held by the federal government rose to Rs. 31.4 trillion, up Rs. 5 trillion (19% annually) to reach this level. The central bank also reported that an average currency rate at

the end of September 2022 was 228 rupees to the U.S. dollar, down 57.4% in a year. This has had a significant impact on the government's external debt. To put it differently, increases in the cost of servicing debt directly result from rising Debt Mountains. In barely a quarter of the current financial year, debt service has topped 1 trillion rupees. According to the government's updated estimates, the debt service could reach Rs 4.7 trillion. Apart from this, Pakistan is currently experiencing a severe dollar shortage and cannot use dollars to handle inbound cargo. As international debts are paid, domestic dollar inflows have plummeted and foreign currency funding has dropped to its lowest level in four years. According to SBP, Pakistan now has USD 6.7 billion in foreign exchange reserves and USD 12.6 billion in total assets. In addition, Pakistan has to pay more than USD 30 billion in overseas liabilities this fiscal year. Meanwhile, exports, remittances, and foreign direct investment are the three primary sources of dollars brought into the country, and all three

have experienced negative growth over the past several months. After successive governments exacerbated current account deficits through high imports compared to exports, the Central Bank of Pakistan has adopted aggressive measures like reducing commercial banks' ability to finance high-end import products and cutting development spending on new projects to stemming capital outflows and making up for sluggish remittances amid rising currency rate volatility. Principally, improving economic sector efficiency and productivity can help Pakistan's foreign reserves recover. By pursuing higher economic competitiveness, Pakistan would be able to attract more international investment. To that end, it should implement structural reforms in trade, investment, and labour laws that increase the ease of doing business and the regulatory environment for private sector development. Encouraging energy-saving technologies and diversifying energy sources could lower energy costs and promote economic sustainability over time.

Police finalize foolproof security arrangements for Christmas

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi District Police on Thursday finalized a security plan for Christmas under which all churches have been divided into three categories and over 3200 police personnel including Elite Force commandos would be deployed to ensure foolproof security. According to a Police spokesman, no one would be allowed to park vehicles in 100 feet radius of Churches. Walk-through gates would be installed at the entrance of the Churches and the visitors would be checked through metal detectors. Best possible security arrangements would be ensured to avoid any un-

toward incident in the city, he said. The security duty at public places including parks would be made more effective, he said adding, that security had also been tightened at the entry and exit points of the city and special checking was ordered for this special occasion. He said, the City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi Syed Shehzad Nadeem Bukhari had directed the SPs, DSPs and SHOs to ensure effective patrolling in their respective areas. Plain-clothed and well-equipped policemen would perform duties near Churches and public places, he added. The security of the churches would be mon-

itored through closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras while a control room would be set up where all the departments concerned would work jointly to keep an eye on the security arrangements. Sharpshooters would also be deployed on the rooftops of different buildings, he added. The City Traffic Police (CTP) would make arrangements for parking vehicles for the visitors of the churches and the parking lots would be set up nearly 100 feet away from the churches. The Police and other law enforcement agencies have divided 159 churches of the district

into A, B and C categories. Additional security personnel would be deployed at the churches falling in A-category. The worshippers would be checked at three points. The roads adjoining the entry points of the churches would be sealed with barbed wires while elite commandos and sniper shooters would be deployed at rooftops. The Police vehicles equipped with cameras would also remain stationed outside the churches. The senior police officials would make surprise visits to churches on Christmas to check security arrangements and deployment, he added.—APP

Port Qasim power company won CSR stalwart award

ISLAMABAD: The National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) has awarded Port Qasim Electric Power Company (Pvt) Ltd (PQEPC) with the CSR STALWART Award and Power with Prosperity Award for playing a vital role to transform the socio-economic landscape of Pakistan. According to a tweet from the Embassy of China, PQEPC won the awards from NEPRA in 2022, "ranking first among all independent power generation companies". Gwadar Pro reported on Thursday. Through the CSR vision of NEPRA, the authority is transforming the socio-economic landscape of the country by bringing about the most efficient and fair business practices to ensure affordable, reliable, and sustainable power services with the active engagement and development of local communities. According to the Private Power & Infrastructure Board of the Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Energy (Power Division)'s website, PQEPC falls in the subcategory of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and Sinohydro Resources Ltd. China is the main sponsor. The gross capacity of the company is 1,320 MW and the net capacity is 1,214 MW. It used Steam Turbines technology.—DNA

OGDCL carries out 221 Line-km 2D seismic surveys

ISLAMABAD: Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL), during the first quarter of the current fiscal year, carried out 221 Line-km 2D and 21 Square-KM 3D seismic surveys in its various operational areas to discover hydrocarbon reserves. "The acquired 221 Line km of 2D seismic data and 21 Sq. km of 3D seismic data represents 49% of total 2D and 17% of total 3D seismic data acquisition in the country respectively," the company said in its first quarterly financial report for 2022-23. Moreover, the OGDCL using in-house resources processed/reprocessed 1,065 Line km of 2D seismic data, besides carrying out an additional 135 Line km of geological fieldwork in Nowshera. On the drilling front, the company spud one exploratory well namely Shahpurabad-1 (1Q 2021-22: 3 wells). It also completed the drilling and testing of two wells pertaining to the previous fiscal year. "Total drilling recorded during the three months stood at 11,392 meters." The company mentioned in the report that its exploration activities had been severely affected by the torrential rains and flood and security concerns, adding "the planned 3D seismic survey of 210 Sq. km was affected by torrential rains, whereas 2D seismic survey of 84 Line km had to be deferred due to security concerns in Zin and Lillah blocks. However, the Company is making all efforts to recover the deferred seismic activities within the current fiscal year. During the period under review, the OGDCL contributed around 46 per cent, 30 per cent and 36 per cent towards the country's total oil, natural gas and LPG production respectively.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Christian youngsters busy in decoration for upcoming Christmas and New Year's celebrations at G-7.—APP

PNCA holds musical charity show for flood victims tomorrow

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) will hold a charity musical show by various artists here tomorrow (December 23) to help and support flood victims. The show is being organized by PNCA in collaboration with Art Aid and Hunerkada College of Visual and Performing Arts while those who will perform include renowned Opera Singer, Saira Peter, Nouman Lashari, Jia Nouman, Nadir Abbass and Rajea Iman. Saira Peter is a British-Pakistani soprano officially recognised as the world's first Sufi Opera singer. She is the Director of NJ Arts London, a multicultural performing arts centre opened in 1998 by Sir Cliff Richard OBE. She is also the founder of Saira Arts Academy in Karachi. Peter gave solo western classical performances in the UK, USA, Germany, Turkey and Pakistan.—APP

ANF seizes huge quantities of drugs

ISLAMABAD: The Anti-Narcotic Force (ANF) has recovered a huge quantity of drugs during a nationwide crackdown against smugglers of contraband items. According to a spokesperson, ANF recovered 53 capsules filled with heroin from the stomach of the accused who was traveling to Sharjah from Islamabad International Airport on flight No. PA-212. In another operation, the force seized over 1 kg of meth ice from the trolley bag of the accused who was going to Bahrain from Paisalabad Airport on Flight No. FZ 372. The ANF recovered about 1604 liters of banned chemicals in 2 separate operations near Chaman Bypass. In an operation near Hazar Ganji Chowk Quetta, the force seized about 50 kg of hashish from the bus. The drugs were hidden on the roof of the bus.—APP

Efforts would be made to resolve overseas issues

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resources Development, Sajid Hussain Turi has laid down the foundation stone of a multi-storey building for Overseas Pakistanis at OPF Housing Scheme Raiwind Road, said a press release issued here on Thursday. The building will comprise 21 floors for shopping malls, shops, and other commercial activities. Speaking on the occasion, Federal Minister Sajid Hussain Turi said that all efforts are being made to resolve issues being faced by Overseas Pakistanis. He said that a No Objection Certificate (NOC) will be issued enabling Overseas Pakistanis to work in any place in the country. He further said that efforts are underway for the reservation of quotas for children of Overseas Pakistanis in all universities and to send them abroad for higher studies as well. Federal Minister said more projects are being launched for laborers. He said that by next month five thousand more flats will be handed over to laborers.—APP

Lok Virsa holds Christmas festivity

ISLAMABAD, Dec 22 (APP): National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage, Lok Virsa will hold colorful Christmas festivity here on December 23 featuring art and craft activities. The Christmas celebrations will have an opening ceremony with colorful performance at Heritage Museum, congregation of Christian community, erection of Christmas tree, distribution of sweets by Santa Claus, Christmas songs, folk songs, folk dances, artisans at work exhibition etc. The event is being organized by Lok Virsa, National Heritage and Culture Division in collaboration with U.P Church and Saint Thomas Church. Meanwhile, Lok Virsa will also hold Quaid e Azam Day Celebrations on December 25 to pay rich tributes to the founder of the nation.—APP

NATO's existence detrimental to peace

The United States Ambassador to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, Julianne Smith, has accused Russia and China of employing a set of strategies to weaken the alliance. She said that there is no doubt that Russia and China are trying to split the alliance partners. She should be reminded of the role NATO has played in the past couple of decades. She should also be told to compare what China has done for world peace and development and what NATO has done to disrupt both. With the disbanding of the Warsaw Pact in 1991, there was actually no need for the continued existence of NATO. The role it has continued to play has proved to be detrimental to world peace and development. Had it not been for its military intervention, the bloodshed in Bosnia in the early 1990s would have been avoided. Many innocent civilians were killed in the war in Afghanistan in which NATO got heavily involved. Had it not been for its expansion in East Europe, there would not have been increasingly fierce confrontation between Russia and Ukraine, and thereafter the military conflict between the two countries currently underway. At its summit in Madrid in June, it even listed China among its strategic priorities for the first time. In the document adopted at the summit, China was said to pose "systemic challenges" because of its "military ambitions, its confrontational rhetoric toward Taiwan and its increasingly close ties with Russia". Aside from its participation in UN peacekeeping missions, China has never been involved in any military conflict in the past several decades. China has spared no efforts in developing partnerships with as many countries as possible for economic and trade cooperation, and it has tried in its diplomacy to ease tensions and seek the settlement of differences through talks. It has done nothing to warrant such an antagonistic portrayal by NATO. NATO is pointing a finger at China simply because of its ambitions to expand to the Asia-Pacific. It needs "an enemy" in the region to justify its presence. The rhetoric about a "potential threat" from China is merely the fabrication of an "enemy" to justify its aggressive moves to maintain the West's global hegemony under the leadership of the United States. By claiming that China is seeking to undermine the rules-based international order that Western countries engineered, adhere to and believe in, NATO is just stirring up an ideological confrontation between NATO and China, and thus fueling the Cold War mentality in the West. But what NATO is doing to justify its existence and expansion will only add to the global uncertainty. It has become a leading source of instability and impediment to peace and development.

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Russia-Ukraine conflict serves US

Just prior to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's arrival in Washington on Wednesday, the White House announced \$1 billion in weapons and equipment from Pentagon stocks for Ukraine, including Patriot missiles, and \$850 million in funding through the Ukraine Security Assistance Initiative, part of which is to be used to fund a satellite communications system. Claiming that these are "critical new and additional military capabilities to help Ukraine defend itself from Russia's ongoing brutal and unprovoked assault", US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said they "underscore our enduring commitment to the people of Ukraine". Well no. What they underscore is the administration's commitment to prolonging the hostilities. As Biden admitted in his joint news conference with Zelenskyy, even before the conflict began, the US provided Ukraine with a steady stream of military hardware, including air defense systems and artillery, ammunition, "and so much more" — which signaled its intent. For as Biden said, the US views the conflict as part of something much bigger — that being "the competition for the 21st century", as he said in his introduction to his administration's National Security Strategy. Like the US, France also announced this week that it had provided more military assistance to Ukraine, with French President Emmanuel Macron saying in an interview aired on Tuesday the country had sent arms, including rocket launchers, and air defense batteries to Ukraine. But the French leader gave a more measured assessment of the crisis than Biden's admission that the US views it as a means to reinforce its hegemony. The French leader said that Russia would require security guarantees as part of a negotiated end to the conflict and only Ukraine should define the terms of any armistice with Russia, not the country's Western backers. To those criticizing that position, he said they should "explain what they are proposing", which, as he said, is total war. Macron has previously struck a practical note, saying on Dec 3 that Europe needs to prepare its future "security architecture", one that is inclusive and takes into consideration "security guarantees" for Russia. He said that NATO had to address Russia's concerns about the alliance coming "right up to its doors" and the deployment of weapons that could threaten it. That echoes China's insistence that it is NATO's unrelenting expansion eastward that has pushed Russia into a corner by worsening its geopolitical and security environment and its long-standing call that both sides' security concerns should be addressed. A cease-fire and a negotiated settlement would not only be the best choice for Russia and Ukraine, but also for Europe. But 10 months into the conflict and Biden has made it clear why the crisis will continue. The US is waging a proxy war against Russia and it will not rest until it has achieved its aims.

Qatar was just the beginning as Middle East eyes Asian sports

James M. Dorsey

Leaving aside the biased and bigoted nature of some of the discussion about the Qatar World Cup that didn't spare Lionel Messi's triumphal lifting of the trophy on behalf of the victorious Argentinian team because Qatari Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani honoured him with a traditional Arab cloak, the tournament fuelled a long-standing debate on whether autocracies that violate human rights should be granted hosting opportunities that allow them to project themselves on the international stage in a different light. The flurry of bids and tournaments to be hosted in the Middle East and the by and large celebratory aftermath of the Qatar World Cup proves that the criticism of the Gulf state did little

this decade's focal points of Asian sports. By 2030, Egypt and Turkey could become part of the global sports-hosting mix. That doesn't mean that Arab and Berber North Africa will be sidelined. On the contrary, barely two months after emerging as a World Cup superstar, Morocco will host the FIFA Club World Cup in February. Qatar will host the Asian Cup a bit later in 2023. Saudi Arabia is certain to host the 2027 Cup. Doha is back in the picture as home to the 2030 Asian Games; in 2034, it's Riyadh's turn. Saudi Arabia and Egypt are considered FIFA favourites for the 2030 World Cup should they decide to bid for the tournament together with Greece. A Moroccan pitch for the 2030 World Cup is also within the realm of possibilities. In between, somewhat incongruously, Saudi Arabia, better known as a desert kingdom, will host the 2029 Asian Winter Games in its futuristic yet-to-be-completed \$500 billion city of Neom on the Red Sea. Moreover, Saudi Arabia is also bidding for the rights to the 2026 AFC Women's Asian Cup. Further afar, Qatar and Saudi Arabia are separately considering bidding for the 2036 Olympics but could join forces. Egypt and Turkey are mulling their separate candidacies. All players will have learnt lessons from the human and worker rights criticism Qatar confronted in the 12-year runup to the tournament that just ended. The indications are that so have human rights activists. Saudi Arabia and Egypt, unlike Qatar, two of the world's worst human rights violators, are likely to be gluttons for punishment. However, for activists, the litmus test will be whether they subject the 2026 hosts of the World Cup — the United States, Mexico, and Canada — to the same level of criticism that Qatar experienced. Leaving aside the biased and bigoted nature of some of the discussion about the Qatar World Cup that didn't spare Lionel Messi's triumphal lifting of the trophy on behalf of the victorious Argentinian team because Qatari Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani honoured him with a traditional Arab cloak, the tournament fuelled a long-standing debate on whether autocracies that violate human rights should be granted hosting opportunities that allow them to project themselves on the international stage in a different light. The flurry of bids and tournaments to be hosted in the Middle East and the by and large celebratory aftermath of the Qatar World Cup proves that the criticism of the Gulf state did little to make Qatar or other regional autocracies rethink the risk of exposing themselves. At the end of the day, the World Cup achieved what the Qataris wanted. That is likely food for thought for activists for

whom the tournaments constitute a golden opportunity to justifiably pursue the campaign for worker and human rights in the Middle East and North Africa, provided they learn from mistakes made with Qatar. That is not to distract from the gains achieved by activists' pressure for migrant workers and the laudable effort of human rights groups and others that did not allow themselves to be sucked into culture wars. That is true, even if they failed to distance themselves for much of the past 12 years from critics who seemed more driven by prejudice and bigotry than genuine concern for the plight of the underdog. Arab states could set a new benchmark for activists and restructure FIFA if Saudi Arabia tries for a second time to carve a new regional federation out of the world soccer body's two largest constituent elements, the Asian Football Confederation (AFC) and the Confederation of African Football (CAF). Eager to be the regional hub for sports and everything else from business to entertainment and innovation, Saudi Arabia attempted in 2018 to create a South West Asian Football Federation. The kingdom, as well as AFC members Bahrain, Yemen, Oman, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan, initially signed up for the federation. However, the initiative collapsed within months. Riding on the wave of the Qatar World Cup's success, a potential new move to create an Arab soccer federation would potentially see 12 Middle Eastern associations depart the 47-member AFC and leave the seven North African associations that fall under the 54-member the Confederation of African Football (CAF) little choice but to join their Arab brethren. A renewed attempt to create a South West Asian body would leave North Africans with the option to remain in CAF but potentially deprive the AFC of an additional seven associations. Sports journalist John Duerden quotes a senior AFC official predicting in 2015 during the Asian Cup in Canberra that "by the end of the next decade, there will be a split in Asian football from east to west." Broaching the notion of an Arab split, Mr. Duerden noted that the string of tournaments hosted by Gulf states had exacerbated already strained relations between Arab and East Asian federations, including those of Japan and South Korea, that have long accounted for a significant chunk of AFC revenues. It didn't help that Qatar secured the rights to the 2023 Asian Cup after China had to back away from hosting the tournament because of its zero-tolerance Covid-19 policy. The Korean Football Association (KFA) responded positively to an AFC

inquiry on whether it would want to replace China but suggested that Qatar made a better financial offer. "Qatar has promised huge financial support, such as the participation of additional sponsors by its own companies in the AFC, which is currently suffering from a loss due to COVID-19, a large-scale broadcasting rights contract with its own broadcasting company, and support for operating expenses of the Asian Cup," the South Korean association said in a statement in October. The KFA said the Qatari maneuver was part of an "unconventional offensive and support of Middle Eastern countries trying to take the lead in Asian football." The Koreans further asserted that the prospect of Saudi financial support for the AFC had secured the kingdom hosting the 2027 Asian Cup. Saudi Arabia is the only candidate after India, which the AFC also shortlisted, withdrew its bid. Arab influence in Asian and African soccer governance has long been undeniable. The AFC is headquartered in Egypt, traditionally one of African football's best performers at the national and club level. Potentially expanding Egypt's influence, Egyptian-born billionaire Mohamed Mansour, the British Conservative Party's incoming treasurer, who Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi recently gave a board membership, last week disclosed plans to buy an English soccer club. Mr. Mansour already has a majority stake in the top-tier Danish club FC Nordsjælland and intends to invest in the US football market. Similarly, except for the past two decades, Arabs have presided over the AFC for the past two decades. First, it was Qatari national Mohammed bin Hamam from 2002 until 2011 when he was ousted as part of the power struggles and corruption scandals that rocked global soccer governance. The AFC's current president, Salman Ebrahim Al-Khalifa, a member of Bahrain's ruling family, has been in office since 2013 and is set to be elected unopposed in February for a fourth term. Mr. Al-Khalifa manages the group primarily from Bahrain, even though the AFC is headquartered in Kuala Lumpur. Finally, Qatar showcased its influence in global soccer when it's two most famous employees, Mr. Messi and Kylian Mbappé, who both play for a Qatar-owned Paris Saint Germaine, squared off in Sunday's France Argentina final of the Gulf state's World Cup. Said Mr. Duerden: The Qatar World Cup "has been a celebration of shared Arab football culture... With the Arab Cup successfully reborn last year.... and the Arab Champions League being pushed, there is more and more of a sense that a MENA (Middle East and North Africa) confederation already exists informally."

Economic development plan and trade liberalization is the need of the hour

Amina Abdul Ghafoor



Pakistan needs to take a step ahead of rhetorical strategy and to shift its focus towards trade liberalization, in-house industrializations, women empowerment, agricultural reforms, tax reforms, for the improvement of economic indicators and to sustain a continuous improvement plan for trade liberation across the globe. They have to have an economic development plan, measure the needs, implement economic reforms

A common disease that afflicts management and government administration the world over is the impression that "our problems are different". They are different to be sure, but the principle that will help to improve the quality of product and service are universal in nature". W. Edward Deming Economy of Pakistan is hot topic since we have made our multi-dimensional National security policy. NSP has been a great achievement in Pakistan's history but we still need to put some extra effort to achieve our goals as mentioned in NSP. One of the goals is "the economic development of Pakistan. It is one thing Pakistani Government always put on table. However, Pakistan cannot deny the fact that they require an action plan on board with true spirit of its implementation. Their government needs to look at their economic indicators with the lens of an economist. Being an economist, they will see that the whole world is struggling to keep their economies on track and it is a piece of cake neither for the world nor for Pakistan. Pakistan only lacks in setting their priorities right. Economy has never been the priority of any political party rather they prioritize their political and personal interests over national interests. This led them to soaring inflation and economic crisis. They plan to come out of immediate economic crisis temporarily nonetheless they are required to do long term planning for economic future of 229m people. Unfortunately, due to increasing polarization and Pakistan's political turmoil keep rolling their economy as well which is a big hurdle in the way of economic reforms and its sustainability. According to Uzair Younus a senior fellow at The Atlantic Council, Pakistan's economy was flourishing at the turn of the century, when compared with India, Bangladesh, and Vietnam.

Twenty years later, it is at the bottom of the group. An immediate action plan is the dire need of the hour. In the era of the twenty-first century, power has been associated with the economy. A stronger economy means a higher status in the international community. States are struggling for a better economic system. An economic plan helps states to realize their economic needs, vision, and to take control to shape their economic future. It also helps to bring together community residents with public and private sectors, together public and private sector should choose economic development goals and outline how to develop these goals. Economic Development Plan summaries the economic vision, mission, and goals of your community, economic strategies and specific actions that will be taken. It should be aligned with your existing plan (if you have one) or any other development plans. It will help public and private entities understand the economic priorities. "Failing to plan is planning to fail" EDP starts with a critical analysis of Pakistan's current economic indicators. What is the need of the time, what to achieve, who will achieve economic goals, how much time is required and through this we will know when we will be able to have a sustainable economy. These questions will help Pakistan to adopt economic models accordingly. According to our economic and country current situation we can chose Friedman's core-periphery model. The main theme of the core-periphery model is inequalities and injustices lie in the towns, provinces, states, or even in the international communities. This model focuses on tendencies of economic activities to concentrate around some pivotal points and to address the uneven socio-economic development. Core is the area (towns, cities, provinces, or states) which are de-

veloped because of some favorable reasons. Periphery is the underdeveloped areas (rural areas). It has four stages of development, first stage is pre-industrial society, second stage is the Development of core and periphery, third stage is the Dispersion of economic activities in periphery regions and the fourth stage is the emergence of spatial integration. Pakistan can grow its economy in short span of time if they act timely and rightly by developing its periphery areas. China used this model for its development. They developed core areas and periphery areas gradually to develop economy. Later the development goes horizontal from core areas to periphery areas. In the last stage, all regions are integrated and equally developed. Pakistan can follow the same for its economic growth. Pakistan and China are already having strong economic ties, Pakistan can utilize these terms for developing its economic plan. Pakistan's policy makers should play their role to avoid economic pitfall. Pakistan needs to take a step ahead of rhetorical strategy and to shift its focus towards trade liberalization, in-house industrializations, women empowerment, agricultural reforms, tax reforms, for the improvement of economic indicators and to sustain a continuous improvement plan for trade liberation across the globe. They have to have an economic development plan, measure the needs, implement economic reforms, keep reviewing the plan, sustain, and improve. These economic reforms need to be pushed through with urgency. They have the best economist in home. Inaction or a strategic documented rhetorical plan is not an option for a government as this can put the economic future of 229m people at stake.

—The writer is Senior Engineer Projects & Operations

Briefs

Things to get out of hand sans snap...

FROM PAGE 01
The PTI chief said that even though his party has governments in two provinces and rules over 66% of the country, it has decided the dissolution of the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies. Last week, the former premier announced that the dissolution of assemblies in both provinces would be done on Friday (tomorrow). "This is everyone's battle, but not of those whose money is lying abroad," Khan said, pointing at the Pakistan Democratic Movement-led government in the Centre. He added that the nation rejected the "gang of thieves". "I want to remind the nation that his toppled PTI government took the country towards economic progress," the deposed prime minister said. He went on to say that one man's decision toppled his government, deeming it "cruelty". "One man has enmity [towards PTI]. He decided to end the party. He decided to end Imran Khan," Khan said without naming the person he was referring to. The PTI government gave the highest growth rate in Pakistan's history when the economy was progressing, he added. "The country's wealth increased by 5.7% and 6% in the third and fourth year. The country had never progressed to this extent." Khan said that he had never seen the nation go into a dark time in his 70 years of life. "Our country is getting stuck in quicksand." He said that he is addressing those Pakistanis who have not laundered their money abroad rather than those who have looted the country. Prior to Imran Khan's address, PTI's Focal Person for Economy Hammad Azhar took a jibe at Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah saying that while he was trying to seal the Punjab CM House, PTI supporters sealed the governor's house and has taken the governor hostage by "staging a huge protest".

PTI to thwart gov't bid to delay LG polls

FROM PAGE 01
The PTI completed the planning to thwart the attempts of the federal government to escape from the elections. During the meeting, they decided to file an application in the Islamabad High Court to become a party in the petition filed by PML-N seeking postponement of local body elections. PTI Islamabad President Ali Awan, Raja Khurram Nawaz and Chief Election Management Cell Shahzad Gul along with legal team and media team representatives were present in the meeting. During the meeting, they discussed the imported government's attempt to use the parliament undemocratically after federal cabinet for their nefarious designs to delay the LG polls in Islamabad in detail. Speaking on the occasion, Asad Umar stated that the PTI was fully prepared for local body elections to inflict a crushing defeat on the cabal of thieves. He said: "We will not let the imported government run away from the LG polls and they would be taken to the people's court in any case." Asad Umar expressed satisfaction over the PTI's LG election campaign.

Banned TTP is our redline: FM Bilawal

FROM PAGE 01
He said that there was no new agreement on cooperation with the US for anti-terrorism. "We urge to release frozen funds for the Afghan people not for the Taliban. They [Taliban] promised with US and the world to take action against extremist groups," said Bilawal. In response to a question, the foreign minister said that the building owned by Pakistan in Washington must be sold as the condition of the property is bad. "Taxes and other expenses are high on it. But I am not in favour of selling the hotel in New York."

Najam Sethi wants to make domestic cricket stronger

In the next 3-4 months, we will make the necessary changes on the ground to revive departmental and regional cricket. The board will be made of elected representatives from four departments

DNA

LAHORE: Chairman of the Pakistan Cricket Board's (PCB) management committee, Najam Sethi, has said that the basic agenda of the governing body is to bring reforms into domestic cricket and make it a big brand like the Pakistan Super League (PSL). In a massive development on Wednesday, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif approved Sethi as chairman of the cricket's governing body, replacing Ramiz Raja. A 14-member committee, headed by Sethi, was established by the government, which is led by the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N), to oversee PCB operations for 120 days prior to the 2014 constitution's election period.

In an interaction with media in Lahore, the former PCB chairman said: "In the next 3-4 months, we will make the necessary changes on the ground to revive departmental and regional cricket. The board will be made of elected represent-



atives from four departments and each number of regions, alongside two nominees from the prime minister. There will then be elections, and the board will function as it used to. This is our agenda, which is for domestic cricket reform."

Sethi said making Pakistan's domestic cricket is a big challenge. "We need to fix our domestic cricket structure. In the last four years, there's been a famine. How many new players domestic cricket has provided to the national team in the last four years?"

It looks like the PSL is supplying cricketers because very few are coming through from domestic cricket, and even if they do, they don't get enough chances. This is a big challenge for us. Just as we made PSL a big international brand, we also need to make domestic cricket stronger," he said. Talking about New Zealand's upcoming tour for the Test series, he said that the committee hopes for the series to happen in a good atmosphere. "I just want to say that a cricket team has been announced for the series. I don't know whether it's appropriate or not to make changes. We will discuss and see; we haven't made any decision yet," he added.

Pakistan are scheduled to take on New Zealand in first Test match, starting on December 26 at the National Bank Cricket Arena. The second Test between the two sides will be staged at the Multan Cricket Stadium from January 3 to 7. After the conclusion of the Test series, the Black Caps will play three ODIs from January 10 to 14 in Karachi.

Meet Antonela, woman who never left Messi's side

WEB DESK

LONDON: The GOAT (Greatest of All Times) in the world of sports, Lionel Messi, has decided to draw the curtains over his football career after becoming the world champion. The Argentina football sensation announced through his country's media agency Diario Deportivo Ole that the Qatar FIFA World Cup was not just his last world cup, but also his final stint at the game. Argentina won the FIFA World 2022 finals on Sunday, December 18, in an exemplary fashion, beating France 4-2 in a penalty shootout after Messi scored twice in a 3-3 draw that featured a hat-trick for France's Kylian Mbappe.

Now, as the Barcelona team sensation retires after two decades, let's take a look at how his love story with his spouse, Antonela Rocuzzo,

fueled not just his career but also carved the great personality he is today. Messi and Antonela met each other as five-year-olds. Antonela was a friend of Messi's cousin and they frequently met to play. Messi was quite an introvert but he always came out of his shell for Antonela. The two played with other kids on the streets of Argentina and became best friends in the process. They remained in touch ever since. Messi was 11 when he was diagnosed with a growth hormone disorder that could hinder his dream of playing football professionally. His father, Jorge Messi, left no stone unturned to get him enrolled in an under-14 soccer team. Messi left for Spain after the under-14 FC Barcelona division signed him. While there was no looking back for him professionally, Antonela lost her best friend in a car crash, and Messi booked a flight back to Argentina to

be with her. The friends reunited, a love story bloomed and with that, so did Messi's football career.

The couple announced in June 2012, that they were pregnant with their first child. Antonela gave birth to their son, Thiago Messi in November 2012. The duo welcomed their second child, Mateo, in September 2015, and their third child in March 2018. They named him Ciro. Antonela decided to persevere dentistry while doing her bachelor's in humanities and social sciences. However, she left school so that she could be closer to Messi, who was living in Barcelona at the time for his career. Messi and Antonela got married on June 30, 2017, in their hometown, Rosario, in Argentina. They got married at the City Center hotel, with over 260 guests, which included some of Messi's teammates from his football team. Their wedding ceremony was touted the 'wedding of the century'. As Messi plays his career-best football in his farewell world cup matches, Antonela is right there cheering for him on, as always. She keeps sharing significant moments from each of Messi's games on her social media. In a recent press conference after his team's win at a quarter-final match, Messi told reporters, "My family is always present. My spouse and my children are there no matter what and seeing them happy today is the most wonderful thing." After Argentina won the FIFA World Cup 2022, Antonela, proud of her husband's hard work, penned a heartfelt note to congratulate him. She said, "I don't even know how to voice that greater pride we feel for you."



Lewandowski wins Golden Foot Award

BARCELONA: Barcelona's Polish star Robert Lewandowski has been honored with the 2022 Golden Foot Award at a ceremony held in Monaco. Before accepting the prestigious award at the Grimaldi Forum on Wednesday, Lewandowski, 34, had his footprint molded. "I am very proud. I am very proud. And for me, it's a huge honor to win this award, Golden Foot. Because I know that everything what I am doing and I did. I know how hard I have to work for this," Lewandowski said in a video before the ceremony.

"Also, what is important in our lives (is) that we are trying to do and to be also the good," he told the ceremony. Lewandowski, a longtime Bayern Munich forward who helped it win multiple German Bundesliga titles, in 2020 earned a UEFA Champions League trophy with the club. This July he left Bayern Munich to join Barcelona. Also on Wednesday, Türkiye's Fatih Terim, who previously coached the Turkish national team, Galatasaray, Italy's Fiorentina and AC Milan, won the Golden Foot award in the legends category. Terim secured the 2000 UEFA Cup with Galatasaray, and bagged eight Turkish top-tier Super Lig titles as head coach. He was Türkiye head coach in the UEFA EURO 96, 2008, and 2016. The Terim-led Türkiye played in the semifinals in the EURO 2008. The Golden Foot is a prestigious international award that is given to football figures and players for their athletic achievements and personality, and can only be won once. - Agencies

Squash Legend Jahangir Khan calls on IPC Minister Ehsan u Mazari

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan squash legend Jahangir Khan called on Federal Minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC) Ehsan ur Rehman Mazari to improve the standard of the squash game. During the meeting, Jahangir Khan expressed his concerns about the declining quality of squash, which was also attended by Federal Secretary ICPC Ahmed Hanif Orakzai and Director General Pakistan Sports Board (PSB) Muhammad Ibrar. Federal Minister Ehsan Mazari said that steps should be taken to improve the squash game. He added that suggestions will be



made to regain the lost glory in squash. Ehsan Mazari said that all stakeholders

have to work together for the development of sports. The federal minister also

assured Jahangir Khan of all possible support for the development of squash.

Pele to spend Christmas in hospital as cancer worsens

In recent years, "The King" has faced deteriorating health and his public appearances have grown rare. He has dealt with his ailments with trademark good humor, remaining active on social media

SPORTS DESK

SAO PAULO: Brazilian football great Pele will spend Christmas in hospital, his medical team and family said Wednesday, as he receives treatment for worsening cancer as well as kidney and heart problems. The 82-year-old "requires greater care related to renal and cardiac dysfunctions," said the Albert Einstein Hospital in Sao Paulo. It also reported a "progression" of his cancer, but said Pele was not in intensive care. Considered by many to be the greatest footballer of all time, Pele was hospitalized in Sao Paulo on November 29 for what his medical team called a re-evaluation of his chemotherapy treatments, which

he has been receiving since having surgery to remove a colon tumor in September 2021.

Doctors who also diagnosed Pele - whose real name is Edson Arantes do Nascimento - with a respiratory infection. Earlier this month, Pele's daughters Kely Nascimento and Flavia Arantes sought to reassure fans about his health, denying reports that Pele had been placed in end-of-life care as supporters held a vigil outside the hospital. They said Wednesday on Instagram that they would be spending Christmas with their father at the hospital. "Our Christmas at home has been suspended," they wrote. "We decided with the doctors that, for various reasons, it would be better for us to stay here with all the

care that this new family at Einstein gives us!" Accompanied by a picture of them smiling, the sisters thanked Pele's fans for their support and wished them a happy festive season. "We are going to turn this room into a Sambodrome (just

kidding), we will even make caipirinhas (not kidding!!)," they joked, referencing Brazil's famous cocktail. The siblings promised an update next week. Pele dazzled from an early age and took the 1958 World Cup by storm when he

was 17 years old, netting a hat trick in the semifinals and two more goals in the final, catapulting his own career and launching the soccer dynasty of the Brazilian national team. Pele scored more than 1,000 goals in one of the most storied careers in sport. He is the only player in history to have won three World Cups (1958, 1962 and 1970).

In recent years, the man dubbed "The King" has faced deteriorating health and his public appearances have grown rare. He has dealt with his ailments with trademark good humor, remaining active on social media. Pele posted regularly during the Qatar World Cup, including a message of congratulations to captain Lionel

Messi after Argentina took the top prize. "Congratulations to Argentina! Diego (Maradona, who died on November 25, 2020) is probably smiling now," he wrote. Pele also watched from hospital as star player Neymar equalled his goal record of 77 with the "Selecao." Pele has received messages from well-wishers all over the world, also recently from French striker Kylian Mbappe who called on fans earlier this month to "pray for the King." It was with Mbappe that Pele made one of his last public appearances, in April 2019, in Paris, for a promotional event. World Cup host nation Qatar also showed its support for Pele, lighting up buildings with a "Get well soon" message.



Pakistan in touch with Afghanistan...

FROM PAGE 01

committed to maintaining its fraternal relations with Afghanistan and ensuring that peace is maintained," she said. She mentioned that Pakistan continued to engage with international players including the neighbouring Afghanistan to ensure that the terrorism emanating from Afghan soil could not affect it. She hoped that the Afghan authorities would work towards fulfilling the commitments made to Pakistan to not allow their territory to be used against its neighbour. Asked if Pakistan was using China's leverage to counter Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in the backdrop of the country's engagement with Afghanistan, Baloch said Pakistan and China were close strategic partners and "We consult each other on all matters of interest including counter-terrorism and on the situation in Afghanistan."

To a question about the number of foreign visits by Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto after assuming office, she shared a list of the countries as - Saudi Arabia (twice), United Arab Emirates (twice), United States (thrice), China (twice), Switzerland, Iran, Uzbekistan (twice), Cambodia, Uzbekistan, Germany, Egypt, Indonesia and Singapore.

In response to the delay in disbursement of salaries to Pakistan's missions abroad, the spokesperson said the process had been restored that faced suspension due to a "very complicated" issue pertaining to the Ministry of Finance, the State Bank, and the international channels.

PM Shehbaz bars governor...

FROM PAGE 01

CM Elahi for now and ordered more consultation on the matter. Punjab Governor Balighur Rehman, Federal Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah, Prime Minister's Advisor Malik Ahmed Khan, Federal Minister Khawaja Saad Rafique, and other important leaders participated. In the meeting, the PML-N leadership considered the constitutional option regarding the de-notification of the Punjab Chief Minister. The meeting also discussed the overall political situation of Punjab while the security of the Governor's House has been tightened and more security forces including Frontier Constabulary (FC) arrived outside there. It is worth mentioning that Punjab Governor has termed the PA speaker's ruling 'un-constitutional' against his direction to the Chief Minister to take a vote of confidence from the Punjab Assembly. Punjab Chief Minister Pervez Elahi had not taken the vote of confidence as per the direction so now the Punjab Governor is considering using the constitutional option of de-notifying him.

Elahi no more...

FROM PAGE 01

Pervez Elahi was no more chief minister as the Punjab assembly session called by the governor did not take place. He said the Constitution allows the governor to convene the assembly session. "How will Article 6 be enforced?" he asked. The minister further said that whenever the assembly session would be held if would elect a new chief minister.

Responding to a question, Rana Sanaullah said Hamza Shehbaz will be their candidate for the chief minister slot. To another query, Rana Sana said the PML-N is making preparations to welcome party Quaid Nawaz Sharif back to the country. He further said Nawaz Sharif will himself announce the date for his return.

Replying to another question, the interior minister said forensic analysis of the leaked audios of PTI Chairman Imran Khan should be conducted. A new political crisis looms in Punjab as neither was the Punjab Assembly session convened, nor did the chief minister take the vote of confidence despite the directions of the Punjab governor. According to the PML-N sources, Punjab Governor Balighur Rehman may de-notify Chief Minister Chaudhry Pervez Elahi for not taking the vote of confidence. It is to be noted here that despite the announcement of Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah, notification to de-notify the chief minister could not be issued last day.

Briefs

'ICT, LG Amend Bill 2022' sails through NA

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly (NA) on Thursday approved the passage of the Islamabad Capital Territory Local Government (Amendment) Bill 2022, aimed at increasing the number of Union Councils from 101 to 125 and seeking direct election for the post of mayor and deputy mayor. The bill was moved by State Minister for Law and Justice Shahadat Awan. According to the amendments, the number of Union Councils (UCs) would be enhanced from 101 to 125 within the Islamabad Capital Territory to cater for the existing population of the federal capital. The mayor and deputy mayor shall be directly elected as joint candidates by the voters. Under the amendment, the federal government has been authorised to increase or decrease the number of union councils from time to time. "If the office of the mayor of local government falls vacant during the term of the council for any reason, the Election Commission shall hold a fresh election to the office of the head of the local government." According to the statement of Objects and Reasons, Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) Local Government Act was promulgated in 2015 to establish an elected Local Government System to devolve political, administrative, and financial authority in order to promote good governance and effective service delivery through the institutionalized participation and involvement of people in day to day governance.—APP

Myanmar junta FM meets ASEAN counterparts

NEWS DESK
BANGKOK: Three Southeast Asian foreign ministers and a regional envoy tasked with solving the Myanmar crisis met with the junta's top diplomat at an "informal" meeting in Thailand on Thursday, the Thai government said. The meeting came shortly after the United Nations Security Council adopted its first resolution on Myanmar, demanding "an immediate end to all forms of violence". The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has led diplomatic efforts to resolve the turmoil that has gripped Myanmar since the military seized power last year. There has, however, been little progress on a "five-point consensus" agreed with the junta in April 2021, which calls for an immediate end to violence and dialogue between the military and the anti-coup movement. There was "candid and constructive" discussion between the foreign ministers of Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam and Cambodia, Thai foreign ministry spokesperson Kanchara Patarachoke said.—APP

IHC clubs petitions about LG elections

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Thursday clubbed the identical petitions with regard to the local body elections in the capital and served notices to the respondents for Friday. Chief Justice Aamer Farooq heard the petitions regarding increase in the number of union councils, changes in voter lists and seeking to postpone LG elections. At the outset of hearing, Attorney General for Pakistan Ashtar Ausaf Ali argued that the petitioner had not challenged the notification regarding the increase in the number of UCs. Director General Election Commission of Pakistan told the court that a new notification had been issued related to the UCs and the ECP had also issued order on it stating that the local body election in federal capital would be taken place as per its schedule.—Agencies

Pak to help Somalia build national registration system

The core objectives of the study tour are to learn from the process of consensus building on constitutional development regarding the 1973 Constitution and 18th Amendment introduced in 2010 – with focus on key processes defining the federal structure in post-independence context

DNA

ISLAMABAD: United Nations Development Program UNDP-Pakistan and UNDP-Somalia have organized a first-ever Somalia-Pakistan Ministerial Study Tour on Federalism, Devolution and State-Building from December 20 to 27, 2022. The Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation (MOIFAR) of Somalia has sent the delegation of honorable ministers representing both Federal Government and Federal Member States including representatives of Banadir Regional Administration (BRA). His Excellency Ahmed Moallim Fiqi, Federal Minister, Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation, Federal Republic of Somalia is leading the study tour. The core objectives of the study tour are to learn from the process of consensus building on constitutional development regarding the 1973 Constitution and 18th Amendment introduced in 2010 – with focus on key processes defining the federal structure in post-independence context. The other objective is to learn about the composition, scope and functioning of Council of Common Interests (CCI) with special reference to the management of inter-governmental relations and dispute resolution between and among Federal and sub-national governments. Another objective is to learn about the mechanism of fiscal equalization and fiscal federalism introduced through



7th National Finance Commission (NFC) Award. Other important objectives include; learning about the framework(s) of democratic devolution introduced through local governance systems and structures; and policy, legislative and institutional dimensions of strengthening social contract between citizens and state. Zafarullah Khan, a famous expert on federalism, moderated the discussion. Yesterday, at NADRA headquarters, inaugural session was organized, and a warm welcome was extended to 11 members from various ministries and states of Somalia. The visiting team was taken to NADRA regional office at Blue Area where citizen registration office at G-11, Islamabad. While at the headquarters, they were acquainted with the NADRA processes of

citizen registration databases, the technologies being used, monitoring and administrative processes, security measures, and also expansion of NADRA databases in other areas such as social protection, immunization, and health benefits for the vulnerable and deserving population. Naeem Khan, DG Africa, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Pakistan said that Pakistan is an interesting place to study and it has traveled a long way in institutional development. He emphasized on the need of improved trade ties between Somalia and Pakistan and cooperation in the area of coastal area management. Kaiser Ishaque, Assistant Resident Representative, Assistant Resident Representative, UNDP, Pakistan, said Pakistan has a successful model of consti-

tutional development. Amjad Bhatti, Chief Technical Specialist, UNDP, Somalia emphasized on the South-South cooperation model because there are many political and cultural similarities between the countries of the South. Aliona Niculita, Resident Representative, UNDP said that UNDP has historical ties with Pakistan and has worked on many issues such as federalism, devolution, climate change, gender equality, rule of law and others. Deputy Ministry of Justice and Constitutional Affairs, Ahmed Abdirehman Hassan, shared his desire to not only listen what people say, but also experience federal life in Pakistan and visit offices and places. Hodain Osman, Advisor to the President of Somalia, said that she is interested in fiscal distribution, equalization, and revenue sharing modalities, and looking forward to learning from Pakistan's experience. Muhammad Tariq Malik, Chairman NADRA, shed light on NADRA's experience of creating evidence of identity of people and treating identity card as social contract between a citizen and the state. It helped people get access to social benefits and other entitlements. Ahmed Moallim Fiqi, Hon'ble Federal Minister, Ministry of Interior, Federal Affairs and Reconciliation, Federal Republic of Somalia, said that they want to learn from the 75 years of Pakistan's experience about constitutional development so that state-building efforts in Somalia can benefit from it.

Elderly Covid patients fill hospital wards in China

CHONGQING, China :Elderly patients lined the wards of hospitals in major cities in China Thursday as the country battled a wave of Covid cases. The virus is surging across China in an outbreak authorities say is impossible to track after the end of mandatory mass testing. Attached to a breathing tube under a pile of blankets, an old man racked with Covid-19 lay groaning on a stretcher in the emergency department of a hospital in central China. A paramedic at Chongqing Medical University First Affiliated Hospital, who confirmed the old man was a Covid patient, said he had picked up more than 10 people a day, 80 to 90 percent of whom were infected with coronavirus. "Most of them are elderly people," he said. "A lot of hospital staff are positive as well, but we have no choice but to carry on working." The old man waited half an hour to be treated, while in a nearby room AFP saw six other people in sick beds surrounded by harried doctors and relatives. They, too, were mostly elderly and, when asked if they were all Covid patients, a doctor said: "Basically." Five were strapped to respirators and had obvious breathing difficulties. Millions of elderly people across China are still not fully vaccinated, raising concerns that the virus may kill the most vulnerable citizens in huge numbers.—DNA

Pakistan, Indonesia sign \$1mln grant agreement for floods

ISLAMABAD: On behalf of the Government of Pakistan, National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) signed the grant agreement amounting to US\$ 1 million with the Government of the Republic of Indonesia for addressing the impact of severe floods in Pakistan. NDMA Chairman Lt Gen Inam Haider Malik and Indonesian Ambassador Adam Mulawarman Tugio signed the document, a news release said. This grant shall be utilized in the recovery and rehabilitation of the most vulnerable population to meet the basic need of food, nutrition, and shelter in the aftermath of the 2022 Pakistan Floods. A portion of the grant could be employed for resilience and disaster preparedness interventions in Pakistan. The NDMA Chairman expressed his gratitude to the government and people of Indonesia for showing solidarity and extending humanitarian relief assistance for flood affectees in Pakistan. He urged to invest in building the capacity of emergency response and preparedness through sharing experience and collaborated training programmes for disaster management regimes. He also conveyed his deepest condolences for the losses during the recent earthquake in Indonesia and wished for the earliest recovery. The Indonesian Ambassador reiterated to continue the support of vulnerable communities in the flood-affected areas by the Government of Indonesia and laid stress on the international community to help Pakistan in the rehabilitation phase after the devastating floods.



ISLAMABAD: Indonesian Ambassador, Adam Tugio calls on Chairman NDMA, Lt. Gen. Inam Haider Malik.—DNA

Pakistan, Turkiye celebrate 75 years of diplomatic ties

ANKARA: A Cultural Night was organized in Ankara by Pakistan Embassy in collaboration with Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism and Pakistan International Airlines to commemorate 75th anniversary of the establishment of Diplomatic Relations between Pakistan and Turkiye. The event was graced by Chairman Pakistan Turkiye Parliamentary Friendship Group Mr. Ali Sahin as chief guest. Governor Ankara Mr. Vasiq Sahin, parliamentarians, dignitaries, representatives of diplomatic corps, media and large number of Pakistani community attended the event. Speaking at the event, Member Turkish Parliament Mr. Ali Sahin stated that from Balkans War to the epic battle of Canakkale, we have continued our efforts to strengthen our relationship with the strength we derive from culture of brotherhood and solidarity. He emphasized that Pakistan and Turkiye share a unique bond of brotherhood, as every Turkish child is born with love for Pakistan and every Pakistani child is born with love for Turkiye. In his address, Pakistan's Ambassador to Turkiye Mr. Yousaf Junaid stated that the relationship between the two brotherly states is 75 years old, whereas the relationship between the two nations go well beyond the establishment of republics.—DNA

Saudi Arabia condemns Taliban's university ban

Don't be afraid. We are together," they chanted. Several high-profile cricketers have also condemned the decision on social media

NEWS DESK

ANKARA: Saudi Arabia strongly condemned the Taliban's nationwide ban on women attending private and public universities. The Saudi foreign ministry expressed "astonishment and regret" at Afghan women being denied a university education. In a statement late on Wednesday, the ministry said the decision was "astonishing in all Islamic countries". They became the latest Muslim-majority countries to do so after Qatar, which has served as a mediator between the United States and the Taliban, criticised the decision. There has also been domestic opposition to the ban, with a dozen women staging a protest in the streets of Afghanistan's capital, Kabul, on Thursday, chanting for freedom and equality. "All or none. Don't be afraid. We are together," they chanted. Several high-profile cricketers have also condemned the decision on social media. Rashid Khan, the former captain of the national team, tweeted that women were the foundation of socie-

ty. "A society that leaves its children in the hands of ignorant and illiterate women cannot expect its members to serve and work hard," he wrote. The Taliban retook control of the country in August 2021 after being removed from power by a US-led military coalition two decades earlier. Afghan society, while largely traditional, had increasingly embraced the education of girls and women after the Taliban had been removed from power. Initially, the Taliban had promised a more moderate rule respecting rights for women and minorities but has since implemented its own strict interpretation of religious law. Since retaking power, it has banned girls from secondary education and barred women from most fields of employment. Women are also banned from parks and gyms. Meanwhile, Turkiye rejects and is "saddened" by the new ban on higher education for young women in Afghanistan, Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said on Thursday. "This prohibition is neither Islamic nor humanitarian. We reject such a ban," Cavusoglu said at a news conference with his Yemeni counterpart Ahmed

Awad BinMubarak in the capital Ankara. Cavusoglu's remarks came after the Taliban-run Higher Education Ministry on Tuesday issued a decision to ban young women from university education until further notice. Afghanistan's ban on female students truly upsets Turkiye and is a "serious concern," Cavusoglu said, calling on the Taliban to reverse its decision. "What harm does women's education do to Afghanistan, and what is the benefit of this ban? ... Our religion Islam is not against education, on the contrary, it supports education. "We expect the Taliban to abandon this decision. Turkiye will continue to provide education and scholarships to our Afghan sisters," Cavusoglu added. Turning to Yemen, Cavusoglu said Turkiye strongly supports Yemen's territorial integrity, sovereignty, and political integrity. "The humanitarian crisis in Yemen has reached a serious point. More than half of Yemeni people are facing a food crisis. We continue to stand by Yemen in these troubled days. In Turkiye we ground 37,000 grains from Ukraine into flour and sent them to Yemen," he added. Yemen slipped into a deadly civil war in 2014 when Houthis rebels captured much of the country, including the capital, Sanaa.

Governor cannot de-notify CM: Speaker

LAHORE: Punjab Assembly Speaker Sabtain Khan has said the No-Confidence Motion has been filed against Chief Minister Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi so the assembly cannot be dissolved tomorrow (Friday). Punjab Speaker talked to media persons here in Lahore on Thursday evening. Speaker Sabtain Khan said Governor Punjab Balighur Rehman cannot de-notify the Chief Minister because the governor cannot call a new session in the ongoing assembly session. Highlighting the legal aspects of the de-notification of the Punjab Chief Minister Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi, Speaker Sabtain asked the Governor of Punjab not to issue illegal orders. Sabtain Khan said No-Confidence Motion has just been received by the Speaker's Office and notice is yet to be given and there are chances that the matter may go up to the first week of January. He further stated that the governor's allegations against Punjab Chief Minister Pervaiz Elahi were not related to the governor. He also confirmed that a letter was ready to be sent to President Dr Arif Alvi but has been put on hold for now. PA Speaker said they want to dissolve Punjab Assembly and go to the people in elections.—DNA

MEP in Qatar-linked graft case protests innocence

BRUSSELS: The Greek MEP at the centre of a graft scandal linked to alleged bribes from Qatar rocking the European Parliament insisted she was innocent on Thursday and asked to be released from pre-trial detention. Eva Kaili, 44, is "cooperating in an active manner" with the Belgian investigation and requesting release under electronic surveillance, her lawyer, Andre Risopoulos, said outside the Brussels courtroom. The Belgian judge, who was only deciding custody terms and not weighing the case itself, was expected to give a decision later in the day. Kaili, a former newsreader booted from her post as parliamentary vice president after police raids earlier this month, has become the public face of the alleged corruption case. Qatar officials have insisted that the Gulf monarchy played no role in any wrongdoing. Another of Kaili's lawyers, Michalis Dimitrakopoulos, on Wednesday told reporters she feels miserable.—Agencies

Naval Chief visits Morocco, meets military leadership

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Muhammad Amjad Khan Niazi called-on Naval Leadership of Royal Moroccan Navy during an official visit to Morocco. Upon arrival at Royal Moroccan Naval Headquarters, Chief of the Naval Staff was received by Naval Chief of Royal Moroccan Navy Vice-Admiral Mostapha El Alami and was presented Guard of Honour. During meeting with Naval Chief of Royal Moroccan Navy, matters of bilateral naval collaboration and regional maritime security were discussed. The Naval Chief underscored Pakistan Navy initiative for ensuring maritime security in the region through Regional Maritime Security Patrols (RMSP) and participation in Combined Maritime Force. The Naval Chief invited host navy to participate in Exercise AMAN and PIMEC-23 to promote Blue Economy and highlighted the importance of enhancing cooperation between armed forces of both countries through bilateral exercises and training programs. Inspector of the Royal Moroccan Navy acknowledged Pakistan Navy efforts and commitment in

support of collaborative maritime security for maintaining peace and stability in the region. Later, Naval Chief called-on Commander Northern Maritime Sector and visited various installations, training unit and Royal Moroccan Navy Ship where he was given detailed briefing on roles, capabilities and training facilities of Moroccan Navy.



It is expected that visit of Naval Chief will further augment and expand defence ties between the two countries in general and navies in particular.