



Islamabad POST

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Detailed News On Page-08

UK's Labour vows to abolish House of Lords

Detailed News On Page-07

Pakistan to get crude oil, Petrol from Russia

Detailed News On Page-08



Briefs

Bilawal rules out early elections

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari rejected Imran Khan's demand for early elections. In an interview to foreign media, FM Bilawal Bhutto Zardari said that there is no unusual or emergency situation in the country. Therefore, there is no need to hold early elections in the country. The divided country and the ruined economy were inherited from the previous government, but at present the coalition govt has representation from the entire country and the coalition parties are working together to solve the problems.

Elahi says no immediate dissolution

BUREAU REPORT

LAHORE: Punjab Chief Minister CM Pervez Elahi has said that the provincial assembly will "continue the same way for the next four months till March", with his remarks being in contrast to the repeated threats of the assembly's immediate dissolution by key ally and PTI Chairman Imran Khan. "My stance is the same ... I will dissolve [the assembly] whenever he (Imran) tells me to," he said. "That decision has been taken. However, now you'd have to think of its pros and cons. For that, we will have to hold talks."

Asif Zardari calls on Ch. Shujaat

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Former President of Pakistan and President Pakistan People's Party Parliamentarians, Asif Ali Zardari called on PML-Q Chief Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain at his residence in Islamabad. During the meeting, General Secretary PML-Q and Federal Minister Tariq Bashir Cheema and former President's Political Secretary Rukhsana Bangash were also present. In this meeting, the political situation of the country and the current political situation of Punjab were discussed in detail.

Mangla upgradation PM all praise for Pak-US cooperation

Shehbaz Sharif inaugurates the refurbishment project of Units 5 and 6 of Mangla Dam

KAMRAN GUJJAR / DNA

MANGLA: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has described Mangla upgradation project as a wonderful example of cooperation between Pakistan and the United States. Shehbaz Sharif on Monday inaugurated the refurbishment project of Units 5 and 6 of Mangla Dam. Shehbaz also credited USAID for providing \$150 million and France for providing 90 million euros and additional commitment for the project. He also said that Wapda contributed Rs20 billion that rose the total amount of the upgradation project to \$483 million. PM Shehbaz credited late president Ayub Khan for laying out the Mangla project that helped our agriculture and industry providing clean and cheap electricity. The prime minister emphasized the need for further enhancing bilateral cooperation between Pakistan and the United States in the field of trade and investment. Alluding to the contributions made by Mangla Dam to the country's economy, the Prime Minister said Pakistan cannot afford expensive energy on which annually 27 billion rupees are currently being spent. He underlined the need for exploiting the indigenous resources including hydel, solar, air and coal to produce cheap electricity. He said the present government has prepared a project to generate ten thousand megawatts of electricity through solar energy. He said a power project 1320 megawatt has also been initiated at Thar to use the indigenous coal for electricity production. The Prime Minister regretted that the country could not fully exploit the hydel

power potential of sixty thousand megawatts. He said apart from extension of Mangla and Tarbela Dams, Diamer Basha, Dasu and some other projects have been launched. He said had these hydel projects been earlier completed, the country would not have faced much destruction due to recent floods as well as its reliance on the imported fuel would have been negligible. The Prime Minister stressed for unity to serve the country and steer it out of all challenges. Shehbaz Sharif has said that construction and development does not happen through sittings and slogans. He said that they will have to advance by moving above differences and personalities for political stability in the country. "The coalition government is striving to counter the challenges," he added. The prime minister said that the time had come to reconcile with angry friends. "We will give a new direction to the Pak-US relations."

In his remarks on the occasion, the US Ambassador to Pakistan Donald Blome said Mangla Dam is a great symbol of Pakistan-US cooperation. He said amongst other hydropower projects, his country is also assisting Pakistan to rehabilitate Tarbela power stations. The Ambassador said the rehabilitation work at Mangla Dam will increase electricity output to meet electricity needs of additional two million people. He said it will also ensure that Mangla Power Stations remain productive for the next several years. Water and Power Development Authority (WAPDA) Chairman Lt Gen (retd) Sajjad Ghani said the refurbishment of the units of Mangla dam was in line with the keen

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FO hopes Kabul attack to be thoroughly probed

Taliban claim that authorities had arrested a foreign operative of the Islamic State

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Foreign Office on Monday said that they remained in active contact with the Afghan authorities on the matter of a terrorist attack on Pakistan's Head of Mission in Kabul and expressed the confidence that it would be fully investigated and the perpetrators and their abettors would be brought to account. Responding to media queries regarding remarks reportedly made by Taliban Spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid, Spokesperson of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Mumtaz Zahra Baloch, in a press release, said that it was an ongoing investigation and they were closely following it. "Pakistan remains resolute in our commitment to fight the scourge of terrorism," she further added. According to media reports, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid,



Envoy returns days after attack in Kabul

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Head of Mission in Kabul Ubaidur Rehman Nizamani has returned to Pakistan days after a terrorist attack on country's embassy in Afghanistan. However, the Foreign Office spokesperson said the envoy returned to the country on a pre-scheduled visit for consultations. Mr Nizamani had remained unhurt in an attack on Pakistan's embassy on Friday; however, Pakistan called upon the interim government of Afghanistan to immediately hold thorough investigation into

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Five terrorists killed in North Waziristan IBO

25-year-old Sepoy Nasir Khan embraced shahadat

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Security forces killed five terrorists while one army troop embraced martyrdom during exchange of firing in an Intelligence Based Operation (IBO) in Jhallar Algad, North Waziristan District, the military's media wing said on Monday. According to the Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR), according to Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), during the conduct of the operation, an intense fire exchange took place between security forces and terrorists. "The troops effectively engaged the

terrorists' location which resulted in the killing of five terrorists, adding that weapons and ammunition were also recovered from the killed terrorists," it stated. "The killed terrorists remained actively involved in terrorist activities against security forces and killing of innocent citizens," it said. The clash also left a soldier dead. ISPR said 25-year-old Sepoy Nasir Khan, a resident of the neighboring South Waziristan District, fought gallantly but embraced shahadat. It further said that sanitisation of the area is being carried out to eliminate any other terrorists found in the area. Later, after a search of the hideout, se-

curity officials said they had recovered weapons, ammunition and explosives from the possession of the terrorists. Last week, security forces killed a notorious terrorist commander, Muhammad Noor alias Sarakai, in an exchange of fire in the North Waziristan district. The ISPR said that on December 2 an exchange of fire took place between terrorists and troops in general area of Shewa. The slain terrorist remained actively involved in high-profile terrorist activities against security forces as well as kidnapping for ransom and was wanted by Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) in multiple cases, the military's media wing further said.



MANGLA: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif interacts with US Ambassador while reviewing refurbishment project of Mangla Dam and operations of the newly inaugurated units. - DNA

British HC Turner leaving Pakistan

Says his tenure in Pakistan remained rewarding



ANSAR BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: The British Foreign Secretary, James Cleverly MP, has announced the appointment of Dr Christian Turner CMG to a senior diplomatic position in London as Director General Geopolitical (Political Director) at the UK's Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). This is a position equivalent to Under Secretary of State.

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PTI intends to decrease acrimony with institutions

Fawad says informal contacts with the govt have begun

ALI HAMZA

LAHORE: Former information minister Fawad Chaudhry confirmed on Monday that "informal communications" between the PTI and federal government, pertaining to the snap elections, had begun. Former premier Imran Khan last week gave the federal government an ultimatum to either "sit and talk and give a date for the general elections" or "we will dissolve the assemblies". Speaking to the media in Lahore, Chaudhry said that "informal communication" with the federal government had begun. "We are trying to make the coalition representatives, especially Finance Minister Ishaq Dar [...] who is more [determined] from the PML-N [...] we told the president [...] the problem is that the government is rapidly becoming irrelevant due to the economic situation. "We have tried to make them understand that no system other than

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Imran felicitates AJK PM over PTI's victory

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan and the party leadership congratulated Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) PTI and Prime Minister AJK Sardar Tanveer Ilyas for trouncing the political opponents in the AJK Local government elections polls against all odds. In a statement on Monday, PTI Chairman felicitated AJK PM on his success in AJK LG elections. Imran Khan stated that the PTI won the local body elections against all odds.

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Ashrafi rejects US report on religious freedom

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Special Representative of the Prime Minister on Inter-faith Harmony and Middle East Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi on Monday rejected the report of the United States (US) on religious freedom in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. Addressing a press conference, Ashrafi, who is also the chairman of Pakistan Ulema Council, said the minority communities in Pakistan equally enjoyed all human rights like the rest of the citizens of the state. He said the information being provided to the US Commission on Religious Freedom was not based on reality as the elements allegedly involved in disinformation against Pakistan had their own hidden agendas to disrepute the peace-loving country in the comity of nations. He invited the US Commission to pay a visit to Pakistan and witness the ground realities of the standard of living of minority communities in the country.

He emphasized the US commission to revisit the report and urged not to be part of any conspiracy against Pakistan, adding that if someone had apprehensions it could be resolved with mutual understanding as issues were part of life. "The way, Muslims were being humiliated in the wake of Islamophobia in Canada, US, England and European countries, it was crystal-clear before the world," he maintained. Ashrafi said since the beginning of December, the Christmas celebrations had kick started in the country, adding that in the same way, Hindu and Sikh communities were observing their religious festivals without any fear at any nook and cranny of the country because their legal rights were completely protected in the Constitution. Expressing his astonishment, he said there was no mention of India where minorities were being treated as third-class citizens. "It proves that the report on religious freedom is based on prejudice and it has nothing to do with reality," he opined. He further

mentioned that Haramain Sharifain was the center of Muslim Ummah's faith and the Saudi Arabia's government was serving them in the light of Quran and Shariah. Ashrafi quoting a verse of Quran said the entry of non-Muslims was prohibited in the jurisdiction of two holy cities - Makkah and Madina, adding that the US should desist from giving its guidelines on the religious matters of Muslims. Regarding the current social and economic challenges being faced by Pakistan, he said its solution was lying in unity and negotiation. He proposed Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chief Imran Khan to opt for unconditional dialogue as there was a dire need for electoral reforms before the general elections in the country. He also asked the Imran Khan to avoid "loose talk" against the former army chief Qamar Javed Bajwa as he had been his "well-wisher and helped him through thick and thin in the PTI's tenure". "It was Imran Khan who used to praise General Bajwa as the most democratic person," he reminded.



ISLAMABAD: A delegation of Dawoodi Bohra community calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. - DNA

Speakers urge to project Buddhist heritage

ISLAMABAD: The speakers at a seminar on Monday underlined the need to promote religious tourism by projecting the Gandhara civilization and Buddhist heritage of Pakistan at the international level in an effective way. The seminar titled 'Gandhara Civilization and Buddhist Heritage of Pakistan' was aimed at studying and analyzing the deep footprints of Buddhism origin and civilization in Pakistan. The seminar was organized by Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) in collaboration with MISIS (Myanmar). The highly intellectual discourse thread barely dwelt into the rich culture, history and monuments of Buddhism in Pakistan, as it is the seat of the ancient religion. The speakers were Aye Kyaw, Managing Director and CEO of Rubyland Tour-

ism Services, Myanmar; Dr Nadeem Omar Tarar, Gandhara Chair University of Wah; Ramesh Kumar Vankwani, MNA and Patron-in-Chief of Pakistan Hindu Council; and Dr Pyiet Phyo Kyaw, Prof. Department of Archaeology, University of Yangon, Myanmar. Former Ambassador to Vietnam, Shahid Kiani was the discussant. The speakers said that a couple of well-prepared documentaries were needed to project the culture and history of Pakistan vis-vis Buddhism. "Museums and other relevant literature are too dry, and does not carry the required enthusiasm," they noted. They called for furthering tourist exchange, as well as incoming of monks so that more harmony and cooperation between the great civilizations can be buoyed. The need for inviting cultural attaches from

Buddhist countries, as well as archeologists, was also underlined. It was pointed out that the culture pertains to an era between 200 BC and 900AD, and the present Pakistan territory was home to the first and largest lived urbanized civilization. Dr Nadeem Omar Tarar, Gandhara Chair at University of Wah, remarked that the state ownership of Buddhist heritage was very old in Pakistan. The country used to issue souvenir stamps on such special occasions, and the Rs 5 postal stamp in 2002 on the 50th anniversary of Pakistan-Japan relations was a case in point, he added. He also said that a book on Raja Tridev Rao: Buddhism in Pakistan was published in 1955. This was why, he noted, from 1950 to 1969, Buddhism was part and parcel of academic discourse.

The major highlight of Pakistan is that apart from Gandhara, Taxila, Swat, Waziristan and Northern Areas, Sindh and Punjab also have major traces of Buddhism. This makes Pakistan the epic-centre of Buddhism, as it houses seven great museums and numerous stupas, too, and Mohenjo-Daro is a classic melting point. While highlighting the importance of Taxila, it was noted that Taxila University is the oldest in the world and it has the oldest surviving manuscripts, the site of transmission of Buddhism to Southeast Asia, origin of literary works, as well as the home of the second Buddha (Padmasambhava - a Buddhist sage from Swat), and renowned Gandhara sculptures. Moreover, Panini - the ancient Sanskrit writer - was born in Swabi. - APP

CDA assures to remove encroachments from markets

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Capital Development Authority (CDA) on Monday assured to remove encroachments from markets in collaboration with traders associations to facilitate business activities in the federal capital. Talking to Fawad Waheed, Senior Vice President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI), Shahjahan Khan, Deputy Director General (Enforcement) CDA assured that he would take trade associations of concerned markets on board to remove the encroachments as their removal would be beneficial for the traders and revive the beauty of the federal capital. He said that the Capital city was the face of Pakistan, but rising encroachments were creating problems for the business community and affecting the beauty of the city. He said that CDA had already done the survey of many markets to identify the violations as the civic body had adopted a zero-tolerance policy against encroachments and added that representatives of Market Associations should share their contact numbers with Enforcement Directorate so that they could be taken on board to address this major issue in markets. He said that three types of



encroachments including pushcarts by outsiders in markets, violations by shopkeepers and constructions would be addressed by taking stakeholders on board. He said that efforts are being made to remove the pushcarts set up under Ahsaas Program from markets to a separate location. He said that the CDA was working on a plan to remove all showrooms from markets to move them to suitable locations as these were creating nuisance in the markets. He said that CDA had adopted the policy of publishing

advertisements in print media and a campaign on electronic media would also be run on various issues including removal of encroachments. Speaking on the occasion Faad Waheed said that the business community is facing great problems due to rising encroachments in markets and under CDA to take urgent measures to address this major issue. He said that before launching operation against encroachments in any market, CDA should take the concerned traders association on board to resolve this issue amicably.

Rehabilitation of flood victims top priority

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Science and Technology Agha Hassan Baloch said that rehabilitation of the flood-affected areas is one of the top priorities of the incumbent government and Balochistan National Party (BNP) is working hard to facilitate the affected people. He expressed these views while talking to a delegation from Balochistan headed by Rashid Kakar called on him here today and briefed the minister about the situation of the flood-affected areas and rehabilitation activities. The Minister said the severity of the cold has increased significantly in Balochistan during last few days and will further increase by end of the month. He called upon the federal and provincial governments, NGOs and the international community to speed up relief activities to facilitate the affected people. Agha Hassan Baloch emphasized that the relief operation in Naseerabad, Qila Saifullah and Jaffarabad should be accelerated. - APP

US CGmeets Governor KP, discusses bilateral ties

OUR CORRESPONDENT

PESHAWAR: US Consul General in Peshawar Panfilo Marquez on Monday called on Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Ghulam Ali, here, at Governor House and discussed strengthening of bilateral relations between the US and Pakistani people, especially the people of KP. The governor emphasized the importance of US cooperation and investment projects for the development of the economic zone in the province and the promo-

tion of bilateral trade activities. On this occasion, the governor said that in US-funded projects for Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, especially the merged districts, the priority should be given to areas where there was a greater need to work in the field of education and commercial activities. He said that the merged districts of the province were geographically in different forms, some districts have plains while others were hilly, adding that in plain areas the solar tube wells projects should be funded for improving cultiva-

tion while in hilly areas modern machinery and technology should be provided to tap the mineral and other natural resources to improve the livelihood of locals. The governor called for investment in the province for socio-economic development besides bringing a clear change to the lives of the people. Regarding the law and order situation, the governor said that the federal government and the law enforcement agencies were jointly working to maintain peace and order throughout the country especially in KP.

UN Under SG calls on Ishaq Dar

ISLAMABAD: Under Secretary General of the United Nations / Executive Secretary of ESCAP Armina Salsiah Alisjhabana called on Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar on Monday. SAPM on Finance Tariq Bajwa, Special Secretary Finance, and other senior officers from Finance Division attended the meeting, said a press release issued here. The finance minister welcomed Armina Salsiah Alisjhabana and appreciated the supportive role of UN. He shared that Pakistan highly acknowledges the solidarity of UN with Pakistan in the wake of devastating floods in the country. Pakistan was, however, in need of further international support for flood reconstruction and rehabilitation. - APP

Islamabad Citizen Club should be restored immediately

Residents of F-7 F-8, F-10 and G-9 near Fatima Jinnah Park can make better use of this facility

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Waqar Zafar Bakhtawari, prominent entrepreneur of Islamabad and president of Chakwal Chamber of Commerce and Industry, has demanded the Chairman CDA to immediately restore the Islamabad Citizen Club built inside F-9 Park. Citizens should be provided the facility to use it. He further said that the building and all its infrastructure and equipments built over many years are slowly decaying. With



the establishment of Islamabad Citizen Club, the residents of F-8, F-7 F-9 and G9 will be able to have club facilities in their nearest Jinnah Park. He said that the Islamabad Citizen Club was built with the taxes of the citizens of Islamabad and it should be used for the purposes for which it was built.


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Experts deliberate over formulating strategies to control pandemic

ISLAMABAD: Three-day ANSO-PAS-MAAP conference on "Epidemic and Pandemic Preparedness" kicked off on Monday with the experts deliberating over strategies to combat the pandemic. The conference is being jointly organized by the Pakistan Academy of Sciences (PAS), the Alliance of International Science Organization (ANSO), and the Monbukagakusho-MEXT Alumni Association of Pakistan (MAAP) at the PAS. The event was inaugurated by Prof. Dr. Mukhtar Ahmed, Chairman Higher Education Commission. In his address, he appreciated the efforts of PAS, ANSO, and MAAP for jointly organizing this useful event for the health and safety of mankind from epidemics and pandemics. He motivated the young scientists and postgraduate students for their role in diagnosis, control, therapeutic and vaccine strategies for different viruses. He mentioned that HEC has been

preempting the concept of smart universities to have higher education online. Executive Director, ANSO, Prof. Dr. CAO Jinghua also addressed the gathering online on behalf of Prof. Dr. Chun Li Bai, President of ANSO. He appreciated the efforts of the Pakistan Academy of Sciences and COVID-related management in the Country for spreading awareness about the adverse impacts of epidemics and pandemics. Earlier, Secretary General, PAS, Prof. Dr. Tasawar Hayat shed light on the role of the Academy in facilitating Pakistani academicians, scientists, and researchers for innovative Research and Development in various scientific disciplines for implications in the domain of health, energy, technology, etc. President MAAP, Prof. Dr. Zabta Khan Shinwari, Prof. Emeritus, QAU, Islamabad, presented the keynote address. He highlighted the improvement in pandemic control-related strate-

gies, risk management, and policies against future possible outbreaks. He had a draft strategy to combat future pandemics. In his inaugural address, Prof. Dr. Khalid M. Khan congratulated the collaborating institutions and organizing team for their efforts in organizing the event. He talked about the spread and impacts of some devastating pandemics in past (hong kong flu), swine flu, and COVID-19 outbreaks, etc.) on mankind. Prof. Dr. Muhammad Ali (QAU), organizer of the event and Principal Investigator of the ANSO Project on Molecular detection and Characterization of Bats-borne Viruses from Pakistan talked about zoonotic viruses that are responsible for pandemics and epidemics, which affect almost every field of life throughout the world. He specifically targeted viruses associated with Bats and that Bats are the main reservoir of viruses. He presented his valuable project

and the inevitable struggle for identification and studying these bats and their microbiome all over Pakistan. During this three-day event, 33 experts from Pakistan and foreign countries including China, Italy, New Zealand, and the USA will focus on surveillance and preparedness against global Pandemics and epidemics while 50 posters will be presented on various themes of pandemics and epidemics. Over 400 academicians, scientists, researchers, and postgraduate students from around the world are participating in the deliberations of the conference through physical and/or virtual (online) presence. The recommendations of the conference will be shared with national and international bodies and research institutions dealing with the development of vaccines for the control of potential epidemic and pandemic-related issues worldwide. - APP

National Days and Armed Forces Days

December

Dec 01 / Romania	National Day
Dec 02 / UAE	National Day
Nov 07 / Russian Federation	Socialist Revolution
Dec 02 / Laos Republic	National Day
Dec 05 / Thailand	National Day
Dec 06 / Finland	Independence Day
Dec 07 / India	Armed Forces Flag Day
Dec 09/ Tanzania	National Day
Dec 11/ Oman	Armed Forces Day
Dec 12 / Kenya	Independence Day
Dec 12 / Turkmenistan	Neutrality Day
Dec 16 / Bahrain	National Day
Dec 16 / Kazakhstan	Independence Day
Dec 18 / Qatar	National Day
Dec 18 / Niger	National Day
Dec 23 / Philippines	Armed Forces Day
Dec 23/ Japan	National Day

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Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....	1122 & 16
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& Rescue Services.....	4451122
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Rawalpindi.....	9270601-20



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Shifa International.....	4603666



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ISLAMABAD: Dr. Arshad Khan hosted a brunch for friends at his place. Seen in the picture, among others, are diplomats from Austria, USA, France, UK, Belgium, former Mayor of Islamabad Sheikh Anser Aziz, Editor Daily Islamabad POST Ansar M Bhatti.—DNA

Indonesian embassy hosts family gala for diplomats

A female singer also sang "Hello hello Sayang Ku", which means "Hello dear one" in Indonesian from the well-known Pakistani film "Bandish"

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Embassy of the Republic of Indonesia organized a "Family Gala" at the Indonesian Embassy. The event was attended by the families of diplomatic corps, government officials, journalists, and business communities. Family Gala featured a diverse program that included musical performances, fun games and stall of handicrafts from women entrepreneurs of Pakistan. Ambassador Adam M. Tugjo appreciated the efforts and teamwork of the organizers for making the event so festive. "It was exclusively dedicated to the families and friends of embassies and also to observe Animal Rights Day", added the envoy. The Chief guest of the event, Chairperson of The National Commission on the Rights of Child (NCRC), Ms. Afshan Tehseen praised the warm gesture



by the Indonesian Embassy for organizing the cultural gathering to strengthen the fraternal bonds among two Muslim brotherly countries. She stated in her remarks,

"Through such event we hope to instill in people the importance of caring for animal in the same way we care for human".

The event also displayed

the envoy's truck arts painted official car. The car is decorated with famous cultural landmarks of Indonesia and Pakistan. Ladies of the Indonesian Embassy

mesmerized the audience with "Angklung" performance on Dil-Dil Pakistan. Angklung is an Indonesian musical instrument consisting of two to four bam-

boo tubes suspended in a bamboo frame, bound with rattan cords. Since each Angklung only generates one note or chord several players must work together in order to play melodies. Angklung captures the spirit of cooperation and togetherness of diverse Indonesian society.

A female singer also sang "Hello hello Sayang Ku", which means "Hello dear one" in Indonesian from the well-known Pakistani film "Bandish." Many exclusive handicraft stalls, famous delicacies of Indonesian and Pakistani cuisines were also presented which includes Meat ball soup, chicken sate with fried rice, biryani, haleem, nihari, creative designs of decorated baking items, fashion and clothing, variety of handmade, henna stall and pet accessories. The event "Family Gala" brought families together and entertained people of all ages.

Chinese govt honors Dr M. Iqbal with friendship award

DNA

ISLAMABAD: (COMSTECH): H.E. Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary, Coordinator General COMSTECH/ Director ICCBS honored by the government of China with the Chinese Government's Friendship Award. The award was presented by His Excellency Mr. Nong Rong, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China in Pakistan in a special ceremony held at the Chinese Embassy in Islamabad. Chinese Government's Friendship Award is the People's Republic of China's highest award for "foreign experts who have made outstanding contributions to the country's economic and social progress". The winners of this award have been se-

lected by the State Administration of Foreign Experts Affairs (SAFEA) under the State Council. The award is conferred as part of the celebrations for the National Day of the People's Republic of China on October 1 and it consists upon a medal and an award certificate. Prof. Choudhary has played a key China-Pakistan cooperation in the field of science and technology, including establishment of Sino-Pakistan centers in various fields. This includes the national institute of virology at the PCMD, in collaboration of Wuhan Institute of Virology China. Prof. Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Choudhary is a world renowned medicinal chemist. He has published 1,175 research papers in the fields of organic and bioorganic chemistry in international

journals, 76 books and 40 chapters in books published by major US and European press. He has secured 40 US patents so far. Prof. Choudhary's work has been cited by the researchers from around the world over 30,000 times and his h-index is 80. By now 94 national and international scholars have completed their PhD degrees under his supervision. Prof. Choudhary is D.Sc., Ph.D., and C. Chem. He has been awarded by different governments of Pakistan with Hilale-Imtiaz, Sitara-e-Imtiaz, and Tamgha-e-Imtiaz. He has been elected fellow by world renowned science academies named Academy of Sciences for the Developing World, Islamic World academy of Sciences, Pakistan Academy of Sciences, Royal Society of Chem-

istry, and Chemical Society of Pakistan. Prof. Choudhary has been honored by the President of Iran with Khwarizmi International Award, President of Azerbaijan, with ECO Award in Education and the Prime Minister of Pakistan with COMSTECH Award in Chemistry. He is Mustafa (PBUH) Prize Laureate. He has been given the prestigious title of "Distinguished National Professor" by the Higher Education Commission in 2004 and Meritorious Professor by the University of Karachi in 2013. Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary is currently serving as Coordinator General, COMSTECH and Director, International Center for Chemical and Biological Sciences, University of Karachi.

Five more diagnosed with dengue virus in RWP

RAWALPINDI: Five more dengue cases were reported in Rawalpindi during the last 24 hours, raising the tally of confirmed cases to 4,760. District Coordinator Epidemics Prevention and Control (DCEPC), Dr Sajjad Mehmood, Monday said that 17 patients were admitted to the city's allied hospitals, including nine to the Benazir Bhutto Hospital (BBH), seven to the District Headquarters Hospital (DHH) and one to the Holy Family Hospital (HFH). He informed that out of the total admitted patients, 11 tested positive, with nine belonging to Rawalpindi.—APP

CDA assures to remove encroachments

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Faad Waheed, Senior Vice President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry said that the business community is facing great problems due to rising encroachments in markets and stressed that CDA should take urgent measures to address this major issue. He said that before launching operation against encroachments in any market, CDA should take the concerned Trade Association on board to resolve this issue amicably. He said that CDA should make one market as a model example for removal of encroachments. He said that Trade Associations of all markets are ready to cooperate with CDA in this campaign as it is in the interest of traders. He said this while talking to Shahjan Khan, Deputy Director General (Enforcement), CDA during his visit to Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI).

Engr. Muhammad Azhar ul Islam Zafar Vice President ICCI, Muhammad Ejaz Abbasi former President, Shehzad Shabbir Abbasi President F-6 Super Market, Abdul Rehman Siddiqui General Secretary F-7 Jinnah Su-

per, Zahid Qureshi Secretary General I-8 Markaz, Abid Abbasi President G-10 Markaz, Raja Imtiaz from G-9 Markaz, Aftab Gujjar President G-11 Markaz, Zafar Iqbal President G-10/4, Ch. Irfan President Steel Fabricators I-10 Market, Khurram Khan President, Islamabad Restaurants Association and representatives of various other markets also highlighted the encroach-

ment issue of their respective markets and assured that they would fully cooperate with CDA in their removal. Speaking at the occasion, Shahjahan Khan, Deputy Director General (Enforcement), CDA assured that he would take Trade Associations of concerned markets on board to remove the encroachments as their removal would be beneficial for the traders and revive the

beauty of the federal capital. He said that the Capital city is the face of Pakistan, but rising encroachments are creating problems for the business community and affecting the beauty of the city. He said that CDA has already done the survey of many markets to identify the violations as the civic body has adopted a zero-tolerance policy against encroachments and added that representatives of Market Associations should share their contact numbers with Enforcement Directorate so that they could be taken on board to address this major issue in markets. He said that three types of encroachments including pushcarts by outsiders in markets, violations by shopkeepers and constructions would be addressed by taking stakeholders on board. He said that efforts are being made to remove the pushcarts set up under Ahsaas Program from markets to a separate location. He said that CDA is working on a plan to remove all showrooms from markets to move them to suitable locations as these are creating nuisance in the markets. He said that CDA has adopted the policy of publishing advertisements in print media and a campaign on electronic media would also be run on various issues including removal of encroachments.



NEPRA holds public hearing

ISLAMABAD :National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) Monday held a public hearing to address some of the concerns raised by Independent Power Producers (IPPs) and coal suppliers in the existing approved guidelines for buying Afghan and non-Afghan coal on a spot basis. The purpose of the hearing was to seek comments from stakeholders on how to optimize the existing spot purchase guidelines and bring in more competition. The hearing was presided over by NEPRA Authority including Chairman NEPRA, Mr. Tauseef H. Farooqi, and Members NEPRA, Mr. Maqsood Anwar Khan and Mr. Mathar Niaz Rana. The authority noted the concerns and suggestions of the stakeholders and will accordingly revise the guidelines at the earliest so that purchase from the above sources by the coal-fired power plants commences at the earliest and generation of cheaper electricity is ensured.—APP

Govt notifies transfer, posting of officers

ISLAMABAD :The federal government on Monday notified the transfer and posting of high-rank officers. According to a notification issued by Establishment Division, Qutubuddin, a BS-19 officer of the Secretariat Group, presently posted as Deputy Secretary, of the Petroleum Division, is transferred and posted as Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, with immediate effect and until further orders. While, Waqar Paris Shah, a BS-19 officer of Pakistan Audit and Accounts Service, currently posted as Director (Establishment), AGP Office: Islamabad is transferred and posted as Deputy Secretary, Finance Division, Islamabad on a deputation basis, on standard terms and conditions, for three (03) years with immediate effect and until further orders.—APP

Imparting modern, research-based education govt's top priority

ISLAMABAD :Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Youth Affairs, Shiza Fatima Khawaja Monday said that equipping the youth with modern, research-based education and training to meet future needs is the top priority of the coalition government. "The nation's resources need to be spent on equipping the 60% of the youth population with high-quality modern education instead of creating divisions", she said while speaking to a private news channel.—APP

Briefs

NADRA achieves milestone by bagging another certification

ISLAMABAD: National Database & Registration Authority (NADRA) in pursuance to becoming a cyber-resilient organization, has reached yet another milestone by bagging ISO 27001 certification. ISO 27001 is an internationally recognized best practices framework. NADRA is now ISO certified in ID Card Printing, Networks & Communications, Infrastructure, and Information Security departments. It has now been certified for Information Security Management Systems (ISMS) and is one of the most rigorous information security standards worldwide. NADRA has recently received this certification in recognition of its exceptional commitment to protecting and safeguarding its information assets. Congratulating team, Chairman NADRA Tariq Malik said, "International Standards Organization certification reflects that NADRA processes of managing its ID assets are governed by international standards, as endorsed by a third-party audit." He further elaborated that this certification is a testament to NADRA's commitment to ensuring that security processes and procedure compliance with international security best practices are audited regularly and are continually improving to deliver the highest level of security and data protection. —APP

Sindhi cultural night enthralled audience

ISLAMABAD: A colorful cultural night featuring vibrant Sindhi culture enthralled the audience of twin cities of Rawalpindi and Islamabad here late Sunday with a tune of regional music and a depiction of the rich cultural heritage of the province. Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) in collaboration with Shah Abdul Latif Social and Cultural Association (SASCA) arranged the Sindhi Cultural Night which included music and folk dances. Farah Lashari and Ayaz Samoo presented Sindhi melodies to entertain the fun lovers of twin cities. While the National Performing Art Group of PNCA presented regional dances by the performers attired in vibrant costumes. The event showcased Sindhi music and regional dances by local Sindhi artists. Atiring traditional costumes of their particular region, folk musicians also presented regional melodies to mesmerize the audience as well as highlight the value of the rich cultural heritage of the country. The event is part of the regular activities of PNCA to preserve and promote the musical heritage of different areas of the country and give recognition to the folk artists for their contribution in their field as well as provide quality entertainment to the people by the performance of popular artistes. —APP

PAL to host inaugural of book "Muhammad in Modern Times"

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Academy of Letters (PAL) and Literary Organization Zavia will host the inaugural ceremony of Uxi Mufti's book "Muhammad in Modern Times" on December 13. Former Chairman PAL Iftekhar Arif will preside over the inaugural ceremony while Chairman PAL Dr. Muhammad Yousuf Khushk will grace the occasion as guest of honour. In addition to that renowned scholars including Dr. Khalid Masood, Justice Dr. Muhammad Al-Ghazali, Mohammad Hameed Shahid, Professor Dr. Najeeba Arif and Sara Shahab would express their views about the book. Talking to APP, cultural expert and the author of "Muhammad in Modern Times" Uxi Mufti said that the book has been written for non-believers and students which have built their knowledge bank from internet sources. —APP

Coordinated efforts mitigated flood damages

He said that NFRCC was created for the specific purpose of emergency response and it has successfully completed its mission and has now been dissolved

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives, Professor Ahsan Iqbal said here on Monday that coordinated efforts between federal, and provincial governments and all concerned institutions helped in mitigating flood damages. Addressing the National Flood Response Coordination Centre (NFRCC) function here, he said the flood damages could have been much more, however, the

collaboration and coordinated efforts helped in evading the huge tragedy. Appreciating the NFRCC's role, the minister said that the world was pleasantly surprised over how Pakistan handled such a huge calamity with less human loss. He said the capability and coordination for disaster management under the umbrella of NFRCC played a great role in helping the country to cope with the challenge. "This shows the power of collaboration," he said adding no matter how great a challenge, if



we have the ability of collaborating, we can handle every challenge. He said that the efforts of all three services, provinces, private sector, humanitarian organizations, civil soci-

ety and friends of Pakistan were positively synergized and it had a huge impact in mitigating the losses. He thanked all the concerned people on behalf of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif for the hard work and efforts they had put in during the recent floods. He said that NFRCC was created for the specific purpose of emergency response and it has successfully completed its mission and has now been dissolved. However, the minister added, this does not mean the challenge has ended. He said challenges

were still there however it would be dealt with a new format and institutional setting with provinces adding the relevant departments that would monitor all the rehabilitation and reconstruction effort that is going on. The minister said that the government had prepared a framework for making Pakistan a climate-resilient country adding the framework would be presented before the international community. He said, Pakistan's economy, which was already struggling to survive, was

inflicted losses of over \$30 billion. However, he added, with the help of social support, the government managed to come out of the crisis mostly at its own resources. He said that Pakistan was the most vulnerable country facing climate change. He said its principle stand has been accepted internationally during the 27th United Nations Climate Change conference that the countries responsible for global warming should accept their responsibility and help the victim countries.

Traders urged for high-rise car parking in Abpara market

ISLAMABAD: The traders of Abpara Market urged the authorities concerned to build high-rise car parking, in a manner to consider the problems being faced by the citizens due to congested parking and encroachments. Talking to APP, President All Pakistan Trade Union and Abpara Market Ajmal Baloch has said that due to increasing encroachment and congested roads, parking had always been an issue for citizens and traders. "Business is being affected and customers are choosing other markets having wider parking" he added. He said that the respect of traders is top priority and urged Capital Development Authority (CDA) to take necessary action against encroachment in the market. He said Abpara market is being the gate of Islamabad should be extended and a flower market should also be set up. He said the issue could be resolved with the unity and efforts of traders. —APP



ISLAMABAD: A guest looking at the Christmas Tree installed on the occasion of German Christmas Market Bazar held at the Islamabad Serena Hotel. DNA

Karachi saw the biggest rise in PM2.5 concentration

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Karachi saw the biggest rise in PM2.5 concentration among major cities in the world from 2018 to 2021, according to the report "China's 10-Year Path toward Cleaner Air: An Asian Perspective" released last week by Clean Air Asia (CAA), an international NGO that works for better air quality and healthier cities throughout Asia. Gwadar Pro reported on Monday that the report gives an overview of air quality in Asia, some European countries, and Ameri-

ca. Air quality in megacities covered in the analysis has generally improved over the past decade, particularly in East Asia. From 2018 to 2021, of the nine cities that saw their three-year moving average of PM2.5 concentration drop by more than 10 percent, eight were in East Asia, six of them in China. South Asia fared less well, with Karachi and Islamabad ranking among the lowest. According to the report, nearly half of Asian countries have current air quality not up to local standards, including Pakistan. China is improving the fastest in air quality in terms

of the population-weighted annual average concentration of PM2.5 between 2012 and 2019, according to the State of Global Air. Also, from 2013 to 2021, the annual average PM2.5 concentration in China decreased by about 56 percent and the average SO2 concentration fell by about 78 percent. The report attributes China's rapid decline in air pollutants to its strict emission standards. Take fuel sulfur content as an example, China reduced the sulfur content of both diesel and gasoline to as low as 10ppm in 2017, bridging the gap with developed coun-

tries. In particular, China's new energy vehicle (NEV) leads the continent. As the world's largest NEV seller and owner, China's NEV annual compound growth rate between 2011 and 2021 reached 91.3 percent, much higher than the global average. Since 2015, China has become the world's largest NEV market, accounting for half of the global market. Most Asian countries are in the initial stage in the promotion of NEV, but they have put forward medium and long-term development goals, promising broad prospects in terms of automotive energy transformation.

Early payment of \$1b of Sukuk bonds lauded

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain on Monday lauded the government for early payment of one billion dollars of Sukuk bonds. The central bank has paid one billion dollars against bonds two days ahead of schedule and with this, the rumors of Pakistan's bankruptcy have been proven wrong. Mian Zahid Hussain said that the position of Finance Minister Ishaq Dar has also been proven correct, while the anxiety of international investors has also decreased, but investors will be fully satisfied when there is political stability in the country. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that after the end of the long march, there is a possibility of improvement in the political situation. If the economy is prioritized instead of politics while taking important decisions, the financial condition of the country will improve, he added. The business leader said that Pakistan's reputation in the global market has improved due to early payment, and the value of Pakistani bonds has improved, but the concerns of investors have not gone away.

Saudi Arabia has also extended the deadline for the return of three billion dollars kept in Pakistan the day Pakistan paid one billion dollars. The Saudi decision has strengthened the confidence in the Pakistani economy. Mian Zahid Hussain said that the comparison between Pakistan and Sri Lanka in terms of bonds is not correct because Pakistani bonds are hardly seven to eight percent of the debt and the remaining is commercial, multilateral, and bilateral. On the other hand, Sri Lanka's half of the debt consisted of international bonds. He further said that fifteen months ago, Pakistan's foreign exchange reserves were twenty billion dollars, now they are seven and a half billion dollars, which can barely bear the burden of five to six weeks of imports. Presently, the textile sector has come under pressure, while the remittances through legal channels are also decreasing due to the increasing difference in the dollar rate in the inter-bank and open market. In these circumstances, the government should make an aggressive export and remittance policy to increase the foreign exchange reserves so that the necessary imports can continue, otherwise, a crisis situation will arise in various sectors of the country, many businesses will go bankrupt and hundreds of thousands of people will lose their jobs. —DNA

Patras Bokhari remembered on death anniversary

ISLAMABAD: Prominent humorist, writer, broadcaster and diplomat, Syed Ahmed Shah, known as Patras Bokhari, was remembered on his 64th death anniversary on Monday. Patras Bokhari who also

served as permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, was a prominent part of the Muslim Intellectuals in South Asia. "Writers like Patras Bokhari are born in centuries and the writings of Patras Bokhari have a great contribution for keeping Urdu language alive. His personality has many aspects as he was a poet, teacher, author and broadcaster who served Radio Pakistan at his best," said Akhtar Raza Saleemi, Poet, Novelist and Editor in Chief at Pakistan Academy of Letters (PAL).

"Patras Bokhari's writings will be there whenever Urdu literature is discussed and for the young generation, those having interest in Urdu language must read essays written by Patras to complete their knowledge about Urdu," Akhtar Raza said while talking to APP. Patras Bokhari was Born in Peshawar, British India to a Kashmiri family and studied at Edwardes Mission School in Peshawar and moved to Lahore where he studied English literature at the Government College. Shah

moved to United Kingdom where he received his Tripos from the Emmanuel College, Cambridge. He returned to Lahore where he taught English at Government College in 1927. He moved to eventually become Director General of All India Radio in Delhi and then Principal of Government College. He was appointed as the country's envoy to the UN in New York City from 1951 and 1954, followed by the Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations for Information until 1958. —APP

Digital warfare a national security threat

UJALA SIDDIQUE

The near-total inundation of society by digitisation has wide-reaching effects on various aspects of human activity and culture. The threat does not arise from computers but from states and non-state actors with hostile intent. Economic and critical infrastructure networks vulnerable to digital attacks are considered a threat to national security. In 1991, the US used a computer virus known as AF/91 during the Gulf War against Iraq. It was able to disable the country's air defence system. In 2005, a hacker with the alias 'Titan Rain' carried out a cyber-attack against the US. In 2007, Russia carried out a cyber-attack against Estonia, obtaining access to the country's websites and various ministries and organizations. These examples highlight the varied and broad range of impact that cyber-attacks can have on nations. There are different categories and types of cyber-attacks. Some types of cyber-attacks are: Denial-of-service (DoS) and distributed denial-of-service (DDoS) attacks simply incapacitate networks by overloading them with overwhelming dum-

my activity, whereas other attacks such as Man-in-the-middle (MitM) attack, Phishing attacks, Drive-by-download attack, Password Attack, SQL Injection Attack, Cross-site scripting (XSS) attack, Eavesdropping attack, and Malware Attack can cause greater levels of damage from stealing critical information, taking entire networks offline or even destroying invaluable data. Alex Stamos, Facebook's former chief security officer, tweeted that "While it is rarely discussed publicly, India and Pakistan have been embroiled in continuous offensive cyber and information operations against each other for years. This might be a situation where that low-level invisible war becomes a destabilising factor." There have been multiple reports of both countries having their official government agency websites hacked and defaced, as well as documented instances of official information being stolen and put up for sale online. The Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) published a report, Economic Impact of Cybercrime

— Not Slowing Down, that concluded that losses due to cybercrime amounted to US \$600 billion in just 2018 — a whopping 1 percent of global GDP. This does not touch upon the major threats in the security and defense domains due to the weaponisation of digital attacks. Attacks on digital infrastructure pose a serious threat to Pakistan, which needs to be able to properly address the increasing number of cyber-crimes. In Pakistan, there are about 194 million cellular network subscriptions and 124 million broadband internet users, which means that society relies on technology to a great extent in everyday life. According to the FIA (Federal Investigation Agency), cases of cybercrime have consistently gone up over the years. Pakistani banks have expanded their operations from traditional in-person services to digitally enabled branchless banking, where ATM fraud has been steadily on the rise, as well as identity theft to perpetrate financial crime. Attention needs to be paid to non-traditional threats to national security. As the country's reliance on technology increases, it is becoming increasingly vulnerable. Different types of cyber-crimes have been known to affect Pakistan's communication systems. There is also the issue of sophisticated spyware being deployed to infiltrate and compromise communications of critical

importance and steal over 13 billion pieces of communications, completely shattering any notion of privacy in communication and online activity. This issue has raised serious concerns about Pakistan's national security as compromised officials and organisations pose serious security risks. In this regard, Israel pushes far above its weight in the realm of digital security and attacks. It spends a huge amount of resources and effort on its own cyber warfare capabilities, reaping benefits from it. Stuxnet — the first known cyberweapon — designed by Israeli and US intelligence, was able to infiltrate and hamper Iran's nuclear programme. Israel is currently ranked as one of the top five countries in the world when it comes to cyber warfare capability and has manufactured extremely powerful spyware that was sold to at least 14 countries, as per NSO group's (the spyware manufacturers) response to questioning by a European Parliamentary committee investigating the matter. Pakistan should sign the international treaties such as the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime to make its cyber defence stronger. These will help the country to develop its digital infrastruc-

ture and improve its defensive capabilities against digital attacks and tackle rampant cybercrime. To enforce the laws related to cybercrime, a bill called ETO (Electronic Transactions Ordinance) was passed in 2002 and then an electronic and cybercrime bill was passed in 2007 and the third set of laws passed in Pakistan pertaining to digital crimes was the Prevention of Electronic Crimes Act, 2016 (PECA). The government has also established a response cell named National Response for Cyber Crime in Pakistan. In addition, a dedicated effort was initiated to bolster cyber security and enhance cyber warfare capabilities under the aegis of the PAF with the setting up of the Cyber Security Academy, and the Cyber Centre of Excellence planned under the National Aerospace Science and Technology Park (NASTP) initiative. This future-oriented strategy will help Pakistan to develop robust digital infrastructure and capabilities that are resistant to cyber-attacks and disruptions and expand its technological reach.

The writer is a researcher at the Centre for Aerospace and Security Studies (CASS), Lahore.

Commissioner for completion of projects

RAWALPINDI: Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Saqib Manan on Monday directed the authorities concerned to swiftly complete construction work on ongoing development projects of Rawalpindi division. Chairing a meeting held here, he reviewed the progress on the development schemes of the division. He directed that the deputy commissioners concerned to monitor progress of different development schemes and ensure quality construction work in their respective districts. He further said that out of total 558 development schemes across the division, 403 projects were ongoing while 155 new projects were also launched for which funds amounting to Rs 24,156 million had been released. The commissioner said welfare of the people was first priority of the incumbent government and directed the authorities that no compromise should be made in quality of construction work and regular monitoring should be ensured. The officers concerned were directed to visit project sites on regular basis and update the Commissioner Office about the progress of the schemes. The officers should also monitor the construction work through Smart Monitoring of Development Projects App and ensure that data of their relevant schemes were updated regularly. All-out effort should be made to complete development projects within stipulated time frame and once completed these projects would bring relief to general public. DC Rawalpindi Shoaib Ali, Additional Commissioner revenue Kanza Khan, DC Attock Hasan Cheema, Director Development, Additional Deputy Commissioner Revenue, Abdullah Mahmood, ADC Murree Ahmad Hasan Ranjha, DCs of Chakwal and Talagang and Heads of other departments concerned attended the meeting. —APP

Political stability vital for progress & prosperity

ISLAMABAD: Qaumi Watan Party Chairman Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao on Monday said political and economic stability was crucial to bring progress, prosperity and development to the country. "No country can chart on the path of progress, prosperity and development without economic and political stability," he said while talking to media here. He urged all the political parties to set aside their differences and sit together to steer the country out of the current crisis. "No single party can pull the country out of the current economic crisis," he added.

Aftab Sherpao said his party always raised inflation and others problems being faced by the common men in the meetings with the government," he added. To a question about the dissolution of Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies by Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chairman, he said, Imran Khan had no right to force the federal and other provincial governments to dissolve the assemblies. He said like India and other countries, elections can be held separately in the provinces. —APP

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Crude oil cap not the right way forward

Will the \$60-per-barrel price cap on Russian crude oil work as European Union countries and Washington expect?

They hope that the cap will restrict Russia's primary source of revenue for its special military operation in Ukraine, while simultaneously preserving the stability of global energy supplies.

A scheme of the US administration, which conceived of the price cap as a way to relax Europe's original plan to completely ban the insurance and financing of Russian oil shipments, will not necessarily work as the Joe Biden administration expects.

Russia could and will very likely refuse to sell its crude oil under the cap. Large buyers of Russian oil may not respect the Western rules and the private sector will struggle to comply with new requirements. Russia has large buyers of its crude oil besides EU countries and it will not be difficult for Russia to defy the cap and refuse to sell its crude under the cap. It is quite likely the stability of the global energy market will be disrupted rather than Russia's own revenue as a result. The fact that Washington talked EU countries into accepting this cap rather than one at a much lower price points to its own concerns that a full ban could jeopardize global oil markets and send crude oil prices as high as \$140 a barrel. Which would undoubtedly lead to a new surge in energy prices and further fuel inflation.

Any surge in oil prices and inflation would have an impact on the well-being of people in European countries and the United States. For residents in EU countries on whose life the conflict between Russia and Ukraine has already taken a toll, the cap will only make things even more difficult. Whatever happens after the cap takes effect, EU countries will hardly benefit and people in the EU will continue to suffer; so will people in the US as it is only wishful thinking that Russia will do as Washington expects. Washington continues to provide military aid to Ukraine as it wants the hostilities to last, from which it hopes to further benefit. But the longer the conflict lasts, the more lives will be lost on both sides, and the more people in EU countries will suffer. The war will also continue to plague the development of the global economy. For the well-being of people in both Ukraine and Russia, for a better life for people in EU countries and for the recovery of the global economy, efforts should be made on the part of EU countries and the US to strive for an end of the war through talks. That is the right way forward.



The crisis humanity can no longer ignore

In an essay entitled *The Sense of Wonder*, the American conservationist Rachel Carson suggested two questions to make us think more deeply about our natural environment. "What if I had never seen this before? What if I knew I would never see it again?" Published in 1955, Carson's call to mindfulness was influential in the burgeoning postwar environmental movement. But despite campaigners' best efforts, the sense of jeopardy lurking within her second question is now acute. Wild animal populations are declining annually by about 2.5% as a result of habitat loss, invasive species, pollution, climate change, overfishing and overhunting. Since 1970, overall numbers are down by 69%. Livestock and the human beings who farm them now account for 96% of all the mammals on Earth. The Sumatran tiger, the Bornean orangutan and the hellbender salamander are among the million animal and plant species judged perilously close to extinction. In Canada this week, conservationists will attempt to persuade the world's governments to summon up the will to address this crisis. Like the climate emergency, it is the direct consequence of human activity, but has nothing like the same high profile. The Montreal Cop15 summit – which begins on Wednesday – is part of the wider Cop process launched in 1992, when the United Nations established three separate conventions on climate change, biodiversity and desertification. But since then, despite 196 nations signing up for action, the record on biodiversity has been one of lamentable failure. Of 20 targets set at the last major summit in Japan in 2010 – ranging from tackling pollution to protecting coral reefs – none were fully met. In the recent words of Andrew Terry, the director of conservation at the Zoological Society of London, "absolutely no progress has been made" in slowing the rate of species attrition. There is no coming back from extinction, so Montreal is an opportunity that the planet cannot afford to miss. But a paradigm shift is required to make progress. For too long, governments have treated biodiversity as a secondary and separate issue, focusing their energy on global heating. In reality, as images of polar bears on shrinking ice illustrate, the two crises overlap. The ecosystems that sustain natural variety also help regulate the climate. The forests, coral reefs and mangroves of the world, which provide a home to a dazzling array of species, capture carbon that would otherwise contribute to rising temperatures. Rapacious economic activity and environmental indifference is thus destroying natural equilibriums that protect us too. To exit this doom loop, a global conservation and restoration project is urgently required. This, in theory, will be the aim of a post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework to be discussed in Montreal. Draft targets include the protection of 30% of the world's land and sea from unsustainable exploitation, and a crackdown on pesticides, plastic waste and invasive species. Businesses may be asked to produce biodiversity impact assessments and plans for mitigation. Richer countries will be pushed to finance biodiversity conservation in the global south. A breakthrough is desperately needed. In Paris in 2015, a legally binding treaty committed the world's nations to action to tackle the climate crisis. Something similar is required in Montreal. But a roadmap will not be worth much if governments do not accept that investing to protect the world's biodiversity is not an optional extra. Disappointingly, no heads of state are expected to attend this week's summit – in stark contrast to the Cop27 climate talks in Egypt last month. That is not good enough. Our human fate is ultimately bound up with nature and the countless species hurtling towards extinction. Recognising that has become an existential necessity.

The SCO and the strategic perspective of Central Asia

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



Security problems and conflicts, especially the issue of Kashmir, became the extensive agenda of the organization. China was worried about the dilution of her role in the SCO after the inclusion of India while Russia understands that the inclusion of India as a full member of the organization would be a check on Chinese influence within the group, unlike India Russia relations which have been cool since the last decade.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization is a leading organization for political, economic, and security concerns. Security challenges of the post-Cold War era necessitate new thinking of cooperation and security at the state level. In 1990, China decided to undertake a more active role in developing a new forum to address security problems, especially on its periphery. The converging policies of China and Russia founded the forum of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. China and Russia are two major members of the organization. As the primary leader of the organization, China offers economic cooperation to Central Asian states whereas Russia offers political-military cooperation. The SCO brought together China, Russia, and the Cen-

tral Asian states with six dialogue partners and four observers. The membership was extended further outwards with India and Pakistan as full members of the organization. Turkmenistan is the only Central Asian state which is not a member of the SCO and sends her representative as a guest due to endless neutrality. The initial mandate of the organization was to promote regional security and protect member states from non-state security threats. The SCO's policymakers always argue that the organization is not an alliance and not a balancing tool against the West or any other state. In the region, China is a key player of the Central Asian states' economies, especially after the development of the One Belt One Road, and Russia is still acting as an elder in Eurasian politics and security. By contrast, the United States started disengaging from the region under the Obama Administration, but under the administration of Trump, there are signs that US forces may stay in Afghanistan. The geographic reach of the organization significantly expanded to India and Pakistan. Security problems and conflicts, especially the issue of Kashmir, became the extensive agenda of the organization. China was worried about the dilution of her role in the SCO after the inclusion of India while Russia understands that the inclusion of India as a full member of the organization would be a check on Chinese influence within the group, unlike India Russia relations which have been cool since the last decade. India understands that Chinese economic diplomacy in South Asia, particularly CPEC, may be a plan against Delhi to contain her regional strategic interests. India is the only country in the SCO which does not endorse the Chinese project BRI (Belt and Road Initiative). In this context, India has launched the project of developing the Iranian seaport of Chabahar to counter Chinese influence in the Indian Ocean. India and Pakistan have issues relating to the current border situation and Kashmir. That's why during the Astana Summit, the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan could not go beyond customary greetings. However, there are differences of interests among the SCO countries, but they are facing some common threats regarding terrorism, extremism, separatism, and drug trafficking. Some typical threats originate from the vicinity Afghanistan. Kazakhstan is facing these threats and has balanced her foreign and security policy towards major powers of the region along with Beijing and Moscow. It can do business with the Russian Federation through the CSTO and with China through the SCO. Within the framework of SCO mechanisms, cooperation is expanding in the law enforcement and security realm, oil and gas pipeline security, counterterrorism, and counter-drug trafficking. Kazakhstan has played active role in several issues within the SCO. The Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan called on NATO to establish dialogue with the SCO in February 2013. It was a message that the SCO was not an anti-NATO bloc. During the SCO Dushanbe Summit in 2014, the Presidents of Kazakhstan and Tajikistan

stressed that the SCO member states should solve existing border issues and ensure food supply security. In addition, they noted the issue of water shortage that might affect the stability of the region. In December 16, 2017, Bishkek-Moscow signed prominent documents for cooperation. This document is a vital document for Kyrgyzstan's survival because it is a weak state without energy resources. For the same reason, Kyrgyzstan joined the SCO, as well as the CSTO military alliance led by Russia. The concept of Kyrgyz foreign policy is focuses on cooperation with neighbors and the SCO. Kyrgyzstan joined the Shanghai Cooperation Organization after the security assurance of the primary member of the forum. Russia wanted cooperation between the SCO and CSTO in 2003, but Uzbekistan threatened to leave the SCO due to its aversion of the CSTO. Uzbekistan left the CSTO in 1999. Uzbekistan does not participate in SCO military exercises, which Tashkent suggested lessen the security of Shanghai Cooperation Organization members. The Uzbek President again demonstrated an ambivalent and independent nature of his country in regional and international politics because its needs a safe transit route for foreign trade. The SCO forum is a vital source to pursue this objective as Uzbekistan does not like to be a part of any military alliance and organization such as the CSTO. It wants to be neutral. Although Uzbekistan and Russia have a difficult relationship, both are larger foreign trade partners. Karimov had previously broken Uzbek policy regarding the resolution of the Ukraine Crisis and had criticized Moscow, but then stated that Russian interests should be taken in to account. However, Uzbekistan fears that the SCO might develop in the wrong direction and suggested that the SCO should remain outside any bloc and military-political alliance. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization has developed as a border arm control organization via its regional counterterrorism body. Cooperation among the members and observers is at a great level but lacks common targets. The wideranging agenda of the SCO and diverse membership weaken its capabilities and potential. The member states and observers of the organization have their own agenda and national interests. For instance, Russia is keen to reestablish its previous status in Central Asia as well as its superpower one at the international level. All the while, China is seeking markets in Central Asia for expanding its economy and energy resources to keep her industries going. Some regional states consider the organization as a guarantee for survival, especially with the protection of China and Russia. The mixture of divergent objectives of each member and observer of the organization is not common. There is no limit of divergent objectives to aforesaid China-Russia relations but they are found within the SCO. For instance, China-Kazakhstan relations were also disturbed during the Peace Mission drills in 2007. However, Kazakhstan was a member and participant of the exercises, but could not conduct them due to internal problems of legislation and thus did not al-

low Chinese troops to go through her territory. A year later, Kazakhstan offered to host SCO war games. Another issue is the rivalry of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. During Peace Mission 2012, Uzbekistan didn't participate in exercises and refused the request of Kazakhstan for passing through her soil. The Uzbek troops made a detour through Kyrgyzstan to reach Tajikistan. These issues are a question mark on the unity of SCO members. It looks that the organization is still unable to resolve some basic issues such as military transit via member state territories. Such differences and divergence of national interests and present cooperation among the states might change into disputes when considering the tense relations between Pakistan and India. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization is a significant forum for the member states. The Central Asian countries are expecting that the SCO forum is not a single country-dominated organization and that they would play a significant role within the forum. Furthermore, SCO partners feel endangered by the China-Russia tandem. Both China and Russia have their own independent interests. In fact, the organization is dominated by the two great powers of the region. They also justifiably have an effect on the Central Asian states. Both countries can challenge each other if one undertakes an action which causes instability in the region. Such an environment is beneficial for the member states of Central Asia as well as South Asia. Hence, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization is an advantageous organization towards its members and observer states. There are opportunities for the member states to explore business and economic cooperation with one another. The Central Asian states pursue their own national interests within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. China-Russia are the leading powers that contest each other and therefore are incapable of unilaterally ruling the other members of the organization. The SCO is the best forum for the regional states; moreover the SCO demands lesser rule than the CSTO. The CSTO is under the control of Russia and without China as a counter-balance. Moscow has superiority in the CSTO and limits the liberty of the member states. The SCO is providing a platform for bilateral arrangement and lot of liberty for its member states. Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan are depending on Russia to fulfill their security and energy needs. On the other hand, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan do not depend on Moscow for security but have intentions of friendly and pragmatic relations. Beijing and Moscow are eager to share the burden of security of the region at the expense of their own strategic interests without demanding any domestic transformations from the regional states. Consequently, the SCO has emerged as a convenient place for the member states, particularly the Central Asian ones, to preserve the domestic status quo by accommodating the ambitions of China and Russia within a single framework.

The economic calamity of flooding

Iqra Munawar

According to Press Releases | National Weather Forecasting Centre, Islamabad, 2022 states that the office has already been informed about the torrential monsoon rains expected in the country that may generate flash flooding or land sliding in different areas in Pakistan. So, there is a dire need to take precautionary measures during the forecast period. Despite the flood alert by the National weather forecasting department in the month of June 2022 still, preventive measures were still not taken. The current situation could have been controlled by the government.

When you have a chronic disease or someone tells you that you have an illness and you don't have much time to live, you plan everything accordingly, and so is the situation Pakistan is facing currently. Rain is always associated with blessings but sometimes it becomes a disaster as has recently happened in Pakistan. After the economic crisis in Pakistan due to political instability and the government's failure to make strong economic strategies, the flood devastations added fuel to the fire. Every year monsoon rains bring devastation and huge destruction to multiple cities in Pakistan and government seems least bothered to take precautionary measures and to make a plan on how to overcome this event. Pakistan is responsible for less than 1% of the world's planet-warming gases, yet it is the eighth most vulnerable nation to the climate crisis. Pakistan is paying a hefty price, not only with lives but almost everything from agricultural lands to the industry has been destroyed. The recent flood devastation has taken children from their mothers, Husbands from their wives and has led families to the never-ending pain of missing their loved ones. The flood has not just taken human lives but livestock too. Heartbreaking stories are coming out of the flood areas. One of the videos made rounds on social media where the family head had to choose his livestock over his child to feed the rest of his family. The loss can be around 30-45 %

including livestock and crop damages stated in (Newspaper article), which create a food shortage in the near future as it is an economic hit for those people whose livelihood is dependent on agricultural products. According to Press Releases | National Weather Forecasting Centre, Islamabad, 2022 states that the office has already been informed about the torrential monsoon rains expected in the country that may generate flash flooding or land sliding in different areas in Pakistan. So, there is a dire need to take precautionary measures during the forecast period. Despite the flood alert by the National weather forecasting department in the month of June 2022 still, preventive measures were still not taken. The current situation could have been controlled by the government. The most concerning effect this flood is having is the economic crisis and famine Pakistan will have to face as we all know Agriculture is the base of Pakistan's economy, which depends intensely on its significant yields. For many farmers, the crops they depend on to feed their families were ruined when floods swept through their fields and washed away everything they had worked so hard to produce. A large chunk of our exports is agriculture products which represent around 18.9% of Pakistan's Gross domestic product and utilizes around 42.3% of the workforce. This time around 18000sq km of agricultural land was wiped out-e 56.26km2 in KPK,

4571km2 in Punjab, 462.5km2 in Baluchistan, and 13,264km2 in Sindh destroyed most of our crops (Aljazeera.com) and 7,50,000 livestock killed (press release int. rescue committee) Economists have been predicting these figures, however, this is just the tip of the iceberg and the full extent of this damage is yet to be known. This time these floods destroyed our vast hectares of crops which negatively affect our foreign exchange. Climate calamity has turned into a principal challenge of today's world which includes changes in weather conditions and climatic temperatures. It is a matter of fact that these issues antagonistically influence other things as well. People have been deprived of food, shelter, and the basic essential need that clean water, and as a result, people are forced to live in the open sky, having dirty water to drink which automatically makes them less immune to their unhealthy environment. Over the past months, a widespread and deadly flood has forced many Pakistani families to evacuate. They are now living in tents or temporary shelters. Different national and international aid agencies come forward to help and bring aid to affected families. Although many are willing to help, it is still the responsibility of the government when to make preliminary measures as soon as the information about floods starts spreading. Not only that measures should also be taken for future purposes. It is essential that we have a

long-term solution for this as it will help with the stability of the country. More dams should be built to control the pressure of the water. This can be utilized in many ways such as providing water for irrigation to the agricultural lands or as a resource for clean drinkable water or to generate electricity etc. It is a fact that when we have full utilization of rainwater, it will have a positive impact on the agriculture sector too which can lead to a more economically stable country. Therefore, with current aid and help, a more stable and long-term solution is in need. Besides this, the upcoming inflation due to the supply chain distortions and potential food shortages including rice and wheat are now the upcoming major issues requiring the government's urgent attention. More than half of the standing food crops, including a majority of the cotton crops, have been washed away by the floods while water in many agricultural areas, particularly the Sindh province, is not expected to drain by the time the wheat crop needs to be sowed. This presents a serious food security and economic challenge to the government as well as a financial shock to the farmers. Resultantly, it is essential to also invest in the economic reintegration of the affected people in addition to the infrastructural rehabilitation. **The author is associated with the Pakistan Institute of Development Economics (PIDE), Islamabad, and can be reached via**

Briefs

PM all praise for Pak-US cooperation

FROM PAGE 01
interest of the federal government to provide clean, green and cheap energy to the people of the country. He said the WAPDA had not only initiated new hydropower projects, but also been rehabilitating and upgrading its existing hydel power stations including Mangla to maximize the ratio of environment-friendly and low-cost hydel electricity in the national grid. Prime Minister of Azad Kashmir Sardar Tanveer Ilyas, Special Assistant to PM Tariq Fatemi, Secretary Water and Power Division Hassan Nisar, and senior officials were present. The prime minister also visited the refurbished units of the dam, where he was given a detailed briefing about the project.

PTI intends to decrease acrimony...

FROM PAGE 01
elections can bring stability in the country," he told reporters. Meanwhile, Chaudhry asserted that his party was seeking "betterment" in ties with the armed forces and judiciary, not "deterioration" of their relationship. "We don't want our differences with the army or judiciary to increase," he said. "We are trying continuously that our differences with the institutions decrease. "But we are seeing that constantly, despite our efforts for betterment, [there is] deterioration in ties with the judiciary and the armed forces. Some elements are exacerbating the differences," the PTI leader claimed. He said that some people, "maybe the government are trying to ruin the relations we are trying to improve". Talking about the dissolution of assemblies, Chaudhry said that the party had decided to hold a meeting with the senior leadership on Tuesday (December 6).

He admitted that there was a difference of opinion among lawmakers over submitting their resignations, but in the same breath contended that Imran had the final call on the matter. "In this regard, we have kicked off meetings. We have called Lahore's MNAs and MPAs to hear them out. Tomorrow, Imran has called a meeting of the party's senior leaders to mull the strategy relating to politics and dissolution [of assemblies]." The PTI leader also highlighted that the party was receiving notices from the Federal Investigation Agency. "There are reports in the media suggesting that the Election Commission of Pakistan is initiating action for the disqualification of Imran as the party chief. "It is a mistake [...] the political scene in Pakistan is incomplete without Imran Khan," he added. Former information minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Fawad Chaudhry has said they want to decrease acrimony with the army and judiciary.

UN rights chief moves Kyiv meeting underground

GENEVA: The UN rights chief said Monday he had met with activists in an underground shelter in Kyiv as missiles rained down, and called for an end to the "senseless" war.

Volker Turk, who took over as the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in October, arrived on Sunday for a four-day visit to Ukraine, which has been ravaged by war since Russia's full-scale invasion in February. He had been scheduled to meet with a number of human rights defenders in the Ukrainian capital on Monday, but then air sirens sounded and they had to move into an underground shelter. In a shaky video seen by AFP, he was among a large group moving quickly along an alley and then down a flight of steps lined with cinder block walls as alarms wailed. "I was on the point of meeting human rights defenders on my second day in Kyiv, and I had to move the meeting down here, to this shelter... because air sirens went off," Turk said in the video, provided by his office. - APP

England defeat Pakistan in first Test after thrilling finish

Pakistan fought gamely before being all out in the absorbing final session, with Saud Shakeel top-scoring for them with 76

SPORTS DESK

RAWALPINDI: England have defeated Pakistan by 74 runs in the first Test after a thrilling finish on the fifth and final day in Rawalpindi. England bowled out Pakistan for 268 runs in the second innings to clinch victory. Pakistan began the fifth and final day on 80-2 after being set a target of 343 for victory, but Ollie Robinson and James Anderson took four wickets apiece to dash the home team's hopes. Robinson, who claimed five wickets, bagged the award for Player of the Match. "The pitch was not favourable but we got it going. I'm just proud of every single man. We knew it would be hard but we just toiled away. Batters gave us the opportunity scoring as quickly as they did. Playing on Pakistan on these tough wickets - probably the best Test match I've had," said Robinson during the post-match presentation ceremony. Pakistan



fought gamely before being all out in the absorbing final session, with Saud Shakeel top-scoring for them with 76. The Ben Stokes-led unit lead the three-match series 1-0. On a flat pitch it seemed that the match was heading towards a draw but a smart declaration by England captain Stokes and a spir-

ited bowling effort in the second innings led the visitors to victory. With a total of 1768 runs, this was the highest-scoring five-day Test match in history. Only two timeless Tests in the 1930s had more runs scored. England are on their first Test tour of Pakistan since 2005, having declined to visit in the interim years on security grounds. It must be noted that England plundered runs on a lifeless wicket in Rawalpindi in the first innings. The visitors were finally all out for 657 - including a record 506 from the first day Thursday - with four batsmen scoring centuries off the hapless Pakistan bowling. In reply, three Pakistan batters scored centuries as the home side posted 579 in their first innings. In the second innings, England batted a run-rate of over seven to set Pakistan a daunting target of 343 runs. The second Test is in Multan from December 9-13, and the third in Karachi from December 17-21.

England braced for 'biggest test' against France

DOHA: Gareth Southgate admits England will face the "biggest test" of their World Cup ambitions when they face holders France in a blockbuster quarter-final on Saturday. Southgate's side recovered from a nervous start before powering to a 3-0 win against Senegal in Sunday's last-16 clash at the Al Bayt Stadium. England will return to the Al Khor desert at the weekend for a titanic showdown with a France side looking to become the first team to win successive World Cups since Brazil in 1958 and 1962. While England looked impressive once Jordan Henderson put them ahead against Senegal, with Harry Kane and Bukayo Saka also netting against the African champions, Southgate knows Didier Deschamps' team are a significant step up in class. "It is the biggest test we could face. They are world champions, with an incredible depth of talent and outstanding players. They are very hard to play against and score goals against."



Southgate said. "It's a fantastic challenge. It's a historic rivalry with great games from the past. It's a brilliant game for us to be involved in and test ourselves against the very best." Fuelled by Paris Saint Germain striker Kylian Mbappe, France beat Poland 3-1 in the last 16, just hours before England joined them in the quarter-finals. Mbappe struck twice against the Poles and already has five goals in this year's tournament.

"Mbappe is of course a world class player. He has already delivered big moments in this tournament and in previous tournaments," Southgate said. "Griezmann is also a phenomenal player, we know Giroud so well and they have outstanding midfield players as well. It is a huge test but one we are really looking forward to." England captain Harry Kane agreed with Southgate's glowing assessment of France, saying: "Saturday will be a really tough evening. France are a great team. They are the reigning champions. "If you want to win the World Cup you have to play the best sides in the world and France are definitely one of them." Although England have good reason to fear France, Southgate can counter by pointing out his team are rounding into form as they enter the business end of the tournament. -Agencies

West African leaders agree to create peacekeeping force

LAGOS: West African leaders have agreed to create an independent regional military force tasked with maintaining peace and security in the region. The leaders attending the 62nd ordinary session of the Authority of Heads of State and Government of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) decided on Sunday to "take care of our own security in the region," said Omar Aliou Touray, the new president of the ECOWAS commission. The West African heads of state, who were present at the New ECOWAS Headquarters building funded by the Chinese Government in Abuja, Nigeria, said they were "determined to establish a regional force that will intervene in the event of need, whether this is in the area of security, terrorism and restore constitutional order in member countries," he added. "The leaders are determined to establish a regional force that will intervene in the event of need, whether this is in the area of security, terrorism (or to) ... restore constitutional order in member countries," according to a communique from the leaders. ECOWAS also said their defense chiefs would meet next month to work out how it would operate. Touray said the latest decision of ECOWAS to create its own regional force would "re-structure our security architecture". The modalities and funding of the planned regional force will be considered by the bloc's defense chiefs in the second half of 2023, he added. The ECOWAS' new president stressed that such an operation could not be solely dependent on voluntary contributions. Touray also addressed other regional issues and called on Mali's ruling junta to release 46 Ivorian troops it has held since July. "We ask the Malian authorities to release the Ivorian soldiers by January 1, 2023 at the latest," he said. The Gambian diplomat said the West African bloc reserved the right to act if the soldiers were not released by January 1. -APP

Brazil great Pele not under palliative care

SAO PAULO: Brazil great Pele has not been moved to palliative care, one of his daughters said on Sunday, downplaying reports that he was in end-of-life care after the 82-year-old was hospitalized last week to re-evaluate his treatment as he battles colon cancer. One of the greatest footballers of all time, Pele had a tumour removed from his colon in September 2021 and has been receiving hospital care on a regular basis. Newspaper Folha de S.Paulo reported on Saturday that he was under palliative care after chemotherapy stopped having the expected results. Pele's doctors have not confirmed that information and his daughter, Flavia Nascimento, said the report was wide of the mark. -Agencies

FIFA World Cup 2022: schedule from knockout games until final

The World Cup in Qatar - the first to be held in the Middle East - started on November 20 and the final is scheduled to take place on December 18.

Brazil are favourites to win the tournament and seal a record-extending sixth title, with the likes of Argentina and defending champions France also fancied. Here is a look at the full schedule for the knockout rounds:

Round of 16

Saturday, December 3

Game 49 - Netherlands vs USA 6pm (15:00 GMT) - Khalifa International Stadium

Game 50 - Argentina vs Australia 10pm (19:00 GMT) - Ahmad bin Ali Stadium

Sunday, December 4

Game 52 - France vs Poland, 6pm (15:00 GMT) - Al Thumama Stadium

Game 51 - England vs Senegal, 10pm (19:00 GMT) - Al Bayt Stadium

Monday, December 5

Game 53 - Japan vs Croatia, 6pm

(15:00 GMT) - Al Janoub Stadium

Game 54 - Brazil vs South Korea, 10pm (19:00 GMT) - Stadium 974

Tuesday, December 6

Game 55 - Morocco vs Spain, 6pm (15:00 GMT) - Education City Stadium

Game 56 - Portugal vs Switzerland, 10pm (19:00 GMT) - Lusail Stadium

The World Cup in Qatar set a record with teams from all continents present in the round of 16 for the first time ever, FIFA said on Saturday.

The tournament, which concluded its group stage on Friday, saw a record for the Asian Football Confederation, with three teams (Australia, Japan and South Korea) reaching the knockout stages.

Two African teams, Senegal and Morocco, are also present in the knockout stages for the second time. In the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, Algeria and Nigeria reached the round of 16.

"The outcome of the group stage

shows the extent to which more countries have acquired the tools to compete at the highest level," FIFA's chief of global football development, Arsene Wenger said.

Quarter-final

Friday, December 9

Game 58 - Winners of 53 vs winners of 54, 6pm (15:00 GMT) - Education City Stadium

Game 57 - Netherlands v Argentina, 10pm (19:00 GMT) - Lusail Stadium

Saturday, December 10

Game 59 - Winners of 55 vs winners of 56, 6pm (15:00 GMT) - Al Thumama Stadium

Game 60 - England vs France, 10pm (19:00 GMT) - Al Bayt Stadium

France and England have stormed through to the quarter-finals of the World Cup in Qatar with a flurry of goals that saw them convincingly end the tournament runs of Poland and Senegal. Argentina also advanced to

the quarter-finals with a 2-1 win over Australia. The Netherlands, with a 3-1 win over the US, also earned a place in the quarter-final.

Semi-Final

Tuesday, December 13

Game 61 - Winners of 57 vs winners of 58, 10pm (19:00 GMT) - Lusail Stadium

Wednesday, December 14

Game 62 - Winners of 59 vs winners of 60, 10pm (19:00 GMT) - Al Bayt Stadium

Third-place playoff

Saturday, December 17

Losers of 61 vs losers of 62, 6pm (15:00 GMT) - Khalifa International Stadium

Final

Sunday, December 18

Winner of 61 vs winner of 62, 6pm (15:00 GMT) - Lusail Stadium

Al Jazeera's AI robot Kashaf believes that the final will be played between France and Brazil, with Brazil winning the tournament.

What Moroccan football team means to its fans

WEB DESK

DOHA: Can the team beat Spain on Tuesday and do what it has never done before - reach a football World Cup quarter-final? "This team is making the hearts of all Moroccans beat as one. The pride, excitement - and fear - this is something we've not seen since 1986," Yasmina Bennani, a Moroccan supporter in Qatar, told Al Jazeera. No member of the current squad was born in 1986 when Morocco last reached the last 16. "To go past the first round was the first football joy for the young generation and it's beautiful because what's happening on the pitch is bringing together children of the Moroccan diaspora, born all over Europe." For Boutaina Essadiki, the team's performance has been a shining light not only for Moroccans but all Arab football fans. "The win [over Spain] will be a victory for all Arab teams," Essadiki said. "I'm so proud to be a Moroccan right now. And given the situation, even if I wasn't a Moroccan I'd like to be one to join in and celebrate. "The team has honoured us by playing amazing football." Horia el-Hadad said she was not into football before the start of the World Cup. "The fact that it's taking place in an Arab country for the first time, where I live, has been extra meaningful for me, especially since Morocco is now the last remaining Arab team," she said. "I feel like the whole Arab world is behind the Moroccan team and the unity has been really heartwarming to see. If they manage to beat Spain, this will be a win for the Arab and African world." Ibtisam Amzil, who

works in Qatar's capital Doha, said she will "support the team till the end" no matter the result. "I'm just so happy with the team, I'm supporting them all the way to the end, just like all the Arab people," Amzil said. "God willing, we will beat Spain and move forward and fulfil the dreams of all Moroccans." Prior to the start of the tournament, Jordan's coach Adnan Hamad had labelled Morocco as the "dark horse

of the tournament". "The Moroccan team is considered the best Arab team playing in the Qatar World Cup. It has 20 professional players from major European leagues. In the qualifiers, it passed with flying colours and has a major chance of progressing from the group," Hamad, who hails from Iraq, had told Al Jazeera. "I believe that the Moroccan team has the best set of players, and the opportunity is

in their hands to be the dark horse of the tournament." Former world champions Spain are ranked seventh in the world, while Morocco sit 15 places below at 22. The gap in rankings, and titles, will not count for much when the two sides meet at Education City Stadium, according to Kawtar Ghfir, a Moroccan citizen based in Dubai.

"I hope that my team will win because they not only have the potential and professionalism from the players and the coach but also know very well how eager and thirsty the Moroccans are for a win," she said. "Spain is a strong team but that does not mean we're weak. We will win. "And that win will mean a lot to us because the country is in love with football, even more so now after watching the team do so well." The odds will be stacked against Morocco when the teams line up for the national anthems on Tuesday. Moroccans will hope the national anthem is not played for the last time at World Cup 2022. "As Moroccans, we typically feel utmost patriotism and pride when we hear our national anthem resound in a crowded football stadium," said Ismail Chokhman. "This World Cup has been quite special, where not only more than 40,000 fans were singing along with pride but also the crowd from other Arab nations supporting the same Moroccan team. I have witnessed Moroccan fans bursting in tears of joy after the first and second goals [against Belgium] and strangers hugging and kissing each other as if they always knew one another."



A draw against Croatia, a win against second-ranked Belgium and a defeat of Canada had Moroccans - in Qatar and around the world - dreaming again. But how much longer can they continue dreaming?

Imran felicitates AJK PM...

FROM PAGE 01

PTI Central Secretary General Asad Asad congratulated the PTI AJK over securing thumping victory in the LG polls and said that the captain crushed the imported government everywhere across the country. Asad Umar stated that there was no place left in Pakistan where the captain has not taken out the political funeral of this imported government. He said that the imported government was not acceptable. PTI Senior Vice President Fawad Chaudhry said that PTI government conducted local body elections in AJK after lapse of 31 years. He said that the federal government did everything what they can to secure victory, as they appointed officers, invested money and put pressure. However, he said that even then results of these elections clearly reflected that it was actually an electoral battle between PTI and independent candidates because both PML-N and PPP were buried under the burden of Nawaz Sharif and Asif Ali Zardari.

PTI Senior Vice President Dr. Shireen Mazari congratulated PTI AJK for trashing the political rivals in the LG polls. She said that once again people have shown their support for Imran Khan and PTI. Dr. Mazari stated that once again people have sent a clear message that they stand with PTI.

FO hopes Kabul attack to

FROM PAGE 01

on his Twitter handle, claimed that Taliban authorities had arrested a foreign operative of the Islamic State terrorist group for allegedly carrying out last week's assassination attempt on Pakistan's top diplomat in Kabul.

Envoy returns days after...

FROM PAGE 01

the attack, apprehend the culprits, hold them to account and take urgent measures to ensure the safety and security of Pakistani diplomatic personnel and citizens in Afghanistan. On the other hand, Taliban Spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid has said that a foreign member of the Daish has been arrested in the attack on the Pakistan Embassy in Kabul. Talking to the media in Kabul on Monday, he said that the foreign hand was involved in the attack on the Pakistan Embassy. "The investigation revealed that the attack was jointly organised by IS and rebels. Some foreign malicious circles are behind the attack and the aim was to create distrust between the two brotherly countries." Pakistan's Head Mission Obaidur Rehman survived the attack, while a security guard was injured.

British HC Turner leaving Pakistan

FROM PAGE 01

Currently serving as the British High Commissioner to Pakistan, a position he has held since December 2019, Christian Turner is expected to depart the country and take up his new role in London by mid-January 2023. This follows the end of a standard three year diplomatic posting.

Over his three years as High Commissioner, Christian Turner oversaw the UK's COVID-19 repatriation efforts, welcomed a UK Foreign Secretary visit, lobbied for and secured direct flights from the UK to Pakistan, initiated a drive to double UK-Pakistan trade by 2025, ensured that the UK was at the forefront of the international Pakistan flood crisis response and played a pivotal role in the promotion of sports diplomacy and the return of the England Men's cricket team to Pakistan following a 17 year absence. The British High Commissioner, Christian Turner, said the following: "The last three years have been some of the most rewarding of my life, both professionally and personally. I will continue closely to follow Pakistan's future in my new role in London."

Briefs

Sarkozy begins appeal against conviction

PARIS: France's former leader Nicolas Sarkozy today begins his appeal against a corruption conviction. Last year, a court found Sarkozy - who served as France's president from 2007 to 2012 - guilty of trying to bribe a judge and influence peddling during his time in office. "Influence peddling", also called "traffic of influence" or "trading in influence", is the practice of using one's influence in government or any position of authority to obtain preferential treatment for another, usually in return for a payment. The trial referred back to Sarkozy's and his lawyer's alleged attempts to bribe a judge with a job offer in exchange for confidential information on a legal case in which the 67-year-old former president was implicated. The case, which was looking into alleged illegal payments from L'Oréal heiress Liliane Bettencourt to fund Sarkozy's 2007 presidential campaign, was later dropped.

Sarkozy was given a three-year prison sentence. It was only the second time in modern French history that a former head of state was convicted of a crime - after Jacques Chirac in 2011 - and the first time a former president was found guilty of corruption.

His lawyer Thierry Herzog, 67, and the now-retired magistrate Gilbert Azibert, 75, were also found guilty and given the same sentence as the politician. -DNA

10 go on trial over Brussels attacks

BRUSSELS: Six years after the 2016 Brussels terror attacks, Belgium's largest-ever criminal trial has begun in the capital. Ten men are accused of being members of the terrorist cell that carried out the worst peacetime attack in Belgian history. A total of 32 people were killed and over 340 others injured in rush-hour bombings at Brussels' airport and on the city's metro system. The suspects include Salah Abdeslam, the only surviving member of the Belgium-based cell that killed 130 people in the Paris attacks in November 2015. Another defendant, Mohamed Abrini - known as the "man in the hat" - is suspected of abandoning his explosive device at the airport during the attacks. The eight other suspects are accused of supplying the Brussels attackers with weapons and logistical assistance or supporting the terrorist cell. Nine of the men face life imprisonment if convicted, while the tenth could be jailed for up to 10 years. One of the ten defendants is presumed dead in Syria and will be tried in absentia by the Brussels court of assizes. The attacks in Brussels came just four days after Belgian police had arrested Abdeslam at an apartment in Brussels' Molenbeek district. -DNA

Pope John Paul II covered up: Research

AMSTERDAM: Pope John Paul II covered up abuse by priests decades before becoming a pope, according to a Dutch investigative journalist. The pope ignored the sexual abuse of minors by some priests under his administration in Krakow, Poland, where he was archbishop, and did not dismiss them, Ekke Overbeek said. The news in the Dutch public broadcaster NOS included archival research that Overbeek conducted for three years in Poland, where Pope John Paul II was born and archbishop. According to the information based on the roommate of a priest named Eugeniusz Sargent, who was accused of child abuse, Sargent repeated the abuse although he apologized for it in the letter he wrote to John Paul II. Another priest, accused of abusing children, also spoke to John Paul II. "I found concrete cases of concrete priests in the Archdiocese of Krakow, where the future pope was archbishop, who abused children. -DNA

Morocco launches mega project to boost green, low-carbon economy

The new OCP investment plan is in line with King Mohammed VI's instructions relating to the need for a faster transition toward a carbon-neutral economy

DNA

RABAT: His Majesty King Mohammed VI of Morocco chaired, on Saturday December 03, 2022, the signing ceremony of the relevant protocol agreement between the government and the OCP group (Morocco's giant fertilizer producer and top exporter of phosphate fertilizers) concerning the new green investment program (2023-2027) of the Group. The ceremony comes in the morrow of the work meeting presided over by the Sovereign, last November 22, devoted to the development of renewable energies and to the new perspectives in the field. The

OCP group Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Mostafa Terrab, presented before His Majesty the King the results of the group's first investment program (2012) which helped solidly anchor OCP group in the fertilizers market. By trebling its fertilizer production capacity, OCP group is today positioned as one of the world's leading producers and exporters of phosphate fertilizers. Thanks to its partnership with Mohammed VI Polytechnic University in terms of research and development, the group was able to seize the opportunities offered by the new industrial and digital technologies. Its reliance on state-of-the-



art technologies, makes it led the way in sustainable agriculture and food security and develop an expertise in innovative technologies for balanced fertilization. The new OCP investment plan is in line with King Mohammed VI's instructions relating to the need for a faster transition toward

a carbon-neutral economy. It revolves around increasing the fertilizer production capacities, while committing to achieve carbon neutrality before 2040 by relying on the unique source of renewable energies as well as on the Kingdom's progress in this field. By investing in solar and wind

power, the group plans to feed all its industrial facilities with green energy by 2027. The low-carbon energy will also be used to supply the new seawater desalination capacities in order to meet the group's needs and provide the areas around OCP sites with drinking and irrigation water. This investment will help the group, first world importer of ammonia, to eventually end reliance on these imports by also investing in renewable energy - green hydrogen - green ammonia sector, allowing the group to strongly enter the market of green fertilizer and of fertilization solutions adapted to the specific needs of different soils

and crops. This ambition will be backed by supporting programs for industrial Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises and those operating in the sectors of energy and agriculture, hence, favoring the emergence of an innovative national ecosystem and the creation of new employment and job integration opportunities for the youth. The new program, which will help consolidate OCP's world position, provides for a global investment of 13 billion dollars (130 billion dirhams) over the period 2023-2027, the achievement of a local integration rate of 70%, the backing of 600 Moroccan industrial enterprises and the creation of 25000 direct and indirect jobs.

Azerbaijan, Russia discuss bilateral ties

BAKU: Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev discussed bilateral relations and matters regarding the Zangezur corridor with Russian presidential aide Igor Levitin during a meeting on Monday. "At the meeting, satisfaction was expressed with the development of Azerbaijan-Russia bilateral relations, including economic relations, and the importance of joint work in the fields of transport and infrastructure was noted," read a statement by the Azerbaijani presidency. The statement also said bilateral and regional issues related to transport, transit and logistics were also discussed, in addition to "expanding the capabilities of the North-South transport corridor and the Zangezur corridor." The Zangezur region was part of Azerbaijan, though the Soviets gave it to Armenia in the 1920s, leaving Azerbaijan deprived of its direct overland route to Nakhchivan. Following a 44-day conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia in September 2020, Baku liberated numerous cities, villages and settlements in Karabakh from Armenian occupation, ending in a Moscow-brokered truce. Since then, Azerbaijan has focused on planned connections including motorways and a 43-kilometer (26.7-mile) railway through the corridor. -Agencies

No prospect of negotiated end to war

HAMBURG: Nobel Peace Prize winner, Irina Scherbakova, co-founder of the Russian rights organisation, Memorial, said she sees no prospect for a diplomatic solution to the war in Ukraine. "The solution that there will be now is a military one in my eyes. But this diplomacy will only happen when Ukraine believes it has won this war and can set its terms. I believe only in this possibility," she said. The Russian historian was speaking last night in Hamburg, where she was presented with the Mari-ono Doenhoff Prize for her years of work on human rights in her home country by German Chancellor, Olaf Scholz. When asked by a journalist if she believed this would be with or without Russian President Vladimir Putin, Scherbakova replied that she believed it would be "without Putin". The Russian president has said he is open to negotiations, but not to demands that Moscow pull out of Ukraine. US President Joe Biden said he is willing to his Russian counterpart if he commits to ending the war. However, Ukraine says it will not sit down at the negotiating table before Moscow leaves all occupied territories. -DNA

UK commits to providing support for Somalia famine

MOGADISHU: During a two-day visit to Somalia, Andrew Mitchell, the UK's Minister for Development, announced that the UK will provide "life-saving" health care, water, food and climate-change protection. The UK Government has said that these support measures will help half a million people amid the current famine crisis that Somalia is facing. "Somalia faces one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world, with millions of people in desperate need of aid, including over half a million children under five years old who are at risk of death," said Mitchell. The funding will be used to provide aid for those who are vulnerable in Somalia. There are projections that, by the end of the year, 300,000 people are expected to be in famine. What's more, 1.8 million children in the country are at risk of malnutrition, according to the UK Government. During his visit, Mitchell pledged the emergency support in response to the country's 2022 drought. UNICEF has said that this drought has affected more than 6.7 million people and also estimated that there are currently 6.4 million people facing acute water shortages in Somalia, with more than one million people being displaced due to the drought. -DNA

UK's Labour vows to abolish House of Lords

Blueprint is not yet Labour policy. It now goes to a public consultation, with agreed changes set to be incorporated into the party's next election manifesto

FOREIGN DESK

LONDON: Britain's opposition Labour party vowed on Monday to scrap the unelected and "indefensible" House of Lords as part of a constitutional revamp to redistribute economic growth after Brexit. Labour looks set to take power in the next election, due by January 2025, streaking far ahead of the governing Conservatives in opinion polls after a tumultuous period politically and economically. Labour leader Keir Starmer promised "the biggest ever transfer of power from (the UK parliament in) Westminster to the British people", arguing that many voters in 2016 opted to quit the European Union because of a sense of lack of democratic control. The party's blueprint for reform, drafted by former prime minister Gordon Brown, envisions new devolution to the UK's regions and countries including Scotland, where the nationalist government is pressing for a new referendum on independence. Brown, who led the successful 2014 campaign for his fellow Scots to stay in the United Kingdom, proposed greater devolution,



with the Edinburgh parliament included in international agreements that involve Scottish areas. Addressing an audience in Leeds, northern England, Starmer said a "failure of economic growth over the past 12 years" under Conservative rule was caused in part by the UK failing as a whole to power growth, relying too much on London and southeast England. The blueprint is not yet Labour policy. It now goes to a public consultation, with agreed changes set to be incorporated into the party's next election manifesto.

Starmer said he hoped to push through the eventual reforms within the first five years of a Labour government, possibly including the redeployment of 50,000 civil service jobs out of London. Tackling widespread public disgust with perceived malpractice in parliament, the proposals would clamp down on MPs holding second jobs and create a new anti-corruption commissioner. The 40-point plan's centrepiece is to scrap the upper house of parliament in its current guise - which is a mixture of political appointees, hereditary peers and Church of England bishops. "I think the House of Lords is indefensible. Anybody who looks at the House of Lords would struggle to say that it should be kept," Starmer told BBC television. "So we want to abolish the House of Lords and replace it with an elected chamber that has a really strong mission." Brown proposed a new assembly comprising members drawn from the UK's regions and countries - a "smaller, more representative and democratic" chamber, although details will be left to the consultation.

Kazakh leader, Greek FM discuss economic cooperation



ASTANA: Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev on Monday discussed the development of bilateral cooperation with a focus on the economy during a meeting with Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias.

"Kassym-Jomart Tokayev received Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias, who is in Astana on an official visit. During the meeting, prospects for the development of Kazakh-Greek cooperation were discussed with an emphasis on strengthening trade and economic ties," a statement from the Kazakh presidency read. Tokayev described Greece as an important partner for Kazakhstan among the EU member states, noting that Kazakhstan and Greece are "actively cooperating on multilateral platforms." "I would like to emphasize once again that relations with Greece are a priority for us. We will do our best to bring the indicators of mutual cooperation to a new level," Tokayev was quoted as saying. For his part, Dendias said Greece considers Kazakhstan as "the largest and priority country for us in Central Asia, which is the guarantor of stability in the region." Dendias later met with his Kazakh counterpart Mukhtar Tleuberdi to discuss "strengthening bilateral political and economic relations and cooperation with an emphasis on investments, the construction sector, tourism and culture," according to a statement on his Twitter account. Dendias also signed a memorandum of understanding with Tleuberdi on cooperation in the field of diplomatic training. -Agencies

Japan plans to increase number of defense units

TOKYO: Amid changing geo-political situation in the Asia-Pacific region, Japan is mulling increasing the number of its defense units over the next decade, a draft plan has revealed. "Japan is considering almost tripling the number of units in its Self-Defense Forces equipped with ballistic missile interception capabilities in the country's remote southwestern islands by the end of fiscal 2031," Tokyo-based Kyodo News reported on Monday. Six of the seven units being upgraded will be based in the southern province of Okinawa and one will be deployed on Amami-Oshima Island in southwestern Kagoshima province. A total of 14 surface-to-air units across Japan will obtain the capability to intercept missiles, the draft plan said. Tokyo may also update its National Defense Program Guidelines, a 10-year defense buildup policy, which is set to be updated by the end of 2022. "Japan plans to increase the number of SDF (Self-Defense Forces) ballistic missile defense units in the Nansei Islands, an island chain stretching southwest from Kyushu toward Taiwan, up to 11 from the current four by the fiscal year that ends in March 2032," the draft shows. This development comes as friction between the US, its allies and China has seen an uptick recently in the region as Washington leads the Quad in the wider region to contain Beijing's expanding military and economic influence. Quad is a loose security alliance that includes Japan, Australia, and India as well. Beijing has pushed back the efforts, criticizing any effort to isolate the world's largest populated country and the second-biggest economy. Tensions with North Korea also intensified recently as Pyongyang fired dozens of missiles last month. Japan's efforts to boost defense are also seen as challenging as the country is known for its war-renouncing Constitution since 1947. -Agencies



TOKYO: Tatsuya Wakisaka, Chairman Suginami City Assembly, visits Pakistan embassy Tokyo along with a delegation to donate JPY 1.15 million for flood affectees in Pakistan. Ambassador Raza Bashir Tarar thanked Wakisaka for the donation. -DNA

G7 price cap on Russian oil kicks in

The cap on crude will be followed by a similar measure affecting Russian petroleum products that will come into force on February 5, although the level of that cap has still to be decided

LONDON: The price cap on Russian seaborne oil agreed upon by the European Union, the G7 and Australia has come into force. The cap of \$60 per barrel, which took effect on Monday, is aimed at limiting Russia's ability to finance its war in Ukraine while making sure it keeps supplying the global market. Moscow, however, has said it will not abide by the measure even if it has to cut production. The cap comes on top of the EU's embargo on imports of Russian crude by sea and similar pledges by the United States, Canada, Japan and the United Kingdom. It means Russian oil sold only at a price equal to or less than \$60 per barrel can be shipped to third-party countries using G7 and EU tankers, insurance companies and credit institutions. Because the world's key shipping and insurance firms are based in G7 countries, the cap could make it difficult for Moscow to sell its oil for a higher price. Countries that do not adopt the measure can continue to buy Russian oil above the price cap, but without using Western services to acquire, insure or transport it. "We

have clear signals that a number of emerging economies, particularly in Asia, will observe the principles of the cap," a European official told AFP news agency, adding that Russia is already "under pressure" from its customers to offer discounts. But Russia, the world's second-largest oil exporter, said on Sunday it would not accept the cap and would not sell oil that is subject to it. Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said the move by the West was a gross interference that contradicted the rules of free trade and would destabilise global energy markets by triggering a shortage of supply. "We are working on mechanisms to prohibit the use of a price cap instrument, regardless of what level is set, because such interference could further destabilise the market," he said. "We will sell oil and petroleum products only to those countries that will work with us under market conditions, even if we have to reduce production a little," he added. Selling oil and gas to Europe has been one of the main sources of Russian foreign currency earnings since Soviet geologists found oil and gas in the

swamps of Siberia in the decades after World War II. The G7 price cap, which was agreed upon on Friday, is not much below the \$67 level where a barrel of Russian oil closed at the end of the day. So, the EU and G7 countries expect Russia will still have an incentive to continue selling oil at that price while accepting smaller profits. "Russia must retain an interest in selling its oil" or risk reducing global supply and causing prices to soar, a second European official told AFP, saying they did not believe the Kremlin's threats to stop deliveries to countries complying with the cap.

The official said Russia would remain concerned about maintaining the state of its infrastructure, which would be damaged if production is halted, and keeping the confidence of its customers, including China and India. While Russia could be tempted to create its own fleet of tankers, operating and insuring them itself, Brussels believes "building a maritime ecosystem overnight will be very complicated" - and such make-do measures could have trouble convincing customers. The level of the cap is to be reviewed by the EU and the G7 every two months, with the first such review scheduled for mid-January. "This review should take into account ... the effectiveness of the measure, its implementation, international adherence and alignment, the potential impact on coalition members and partners, and market developments," the European Commission said in a statement. The cap on crude will be followed by a similar measure affecting Russian petroleum products that will come into force on February 5, although the level of that cap has still to be decided. -Agencies



Briefs

Taliban defence minister holds talks with UAE president

ABU DHABI: The acting defence minister of the Afghan Taliban has met the president of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan, for talks in Abu Dhabi on strengthening relations, his ministry and UAE state media reported on Monday.

The acting defence minister, Mullah Yaqoob, is the son of the late supreme leader of the Taliban, Mullah Omar, and the meeting with the UAE president is a rare encounter between a senior member of the group and a foreign head of state. They discussed "strengthening relations, bilateral co-operation between the UAE and Afghanistan and other important issues", the Afghan defence ministry said in a statement on Monday.

The UAE state news agency WAM reported that the meeting took place on Sunday. The Taliban administration in Afghanistan has not been formally recognised by any government since the Islamists swept to power last year as U.S.-led foreign forces withdrew after two decades of war. The Taliban have for years run a political office in Qatar where top members of the group have often met foreign officials. The UAE news agency released photographs of the talks that showed another senior Taliban figure, Anas Haqqani, was present at the talks. — Agencies

China set to ease COVID curbs further

NEWS DESK

BEIJING: China is set to announce a further easing of some of the world's toughest COVID curbs as early as Wednesday, sources said, as investors cheered the prospect of a policy shift that follows widespread protests and mounting economic damage. Three years into the pandemic, China's zero-tolerance measures, from shut borders to frequent lockdowns, contrast sharply with the rest of the world, which has largely decided to live with the virus. The strict approach has battered the world's second-largest economy, put mental strain on hundreds of millions and last month prompted the biggest show of public discontent in mainland China since President Xi Jinping took power in 2012.

Although last month's protests largely subsided amid a heavy police presence across major cities, regional authorities have since cut back on lockdowns, quarantine rules and testing requirements to varying degrees. Top officials have also softened their tone on the dangers posed by the virus.

Asad Umar submits reply in SC in ECP contempt case

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Asad Umar on Monday submitted his reply to the Supreme Court in the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) contempt case. Asad Umar submitted the reply in the contempt case against him, Fawad Chaudhry and PTI Chairman Imran Khan.

In his reply, Umar maintained that the show-cause notice issued by ECP was illegal and unconstitutional. He stated that Article 204 empowered the higher judiciary with contempt of court and the ECP was not a court. The commission could not use the power of contempt of court under Article 204, he added. He said that Section 10 of the Election Act was inconsistent with the Constitution.

Pakistan to get crude oil, petrol, diesel from Russia

Musadik Malik says an inter-governmental delegation of Russia, led by its Energy Minister, would visit Pakistan by January-mid [next month]

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Petroleum Dr Musadik Malik on Monday termed his recent visit to Russia 'very successful' as the host country, in principle, had decided to provide crude oil, refined petrol and diesel to Pakistan at a discounted rate.

"In addition, negotiations with private sector companies of Russia have been initiated for procurement of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), while talks for long term contracts with public sector companies of Russia have also been initiated to get LNG from their new plants," he said addressing a news conference. During the visit, he said fruitful discussions were also held on gas pipeline projects including establishing of Pakistan Stream Gas Pipeline, commonly known North-South (Lahore-Karachi) Gas Pipeline, and another 'big gas pipeline' to get the commodity from Russian hydrocarbon deposits. Musadik Malik said an inter-governmental delegation of Russia, led by its Energy Minister, would visit Pakistan by January-mid [next month] to make progress on oil and gas sale-purchase agreements between the two countries.

Commenting on the current gas supply situation in the country, the minister said the



local gas production was witnessing around 8-10 per cent decline annually and despite all these odds, the government had arranged extra gas for months of November, December and January as compared to the same months of the last year. He said an effective monitoring system of gas supply to domestic consumers was in place, under which the Petroleum Division kept a vigil eye on the demand and supply of the commodity.

Musadik Malik said the gas companies had been directed to ensure gas supply, especially during 'breakfast, lunch and dinner' preparation timings i.e. 6-9 a.m., 12-2 p.m. and 6-9 p.m. "The incumbent government is providing extra gas as compared to the last year, and monitoring the supply situation regularly," he added. However, he said there was a problem of poor infrastructure which created a gas pressure issue for the remote

areas, which was being rectified on priority basis. To bridge the demand and supply gap, the minister said the gas companies were providing more than 20,000 tons Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) per month in the areas where gas-pressure issue and shortage prevailed. He disclosed that Iran had announced to give Pakistan LPG worth two million pounds as 'assistance,' for which all formalities have been completed. He said the additional LPG would help ensure better gas supply to domestic consumers in December. The minister was of the view that the government believed in providing sufficient energy to the industrial sector as it would help move the economic wheel at a fast pace, thus generating employment opportunities for youth and increasing the country's exports. Accordingly, he said the government was utilizing all available options and contacting different countries including Central Asian States to meet its energy requirements. He highlighted the importance of exploiting the country's indigenous oil and gas potential, saying that two new policies related to tight gas and revival of old hydrocarbon wells, were being worked out. Musadik Malik said the country needed 8-10 per cent addition in energy efficiency, if it wanted to improve Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at the rate of 5-6 per cent annually.

ECC approves wheat import from Russia

DNA

ISLAMABAD, Dec 05 (DNA): The Economic Co-ordination Committee has accorded approval to import of 450,000 metric tonnes of wheat from Russia.

The approval was granted at a meeting of Committee held in Islamabad on Monday, with Finance Minister Ishaq Dar in the chair. This wheat will be imported at a rate of 372 dollars per metric ton for supply at Gwadar from February to March next year. The Committee also approved import of 130,000 metric tonnes wheat at the same rate from a UK based company to be supplied at Karachi port from 16th of this month till February next year.

The ECC decided that additional cost on inland transportation from Gwadar Port will be borne by Pakistan Agricultural Storage & Services Corporation Ltd to be recovered from provinces at the time of release of wheat stock. The meeting also approved proposal of Finance Ministry to change the title of the revolving fund account for CPCC Independent Power Producers from 'Pakistan Energy Revolving Fund' to 'Pakistan Energy Revolving Account'.

Russia says oil price cap will not stop offensive

MOSCOW: Russia shrugged off a Western-imposed price cap on its oil exports on Monday, warning that it would not disrupt its military campaign in Ukraine. The \$60-per-barrel price cap agreed by the European Union, G7 and Australia aims to restrict Russia's revenue while making sure Moscow keeps supplying the global market. "Russia's economy has all the necessary potential to fully meet the needs and requirements of the special military operation," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters, using Moscow's term for the Ukraine offensive. "These measures will not affect this," he said. Russia, he added, "will not recognise" the measures, adding that they amounted "a step towards destabilising the global energy markets" and that they would "change" oil prices. The cap is the latest in a number of measures spearheaded by Western countries and introduced against Russia after Moscow sent troops into Ukraine. — Agencies

Pakistan highly values bilateral ties with Germany

The Finance Minister briefs German Ambassador Alfred Grannas about the economic policies of the present government

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Germany Alfred Grannas called on Minister for Finance Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar in Islamabad on Monday. The Finance Minister highlighted bilateral relations between the two countries and stated that Pakistan highly values its bilateral relations with Germany. He also pointed the importance of enhancement in trade and economic relations between both countries.

The Finance Minister briefed Alfred Grannas about the economic policies of the present government aiming at promotion of trade and investment. He also shared the potential avenues for investment present in Pakistan through which both countries can further deepen the commercial and economic ties. Ambassador of Germany shared sentiments of gratitude with the Finance Minister on offering the cooperation and support for enhancing and strengthening bilateral relations between both the countries. The Ambassador also showed keen interest for getting benefit from investment opportunities in Pakistan in various sectors. The Finance Minister, in conclusion, thanked the German Ambassador Alfred Grannas and offered full support and cooperation for future investment endeavours in Pakistan.



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Germany, Alfred Grannas calls on Finance Minister Ishaq Dar. DNA

Scholz: We must avoid dividing world into Cold War-style blocs

WEB DESK

BERLIN: German Chancellor Olaf Scholz warned against creating a new Cold War by dividing the world into blocs and called for every effort to be made to build new partnerships, writing in an opinion piece for Foreign Affairs magazine published online on Monday. The West must stand up for democratic values and protect open societies, "but we must also avoid the temptation to once again divide the world into blocs," wrote Scholz in the piece. "This means making every effort to build new partnerships, pragmatically and without ideological blinders," he added.

Scholz singled out China and Russia in particular as two countries that pose a threat to a multipolar world, which requires stronger European and transatlantic unity to overcome. The transatlantic partnership remains vital to confronting challenges posed by Russia's threat of potential assaults on allied territory, while China's turn towards isolation and its approach towards Taiwan require Europe and North America to form new and stronger partnerships with countries

around the world, he wrote. "Germans are intent on becoming the guarantor of European security that our allies expect us to be, a bridge builder within the European Union and an advocate for multilateral solutions to global problems," wrote Scholz.

Scholz highlighted how rather than seeing the fall of communist rule "as an opportunity for more freedom and democracy," Russia's President Vladimir Putin labeled it "the biggest geopolitical catastrophe of the twentieth century."

This, Scholz said, was when "authoritarianism and imperialistic ambitions" began to resurface. He pointed to Putin's 2007 speech before the Munich Security Conference in which the German chancellor said Putin spoke of "the rules-based international order as a mere tool of American dominance."

Scholz said that since the illegal annexation of Crimea, Russia has "made it impossible for diplomacy to succeed" and said the February invasion of Ukraine signaled a return to imperialism.

Scholz said that Putin's war in Ukraine had "shattered a European and international peace architecture that had taken decades to build."

Pakistan, Korea ink MoU on export of workers through EPS

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development and the Ministry of Employment and Labour (MOEL) of the Republic of Korea has signed a Memorandum of Understanding on the Sending and Receiving of Workers under the Employment Permit System (EPS) in 2006. The MoU is renewed after every two years. So far, Overseas Employment Corporation (an attach department of the MOPHRD) has dispatched more than 10,000 workers to the Republic of Korea under EPS, said a press release here Monday.

The signing ceremony of the renewal of EPS was held on 5th December, 2022 in the Ministry for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development, Islamabad.

Federal Minister Overseas Pakistanis & Human Resource Development Mr. Sajid Hussain Turi signed the MoU on behalf of the Government of Pakistan. Ambassador of the Republic of Korea, H.E Suh Sangpyo, presented the signed copy of the MoU from the Minister for Labour and Employment, H.E Lee Jung Sik, on behalf of the Republic of Korea. Mr. Turi said that



"Pakistan and Korea relations have grown from strength to strength in all fields. Pakistan and Korea are enjoying long-standing relations which are based on decades-old economic partnerships."

On the request of the Federal Minister for OP&HRD, Ambassador of Korea also gave the assurance that Korea will consider the hiring of Skilled Workforce and IT Professionals from Pakistan under a separate MoU/Agreement during their Minis-

ter for Labour and Employment visit to Pakistan in the next year. Minister for OP&HRD also appreciated the efforts of the incumbent Korean Ambassador for the enhancement of quota for Pakistan from 1100 to 2400 during the current year out of which 1600 workers have already proceeded to Korea.

Both the sides agreed to enhance the cooperation and extend it further to other sectors like Construction, Fisheries and Agriculture.

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