



Islamabad POST

Monday, December 12, 2022

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I am not a singer. I just convey message of Sufis: Sain Zahoor

Detailed News On Page-08

VP European Parliament Kaili arrested

Detailed News On Page-07



Pacquiao beats up YouTuber in South Korea

Detailed News On Page-06



Briefs

Kashmir OIC's top agenda

DNA

MUZAFFARABAD: Secretary General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation Hissain Brahim Taha has said Kashmir is on the top priority of the OIC's agenda. He was addressing a joint press conference along with Azad Jammu and Kashmir President in Muzaffarabad on Sunday. He said that he will submit a comprehensive assessment report on the human rights situation in Kashmir to member countries and Foreign Minister's Council of the member countries and would also seek permission from India to visit other side of LOC.

Swati sent on 3 day remand

DNA

QAMBAR: A judicial magistrate in Q a m b a r remanded PTI Senator Azam Swati in police custody for three days on Sunday in two cases over his controversial tweets about senior military leaders. Swati was arrested over a "highly obnoxious campaign of intimidating tweets [...] against state institutions" by the Federal Investigation Agency on November 27 and has been in detention since and continues to face legal action. The FIA booked him under Section 20 of the Prevention of Electronic Crime Act 2016 (Peca), which deals with offences against the dignity of a person.

NA Speaker calls for consensus

DNA

LAHORE: National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf on Sunday called for a consensus between the government and the opposition to resolve issues faced by the country and said just like the government holds importance, so does the opposition. Speaking to the media in Lahore, the NA Speaker said PTT's demand for transparent polls can only be fulfilled if we legislate better, take better measures and work out a strategy together with everyone's agreement.

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European parliament hit by Qatar corruption scandal - Page 07

Legendary Saïen Zahoor and Zarsanga steal the show - Page 08

Cross-border firing martyrs 6, injures 17

Pakistani troops responded effectively, says (ISPR) military's media wing

SPECIAL CORRESPONDANT

RAWALPINDI: Using heavy weapons, the Afghan border forces opened unprovoked and indiscriminate fire at the civilian area in Balochistan's Chaman city resulting in the martyrdom of six people and injuries to 17 others, a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said Sunday. According to the military's media wing, the Afghan border forces used artillery and mortar in the attack. The ISPR said that Pakistan's troops at the border gave a befitting albeit measured response against the unprovoked aggression, but avoided targeting innocent civilians in the area. The statement added the Pakistani border forces have also approached Afghan authorities in Kabul to highlight the severity of

the situation and demanded strict action to avoid any such recurrence of the incident in future. An emergency was imposed in Quetta Civil Hospital on the directions of Health Secretary Saleh Muhammad Nasir. Balochistan Chief Minister Abdul Quddus Bizenjo expressed concern over the incident. "I hope the federal government will ensure an immediate and effective solution to this problem at the diplomatic level." He ordered the district administration of Chaman to provide full support to the people affected. Last month, the Pak-Afghan border at Chaman was closed for an indefinite period after an armed man from the Afghan side opened fire on Pakistani security personnel at Friendship Gate, resulting in the martyrdom of one soldier and

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Imran imposed by 'planners': Kh. Asif

Imran was brought to power under a plot, Asif said, that after destroying young generation, PTI chief was demanding elections

DNA

SIALKOT: Berating former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif claimed that the former did not rise to power suddenly, saying "planners" had decided to impose him on the state. Addressing the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) workers' convention in Sialkot Sunday, Asif said Khan always stabbed his friends in the back. Referring to Khan's criticism of the institutions, the defence minister said he "slams his benefactor from dawn to dusk". The deposed PM Imran Khan said that he made a mistake by granting the extension to General (ret'd) Qamar Javed Bajwa, but on the other hand, he offered the then-army chief an extension to his tenure for life. Imran Khan was brought to power under a plot, Asif said, adding that after destroying the young generation, the PTI chief was demanding elections.

Imran fabricated cases against opponents

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Federal Minister for Information Marriyum Aurangzeb on Sunday said former Prime Minister Imran Khan fabricated cases against his political opponents. Speaking at Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz's Workers Convention, she said PML-N faced all the cases and countered all allegations [made by the PTI government]. Ms Aurangzeb further said the PML-N government under the premiership of Nawaz Sharif did not initiate Langar Khanas but created job opportunities and planted factories.

Tajik President arrives on Wednesday

ANSAR BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon is arriving Pakistan on Wednesday on a three-day visit. The Tajik president is visiting Pakistan on the invitation of the Prime Minister of Pakistan Shehbaz Sharif. During the visit both sides are expected to sign a number of MoUs with a view to further promoting bilateral relations. For the preparations, the advance team of the Tajik Ministry of Foreign Affairs led by Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Farhod Salim is already in Pakistan. The Director General Tajik Ministry of Foreign Affairs and former Tajik Ambassador to Pakistan Sherali Jononov is also part of



the delegation. Pakistan and Tajikistan enjoy excellent brotherly relations. Both countries are part of landmark CASA 1000 energy project. This project will bring energy from Tajikistan to Pakistan via Afghanistan. After completion of this project Pakistani people will have cheap energy. Both sides are also discussing resumption of air links between the two countries. The Tajik airline shall fly from Dushanbe to Lahore very soon.



MUZAFFARABAD: Secretary General OIC, Hissain Brahim Taha laid wreath at the J&K Monument and offered Fateha in memory of people who sacrificed their lives for the Kashmir cause. - DNA

ECC okays agenda items for Reko Diq Project



ISLAMABAD: The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet on Sunday approved two important agenda items related to Reko Diq project, thus paving the way for early start of the Reko Diq Project. Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar presided over the meeting virtually, where as the meeting was attended by the Minister for Power Khurram Dastgir Khan, Minister for Commerce Syed Naveed Qamar, Minister of State for Petroleum Musadik Masood Malik, Minister of State for Finance and Revenue Dr. Ayesha Ghous Pasha, said a press release.

Among others the meeting was also attended by Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Finance Tariq Bajwa, SAPM on Revenue Tariq Mehmood Pasha, federal secretaries, Chairman FBR and other senior officers. Ministry of Energy (Petroleum Division) submitted a summary on accrued interest with respect to the amount held in an escrow account in connection with the Reko Diq Project dispute settlement. It was presented that government of Pakistan and Provincial Government of Baluchistan entered into an out-of-court dispute settlement with M/s Tethyan Copper Company Pvt Limited-a consortium of Barrick Gold Corporation of Canada and M/s Antofagasta PLC of Chile, in respect of Reko Diq Co per-Gold Project in Chaghai district of Baluchistan. As per settlement terms, Government of Pakistan has to clear

Continued on Page 06

'Gang of thieves' doesn't care if Pakistan defaults

"A group of thieves has been imposed on us," the former premier says

DNA

LAHORE: Lashing out at the coalition government, former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan has said that it will not damage the interest of the "gang of thieves" if the country defaults. Addressing a press conference Sunday, Khan said the "gang of thieves" has properties in foreign countries worth billions of dollars, hence they do not care about the economic collapse of the country. He added that the US dollar will further shoot up and there would be no foreign investment "if Pakistan defaults". "A group of thieves has been imposed on us," the deposed premier said, adding that the gang has been stealing national wealth for the past 30 years. He also said they were laundering the looted money abroad via illegal means including hundi and hawala.

Continued on Page 06

Fawad shares date for dissolution with PDM

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Senior Vice President Fawad Chaudhry on Sunday warned the ruling coalition that the party will order the dissolution of assemblies in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa if a final date for next general election is not announced by December 20. PTI Chairman Imran Khan has warned to dissolve the provincial assemblies in order to pressure the government into snap polls. "Leaders of the imported government don't want polls and they have no idea how to run

Continued on Page 06

Germany to tighten gun laws after suspected coup plot

German police last week arrested 25 people suspected of involvement in the plot

NEWS DESK

BERLIN: Germany plans to tighten its gun laws in the wake of a suspected plot by a far-right group to violently overthrow the government and install a minor royal as a national leader, its interior minister said in an interview published on Sunday. German police last week arrested 25 people suspected of involvement in the plot, which has shocked many in one of Europe's most stable democracies. Many of the suspects were members of the far-right "Reichsbuerg-

er" (Citizens of the Reich) movement that denies the existence of the modern German state, according to prosecutors. Interior Minister Nancy Faeser, in an interview with "Bild am Sonntag" newspaper, warned that the Reichsbuerg represented a rising threat to Germany given it had expanded by 2,000 to 23,000 people in the past year. "These are not harmless crazy people but suspected terrorists who are now sitting in pre-trial detention," Faeser was quoted as saying. Prosecutors have said the suspects included individuals with weapons

and knowledge of how to use them. They had attempted to recruit current and former army members and had stockpiled weapons. "We need all authorities to exert maximum pressure" to remove their weapons, Faeser was quoted as saying, which was why the government would "shortly further tighten gun laws". Prior to the raids, authorities had already confiscated weapons from more than 1,000 Reichsbuerg members. However, at least another 500 are still believed to hold gun licenses in a country where the private possession of firearms is rare.

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Coalition govt puts country on path of development

DNA

ISLAMABAD :Special Assistant to the Prime Minister for Poverty Alleviation and Social Protection Faisal Karim Kundi has said that the present coalition government has put the country on a path of development. Talking to media persons here on Saturday evening, the prime minister's aid said that when the coalition government of the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) came to power, the country was facing a number of challenges on front of the economy as well as political due to wrong policies of the incapable government of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). The government inherited the country's economic crisis as the PTI government had created an economic mess with its flawed policies. Now, he added that efforts were initiated by the government under the leadership of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to improve the situation and hoped that the country would be steered out of the economic quagmire, soon. The government, then, came across another challenge when the PTI embarked upon what he termed a 'Farlang Marach, then its leadership launched a series of tirades against the government and the state institutions, he said. He said that PTI badly failed to maintain peace in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and terrorist attacks occurred frequently such as people witnessed that DPO



and police squad were attacked here. He was of the opinion that there was peace and prosperity in KP before the PTI government was formed. But when the PTI came to power in the province, the situation started deteriorating and peace was destroyed. Today's situation was so alarming that the chief minister of the province could not go to his hometown of Swat, he added. Similarly, he added that KP province was pushed into an economic crisis and today its government did not have money for employees' salaries. He regretted that the KP chief minister never went to Imran Khan when the PTI was in power in the center to get the province's rights. Faisal Kundi asked the KP government that if it had any issue with the federal government, the chief minister should come and dis-

cuss it with the federal government. He added that his efforts for the welfare of people and the province's rights would be supported. He said that the general election would be held on time and the strategy of the component parties of the PDM for contesting the next general elections would be decided in the future. He said that the PTI government caused damage to the country's relations with other countries. But now the country's foreign minister was striving to restore the trust of other countries and as a result, bilateral relations were gradually improving and the exchange of delegations had started with other countries. He said the government was focusing on rehabilitation activities at flood-affected areas and added that those countries who were responsible for polluting the environment which resulted in climate change, should contribute and support Pakistan in its efforts in rehabilitation activities in flood-affected areas. He said floods wreaked havoc on agricultural land and there were several areas where crops could not be sown and such a situation led to food scarcity. But the government was committed to bringing life to normal in the flood-hit areas and converting the situation into an opportunity, he added. As far as Dera Ismail Khan was concerned, Faisal Karim said, efforts were underway to lay the foundation stone of the Chashma Lift Canal which was a long-standing demand of the area. Similarly,



PESHAWAR: US Ambassador Donald Blome launched the US government-funded 'Improving Girls Education Activity' with an aim to provide quality education to girls in remote areas of KP. – DNA

Govt. asked to focus on innovative housing solutions

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Abdul Aleem Khan, Chairman Vision Group said that Pakistan needs innovative and creative housing solutions to bridge the gap of rising housing shortage and stressed that the government should amend building bylaws to encourage innovative constructions as current building laws were a major hurdle in vertical growth, which is the future need of the country. He said that the condition of real estate is the yardstick to judge the growth of a country as when real estate grows the country grows and when the real estate is in slump, it means that the economy is in trouble. He said this while addressing as Chief Guest at the Awards Distribution ceremony of the 1st International Housing EXPO 22 organized by Ministry of Housing & Works in collaboration with Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry at Jinnah Convention Centre, Islamabad from December 8-11, 2022, which ended on a high note. Abdul Aleem Khan said that Dubai has achieved historic development in the last 20 years by encouraging vertical growth in construction and said that Dubai should be the role model for Pakistan. He said that

Abu Dhabi, Sharja, Qatar etc. have achieved great economic growth by focusing on the construction industry and said that Pakistan needs a vision to promote the construction industry to revive its economy as this industry boosts the growth of roughly 100 allied industries. He appreciated the Ministry of Housing & Works and ICCI for organizing such a wonderful housing expo. Speaking at the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry said that many big players of the housing and construction sector are developing good housing projects and the purpose of organizing the Expo was to provide them a good platform to market their projects. He said that the Expo has also provided the people an excellent opportunity to see the housing products of latest trends that help them in building smart and energy efficient houses. He said that the Expo has come up with very good recommendations during breakout sessions to provide shelter to all and hoped that the government would consider implementing them to provide affordable housing options to low-income people. He thanked the platinum, diamond and gold part-

ners and all the exhibitors for making the Expo a successful event. He also thanked the Ministry of Housing & Works for partnering with ICCI to organize the 1st International Housing Expo in these tough economic conditions. Iftikhar Ali Shallwani, Secretary, Ministry of Housing & Works said that organizing the 1st International Housing Expo in the current difficult economic times was a great challenge and thanked ICCI for joining hands to make it a successful venture. He said that the housing and construction industry has a vital role in the development of the economy and vowed that this Expo would be made an annual feature of the Ministry. The first exclusive award was given to Ch. Abdul Rauf, Chairman, Fair Group. From the platinum partners, the top five awards recipients included Grana.com, Gandhara City, Star World, Star Marketing, Fair Deal Marketing. From diamond partners, the top five award recipients included Taj Residencia, Movida, KK Enterprises, Property Enclave and Crescent Lake Tower. From gold partners, the top five award recipients included AMS Group, Amar Builders, Gulberg Mall, R. Power, Chawla Aluminium. The awards were given to various other categories including exhibitors and universities.

KP Govt establishes model of sustainable uplift: CM

OUR CORRESPONDENT

PESHAWAR: Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mahmood Khan Sunday said the provincial government has established a model of sustainable development in the province to make it financially self-sustainable and enable it to contribute to the national exchequer. In a statement issued here from the Chief Minister's Secretariat, Mahmood Khan stated that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has worked tirelessly for promotion of tourism as an industry which has made the province a tourist destination not only at national but also at international level. In order to exploit the natural resources available

in the province, various initiatives have been undertaken in which the wheeling model deserves special attention. Provision of cheap electricity has made Khyber Pakhtunkhwa an attractive spot for national and international investors seeking establishment of small and large industrial units. The chief minister maintained that despite various constraints and challenges, the provincial government has successfully completed the integration of erstwhile FATA into Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province which was a daunting task. He added that a number of initiatives have been undertaken in newly merged districts under a well-planned strategy with the sole purpose of addressing their

longstanding deprivations. He clarified that the incumbent government has also invested significantly on preservation of our moral, cultural and Islamic values adding that these initiatives will strengthen our national identity among the international community. The introduction of Islamic teaching by translation of the Holy Quran in schools and provision of honorarium to Aima Masjid and religious leaders of minorities, deserve special mentioning here which has ensured their financial independence. Regarding initiatives taken in education and health sectors, the Chief Minister said that deficiencies of staff and other resources in government schools and hospitals

has been addressed due to which services delivery has improved significantly. Some initiatives in these sectors include recruitment of new doctors and paramedical staff, extension of Sehat card scheme, revamping and upgrading health care facilities across the province, establishment of new medical colleges, recruitment of thousands of new teachers, launching second shift in selected schools, launching education card, provision of scholarships to students, establishment and up-gradation of schools and colleges, establishment of Pak-Austria Fachhochschule institute of Applied Sciences, establishment of Shangla University and many more.

Islamabad police finalize security for LG polls

ISLAMABAD :Islamabad police have finalized security plan for the upcoming local bodies elections, Christmas and New Year celebrations. Special deployment will be ensured at Churches and public places, police said. As per directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr Akbar Nasir Khan, a meeting presided by SSP Operations Jamil Zafar Malik was held to review and finalize security measures for the upcoming local bodies elections, Christmas and New Year. The meeting was attended among others by all SDPOs and SHO. During the meeting, it was decided to install walk-through gates at the entrance of main churches of the capital city. All the police officers have also been directed to hold special meetings to implement SOPs formed by the government for local bodies elections. "Make the security for the LBs elections foolproof," said SSP Operations. He directed the subordinates to carry out search operations across the capital city to ensure security and to flush out suspects and hardcore criminals. Extra police force to be deployed to avoid any untoward incident, he said adding that security should also be enhanced for New Year night. —APP

Rs200 mln being spent on identification of earthquake 'hotspots'

ISLAMABAD: The government would spend funds amounting to Rs 200 million to advance an ongoing project, during the current fiscal year, to identify and compile data on the country's 'active faults' and possible landslide 'hotspot' zones aimed at minimizing the disaster risk activities. The project, initiated with Rs40 million allocations under the Pub-

lic Sector Development Programme (PSDP 2021-22), would be completed at an estimated total cost of Rs412.769 million in a three-year period, according to an official document available with APP. The main focus of the project, titled "Pakistan National Research Programme on Geological Hazards (Earthquakes and Landslides) - Data Acquisition along

Active Faults and Identification of Potential Landslide Hotspot Zones," would help in identifying the earthquake-prone areas and landslide hotspots in the country. Besides, the establishment of a new network of Global Navigation Satellite Stations (GNSS - permanent as well as periodic) and a countrywide landslide inventory database would be carried out. —APP

Pyrolysis plants demolished for causing pollution

LAHORE :The district administration demolished two pyrolysis plants on Sunday, which were operating in different areas of the provincial capital, for causing pollution. According to a spokesperson, the plants were extracting furnace and crude oil from wires and used tyres and selling them in the market at lower prices. Thousands of litres of oil was being extracted daily and in this process hundreds of tonnes of carbon powder was released into the air. Some of the plants, earlier located in Lakhodair area near the Ring Road, were now being operated in the river Ravi's bed under the trees. The anti-smog squad had earlier sealed the plants. Deputy Commissioner Muhammad Ali ordered registration of cases against the management (owners) of the plants, besides confiscation of all the machinery. —APP

Daily Mail's apology to PM victory of truth

MARDAN:Adviser to the Prime Minister on Political and Public Affairs and National Heritage Engr Amir Muqam here on Sunday said certain developments over the past week, including the Daily Mail's apology to Shehbaz Sharif and acquittal of Rana Sanaullah in the false narcotics case, exposed the ugly faces of those, who had been filing fake cases against the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leaders. Addressing the PML-N workers' convention at Sher Garh here, he termed the Daily Mail's apology to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif over false allegations of corruption against him a victory of truth. He reiterated that the elements, who had been implicating the PML-N leadership in false cases were exposed before the masses after Daily Mail's apology and acquittal of Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah.

He said even courts and investigations agencies in foreign countries have endorsed that all members of the Sharif family, including Nawaz Sharif, were "Sadiq and Ameen". Despite two years-long investigations, he said the UK National Crimes Agency did not prove a single penny of corruption against any member of the Sharif family. He said Imran Khan was a certified liar as his corrupt practices and lies-based politics were exposed in Toshakhana and PTI foreign funding cases. He said when Imran Khan's loot and plunder were exposed before the public, he tried to drag state institutions into politics by levelling baseless allegations against their leadership. He said Imran Khan had deceived the masses, especially youth through hallow catchy slogans, as neither could he deliver during his time in the government, nor could lead

the PTI during his flopped long march. He said Imran's announcement of dissolving provincial assemblies was also proved to be a lie. He gave credit to CM Punjab for foiling the ill designs of Imran Khan. Amir Muqam questioned that if a three-times prime minister could be disqualified under Articles 62 and 63 for not charging salary from his son, then why not Imran, who was found guilty of corrupt practices in Toshakhana case, could be disqualified under the same articles? He said the billion trees project was taken over by the NAB which was a big question mark on its transparency. He said Imran's act of contesting by-elections from different constituencies signified that he did not trust other leaders of his party. "I am afraid, Imran Khan will likely present his name for the seats reserved for women and minorities in the next general election."



RAWALPINDI: Federal Minister for Information Mairiyum Aurangzeb addressing PML-N workers convention. – DNA

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National Days and Armed Forces Days

December

Dec 01 / Romania	National Day
Dec 02 / UAE	National Day
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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ISLAMABAD: Nomad Art Gallery in collaboration with the Serena Hotels organized crafts festival in order to support the flood affected people. Ambassador of Austria Andrea Wicke was the chief and formally opened the exhibition together with Ambassador of Belgium, Serena hotels senior management and others. The Austrian ambassador while talking to media people praised skills of the Pakistani women and congratulated the organizers for holding the event. The purpose of the festival was to appreciate the artwork of talented women. According to the organizers the festival was a step toward women empowerment with a view to enabling them to play a constructive role in the society.—DNA

NUMS follows zero tolerance towards sexual harassment

The process ensures confidentiality and prompt action against the perpetrators, which is reinforced by a mechanism of feedback to continuously improve the system

RAWALPINDI :National University of Medical Sciences (NUMS) is committed to enforce zero tolerance towards sexual harassment for ensuring a dignified learning and enabling environment both for its students and employees, said Focal Person on anti-sexual harassment of the university here Sunday. Dr Erum Monis was giving a talk on "Laws and Policies about Sexual Harassment" at NUMS PWD Campus which was organized by Department of Psychology. Dilating upon the subject she explained the laws governing sexual harassment to create aware-

ness and said that the university had well-defined policy and would never show any leniency in this regard. NUMS gives familiarization sessions on sexual harassment laws to all its new batches of students getting admission in different departments, to put at rest whatever concerns they may have in this regard, so that they can concentrate on their studies in a peaceful environment, she added. Prof. Dr. Shazia Khalid, Head of the NUMS Psychology Department, sharing her observations on psychological impact of sexual harassment said "peo-

ple have a common perception that sexual harassment is usually fabricated by the victim and it does not exist in our society. The invasion of personal space is never a pleasant experience specially for young girls and boys to whom such experiences are extremely traumatic and have a long-term impact on their emotional and psychological wellbeing.. "The victims develop a negative worldview and have a pervasive trouble in functioning socially. Therefore, there is a dire need for awareness on anti-sexual harassment laws and

policies and we should equip our youngsters to ward off such advances and build confidence in them to reach out to appropriate forums," added Dr Shazia. Dr Erum also mentioned that NUMS has taken significant steps of adopting HEC's 'Policy on Protection Against Sexual Harassment at Workplace', which is in line with the 'Protection of Women at Workplace 2010,' and its amendment announced in 2022. She said NUMS and a Non-Governmental Organization- "Mehergarh", which is working for women rights, had

already signed a 3-year Memorandum of Understanding(MOU) last month to further strengthen measures for congenial environment for women at their workplaces to ensure implementation of laws on sexual harassment. NUMS encourages open communication between employees and has developed an internal complaint process in line with the law of the land. The process ensures confidentiality and prompt action against the perpetrators, which is reinforced by a mechanism of feedback to continuously improve the system.—APP

Health activists for banning innovative tobacco products

ISLAMABAD :The Society for Protection of the Rights of the Child (SPARC) urged all the stakeholders to play their role in protecting Pakistani youth from harmful innovative tobacco products. Health activists raised alarm on the recent attempts by the tobacco industry to get the heated tobacco products regularized. The activists mentioned that the potential harms of innovative products, such as nicotine pouches, e-cigarettes, and heated tobacco devices, must be recognized and their sales and promotion must be banned. Country Lead of Vital Strategies Dr Ziauddin Islam mentioned that contrary to the tobacco industry's claims, innovative products are harmful as they contain nicotine which serves as

a gateway to many other forms of substance abuse and may cause serious health and mental health issues among youth. He said these products are claimed as cessation products but in fact, are new forms of addiction. The so-called research studies which claim that they're less harmful than cigarettes are all funded by the tobacco industry, he said, adding that independent research studies warned about their harms. He appealed to the federal cabinet not to approve any move asking to legitimize novel products. Country Head of Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids Malik Imran Ahmed said more and more countries are banning the sales of heated tobacco products due to the fact that they include tobacco and

their emissions have the same negative impact on health as cigarettes. However, he added, the tobacco industry in Pakistan is using various deceptive tactics to get these products regularized. He said the tobacco industry has already misled the government by claiming that e-cigarettes and nicotine pouches are less harmful and only for smokers who want to quit. However, these products are openly promoted online and sold to young and new consumers. If heated tobacco products are allowed, the country will witness the same deception as before because the industry needs new consumers to maintain its profits. Program Manager at SPARC Khalil Ahmed

Dogar mentioned that due to cheap and easy affordability, nearly 1,200 children begin smoking every day in Pakistan. We can't afford any more getting addicted to these new products. He requested the government to recognize this situation as a 'child rights emergency' because it is directly hurting their health, education, and future development. It is the responsibility of policymakers to ensure that no anti-child policy is implemented in the country. Pakistani children and youth have suffered various health issues in the last few years. It is the golden opportunity for our policymakers to reject HTPs and give a message to our young generation that they will be protected from all harm, he added.—APP

Experts for daily exercise as crucial for physical, mental health

ISLAMABAD :Health experts on Sunday said that daily exercise is crucial for the physical and mental health of people as it stimulates certain hormones in the brain which improve a person's mood and positively affect memory and learning. Talking to APP here, health expert Dr. Ruby Rafique said that daily exercise had been decreasing the risk of heart attacks, depression and other cognitive diseases. She said that by using various means of transport, the trend of exercise was significantly declining among the general public of different ages and segments of society. She further said that exercise had been playing a pivotal role in good health and a healthy lifestyle in order to make a person physically fit and energetic. Dr. Ghulam Rasool Jono said the exercise had many benefits and also helped in coping with heart attack, high blood pressure, diabetes, cancer, dementia, depression and other diseases. He said every second person was facing mental issues and regular physical activity was a good initiative to prevent and manage mild anxiety or depression.—APP

Commissioner directs to utilize all resources to facilitate tourists in Murree

RAWALPINDI: Commissioner Rawalpindi Division Saqib Manan has directed the authorities concerned to utilize all available resources to facilitate the tourists in Murree. According to the commissioner's office spokesman, the commissioner while reviewing the Murree Emergency plan and arrangements finalized by the administration for the snowfall season had instructed the authorities to strictly implement the verdict of the court on the Murree tragedy. All the departments concerned should fulfill their responsibilities with dedication and commitment while implementing the Murree emergency plan, the Commissioner added. Map of a maximum of 8000 vehicles should be allowed entry into Murree according to the traffic plan finalized for the winter season, Saqib Manan said adding, other entry points like 'Kohala and Barrian' should also be monitored. All snow removal machinery should be kept operational besides arranging salt sprinkler machines and ensuring attendance of the required number and staff, the commissioner said. Meteorological Department should send timely forecasts to all the departments concerned and all the departments should also develop close coordination with each other in case of any emergency, he added. Saqib Manan directed that there should be warning boards for the convenience of the tourists at several points besides arrangements to display up-to-date information. The spokesperson informed that on the special directives of the Commissioner, a control room had also been established in Jinnah Hall Murree and the tourists in case of any emergency can contact that control room on 051-9269015, 051-9269016, 051-9269018. —APP

IOFS to celebrate its day on Monday

ISLAMABAD :The Islamic Organization for Food Security (IOFS) will celebrate IOFS Day on Monday and will gather the Diplomatic Corps and other relevant stakeholders in Kazakhstan to provide a presentation on the organization's accomplished work throughout the year. During the celebration, a presentation will be made on the achievements of the Islamic Organization for Food Security during the year 2022 and its contributions to enhancing food security.

The event would be addressed by the leaders of the relevant international organizations, including a video intervention by the Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Houssein Ibrahim Taha, delivered on his behalf by the Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Affairs, Dr. Ahmed Qwesa Sengendo, a speech by the IOFS Director-General, Yeran Baidolet, and a speech by the Acting Director General of the Union of OIC News Agencies, Muhammad bin Abed Rabbo Al-Yami.

The IOFS will also give a briefing of major outcomes of "IOFS Year for Africa." The year 2022 was designated as the "Year for Africa" by the IOFS, and throughout the year the Organization has been working with African governments and relevant development partners in the African agricultural landscape and launched its activities in different member states.—APP

Transgenders demand implementation of Rights Act

ISLAMABAD: Transgenders community has demanded the authority concerned for the implementation of the Transgenders' Rights Act for ensuring security and their inclusion in society with dignity. Talking to APP, an expert on Transgender law Nayab Ali said that the only support for transgender people in Pakistan was provided by their peers. In the absence of medical care that is sensitive to their needs, the relief usually comes from the community members looking after them using traditional methods and wisdom, she said. She added that an inclusive transgender policy allowed individuals to take part as their self-determined gender and they were assigned at birth. She further added that Transgender participation had proved non-controversial with women's groups and some people were saying transgender should be banned from female categories.—APP

3,069 FIRs over violations of anti-dengue SOPs

RAWALPINDI :The Rawalpindi Administration had imposed Rs 12,422,643 fine and registered as many as 3,069 FIRs on violations of anti-dengue SOPs from January 1 to date in various areas of the Rawalpindi district. This was stated by the District Coordinator of Epidemics Prevention and Control, Dr. Sajjad Mehmood, here Sunday. Giving details of the punitive actions, the health officer told APP that the district administration, in collaboration with allied departments, had sealed 697 premises, issued Challans to 7,940, notices to 16,683 on violations of dengue SOPs this year. Dr. Sajjad informed that around 4,764 confirmed cases had been reported in the district in 2022, while the number was 6,294 in 2019, 17 in 2020, and 2,504 in 2021. The health officer further stated that five patients with positive symptoms were admitted to the city's allied hospitals, including three to the Benazir Bhutto Hospital and two to the District Headquarters Hospital. Dr. Sajjad said that due to decreasing temperatures, dengue fever cases had registered a sharp reduction in the district during the last week, adding since the previous week daily.—APP

Govt releases Rs296.10m to advance nine petroleum sector projects

ISLAMABAD :The government has released funds amounting to Rs296.10 million to advance nine ongoing petroleum-related projects during the first four months of the current fiscal year under the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP 2022-23) against a total allocation of Rs1.48 billion. Out of the total disbursement of Rs296.10 million, around Rs11.44 million have been spent on petroleum projects to accelerate oil and gas exploration activities during a four-month period (July-October 2022), according to official

data available with APP. As per the PSDP document, the incumbent government earmarked Rs150.560 million for the establishment of the National Mineral Data Centre (NMDC) Directorate General of Minerals, Rs303.700 million for expansion and up-gradation of Pakistan Petroleum Corehouse (PETCORE) for its sustainable operations to facilitate oil and gas exploration research in Pakistan (HDIP), Rs100 million for Geological Mapping on 50 Toposheets, out of 354 unmappped Toposheets of Outcrop Area of Balochistan Province, Rs70

million for Legal Consultancy Services for drafting of Model Mineral Agreement and updating of Regulatory Framework (Federal and Provincial Minerals/Coal Departments) and Rs 200 million for Pakistan National Research Programme on Geological Hazards (Earthquakes and Landslides) - Data Acquisition along Active Faults and Identification of Potential Landslides Hotspot Zones. Similarly, the government specified Rs 224.809 million for strengthening and up-gradation of Karachi Laboratories Complex

(KLC) at HDIP Operations Office, Karachi, Rs100 million to supply 10 MMCFD gas/RLNG at doorstep (zero point) of Bostan Special Economic Zone, Balochistan (SSGCL), Rs 74.705 million to supply 13 MMCFD gas/RLNG at doorstep (zero point) of Bin Qasim Industrial Park Special Economic Zone, Sindh (SSGCL) and Rs256.735 million to supply 40 MMCFD gas/RLNG at doorstep (zero point) of Allama Iqbal Industrial City Special Economic Zone, Faisalabad (SNG-PL).—APP

Briefs

Daraz, Visa collaborate to provide relief goods

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's leading online marketplace Daraz and global card payment service Visa pooled their resources to provide relief goods to 4,000 flood-hit families. According to Gwadar Pro on Sunday, the e-commerce company said that "Daraz and Visa leveraged their long-term partnership by actively participating in flood relief efforts in Pakistan". The two companies pooled their resources to assist flood victims through the Daraz platform. As part of the collaboration, Visa allocated Rs 22 million to procure items from the Daraz marketplace. Daraz managed logistical operations to arrange items at the cost price from its seller network. It handled the logistics quickly, ensuring that all procured items were gathered from respective warehouses and delivered on time, Daraz said. In addition, Daraz worked with various humanitarian organisations, leading flood relief drives across Pakistan to distribute these items to over 4,000 families, it said. Daraz is owned by China's Alibaba Group.—DNA

IRSA releases 77,600 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Sunday released 77,600 cusecs of water from various rim stations with an inflow of 42,900 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, the water level in River Indus at Tabela Dam was 1498.45 feet and was 100.445 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 20,800 cusecs while outflow as 42,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1127.50 feet, which was 77.50 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded at 8,500 cusecs and 22,000 cusecs, respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded at 44,200, 40,700, 33,500 and 13,800 cusecs respectively. Similarly, from River Kabul, a total of 8,500 cusecs of water was released at Nowshera and 2,000 cusecs released from River Chenab at Marala.—APP

Authorities directed to complete Rattaamral Bridge

RAWALPINDI: Station Commander and President Rawalpindi Cantonment Board (RCB) Brig. Salman Nazir has directed the authorities concerned to swiftly complete the rehabilitation work of the Rattaamral Railway Bridge to facilitate the citizens. According to Rawalpindi Cantonment Board (RCB) spokesman, Brig. Salman Nazir has instructed the authorities to start rehabilitation work on the Railway Bridge connecting Rattaamral to Raja Akram Shaheed Road as soon as possible. Several projects including construction work on different roads, the rehabilitation projects of the Rattaamral Railway Bridge and Railway Level crossing on Mushtaq Baig Shaheed Road would also be completed within the shortest possible time frame.—APP

Country's first ever literature-based museum on cards

ISLAMABAD, Dec 11 (APP): Pakistan Academy of Letters (PAL) is working on the novel idea of establishing the country's first-ever literature-based museum on Pakistani languages with the aim to protect and promote the unique literary asset of all the regional languages of Pakistan. The "Literary Museum of Pakistani Languages" will provide information about all the regional languages being spoken in the length and breadth of the country in form of scripts, booklets, audios and video documentary display, said Asim Butt, Director PAL while talking to APP.—APP

Christmas tree lighting ceremony at Serena Hotel

General Manager of the Islamabad Serena Hotel Otto Kurzendorfer welcomes guests; assures to continue this tradition



DNA

ISLAMABAD: The General Manager of the Islamabad Serena Hotel Otto Kurzendorfer has said a year had passed since his predecessor Michel Galopin had stood here to open the festive season at the ISH. He said they all had missed that in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic. Christmas is such a celebration by itself but

I guess together with the people from near and far it is more meaningful and nice again. He expressed these views on the occasion of the Christmas Tree Lighting ceremony held in the lobby of the ISH. Diplomats and members of the civil society attended the ceremony in large numbers. Tree lighting ceremony is a regular feature of Serena Hotels Christmas celebrations.

The GM further said, we remember those who celebrated with us in the years before fondly, be it here in beautiful Pakistan or as for example with my family in Kuwait where I had spent the past 4 years. 'Please allow me as well to thank each of us for your loyalty over the past 12 months, your loyalty to our hotel and the people who come every day to make Serena such a special place. He also thanked guests for helping

them in making this place a better place for all', he added. Mr. Otto said 2022 had its dark moments as Pakistan witnessed devastating floods but as Christmas is sometimes celebrated as a festival of light and hope, I did witness in the past 4 months such hope and light with our individual contributions to our hotel wide charity drive still ongoing. 'As you must know each mean room night or service you avail here offers on

chargeable basis the opportunity to donate 5 percent of its value to our flood relief charity and as we try to help as we can this amount is matched to 100 percent by the hotel. Thank you for making the dark moment a means of joint efforts for the benefit of those who are affected by the flood'. He also thanked the artists and the priest for being a part of the Christmas celebrations.

Aawaz II recognizes contributions of community leaders

STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The British Council-led Aawaz II programme organised its sixth learning and development forum, in the federal capital to recognise the contributions of community leaders to address gender-based violence and intolerance. The forum brought together stakeholders including representatives from the British Council, British High Commission Islamabad, government organisations, civil society, and community leaders – to address gender-based violence through behaviour change interventions and communi-

ty engagement. The forum is part of a series of activities from Aawaz II to mark the 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-based violence, focusing on changing behaviour towards violence against women, girls and transgender persons. Aawaz II provincial and downstream partners are organising different dialogue sessions and advocacy campaigns to make their communities safer and free from gender-based violence. Dr Yasmin Zaidi, Aawaz II Team Lead, during her opening remarks said: "One in three women experience gender-based violence, globally. Aawaz II is addressing gender-based violence

through its critical mass of more than 30,000 volunteers representing community-based structures in villages and tehsils across the 22 districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab. These community leaders are now working to address harmful practices such as gender-based violence and child marriage in their communities". She urged the participants to continue to share ideas and explore ways to change social norms to address gender-based violence beyond the 16 Days of Activism." Ms. Zoe Ware, Political Counsellor, British High Commission, Islamabad said: "Gender-based violence is a serious issue

requiring action from all stakeholders. The FCDO is committed to efforts for promoting gender equality for the rights of women and girls. The Aawaz II programme has made significant contributions in addressing gender-based violence in local communities. The contributions and enthusiasms of community leaders and youth volunteers from Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa are a testament of the commitment of these individuals for developing gender-based violence free communities." The two-day learning and development forum includes panel discussions

and stall exhibitions showcasing Aawaz II achievements and group work. Aawaz II aims to create awareness and behaviour change and increase citizen-state engagement to promote change in the harmful practices of child marriage, gender-based violence, exclusion, exploitation and intolerance. The programme has reached over 30 million individuals with its interventions including communications campaigns on behaviour change. The five-year long programme is managed by British Council with support from Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).

Christmas to spread joy

ISLAMABAD: Christmas is around the corner to spread joy in the cold wintry December with majority of Christian community in the federal capital like across the globe having started the initial preparations for celebrating this festival in a passionate way. The main markets and shops of the capital city have started displaying a variety of Christmas-related accessories for attracting the community while the sweet and flower shops are also ready to gain huge profits through selling their items on this occasion. Every year, the Christian community with the advent of December starts their preparations by buying all the stuff including dresses, shoes and other accessories to mark the occasion in a befitting manner.—APP

HSF-NDF launched a series on Afghans refugees' struggles

ISLAMABAD: The Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF) Pakistan and the National Dialogue Forum (NDF) organized a ceremony for the screening of a mini-documentary to highlight the sufferings and hardships of Afghan Refugees living in Pakistan titled "The Refugee Stories: Lives of the Afghan Refugees in Pakistan" here the other day. The documentary series has highlighted the struggles and achievements of Afghan refugees' role models and community leaders who have excelled in adversity. Addressing the gathering of the ceremony, the Resident Representative of HSF Pakistan, Dr. Steffen Kudella, said "We want to strengthen the regional stability in Pakistan and Afghanistan through mutual understanding and cooperation." "We believe that Afghans in Pakistan are agents of positive change in Pakistan and Afghanistan: they can contribute substantially to democracy, peace and development." Dr Steffen explained the idea that the initiative aimed to only offer these Afghans a platform to share their experiences with the world and use these experiences to guide the future orientation of our work in Pakistan. Dr Steffen said that we are hoping that the situation in Afghanistan improves soon, hope that the country can be rebuilt as a strong motherland one day, and hope that even in the most difficult situations of life, you can do good and contribute to society. He said that the documentary was jointly created by the National Dialogue Forum, Hanns Seidel Foundation and IBEX Productions. It is part of our activities on regional dialogue with Afghan and Pakistani stakeholders. Explaining the details and role of HSF-Pakistan, Dr Kudella said that Democracy, peace and development are also the goals of the Hanns Seidel Foundation. He said that the Hanns Seidel Foundation is the oldest German political foundation in Pakistan and it will celebrate its 40th birthday in Pakistan next year. Our projects here promote good governance, regional dialogue, expertise in sustainable development, and support for talented Pakistani and Afghan scholars and students, he added. Earlier, the Executive Director, National Dialogue Forum Shaharyar Khan in his well-come remarks said that our main objective is to highlight the human stories of Afghan refugees in Pakistan. He said "We want to give them a voice and highlight their contributions to society. With this project, we want to remove the "taboo and stigma" around the word "refugee" and promote social cohesion between the Afghan refugee community and Pakistani society. He said that this documentary series is our small contribution to removing the misconceptions surrounding Afghan refugees in Pakistan. Shaharyar Khan said that same has the attention behind this effort is to highlight the struggles and successes of Afghan refugee role models & community leaders who have excelled in adversity. "Our mission is to bridge the gap between the refugee and host communities by highlighting the struggles of refugees and migrants; how they excel due to their hard work and perseverance under these circumstances and contribute to Pakistani as well as the Afghan diaspora. Resultantly, we aim to foster and promote social cohesion in both communities." The documentary screening was followed by a panel discussion with prominent experts: Mr. Mansoor Ahmad Khan, Former Ambassador of Pakistan to Afghanistan, Ms. Tammi Sharpe, Deputy Head of UNHCR Pakistan and Ms. Nasria Pashtun, Civil Society Activist and an Afghan Refugee, and moderated by Dr. Simbal Khan.—DNA

Mobile phone's usage decreases book reading habit

ISLAMABAD: The usage of mobile phones was significantly diminishing and decreasing book reading habit among writers, intellectuals, authors, poets, students and other readers. Talking to APP, Assistant Professor of Shah Abdul Latif University Khairpur, Dr Sahib Khan said the people especially students were reading books, newspapers, theses and other materials by using the internet on cell phones rather than hard copies and it had badly affected book reading. He said that people belonging to every age were busy with messages, texts, and tweets by using Twitter, WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram and other social networking Apps and it was promptly decreasing the concept of book reading among its lovers. He said reading books were enhancing knowledge and giving ample information to compete with the world and also making a person able to talk with others with logic, evidence, proof and solid imagination. He said, "Read thousands of books then words will come into the reader's mind like floods." —APP

Chinese firm assured of solar project's approval

Chairperson SEZA assured that the matters relating to the project will be resolved on a priority basis and meetings with FIEDMC for resolution of the matter will also be arranged as soon as possible

ISLAMABAD: The Punjab Board of Investment and Trade (PBIT) and the Special Economic Zones Authority (SEZA) are to approve a 700-megawatt solar power project in Faisalabad on a priority basis, as stated by PBIT. According to Gwadar Pro, the Faisalabad Industrial Estate Development and Management Co. (FIEDMC) and PowerChina Jiangxi Electric Power Construction Co. (JEPCC) has already signed a memorandum to facilitate the setting up of a 700MW solar power plant for M3 Industrial City and Allama Iqbal Industrial City in Faisalabad. The PowerChina JEPCC is a subsidiary of PowerChina and Henan Zhonghui Electric Power Engineering and Consulting Co. According to the PBIT statement, Dr Rania Ahsan, a representative of Chinese state-owned firm Zhonghui Electric Power Engineering and Consulting Co., held a meeting with Chairperson SEZA S. M. Naveed to discuss matters relating to the approval of the company's 700MW solar power project. CEO PBIT/Secretary SEZA, Jalal Hassan, DG PBIT Dr Suhail Saleem and RA-Facilitation Engr. Ayesha Khushboo also attended the meeting. The Chairperson SEZA assured that the matters relating to the project will be resolved on a priority basis and meetings with FIEDMC for the resolution of the matter will also be arranged as soon as possible. According to an earlier statement by the Federal Board of Investment (BoI), the provisionally-estimated total investment of the project is \$630 million, wherein Chinese companies will come as financiers, and the SEZ developer/FIEDMC will provide land on lease or will be an equity investment partner in the project.—DNA

Early closure of markets to save 3.5 billion dollars

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former President of Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) Dr. Shahid Rasheed Butt on Sunday said the foreign exchange reserves have fallen further while the IMF is not ready to cooperate. In these circumstances, it has become impossible for Pakistan to survive without more loans from friendly countries, he added. Shahid Rasheed Butt said that containers full of fruits, vegetables and other food items are piling up at the ports, which are not being cleared resulting in scarcity and price hikes. The authorities are not clearing poultry and animal feed which is increasing the inflation in the country. In a statement issued here today, he said that necessary raw materials and medicines are not being cleared to save dollars, while foreign companies and investors cannot repatriate their profits. He informed that the value of the goods stopped at the port has reached about five billion dollars and it is increasing daily panicking masses and the business community. The business leader noted that friendly countries have kept ten billion dollars in Pakistan and the country's treasury cannot afford more than one month's worth of imports. Despite grim scenario, the options of reducing oil consumption, banning foreign travel, and closing shops in the evening are not being considered which is unfortunate.

TEVTA/MG JW Automobile signed agreement

ISLAMABAD: Muhammad Mamoon Jaffar Tarar, Chairperson of the Technical Educational and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) and Zhang Jianmin, CEO of MG JW Automobile Pakistan Ltd signed a strategic cooperation agreement, which marks a new chapter in the development of Pakistan's automotive industry and automotive professional training, Gwadar Pro reported on Sunday. On the occasion, Tarar lauded and thanked MG for bringing new high-tech products and new growth momentum to the Pakistani automotive industry. He highlighted that the cooperation between the two parties would inevitably contribute greatly to the development of automotive technology, vocational training and employment in Punjab and the country as a whole. Zhang said that the MG plant has been completed and has obtained the production qualification issued by the government, and will soon enter formal production, which requires a large number of skilled workers. He expressed his pleasure at reaching a strategic cooperation agreement with TEVTA at this juncture and receiving timely support in the recruitment of staff, which lays an important manpower foundation for the subsequent mass production of the plant.—DNA

Business leader calls for improved tax mechanism

Former Vice President of FPCCI Atif Ikram Sheikh on Sunday said tax mechanism should be improved to realise the full potential of taxes without which country cannot survive anymore. He said that tax evasion is resulting in unrest, inflation, poverty, unemployment and illiteracy in the country which should not be allowed. Atif Ikram Sheikh who has also served as Chairman PVMA said that loans and grants can never be an alternative to economic activity which is imperative for national development. He said that the regressive taxation regime introduced by many countries has killed economic activity keeping them dependent on loans and charity. He added that no amount of borrowing or charity can help a country as economic activity is the only solution to the problems. Economic activity is reducing due to multiple problems which are triggering unrest, inflation, poverty, illiteracy and child labour putting the future of the country at stake.—APP

Pakistan's First And Only Diplomatic Daily

Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti

Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

Member APNS / ABC Certified

Vol: 03 Issue: 114

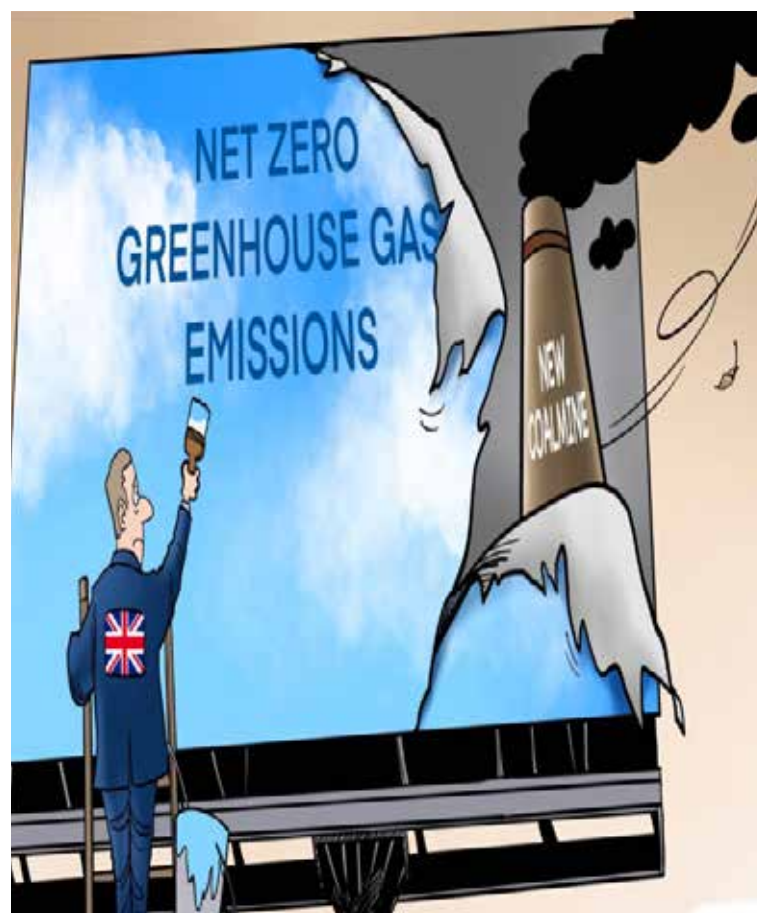
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Fairy tale of Morocco to reach semifinal

MOROCCO wrote World Cup history on Saturday to become the first African and Arab country ever to reach the semifinals of the World Cup after they beat Portugal 1-0, extending their dream run thanks to a towering headed goal from Youssef En-Nesyri as they out-thought and out-fought the Portuguese side. Youssef En-Nesyri leaped high in the air to head home the game's only goal just before half-time at the Al-Thumama Stadium to strike a significant blow against football's established order and book a semifinal on Wednesday against either England or France, who meet later on Saturday. The result will be widely celebrated across Africa and the Arabic-speaking Middle East, desperate to see one of their teams in contention for the biggest prize in football. Morocco had already taken the scalps of Belgium and Spain in this tournament but the win over Portugal is of much greater significance. It was also one of Morocco's better performances in Qatar, full of determined defending and canny counters, keeping at bay a collection of world stars despite losing key defender Nayef Aguerd to injury before the match and his back four partner and captain Romain Saïss early in the second half. Portugal will see it as a missed opportunity against the lowest-ranked side left in the tournament and a disappointing curtain call for the 37-year-old Cristiano Ronaldo. Morocco, again noisily encouraged by the majority of the 44,198-strong crowd, said they were fatigued after their last-16 success over Spain and immediately went into defensive mode as Portugal attacked from the outset. A fourth-minute free kick for Portugal from wide on the right was swung into the penalty area, and met by Joao Felix's diving header, producing a fine save from Yassine Bounou. But the supply quickly dried up thereafter as Morocco closed the passing lanes and frustrated the Portuguese attackers. Joao Felix had two more half chances in the first half but Morocco gained in confidence and found a sudden spring in their step, frequently breaking on the counterattack. Left back Yahya Attiat-Allah made several surging runs down the flank, presenting Selim Amallah with a good chance in the 35th minute, which he could not convert. But seven minutes later, a high ball from the fullback into the Portuguese box was met by a towering header from En-Nesyri, outjumping both goalkeeper Diogo Costa and defender Ruben Dias to hand Morocco the lead. Portuguese frustration was evident as they swarmed the Argentine referee Facundo Tello at the end of the first half, complaining that several penalty appeals had been turned down. Morocco came close to a second goal four minutes into the second half as Jawad El Yamiq got a touch to Hakim Ziyech's in-swinging free kick but Costa was in place this time to block. Ronaldo's entry in the 51st minute was met with a loud chorus of jeers, but he did inject a new energy into the Portugal side for whom Goncalo Ramos, the hat-trick hero of their 6-1 win over Switzerland in the previous round, missed with a close-in header in the 58th minute. Bruno Fernandes hit over the top of the crossbar five minutes later as Portugal threw more into attack and Morocco began to sit deeper. Bounou saved again from Joao Felix with seven minutes left.



Apartheid wall imposes restrictions on Palestinians

THE Israeli occupation authority (IOA) has built the separation wall in order to isolate the Palestinian citizens, impose restrictions on their movements, and prevent them from communicating with their brethren in 1948 Occupied Palestine. The construction of the separation wall started on the 23rd of June 2002 when Ariel Sharon served as the 11th Prime Minister of Israel. 3.4 billion US dollars were allocated to build the wall between the occupied West Bank and 1948 Occupied Palestine. On the 9th of July 2004, the International Court of Justice in The Hague deemed the building of the apartheid wall illegal, demanding that Israel must immediately halt the construction of the wall. "The separation wall near Tulkarem governorate and adjacent to the green line area is built with a length of 32 kilometers," Director of Land Research Center Mahmoud Al-Saifi said, adding that the wall penetrates through 6 kilometers of the borders of al-Raas and Khirbet Jibarah villages in the governorate. According to Al-Saifi, the wall penetrates the borders of 17 villages, destroying 6,043 dunums of the Palestinian lands and razing 63,000 citrus and olive trees in addition to 80 houses. He stressed that the wall also isolates 16.4 square kilometers and five artesian wells in the Palestinian lands of the Tulkarem governorate. Al-Saifi noted that 6,700 dunums of isolated lands are agricultural lands, while 7,900 dunums are forests and open spaces, adding that 190 dunums are urban areas while 570 dunums are seized by the wall, in addition to 1,030 dunums confiscated in favor of Sal'it settlement. After constructing the separation wall, the IOA announced the Palestinian lands isolated by the separation wall, whether residential or agricultural, as Israeli military zones that Palestinians cannot reach unless by Israeli permits. The wall has 12 gates, nine of which are used by the Palestinian farmers who have isolated lands. Some of the gates open daily, others weekly and others only in some seasons such as the season of picking olives. Palestinians are granted permits to reach their lands under three conditions after they provide ownership certificates of the isolated land in addition to a map for the land. Sometimes the IOA does not allow Palestinians to reach their lands even after they get permits as a prelude to confiscate such lands. Moreover, sometimes the IOA refuses to issue permits for Palestinians who have met all the conditions.

A curious courtship: Rival Muslims woo Hindu nationalists

James M. Dorsey

The gathering would follow a first Religion Forum 20 meeting in Bali in November, where Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim-majority country and democracy, declared the R20 an official engagement group with a permanent secretariat in Jakarta. If the Bali R20 involved an attempt by its rival co-organisers, Indonesia's Nahdlatul Ulama and Saudi Arabia's Muslim World League, to coopt one another, Delhi promises to be a three-way competition with the United Arab Emirates joining the fray. The competition for who will be the primary Muslim player in an R20 Delhi summit is part of a larger Muslim struggle that is likely to define Islam in the 21st century. Senior Indian officials favour embracing the R20 as an official engagement group

MUSLIM religious soft power rivalry, a battle for the soul of Islam, just got hotter. The rivalry's latest battlefield is not Mecca, Medina, Cairo, Tehran, or Istanbul. It's Hindu nationalist Delhi. That is because, for the next year, India chairs the Group of 20 largest economies in the world. At stake for the Muslim rivals, proponents of rival pluralistic and autocratic forms of Islam, is who will help shape a gathering of religious leaders in advance of the September 2023 Delhi summit of G20 leaders. The gathering would follow a first Religion Forum 20 meeting in Bali in November, where Indonesia, the world's largest Muslim-majority country and democracy, declared the R20 an official engagement group with a permanent secretariat in Jakarta. If the Bali R20 involved an attempt by its rival co-organisers, Indonesia's Nahdlatul Ulama and Saudi Arabia's Muslim World League, to coopt one another, Delhi promises to be a three-way competition with the United Arab Emirates joining the fray. The competition for who will be the primary Muslim player in an R20 Delhi summit is part of a larger Muslim struggle that is likely to define Islam in the 21st century. Senior Indian officials favour embracing the R20 as an official engagement group. But some are concerned that a religious gathering could turn into a platform that takes India to task for its perceived anti-Muslim policies. The inter-Muslim struggle pits Nahdlatul Ulama's socially and politically pluralistic and reformist interpretation of Islam against the Muslim World League and the UAE's autocratic version that embraces social change, rejects political liberalization, and avoids jurisprudential and doctrinal reform of supremacist attitudes that Islam shares with other major religions. Part of a bold and risky strategy, Nahdlatul Ulama's partnership with the League that formally ended in late November raised questions about the group's legitimisation of the Saudi-government agency as a non-governmental organisation. The League is a de facto branch of Mohammed bin Salman's government tasked with propagating the crown prince's insistence that a socially liberal Islam demands absolute obedience to the ruler. Nahdlatul Ulama's silence over a new Indonesian criminal code that parliament recently passed unanimously has sparked further questions on how that squares with its unconditional endorsement of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights – a significant differentiator in its rivalry with state-sponsored autocratic versions of moderate Islam. The law bans extramarital sex and curbs freedom of expression by, for example, outlawing insulting the president, but puts major limitations on who can file a complaint. Privately, influential Nahdlatul Ulama sources defend the socially restrictive aspects of the law but concede that freedom of expression concerns are legitimate. The sources expect the law to be modified in challenges likely to be filed with the Constitutional Court. The competition for India's favour in shaping a religious summit in Delhi is as much a power struggle between rival interpretations of moderate Islam as

between the UAE and Saudi Arabia for religious soft power in the Muslim world. The competition also involves a battle for influence between a G20 legacy group, the G20 Interfaith Forum Association (IF20), that long dominated the G20's informal religious tack, and Nahdlatul Ulama. Nahdlatul Ulama's R20 sidelined the Utah-based IF20, creating an opportunity for the UAE to step into the breach on the back of its convening power and financial muscle. Organised by the IF20 and the Interfaith Alliance for Safer Communities, a UAE-based group, the Emirates this week is sponsoring a two-day conference of Muslim, Jewish, Christian, Hindu, and Buddhist figures under the patronage of Emirati President Mohamed bin Zayed. Entitled "Engaging Faith Communities: G20 Agendas and Beyond," the conference aims to take the wind out of the sails of the Bali gathering and to position the UAE as an autocratic player alongside the Muslim World League. Little surprise that neither Nahdlatul Ulama nor the League, despite the Emirates' alliance with Saudi Arabia, are represented at the Abu Dhabi conference. More surprising is the absence of longer-standing building blocks of the UAE's religious soft power campaign, such as the Forum for Promoting Peace in Muslim Societies led by Abdallah bin Bayyah, a Mauritanian Islamic scholar, and Hamza Yusuf, one of the most prominent Western Muslim figures. The contrast between the R20 Bali's focus and the agenda of the IF20 in Abu Dhabi says much about the difference in objectives and approaches of Nahdlatul Ulama and the UAE. While the R20 focused on coming to grips with the problematic histories of various religions, including Islam, to generate genuine religious reform, the IF20 is geared towards themes likely to curry favour in Western capitals. The Abu Dhabi focus is key to the UAE's continuous effort to ensure that it is a relevant partner that the United States and Europe would want to defend against attack, particularly in the way they did in 1990 when Iraq invaded Kuwait. As a result, the IF20's themes include interfaith dialogue, tolerance, conflict resolution, freedom of religion, refugees, the food crisis, trafficking, health care, and social protection whereas the R20 was about shared religious and civilizational values and historical grievances, truth-telling, reconciliation, and forgiveness. Key sessions of R20 panels sought to answer questions such as "what values do our respective traditions need to relinquish to ensure that religion functions as a source of genuine solutions, and not problems, in the 21st century," and "what values do we need to develop to ensure peaceful coexistence, and why?" To put flesh on the skeleton, the R20 secretariat is organising working groups to formulate detailed responses to these questions that could be debated at a second meeting in Delhi. Also, timed to coincide with Nahdlatul Ulama's centennial, the R20 is organizing in February a gathering of Islamic scholars, to which Messrs. Bin Bayyah and Muhammed al-Issa, the Muslim World League secretary general, are

being invited. The meeting is designed to kick off a discussion that would result in jurisprudence that would recognize the legitimacy of the United Nations and its charter as well as the principle of the nation state and anchor them in Islamic law. In doing so, Nahdlatul Ulama hopes to counter notions of a transnational Islamic state advocated by militants such as Al Qaeda and the Islamic State and make the UN Charter legally binding for its Muslim signatories, according to religious law. The questions posed during Bali R20 challenge Nahdlatul Ulama, given its involvement in the 1965 massacre of perceived communists in Indonesia, as well as the Muslim World League that has failed to account for its past as a primary vehicle of decades of global Saudi propagation of an ultra-conservative, supremacist, and sectarian interpretation of Islam. The questions also challenge the UAE's willingness to go to any lengths to impose an autocratic interpretation of Islam that brooks no political or religious dissent. Speaking at the Bali gathering, Sri Swapan Dasgupta, an Indian journalist, politician, and close associate of Prime Minister Narendra Modi argued that "obfuscation and denial (of traumatic historical events) has only worsened the situation." Mr. Dasgupta was referring to Hindu nationalist grievances dating back to the Muslim conquests in the Indian subcontinent in the 13th to 17th centuries that fuel Mr. Modi's Hindutava ideology. Mr. Dasgupta did not say that Hindu nationalist India needs to come to grips with the subcontinent's history in ways that do not boil down to a campaign of revenge against India's 200 million Muslims, the world's largest Muslim minority. The challenges for Muslims in the rivalry to shape the Delhi G20's religious agenda are no less daunting. Muslims can choose between taking the high or the low road to coming to grips with history. The high road involves confronting painful truths in a quest for a healthier, more pluralistic, and socially cohesive society. The low road allows autocrats to either rewrite history or sweep it under the table and opportunistically bend it to their will. India is not where the battle for the soul of the world's major religions, including Islam and Hinduism, will be decided, but it is the battle's next arena. Thank you to all who have demonstrated their appreciation for my column by becoming paid subscribers. This allows me to ensure that it continues to have maximum impact. Maintaining free distributions means that news website, blogs, and newsletters across the globe can republish it. I launched my column, The Turbulent World of Middle East Soccer, 12 years ago. To borrow a phrase from an early proprietor of The Observer, it offers readers, listeners, and viewers 'the scoop of interpretation.' If you are able and willing to support the column, please become a paid subscriber by clicking on Substack on the subscription button and choosing one of the subscription options. – Dr. James M. Dorsey is an award-winning journalist and scholar

Regarding the 'Attempted Coup' in Germany

Hazem Saghieh

The model of these conspirators is the pre-1871 German empire. The Reichsbuerger (Citizens of the Reich) is one of the groups involved in the plot. Their most prominent member is a 71-year-old aristocrat who calls himself "Heinrich XIII." They hate nothing more than modern democratic Germany, which they refuse to recognize or pay taxes to, and some of them have printed alternative currencies and ID cards

SOME events are inane and idiotic, but conceal important phenomena and worrying potentialities. Such events could present an embellished and fragmented image of these phenomena; indeed, they could sometimes abort them. However, they push these latent phenomena above the surface, perhaps exposing the threat they pose as well. The recent attempted coup in Germany can be categorized among those events. Does the term "coup in Germany" or any other Western European country, given the paradox within it, not give us the impression that we are hallucinating? The details reported about the coup attempt in the media are typical of insane rightwing groups: changing Germany was entrusted to 25 far-right individuals, retired members of the armed forces and former Alternative for Germany members. They had been planning to storm parliament (the Reichstag) and seize power before they were arrested. They were clearly influenced by the storming of the Capitol in the United States after the recent presidential elections. The model of these conspirators is the pre-1871 German empire. The Reichsbuerger (Citizens of the Reich) is one of the groups involved in the plot. Their most prominent member is a 71-year-old aristocrat who calls himself "Heinrich XIII." They hate nothing more than modern democratic Germany, which they refuse to recognize or pay taxes to, and some of them have printed alternative currencies and ID cards. QAnon, another group that took part, believes that real power lies with the "deep state," which has dangerous secret powers. They have no trust in institutions or science: COVID, in their eyes, is a conspiracy, and the false reports about it are part of a plan aimed at controlling residents and forcing them into submission. They hate the media because it misguides the people. Social media, which they use to spread their fantasies and generalizations, is their ultimate weapon. The US and the Jews, as usual, top the

list of evil conspirators. Der Spiegel added another spin to the story, suggesting Russia had had a hand in the attempt, though a Kremlin spokesman denied it. Everything reported about these groups suggests that their actions revolve around two interlinked questions. First, they are drawn to a mostly imagined past, seeing it as salvation. Such a drive stems from deep anxiety about living in a transforming world in crisis. The challenges posed by globalization, refugees, migration, and the strains of the modern nation-state fall into this category. As for the second matter, it is populist skepticism of democracy and its institutions, as well as an increasingly widespread conviction that the way in which countries are ruled and social relations are shaped no longer ensures economic security or any other form of security to residents. What is worrying about all of this is not that the 25 individuals were planning a military coup before being arrested, nor is it that many extremist German citizens are armed or that number of armed citizens has been rising over the past few years. What should worry us is that a combination of democracy's weakness and an intransigence in dealing with the changing times can precipitate ugly phenomena, of which military coups are only one example. A quick overview of the history of some actions of this kind in democratic European countries affirms this notion. In 1961, four retired French generals, spurred by their objection to the decolonization of Algeria, tried to overthrow President Charles de Gaulle. This intransigence in accepting change came at a time when the Algerian war was already undermining French democracy and the Fifth Republic. Italy witnessed, in 1964 and 1970, two coup attempts that sought to obstruct any attempt at recognizing the legitimacy of the Communist Party and including it in government. Italian democracy was (and still is) suffering from weaknesses that analysts keep struggling to analyze and understand. In 1978,

Spain witnessed an attempt to obstruct its transition to democracy, which only began after the death of the country's dictator Franco in 1975. More recently, in 2017, rejection of globalization and modern statehood, as well as the influence of the model put forward by Vladimir Putin in Russia, precipitated an attempt in Austria that shares a lot of similarities with the recent attempt in Germany in terms of its ideas, practices and its pitiful number of participants. The woman who led this attempt, Monika Unger, wanted her movement to pave the way for a military coup. As for Germany itself, it witnessed several coup attempts in the 1920s that were propelled by its economic collapse and a decline in confidence in political life and the Weimar Republic's democracy. Among them was an attempt led by Adolf Hitler launched in Munich in 1923, the failure of which led to his imprisonment. However, just ten years later, Hitler managed to ascend to power through an election. This does not mean that European countries, especially Germany, face the specter of seeing what happened a century ago repeat itself. Nonetheless, this attempt should inspire caution and anxiety. We should remember that extreme right-wing parties rule Italy and that the electoral process itself, among the democratic principles that has been most resilient in face of populism, is now subject to skepticism. This was evident in the recent presidential elections in the United States and, to an extent, Brazil as well. We should remember Donald Trump's recent demand that the constitution be terminated. We should remember the Israeli elections and the government that will spring from them... We should notice that the extreme left and extreme right are constantly trying to deny the existence of democracy and announce its death. All of this could turn and is turning into rifles shooting lethal, toxic bullets in every direction. Source: Asharq Al-Awsat

Briefs

'Gang of thieves' doesn't care if Pakistan defaults

FROM PAGE 01
A day earlier, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar reiterated that the "economy is going in the right direction" and it would "not default". He added that no more experiments could be done with the country's economy as Pakistan had gone through its "darkest economic periods" during the previous government's tenure. People came to know how the Sharif family was laundering the looted money when the Hudaibia Paper Mills case surfaced, Khan added. The Sharif family's "front man" Ishaq Dar recorded his statement under Section 164 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) and revealed the details of the money laundering. The PTI chairman warned that Pakistan's default risk has surged to 100% as the 88% of local investors do not believe in the incumbent government. As long as this government lasts, the country's economic instability will increase, warned Khan. "They will leave the country whenever they get a chance."

Referring to the alleged horse-trading in Sindh House in the past, the PTI leader said that the Constitution suit them only when it benefits them, otherwise they have always flouted the law. He urged the national security institutions to look into the ongoing situation in the country. He also accused the Election Commission of Pakistan and the establishment of supporting the ruling alliance led by the PML-N during the recent by-polls in the country.

"Maryam Nawaz reached [homeland] first, then Ishaq Day was dry cleaned and now Suleman Shehbaz would be dry cleaned," Imran Khan said. "We all knew who gave them NRO-II," Khan said and asked if Constitution allows NRO-II. The PTI chairman feared that PML-N supremo Nawaz Sharif and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Co-chairman Asif Ali Zardari would not go into elections. Reacting to Suleman Shehbaz's return to the homeland, the former prime minister said: "An absconder responsible for billions in corruption & money laundering, Salman Shahbaz, is drycleaned & returns to Pakistan."

Sharing a hadith on his Twitter handle, Khan wrote if anyone wants to understand why Pakistan's economy is now a disaster, just two incidents provide the answer. He said that Senator Azam Swati, 75, has been subjected to custodial torture, beaten up in front of his grandchildren, his house vandalised and sealed, and he is being dragged from one province to another under multiple "false FIRs" registered against him in total "violation of all laws and basic human rights" enshrined in the Constitution.

Fawad shares date for dissolution with PDM

FROM PAGE 01
the country," the former federal minister claimed on Twitter. He criticised the members of ruling coalition saying that the country's affairs are not run by appointing ministers and making foreign visits. Fawad said that running the country is a "complicated and difficult" task and "these rulers don't have the ability" to do it. Pakistan needs political stability which is not possible without a stable government, he added. "If Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) doesn't bring a formula for holding general elections by December 20, the Punjab and KP assemblies will be dissolved," Fawad said. He said that the process of general elections in the two provinces will be completed by March 20 and PTI has complete trust of its allies in this regard.

France, Morocco, Argentina and Croatia get ready for semis

France will face the surprising North Africans on Wednesday, earning their place when Olivier Giroud's header proved the difference at Al Bayt Stadium



SPORTS DESK

DOHA: The four teams are still riding high after their respective wins in the World Cup quarter-finals, but anticipation is already building ahead of the next step: the semis on Tuesday and Wednesday. Croatia will attempt to reach its second World Cup final in as many competitions, and Morocco is looking to continue its historic run after it became the first African team and the first Arab team to ever make it to the final four. Defending champions France edged England 2-1 on Saturday as Harry Kane missed a late penalty in the World Cup quarter-finals, after Morocco became the first African team ever to reach the semi-finals. France will face the surprising North Africans on Wednesday, earning their place when Olivier Giroud's head-

Pacquiao returns to ring for clash with South Korean YouTuber

SEOUL: Philippine boxing great Manny Pacquiao returned to the ring Sunday for the first time since retiring from the sport last year, facing off against a South Korean YouTuber in an exhibition match near Seoul. The 43-year-old fighter turned politician stepped away from boxing to launch a bid for the Philippine presidency that failed. He also served as a senator between 2016 and May this year. On Sunday Pacquiao fought D.K. Yoo in a showcase match on the outskirts of

the South Korean capital to raise money for Ukraine and homeless Filipinos. Dressed in a shiny red robe with gold trimming, Pacquiao emerged into the KINTEX arena in Goyang to roars of excitement from the crowd. For his opponent Yoo, a martial artist and internet star, it was only the second time in a boxing ring - his previous encounter an exhibition match against former UFC fighter Bradley Scott. Yoo, dubbed the "Korean Bruce Lee" in his homeland - was no match for

Pacquiao despite being significantly taller and heavier. The South Korean was visibly tired and winded after the second round as a speedy Pacquiao moved in with an explosion of rapid-fire punches. Pacquiao, who turns 44 next week, was the winner by unanimous decision and hinted that more appearances in the ring could lie ahead. In a television interview, he said he would continue training to get back in shape. When asked about the prospect of a fight in 2023, he replied: "You'll

see." He had suggested prior to the match that he may not be done with fighting, calling Sunday's bout a "very good stepping stone to come back". "This is a great opportunity to come back in the ring," he added. "I thought it was easy to retire... I really missed boxing." Pacquiao, a multiple world champion who hung up his gloves with a 62-8-2 record after winning 12 major titles in eight weight classes, admitted: "I felt lonely when I retired from boxing."

Crawford knocks out Avanesyan to retain title

LOS ANGELES: Unbeaten American Terence Crawford knocked out David Avanesyan in the sixth round on Saturday to retain his World Boxing Organization welterweight world title. Crawford, fighting in front of home fans at the CHI Health Center arena in Omaha, Nebraska, sent Avanesyan sprawling with a right hook at 2:14 of the sixth, improving to 39-0 with 30 knockouts. A former undisputed light welterweight world champion, Crawford made his sixth defense of the title he claimed when he stopped Australian Jeff Horn in the ninth round in June of 2018. No opponent has taken Crawford the distance in more than six years. He punished Avanesyan in the sixth with repeated left upper-cuts, finally following one short left with the right hook that knocked the challenger out cold. Crawford's 10th straight knockout ended the six-fight winning streak of London-based Russian Avanesyan, the reigning European Champion in the 147-pound division who fell to 29-3 with one draw and 17 knockouts. Crawford's latest victory could at last pave the way for a long-awaited match-

"Crawford's 10th straight knockout ended the six-fight winning streak of London-based Russian Avanesyan, the reigning European Champion in the 147-pound division who fell to 29-3 with one draw and 17 knockouts"

up with fellow American Errol Spence Jr., unbeaten holder of the World Boxing Association, World Boxing Council and International Boxing Federation titles. The two had been in talks for a meeting this year and when that failed to materialize Crawford opted for the title defense against Avanesyan that was his lone bout in 2022. Spence, who owns a record of 28-0 with 22 knockouts, returned from surgery to repair a detached retina to score a 10th-round technical knockout of Yordenis Ugas in April to add the WBA belt to his WBC and IBF titles. Spence had been set to fight Manny Pacquiao in August 2021 but withdrew from the matchup because of the eye injury. It was the second major setback of Spence's career after an October 2019 car crash led to him being hospitalized. On Saturday, Spence posted a video on Instagram saying he'd been in another car accident, showing damage to his vehicle and saying he was hit by a 14-year-old driver who had run a red light after taking his parents' car. "It always happens to me," Spence says in the video. - APP

Benazir Bhutto National Tennis C'ship kicks off today

Thirteen categories of competitions will be held in the championship including men's singles and doubles, ladies' singles, boys under 18, girls under 18, boys under 14, girls under 14, girls boys under 12, girls boys under 10, special child, senior

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: More than 300 male and female players will feature in the 8th edition of Shaheed Benazir Bhutto National Ranking Tennis Championship 2022 will roll into action from today (Monday) supported by Sindh Sports Board here at Islamabad Tennis Complex. These views were expressed by Pakistan Peoples Party Senator Taj Haider along with Senator Farhatullah Babar and chief organizer Fazal Subhan during the press conference. Taj Haider said that we are organising the Benazir Bhutto tennis championship every year in memory of Benazir Bhutto while representatives of International Tennis Federation will also participate in the championship. "Benazir Bhutto Tennis Academy has also been established which supporting poor talented tennis players", Taj Haider said adding that Federal Minister for Inter-Provincial Coordination (IPC) Ehsan ur Reman Mazari has also approved the grant for the tennis academy and we are hoping that Ministry of Inter-Provincial Coordination and Pakistan



Sports Board will play their positive role and support for the tennis academy. Senator Taj Haider said that he has requested the Prime Minister to abolish the customs duty on sports goods for the promotion of sports in Pakistan. Speaking with the media, Senator Farhatullah Babar said that the establishment of Benazir Academy will be beneficial for the promotion of tennis and Benazir Bhutto academy will prove to be helpful for poor talented players. Thirteen categories of competitions will be held in the championship including men's singles and doubles, ladies' singles, boys under 18, girls under 18, boys under 14, girls under 14, girls boys under 12, girls boys under 10, special child, senior. Doubles 45+, Senior Doubles 60+ and Open Media categories will be held. The pre-qualifying rounds of the event will begin on December 12 and the main round from December 13. The quarter-finals will be played on December 16, the semi-finals on December 17 and the finals on December 18. This year, the prize money of the championship has been set at 1 Million while Kamran Khalil has been appointed as Tournament Director.

ECC okays agenda items for Reko Diq Project

FROM PAGE 01
liabilities to Antofagasta PLC. In the light of the terms of agreed settlement, the ECC allowed Finance Division to direct GHPL (for its own as well as GoB's share), OGDCL and PPL to deposit the aggregate amount of interest to the sum of US\$ 22,718,173/- in the escrow account from March 31, 2022 to December 15, 2022. The ECC further allowed Finance Division to arrange the interest payable for Government of Balochistan share amounting to US\$ 8,519,314 from the loan of Rs 65 billion already raised by the GHPL with the Government of Pakistan guarantee. Further, the ECC allowed the concerned Divisions of government and the SOEs to act in such a manner to ensure that the deposited amount alongwith interest deposited by the state owned enterprises in the escrow account to form part of the consideration for share purchase of Reko Diq Mining Company Limited. The ECC also considered and approved a proposal of Finance Division through a summary on funding plan of Government of Pakistan for share of Government of Balochistan in Reko Diq Project. As per proposal, overall funding commitment of US\$ 717 million over the period of 6 years by Government of Pakistan in respect of Government of Balochistan SPV Project Capital Commitment to be provided by the Government of Pakistan. - APP

Cross-border firing injures 6, martyrs 17

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leaving two others wounded. Official sources had said that Pakistani and Afghan forces exchanged fire for more than an hour following the incident, with reports that five personnel from the Afghan side were killed and 14 others were injured in the gun battle. The closure of the border soon after the incident had caused the suspension of trade, including the Afghan transit trade, between the two countries. On November 22, Pakistan reopened its border with Afghanistan at Chaman after a week. The decision to reopen the border was taken at a meeting between Pakistani border authorities and Taliban officials.

Man kills 3 in Rome

ROME: A man opened fire Sunday during a condominium board meeting in a coffee shop in northern Rome, killing three people and injuring others, authorities and witnesses said. Rome Mayor Roberto Gualtieri called an emergency security meeting for Monday after what he called "the grave episode of violence that has struck our city." In a tweet, he confirmed three people were killed in the shooting in the working class neighborhood of Fidenze. "The shooting occurred in an enclosed outdoor seating area of the bar, called 'Il Posto Giusto,' or 'The Right Place.'" La Repubblica daily quoted witness Luciana Ciorba, vice president of the condo board, as saying the man entered the bar shouting "I'll kill you all," and then opened fire. Participants managed to disarm him until Carabinieri police arrived. - APP

AJK President, OIC Sec Gen discuss Kashmir issue

MUZAFFARABAD: Azad Jammu and Kashmir President Barrister Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry and Prime Minister Sardar Tanveer Ilyas on Sunday received Organization of Islamic Cooperation Secretary General Hissen Brahim Taha. They had fruitful discussions on the Kashmir issue, the Foreign Office Spokesperson said in a press release. The OIC secretary general expressed his deep sentiments for the people of Kashmir after witnessing the grave atrocities and human rights violations committed by the Indian forces in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK). - DNA

'Psychologically destroyed' by World Cup loss: Neymar



SAO PAULO: Brazil's Neymar said his team's elimination from the 2022 World Cup following a devastating penalty shootout loss to Croatia has "psychologically destroyed" him. Seleção were knocked out on Friday by Croatia in a stunning 4-2 quarter-final penalty showdown that left Neymar in tears. "I am psychologically destroyed," Neymar said in an Instagram post on Saturday. "It is definitely the defeat which has hurt me the most, which left me paralysed for 10 minutes after the match, after which I burst into tears without being able to stop." "It is going to hurt for a very long time, unfortunately," he said. His revelatory Instagram post has tallied more than 18.8 million likes and counting. Neymar, who hinted this could be his final World Cup, said he was unsure on Friday whether he'd return to the Brazil side for another run at the Coupe Du Monde. "Honestly, I do not know," Neymar, 30, told reporters in Al Rayyan, Qatar, after the heartbreaking defeat. But in response to Neymar's emotional Instagram post on Saturday, Brazilian football legend Pele urged him to "continue to be an inspiration". On Friday, Neymar had put Brazil on pace to cement a semifinal place by notching the game's first goal in the first half of extra time, tying him with Pele as his country's all-time leading scorer with 77 goals in 124 international matches. But Croatia, who tallied an equaliser in the dying minutes of added time, ultimately snuck away with a victory on penalties, stunning Brazil. Neymar broke down in tears in midfield after his teammate Marquinhos' shot rang off the post, giving Croatia the win. He had been slated to take the fifth penalty shot that never was. - DNA

Briefs

Iran summons China envoy

TEHRAN, Iran : Iran called in China's ambassador after Beijing issued a controversial joint statement with Arab states dealing, among other things, with three disputed islands. Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Iran's rival Saudi Arabia on Friday, where he also sat down with leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. They issued a joint statement, which contained several clauses that directly dealt with Iranian affairs, its nuclear programme, and its regional activities. The issue that prompted the rare summoning of the Chinese envoy was ownership of Greater Tumb, Lesser Tumb and Abu Musa - three islands in the Strait of Hormuz that have been governed by Iran since 1971 and are claimed by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) as part of its territory. The then-shah of Iran dispatched the royal navy to the three islands in 1971 after the British withdrew their armed forces from areas that are today the UAE. Emirati leaders have since maintained the islands belong to them, with support from other Arab states. Iran has dismissed these calls. In signing the statement that called for "bilateral negotiations in accordance with the rules of international law, and to resolve this issue in accordance with international legitimacy", China effectively undermined Tehran's stance that it would not entertain any talks on the islands. AD.—DNA

European Parliament approves \$19B loan to Ukraine

BRUSSELS: The European Parliament (EP) approved a 18 billion (\$19 billion) loan Saturday to Ukraine for 2023. The loan will cover approximately half of the estimated 3 - 4 billion monthly funding Ukraine needs in 2023, the parliament said in a statement. It said the money, in line with a European Commission's proposal, will be used to support essential public services, including running hospitals, schools and provide housing for relocated people as well as restoration of critical infrastructure destroyed by Russia. The statement highlighted that the loan is conditional. "It requires reforms to strengthen the country's institutions and prepare it both for reconstruction and its path toward EU membership," it said. "Reviewed by the Commission before each installment, the conditions include measures for anti-corruption, judicial reform, respect of the rule of law, good governance, and modernization institutions." Commenting after voting on the loan, EP President Roberta Metsola said: "Ukraine is fighting for European values. The European Parliament and the European Union have shown remarkable solidarity with Ukraine on the humanitarian, military, and financial front. Importantly, we have granted Ukraine EU candidate status."—DNA

More Iranians at imminent risk of execution: rights groups

PARIS :Several Iranians were on Sunday at risk of imminent execution over protests that have rocked the country's clerical regime, rights groups warned, after an international backlash over Iran's first hanging linked to the movement. The almost three-month protest movement was sparked by the death of Mahsa Amini, who had been arrested by the Islamic republic's morality police. It is posing the biggest challenge to the regime since the shah's ousting in 1979. Iran calls the protests "riots" and says they have been encouraged by its foreign foes. Authorities are responding with a crackdown activists say aims to instill fear in the public. Iran on Thursday executed Mohsen Shekari, 23, who had been convicted of attacking a member of the security forces. —APP

European parliament hit by Qatar corruption scandal

European Parliament Vice-President Eva Kaili and three others were charged and imprisoned on Sunday in Belgium, amid a police probe into alleged corruption linked with Qatar

BRUSSELS: Four people have been charged in connection with an anti-corruption investigation into the European Parliament that has sent shockwaves through Brussels. European Parliament Vice-President Eva Kaili and three others were charged and imprisoned on Sunday in Belgium, amid a police probe into alleged corruption linked with Qatar. Five people were arrested on Friday in Brussels after investigators made 16 searches into suspicions of "substantial" money payments by the Gulf state to influence MEP's decisions. One more person was detained in the last 48 hours— Kaili—a Greek Socialist MEP and one of 14 vice presidents at the European legislative body—has been suspended from her party and sanctioned. She is temporarily withdrawn from her duties, such as representing the head of the parliament in the Middle East. The Belgian federal prosecutor's office did not name the country, but a source close to the issue confirmed to AFP that it was Qatar, which the Le Soir and Knack media also reported. The office did not provide any other names when announcing that those arrested had been charged. "This is not an isolated incident," said Transparency International. "For several decades, [the European] Parliament has allowed a cul-

ture of impunity to develop ... and a total absence of independent ethical control". A spokesperson for Roberta Metsola, President of the European Parliament, announced on Saturday evening: "In the light of the ongoing judicial investigations carried out by the Belgian authorities, President Metsola has decided to suspend with immediate effect all the powers, duties and tasks that have been delegated to Eva Kaili in her capacity as Vice-President of the European Parliament." Earlier in the day, she said the EU legislator "stands firmly against corruption" and that "we'll do all we can to assist the course of justice. The allegations come at a sensitive time for Qatar as it hosts the World Cup. The Gulf State has already had to battle against claims around alleged human rights abuses of migrant workers and the LGBT+ community. "Any allegation of misconduct on the part of the State of Qatar testifies to serious misinformation," a Qatari government official told AFP on Saturday. Hearings of the suspects were ongoing in Brussels over the weekend, according to a spokesperson for the federal prosecutor's office. Prosecutors said the investigation by Belgian judge Michel Claise is looking into "corruption" and "money laundering" within an organised gang. Kaili



—formerly a news anchor—was suspended from the Socialists and Democrats (S&D) in the European Parliament "with immediate effect" on Friday, according to a statement shared by the group. On Saturday the Belgian newspaper L'Echo claimed that "several bags full of banknotes" were discovered at Kaili's Brussels home. Police searched her house after allegedly finding her father in possession of a large amount of cash in "a suitcase". In November, Kaili went to Qatar where she welcomed "reforms" in the Gulf State. "Qatar is a leader in terms of labour rights," she said afterwards at the podium of the European Parliament, sparking a fierce backlash from other MEPs. An additional search of a second MEP's home took place on Satur-

day. The EU legislator will open on Monday in what promises to be a fiery session. French socialists have lambasted the "very serious scandal", with MEP Manon Aubry demanding a debate on the issue and criticising "aggressive lobbying" by Qatar. European Parliament sources told Euronews that Kaili's office had been sealed by Belgian police on Friday, along with those of two Belgian socialist MEPs, Maria Arena and Marc Tarabella. Arena denied any involvement, stating that the investigation involved her assistant instead. "The seals were put because she worked for the NGO Fight Impunity, I believe, in 2019," Arena told Le Soir. "It has nothing to do with the fact that she is my assistant." Media outlets in Greece and Belgium reported that one of

those arrested is Kaili's partner. The Greek socialist party PASOK, of which Kaili is a member, announced on Friday evening that she was "expelled" from its membership. Belgium's Federal Prosecutor's Office said it recovered 600,000 in cash and seized computers and mobile phones in Friday's swoop. "For several months, investigators of the Federal Judicial Police have suspected a Gulf country to influence the economic and political decisions of the European Parliament, this is done so by paying large sums of money or offering large gifts to third parties with a significant political and/or strategic position within the European Parliament," it said. The beneficiaries are personalities with "a significant political and/or strategic position" in the European Parliament. At least three of those arrested are all believed to be Italian citizens: director of No Peace Without Justice NGO Niccol Fig-Talamanca; trade union leader Luca Visentini; the former S&D MEP Pier-Antonio Panzeri; and parliamentary assistant in the S&D group and Kaili's partner, Francesco Giorgi, according to Italian news agency ANSA. Kaili, 44, has been an MEP since 2014. Contacted by Euronews, the European Parliament's press services said that "the European Parliament does not comment on judicial proceedings."—Agencies

Ethiopia, Pakistan discuss counter terrorism cooperation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan have discussed various ways to develop bilateral cooperation in diverse sectors including security and counter terrorism. The bilateral cooperation on counter terrorism and security came under discussion during a meeting between Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan H.E. Jemal Beker Abdula and State Minister for Interior H.E. Abdul Rehman Khan Kanju. Ambassador H.E. Jemal Beker Abdula eulogized the efforts of Pakistan against terrorism and said his country would look forward to learning from Pakistan's experiences in counter terrorism. He suggested to develop a framework between the two countries on counter terrorism. "Our military's technology and determination against the terrorism

is very high, but we still want cooperation in this sector," he added. The ambassador said Pakistan and Ethiopia needed to work together closely as there were a lot of challenges in the 21st century. He said there was a dire need to create a platform to promote south-south cooperation for betterment, progress and prosperity of our people. "It is the only option we have in this 21st century and we have seen what happened to Pakistan in the wake of climate change that triggered flash floods in the recent past," H.E. Jemal Beker maintained. The ambassador said he had visited the flood affected camps in Sindh after the flash floods to share their pain and grief. "Pakistan will not be left alone in this climate fiasco as my government is ready to share its experiences in averting the impacts of climate change." He said Prime Minister of Ethiopia H.E. Dr. Abiy Ahmed launched a green legacy programme which brought green revolution in his country. "We have planted 25 billion seedlings in the last four years to address the climate related issues," he



added. Ambassador H.E. Jemal Beker said both the countries shared similarities in many ways and heirs of the ancient civilizations. Ethiopia had a federal system like that of Pakistan and held elections after regular intervals, he added. He said he was amazed by political dynamism of Pakistan where democracy has been flourishing gradually.

"There are a lot of areas where both the countries are needed to strengthen close cooperation such as economy, security, technology transfer and others." On the other hand, H.E. Abdul Rehman Khan Kanju, State Minister for Interior appreciated all rounded recent achievement of Ethiopia under the leadership of H.E. Abiy Ahmed,

the Prime Minister of Ethiopia that increase the diplomatic and political leverage of Ethiopia across the globe. The minister assured the ambassador all-out support in this regard and said the Interior Ministry and the nation of Pakistan would be delighted to extend all-out assistance to Ethiopia on counter terrorism.

Türkiye urges Russia to implement deal on Syria deal

NEWS DESK

ANKARA: ANKRA: President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on Sunday reiterated to his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin the importance of the withdrawal of the PKK's Syrian wing, the YPG, 30 kilometers (18.6 miles) south of its border with Syria in accordance with a 2019 deal. Underlining that the PKK/YPG's separatist activities in northern Syria and terrorist attacks targeting Türkiye continue, Erdoğan said that in line with the 2019 Sochi agreement, it is important to clear the border of terrorists to a depth of at least 30 kilometers. Erdoğan and Putin discussed bilateral ties and regional issues, including the grain corridor and the

fight against terrorism, over the phone. Erdoğan relayed to the Russian president his sincere hope that the Moscow-Kyiv war will end "as soon as possible." The Turkish president also said that they can start work on the export of different food products through the grain corridor. The call comes after Turkish and Russian delegations held political consultations and addressed regional issues in Istanbul on Thursday and Friday, as Ankara reiterated its expectation that Moscow upholds its pledges regarding the withdrawal of PKK/YPG terrorists from the Syria-Türkiye border. Delegations headed by Turkish Deputy Foreign Minister Sedat Önal and his Russian counterpart Sergey Vershinin ad-

ressed bilateral ties, United Nations reform, the Black Sea grain export deal and regional issues such as Syria, Libya and Palestine, according to a Turkish Foreign Ministry statement. During the talks, Önal noted the importance of maintaining Syria's territorial integrity and political unity as well as the need to reach a political solution to the ongoing crisis. Türkiye reiterated its determination to its counterterrorism efforts against the PKK/YPG and conveyed its expectation that Russia fulfills the provisions of the 2019 memorandum of understanding on PKK/YPG terrorists in Syria. Last month, Türkiye launched Operation Claw-Sword in northern Iraq and Syria—a cross-border aerial

campaign against the PKK/YPG terror group—which has illegal hideouts across the Iraqi and Syrian borders where they plan and sometimes execute attacks on Turkish soil. The country's air operation followed a PKK/YPG terrorist attack on Nov. 13 on Istanbul's crowded Sıkık Street that killed six people and left 81 injured. After the air operation was launched, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan also signaled an impending ground operation to northern Iraq and northern Syria to eliminate the terrorist threat, adding, "This is not limited to just an air operation." The president specified northern Syria's PKK/YPG-controlled Tal Rifaat, Manbij and Ain al-Arab (also known as Kobani) regions as possible targets to clear of terrorists.

Peru's new President swears in cabinet

LIMA: Peru's new leader Dina Boluarte unveiled her cabinet Saturday as protesters blocked highways and pelted police with rocks in the wake of Pedro Castillo's ouster as president. Boluarte, Peru's first woman president, oversaw a ceremony in which 19 ministers—eight of whom are women—took the oath of office at the presidential palace. Boluarte was hastily sworn in on Wednesday hours after Castillo, who faced a series of corruption probes, tried and failed to dissolve Congress, which then impeached him. Castillo is now under arrest. Boluarte's new chief of staff is a former prosecutor who specialized in corruption cases and her new cabinet comprises members seen as technocrats who are politically independent. "Consolidation of democracy, rule of law, balance of powers, governability—this is the essential line of my government," Boluarte, who was vice president under leftist Castillo, said in her first speech. The 60-year-old lawyer has said she will serve out Castillo's term through July 2026, but on Friday she did not rule out holding an early presidential vote. Elections are a key demand of protesters who have been blocking roads and burning tires across the country, which has a record of political upheaval and instability. Protests took a violent turn Saturday in the southern Andean city of Andahuaylas, where police used tear gas to quell thousands of marchers, some of whom used slingshots to repel police. Twenty people—including four police—were injured in the clashes, the national human rights ombudsman's office said in a tweet.—Agencies

Activists warn UN nature pact will fail

MONTREAL: The world's next global pact for nature is doomed without clear mechanisms for implementing targets, conservation groups said Saturday on the sidelines of UN talks, as hundreds of protesters took to the streets of Montreal demanding greater action. Similar factors were widely blamed for the failure of the last 10-year biodiversity deal, adopted in 2010 in Aichi, Japan, which was unable to achieve nearly any of its objectives. "Strong text that commits countries to review progress against global targets and ratchet up action over time is essential to hold governments accountable," said Guido Broekhoven of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), adding he was "very worried" about the current state of negotiations on this point. Implementation mechanisms are at the heart of the Paris agreement on the fight against global warming, in the form of "nationally determined contributions." However, the current text on biodiversity only "urges" countries to take into account the conclusions of a global review in four years' time—without committing them to enhance action if the review finds targets aren't on track. "So what we have on the table is barely an encouragement to maybe do better," Aleksandar Rankovic, of the US nonprofit Avaaz, told AFP.—APP

Powerful earthquake sparks panic on Indonesia's Java island

DNA

ANKARA :A strong tremor rocked Indonesia's Java island on Saturday, sparking panic in a region where more than 320 people were killed in an earthquake last month. A magnitude 5.7 tremor struck at a depth of 112 kilometers (69 miles), with its epicenter some 18 kilometers (11 miles) southeast of the town of Banjar in West Java, the United States Geological Survey (USGS) said in a brief statement. Indonesia's meteorological agency BMKG initially reported a magnitude of 6.4, before revising it to 6.1. There were no reports of major damage or casualties. BMKG officials said there was no threat of a tsunami, according to local media.

Pothohari should be included in NADRA database

DNA

ATTOCK: Journalist, poet and umpire Faisal Irfan has said on Sunday that no progress could be made on the registration of Pothohari language. Speaker National Assembly Raja Pervaiz Ashraf has the application for one and a half months. Nadra Chairman Tariq Malik had registered the Pothohari language in the NADRA library this year on my motion, but removed it from the system after 10 days for unknown reasons. Talking to newsmen, he said that Raja Pervaiz Ashraf became the Speaker of the National Assembly, he appealed to him in several applications. Last time submitted written application with all necessary documents on 18th October but till now no progress has been made. He said that the people of Pothwar region demand the Speaker of the National Assembly to take notice of the matter and add the Pothohari language to the database of NADRA. Not giving its rightful place to the mother tongue of millions of people is not only sad but also a matter of concern for all the ruling classes of Pothohar region.

Ethnic tensions rise as Serbs block Kosovo roads

Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in 2008 with the backing of the West, following a 1998-1999 war in which NATO intervened to protect Albanian-majority Kosovo

FOREIGN DESK

ANKARA: Ethnic tension ran high in Kosovo after a group of Serb protesters blocked main roads in the northern part of the country for a second day on Sunday. The blockade comes following a night-time exchange of fire with police after the arrest of a former Serb policeman amid a surge in tensions between the Serb minority and the authorities. In recent weeks Serbs in northern Kosovo, a hotbed of Serbian nationalism, have met attempts by Pristina which they see as anti-Serb

with violent resistance. EULEX, the European Union mission tasked with patrolling the north of Kosovo, said one of the armored vehicle patrols also came under attack from protesters on Saturday evening. "A stun grenade was thrown at an EULEX reconnaissance patrol last night near Kudare," the EU mission said in a statement. It said no one was injured. The latest protests were triggered by the arrest of a former police officer Saturday, who was part of an exodus of Serbs from the force last month after Pristina said it would enforce a law requiring Serbs to scrap old license plates dating to

before a 1998-99 guerrilla uprising that led to independence. For a second day on Sunday, trucks and other heavy-duty vehicles blocked several main roads in northern Kosovo that lead to two border crossings with Serbia. Both crossings were closed to traffic. Late on Saturday Kosovo police said they came under fire in different locations close to a lake bordering Serbia. The force said it had to return fire in self-defense and there were no immediate reports of injuries. "The barricades from masked criminals in the north must be removed immediately," Kurti

said in a statement adding that his government was in contact with NATO's peacekeeping mission that has more than 3,000 troops on the ground. Police in Pristina said former policeman Dejan Pantic was arrested for allegedly attacking state offices, smashing the windows of the election commission offices, and police officers and election officials Tuesday. Serb mayors in northern Kosovo municipalities, along with local judges and some 600 police officers, resigned last month in protest over a government decision to replace Belgrade-issued car license plates with ones issued

by Pristina. Serbia's President Aleksandar Vucic said his country would ask NATO's KFOR peacekeeper mission to let Serbia deploy troops and police in Kosovo, although he acknowledged there was no chance of permission being granted. "We do not seek conflict, but dialogue and peace. But let me be clear: the Republic of Kosovo will defend itself—forcefully and decisively," Kurti said replying Vucic's comments. Kosovo declared independence from Serbia in 2008 with the backing of the West, following a 1998-1999 war in which NATO intervened to protect Albanian-majority Kosovo.

Briefs

South Korea: Parliament calls for minister to be dismissed

DNA

SEOUL: South Korea's parliament has passed a motion calling for the dismissal of the interior minister over the government's response to the Itaewon crush. Lee Sang-min has been facing mounting pressure to step down following the incident that killed 156 people and injured 152 others on 29 October. The opposition-controlled assembly passed the motion on Sunday. But President Yoon Suk-yeol is widely expected to reject calls for his minister's resignation. The Democratic Party has threatened to impeach the minister if the president rejects the motion, Yonhap News Agency reports. The Interior Ministry oversees South Korea's police, who have been criticised for their response to the incident in Itaewon, a popular nightlife district in Seoul with narrow streets and alleys filled with bars and restaurants. The crush happened as crowds gathered to celebrate Halloween without restrictions for the first time since the start of Covid. Yoon Hee-keun, the country's police chief, said the emergency response was "inadequate" and vowed a full investigation over what had happened. Lee Sang-min also apologised in the National Assembly, saying: "It is very sad for me as a father who has a son and daughter... it is difficult to express in words how unreal this situation is, and it is difficult to accept this situation."

Jersey explosion: No survivors found

DNA

NEW YORK: A search for people after an explosion at a block of flats in Jersey that left three dead has found no signs of life. Emergency service bosses said the search and rescue operation was now one of recovery. "We have been searching and we will not stop searching for people's loved ones," Chief Fire Officer Paul Brown told a press conference. It is understood there were nine known residents in the block before the blast in St Helier on Saturday morning. Three bodies have been found at the Pier Road scene and specialist teams are continuing to look for six more. It is estimated there could be up to a dozen, as details on visitors remain unknown. The fire service had attended the flats just after 20:30 GMT on Friday after the smell of gas was reported, it has been confirmed. The blast happened at about 04:00 GMT on Saturday. Specialist teams and a search dog have been carrying out searches at the scene. Chief of Jersey Police Robin Smith described how there had been a "meticulous and painstaking search of the debris following the explosion, to start carefully identifying bodies when and if we find them". He told the press conference: "That will take time. We are not going to be here for days we are likely to be here for weeks."

Legendary Saïen Zahoor and Zarsanga steal the show

Serena Hotels and Aga Khan Trust for Cultural Services Honour the Pakistan iLaureates of the Aga Khan Music Awards 2022

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Serena Hotels and the Aga Khan Trust for Cultural Services hosted an evening celebrating the laureates of the "Aga Khan Music Awards" that was established in 2018 by His Highness to recognize and develop exceptional creativity, promise and enterprise in music, and music education in societies across the world where Muslim communities have a significant presence. The event was attended by prominent dignitaries including Diplomats, Federal and Provincial Ministers, Government functionaries, Representatives from Corporate Sector, and business community and media houses. The evening was illuminated by live performances by the award winners Sufi Music Legends Saïen Zahoor and Zarsanga along with a performance by the students of Leif Larson Music Centre. The Leif Larsen Music Centre, which was established in April 2011, at the Altit Fort with the intention of training young generation on the use of old musical instruments for ensuring the cultural music of the Northern Areas of Pakistan. Aziz Boolani, CEO Serena Hotels, complimented the efforts of the Aga Khan Award winners Zarsanga and Saïen Zahoor of Traditional, Folk, and Sufi music. The Laureates are international representatives of our musical heritage and deserve global recognition. Tauseef Ahmed, CEO AKCSP briefed the audience regarding vision of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture programmes, like the Aga Khan Award for Architecture, the Aga Khan Historic Cities Programme, the Aga Khan Music Program, and the Aga Khan Museum. He also gave the presentation on the Aga Khan music awards 2022. The Laureates of the 2022 Aga Khan music award selected 15 top performers for the main award by a master jury out of 400 nominees from 42 nations. They share the prize money of \$ 500,000 USD was shared by the 15 award winners. The award winners from Pakistan were the "Queen of Pashtu" Zarsanga and the "Mystical Punjabi Sufi Singer" Saïen Zahoor, whose work stands out on its own as being unique and standalone power houses. The award ceremony was hosted in October 2022, in Muscat, Oman in a two-day musical gala held at the Royal Opera House of Musical Arts. The awards presentation marked the culmination of a spirited celebration, featuring the laureates, who showcased their talent on a global platform.



Ukraine war: Odesa and Melitopol under attack

KIEV: Southern Ukraine has been hit by strikes from both sides in the war, with Russia launching drones at Odesa and Ukraine fighting back in Melitopol. The Ukrainian army said it shot down 10 drones on Saturday but another five had hit energy facilities, leaving some 1.5 million people without power. Later on, the exiled mayor of Melitopol said a Ukrainian strike had been carried out on the Russia-held city. Images shared by a Moscow-installed official there showed a big fire. Russia's drone attack on the Ukrainian port city of Odesa saw Moscow fire Iran-made drones at key infrastructure, Ukrainian officials said. "The situation in the Odesa region is very difficult," President Volodymyr Zelensky said in his nightly video address. "Unfortunately the hits were critical, so it takes more than just time to restore electricity. It doesn't take hours, but a few days." Since October, Moscow has been targeting Ukraine's energy infrastructure with large waves of missile and drone strikes. In Melitopol, pro-Moscow authorities said a Ukrainian missile attack had killed two people and injured 10. "Air defence systems destroyed two missiles, four reached their targets," Yevgeny Balitsky, the Russia-installed governor of the occupied part of the Zaporizhzhia region, said on the Telegram messaging app. He added that a "recreation centre" where people were dining had been destroyed in the attack, and that Ukrainian forces had used US-supplied HIMARS rocket launchers. This weapon has played a key role in Ukraine's counter-offensive, being used to target locations away from the frontlines, including Russia's command posts. Ivan Fedorov, Melitopol's exiled mayor, said scores of "invaders" had been killed. - DNA

Facing COVID surge, China expanding hospitals, ICUs

BEIJING: Facing a surge in COVID-19 cases, China is setting up more intensive care facilities and trying to strengthen hospitals as it rolls back anti-virus controls that confined millions of people to their homes, crushed economic growth and set off protests. President Xi Jinping's government is officially committed to stopping virus transmission, the last major country to try. But the latest moves suggest the ruling Communist Party will tolerate more cases without quarantines or shutting down travel or businesses as it winds down its "zero-COVID" strategy. A Cabinet meeting called Thursday for "full mobilization" of hospitals including adding staff to ensure their "combat effectiveness" and increasing drug supplies, according to state media. Officials were told to keep track of the health of everyone in their area aged 65 and older. It isn't clear how much infection numbers have increased since Beijing last week ended mandatory testing as

often as once a day in many areas. But interviews and social media accounts say there are outbreaks in businesses and schools across the country. Some restaurants and other businesses have closed because too many employees are sick. The virus testing site in Beijing's Runfeng Shuishang neighborhood shut down because all its employees were infected, the neighborhood government said Saturday on its social media account. "Please be patient," it said. Official case numbers are falling, but those no longer cover large parts of the population after mandatory testing ended Wednesday in many areas. That was part of dramatic changes that confirmed Beijing was trying gradually to join the United States and other governments that ended travel and other restrictions and are trying to live with the virus. On Sunday, the government reported 10,815 new cases, including 8,477 without symptoms. That was barely one-quarter of the

previous week's daily peak above 40,000 but only represents people who are tested after being admitted to hospitals or for jobs in schools and other higher-risk sites. Shaanxi province in the west has set aside 22,000 hospital beds for COVID-19 and is ready to increase its intensive care capacity 20% by converting other beds, the Shanghai news outlet The Paper reported, citing Yun Chunfu, an official of the provincial health commission. Yun said cities are "accelerating the upgrading" of hospitals for "critically ill patients." "Each city is required to designate a hospital with strong comprehensive strength and high treatment level" for COVID-19 cases, Yu was cited as saying at a news conference. China has 138,000 intensive care beds, the general director of Bureau of Medical Administration of the National Health Commission, Jiao Yahui, said at a news conference Friday. That is less than one for every 10,000 people. - APP

Lockerbie bombing suspect in US custody

WASHINGTON: A Libyan man accused of making the bomb which destroyed Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie 34 years ago is in United States custody, Scottish authorities have said. The US announced charges against Abu Agila Masud two years ago, alleging that he played a key role in the bombing on 21 December, 1988. The blast on board the Boeing 747 left 270 people dead. It is the deadliest terrorist incident to have taken place on British soil. All 259 passengers and crew on board the jumbo jet bound to New York from London died while another 11 people were killed in Lockerbie when wreckage destroyed their homes. Last month it was reported that Masud had been kidnapped by a militia group in Libya, leading to speculation that he was going to be handed over to the American authorities to stand trial. A US Justice Department spokesperson told the Reuters news agency that Masud would make an initial appearance in a federal court in Washington. Five years ago he was serving a prison sentence in Libya for bomb-making. Image caption, Abu Agila Masud behind bars in Libya. In 2001 Abdelbaset al-Megrahi was convicted of bombing Pan Am 103 after standing trial at a special jury-convened Scottish court in the Netherlands. - APP

27 bodies dumped by the roadside in Zambia

LUSAKA: The bodies of 27 people, believed to be migrants from Ethiopia, have been "dumped" by the roadside in Ngwera area north of Zambia's capital Lusaka. They likely suffocated to death while in transit, Police Spokesperson Danny Mwale told the BBC. One survivor found "gasping for air" has been rushed to a local hospital, he said. Zambia is a transit point for migrants, mostly from the Horn of Africa, who want to reach South Africa. Mr Mwale said residents of Ngwera found the bodies on Sunday at 06:00 local time (04:00 GMT). He said the police believe the migrants are Ethiopian nationals based on the identity documents found on them. - APP

500 refugees arrive in Italy

MILAN: Two rescue boats arrived in ports in southern Italy on Sunday morning, carrying more than 500 people who had been rescued from the Mediterranean Sea. The German-flagged Humanity 1, operated by the SOS Humanity NGO, arrived at the port of Bari in Italy's southeast while the Geo Barents ship, belonging to the charity Doctors without Borders (MSF), landed in the port of Salerno just south of Naples. The Geo Barents was carrying 248 migrants, of which 84 were children, mostly unaccompanied. They were welcomed by anti-racist activists carrying a banner reading "refugees welcome" in Salerno, according to the local Salerno Today news site. Several people had to be airlifted before reaching land, including a woman who gave birth on the boat on Wednesday. The Humanity 1 arrived in Bari with 261 rescued migrants on board. Italian authorities had referred it to the port on Friday but the journey took some 40 hours due to bad weather, including three-meter (9.8 feet) high waves that left many of the passengers seasick, the NGO said. The arrival of the rescue boats in Italy comes less than two months after far-right Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni took power in Italy. The Italian far right has long demonized migrants and the head of Meloni's coalition partner, Matteo Salvini, is currently on trial for kidnapping after refusing to let a rescue ship disembark in August 2019 while he was serving as interior minister. Last month, tensions flared between Rome and Paris after a French port took in a boat that had been turned away by Italian authorities. Italy's interior ministry said the decision to allow the two boats to dock was down to bad weather conditions rather than marking any change in Italy's anti-migrant policies. - DNA

Pakistan fight back after England set stiff target



MULTAN: Pakistan's Saud Shakeel and Imam-ul-Haq hit fighting half-centuries on Sunday to foil England's seam and pace attack and set up an exciting finish to the second Test in Multan. Set a challenging 355 runs for victory, Pakistan ended the third day at 198-4, needing another 157 with two full days remaining. With reverse swing helping the fast bowlers, England derailed Pakistan's start of 66 without loss with three wickets for just 17 runs. But Haq (60) and Shakeel (54 not out) led a remarkable 156-minute fightback during their stand of 108 for the fourth wicket before Jack Leach had

the former caught at slip three overs before stumps. Haq, who came in at number five instead of opening the innings following hamstring treatment, hit seven boundaries. Allrounder Faheem Ashraf, promoted to number six, was three not out as Pakistan chased a series-leveling win after losing the first of three Tests by 74 runs in Rawalpindi. England assistant coach Marcus Trescothick said he thought Haq's wicket shifted the balance in his team's favour. "I think it was a really important wicket because with the partnership they put together they were building to a nice place," he said. "Hopefully we put ourselves in a position to win the game." Still, Pakistan batting coach Mohammad Yousuf saw the balance at 50-50. "Players are confident that they can win this match," he said. Pakistan can take heart from the fact that their highest successful chase was 377 against Sri Lanka in Pallekele in 2015, and they beat the same opponents after being set 342 in Galle in July. No team has ever successfully chased more than 314 in Pakistan, a target reached by the home team against Australia in Karachi in 1994. After Pakistan's solid start, veteran pacer James Anderson bowled Mohammad Rizwan with the fifth ball after lunch for 30, before Ollie Robinson dismissed skipper Babar Azam for one. Azam was left shell-shocked as he tried to leave a ball which came in sharply to hit the stumps. - DNA

DECEMBER 2022

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