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Thailand-Pakistan relations excellent, says Ambassador

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EU lawmakers remove Kaili from office

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Strong foreign policy needs strong economy

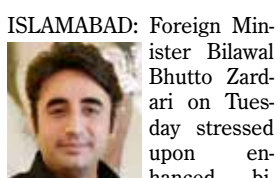
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Briefs

FM hails ties with Indonesia

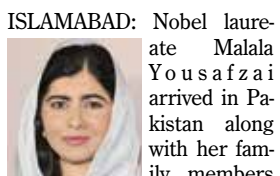
STAFF REPORT



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari on Tuesday stressed upon enhanced bilateral economic cooperation between Pakistan and Indonesia in diverse fields. During an interview with an Indonesian Tv channel, the foreign minister opined that there existed a large scope of cooperation between Pakistan and Indonesia. He said that they had signed an MoU for setting up a joint ministerial commission between the two countries, adding the economic and bilateral ties between the two countries had more potential which required to be unlocked.

Malala in Pakistan on 4-day visit

STAFF REPORT



ISLAMABAD: Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai arrived in Pakistan along with her family members on Tuesday. She is visiting her native country with an aim to help Pakistani girls get access to STEAM education and a fellowship programme for teachers. During her stay in Pakistan, Malala and her father would also meet Punjab Chief Minister Chaudhry Parvez Elahi with a focus on education and the work of the Malala Fund in Pakistan. She will then attend the OPP and the Malala Fund team events for awareness of the academic program within Pakistan having a focus on science education for young girls.

'Shocked' by attack on Afghan hotel

DNA



KABUL: Beijing said Tuesday it was "shocked" by a deadly attack on a Kabul hotel popular with Chinese business visitors, adding that five of its nationals were wounded. "This terrorist attack is abominable and China is deeply shocked," foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said in Beijing. "As far as we know, five Chinese citizens were injured in the terrorist attack, and several Afghan military and police were also killed."

SC questions NAB amends by incomplete assembly

Only the legislators benefited from NAB amendments, observes Justice Ijazul Ahsan

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Umar Atta Bandal on Tuesday remarked the recent amendments to the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) ordinance will slide Pakistan 100 points down in the world corruption index. The Supreme Court of Pakistan bench comprising the CJP, Justice Ijaz-ul-Ahsan, and Justice Mansoor Ali Shah heard Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan's plea against the amendments. Khawaja Harris, the lawyer representing Mr Khan in the court, said if executive did not perform its duties, people were left with the option to move to the SC. The CJP remarked incomplete National Assembly passed the amendments adding the SC could not find a law that dealt with the authority of an incomplete assembly to enact laws. The CJP further said the deficiencies in system halted the government to ensure accountability adding the wrong use of NAB amendments ruined the businesses of people. Justice Ijaz ul Ahsan remarked

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Shehbaz' son gets 14-day protective bail

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad High Court (IHC) Chief Justice Amir Farooq has granted protective bail to Suleman Shehbaz, son of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, for 14 days. The court on Tuesday also directed Suleman Shehbaz to appear before the relevant court within two weeks. The court also ordered National Accountability Bureau (NAB) and Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) not to arrest Shehbaz Sharif. Suleman Shehbaz earlier reached Islamabad High Court (IHC) to surrender before the court and to attend the hearing of his plea

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Assemblies' dissolution likely before Dec 20

Imran Khan says PML-Q is our key ally

KHAYAM ABBASI



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief and former Prime Minister Imran Khan said on Tuesday announcement to dissolve the Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assemblies will be made before December 20. During the meeting with PTI's Mianwali, Sargodha and Sahiwal lawmakers at Zaman Park, the deposed premier, while highlighting the ruling Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) "ineffective decisions" on the country's economy, said that party's politics is not against the country's interests, adding that the announcement regarding the provincial assemblies' dissolution will be made before December 20. "PML-Q is our key ally, and we are on the same page over dissolution decisions,"

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ECP initiates removal of Imran Khan as PTI chief

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) Tuesday informed the Islamabad High Court (IHC) about initiating the proceedings of removing Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chief Imran Khan from the party's leadership after his disqualification in the Toshakhana reference. The ECP, during the hearing of Khan's petition against his disqualification in the Toshakhana reference by the electoral body, also informed the IHC that the

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SUKKUR: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif offering prayer after laying the foundation stone of the Sukkur-Hyderabad motorway (M-6) during a ceremony. – DNA

Tajik president due in Pakistan today



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Tajikistan's President Emomali Rahmon is arriving in Pakistan on Wednesday on a two-day official visit at the invitation of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif. The Foreign Office in a statement on Tuesday said the two sides would exchange views on further strengthening bilateral co-operation in a wide range of areas. During the visit, a number of bilateral agreements and Memoranda of Understanding (MoU) are expected to be signed. "The Tajik President's visit to Pakistan is expected to impart a renewed impetus to deepening co-operation between the two countries in diverse fields and further strengthen the growing geo-economic partnership," the FO said. Pakistan and Tajikistan are brotherly countries linked through longstanding historical, cultural and religious bonds. These ties are marked by mutual respect and exceptional cordiality.

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India involved in all sorts of terror activities: Rana

"We have evidence of India's involvement" Sanaullah says referring to Johar Town blast

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah said on Tuesday that there was "clear evidence" of India carrying out terrorist activities in Pakistan, adding that the government has decided to present the matter before the international community. "We have decided to bring our stance before the world and unveil India's face of terrorism," he said in a press conference in Islamabad, flanked by Punjab Counter Terrorism Department Additional Inspector General Imran Mehmood. "For decades, Pakistan has been burning in the fire of terrorism. Our mosques, imambargahs, important buildings, and gatherings have been targeted.

"Today, the matter that we are putting before you [...] we have evidence of India's involvement in it," Sanaullah said, referring to the Johar Town blast in Lahore last year. In June 2021, a powerful blast near the residence of Jamaatud Dawa chief Hafiz Saeed in Johar Town had killed three people and injured 24 others, including a police constable. Six-year-old Abdul Haq, his father Abdul Malik, 50, and a young passerby died in the explosion that left a four-foot-deep and eight-foot-wide crater on the road and damaged several houses and shops nearby. Days after the incident, the then information minister Fawad Chaudhry and national security Adviser Dr Moed Yusuf told a

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The EU agrees to give Bosnia candidate status

BRUSSELS: EU countries agreed Tuesday to grant Bosnia candidate status to join the union, putting the volatile Balkan nation at the start of a long road to membership. Russia's war on Ukraine has breathed fresh life into the European Union's willingness to consider letting in more of its eastern neighbours after years at a standstill. The EU is concerned that other powers, such as Russia or China, might spread their influence into the Balkans if countries hopeful of joining the bloc are thwarted. European affairs ministers meeting in Brussels gave the green light to Bosnia becoming a candidate after the bloc's executive

arm in October recommended they launch the membership process. The step is expected to be signed off formally by EU leaders at a summit in Brussels on Thursday. Czech Europe Minister Mikulas Bek, whose country holds the bloc's rotating presidency, said member states were "sending a strong message of its commitment to EU enlargement". The move comes despite long-standing concerns over the political situation in Bosnia, a country of three million people burdened with ethnic divisions since its devastating war three decades ago.

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Thailand-Pakistan relations excellent: Ambassador

Exclusive

ANSAR MAHMOOD BHATTI

Ambassador of Thailand to Pakistan Chakkrid Krachaiwong talked to Daily Islamabad POST. During the interview the Ambassador touched upon various aspects of bilateral as well multi-lateral issues. Here is the text of his interview

ON BILATERAL RELATIONS

I am pleased to say that we are living in a very exciting moment of Thailand-Pakistan relations. The reason I'm saying that is because this year marks the 60th anniversary of the late Bhumibol Adulyadej, the Great and Her Majesty Queen Sirikit's landmark visit to Pakistan. To commemorate this auspicious occasion, the Royal Thai Embassy, in kind cooperation with the Punjab Governor House, accomplished a project to improve the landscape around the mango trees that Their Majesties planted during their visit in 1962. Sixty years have passed, these old mango trees still stand strong as a testament of our closed and cordial ties. I would like to also express my sincere appreciation to our Pakistani friends who help taking very good care of these important trees. His Majesty the current King of Thailand has also visited Pakistan 3 times when His Majesty was the Crown Prince. At one of his visits in 2006, the then Crown Prince, brought with him relief assistance granted by his father for the earthquake victims in



Pakistan and during the recent severed flood, His Majesty has also sent a Royal Condolence Message to those who were affected by the flood. Additionally, since October last year, the Embassy along with Pakistanis friends from several sectors as well as the Government of Pakistan have celebrated the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations through numerous activities. In fact, linkages between our two countries actually dated back more than 2,000 years through exchanges of trade and culture since Gandhara civilization. Recently, the Royal Thai Government presented a container of the Lord Buddha's relics as a gift to commemorate the 70th anniversary to Taxila Museum which combines the beautiful Thai and Gandhara arts reflecting such linkages. Also, under Punjab and Pakistan authorities' invitation and support, the Thai Buddhists have also performed one of the largest Buddhist ceremonies in Taxila demonstrated Pakistan's harmony and interfaith principle.



In March this year, H.E. Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, participated in the OIC Foreign Minister Conference organized in Islamabad. This visit not only demonstrated our cooperation in multilateral aspect but also to represent Thailand's strong support to our Pakistani friends as the host country. In terms of trade, despite of the global pandemic, our trade volume last year has reached the highest record in the entire history of our bilateral trade at 1.8 billion US Dollars. I am hopeful that this year's bilateral trade would break yet another record as the trade volume until this September has already reached 6 percent higher than the same period of last year. We are also looking forward to the conclusion of Thailand-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement which is anticipated to enhance our trade dynamic and strengthen our trade links to a higher level for our mutual benefit. When I visited Sialkot, I am delighted to learn that the rubbers and latex that have been imported from Thailand are used by factories there, to make foot-



balls for players around the world especially World Cup during the past several years, including the "Al Rihla football" using in World Cup 2022 in Qatar. The synergy between high-quality rubber from Thailand and skill craftsmanship and technique from Pakistan represents as a symbol of strong relationship between Thailand and Pakistan and cooperation that benefit beyond our two countries. Regarding investment, Charoen Pokphand Group, Thailand's agro industry, which has established its large investment in Lahore, has shared with us that they are very pleased with the productivity and already planned to increase their investment next year, creating more jobs for the local people. We also have received good news that Pakistani businessman who joined Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce's trip to Thailand in July has invested in buying two hotels in Phuket, Thailand. I still believe that there are more rooms to be explored.

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Govt urged to engage KP locals in decision making

Former NSA, Lt. Gen (retd) Nasir Janjua said TTP was a defeatist body, its entire workout was to somehow align with other non-state players to attract attention and bargain a deal

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The experts on Tuesday urged the government to empower and engage local communities of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, besides the elites, in decision-making in order to sustain peace in the region. Experts made these remarks while speaking at a seminar titled "Potential Resurgence of TTP and challenges to peace and security in KP and tribal districts," which was organized here by the Islamabad Policy Research Institute in collaboration with the South Korean Embassy. It was underscored dur-

ing the seminar that institutional checks, a balanced approach and complete coordination among all the organs of the state were crucial to fight out fissures and upheavals in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Former National Security adviser, Dr Moeed Yusuf said increasing concerns in the context of peace and security were of vital importance which was needed to be addressed in a holistic manner. He said that sporadic terrorist attacks were an enigma and ending terrorism in the country was beyond the security forces as it entailed political solutions. "The environment around Pakistan is not in our control and the fact of the matter

is that we have a neighbour on our East which is negative to us and the Western frontier is in trouble," he analyzed. The former NSA said that the ongoing unrest in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was borne out of the fallout from Afghanistan.

However, so far as counter-terrorism was concerned, Pakistan had a great track record, he added. He said no attempts which were manoeuvred in the early part of the current century would be re-enacted as the people of KP stood fast against terrorism. Former National Security Adviser, Lt. Gen (retd) Nasir Janjua said TTP was a defeatist body, and its entire workout was to somehow align with other non-state players to attract attention and bargain a deal. The state must assert its writ and there should be no bargaining with the TTP, he added. Talking about the involvement of two superpowers in southwest Asia, Janjua said the survival of Afghanistan and Pakistan as independent entities was a show of great resilience and achievement. The Ambassador of South Korea, Suh Sangpyo, said that South Korea was eager to see peace and prosperity in Pakistan and the Korean companies were very much interested in investing in the country. He also said durable peace in the tribal areas was a crucial for broad-based serenity in Afghanistan.



Complete ban on use of plastic bags

GILGIT :From January 1, 2023, a complete ban would be imposed on the manufacture, delivery, sale, and use of plastic bags in the Gilgit district. In this connection, a meeting regarding making Gilgit-Baltistan free of plastic bags was held on Tuesday under the chairmanship of Chief Secretary Mohiuddin Wani. The secretary home, secretary finance, secretary minerals and Industries, secretary of forests, wildlife and environment, Commissioner of Gilgit Division, deputy director environment, CEO KADO and Soni Jawari Institute for Public Policy Mehnaz participated in the meeting. It was decided in the meeting that from January 1, 2023, a complete ban will be imposed on the manufacture, delivery, sale, and use of plastic bags in the Gilgit district. Eco-friendly cloth and paper bags would be introduced as alternatives to plastic bags. The provision of easy and interest-free loans will be ensured in collaboration with GBRSP and KCBL for textile and paper manufacturing. At the end of the meeting, it was decided that Section 144 will be implemented to completely ban plastic bags from January 1, 2023. —APP

Mushaira to mark 70 years of Pak-Japan ties

KARACHI :The Arts Council of Pakistan here organized the '35th Annual Urdu Haiku Mushaira' titled 70th Anniversary of Friendship in connection with the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and Japan. Haiku Mushaira was moderated by Ruksana Saba and Shahdab-ud-din Shahb. Among others Mahmood Sham, Wazahat Naseem, Dr Shadab Ehsani and Safdar Siddique Razi recited poems in Japanese language. —APP

Pak keen to establish productive ties with Central Asian states

ISLAMABAD: Senate Chairman Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani on Tuesday said that Pakistan was keen to seek and establish broad-based productive and sustainable ties with central Asian states under "Vision Central Asia Policy". Talking to Chairman of Mazhilis of the Parliament of Kazakhstan Koshanov Yerlan Zhakanovich and members of his entourage at the Parliament House on Tuesday, he said Pakistan also offered to provide access to CARS through Karachi and Gwadar ports. He said that considering the potential of both countries, there was an urgent need to find new ways to diversify and promote bilateral trade. Senate Chairman Muhammad Sadiq

Sanjrani said that joint projects could be initiated in energy, agriculture, IT, textile, energy, logistics and housing, and construction sectors. He called for increased institutional collaboration and said that Pakistan Institute for Parliamentary Services (PIPS) was a unique research and capacity-building organization for parliamentarians. The institute could prove to be an excellent forum for sharing parliamentary experiences and knowledge. The chairman observed that Pakistan attached great importance to its relations with Kazakhstan and desired to further diversify the already fraternal ties. During the meeting, he congratulated

the Kazakh people and Parliament for trusting the leadership of Kassym-Jomart Tokayev and electing him as the president. He said that under the leadership of the newly elected President, Kazakhstan would reach new heights of development, and prosperity and the Pak-Kazakhstan friendship would be strengthened. The chairman extended advance felicitations on the upcoming Independence Day of Kazakhstan. The chairman congratulated the two countries on the completion of 30 years of diplomatic and thanked the Government of Kazakhstan for their generous assistance to the flood-affected people of Pakistan. —APP



ISALABAD: German ambassador to Pakistan, Alfred Grannas and Country Director WFP Pakistan, Chris Kaye shaking hands after signing the partnership of additional 36M Euros for rehabilitation, social inclusion, food assistance & restoring livelihoods of flood effectees in Pakistan. - DNA

OIC should chalk out plan to stop Indian atrocities

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Permanent Representatives of the member states of the OIC Contact Group on Jammu and Kashmir visited the Institute of Strategic Studies, Islamabad (ISSI) for a roundtable discussion titled "Resolution of the Kashmir Dispute: Imperative for a Lasting Peace in South Asia" on December 12, 2022. The members of the delegation included Ambassador Shahin Abdullayev, Ambassador Dr. Saleh Hamad A. Alsuhaibani, Permanent Representative of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the OIC, Ambassador Mehmet Metin Eker, Permanent Representative of Turkey to the OIC, Ambassador Dieye Ali, Permanent Representative of Niger to the OIC, Ambassador Rizwan Saeed Sheikh, Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the OIC, Mr. Sajid Ullah Assistant Director (Economic Diplomacy) Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamabad, Dr. Talha Jamil, Assistant Director (OIC) Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Islamabad. The participants for the discussion included Mr. Altaf Wani, Chairman, Kashmir

Institute of International Relations, Justice Ali Nawaz Chowhan, former Chief Justice of Gambia and elected international Judge of the United Nations, Dr. Asma Khawaja, Executive Director at the Centre for International Strategic Studies, AJ&K, Dr. Waleed Rasul, Director General, Institute of Multi-Track Dialogue and Mr. Faiz Naqashbandi, Convener, All Parties Hurriyat Conference Islamabad. The OIC delegation and the guests were warmly welcomed by Director India Study Centre at ISSI Dr. Arshad Ali. In his introductory remarks, Dr. Arshad highlighted that the BJP government has adopted a strategy to politically marginalize and disempower the minority groups in India, especially the people of Jammu and Kashmir. The members of the OIC contact group were informed about the existing human rights situation in the Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir. The delegation was briefed in depth about the policy that Prime Minister Modi has adopted towards the occupied Kashmir which is based on excessive use of power to silence any dissenting voice. Taking a clue from Israel's experience, India is

also working to change the demography of the Indian-occupied Jammu and Kashmir to turn the Muslim majority into a minority. The participants urged the OIC that being the voice of oppressed Kashmiri Muslims, it needs to chalk out a plan to stop India from committing heinous crimes against the hapless people of Kashmir. Certain suggestions and recommendations were also floated by the participants that included; invoking the United Nations principle of Responsibility to Protect and increasing the cost of conflict for India in terms of economic boycotts. Towards the end of the discussion Chairman Board of Governors ISSI, Ambassador Khalid Mahmood said that the UN has given a very clear solution to the Kashmir conflict which is a plebiscite under UN auspices to determine the will of the Kashmiri people. This solution was accepted by both India and Pakistan but unfortunately, India later backtracked. He said that there is a need to raise awareness about this issue across the world. He also thanked OIC for keeping the Kashmir issue alive.



ISLAMABAD: Danish ambassador to Pakistan Jakob Linulf in a group photo with embassy staff after hosted a Christmas lunch. —DNA

ICRC holds national summit

ISLAMABAD: The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Pakistan along with the National Forum of Women with Disabilities (NFWWD) on Tuesday organized a national summit on the empowerment of women with disabilities to highlight the challenges and opportunities for their growth. The summit was also held to assess the current situation of women with disabilities in Pakistan and other aspects. Addressing the summit, speakers said that in Pakistan, which is ranked 147 among 188 countries in the Gender Inequality Index, women with disabilities are a largely overlooked minority. The summit brought together over 100 participants, including representatives from government authorities as well as humanitarian and development organizations to chart a way forward on a more disability inclusive environment in the country. "A barrier-free environment is central in assisting women with disabilities reach their full potential and achieve autonomy," said Abia Akram, CEO NFWWD. She said this cannot be done without including the voice of these women in mainstream gender and disability decision-making processes. "Immediate realization of efforts is needed for inclusion of girls and women with disabilities in all walks of life in Pakistan," said Mohammad Iqbal, the advisor on disability inclusion at the ICRC. He said that this includes their engagement through advocacy, capacity-building programs, and creating a space for meaningful collaboration with the government multilateral agencies. — APP

Taliban's presence in Afghanistan not temporary

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Taliban were here to stay, and their absence could potentially lead to another war spanning many years said Obaidullah Baheer, lecturer at the American University of Afghanistan. He was speaking at a webinar organized by the Institute of Regional Studies (IRS) titled 'Afghanistan: Year in Review' here on Tuesday. Mr Baheer was of the view that the human rights abuses by the Taliban made it difficult for the West to engage with them. He added that though the Taliban had been trying to act as per the norms acceptable to the global liberal order, their actions such as media bans, public floggings, separate parks for women, and ban on women education in schools had put them in a difficult spot. He said that crime rates in Afghanistan were alarmingly high and while they were not reported, they were still being dealt with extra-judicially. The internal security was also turning worse but was still far from when the Taliban had taken over. He was of the view that this was not the old Afghanistan nor the Taliban of the old times. The people back then were exhausted and willing to accept their rule. However, this time the Taliban had returned to power after 20 years and had taken over a well-built inclusive society. The Taliban had also gotten

more exposure as they had travelled abroad and their families lived abroad, he added. Mr Baheer said that the Taliban acted like they do not value recognition but some of them had stressed the importance of engaging with the world. Taliban had no mechanism for changing the Emir and the position of the Emir was for life. Hence, as the Taliban did not have any central ideology or literature, any change in leadership could completely alter their perception, he said. Taliban were making a lot more enemies than friends. He stressed the need for an inclusive Afghan government. On Pak-Afghan relations, Dr Baheer said that the conventional channels for diplomacy could not work between India and Pakistan, hence iterating the need for new channels. He said that this time around the Taliban did not have any financial dependence on Pakistan like before, however, their views about Pakistan were rooted mainly in the trust deficit that prevailed following their rule in 2001. Lastly, he emphasized that viable developmental ventures in Afghani the international community. Ambassador Nadeem Riyaz, President IRS said that the Taliban had not been able to gain political recognition that they had been hoping for. He iterated that there was an ensuing struggle between the Taliban themselves considering the divergences among the people regarding adherence to traditional mindsets.

KP approves issuance of arm license to lawyers

PESHAWAR :Khyber Pakhtunkhwa cabinet in its 84th meeting here on Tuesday approved issuance of arm license of prohibited bore to lawyers. The chief minister presiding over the meeting directed the concerned authorities to formulate a mechanism to extend the prohibited bore arm license facility to the general masses as well. The Cabinet decided to impose ban on the burning of tyres for industrial activities for a period of one year with the aim to curtail environmental pollution. The cabinet also okayed the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Mineral Auction Rules 2022. Similarly, the cabinet nodded to the holding of digital liter-

acy training for provincial cabinet members to promote e-governance and paperless culture in government offices. The cabinet approved extending of the tenure of 80 Muawin Qazis of Malakand division in the light of para-6 of Sharia Nizam Adal Regulations. Moreover, the Cabinet also approved the establishment of a special Unit for the investigation of sexual crimes in all the districts under anti-rape (investigation & trial) Act-2021. The cabinet also accorded approval to the establishment of seven sports grounds on the land of Auqaf in Mardan which included 50 Kanal ground near women university Mardan, 30 Kanal ground in Shahbaz Ghari, 50 Kanal ground in Ghalla Dher, 30 Kanal ground in Shamat Pur, 20 Kanal ground in Turoo Khas, 40 Kanal ground in kandar, and 66 Kanal ground in Muhib Banda. Similarly, the cabinet approved upgradation of Swabi Sports Complex on 30 Kanal lease land of Auqaf. The cabinet approved appointment of Hifzur Rehman as a technocrat member of the Local Government Commission besides approving Tehsil Council (Procedure for the conduct of Business and meetings) bye-laws 2022. — APP



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For further information please contact the following.

Maj (r) Sabih Ur Rehman
Mobile: 0300 8553342

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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Turkish Airlines.....	8494949



Emergency	
Rescue (Police).....	15
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MH.....	561116
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DHQ.....	5556311-4
RGH.....	9290301-7
Holy Family.....	9290322-7
PIMS.....	9261170-79
Polyclinic.....	9218300-09
Shifa International.....	4603666



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Met Office.....	9250360-6
RDA.....	5555864
TMA.....	5770886
Cantonment Board	9270151-3

Islamabad Metropolitan	
Corporation.....	9209224
Potohar Town.....	9209224
Rawal Town.....	5773343

Water Tank	
Islamabad.....	0321-5744480



ISLAMABAD: Artists from Kazakhstan perform during a music concert held at the PNCA. – DNA

3rd Int’l moot on Artificial Intelligence in February

The conference will be a rewarding experience of networking and exchanging knowledge of Artificial Intelligence with industry, academia, and intellectuals of the field and accepted papers will be published in IEEE Explore

ISLAMABAD: The National Center of Artificial Intelligence (NCAI) has invited submissions of research papers from students, researchers and faculty members on Artificial Intelligence for the 3rd International Conference on Artificial Intelligence to be held in the month of February. According to an official of NUST, the two-day conference, scheduled to be held from February 22-23, will be held at the premises of the National University of Sciences and Technology (NUST) bringing together an international community of practitioners and researchers to meet and share cutting-edge developments in the field.

The conference will cover innovation and scientific research in the area of Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Data Fusion, Data Mining and Information Retrieval, Decision Support Systems, Artificial Neural Networks, Deep Learning and Big Data Analytics, Deep Learning and Cybersecurity, Robotics, Autonomous Systems, Assistive Robotics, Intelligent Systems, biologically inspired neural networks, Data Sciences and 4.0 etc. with a focus on the emerging needs of humankind in the rapidly developing science and technology frontier.

The conference will be a rewarding experience of networking and exchanging the knowledge of Artificial Intelligence with industry, academia, and intellectuals of the field and accepted papers will be published in IEEE Explore. The intended participants can submit their papers by December 25 for participating in the conference through the link: <https://easychair.org/conferences/?conf=icaai2023>. Artificial Intelligence (AI) offers society and the business world novel and radically different approaches to knowledge discovery, learning, problem-solving, and decision-making. Based on intelligent computing technologies that empower machines to observe, listen, and learn beyond the typical capabilities of humans, AI facilitates business decision-making by offering real-time models with enhanced accuracy and efficiency. Applications are not limited to business and include smart cities and their governance, so that socio-economic benefits are shared by the many and not just a few. Further details regarding focused areas, criteria, and other relevant information can be found on the conference website: <https://ncai.pk/icaai2023/>.

ISLAMABAD: The 2nd National Youth Peace Conference and Awards 2022 would be held on December 29 and 30 at Jinnah Convention Center, offering an education expo, lectures, stalls, talent hunt competitions, sports events, and awards. Talking to APP, organizer of the event Sana Ullah said that the event was being arranged by the registered non-profit youth organization "Hawks Youth Vision", adding the purpose of the event was to recognize excellence and achievements in advancing and sustaining the national youth development. He said the conference was a unique national contest that brings young developers, entrepreneurs, journalists, sportsmen, peace activists and citizens together, who are playing a positive role in societies as young leaders. Sana Ullah said that Talent Gala would start on December 20 during which participants will compete in their respective cities while literary competitions would be held online. He informed that categories of the Talent Gala include literary, talent tribute and technical, having two phases. He said that the top five competitors of phase one would perform in the final phase at Jinnah Convention Center. He said that "over three hundred participants" from various schools, colleges and universities will come together and reside under one roof. The event will give a message of harmony, tolerance and respect for different regions and cultures, he highlighted. – APP

HEC asks students to take admission in recognised institutions

ISLAMABAD: The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has asked the students seeking admission in higher educational institutions of the country to only choose HEC recognised institution. According to official sources from HEC, it is notified for information of the students, parents and the general public that the HEC has been empowered, by virtue of its 2022 Ordinance under which Institutions including those that are not part of the State educational system may be opened and operated across the country. Therefore, HEC, in exercising its delegated powers, recognises degrees from accredited universities/institutions in the public and private sector of Pakistan and degrees from their approved campuses, including Transnational Educational Institutions imparting foreign qualification in Pakistan as mentioned on HEC website

on the following web links: Link of Recognized Universities/Institutions: www.hec.gov.pk/site/HEIs. Link of Recognized Campuses of Public and Private Sector Institutions: www.hec.gov.pk/site/recognizedCampuses. Link of Recognized Institutions Imparting Foreign Qualification in Pakistan through Collaboration: www.hec.gov.pk/site/FCI. Any other University/Institution which is not listed in HEC Recognised Universities/ Institutions/Campuses available at our website will not be considered/ recognised by HEC. Further, a separate list of Fake, Illegal, Unlawful and Unrecognized Institutions is also being maintained at following web link for awareness of public and all relevant stakeholders: List of Illegal/Fake Institutions: www.hec.gov.pk/site/IllegalDAIs. In the larger interest of general public and forthcoming admission season, students and their parents are cautioned to verify legal status of the University/ Institution, its campus and transnational education (TNE) provider from the above-mentioned links before seeking admission. Further, the status of affiliated colleges can be verified from respective public sector universities/institutions and HEC. The students are strictly advised not to take admissions in those Institutions which are not listed on HEC website in the recognised list of Universities/ Institutions/Campus(es). Degrees obtained from un-recognized Institutions/ Campuses will not be recognized by HEC. It is pertinent to mention here that the students and parents are cautioned not to get admission in the Universities/ DAIs whose admissions are banned due to various irregularities as mentioned on HEC website. – APP

RAWALPINDI: The Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education Rawalpindi (BISER) on Tuesday announced the results of the Secondary School Certificate (SSC) second annual examination 2022. According to the results announced by Controller Examinations BISER, Prof. Nasir Mehmood Awan, the overall passing percentage remained at 23.22 with 35.29 percent for female students and 17.85 of male students. He informed that a total of 17,713 candidates submitted admission forms and 17,608 including 12,186 male and 5,422 female students appeared in the second annual examination while only 4,087 could get success and 13,446 were declared failed by the board. The BISER spokesman said that the students could check the results on www.biserawalpindi.edu.pk while in case of any difficulty, the officials concerned could also be contacted at 051-5450917 and 051-5450918. – APP

BISE Rwp announces SSC-II results

Railways retrieved 961 acres land from land grabbers

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Railways has retrieved as many as 961 acres of its land worth Rs19, 603 million during various anti-encroachment operations across the country from the land grabbers. "Around 474 acres retrieved in Punjab, 135 acres in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 329 acres in Sindh and only 23 acres in Balochistan acres land had been retrieved by the Pakistan Railways," an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP. He said that about 3,287 acres in Punjab, 832 acres in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 5,180 acres in Sindh, and 687 acres of land in Balochistan were being encroached. The official said that in the light of orders of the Supreme Court, the anti-encroachment operations for retrieval of encroached railway land all over the Railway network were initiated and a joint procedure order was issued to all Divisional Superintendents for retrieval of Railways land from encroachment. "The anti-encroachment schedules, on a three months basis, are being prepared and sent to all concerned in line with the joint procedure order," the official added. He said Pakistan Railways had also decided to accelerate its ongoing anti-encroachment operation against land grabbers across the country to recoup its land from different individuals, groups, and even business organizations who were using it for residential, commercial, and agriculture purposes for decades. "The encroachment operation will be launched with the assistance of Railway Police and district administrations of the relevant provincial governments," he added. He said the government was taking several steps to retrieve encroached land from the land grabbers including a detailed survey being carried out to identify the encroached land, occupied by the individuals and under illegal occupation by various government departments. The official said that First Information Reports (FIRs) were being lodged and cases were registered and sent to PR Judicial Magistrates for expeditious trial. – APP

2nd National Youth Peace Conference to start on Dec 29

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14 new primary healthcare facilities being established

ISLAMABAD: Cognizant of the basic health needs of the rural population, the District Health Department is working on a comprehensive plan of extending all-possible services to the ailing humanity under which 14 new Community Health Centers (CHCs) and Basic Health Units (BHUs) would be made operational during the next year. "Around 11 new CHCs and three BHUs, having 515 indoor-bed capacity, are in the final phase of their construction that will be functional during the next year," Project Director of Health Department Islamabad Sardar Shabbir Ahmed told APP on Tuesday. Sharing details, he said the new initiatives having indoor facilities included 200-bed King Salman bin Abdulaziz Hospital at Tarlai, 30-bed CHC at Bari Imam, 40-bed CHC at G-13, 25-bed Mother & Neonatal Child Health Centre at I-14 (Badhana Kalan), 20-bed Mother & Child Health Centre at Gohra Shahan, 60-bed Mother & Neonatal Child Health Centre at Bhara Kahu, 40-bed CHC at Bokra (Proposed to be built in I-12 sector), while four BHUs at Tarno, Kirpa, Shah Allah Ditta and Rawat were being upgraded to CHCs with 25-bed capacity each. – APP

Islamabad police to check attitude of officials

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad police have devised a mechanism to check attitude of officials with public in police stations and to record views of complainants for further improvement. Following the directions of Inspector General of Police (IGP) Islamabad Dr. Akbar Nasir Khan, feedback of complainants would be recorded and maximum efforts to be made for relief to them. Police source said that Islamabad Police is taking all possible steps to provide maximum relief to the citizens. He said that IGP has directed the officials to ensure quality investigation into crime cases and provide relief to people through resolving their matters. He said that free registration of crime, quality investigation and prevention of crime are among top priorities of police and no compromise would be made on it. – APP

Puppet Show organized for awareness of Children’s rights

DNA
ISLAMABAD: Under its Orphan Sponsor Program, The Secours Islamique France (SIF) organized a puppet show at the Pakistan National Council of Arts (PNCA) Islamabad for the recreation and awareness of the children on their rights and protection. These children are mostly from sponsored orphan families in Rawalpindi and Islamabad. Secours Islamique France (SIF) is implementing an Orphan Sponsorship Program in Islamabad and Rawalpindi at the community level, target group of the program are vulnerable orphan families which are targeted for the provision of stipend to support the education of the orphan children in addition to awareness raising to the sponsored families regarding child rights and protection. SIF is currently supporting 683 orphan children in Islamabad, Rawalpindi and Tharparkar. To enable vulnerable families to afford their children's education, SIF provides cash assistance every year. SIF also provides livelihood support to sponsored families through vocational training programs, apprenticeship, enterprise development assistance and livestock support.

Founded in 1991, SIF is an international non-Governmental solidarity Organization acting in the fields of humanitarian and development sectors. Working in the field for over 30 years, SIF is now active in more than twenty countries, mainly in sectors including Water and Sanitation (WASH), Food Security & Livelihoods (FSL), Education, and Child Protection. SIF is present in Pakistan since 2010. The program was attended by a large number of Children their guardians and extended families, SIF staff and volunteers. All the participants appreciated the program and efforts of SIF in arranging such a delightful and informative program. Participants stressed that in future such programs should also be organized on a regular basis for grooming the children and creating a healthy & vibrant society in Pakistan.

Speaking at the occasion, Head of Mission SIF Pakistan Dr. Altaf Abro Said "Puppet show organized under the orphan sponsorship program (OSP) of SIF is not only to entertain children, but also to relay messages highlighting the importance of education, especially for girls, skills development for youth and children's rights and protection in general". Founded in 1991, SIF is an international non-Governmental solidarity Organization acting in the fields of humanitarian and development sectors. Working in the field for over 30 years, SIF is now active in more than twenty countries, mainly in sectors including Water and Sanitation (WASH), Food Security & Livelihoods (FSL), Education, and Child Protection. SIF is present in Pakistan since 2010. The program was attended by a large number of Children their guardians and extended families, SIF staff and volunteers. All the participants appreciated the program and efforts of SIF in arranging such a delightful and informative program. Participants stressed that in future such programs should also be organized on a regular basis for grooming the children and creating a healthy & vibrant society in Pakistan.

Briefs

Summary moved to PM for lifting ban on new gas connections

ISLAMABAD :Parliamentary Secretary for Energy (Petroleum) Muhammad Hamid Hameed on Tuesday informed the National Assembly that the former government led by Imran Khan Niaz imposed a ban on new gas connections adding that a summary has already been moved to the prime minister to lift the ban but no decision was yet taken in this regard. Responding to a calling attention notice raised by Qadir Khan Mandokhail regarding the shortage of gas in the country, especially in Karachi NA-249, the parliamentary secretary said there was a gap between demand and supply and all-out efforts were being made to provide maximum relief to the people. He said some schedule was devised for the provision of gas to domestic consumers due to a gap in demand and supply. Efforts were being made to implement the schedule under which gas would be provided during 5-9 in the morning, 12-02 noon and 5-9 evening, he said. Hamid said out of 18 new gas wells, 9 have already been connected to the system but unfortunately no attention as given to the rehabilitation of gas infrastructure especially in the constituency of NA-249 during the tenure of the past government. He said rehabilitation work on a 20 km long gas pipeline was in progress and would be completed during this month. Currently, gas supply to areas including Baldia and Saeed Abad was disturbed due to at tail-end, he said.—APP

Police search 135 houses, 63 shops in different areas

RAWALPINDI, Dec 13 (AP-P):Rawalpindi District Police on special directives of City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi on Tuesday searched 135 houses, 63 shops, and four hotels in the jurisdiction of different police stations. According to a police spokesman, police launched search operations in different areas in the jurisdiction of Mandra, Gujar Khan, Kahuta, and Naseerabad police stations. He informed that heavy police contingents, Elite Force, Special Branch personnel, and Ladies police under the supervision of senior police officers conducted search operations in different areas and searched 135 houses, 63 shops, and four hotels, besides checking the particulars of 20 tenants.—APP

Mushaira held at PAC

RAWALPINDI: A mushaira was organized at the Punjab Arts Council in honour of the well-known Karachi-based poet, Neel Ahmed. The famous poet, fiction writer and columnist Farkhunda Shamim presided over the event while Nasir Ali Nasir performed the host duties. Speaking on the occasion, Farkhunda said that establishing the Punjab Tea House by Director of Arts Council Waqar Ahmed was a unique gift to poets. She added that tea house would be a new chapter in promoting literature. Farkhunda Shamim congratulated Waqar Ahmed, Anjum Salimi and Nasir Ali Nasir for completing 260 seats and showered them with lots of love and prayers. Neel Ahmed, on the occasion, appreciated the selfless services of PAC Rawalpindi and said that Director of Arts Council Waqar Ahmed and Anjum Salimi deserve congratulations who ensured the establishment of Punjab tea house "Adabi bathek" and literary seats for poets and writers. Abdul Qadir Taban, Anjum Salimi, Zafar Iqbal Shaheen, Imran Aami, Aqeel Shah, Javed Jadoon, Zeeshan Haider, Ali Babar, Hasan Farooq, Zeeshan Murtaza, Atiq Ahmed, Intizar Syed, Muhammad Umar Khan, Allah Razi Rajput, Junaid Rajput and Nasir Ali Nasir presented their kalam, which were well received by the audience.—APP

FPCCI shows concern over economic situation

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Irfan Iqbal Sheikh, President, Federation of Pakistan Chambers of Commerce and Industry said that all the economic indicators have turned negative and the current unpredictable economic situation is creating great concerns in the business community. He said that he has never seen such an uncertain situation in his 45 years of his business life and stressed that the government should take business leaders on board to steer the economy out of troubles. He said that importers are paying US\$ 120 per container per day as demurrage charges due to LCs issue and stressed that SBP should address this issue on an urgent basis. He said this while addressing the business community during his visit to Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry. Irfan Iqbal Sheikh said that Pakistan is doing exports with only 10-12 countries and it should tap new markets to increase exports. He said that Pakistan should focus on engineering products for exports as their share in the global market



is 19% while the share of textile products is only 6%. He said that FPCCI will hold a conference on the charter of economy and a conference on exports in January 2023 to develop proposals for improving the economy and exports. He stressed that the business community should develop strong unity to influence the government for making business friendly policies and assured that FPCCI would continue to play a role to resolve the issues of the business community

and improve the economy. Speaking at the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ICCI) said that LCs of the business community are not opening due to which production activities are badly suffering and if this situation continues, many industries would face closure. He said that consignments of imports including soybean are stuck up at ports as banks are not retiring LCs due to which the poultry industry would

face a crisis and stressed that FPCCI should take up this issue with the government for early solution. He said that the forex reserves have tumbled down to USD 6.7 billion, which is creating panic in the market. He said that despite significant depreciation of the rupee, exports have shown a declining trend and the trade deficit is still high. He stressed that the government should bring down policy interest rate to single digit level to facilitate the growth of investment and

businesses. He urged that the government should co-operate with the private sector in boosting exports to China, Africa, Central Asia and ASEAN countries to improve forex reserves. Faad Waheed Senior Vice President, Engr. Azhar ul Islam Vice President ICCI, Khalid Iqbal Malik Group Leader ICCI, Aminullah Baig, Umar Masood ur Rehman and Qazi Akbar, Vice Presidents FPCCI, Mirza Abdul Rehman Chairman Coordination FPCCI, Muhammad Riaz Khattak Sen-

ior Vice President Pakistan Business Forum, Sajjad Anwar President Islamabad Chamber of Small Traders & Small Industries, Asad Mashadi former President Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce & Industry, Zafar Bakhtawari, Muhammad Ejaz Abbasi, Mian Shaikat Masud, Sheikh Abdul Razzak, Khalid Chaudhry and ICCI Executive members also spoke at the occasion and stressed that the government announced a clear strategy to revive the economy.

Gas companies laying 10,707-km pipelines

ISLAMABAD :The two state-owned companies, SNGPL and SSGC, are in process of laying almost 10,707-kilometer pipelines to reinforce gas transmission networks in their operational areas across the country during the current fiscal year. The Sui Northern Gas Company Limited (SNGPL) would place 9,605 kilometers and Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC) 1,102 transmission and distribution pipelines in their respective areas during 2022-23 aimed at improving the efficiency of the commodity supply to domestic, industrial, and commercial consumers. The companies would collectively spend funds amounting to

Rs 113.899 billion on the upgradation of the gas transmission and distribution system. "The SNGP and SSGC have planned to invest Rs 27,669 million on transmission projects, Rs 77,484 million on distribution projects, and Rs 8,746 million on other projects bringing the total investment of Rs 113,899 million during the fiscal year 2022-23," according to an official document available with APP. The available statistics indicated that Pakistan has an extensive gas network with more than 13,513 KM transmission, 155,679 KM distribution, and 41,231 KM service gas pipelines for cater to the require-

ment of millions of consumers. The number of consumers has increased from 10.3 million to more than 10.7 million across the country. The companies are also executing at least three strategic projects to supply gas to two Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and an industrial park in their respective areas to boost industrial production. For this purpose, the government has allocated funds amounting to Rs 431.45 million in the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP 2022-23) to advance three ongoing projects one each in Balochistan, Sindh, and Punjab. The SSGC is laying a pipeline to supply 10

MMCFD (Metric Million Cubic Feet per Day) Regasified Liquefied Natural Gas (RLNG) to Bostan Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Balochistan Province with an allocation of Rs 100 million for the current fiscal year, and a dedicated line to provide 13 MMCFD RLNG to Bin Qasim Industrial Park, located in Karachi city of Sindh province, with Rs 74.71 million funds. Similarly, the SNGPL is carrying forward a project to supply 40 MMCFD gas/RLNG to Allama Iqbal Industrial City, a Special Economic Zone in Faisalabad of Punjab province, for which the government has earmarked Rs 256.74 million funds in the PSDP 2022-23.—APP

Students' council meeting held at girls college

ISLAMABAD: FG home economics and management sciences college F11/1 held its Students Council Investiture Ceremony under the supervision of our esteemed principal Prof Rozina Faheem. Mrs SAIRA ATTA Joint secretary development graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. The programme commenced with Qiraat, Naat followed by the introduction of the Chief Guest, a truly awe inspiring personality. The compere MINNA BINTE ASHFAQ took the morning forward by the oath taking ceremony and the adorning of the elected members with the sashes by the chief guest. Among the new elected Council executives are Adeena Hassan (President), Rabia Jogezaif (Vice President), kinza Minahil (treasurer) Abeer Rizwan (Debating Secretary) Aneesa Khan (Dramatics Secretary) Maheen Maryam (Sports Secretary) Aimen Alam (Media Secretary) As tribute to Iqbal was a special segment of the occasion, college vocal artists very well articulated extracts from Iqbal's poetry in group. Moreover, Merit certificates were awarded to the brilliant students and scholarships were given to the star performers of BS. The worthy Principal Prof Rozina Faheem presented the Token of thanks to the Chief Guest. The Chief Guest Ms Saira Atta addressed the audience congratulating the worthy Principal and the Council in particular for the successful conduction of the event. After the President's vote of thanks and National Anthem, Cake cutting was done. The programme met its closure with tree plantation by the chief guest and the Principal and a group photo of the council members with the chief guest. Later, chief guest visited the college and appreciation whole heartedly the students' projects.—DNA

10 periodical reports presented in NA

Bhutto further presented the periodical report of Standing Committee on Human Rights for the period 1st January 2021 to 30th June 2021.

ISLAMABAD :Ten periodical reports of various standing committees were presented in the National Assembly (NA) by their respective chairmen and members as required by Rule 234-A of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the National Assembly, 2007 on Tuesday. Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML-N)'s Muhammad Junaid Anwar Chaudhry presented the periodical report of the Standing Committee on Federal Education, Professional Training, National Heritage and Culture for the period 1st January 2021 to 30th June 2021. Jamaat-e-Islami's Abdul Akbar Chitrali presented the periodical report of the Standing Committee on Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development for the period 1st January 2021 to 30th June 2021. He also presented the periodical report of the Parliamentary Committee on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) for the period 1st January 2021 to 30th June 2021. Chitrali further presented the periodical report of the Standing Committee on Interi-

or for the period 1st January 2021 to 30th June 2021. PML-N's Muhammad Moeen Wattoo presented the periodical report of the Standing Committee on National Food Security and Research for the period 1st January 2021 to 30th June 2021. He also presented the periodical report of the Standing Committee on Railways for the period 1st January 2021 to 30th June 2021. PML-N's Chaudhry Riaz-ul-Haq presented the periodical report of the Standing Committee on Housing and Works for the period 1st January 2021 to 30th June 2021. Pakistan Peoples Party's Dr. Mahreen Razaq Bhutto presented the periodical report of the Standing Committee on Human Rights for the period 1st January 2020 to 30th June 2020. She also presented the periodical report of the Standing Committee on Human Rights for the period 1st July 2020 to 31st December 2020. Bhutto further presented the periodical report of the Standing Committee on Human Rights for the period 1st January 2021 to 30th June 2021.—APP

Data of moving children essential for vaccination

RAWALPINDI :Head of the Anti-Polio programme Punjab Khizar Iqbal on Tuesday underlined the need for giving special attention to Afghan refugees' kids and those coming from outside districts and still deprived of regular polio immunization vaccines. Presiding over the performance review meeting, he said Rawalpindi was home to a vigorous population inhabited by people from all corners of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Khizar directed the officials to register the data of the moving population which could help in facing the challenge of unvaccinated children. He also directed to depute anti-polio teams which are learned enough in understanding the language of the area. Infants traveling inter-cities or provinces should also be vaccinated against polio so that the polio virus does not transmit during the journey, he added.—APP

Large-size banknotes cannot be exchanged after Dec 31: SBP

ISLAMABAD: The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) on Tuesday informed the public that old design large size banknotes could not be exchanged after December 31, 2022. According to press statement issued by SBP, the federal government vide Gazette Notification F.No.2(1)IF-III/2010 dated December 23, 2021, had extended the last date for exchange of old design large size banknotes of Rs 10, 50, 100 and 1000 by one year. "The holders of these old design large size banknotes have been given the last chance to exchange these old design large size banknotes from the field office of SBP Banking Corporation 31st December 2022," the statement is once again added. It emphasized that this is the final deadline for exchange of such banknotes, upon expiry of which, these banknotes would no longer be exchangeable from the counters of the SBP BSC and thus will lose their value. The general public is therefore, requested to avail this final opportunity and get their holdings of these banknotes exchanged from SBP BSC Field Offices by December 31, 2022 and protect the value of their savings in these banknotes, the statement added.—APP



NDMA Chair highlights data intelligence importance

ISLAMABAD :Chairman National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik on Tuesday underscored the importance of data usage and actionable intelligence's availability to forewarn communities before a disaster strikes and expand the scope of national alerts to the target audience in affected zones. The NDMA Chairman participated in thought-provoking panel discussions on climate change, humanitarian crises and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), during his visit to Bangkok, held during Regional Humanitarian Partnership Week (RHPW) 2022, a news release here received said. The discussions were divided into two sessions; the first session was collectively organized by the International Council of Voluntary Agencies (ICVA), Asian Disaster Risk Reduction Network (ADRRN), Community World Service Asia (CWSA),



and the United Nations Office for the coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN-OCHA). It discussed data challenges at the nexus of DRR, humanitarian crises and climate change adaptation. Besides Chairman NDMA Pakistan, participants from the Global Data Laboratory, Asian Disaster Preparedness Centre (ADPC),

ADRRN, Green Climate Fund, and the University of Delaware CERD took part in the discussion. The Chairman NDMA explained the value of archived, upgraded and studied databases that could help enable tangible outcomes of any action plan in the field of DRR. He reiterated the importance of variable and intangible components of data that impact the quality of responses and add further value. The second session of the discussions was specifically about the Impact of climate change on Pakistan. Organized and hosted by Pakistan Humanitarian Forum (PHF) and National Humanitarian Network (NHN), including representatives from key donor agencies. The Chairman NDMA apprised the house about the devastating floods experienced by Pakistan this year and the resilience-driven national response.—APP

RDA surpasses 500,000 mark

ISLAMABAD: The number of accounts registered under Roshan Digital Accounts (RDA) has surpassed the 500,000 mark in just over two years, according to recent data released by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The inflow of remittances under Roshan Digital Account (RDA) also rose to US \$5.436 billion by the end of November 2022 as compared to US \$5.295 billion by the end of October, the data released by the Central Bank said. The data showed that the inflows of remittances during the month of November were recorded at \$141 million as compared to \$146 million in October and \$168 million in September 2022.

Roshan Digital Account (RDA) was launched by the State Bank of Pakistan in collaboration with commercial banks operating in the country. These accounts provide innovative banking solutions to millions of Non-Resident Pakistanis (NRPs), including Non-Resident Pakistan Origin Card (POC) holders, seeking to undertake banking, payment, and investment activities in Pakistan. As per data, expatriate Pakistanis from 175 countries had deposited funds to over 500,000 accounts opened through RDA. The number of accounts has also increased from 485,873 in October to 500,000 in November 2022.—APP

NA extends Tax Laws Ordinance

ISLAMABAD: The National Assembly on Tuesday adopted a resolution with majority votes to extend the Tax Laws (Second Amendment) Ordinance, 2022 (No.Vi of 2022) for a further period of 120 days. Minister for Parliamentary Affairs Murtaza Javeed Abbasi on behalf of Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Ishaq Dar move the resolution in the House. Maulana Abdul Akbar Chitrali while opposing the resolution said that ordinances culture should be discouraged in the country adding that such ordinances should be brought into the house in form of bills. Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf responded that Maulana Akbar Chitrali raised a valid point and the ordinance should be brought through a proper bill in the House.—APP

Cars' sale decreases 38% in 5 months

ISLAMABAD :The sale of cars during the first five months of current fiscal year 2022-23, has dropped by 38.93 percent as compared to the same months of last year, a latest data released by Pakistan Automobile Manufacturing Association (PAMA). According to the data, as many as 55,144 cars were sold during July-November 2022-23 as opposed to 90,303 units during July-November 2021-22. The breakup figures showed that 7,925 units of Honda Civic and City were sold during the corresponding period of the year 2022-23 as compared to the sale of 13,215 units last year, thus showing a dip of 40.03 percent. Toyota Corolla and Yaris cars' sale also decreased by 57.51 percent as it went down to 10,186 units current year from 23,975 units in the same period of previous year. However, Suzuki Swift's sale went up by 1053.93 percent as its sale increased to 5,712 units from 495 units last year. Sale of Suzuki Cultus decreased to 4,088 units during current year, whereas during same period last year, the sale was recorded at 13,105 units while the sale of Suzuki WagonR also decreased to 2,899 units from 8,768 units in same period of last year. Suzuki Alto's sale also witnessed a sharp decline of 10.66 percent from 23,193 units to 20,719 units during the months under review.—APP

ANF seizes over 412 kg drugs; arrests four

RAWALPINDI :Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Pakistan while conducting four counter-narcotics operations seized over 412 kg of drugs and arrested four accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Tuesday. He informed in an operation near Lasbela, ANF foiled a bid to smuggle drugs from Quetta to Karachi and recovered 360 kg charras, weapons, and ammunition besides netting two accused. In another operation near Islamabad Sangiani Toll Plaza, ANF recovered 25.2 kg charras and 7.2 kg opium from the secret cavities of a truck and arrested two drug pushers, residents of Khyber. ANF while conducting a raid in Hyderabad seized 1.5 kg opium and 800 grams charras besides rounding up an accused. In the fourth operation in Kohat Dara Adam Khail, ANF also recovered 18 kg of charas.—APP

12-member Libyan Parliamentary delegation arrives

ISLAMABAD: A 12-member delegation of Libyan Parliament arrived in the federal capital on a six day visit with the aim to further strengthen the bilateral relations with Pakistan. The delegation led by Deputy Speaker of the House of Representatives Fawzi Al Nuwari was visiting Pakistan on the invitation of Senate Chairman. The visiting delegation is expected to meet the Senate Chairman Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani, President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Dr. Arif Alvi, National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf, Minister of Commerce Syed Naveed Qamar and representatives of the International Parliamentary Congress.—APP

America’s toxic gun culture

A year ago, Representative Thomas Massie of Kentucky posted a Christmas photo on Twitter. In it, Mr. Massie, his wife and five children pose in front of their ornament-bedecked tree. Each person is wearing a big grin and holding an assault weapon. “Merry Christmas! ps. Santa, please bring ammo,” Mr. Massie wrote on Twitter. The photo was posted on Dec. 4, just four days after a mass shooting at a school in Oxford, Mich., that left four students dead and seven other people injured. The grotesque timing led many Democrats and several Republicans to criticize Mr. Massie for sharing the photo. Others lauded it and nearly 80,000 people liked his tweet. “That’s my kind of Christmas card!” wrote Representative Lauren Boebert of Colorado, who then posted a photo of her four sons brandishing similar weapons. The AR-15 has also become a potent talisman for right-wing politicians and many of their voters. That’s a particularly disturbing trend at a time when violent political rhetoric and actual political violence in the United States are rising. A growing number of American civilians have an unhealthy obsession with “tactical culture” and rifles like the AR-15. It’s a fringe movement among the 81 million American gun owners, but it is one of several alarming trends that have coincided with the increase in political violence in this country, along with the spread of far-right extremist groups, an explosion of anti-government sentiment and the embrace of deranged conspiracy theories by many Republican politicians. Understanding how these currents feed one another is crucial to understanding and reversing political violence and right-wing extremism. All told, gun rights groups spent a record \$15.8 million on lobbying in 2021 and \$2 million in the first quarter of 2022, the transparency group OpenSecrets reported. “From 1989 to 2022, gun rights groups contributed \$50.5 million to federal candidates and party committees,” the group found. “Of that, 99 percent of direct contributions went to Republicans.” It is important, of course, to distinguish between the large majority of law-abiding gun owners and the small number of extremists. Only about 30 percent of gun owners have owned an AR-15 or similar rifle, a majority support common sense gun restrictions and a majority reject political violence. States and the federal government should also pass far tougher regulations on the gun industry, particularly through restrictions on the marketing of guns, which have helped supercharge the cult of the AR-15. New York’s law, which allows parties like victims of gun violence and the state government to sue gun sellers, manufacturers and distributors, is a good model for other states to follow. Americans are going to live with a lot of guns for a long time. There are already more than 415 million guns in circulation, including 25 million semiautomatic military-style rifles. Calls for confiscating them — or even calls for another assault weapons ban — are well intentioned and completely unrealistic. With proper care and maintenance, guns made today will still fire decades from now. Each month, Americans add nearly two million more to the national stockpile. But even if common-sense regulation of guns is far from political reality, Americans do not have to accept the worst of gun culture becoming pervasive in our politics. The only hope the nation has for living in and around so many deadly weapons is a political system capable of resolving our many differences without the need to use them.

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Old trick to paint China in bad light

The United States is fond of portraying itself as a champion of human rights and pointing an accusing finger at what it alleges are human rights abuses in countries that are in its bad books. Thus it will have surprised few, if any, that US Ambassador to China Nicholas Burns issued a statement on Saturday, which was International Human Rights Day, criticizing the human rights conditions in China and in particular expressing the now cliched concerns over the human rights conditions in Xinjiang, Tibet and Hong Kong. These are familiar smears voiced by the US that were once again swiftly rebutted by China’s Foreign Ministry, which decried them as “unwarranted accusations against China’s human rights conditions” that were full of “falsehoods and bias”. As a ministry spokesman rightly said, the statement was part of the political agenda of the US, which is using human rights as a pretext to interfere in China’s internal affairs with the aim of undermining stability and ethnic solidarity in the country. These accusations of “genocide” and “crimes against humanity” in Xinjiang, the so-called repression carried out in Tibet and the so-called disintegration of central government’s commitment to Hong Kong’s autonomy are unfounded fabrications that are politically motivated. China gives high priority to protecting human rights, and the human rights situation in the country is being continually improved. China has also earnestly fulfilled its international human rights obligations and is the only major country that has consecutively formulated and implemented four national human rights action plans. The US should be the last country to cast stones at others, given its own notorious human rights record. The US has long been criticized both at home and abroad for acting too slowly and doing too little to protect human rights and address its own human rights woes. Domestically, the US faces severe problems including systemic racism, forced labor, and infringement of the rights of refugees, migrants and Native Americans. It has also, in the name of protecting human rights, bullied, imposed sanctions on and waged wars against other countries, resulting in humanitarian crises, economic ruin and social turbulence in these countries. Not even US politicians such as Burns could possibly believe the US really cares about promoting the international human right cause. Rather than being a champion of human rights, the US uses allegations of human rights abuses as part of its soft power attacks on other countries. Throwing mud at China over human rights issues caters to the US’ containment policy against China and helps to propel the narrative that it is trying to push that China is “evil”. This is a tired old ploy from the Cold War that people are now wise to. Washington should give it a rest.

Chinese flag fluttered in Riyadh

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



First, the Chinese leader’s expected visit to Saudi Arabia on the occasion of Biden’s visit will boost Saudi Arabia’s image as an emerging and important player in regional and global political affairs, as well as a beneficiary of global alignment. It will help to stabilize and strengthen its ties with the Saudis and it will also help enhancement its “strategic policy” in the Gulf region

President Xi’s visit to Saudi Arabia is aimed at deepening China’s decades-old relationship with the Gulf region particularly Saudi Arabia. The tour is an effort to secure oil, and arms sales, technology transfers. A complex relationship has involving infrastructure projects as well. According to Gedaliah Afterman, director of the Asia Policy Program at the Abba Eban Institute for Diplomacy and International Relations at Reichman University in Israel “When Gulf countries think about their future, they see China as their partner.”. The common economic interests of China and Saudi Arabia are clear: both the countries are largest trading partner. Saudi Arabia is one of China’s largest oil suppliers while Chinese companies have deep ties with the KSA to building mega projects, setting up 5G infrastructure and developing military drones. Regardless President Joe Biden’s visit in mid-July to Saudi Arabia to strengthen their mutual relations, President Xi’s visit to Saudi Arabia is intended to advance the interests of both Riyadh and Beijing. First, the Chinese leader’s expected visit to Saudi Arabia on the occasion of Biden’s visit will boost Saudi Arabia’s image as an emerging and important player in regional and global political affairs, as well as a beneficiary of global alignment. It will help to stabilize and strengthen its ties with the Saudis and it will also help enhancement its “strategic policy” in the Gulf region. China is exploring new land routes that can reduce reliance on access to sea lanes by road and rail through the Belt and Road Initiative. On the economic front, bilateral trade between China and Saudi Arabia has been expanding rapidly in recent years, currently running at an annual rate of about \$70 billion. Beyond its traditional exports of telecommunications and other electronics, the Chinese are looking

for growth opportunities in other fields, particularly in defense, which has traditionally been dominated by the United States and its allies. On the other hand, Saudi exports are based almost entirely on oil and oil products. But those volumes for China have declined in recent months as the Chinese have taken advantage of heavy discounts on Russian petroleum, which have made Moscow the biggest supplier to Beijing. The Saudis will certainly want to explore opportunities to regain Chinese market share, especially in the face of increasingly gloomy and unfavorable forecasts of the coming global economic downturn. would like Cash-rich Chinese investors are eyeing Saudi Arabia for investment, and Saudi Chinese industrialists are seen as future partners for the Gulf states’ aggressive economic diversification program. The mega city project is the largest project of the Vision 2030 strategy in the north-west of the country The approximately 26,500 square kilometer city, once completed in 2025, is expected to become the largest city fully managed by artificial intelligence. All transportation will be autonomous, and electricity will come from renewable energies. The plan, unveiled in October 2017, reflects Mohammed bin Salman’s ambitions to transform his country and diversify the Saudi economy by promoting new activities. The city will become an important hub for the entire Middle East. Under this project, there is also a plan to build a bridge between Egypt and Neom. In March 2018, Egypt and Saudi Arabia launched a \$10 billion joint fund to finance the Egyptian border region of Neom. The project will also benefit Jordan. Mohammed bin Salman has visited China to try to attract Chinese investors to his modern city project and entice Chinese high-tech leaders to develop projects in Neom. . The project is estimated at 500 billion dollars and it can

only be achieved if the international community, including China, supports the project. The participation of Chinese companies is very important for the development of Neom so that the new city can attract goods, capital and people. Be fully integrated with the flow. As a result, Neom could be an integral part of the BRI. IMF experts have also pointed out that the new city of Neom could be a laboratory for cutting-edge innovations for high-tech companies, especially Chinese companies can work. Despite its economic ties to Saudi Arabia, Chinese officials appear relatively uninterested to adopt such kind of strategic defense role that the United States has played in the region. It would be “reasonable” to think that Saudi Arabia could replace the U.S. with China today. China’s role is still growing in Persian Gulf. It is disappointing for Saudi Arabia when it sees America’s strategic power diminishing for political reasons. The policy makers have to think about America’s threats to withdraw from the region or realign relations with the regional states and a post-United States Middle East, or world order, might look like. Saudi Arabia’s official news agency says tens of billions of dollars’ worth of deals are expected to be signed at the summit. Washington will be watching closely to see if any of them touch on more sensitive areas such as defense or nuclear energy. US Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Colin Cahill has stated during a briefing in Bahrain that “across certain lines, if they are deeply engaged with China in terms of military infrastructure and military equipment, it’s more likely to work with us.” Consequently it will be difficult. “The more intertwined their military and intelligence systems are with Beijing, the more direct the challenge is to US forces in the region because the geopolitical landscape of the region is changing.

Pakistan-Russia expands strategic cooperation

Gul.i.Ayesha Bhatti



Pakistan had established its place in the Cold War by joining SEATO, and this marked the start of a lengthy competition between the two countries. In later years, Pakistan’s role in the 1960s U-2 spy plane incident, the 1970s China-US rapprochement, and 1980s afghan war against soviet increased this rift between the two. Later on, Due to Pakistan’s recognition of the Taliban administration in Afghanistan and its US-centric foreign policy, ties between Pakistan and Russia throughout the 1990s

Henry John Temple Palmerstone stated during the House of Commons session on March 1, 1848, “we have no eternal allies, and we have no perpetual enemies. Our interests are eternal and perpetual, and it is our duty to follow such interests”. Current global circumstances and imperatives have driven Russia to turn to the East and engage in regional connectivity with the Asian States, alongside, reestablishing ties with its former adversary Pakistan. Simultaneously, out of the US sphere, Pakistan is also looking for reliable friends in the neighborhood to work on regional connectivity and stability. Now the million-dollar question is whether both states are going to ignore the shadows of the past and are eager to start a new journey. Since Pakistan’s independence in 1947, bilateral ties between Pakistan and the USSR have remained strained. As Pakistan opted to join the Western bloc by signing its first defense agreement with the US on May 9, 1954, ties between the two countries began to deteriorate in the early 1950s. After Pakistan joined the South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) in January 1955, the situation deteriorated further. SEATO was founded largely to combat communism, which meant combating the Soviet Union since it served as the global symbol of the communist movement. The Soviet Union strongly disapproved of Pakistan’s choice of foreign policy. Pakistan had established its place in the Cold War by joining SEATO, and this marked the start of a lengthy competition between the two countries. In later years, Pakistan’s role in the 1960s U-2 spy plane incident, the 1970s China-US rapprochement, and 1980s afghan war against soviet increased this rift between the two. Later on, Due to Pakistan’s recognition of the Taliban administration in Afghanistan and its US-centric foreign policy, ties between Pakistan and Russia throughout the 1990s remained largely cold. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, Pakistan and Russia’s bilateral ties began to improve. Pakistan chose to break its ties with the Taliban regime and join the global alliance fighting terrorism, these efforts, however, couldn’t guarantee a faithful alliance from the US. Pakistan was upset with Obama’s Drone policies and neglecting Pakistan’s efforts for the War on Terror at the cost of its own national security. Further the increasing rift due to Obama’s Pivot to Asia policy which brought the US close to India to counter China in the region. While keenly observing the shift in alliances in the region, Pakistan chose to revive its relations with the neighboring states. Regional cooperation was the mantra that bought Russia and

Pakistan to forget old conflicts and revive new ties. Therefore, high-level state visits began to occur, the two nations’ relations continued to show positive indicators. In April 2001, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Losyukov travelled to Pakistan as part of a state visit. In 2002, Pakistan’s President, General (Retd) Pervez Musharraf, visited Moscow in return. The goal of these high-level visits and meetings was to strengthen bilateral cooperation between the two states in the economic, cultural, development, and technology sectors as well as to launch joint efforts to improve regional peace and stability. This was the first visit by a head of state or government from Pakistan in thirty years. As its ties with the United States deteriorated, Pakistan started to regard the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which is governed by China, as a chance to forge stronger ties with both Russia and China on common ground. In 2004, The Tashkent Summit established a regional organization to combat terrorism, separatism, and extremism while also fostering greater economic growth. Later, the SCO expanded its geographical reach to encompass India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. Russia being the senior member of the SCO always tried to avoid indulging in Pakistan-India rivalry. After the Pulwama attack, India tried to raise the issue at the SCO but Russia refused to address the issue at the SCO summit and Pakistan took a positive step toward bilateral relations between Russia and China. Similarly, when we look into the strategic interest Russia has started observing in Pakistan is directly linked to Pakistan’s geo-strategic position and its vital role in the regional strategic environment. In the sake of maintaining the balance of power during this, Russia now most likely recognizes Pakistan’s justifiable need for defense. In the beginning, the Russian position used to be that India was the best source of hegemonic stability in South Asia. This pragmatic shift likely resulted from the knowledge that Pakistan, which is nuclear-armed, would steadfastly reject India’s hegemony and that China would continue to guarantee Pakistan’s security by maintaining an adequate conventional and nuclear deterrent to counterbalance India. In this scenario, India and Pakistan are supposed to indulge themselves in an arms race, and Russia doesn’t want to fall behind. However, Pakistan is looking for State-of-the-art military weapons to buy from Russia but on affordable prices. Moving further towards regional connectivity, Putin suggested a “Greater Eurasia

Partnership” in 2016, including the EAEU members, China, India, Pakistan, Iran, and the Commonwealth nations. Since 2015, Moscow and Beijing have signed agreements signaling cooperation and regional integration because the BRI and the EAEU have the same objective of uniting Eurasia through overland trade and infrastructure. In order to achieve the Russian geo-economic vision of a “Greater Eurasia,” Pakistan has been designated by analyst Andrew Korybko as the “zipper of Pan Eurasian Integration” through South, Central, and West Asia. In 2016, Alexey Devov, then-ambassador Russia to Pakistan, is said to have said that Russia “strongly supported” the CPEC and that Moscow and Islamabad had discussed merging the EAEU with the CPEC. Additionally, Pakistani authorities have agreed to allow Russia access to the Gwadar Port. Russia and Central Asia now have access to the Indian Ocean, Arabian Sea, and Persian Gulf. In addition, the port acts as a backup trade route in the event of a blockage. The crisis in Ukraine has widened rifts between the US and its allies and Russia and its supporters. Pakistan, though, managed to preserve a precarious equilibrium in the developing conflict. Islamabad voiced its worry for the humanitarian situation in Ukraine but refrained from criticizing Russia. In this regard, Pakistan abstained from voting on the U.N. General Assembly’s resolution condemning Russia’s invasion of its neighbor and maintaining its “Neutrality”. Pakistan has been struggling with rising energy needs, mostly for gas and oil, as well as an expanding current account imbalance brought on by oil payments. A Pakistani delegation led by State Minister for Petroleum Musadik Malik traveled to Moscow the previous month in November to conduct negotiations with Russian authorities. Pakistan would pay discounted prices to Russia for its crude oil, gasoline, and diesel. Moreover, Russia is also extended an invitation to Islamabad to start discussions on long-term liquefied natural gas contracts for the years 2025 and 2026. Pakistan’s expanding residential and industrial energy needs have prompted Russia to agree to supply Pakistan with oil at a reduced price. In this regard, Pakistan has adopted a wise approach by developing better relations with Russia for the fulfillment of its energy demand. Although, Building stronger bilateral connections with Russia was formerly difficult for Pakistan, however, in the age of strategic and economic cooperation and intricate interconnectedness, Pakistan must not avoid rapprochement with Russia. –The writer is PhD scholar International Relations

Briefs

SC questions
NAB amends
by incomplete
assembly

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the amendments benefitted only those who enacted them adding only an iota of powerful people from the party were running the affairs of the whole party. Justice Ijaz further said the amendments were enacted in haste adding if they were passed with ill intentions, how could they lead to betterment. Talking about the system, the justice remarked corruption was not the only problem but the underlying system was adding no attempts were made to improve the system. It was the duty of the parliament to enact laws to improve the system and ensure action on them, the justice added. Justice Mansoor Ali Shah remarked Pakistan was on the 80 th spot in the corruption ranking before the amendments were enacted adding the country would slide down further in the new ranking set to be released after the amendment. Harris said if enactments served someone's interest, they are termed as "regulatory capture" to which the CJP asked whether recent amendments should be termed "parliamentary capture". The lawyer replied the term [parliamentary capture] did not fit here.

Shehbaz' son gets 14-day...

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seeking protective bail. On December 8 last, the IHC ordered Suleman Shehbaz to surrender himself before the court by December 13. While talking to media outside the IHC, Suleman Shehbaz on Tuesday said that former prime minister Imran Khan has no faith and belief, adding that Khan used to praise former army chief General (retired) Bajwa day and night but now he calls him a hypocrite. He said Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leadership lodged bogus cases against Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leaders. "We defended ourselves in London in fake cases and get a clean chit from them," he added. He said that Shahzad Akbar – then adviser of ex-PM Imran Khan – used to bring Daily Mail correspondent David Rose to NAB cells during the period when PML-N leaders were in detention. He said that Shahzad Akbar gave a fake briefing to David Rose and published fake news in the British publication Daily Mail. He also said that the Sharif family getting clearance from Britain's National Crime Agency (NCA) is a big slap on the face of Imran Khan.

Assemblies' dissolution likely before Dec 20

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he continued. Earlier, the PTI chief on Monday lambasted the current administration, claiming that investors had lost faith in the government due to its policies. The former prime minister, while speaking to a gathering of his economic team, expressed apprehension that things would spiral out of control. He said he had sought the help of Hammad Azhar, Hamayun Akhtar, Omar Ayub and others to discuss the economic situation. He lamented that the media did not highlight the state of economy.

Tajik president due in Pakistan today

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The two countries have a commonality of views on various regional and international issues. Tajikistan is the closest neighbour of Pakistan in Central Asia separated by the narrow Wakhan Corridor. This proximity makes Tajikistan an important partner of Pakistan in Central Asia.

Defiant and witty, Morocco coach wants more WC history

"We want to win the World Cup," he said, "It's not just words, we have to go further, maybe we won't have another opportunity," he said

DNA

DOHA: The 47-year-old coach of the first African and first Arab team to reach the last four of the World Cup took full advantage of the chance to address the world's football press in a Doha auditorium, the day before the clash with Didier Deschamps' team. The Moroccan exuded pride, optimism, defiance and humour in a refreshing contrast to the usual drone of non-committal cliches that coaches ritually role out before big games. He mocked the game's modern focus on possession, ridiculed the 'Expected Goals' stats and laughed in the face of those who wrote of his team before they eliminated Spain and Portugal. But along with the quickfire responses and talking points, there was a defiant refusal to play the role of the satisfied minnow and an evidently burning belief that his team can beat France and then do it again against Argentina or Croatia in Sunday's final. "We want to win the World Cup," he said, "It's not just words, we have to go further, maybe we won't have another opportunity," he said. "We are not the favourites but we are confident – maybe that makes me mad, crazy? A bit of crazy can be good," he said with a grin. Having already dubbed his team as "the Rocky Balboa of this World Cup" after they knocked out Portugal in the quarter-finals, Regragui was not pulling any



punches. Asked whether his team will continue in the same style, which has seen opponents enjoy plenty of possession, he was unapologetic about his team's approach. "We will play to our strengths ... this idea of possession, it is amazing how football journalists love these figures about 60-70 per cent possession, but it is no good if there are only two shots on goal," he said, perhaps recalling Spain's 77pc possession and one shot on target against his team. "The expected goals too ... we should have won, we had 4pc expected goals ... Well, we are here to win, that's all," he said. "If France give us possession, we will take it

but I don't think they will. So we will try to stop them," he added. If Morocco's application of the well-established strategy of mass defence and rapid counter-attack is not in fashion at the moment, statistics certainly are and Regragui has little time for focusing on numbers. "Let's stop with the statistics. I'm going to ask [FIFA President] Gianni Infantino to add points for beyond 60pc possession," he added. "We had a 0.01pc chance of winning the World Cup at the start," he said before a reporter told him the probability is now rated at 12pc. "We are at 12pc now? Well, praise be to Allah. We will work on that." Regragui

suggested that his team was being criticised, in part, for refusing to play the role of the entertaining losers. "European journalists criticise our style, I think it bothers them to see an African team playing as they do. They like to see a dance and see [winger Sofiane] Boufal doing two nutmegs and then going back home," he said. Indeed, though, not even the most critical could question Morocco's determination and work rate along with their defensive resilience. "The key for us is spirit, we play a quality game every time with a good spirit. For me the spirit is the most important thing in football – we have to play with the heart and the spirit," he said. Born in France, in what he called a "difficult" suburb south-east of Paris, Regragui spent the bulk of his playing career in France before moving to Morocco to coach. He only took over the national team in August. It has been a short reign so far but his impact – and that of his team – has been enormous, resonating well beyond Morocco. "If we can make young people dream and present a positive image of Africa, the Arab world and our religion that is great," he said. But what clearly is driving Regragui is the satisfaction of surpassing all expectations and defying sceptics. "Before every round people thought we would get knocked out," he said. "But we are still here and we are going to fight to the end. "

France preparing for wall of noise in semi-final

DNA

DOHA: France will go into Wednesday's World Cup semi-final against Morocco with the utmost respect for their giant-killing opponents as the defending champions prepare for a hostile reception from the Maghreb side's supporters on Wednesday. The French fans will be largely outnumbered by the Morocco supporters at the Al Bayt stadium and Les Bleus know that they will be jeered and whistled throughout. "They're benefiting from a huge support, I've seen this and my observers have told me about. We know it's going to be extremely noisy, it's part of the context and we'll have to be ready for it," France coach Didier Deschamps told a news conference on Tuesday. "Good for them. We have to prepare for the game, but also for the environment of the

game," Captain Hugo Lloris said: "We're going to have to be ready for the noise".

The backing of their fans has been giving Morocco, the first African side in the World Cup last four, extra energy as they beat Belgium, Spain and



Portugal on their way to the semi-finals, but France will be ready. "I admire and respect what they've done here, they owe nothing to chance, they finished top of their group," said Lloris. "They have a lot of qualities on and off the pitch, in terms of co-

hesion. The environment will be hostile but we're getting ready, calmly. We'll have to be ready to up our level one more time."

Morocco play a very compact 4-1-4-1 and patience will be key for France, who hope

Griezmann with his ability to play between the lines. "Here's another game where he'd better be good. He's got this capacity to change the face of the team, with his technical touch, and the fact that he enjoys a good tackle as much as a good pass," said Deschamps, who expects France to enjoy possession. Morocco have been very dangerous on the break and quick attacks, but this is precisely how France could hurt them as well. "We want to have the ball to create danger, but you saw that in our game against Poland (in the last 16) they actually had it more than expected," said Deschamps. "We're as good as Morocco on the break and on fast attacks. We won't abandon possession, but when we will have the ball we're going to have to make it count." The winner will face either Croatia or Argentina, who face each other later on Tuesday.

Schedule revised for New Zealand tour of Pakistan

LAHORE: The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has announced the revised schedule for New Zealand's tour this year. However, the PCB has not revealed the reason behind bringing forward the tour by a day. "The Pakistan Cricket Board and New Zealand Cricket have mutually agreed to bring forward the tour of New Zealand men's side to Pakistan by a day," the PCB said in a press release. "The first Test of the two-match series will now commence on 26 December at the National Bank Cricket Arena Karachi and the second will be played in Multan from 3 January. "The three ODIs will be played on 10, 12 and 14 January in Karachi." Schedule of New Zealand's tour of Pakistan: First Test – 26-30 December at National Bank Cricket Arena Karachi Second Test – 3-7 January at Multan Cricket Stadium First ODI – 10 January at National Bank Cricket Arena Karachi Second ODI – 12 January at National Bank Cricket Arena Karachi Third ODI – 14 January at National Bank Cricket Arena Karachi The Pakistan cricket team is currently playing a three-match Test series against England on home soil. It must be noted that England took full advantage of winning the toss – and their batting depth – to win the first Test by 74 runs on a dead wicket that offered nothing to the bowlers. Rawalpindi yielded 1,768 runs in four innings – the third most in Test history – with seven individual centuries and five fifties. The visitors also won the second Test in Multan by 26 runs to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series. England are on their first Test tour of Pakistan since 2005, having declined to visit in the interim years on security grounds. The third and final Test of the series is in Karachi from December 17-21. – DNA

Rawalpindi pitch rated 'below average'

LAHORE: The Rawalpindi pitch on which England won a memorable first Test against Pakistan has been rated as "below average" by the match referee. Pitches for every international match are rated, with negative ratings resulting in demerit points, the accumulation of which could lead to a suspension of staging rights. The below average rating has given Rawalpindi one demerit point. It is the second time this year the ground has been given a demerit point. The pitch for the drawn first Test between Pakistan and Australia in March was also rated as below average. If a venue receives five demerit points in a five-year period, it will be suspended from hosting international cricket for 12 months. The six ratings a pitch or outfield can be given are very good, good, average, below average, poor and unfit. The flat pitch in Rawalpindi resulted in 1,768 runs being scored, the most in history for a Test played over a maximum of five days. Despite the lack of encouragement for bowlers, England were able to force a famous victory in the dying moments of the final day. Match referee Andy Pycroft said: "It was a very flat pitch which gave almost no assistance to any type of bowler. That was the main reason why batters scored very fast and both sides posted huge totals. The pitch hardly deteriorated during the course of the match. "Since there was very little in it for the bowlers, I found the pitch to be 'below average' as per the ICC guidelines." England followed up their win in Rawalpindi with success in the second Test in Multan to take an unassailable 2-0 lead in the series. They will look for a clean sweep in the final Test in Karachi, which begins on Saturday. – DNA

Court clears Neymar, co-defendants in fraud case

MADRID: A Spanish court on Tuesday acquitted Brazil soccer star Neymar and other defendants in a fraud and corruption case over his 2013 transfer to Barcelona from Santos after prosecutors had dropped all charges in the high-profile trial, the court said in a statement. The suit had been brought by Brazilian investment firm DIS, the owner of 40% of the rights to Neymar when he was at Santos. He now plays for Paris Saint-Germain. DIS argued it had lost out on a cut from the transfer because its true value was understated and sought a five-year jail term for Neymar and a total fine of 149 million euros (\$157 million) for the defendants. In October, prosecutor Luis Garcia Canton asked the Barcelona court to acquit all defendants as there was "not the slightest hint of a crime". – Agencies

Tchouameni emerges as new leader of France midfield

DOHA: Aurelien Tchouameni might do most of his work in the shadows, but the France midfielder lit up the World Cup with his brilliant opening goal in Saturday's quarter-final win over England. The 22-year-old later gave away the first penalty of the game at Al Bayt Stadium which Harry Kane scored to equalise for England, yet France eventually ran out 2-1 winners and Tchouameni's role for the holders has been vital given the problems they faced coming into the tournament. The outlook for coach Didier Deschamps and his side appeared grim when they were struck by an avalanche of injuries, not least with their starting midfield duo of Paul Pogba and N'Golo Kante both being ruled out. Deschamps had to completely reconfigure his team, including abandoning his experiment with a back three, but his decision to build a three-man midfield

around Tchouameni with Adrien Rabiot and Antoine Griezmann either side of the Real Madrid man has paid off. Now when his teammates push forward to join the attack, "he is there to cover us, fill in, plug gaps and win the ball back," said Rabiot, who has also impressed on France's run to the semi-finals in Qatar, where they will face Morocco on Wednesday. Yet Tchouameni has hardly come from nowhere to start for his country at this World Cup. The recurring fitness worries of Pogba and Kante – two stars of France's triumphant campaign four years ago – allowed the powerful and athletic midfielder to make his debut in a qualifier against Bosnia and Herzegovina in September last year. Since then he has played in all bar one of his country's matches while also seeing his club career take off. Tchouameni's outstanding

performances for Monaco saw him win the Ligue 1 young player of the year prize in 2021 and then earn a move to Madrid in the last close season for a fee of 100 million euros (\$105m) including bonuses. Kylian Mbappe, who had himself turned down a move to the Spanish capital, had asked Tchouameni if he might like to sign for Paris Saint-Germain instead. But joining the European champions and now standing on the brink of a World Cup final were, it seems, all part of the plan for the midfielder with Cameroonian roots, even if things have maybe happened a little faster than he might have anticipated. "I have objectives, dreams, the desire to play for the best clubs, to win titles, to impact my sport and my position. I want to be remembered for positive things. I want to leave my mark," he told L'Equipe last year. – APP

ECP initiates removal of Imran Khan as PTI chief

FROM PAGE 01
district and sessions court in Islamabad had reserved the verdict on a plea filed by the ECP in the same case against Khan for allegedly indulging in corrupt practices, which the former premier denies. A day earlier, it was learnt that the court will announce its verdict on December 15 at 2pm. The Toshakhana reference case was taken up by the trial court on November 22. IHC Chief Justice Aamer Farooq, while hearing the petition, remarked to take a decision on the application after listening to everyone in two to three weeks. Khan's counsel Barrister Ali Zafar, while presenting his arguments, said that the ECP is not a court of law in light of several verdicts issued by the Supreme Court of Pakistan. Therefore, it has no authority to disqualify any member of the National Assembly. "In this case, the ECP took recourse to the Faisal Vawda case and issued a declaration," Zafar said maintaining that the PTI chief took the gifts after a 20% payment and provided a copy of its challan. Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader Mohsin Shah Nawaz Ranjha's lawyer sought a week's time to present his arguments.

India involved in all sort...

FROM PAGE 01
press conference that the mastermind of the attack was "an Indian citizen and he is associated with [Indian intelligence agency] RAW". Earlier this year, Dawn reported that the Punjab CTD had claimed to have arrested the mastermind as well as the facilitator of the Johar Town bomb blast from Balochistan. They were identified as Samiul Haq and Uzair Akbar. In the press conference, IG Mehmood briefed on the investigation of the blast and revealed that the authorities had reached the culprits. "Basically, at 9am on June 23, 2021, a bomb blast was reported in Lahore's Johar Town. Three citizens were martyred and 22 were wounded in the blast. To date, no terrorist organisation has accepted responsibility for the attack," he said. The official recalled that the police had traced the suspect within 16 hours of the incident. "And within 24 hours we arrested three terrorists.

The EU agrees to give Bosnia..

FROM PAGE 01
It remains partitioned between a Serb entity and a Muslim-Croat federation connected by a weak central government. It has a dysfunctional administrative system created by the 1995 Dayton Agreement that succeeded in ending the conflict in the 1990s but largely failed in providing a framework for the country's political development. The EU's executive branch, the European Commission, has laid out 14 priorities for reform that it insists Bosnia must make good on before it can move on to the next stage of opening formal accession negotiations. EU enlargement commissioner Oliver Varhelyi has told Bosnia it is at "a crucial juncture" on its path to the bloc. Bosnian politicians insist it is high time the country be granted candidate status. "It is time for the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina to receive a positive message from the European Union," Denis Becirovic, the Bosnian member of the country's tripartite presidency, said last week. "But of course, that will only be the beginning of the real work." A stand-off has seen Bosnia's Serb entity, the Republika Srpska, block state institutions and cause "virtual paralysis" in the reform process, the EU has said. There are also concerns over calls by Serb leaders for closer ties with Russia, and the entity's nationalist president Milorad Dodik has vowed to stall the push towards the EU if it means more centralisation of power in Bosnia. Bosnia will join seven other nations with candidate status: Turkey, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Moldova and Ukraine. – APP

Thailand-Pakistan relations excellent: Ambassador

FROM PAGE 01

BANGKOK AS THE TRANSIT HUB

One of the first questions I was asked since my arrival last year was "When Thai Airways will resume its flight between Pakistan and Thailand?". Since then, the Royal Thai Embassy in Islamabad had been working closely with the Thai Airways toward the flight resumption. Finally in March this year, the Thai Airways has resumed its direct flights from Bangkok to all three major cities in Pakistan: Islamabad, Lahore, and Karachi. Not only that, the number of flights has quickly increased from only once a week to 4 or 5 times a week. Not only Pakistanis can travel to Thailand more comfortably but also, for the last couple of months, we have noticed a sharp increase in numbers of Thai people travelling to Pakistan, deepening the people-to-people ties, which is another important element of our bilateral relations. Recently, we have seen more and more stories about Pakistan published in the Thai social media, including one of my own, sharing the true beauty of natural landscape and



world ancient heritage sites which have not presented well enough through the eyes of the global media. **ON CULTURAL LINKAGES** I believe that culture, arts, music, dance,

and food can be key elements to create understanding and unity as they are understandable and appreciable by all human kinds. That is why for the past year

the Embassy has participated in several culture and social activities from fund raising bazar with MOFA to traditional dress show to Thai Festival in Lahore, the largest scale event from Thailand which attracted almost 10,000 visitors. Regarding the heritage sites, Pakistan is home to the ancient Gandhara civilisation with plenty of ancient Buddhist sites declared as UNESCO World Heritage. I admire the arrangement of the Pakistan's authorities as well as the local Pakistanis in preserving these world heritage sites. By doing so, not only the Pakistanis have preserved these sites for your country but also for the people from around the world. The Pakistan Government's vision to promote the tourism of these historical sites will bring more development to these areas and the local people and economy would also benefit greatly from this tourism. I would like to see more people visiting Pakistan because I want them not only to see your country's beauty and heritage but to also experience, as I do, the friendliness and kindness of the Pakistanis. **To be continued....**

Briefs

Russia to construct nuclear plant in Saudi Arabia

MOSCOW: Russia's Rosatom is bidding for the construction of the first nuclear power plant in Saudi Arabia, Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Novak said Tuesday. Other projects, including the construction of one more nuclear power plant in Türkiye, are also being discussed, Novak said in an article for Energy Policy magazine. Russia is also planning to increase by 25% the share of nuclear energy until 2040, he said. The deputy prime minister added that Russia may also increase the export of its nuclear energy as its demand is growing due to the global energy crisis. The slowdown in the development of nuclear energy in the last decade was largely due to the accident at the Fukushima nuclear power plant in Japan in 2011, he said. "However, the Japanese experience has been seriously studied and taken into account at the world level, relevant conclusions have been drawn, necessary decisions have been made for the possibility of further existence and development of the industry. As a result, there has been significant progress in technology," Novak said. Novak also listed the advantages of nuclear energy: it is cheaper, less fuel produces more energy and has a low volume of CO2 emissions, which fully meets the current climate agenda. —DNA

New Zealand passes unique tobacco age law

AUCKLAND: New Zealand has passed into law a unique plan to phase out tobacco smoking for the next generation by imposing a lifetime ban on young people buying cigarettes. The law states that tobacco can't ever be sold to anybody born on or after January 1, 2009 - and from now on, the minimum age for buying cigarettes will keep going up and up. In theory, somebody trying to buy a pack of cigarettes 50 years from now would need ID to show they were at least 63 years old. But health authorities hope smoking will fade away well before then. They have a stated goal of making New Zealand smoke-free by 2025. "There is no good reason to allow a product to be sold that kills half the people that use it," Associate Minister of Health Dr. Ayesha Verrall told lawmakers in Parliament. "And I can tell you that we will end this in the future, as we pass this legislation". New Zealand is not the only nation pushing to ban smoking for the next generations. In June, a report commissioned by the UK government recommended raising the legal smoking age each year to phase out tobacco use among young people.

Ramaphosa faces crunch impeachment debate

CAPE TOWN: South African MPs on Tuesday prepared to debate whether to initiate proceedings that could force out President Cyril Ramaphosa over allegations he concealed a huge cash theft at his farm. Ramaphosa - championed as a graft-busting saviour after corruption-stained predecessor Jacob Zuma - is counting on support from the ruling African National Congress (ANC) party, which has been further divided by the scandal. An extraordinary parliamentary session opening in Cape Town at 1200 GMT will discuss the findings of an independent panel which said Ramaphosa may be guilty of serious violations and misconduct. Lawmakers are called to decide in an open vote, by simple majority, whether to launch an impeachment investigation against Ramaphosa - a lengthy probe that could lead to his removal from office. The 70-year-old president seems likely to survive the day, although analysts predicted the debate could be long and bitter. Last week, he secured the renewed backing of the ANC, which holds 230 of the National Assembly's 400 seats, after mounting a legal bid to have the damning report annulled. —Agencies



RAWALPINDI: President RCCI Saqib Rafique receiving souvenir from President of Pakistan Dr. Arif Alvi. — DNA

Hungary agrees to lift veto on EU Ukraine aid package

Johannes Hahn, Commissioner for Budget, nevertheless described the decision as a "big moment for rule of law and EU funds!"

FOREIGN DESK

BUDAPEST: Hungary has agreed to lift its veto on sending 18 billion in EU aid to Ukraine. The European Commission last month recommended that 7.5 billion of EU funds to Budapest should be frozen because reforms to strengthen the rule of law in Hungary fell short. But EU ambassadors agreed to lower the amount frozen to 6.3 billion and approved 5.8 billion post-COVID-19 recovery funding. In exchange, Budapest lifted its veto on two key files that required unanimity among EU countries: 18 billion in aid for Ukraine and a global corporate tax. "Megadeal! EU ambassadors approved

in principle a package of 18 billion in support for Ukraine, 15% minimum tax for big corporations, approval of Hungary's RRP [post-COVID recovery and resilience plan] and an agreement on conditionality," the Czech Presidency of the European Council said on Twitter. Budapest will however still need to complete the 27 "super milestones" set out by the European Commission in order to get the funds under the conditionality mechanism and the recovery plan. These include reforms to strengthen judiciary independence, new rules on auditing and reporting on EU funds, the creation of new independent anti-corruption bodies, and strong-



er rules to crack down on conflicts of interest. Hungary's total cohesion envelope for the 2021-2027 period is 22.5 billion. This means that even if 6.3 billion is frozen, around 16 billion can be committed as normal, amounting to about 3.7 billion a year

from 2022. **But Budapest has up to two years to reach the super milestones set by the Commission and unlock the frozen funds.**" A senior EU official said last month that it expected the Hungarian government to attain these milestones before the end of the first

quarter. The decision is likely bruising for the European Commission which had last week - after being asked by some of the bloc's member states to release a new rule of law analysis that would include reforms passed by the Hungarian government earlier this month in a bid to lower the amount frozen - stood by its initial assessment. It is therefore a victory for Budapest, which successfully wielded its veto on the two other key files in order to secure the EU funds. On the package of assistance to cover Ukraine's budget shortfall for 2023, Budapest had argued against raising money on the markets and said it preferred providing

assistance to Ukraine on a bilateral basis despite its share being lower as part of an EU package. It opposed the global corporate tax, known as Pillar II, for months arguing that with the world economy in the slump because of COVID-19 and Russia's war in Ukraine it was not the time to raise taxes. Yet it upped taxes for small businesses over the summer triggering mass protests. Johannes Hahn, Commissioner for Budget, nevertheless described the decision as a "big moment for rule of law and EU funds!" "(The) first use of the conditionality mechanism proves effective, delivering structural improvements," he said on Twitter.

Exhausted UK nurses gear up for biggest strike

LONDON: As British professionals across multiple sectors continue to stage a massive wave of strikes to protest the tightening cost-of-living crisis, upcoming labor action by nurses has stoked more fears than others, shining a spotlight on the country's healthcare system. In their biggest walkout in the National Health Service's (NHS) history, nurses are set to go on strike on Dec. 15 and Dec. 20 over a pay dispute with the government. The Royal College of Nursing (RCN), the world's largest nursing union and professional body, said it had been given no choice but to strike after the government said their demand for a 19% pay rise was unaffordable. Their action will take place this week in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland after talks fell through between the union and the country's health secretary. Around 100,000 nurses are expected to participate in the strike, though emergency care services will continue. More than 10,000 ambulance workers in England and Wales will also strike for

four days before Christmas. While these strikes were sparked by the bitter cost-of-living crisis amid soaring inflation, the nurses' walkout is the result of a clear domino effect after a decade of pay erosion and deterioration in the economy, as well as piling workloads triggered partially by Brexit and the coronavirus pandemic. According to a study conducted by the London School of Economics, real earnings for nurses have lagged behind employees in other professions in the UK, especially those in the private sector. "In the private sector, real median earnings fell by 3.2% between 2011 and 2021, while nurses' median earnings diminished by 6%," it said. As nurses' salaries declined substantially in real terms from 2010-11 to 2021-22, the annual rate of departure for nurses increased from 8.5% to 10.9%, the research showed. The total number of leavers rose from 27,000 to over 38,000 over the period, marking a 42% rise. Also striking, the study found that about 47,000 NHS nurse positions re-

mained vacant as of June 2022, the highest figure on record. "Nursing is a highly-skilled, safety-critical profession. Over the last 10 years, nurses in England have seen a real-terms pay cut of almost 20%. But, this strike action is about more than pay," RCN representative Claire Flatt told Anadolu Agency. There are nearly 50,000 nurse vacancies in England alone, and many experienced nurses are leaving the profession, she explained, adding that workloads were becoming unsustainable, leading to poor care and compromised safety for patients. "More worryingly, the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service has confirmed a 10% drop in the number of students accepted onto nursing courses across the UK this year, perhaps demonstrating students are being put off a career in nursing due to poor pay, poor working conditions, and with the government removing student bursaries in England, nurses will qualify with an excess of £24,000 (nearly \$29,500) in student debt."

Anadolu Agency also spoke to Maria Kublova, a staff nurse from University College Hospital in London, who said the government should focus not just on paying nurses fairly, but on retaining nurses already in the system, ensuring that they stay longer by showing them greater appreciation. "I'm just disappointed that the announcement of the strike didn't awaken any discussion with the government because that's what usually happens when you announce a strike, isn't it?" Despite the widespread strikes across a multitude of sectors, the government has not changed its behavior on the pay dispute, said Kublova. "So hopefully, this walkout will mobilize forces." A veteran NHS nurse, Pakize Durmaz, explained there was also a huge staff shortage in her profession when she first came to the UK 20 years ago. "Unfortunately, as a country policy, they don't train enough nurses here." One reason for this, she explained, was that employing more nurses had little appeal and would bear high costs. —Agencies

EU lawmakers remove Eva Kaili from office



BRUSSELS: Greek MEP Eva Kaili was stripped of her position as a vice president in the European Parliament. The decision over Kaili, embroiled in a corruption probe that allegedly involves World Cup hosts Qatar, was taken on Tuesday morning, according to European Parliament President Roberta Metsola. Her ousting as vice president was rubber-stamped by MEPs who overwhelmingly backed the motion with 625 in favour, one against and two abstentions. A two-thirds majority was needed. It comes after Belgian police made fresh raids on Monday including one on a European parliamentary office as the corruption investigation widened. In a statement, Belgium's Federal Prosecutors Office said that the IT resources of ten parliamentary staff had been "frozen" to prevent the "disappearance of data necessary for the investigation". They went on to say that the purpose of the search at the European Parliament was "to seize this data". The bloc's top politicians have strongly condemned the corruption scandal that is shaking the EU legislative body. The EU Parliament President Roberta Metsola spoke about the "enemies of democracy for whom the very existence of this Parliament is a threat, will stop at nothing". —APP

Is Poland becoming more authoritarian?

WEB DESK

WARSAW: Alarms are being sounded over creeping authoritarianism in Poland. A damning report published in November said the country's democracy was faltering and that key institutions were "severely backsliding". This means the government has eroded some of the fundamental rights and freedoms that underpin Poland's political system, according to the report's authors, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA). Examples are the reduced independence of Poland's media and judiciary system, though policing is a particular area of concern for some. Wojciech Przybylski, president of the Res Publica Foundation think-tank, said there was an "alarming rise in eavesdropping" - with the ruling Law and Justice (PiS) party embroiled

in a phone tapping scandal of political opponents and journalists - besides "more and more" violent repression of demonstrators. "Police control was already high before PiS came to power - especially in terms of internet surveillance and government intervention into online activities - but excessive policing in Poland has only accelerated over the past eight years," said Wojciech Przybylski, president of the Res Publica Foundation think-tank. In October, police were criticised for detaining anti-fascist protesters at a nationalist rally, while not reacting to the illegal use of Nazi symbols by other demonstrators. But others say the problem should not be exaggerated. Alberto Fernandez, a senior programme officer at IDEA, told Euronews that

Poland was still committed to holding free and fair elections. Meanwhile, some commentators claim that fierce protests, particularly over the government's restriction of reproductive rights and media freedoms, reflect the health

of Poland's democracy.

All of this is set against the backdrop of a regional refugee crisis. Amid swirling regional geo-political tensions in 2021, Belarus was accused of beginning to push refugees and migrants across its borders into Poland and other neighbouring EU states in an apparent bid to destabilise the bloc. Although this has had many effects, Przybylski claims it has served as a pretext to pour more money into its police and security apparatus. "We have a real situation on the border and we require more border police and military given the given circumstances, but the question is whether funding for police actually goes in the direction that resolves these problems," he said. "At the same time, while the excessive funding in resources and police privileges has been

increasing, the rates of homicide and the rates of personal threats against civilians have also risen. "Something is off here. Either the [police] are not doing their job or something is seriously wrong." From 2019 to 2020 the murder rate in Poland did increase, although this follows a long-running fall. Crime rates in the country are comparatively lower than elsewhere in Europe. Soon after the PiS formed a majority government in 2015, they began reforming the judicial system, changing how judges were appointed and managed, which led to accusations that the independence of the judiciary - a key pillar of democracy - was being undermined. While the public did want limited reforms to make it faster and more efficient, Przybylski says PiS used this feeling as a pretence to paralysing the existing judicial system and start building a politically controlled alternative.

US calls for removal of blockades in Kosovo

NEWS DESK

BELGRADE: The US special envoy for the Western Balkans arrived Monday in Kosovo's capital Pristina amid tensions in the region. The visit by Gabriel Escobar came after Serbs in northern Kosovo blocked main roads to protest the arrest on suspicion of terrorism of former Serb police officer Dejan Pantic, who was part of a mass resignation of Serbs from the security forces in November. The US delegation met with President Vjosa Osmani and Prime Minister Albin Kurti. According to a statement from Osmani's office, the US called for the removal of blockades on roads in the north and an end to intimidation and threats of violence. US State Department Counselor Derek Chollet was also set to take part in the visit, but it was canceled after he tested positive for COVID-19. Meanwhile, the European Union's Foreign Affairs Council said most member states agree with EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell on the need to send in reinforcements and equipment for the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) if they are needed. "I asked the member states to be ready to send additional reinforcements for our EULEX mission. Many of them agreed and are ready to send more capacities, more effective support, more people to this mission if needed," said Borrell.

Protests in Peru leave 5 dead

FOREIGN DESK

BOGOTA: At least five people have died and an airport has been seized over the past 24 hours in Peru in protests following the removal of former President Pedro Castillo and the inauguration of Dina Boluarte as the country's new head of state. A clash between police and protesters Sunday left two dead in the city of Andahuaylas, where protesters attempted to storm the city's airport. The next death occurred Monday in Arequipa, Peru's second largest city, when police were recovering an airport runway seized by around 1,500 demonstrators. Another two deaths were confirmed in Apurimac in south Peru - a man around 26 years old and a 16 year old. Protesters have blocked roads with rocks and logs and burned tires, interrupting traffic along the Southern Pan-American Highway that connects Peru and Chile. There have also been reports of police kidnappings. The local press in Andahuaylas reported that the police were firing long guns. Although Boluarte proposed early Monday to hold elections in April 2024 instead of April 2026, her statements failed to defuse the tensions that have escalated in the South American country since the ouster of leftist leader Castillo.

US announce major nuclear fusion breakthrough

WEB DESK

WASHINGTON: US researchers announced a historic nuclear fusion breakthrough on Tuesday that could pave the way for alternative clean energy sources. The Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory (LLNL) said an experiment it conducted this month "produced more energy from fusion than the laser energy used to drive it." The US Department of Energy described the achievement of fusion ignition as a "major scientific breakthrough" that will lead to "advancements in national defense and the future of clean power." LLNL director Dr. Kim Budil described it as "is one of the most significant scientific challenges ever tackled by humanity." Scientists have been working for decades to develop nuclear fusion - touted by its supporters as a clean, abundant and safe source of energy that could eventually allow humanity to break its dependence on the fossil fuels driving a global climate crisis.

Briefs

China scraps
COVID travel
tracking app

MONITORING DESK

BEIJING: People in China celebrated the withdrawal on Tuesday of a state-mandated app used to track whether they had travelled to COVID-stricken areas, in the latest loosening of some of the world's toughest anti-virus rules.

China last week started axing key parts of its stringent 'zero-COVID' regime in the wake of widespread protests against the curbs last month which had marked the biggest show of public discontent in mainland China since President Xi Jinping came to power in 2012.

This has included dropping mandatory testing prior to many public activities, reining in quarantine, and now shutting down an app called 'itinerary code' which critics had said could be used for mass surveillance and social control of the population.

As authorities deactivated the app at midnight on Monday, China's four telecoms firms said they would delete users' data associated with the app. Netizens took to social media platform Weibo to cheer its demise.

"Goodbye itinerary code, I hope to never see you again," wrote one user. "The hand that stretched out to exert power during the epidemic should now be pulled back," wrote another. Itinerary codes were mainly used to track domestic travel within China, while authorities also use so-called health codes that residents must scan to enter public venues in order to check whether they may have been in contact with the virus.

While authorities have not announced their demise, several cities including Shanghai have said that residents are no longer required to show these codes when entering places such as shops and restaurants.

Iran jails 400
protesters
in Tehran
amid unrest

DNA

TEHRAN: Iran has slapped 400 protesters in the capital Tehran with jail terms in connection with mass demonstrations over the death of a young woman in police custody, according to the city's prosecutor-general on Tuesday. "In hearings on cases of rioters in Tehran, 160 people were sentenced to between five and 10 years in prison, 80 people to two to five years and 160 people of up to two years," Ali Alghasi-Mehr said in statements cited by state news agency IRNA.

The judicial official said 70 people have also been fined over their involvement in the protests. The nationwide protests were triggered by the death of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini while in the custody of morality police in mid-September, which also sparked fresh tensions between Tehran and the West.

Iranian authorities have executed two men this week for involvement in the months-long protests. Nine more people are sitting on the death row.

Strong foreign policy linked
to strong economy: Talah

The purpose of this conference was expressed by the speakers regarding investment in Pakistan. Special guest Federal Minister Senator Talha Mehmood while addressing the conference said that there will be a free foreign policy only with a strong economy



ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister Senator Talha Mehmood, Ambassadors of Brazil, Indonesia, Mauritius, Vietnam and others posing for a picture on the occasion of 2nd Investment in Pakistan conference organized by Khurshid Barlas under the aegis of PAEI, at Islamabad Serena Hotel. – DNA

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The second Invest in Pakistan Business Conference was held at Serena Hotel. In which distinguished domestic and foreign ambassadors Ambassador of Brazil, H.E. Mr. Olyntho Vieira, Ambassador of Indonesia, H.E. Mr. Adam Mulawarnan Togio, Mauritius High Commission H.E. Mr. Rashid Ally Soobadar, Ambassador of Vietnam H.E.

Mr. Nguyen Tien Phong. Apart from the prestigious real estate, various business community associated with the tourism industry participated in large numbers. The purpose of this conference was expressed by the speakers regarding investment in Pakistan. Special guest Federal Minister Senator Talha Mehmood while addressing the conference said that there will be a free foreign policy only with a strong economy. We are laying the foundation of

a strong country only by facing difficult economic conditions. The real estate and construction industry sector in Pakistan is growing rapidly. I assure the Pakistan Association of Exhibition Industry of full support and will continue to organize more exhibitions in this manner in terms of investment. On this occasion, he thanked Chairman Pakistan Association of Exhibition Industry Muhammad Khurshid Barlas. Arif Jeeva said Preparation for any expo starts

not weeks but months in advance and after days and nights of hard work such beautiful events are organized where families come with full confidence Traditional ways of doing business are changing and Pakistan Association The Association of Exhibition Industry has also taken this into account and taught Pakistan's real estate market the best use of technology. Addressing the ceremony, Sardar Yasir Ilyas Khan said that Pakistan has to take the best practical steps to promote international investment.

Pakistan, Kazakhstan to improve
trade, investment: President Alvi

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi on Tuesday said boosting trade with Kazakhstan and other Central Asian Republics (CARs) through Karachi and Gwadar was an important element of Pakistan's 'Vision Central Asia' policy. "There is a great potential for diversifying bilateral trade relations and entering into joint ventures in the fields of agriculture, IT, textile, energy, logistics, housing and construction," he said while talking to

Chairman of the Mazhilis (Lower House) of the Parliament of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Koshanov Yerlan Zhakanovich who led a delegation, here at the Awwan-e-Sadr. President Alvi said Pakistan and Kazakhstan enjoy fraternal brotherly relations rooted in a common heritage and social, cultural and religious values which need to be translated into meaningful business trade, investment and economic relations.

He mentioned that the Vision Central Asia policy focused on five elements, including political and diplomatic, trade and investment, energy and connectivity, security and defence, and people-to-people contacts. He said the existing level of trade of US\$219.12 million in 2021-22 needed to be substantially increased keeping in view the immense potential that existed between the two countries by building new and improving existing linkages through roads and railway networks, and through the sea. The president expressed the hope that with the establishment of complete peace in Afghanistan, trade and investment between Kazakhstan and Pakistan would receive much-needed impetus and hoped that the current leadership in Afghanistan would succeed in establishing sustainable peace. He hoped that Pakistan and Kazakhstan Inter-Governmental Joint Commission (IJC) on trade, economic, scientific, technological and cultural cooperation scheduled to be held in Islamabad on December 22-23, 2022 would take tangible decisions to further improve and cement the bilateral brotherly and fraternal relations. – APP

PML-Q lawmakers divided over
dissolution of Punjab Assembly

CM Pervaiz Elahi suggested delaying the dissolution of the Punjab Assembly for at least three months so that development projects to be completed and it will be a better decision

LAHORE: The Pakistan Muslim League (Quaid e Azam) is divided over the dissolution of Punjab assembly which was

announced by PTI Chairman and former Prime Minister Imran Khan. According to sources, PML-Q leadership is discussing the dissolution of Punjab assembly with Members of provincial assemblies (MPAs) and other close aides. The chief minister (CM) Chaudhry Pervaiz Elahi Punjab asked party MPAs whether they want to contest election independently or in coalition with Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), sources said, but most of them want to participate in election in coalition with PTI. Several PML-Q leaders were in favor of an early election but they were against the dissolution of the Punjab Assembly. Upon various opinions, the party

member gave authority to Pervaiz Elahi. Furthermore, Pervaiz Elahi's son Monis Elahi will meet PTI chief Imran Khan, sources added. Earlier, Punjab chief minister (CM) Pervaiz Elahi advised Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chairman and former prime minister Imran Khan to delay the Punjab Assembly dissolution. CM Pervaiz Elahi suggested delaying the dissolution of the Punjab Assembly for at least three months so that development projects to be completed and it will be a better decision. Sources say that Imran Khan is sticking to his position that immediate elections are the only solution to the problems facing the country. – DNA

NA passes Trade
Organization
(Amend) Bill, 2022

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Commerce Syed Naveed Qamar on Tuesday presented the Trade Organization (Amendment) Bill, 2022 as reported by the standing committee which was unanimously passed by the National Assembly (NA). According to the statements of objects and reasons, the trade organizations (TOs) are regulated under the Trade Organization Act 2013. The act and its subsequent rules aim to define the purpose, role, responsibility and operational framework including the code of corporate governance for TOs and their related matters. The Trade Organization Act, 2013 has given certain functions and powers to be exercised by the federal government. These functions and powers relate to regulations of operational matters of TOs and hence, it is appropriate that such functions and powers are given to the Commerce Division or the Regulator of Trade Organization. The purpose of the amendment is that the power of the federal government relating to operational matters of the TOs should be given to the Commerce Division of the Regulator Trade Organizations for the smooth functioning of day-to-day affairs. Moreover, the tenure of office bearers of trade bodies also needs to be increased from existing one year to two years to provide adequate time for the office bearers to implement their agenda. The proposed amendments in the Trade Organizations Act, 2013 will enable the office of the expeditious disposal of operational issues in the regulation of TOs by the Directorate General of Trade Organization and Commerce Division. Increasing the tenure of trade bodies to two years from the existing one year will enable the management of trade bodies to implement their policies and agendas by getting sufficient time. – APP

37 Lankan students
arrive to pursue
higher studies

ISLAMABAD: As many as 37 Sri Lankan students arrived in Pakistan the other day to pursue their higher studies under the Pak-Sri Lanka Higher Education Cooperation Programme (HECP). According to official sources, around 357 more students from Sri Lanka, who won the 'Allama Iqbal Scholarships for Sri Lankan Students', will also reach Pakistan soon. These scholarships are being offered in all major disciplines, including Medicine, Engineering, Business Studies, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, etc, the sources said. Meanwhile, 272 Sri Lankan students are already studying in top-tier Pakistani public sector universities where they are enrolled in different fields of study. It is worth mentioning here that there is also a faculty exchange component in this programme that will be launched soon so that Pakistani and Sri Lankan academics can work together on contemporary areas of research. – APP

G-7 establishes Climate Club
to tackle global warming

WEB DESK

BERLIN: The G-7 group of the world's major economic powers has decided to establish an international Climate Club to tackle global warming, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz announced on Monday. "The Climate Club is not intended to be a G-7 initiative; rather, it is to be a global undertaking," Scholz told a news conference in Berlin, following a virtual meeting of G-7 leaders. He invited interested states that pursue an ambitious climate policy to join the club, adding that they can shape its concept and structure together in the coming months. "This is not an exclusive club, it's intended to be as open as possible to many countries, so that we can also together master this great task we have to protect our planet and the environment for future generations," he said. Scholz also noted that the G-7 asked the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, in tandem with the International Energy Agency, to host an interim secretariat for the Climate Club. The idea was first discussed during the G-7 summit in Elmau, Germany in June, and the leaders reached an agreement at that time to set up this

intergovernmental forum by the end of this year. On Monday, at their virtual meeting, G-7 leaders endorsed a "terms of reference" document for the Climate Club, which outlined the main objectives, criteria for participation, and planned steps for the further development of the forum. The Climate Club will be open to countries which indicate commitment to "the full and effective implementation of the Paris Agreement" and the decisions thereunder, and pursue efforts to limiting the temperature increase to 1.5C, according to the document.

Scholz told reporters in Berlin that the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development and the International Energy Agency would establish a "climate change secretariat" now that the forum is launched. New figures published Monday show Germany itself was slow to ramp up renewable energy production this year. While the country increased its solar capacity by 10% in 2022, the amount of additional wind power capacity it installed on land and at sea was only about 3%. The government aims to increase offshore wind power capacity from about 8 gigawatts to 20 gigawatts by 2030, but this year only 0.2 gigawatts of new capacity were added.

DECEMBER 2022

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