



Islamabad POST

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Trump's conservative base deserting him for DeSantis, poll says

Detailed News On Page-08

Putin has not achieved a single goal

Detailed News On Page-08



Messi says WC Final his last int'l game

Detailed News On Page-06



Briefs

Issues with BNP-M resolved

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Law Senator Azam Nazir Tarrar on Wednesday claimed that the issues related to Reko Diq with Balochistan National Party-Mengal (BNP-M) have been resolved. Speaking in the Parliament House, Tarar said that Mengal's position is to limit this bill only to Reko Diq, adding that he is bringing the amendment that we will support him. The federal law minister added that he is in touch with Sardar Akhtar Mengal and other coalition partners on the issue of Foreign Investment and Protection Bill.

Sheikh slams beneficiaries of NAB amends

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Awami Muslim League (AML) chief Sheikh Rashid demands Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial to put the names of beneficiaries of amendments to NAB laws on the ECL. The former interior minister, while addressing a ceremony on Wednesday, said the govt was unpopular and even people in Mecca were cursing the PDM and its allies for what they had done to Pak. Criticising government's economic policies, Mr Rashid said Pakistan had technically gone bankrupt, and that even diplomatic staff abroad had run out of finances while the govt was unable to even pay salaries and pensions.

Default risk looms over Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Former finance minister Miftah Ismail on Wednesday warned that the default risk would continue to loom over the country until it managed to secure the next tranche of loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The PML-N leader's remarks has put him in a face-off against Finance Minister Ishaq Dar who has categorically denied the speculations that the South Asian country is at brink of default.

Pak-Tajik cooperation need of hour

PM meets Tajik President; memorandums of understanding (MoUs) signed; both sides agree to enhance cooperation

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday called for enhancing economic cooperation and bilateral trade with Tajikistan. He made the remarks while addressing a press conference alongside Tajik President Emomali Rahmon, who arrived in Pakistan earlier on a two-day visit. Earlier in the day, the two leaders held a one-on-one meeting at the Prime Minister's House. Addressing the joint press conference, where the two leaders signed memorandums of understanding (MoUs), PM Shehbaz said: "We need to work very closely with each other to strengthen our economic cooperation and enhance our bilateral trade in the field of industry, agriculture, joint ventures and energy cooperation." The prime minister said Tajikistan had a very "important place" in Central Asia and was a "gateway" to the region. He went on to say he was looking forward to working closely with Rahmon for the completion of the Casa-1000 power project as early as possible as well as for

Continued on Page 06

Tajik president receives red-carpet welcome

ISLAMABAD: Tajikistan's President Emomali Rahmon was accorded a red-carpet welcome here Wednesday at the Prime Minister's House as he arrived in the capital on a two-day visit. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif received the Tajik president on his arrival at the PM House. A contingent of armed forces presented a salute to the visiting dignitary. President Rahmon reviewed the guard of honour, presented by a contingent of the three services. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and President Rahmon introduced their delegations to each other. President Emomali Rahmon also planted a sapling in the lawns of the PM's House. Later, the two leaders along with their delegations proceeded for talks.

Continued on Page 06

Pak missions abroad unable to pay salaries

Diplomatic staffers are also facing serious problems due to non-payment of salaries

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Employees of Pakistan's foreign missions in various countries have not been paid for the last three to four months, due to the shortage of dollars in the country, a fact confirmed by the Foreign Office Spokesperson when contacted by media people. The details have revealed that employees of Pakistan's missions abroad in various countries, including in France, Germany, the United States, Oman, Iran, Turkey,

Afghanistan etc are facing problems due to the non-payment of their salaries, being paid to them in dollars. They said that these missions have informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the problems being faced by their employees due to the pending salaries of three to four months. They added that some missions have also conveyed to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that diplomatic staffers are also facing serious problems in meeting their expenses including handling routine affairs.

Continued on Page 06



ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Morocco to Pakistan H.E Mr Mohamed Karmoune visited Naval headquarters, Islamabad and called on Chief of Naval Staff Admiral M Amjad Khan Niazi. Matters of mutual interest, regional maritime security and bilateral collaboration were discussed during the meeting. The dignitaries agreed upon enhanced maritime cooperation and collaboration between the brotherly countries. — DNA



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif meets with Tajikistan's President Emomali Rahmon at the Prime Minister's House. — DNA

Ishaq Dar reiterates need for 'Charter of Economy'

SAIFULLAH

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar here on Wednesday reiterated the idea of developing 'Charter of Economy' to keep the economy out of politics on a sustainable growth path and lead the country towards progress. "Politics must be detached from the economy," the finance minister said at the Second Pakistan Prosperity Forum on 'Sustained Economic Growth: Roadmap and Roadblocks,' organized by Prime Institute and Business Recorder. Instead of launching negative campaigns, the political parties should force the incumbent government to move the country back on the path where it was in 2017. He lamented that Pakistan was going to be part of G20 in a few years owing to the policies of the Pakistan Muslim League government, however instead of making collective efforts to reduce this time line, negative campaigns put the country away from the target. However, he was optimistic that it was not late to enable the country to become part of G20 with the collective efforts of all. He said if conferences are held abroad and people are told that Pakistan was debt trapped country, or a corrupt country, who would choose it for investment. Talking about the debt issue, the minister said it was below Rs25000 billion when the Pakistan Muslim League (N) left in 2018 and if debt liabilities are added, it was calculated at Rs30,000 billion. However, it reached Rs44500 billion within a few months after PML(N) left and stands at Rs54500 billion currently.

Imran to announce date of assemblies' dissolution on Dec 17

PTI Chairman says as much as 70% of Pak would move towards elections

DNA

LAHORE: After holding back-to-back consultations with his party's leadership, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan said Wednesday he would announce the dissolution of both assemblies — Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa — on December 17. In his address to the nation via video link, the former prime minister said he would announce the date for the assemblies' dissolution during the party's public gathering at Lahore's iconic Liberty Chowk. "Once we dissolve both the assemblies, we will hold elections in the provinces. Also, our 123-125 National Assembly members — whose resignations have not been accepted — will ask the speaker inside the assembly to accept their resignations," Khan said. The address came after he consulted the party's senior leadership today on important political and economic matters that "required his party to take action". Following these moves, Khan said as much as 70% of Pakistan would move towards elections and in line with the law,

Continued on Page 06

IHC fixes hearing for disqualification case against Khan

COURT REPORTER

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) Wednesday fixed the date for hearing a petition to disqualify Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan for purportedly concealing information regarding his alleged daughter Tyrian Jade White. According to the cause list issued by the registrar's office, the hearing for the petition — filed by a citizen named Mohammad Sajid — will be held by Chief Justice IHC Aamer Farooq on December 20. The court has issued pre-admission notices to Khan, the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and the federal government while directing them to assist in deciding the maintainability of the petition. In his plea to disqualify

Continued on Page 06

Ukraine battles Russian push as allies pledge \$1bn

NEWS DESK

KOSTIANTYNIIVKA, Ukraine: Russia and Ukraine pounded each other's forces in heavy fighting in the eastern region of Donetsk on Tuesday as Kyiv's allies meeting in Paris pledged just over 1 billion euros (\$1.05 billion) to help Ukrainians survive the freezing winter. Russian forces are battling to take control of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, two of four territories the Kremlin claims to have annexed in votes rejected by most countries as illegal. Moscow is also attacking Ukraine's energy infrastructure with waves of missile and drone strikes, at times cutting off electricity for millions of civilians enduring Europe's

deadliest conflict since World War Two. "They're shelling really hard, there's shelling, especially at night," Valentyna, 70, told Reuters as she fled the Ukrainian-held city of Bakhmut, which Moscow seeks to capture but which is now largely in ruins because of incessant bombardment. Valentyna, who declined to give her surname, spoke in a van driving to the relative safety of Ukrainian-controlled Pokrovsk. "The house would shake and every minute, second you expect it could crumble around you and that'd be it. I couldn't even sleep in the last week, so I decided to leave," she added. Air raid sirens wailed across Ukraine on Tuesday afternoon, but no new attacks were

Continued on Page 06

Inside...

- Serena Hotels takes over PC Peshawar — Page 02
- Ethiopia to develop coop with Pakistan in education — Page 03
- Children not only the future but present of Pakistan — Page 04
- Is green hydrogen Africa's answer to the global climate crisis? — Page 05
- Mountain youth urge help for startups in native towns — Page 06
- Denmark has a new govt, six weeks after elections — Page 07
- No discussion of Christmas ceasefire, Russia says — Page 08

India a 'terrorist State', uses terrorism as a tool

MoS said no other country had used terrorism better than India that played the victim card despite being "biggest perpetrator of terrorism"

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan on Wednesday called upon the international community and the United Nations to hold India accountable for perpetrating terrorism in Pakistan with "undeniable and indisputable" evidence available. Minister of State (MoS) for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar at a press briefing on the dossier regarding India's involvement in terrorism in Pakistan said repeated terror incidents reflected India's persistent hostility and the use of terrorist proxies against Pakistan. Khar was referring to the evidence of India's involvement in the Johar Town blast in Lahore last year, that killed three people and injured 24 others. The MoS said no other country had used terrorism better than India that played the victim card despite be-

ing the "biggest perpetrator of terrorism". She mentioned that Pakistan had submitted the Lahore blast-specific dossier with the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and would soon be sharing with the UN Secretary General, which she said was a "clear evidence of India's planned and perpetrated attack against civilians". She said Pakistan condemned terrorism in all its forms and manifestation and added that India as the mastermind and facilitator of the incident remained at large. Khar said where perpetrators of terrorism were acting as victims of terrorism, she wished to talk about the economic development of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) rather than the "state-sponsored terrorism". She said India fits the definition of a rogue state and mentioned that

Continued on Page 06

DECEMBER 2022

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Rangers arrest 'most wanted' Lyari gang commander

KARACHI: Pakistan Rangers Sindh and Police in a joint intelligence-based operation in Lyari arrested a most wanted commander of a Lyari Gang Mullah Nisar alias Salam from Lyari area on Wednesday. According to a spokesman for Rangers, the arrested was wanted for his involvement in targeted killings, police encounters, terrorism, extortion, and arms business. The accused remained an active member of Lyari Gang of Rehman Dacot and Aman Committee from 2003 to 2008. He joined Uzair Baloch Gang in 2013. His name was enlisted in the Sindh Counter Terrorism Department's Red Book and the government of Sindh had fixed prize money of Rs. 0.5 million for his arrest, he added. Meanwhile, the Rangers spokesman apprised that the arrested accused during the interrogation revealed that to escape his arrest in the Karachi operation he fled to a foreign country in 2015 by getting a bogus CNIC with a changed name as Muhammad Salam and later moved to a neighboring country in 2016. — APP

CPSP team visited KMU for FCPS training

PESHAWAR: The College of Physicians and Surgeon (CPSP) Karachi inspection team visited Khyber Medical University (KMU) Peshawar on Wednesday to review and approve the facilities required for FCPS training in the subjects of Public Health (Community Medicine), Anatomy, Biochemistry, and Physiology at KMU. The inspection team consisted of Prof. Dr. Waqar Alam Jan, regional director of CPSP, Brig (Retd.) Prof. Dr. Naila Azam, Prof. Dr. Huma Musarrat Khan, Prof. Dr. Alamgir Khan, and Prof. Dr. Amir Rashid, while on this occasion, Vice Chancellor of KMU Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq, dean PGMI Peshawar Prof. Dr. Sahibzada Mehmood Noor, heads of various institutions and faculty of KMU were also present. Earlier, Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Zia ul Haq along with his team welcomed the CPSP team and gave them a detailed briefing about various departments of KMU. He said that in KMU education is being imparted in various disciplines from diploma and bachelor to MPH, master, and PhD levels.

Serena Hotels takes over PC Peshawar

DNA

PESHAWAR: Tourism Promotion Services (Limited) Pakistan, the owners and managers of Serena Hotels in Pakistan announces the take over of Pearl Continental Hotel Peshawar. This will be the ninth Serena Hotel property in Pakistan. The addition of Serena Hotels in Peshawar, the oldest city of Pakistan with a rich cultural heritage, will not only help in extending the tourist circuit in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, but will also allow regional connectivity for tourists and business travelers through its vast portfolio of hotels in Islamabad, Peshawar, Kabul, and Dushanbe. The Hotel shall serve as a gateway to Central Asia, taking the brand portfolio to a whole new level. Serena Hotels, a brand associated with unique destinations globally, will be renovating and refurbishing the centrally located Hotel building as all Serena Hotel properties stand as a reflection of its vision and brand values. Continuing our legacy of giving back to society and benefiting the communities where we operate, the company intends to exploit the untapped, rich potential in the tourism sector of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This will be the second Serena Hotel in the KP province after the Swat Serena Hotel, enabling the brand to connect the diverse tourist communities to the rustic areas of the



province. The upgradation of Peshawar Serena Hotel including the new construction will enhance the quality and comfort of the guest rooms, restaurants, banqueting and meeting

rooms, public areas and Maisha Spa & Health Club. The Company has rigorous training plans for its Associates to ensure service delivery, bringing it in line with Serena Hotels' standards.

Serena Hotels' properties in Pakistan are currently located in Islamabad, Faisalabad, Quetta, Gilgit, Shigar, Khaplu, Altit, Hunza and Sost. In addition, two new Hotels are under construction in Gilgit-Baltistan; the Hunza Serena Hotel with 85 rooms, expected to be commissioned towards the end of 2023, and Sost Serena Hotel with 56 rooms, expected to be commission in 2024.

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Merit vital to curb Corruption

FAISALABAD: Corruption is root cause for all societal evils and it could be eliminated by promoting merit and self-accountability. This was stated by Prof Dr Iqbal Ahmad Khan Vice Chancellor (VC) University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF) while addressing the anti-corruption seminar arranged in collaboration with National Accountability Bureau (NAB) and Senior Tutor Office Character Building Society UAF here on Wednesday. He said that the corruption was creating severe hindrance in socioeconomic development of the country in addition to destroying the societies like cancer. "Therefore, we will have to raise strong voice against corruption in addition to creating awareness at public level", he added. Additional Director NAB Attiya Azmat said that they were arranging seminars in various educational institutions, colleges and universities to create awareness against corruption so that the youth could be made the vanguard of establishing a corruption-free society. — APP

Sen. Zargha calls on AJK President

MIRPUR: Senator Dr. Zargha Suhrawardy called on Azad Jammu and Kashmir President Barrister Sultan Mehmood Chaudhry, at Kashmir House on Wednesday, and discussed in detail the issues of mutual concern including the worsening situation of human rights situation in IOJK. Both the leaders reiterated to continue raising the Kashmir dispute at every forum within and outside the country. Speaking on the occasion, the President AJK asked the senator to raise the issue of Kashmir in the Senate of Pakistan and also play her role regarding the formation of a caucus committee in the American Congress so that the voice of Kashmiris could be raised effectively in the United States. President AJK assured Senator Dr. Zargha Suhrawardy of his full cooperation in this regard. — APP

COURT NOTICE

IN THE COURT OF
SANA AFZAL
CIVIL/FAMILY
JUDGE RAWALPINDI

Suit for recovery of Maintenance Allowance etc. Mst. Farah Khuda Bakhsh versus Muhammad Usman Notice To , Muhammad Usman son of Munir Akhter, R/o House No. NW-424/3, Mohallah Said Pur Scheme II, Satellite Town Rawalpindi. The service through ordinary means is difficult, so you are informed to attend the court personally, through counsel or attorney on 15-12-2022 at 9 am avoid exparte proceeding.

SCCI urges to bring relaxation in visa

OUR CORRESPONDENT

PESHAWAR: Sarhad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) underscored the need of bringing relaxation in visa policy, besides taking of pragmatic steps to quell out of related factors that were creating hurdles in smooth issuance of visa to the business community so that bilateral trade between Pakistan-Afghanistan would be boost up trade at optimal level. Shahid Hussain, senior vice president of the SCCI in a press statement issued here on Wednesday underscored the need of focusing on bringing relaxation and improvement in visa issuance to Afghans and traders' than holding conferences. It is imperative to ensure issuance of visas to citizens and traders communities of both countries without any hurdle, the SCCI senior office bearer commented. However, he made it clear that if such steps aren't taken, the likely convening of conferences will not bear any fruits and won't gain desired results/objectives. Giving reference to a recent survey report, Mr Hussain said Pak-Afghan bilateral trade volume that stood at \$2.5billion in 2012 that has been dropped by \$6million in 2022, which is highly worrisome and a matter of grave concern. It is reportedly that alleged \$1000 illegally is being charged on issuance of visa to Afghans and traders, citing that some local and foreign elements and factors are allegedly involved in this illegal practice, the SCCI SVP elaborated. Hussain questioned: "What ex-

pectation can be attached with regard to Pak-Afghan bilateral trade promotion under the prevailing circumstances"? He added the denial from these facts and ground reality, is equally tantamount in wild dreams. Keeping in view the current fragile security situation in war-ravaged Afghanistan, the SCCI SVP noted Pakistani traders could not freely roam for conducting survey, marketing and business purposes in various Afghan cities. He went on to say that Afghan traders and people can buy and transport themselves if they were provided a visa by relaxing policy.

There is neither issue of language, identification of locations and ways nor required any guidance for roaming to Afghans people in various cities of Pakistan, he added. However, he said the only thing which is needed for Afghans is a smooth issuance of visa on simplified procedures and a prompt manner. The SCCI senior office bearer asked to focus on bringing relaxation and improvement of visa issuance to Afghans instead of wasting time in conducting conferences, according to Mr Ishaq, such meaningless initiatives would further drop the Pak-Afghan bilateral trade. Shahid Hussain asserted that collective policies would be proved a catalyst to enhance Pak-Afghan mutual trade and onward trade to Central Asian Republics. Approximately CARs market is \$100billion, in which Pakistan's share is completely negligible, Hussain noted. He said Pakistan has also been ignored due to various factors in this regard and citizens/traders of CARs states await for visa facility for two or more months. He asked: "Who will come in the current scenario in Pakistan"?

Work on 'Lawyers' Protection Bill' to be finalized soon

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Law and Justice Senator Azam Nazeer Tarar on Wednesday said that the work on the Lawyers' Protection Bill was being continued in a rapid pace and consultations were being held with the provinces to finalize it. The bill would be finalized after consultation with a six-member committee of all the provinces, Islamabad and Pakistan Bar Councils representatives, he said. The minister expressed these views in a meeting held with a delegation of lawyers in the Ministry of Law and Justice, here, said a press release. The delegation of lawyers included members of Pakistan Bar Council, Vice Chairman Islamabad Bar Council, Vice Chairman Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Bar Council, Vice Chairman Sindh Bar Council, Chairman Legal Education Committee Balochistan & Sindh Bar Councils and others. On the assurances and promises of the minister, the lawyers' delegation agreed to postpone the sit-in call in consultation. On the demand to withdraw the review petition against Justice Qazi Faez Isa case, the law minister apprised that the approval had been obtained from the federal cabinet and the delegation of lawyers would be informed regarding further development on the matter. On the demands regarding grants to the Bar Councils, the minister said that for the first time in the history of Pakistan, the lawyers grant had been made a part of the federal budget and finance bill. The minister further assured that the meeting of the lawyers' delegation would be arranged with PM Shehbaz Sharif and the demands of the lawyers would be presented before the latter. — APP

RCCI urges stakeholders to end political polarization



RAWALPINDI The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) President Saqib Rafiq on Wednesday urged all stakeholders to play their

role in ending political polarization. According to a statement, he said that The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) was making efforts to promote business activities in the country, enhancing exports and developing

linkages with foreign trading partners in different sectors, particularly the IT sector. "We must bring seriousness and maturity in our attitudes, adding fake news, distorting information for some likes on social media, sensationalism

in talk shows, defamatory remarks, and such actions should be discouraged." Saqib further stressed the continuation of policies to promote industrialization in the country, besides attracting foreign investors to invest in Pakistan

Committee directs to activate community schools

PESHAWAR: Chairman Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Assembly's Standing Committee on Planning & Development Department Mohammad Shafiq Afridi has directed the concerned authorities of the Elementary & Secondary Education Department to activate community schools across the province. Presiding over a meeting of the panel here on Wednesday, he has also directed Tribal Electric Supply Company (TESCO) to take steps for the resolution of the electricity-related problems in the newly merged districts to further ensure the promotion of education. Besides, MPAs Sardar Hussain Babak, Zafar

Azam and Pakhtun Yar Khan, the Additional Secretary P&D, Deputy Secretaries KP Assembly, Directors Jabba & Bara Dam, Superintending Engineer Public Health Engineering (PHE) Department, district Khyber, Chief Engineers North & South, Deputy Director Small Dams and other concerned officials also attended meeting. The meeting reviewed in detail the Project Policy 2018, Regularized Projects, Jabba & Bara Dams (Khyber), Kehala Dam (Mansehra), floods preventive schemes, drinking water schemes in district Kurram, Water Supply Scheme Khojri (Bannu) and education sector schemes in the newly merged districts in detail. The meeting expressed unanimity regarding approval and awareness about projects from the forum of District Development Advisory Committee (DDAC). The chairman of the committee issued directives for ensuring timely recruitments in educational institutions and directed for furnishing details regarding objections of the members of the committee relating to Government Post-Graduate College, Takht Nusrati (Karak) and Government High School, Sarmast Mira Khel in the upcoming meeting of the panel. — APP

GOVERNMENT OF PAKISTAN
MINISTRY OF FEDERAL EDUCATION & PROFESSIONAL TRAINING
"EXPRESSION OF INTEREST"
FOR HIRING THE SERVICES OF INDIVIDUAL CONSULTANT

Ministry of Federal Education and Professional Training intends to hire services of a highly qualified/ skilled person for the following position on contract basis for a period of 06 months in the National Curriculum Council (NCC) under this Ministry as Individual Consultant: -

S#	Name of Position	No. of Position	Salary (Fixed Rs.)	Contract Period
1.	Manager: Academics and External Relations	02	300,000/-	6 Months
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education and Work Experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A PhD degree from a highly ranked university within Pakistan or abroad: The degree must have a focus on Education Education or work experience of at least five (05) years in the education sector, with an emphasis on improving the quality of education delivery and capacity building for adult learners Required Skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong verbal and written communications skills. Excellent organizational skills; ability to manage deadlines and to work independently and in teams. Strong interpersonal skills An understanding and knowledge of contemporary education needs in the Pakistani context Ability to work in the field in sometimes challenging and uncertain environments 			
2.	Coordinator: Academics and External Relations	02	150,000/-	6 Months
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Education and Work Experience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bachelors' degree from a highly ranked university within Pakistan or abroad: The degree may have a focus on Education or Social Sciences Education or work experience in the education sector, with an emphasis on improving the quality of education delivery Required Skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong verbal and written communications skills. Excellent organizational skills; ability to manage deadlines and to work independently and in teams. An understanding and knowledge of contemporary education needs in the Pakistani context Ability to work in the field in sometimes difficult and challenging environments. 			

Interested persons between age of 40-65 having relevant experience in Education or work experience in the education sector, with an emphasis on improving the quality of education delivery, may submit their expression of interest (EOI) in a written form (covering clearly mentioning the position title in the subject line, enclosed with a detailed CV containing therein all requisite information) to address mentioned below (in-person/ by courier/ by registered mail) latest by January 1st, 2023 by 04:00 p.m. any application received beyond the deadline due to any reason whatsoever shall be considered for shortlisting. Only shortlisted candidates will be called for interview etc.

Section Officer (General)
Room No.131, Block-'C', Pak-Secretariat,
Islamabad. Ph: 051-9204248

PID (I) No. 3756/22

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



Hotels & Restaurants

Serena Hotel.....111 133 133
Marriott.....051-2826121
Monal.....0334-5421812



Airlines

Turkish Airlines.....8494949



Emergency

Rescue (Police).....15
Bomb Disposal.....15
Fire Services Rawalpindi/ Islamabad.....1122 & 16
Emergency Ambulance.....1122 & Rescue Services.4451122
Motorway Police.....9266044
Motorway Police.....9270601-20
Women Police Stations Islamabad.....9222596
Rawalpindi.....9270601-20



Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....115
PIA Flight Info.....114
PIA Cargo.....9280979
Railway Inquiry.....117
Railway Exchange 9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi.....555489
CAA.....9281092



Hospitals

CMH.....5611111
MH.....5611116
Cantt Hospital.....9270907-11
DHQ.....5556311-4
RGH.....9290301-7
Holy Family.....9290322-7
PIMS.....9261170-79
Polyclinic.....9218300-09
Shifa International.4603666



Departments

CDA.....9221334-43
CDA.....9208301-04
Met Office.....9250360-6
RDA.....5555864
TMA.....5770886
Cantonment Board 9270151-3

Islamabad Metropolitan

Corporation.....9209224
Potohar Town.....9209224
Rawal Town.....5773343

Water Tank

Islamabad.....0321-5744480

Ethiopia to develop coop with Pakistan in education

The ambassador suggested the delegation to establish an Africa Study Center within the planned Africa House to boost the cooperation between Pakistan and the African countries in the education sector

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Ethiopia to Pakistan Jemal Beker Abdula has said that Ethiopia was looking forward to developing cooperation with Pakistan in the education sector. He made these remarks during a meeting with a delegation from the education sector led by Special Assistant to the Prime Minister and Minister of State Romina Khurshid Alam. The delegation which includes the University of Sialkot Executive Director Muhammad Rehan Younas and its Chairman Board of Governors Faisal Manzoor, was called on him here at the Embassy of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia in Islamabad. "We want our youth to be educated and skillful as our government under the leadership of Prime Minister of Ethiopia H.E. Dr. Abiy Ahmed Ali is fully committed to promoting education in our country," the ambassador said while requesting the delegation to offer scholarships for the Ethiopian students in their university. Suggesting the start of the exchange programmes between the two countries, he said it was high time to develop south-south cooperation for the betterment, progress and prosperity of the people living in the southern regions of the world. University of Sialkot Executive Director Muhammad Rehan Younas extended full assurance to the ambassador in this regard and said his university would look



forward to offering scholarships to the Ethiopian students. He said his institution had been developing a curriculum in consultation with the chambers of commerce to bridge a gap between academia and the industrial sector. Rehan Younas said the work on establishing an Africa House in Islamabad was also underway which would promote ties between Pakistan and the African countries in diverse sectors including education, business, trade and investment. The ambassador suggested the delegation to establish an Africa Study Center within the planned Africa House to boost the cooperation between Pakistan and the African countries in the education sector. He also briefed them about the business, trade and investment opportunities in Ethiopia for Pakistani businessmen. A plan for arranging a visit of a Pakistani business delegation to Ethiopia was underway which would enhance business ties between the two countries by linking business communities of both countries. Special Assistant to Prime Minister H.E. Romina Khurshid Alam, who is also Convener of the National Parliamentary Taskforce on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), said she would look forward to arranging a workshop cum conference on Pakistan and Ethiopia Relations in Sialkot to sensitize the business community on the opportunities offered by the Ethiopian markets in general and visit of business delegation to Ethiopia in particular.

Pakistani growth outlook deteriorates: ADB report

ISLAMABAD: The Asian Development Bank (ADB), in its latest report, said that the Pakistani outlook for the fiscal year 2023 (ending 30 June 2023) has deteriorated under heavy flooding that began in mid-June this year. According to Asian Development Outlook (Supplement December 2022), the economy was already struggling to regain macroeconomic and fiscal stability before the floods, which adversely affected cotton, rice, and other important crops. As wheat is usually planted from mid-October, flood damage threatens the up-

coming agricultural season as well, it adds. Further, the flooding is expected to have spillover effects on the industry, notably textiles and food processing, and on services, in particular wholesale trade and transportation. Flood disruption and damage are expected to slow real GDP growth in combination with a tight monetary stance, high inflation, and an uncondusive global environment. According to the report, the South Asian forecast for 2022 is maintained at 6.5 percent but revised down marginally for 2023 from 6.5 percent

to 6.3 percent following a slowdown in Bangladesh and flooding in Pakistan. In Bangladesh, recovery is hampered by external imbalances and unexpectedly high inflation while in Pakistan, floods that began in mid-June have dampened economic activity already affected by stabilization efforts to tackle sizable fiscal and external imbalances and double-digit inflation. The 2022 forecast for Southeast Asia has been upgraded from 5.1 percent to 5.5 percent on robust consumption and tourism recovery in Malaysia, the

Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam, however, the 2023 forecast has been revised down to 4.7 percent as global demand weakens. The inflation projection for South Asia has increased marginally for 2022 from 8.1 percent to 8.2 percent and more substantially for 2023 from 7.4 percent to 7.9 percent. The sub-regional revision for 2023 largely reflects higher inflation forecasts for Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. Inflation forecasts for elsewhere in the sub-region in 2023 remain unchanged. - APP

Colonel Amjad Hussain Sayed remembered

LAHORE: Speakers at Seminar of Nazriya Pakistan Trust said 'the nation must honour its heroes' while remembering the role, contributions and services in the freedom movement of student leader, Colonel Amjad Hussain Sayed, on the occasion of his birthday centennial. The Seminar, held at the Nazriya Pakistan Trust (NPT), which is dedicated to promoting the vision and ideology of the Quaid e Azam, was chaired by NPT Chairman of Chief Justice (retired) Ejaz Nisar and had a keynote speech by NPT Senior Vice-Chairman Mian Altaf Farooq. A diverse and distinguished audience of 200 persons also complimented Senator Mushahid Hussain on his election as Vice Chairman of Nazriya Pakistan Trust. Ms Tahseen Sayed, daughter of Colonel Amjad Hussain, who recently retired as the senior most Pakistani in the World Bank, spoke of her father's strong commitment to female education and inculcating values of 'Rizq e Halal' & 'Kalima e Haq'. Chaudhry Javed Ellahi termed him as an extraordinary example of Pakistani nationalism. Chief Justice (r) Ejaz Nisar termed Col Amjad Hussain as a 'loyal foot soldier of Allama Iqbal and Quaid e Azam' at whose behest he attended the 2 historic sessions of All India Muslim League, Lucknow 1937 and Lahore 1940, while Mian Farooq Altaf urged 'nation must never forget its heroes'. - DNA

ANF holds anti-drug awareness seminar

RAWALPINDI: Anti Narcotics Force (ANF) in collaboration with Government Post Graduate Degree College, Jhelum on Wednesday organized an awareness lecture. Director General (DG) ANF, Maj. General Mohammad Aneeq ur Rehman Malik was the chief guest of the event. The DG said that keeping the society safe from drug addiction is a shared national responsibility. Addressing the future generation of Pakistan he emphasized that drug abuse has grown from essential domestic problem into a national and global threat. "ANF as a force will leave no stone unturned to curb this menace and will fight against all odds to secure our next generation," he said. A complete drug-free society is the guarantee of a bright future for the young generation, he said adding, education is the most effective weapon against drugs. The chief guest assured the participants of complete support and cooperation from the Force and emphasized the role of educational institutes in the societal space to save the future of Pakistan from the curse of narcotics by highlighting "Education as a weapon against drugs" within the ambit of "shape" strategy. The ANF Headquarters spokesman informed that the participants of the lecture included more than 4000 male and female students, out of which 350 were students of Post Graduate Degree College Jhelum, while the students of other educational institutions of the region also participated through video link. Nation must honour its heroes, Col. Amjad Hussain Sayed remembered, Newly-elected Vice Chairman of Nazriya Pakistan Trust, Senator Mushahid Hussain, urges 'political ceasefire' on key national issues. - APP

Legislative performance of NA significantly improves

ISLAMABAD: The 15th National Assembly witnessed significant improvement in considering the legislative proposals during the last eight months and its role also increased in considering the interventions meant to highlight issues of public and national importance. The lower house passed a total of 43 bills, including 28 government bills which were mainly related to law and justice, economic affairs, education, governance, election and human rights. It is to mention that National Assembly has passed a total of 169 bills so far and more than 25 percent bills have been passed during the last eight months. Another key feature of the legislative performance of the Assembly is that it passed around 45 percent of

the total private members' bills. The lawmakers were also keen on moving the private members' bills as 37 such bills were introduced in the lower house during the last eight months. In addition, the lawmakers moved resolutions highlighting various local, national, and international issues during the last eight months. According to the website of National Assembly, the House adopted 25 resolutions making recommendations to the government on the issues concerning foreign affairs, law and order, employment and human rights. Parliamentarians have a duty to shape policy, guide the government in the national interest, and raise the issues of public concerns in the House. The tools for the oversight of the executive and the representation of public issues were effectively used by the lawmakers during the last eight months of the incumbent Assembly. After the change of the leader of the house, the performance of the lawmakers had remained quite objective despite the absence of PTI lawmakers from the House. The 15th Assembly has also been unique in terms of the elections to the offices of the speaker and the Deputy Speaker. The Assembly had to choose the Speaker and the Deputy Speaker twice as the re-election to these both offices was necessitated due to resignations of former speaker Asad Qaisar and former deputy speaker Qasim Khan Suri after Imran Khan was voted out by the Nation-

PNCA holds programmes to mark Quaid's birth anniversary

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) here Wednesday arranged colorful cultural programs to mark the upcoming birth anniversary of Quaid e Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah on December 25. The programs included speeches, mli naghma performances and painting activities with the participation of students from various educational institutions of twin cities while National Puppet Theater presented a puppet show for the children and youth. Puppeteers dressed up their puppets in green and white costumes following the colors of the national flag to express the joyous moments of the Independence movement and highlight the sacrifices of the freedom fighters. Colourful puppets portrayed the history of the Pakistan Movement in the form of stories and performing art to grab the attention of the children and educate them about their history. Mili Naghma show was presented by students with a performance of national songs and melodies to highlight the theme of freedom movement and national heroes while the youth shared their ideas to recall the historical moments that led to the creation of a separate homeland for the Muslims of the Subcontinent in the speech competition. Celebrating the national days with art and cultural programmes is a regular feature of PNCA's activities that not only celebrate the occasion but also involve young talent to create awareness among the masses about the importance of historical days. - APP

NCC reviews projects worth \$5.6bln

ISLAMABAD: The National Coordination Committee on Foreign-Funded Projects (NCC-FFP) on Wednesday reviewed 12 ongoing projects of road and transport sector amounting to \$5.6 billion. The projects are funded by the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, the Saudi Fund for Development (SFD), Japan and South Korea, according to a Ministry of Economic Affairs news release. Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Sardar Ayaz Sadiq chaired the meeting, attended by the Federal Minister for Planning and Minister of State for Finance, Secretary of Economic Affairs Division, provincial additional chief secretaries, representatives of the Prime Minister Office, Finance Division, Ministry of Communications and National Highway Authority (NHA), and provincial P&D and line departments and boards of revenues. The NCC-FFP, in the follow-up meeting, reviewed the compliance status of its decisions made in its previous meetings held on the transport and communication sector. - APP

Amir Muqam inaugurates exhibition of Quranic manuscripts

ISLAMABAD: Adviser to the Prime Minister on Political & Public Affairs, and National Heritage Engr Amir Muqam on Wednesday inaugurated exhibition of Quranic manuscripts, here at Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA). The exhibition was organized by National Heritage and Culture Division (NH&CD) while artist Khan Shah Nawaz Malhi presented exquisite hand knit verses of The Holy Quran. Muqam was accompanied by Secretary National Heritage and Culture Fareena Mazhar, Senior Joint Secretary NH&CD Abdul Sattar Khokhar, Director General PNCA and other senior officials of the division. Amir Muqam said, "Looking at today's exhibition, I feel a sense of spirituality. The NH&CD is also taking substantial steps to promote Islamic calligraphy". He was briefed on the various sections of the exhibition. - APP

Riaz Pirzada inaugurates orthopedic workshop

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Ministry of Human Rights Islamabad Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada inaugurated the Orthopedic Workshop at National Special Education Centre for Physically Handicapped Children under the Directorate General of Special Education (DGSE) on 14th December, 2022. Representatives of M/O Human Rights, Govt. officials, renewed NGOs, social workers and staff of this centre attended the ceremony. While talking to audience Chiefguest Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada said that Persons with Disabilities are facing the challenges of accessibility, empowerment, rehabilitation and inclusion. Further, he appreciated the efforts of Directorate General of Special Education persons with disabilities and showed his pleasure on such initiatives by the Director General. He said that provision of artificial limbs, prosthetics, and orthotic devices to the children and adults



with physical impairment & deformity will change their life. The worthy Minister emphasis the need of expansion of such services and provision of state of the art World class facilities to the Persons with Disabilities. He further talks about regarding the need of new avenues and projects for facilitation of Persons with Disabilities. Sheikh Azhar Sajjad Director General of Special Education in his welcome address, said that the DGSE and its allied institutions are engaged in rehabilitation, education and training of PWDs/CWDs. They are also enhancing their present capacity to uplift the living standards and functional mobility of the individuals with disabilities. The Director General (SE) said that Directorate General of Special Education is contributing in the training and capacity building of the professionals, teachers and supporting staff in the field of special education. He emphasized that provision of artificial limbs, prosthetics and orthotic devices will swap the life of persons with physical disabilities.

Briefs

Default threat taking a heavy toll on economy

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain on Wednesday said the threat of default is causing great damage to the economy. Thousands of containers are awaiting clearance at ports but are stuck due to the non-availability of foreign exchange and importers have to pay millions daily in demurrage and detention charges, he said. Mian Zahid Hussain said that the country is engulfed in a fire that cannot be extinguished by comforting statements as practical steps are needed to restore the confidence of local and foreign investors, which is not possible without revitalizing the IMF program. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that with the elections around the corner, the government is not taking tough decisions, which is making the situation worse. He said that the country is currently suffering from an economic and financial crisis, most of which is being blamed on the situation arising from the war between Russia and Ukraine. The fundamentals of the economy have become so weak that it cannot bear the burden of average economic activity. The focus of economic managers is not on the development of the country, but on creating an impression of development, in which they get some success, but soon it results in a crisis, after which loans at high-interest rates are used to save the country.

OGDCL produces 33,443 BPD oil

ISLAMABAD: Oil and Gas Development Company Limited (OGDCL), during the first quarter of the current fiscal year, has produced around 33,443 BOPD, 779 million MMCFD gas and 722 TDP LPG. The production witnessed a little decline as compared to 37,347 Barrel per Day (BPD) oil, 845 Metric Million Cubic Feet per Day (MMCFD) gas, and 805 Tons per Day (TPD) Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) during the same period of the year 2021-22 due to torrential rains. "The company recorded a decrease in overall hydrocarbon production in comparison to the corresponding period of last year as various production-sustaining activities planned in the first quarter had to be deferred due to torrential rains and flood, and natural decline at Sinjhor, Nashpa, KPD-TAY, Chanda, Mela and 6 Dhok Hussain fields," according to an official report available with APP. During the period under review, the OGDCL contributed around 46 percent, 30 percent, and 36 percent towards the country's total oil, natural gas, and LPG production respectively. —APP

Ministry requires Rs 9,179 million for FY 2022-23

ISLAMABAD, Dec 14 (APP): Ministry of Housing and Works has required the grant of a sum of Rs 9,179 million to meet the requirements of the ministry and attached departments for the current fiscal year 2022-23. However, the Finance Division has allocated a sum of Rs 5,915 million as per the austerity measures for the current financial year, which was conveyed to the ministry while budgetary allocation has already been finalized and approved in June 2022, an official in the Ministry told APP. The official said that Finance Division already imposed austerity on budget allocation and reduced the budgetary allocation by Rs 55.163 million. To a question, he said the Capital Development Authority (CDA) was responsible for the maintenance and renovation of Pak Secretariat Islamabad. Therefore, no fund has been spent on Ministry's renovation. —APP

DNA



ISLAMABAD: Children and families of diplomats taking part in Lucia-celebrations during a function arranged by a foreign mission, in Islamabad.—DNA

Children not only the future but present of Pakistan

National Consultative Workshop in Islamabad stresses upon elimination of child labour

MAHNOOR ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: A strong common collaboration among all the stakeholders is required to define and achieve the common goal of preventing child labour. Thus concluded 'National Consultative Workshop on Elimination of Child Labour in Agriculture/Cotton, Textile and Garment Value Chains in Pakistan' held in Islamabad on Tuesday. The workshop was organized by Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in collaboration with International Labour Organization (ILO). The workshop was held under the "CLEAR Cotton Project: Eliminating child labour and forced labour in the cotton, textile and garment value chains" (2018-2023). The project was mainly funded by the European Union. Pakistan is among the four countries including Burkina Faso, Mali, and Peru where the CLEAR Cotton Project is being implemented. In Pakistan, the project is being co-implemented by FAO and ILO. Speaking on the occasion, Ms. Khemphone Pha-

okhamkeo, ILO Country Director (Officer in Charge) in Pakistan said that fighting child labour is important for ILO and has been a priority since its establishment in 1919. Pakistan has also ratified 36 international conventions including the ones on the elimination of child and forced labour. As a member state of ILO, Pakistan should take steps to respect compliance of these conventions. The issue of child and forced labour in Pakistan requires our attention amongst other on three areas; Firstly, we need to ensure that all children have access to the quality education; not only up to the primary level but till the time they attain the legal age of being eligible to work. Secondly, a healthy, safe and protective work environment must be provided for the youth. Thirdly, poor should be protected under social safety nets and social protection. All adults must be provided decent work so that they don't have to pull their children into work. Ms. Florence Kelle, FAO Representative in Pakistan while addressing the inaugural session said that; "Looking at the statistics of the

out of school children and stunting rate in Pakistan, we realize that these are the key issues that we need to address. Nonetheless, the question is how? It is often said that children are the future. In my opinion, they are the present. We need to address the present so that they become the future of Pakistan. Almost 70 percent of the child labour in Pakistan is involved in agriculture, therefore, for FAO this is a major concern. The project was first of its kind in Pakistan where we worked with the awareness raising in communities. Child labour in agriculture is not only about children being out of school, but it is also a major health issue as they are exposed to pesticides. FAO through its various initiatives is also trying to increase the outcomes of the smallholder farmers so that the vicious circle of child labour is broken." She reiterated that FAO will mainstream the outcomes of this project in all other projects as well. She concluded on the point that "it is always good to forge partnerships so that difficult subjects like child labour are tackled

at multiple levels from different angles". Mr. Azhar Iqbal Malik, Deputy Secretary, Ministry of Overseas Pakistanis, and Human Resource Development and Mr. Syed Khalid Gardezi, Additional Secretary, Ministry of National Food Security and Research, also represented the government and their respective ministries. They appreciated the project for being inclusive by involving all stakeholders to end the threat of child labour. Mr. Malik said that currently, child labour survey is ongoing. The findings of the survey will help to find the root causes. Meanwhile, the survey is ongoing, government is committed to end child labour. Articles 11, 25A and 37 of the Constitution guarantee free and compulsory education for all, end of child, forced labour and slavery. Pakistani government has also ratified all the relevant ILO conventions. A strong legal environment is also prevailing at provincial level in forms of various laws. Further to this, we need suggestions for key interventions to scale up our efforts. Mr. Malik while thanked the developing part-

ners, specially, European Union reassured Government's fullest support. Mr. Gardezi appreciated the efforts made under the project. He concluded that Pakistan is seriously committed to achieve the SDG target 8.7 to end child labour by 2025. We are progressing in a right direction. However, we also expect our partners to play a positive role to support us to achieve this end. The issue of child labour requires complete attention and must be addressed with problem solving outlook with the participation of all the stakeholders. Dr. Ulrich Thiesen, First Secretary, EU Delegation, Pakistan while sharing his thoughts said that child and forced labour fall under the eight ILO core conventions and Pakistan ratified the forced labour convention already since 1957 and child labour conventions in 2001 and 2006. These conventions are also part of the list of 27 international conventions and agreements in the EU GSP+ regulations, which offers tariff and quota free access of the Pakistanis exports to the EU market constituting 66% of all exports from Pakistan to EU.



ISLAMABAD: Editor Daily Islamabad POST/DNA News Agency and Centreline magazine met with the newly-arrived ambassador of Belgium Mr. Charles Delogne. Both sides discussed ways to further enhance cooperation. —DNA

IHC suspends actions under FIRs against Secy. Information, MD PTV

He questioned whether there was any law or procedure in the country. The court ordered to make the complainants to the two FIRs respondents in the petition and suspended actions against the petitioners under the said FIRs.

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday suspended the terrorism FIRs proceeding against the secretary of information, MD PTV and others in a petition against their harassment. The bench also conditioned the registration of an FIR against the petitioners with the court's permission, and served notices to Pakistan Bar Council, Islamabad Bar Council and Advocate General Islamabad for assistance in the above case. Justice Tariq Mehmood Jahangiri remarked that it had to be settled once of all if several FIRs could be regis-

tered across the country on one TV program or vlog. The bench heard the case against the registration of FIR against Secretary Information & Broadcasting Shaha Shahid, Managing Director PTV Sohail Ali Khan and others for on-airing the press conference of Federal Minister Mian Javed Latif. The court remarked on what was the fault of MD PTV if a federal minister held a talk on a TV channel. Justice Jahangiri questioned whether an FIR would also be registered against the registration of the bar council if someone held a talk in the bar. The court ob-

served that these people used to criticize and shout when cases were registered against Azam Swati but what were they doing on their side? Justice Jahangiri further noted that FIRs were registered under the anti-terrorism act as they were the world's top terrorists. On the instruction of the bench, the petitioners' counsel read out the contents of the FIR. Additional Attorney General Munawar Dogal informed the court that the federal government had received the details of FIRs from provinces except for Punjab.

He said that the federation had no control over provincial police after the 18th amendment to the constitution. Expressing annoyance, Justice Tariq Jahangiri asked how it was so; the citizens of the federal capital also had some rights. A new trend of registration of FIRs across the country had been promoted, he remarked. He questioned whether there was any law or procedure in the country. The court ordered to make the complainants to the two FIRs respondents in the petition and suspended actions against the petitioners under the said FIRs.—APP

Technical, vocational varsity to be set up

ISLAMABAD: Federal Minister for Overseas Pakistanis and Human Resource Development (OP&HRD) Sajid Hussain Turi said that Pakistan with the cooperation of the government of Saudi Arabia would establish a technical and vocational university for Overseas Pakistanis in Saudi Arabia. Talking to APP, he said that Saudi Arabia was the home of some 2.3 million Pakistanis who were working and living there for a long time and Turi reiterated that Overseas Pakistanis were playing a key role in the development of Pakistan hence, the development of the welfare of Pakistanis is paramount and it is considered to be a priority of the present government. The minister said that technical institutes would be established at the local level rest of the country to train the

people who are interested in the foreign job in different fields. He said that already Pakistan training the workers to meet the requirement of the international labour market to earn maximum remittances. He further elaborated that with the collaboration of OPF a facilitation desk would be established in order to resolve the problems of Pakistanis and their dependents. To a question, he said that overseas Pakistanis would not be deprived of voting rights. A new plan is being created where constituents will be selected to represent them in Parliament, he added. Turi said that he has already discussed the importance of trade and the implementation of cross boarders trade, and the deliverance of maximum employment opportunities for Pakistanis with the relevant authorities.

Pakistan to introduce China's seed ID technology

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) signed a letter of intent with Wuhan Qingfa Hesheng Seed Co., Ltd. this month on promoting MNP marker technology in Pakistan, a method to identify plant varieties, Gwadar Pro reported on Wednesday. The method, developed by Jiangnan University, China, can identify seed varieties at the molecular level and construct the DNA database of seeds, thus helping better protect owners' Intellectual Property Right and reducing counterfeit and adulteration of seeds. According to Mr. Zhou Xus-



heng, Director of Pakistan Business of the company, fake, low-quality seeds have been undermining Pakistan's crop production. With MNP marker method, the authenticity of seeds will be detected more easily and efficiently.

Islamabad Marriott Hotel hosts President of Tajikistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Marriott Hotel is delighted to have hosted H.E. Emomali Rahmon the President of Tajikistan. The General Manager of Islamabad Marriott hotel Mr. David Richard O Hanlon received President Rahmon upon his arrival to The Marriott Hotel. During this high profile state visit Mr. Rahmon is expected to sign multiple high profile agreements with the Govt of Pakistan. The Marriott Hotel Islamabad is exuberant to have been given an opportunity to serve the visiting dignitary along with his delegation and facilitate their stay while they conduct State to State Business.

Police search 110 houses, 30 shops

RAWALPINDI: Rawalpindi District Police on special directives of City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi searched 110 houses, 30 shops, 26 hotels and arrested 20 accused in the jurisdiction of different police stations, said a police spokesman here on Wednesday. He informed that police launched search operations in different areas in the jurisdiction of Bani, Sadiqabad, Gungmandi, Murree and Chontra police stations. He said heavy police contingents, Elite Force, Special Branch personnel and Ladies police under the supervision of senior police officers conducted search operations in different areas. The spokesman said, Chontra police on the directives of CPO Syed Shehzad Nadeem Bukhari on Tuesday night conducted a search operation in adjoining areas of private housing societies and recovered a huge quantity of arms and ammunition. The operation was conducted under the supervision of SDO Saddar while 20 accused namely Shahid, Janullah, Masood, Hayatullah, Yasin, Noor Syed, Raheem, Sakhi Dad, Mikail, Ali, Zain, Mehmood, Qadir, Namiat Gul, Syed Muhammad, Sher Muhammad, Hassan, Kafiatullah, Noor Rehman and Hamzaullah were sent behind the bars as police recovered seven 223 bore rifles, three 12 bore repeaters, three G3 rifles, a 9mm pistol, a 7mm pistol, one 8mm rifle, a Kalashnikov, 27 magazines and ammunition.—APP

IRSA releases 75,800 cusecs water

ISLAMABAD: Indus River System Authority (IRSA) on Wednesday released 75,800 cusecs water from various rim stations with inflow of 43,700 cusecs. According to the data released by IRSA, water level in River Indus at Tarbela Dam was 1495.71 feet and was 97.71 feet higher than its dead level of 1,398 feet. Water inflow and outflow in the dam was recorded as 22,000 cusecs while outflow as 42,000 cusecs. The water level in River Jhelum at Mangla Dam was 1124.85 feet, which was 74.85 feet higher than its dead level of 1,050 feet. The inflow and outflow of water was recorded 7,900 cusecs and 20,000 cusecs respectively. The release of water at Kalabagh, Taunsa, Guddu and Sukkur was recorded 47,400, 40,300, 30,300 and 13,800 cusecs respectively.—APP

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India's border adventurism

The un-demarcated 3,400-kilometer Sino-Indian border has long been the source of tensions between the two countries. Yet thanks to confidence-building measures and peace-keeping mechanisms established between the two sides, not a single bullet has been fired across the border over the past four decades and peace and tranquility have generally been maintained there. There have, however, been sporadic violent clashes between Chinese and Indian border troops, as happened in South Tibet on Friday. Unlike the deadly brawl in Galwan Valley in June 2020, there appear to have been no deaths on this occasion, although there were reportedly injuries on both sides. According to a spokesman for the People's Liberation Army's Western Theater, the latest incident was sparked when Chinese border guards organized a routine patrol on the Chinese side of the Line of Actual Control, which was blocked by Indian troops that had illegally crossed the line. That the two sides "immediately disengaged from the area" and their respective commanders on the ground met to discuss the issue in "accordance with structured mechanisms", as Colonel Long Shaohua said in a statement on Tuesday, suggests the two neighbors are capable of preventing the situation from spiraling out of control through dialogue and consultations. It is disappointing that the skirmish came just weeks after the two countries held the 25th meeting of the working mechanism for consultation and coordination on China-India border affairs on Oct 14, at which the two sides spoke highly of the achievements made in the disengagement of border troops. But it is notable that the Indian troops have become more provocative in recent years, with a higher frequency of intrusions into China-controlled areas. This has severely heightened tensions to the detriment of peace and stability along the border. The nationalistic sentiment in India aside, the ever closer military cooperation between India and the United States on the premise of countering an "increasingly assertive and aggressive" China may also have played a part in some Indian military hawks trying to push the envelope on the border issue. It is surely no coincidence that just days before the latest skirmish, India and the US conducted a high altitude joint military exercise in Uttarakhand near the Sino-Indian border, a move that China's Foreign Ministry said was "not helpful for building bilateral trust". India must restrain its troops from trespassing across the Line of Actual Control and work with China to calm the situation. The aggravating of the border tensions is obviously not in the interest of either China or India, as such clashes threaten to negatively affect the development of bilateral relations on a broader front.



China's Covid U-turn

Despite the rigidity of the Chinese Communist party's politics and grip on power, it can sometimes change course at a startling pace. The most obvious was its economic turn from Mao to market. More recently, it flipped from its one-child policy of limiting births to actively trying to boost them. But the turnaround on its zero-Covid policy is truly astonishing in its speed. In mid-October, Beijing was still boasting of an "all-out war" on Covid-19, despite its evident unsustainability and punitive economic effects. Two weeks ago, the foreign ministry's spokesperson tweeted scathingly of 1m Covid deaths as part of "The price of 'freedom' in the US ... What we want is to protect our people's lives." Now the government has cast off controls in a matter of days. Quarantine rules and travel restrictions have been significantly relaxed; the government has scrapped its primary Covid tracking app. Experts warn that hospitals could be rapidly overwhelmed; one analysis suggests that up to 2.1 million lives could be at risk. Testing booths are being dismantled, but Beijing authorities said fever clinics in the city received 16 times more patients on Sunday than the week before. Relaxation also poses political risks, despite the understandable unpopularity of zero Covid in cities. The countryside was relatively unaffected by restrictions; it is also much worse served by healthcare, and therefore worse equipped to handle a surge in cases. We are likely to hear far less about sickness and deaths there, and some wonder if many Covid deaths will be ascribed to other causes. But while the party-state is expert in altering the narrative, it is hard to do so overnight. Having hammered home the message that much of the world had been callously abandoned by its leaders to a deadly illness, officials now suddenly portray Covid as little worse than a bad cold. State media has switched from highlighting the toll of long Covid to announcing that the chances of getting it are "very low", and even quoting a doctor questioning its very existence. Had China poured a fraction of the effort and resources devoted to testing and lockdowns into vaccination and planning the end of zero Covid, it would now be in a much better place. This reversal is necessary, but should not be viewed as proof of an effective self-correction mechanism – particularly when protesters are paying the price for their defiance. Rather, it is evidence of the failures of a system that rarely listens to its citizens and is increasingly subject to the decisions of one man.

Is green hydrogen Africa's answer to the global climate crisis?

Jonathan Fenton-Harvey

The IEA's report also said that by 2030, Africa could produce 80 percent of its required energy from solar, wind, hydropower and other renewable energies. Continental developments Various projects to produce and eventually export green hydrogen are already underway this decade. South Africa is tipped to be one of the continent's leaders in green hydrogen energy due to its excellent solar, wind and precious metals resources. In February 2022, South Africa announced a pipeline of various green hydrogen initiatives valued at around \$17.8 billion until 2030

While the prospects are exciting for the continent, governments and companies must ensure that the native populations get access to the alternative energy sources. Discussions about climate crisis have often portrayed – and rightly – the African continent solely as a victim and even an innocent bystander, particularly as it contributes under 4 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions. Yet, as the world scrambles to find new sources of cleaner energy, it is getting harder to ignore Africa's phenomenal potential in aiding the climate crisis and delivering cleaner energy. From solar energy from the Sahara Desert to vast onshore wind levels, Africa has much potential to convert this into green hydrogen, with climate researchers going as far as arguing it is the key to producing cleaner energy. At the same time, there are pitfalls over whether African countries can fully utilise this energy potential to benefit their own populations and whether development projects could be 'extractivist' in nature. Case for green hydrogen Green hydrogen has been tipped as a new renewable energy that can solve the climate crisis due to its cheapness, ease of storage and lack of polluting gasses. It can be tipped to replace coal, oil and gas in all their uses, with double the production for cars than diesel while only releasing water vapour. Hydrogen is the most abundant element in the universe and is already used for various purposes such as fuel for cars, treating metals, producing fertiliser and processing foods. On Earth, it requires energy to separate as it doesn't appear pure in nature. So, to fully extract hydrogen in its purest form, it calls for the process of electrolysis, which sends a strong electrical current through a tank of water (H2O) and splits the molecule into its two elements (hydrogen and oxygen). If the electricity comes from renewable sources such as solar or wind, hydrogen production through electrolysis creates no greenhouse gasses, making green hydrogen renewable. And given Africa's abundance of solar and wind energy, the continent has the perfect natural potential to create green hydrogen. Indeed, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said in its Africa Energy Outlook 2022 report that Africa's rich renewable resources are crucial for unlocking this potential. Due to this potential, the continent can produce 5,000 megatonnes of hydrogen per year at less than \$2 per kilogramme, which is equivalent to the world's total energy supply, the report stated. The IEA's report also said that by 2030, Africa could produce 80 percent of its required energy from solar, wind, hydropower and other renewable energies. Continental developments Various projects to produce and eventually

export green hydrogen are already underway this decade. South Africa is tipped to be one of the continent's leaders in green hydrogen energy due to its excellent solar, wind and precious metals resources. In February 2022, South Africa announced a pipeline of various green hydrogen initiatives valued at around \$17.8 billion until 2030. On November 27, the country hosted a green hydrogen summit in Cape Town, in which President Cyril Ramaphosa hosted several world leaders, ambassadors and high commissioners. Ramaphosa stated that "South Africa is determined to become a world leader in green hydrogen". At the same time, he cited estimates that the country has the potential to "produce 6 to 13 million tons of green hydrogen and derivatives a year by 2050". His announcement came after South African petrochemical giant Sasol and steelmaker ArcelorMittal announced exploration projects for green hydrogen in October, along with a hydrogen production hub in Saldanha Bay and extraction from the North Cape region. In September, Sasol also announced a partnership with Japanese company Itochu to explore green hydrogen export projects and supply chains in the country, with the latter pledging to give grants for such projects. The country is also aiming to supply European markets. In January 2022, it signed a memorandum of agreement, under which the Port of Rotterdam will act as a "demand aggregator for green hydrogen in Europe". Other European countries like Germany have eyed cooperation with South Africa in this space. Investments would undoubtedly be critical, as South Africa said it will need around \$250 billion by 2050 to meet its long-term hydrogen production goals. Other countries, including Egypt, Nigeria and Kenya, are also at different stages of building initiatives, which aim to come into place over the next decade. In 2021, Namibia and Botswana also signed a memorandum of intent with USAID to build a mega solar plant to produce green hydrogen. North African countries also seek to harness their supreme solar energy capabilities through the African continent. During COP27 in November 2022, the United Arab Emirates energy company Masdar stated in a report that Africa could capture up to 10 percent of the global green hydrogen market by 2050. It particularly gave credit to Morocco, stating that the North African country is expected to produce green hydrogen at less than \$2 per kilogram in 2030 and less than \$1 per kilogram in 2050. In addition, the report said Morocco's green hydrogen industry could create nearly 4 million extra jobs and add \$60-120 billion to the continent's GDP by 2050 – a considerable feat, considering the country's GDP in 2021 was just over \$132 billion.

While Rabat established its first green hydrogen production system in September 2022, the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) published a report stating that Morocco is forecast to have the third cheapest green hydrogen production in 2050. British TuNur has pledged to invest \$1.5 billion in a power plant in Tunisia, which will aim to give the country the capability to export solar energy. It's a huge investment considering the country's GDP currently amounts to around \$40 billion. Like Morocco, Tunisia has announced its own green hydrogen strategy in 2022, which it would aim to forward by 2024. Mauritania has partnered with the multinational company Chariot Energy to focus on Project Nour, which aims to capitalise on Mauritania's world-class access to wind and solar energies, to make the country one of Africa's cheapest global exporters of green hydrogen. Pitfalls to consider These are a few of many exciting projects occurring across Africa. While there are concerns over other factors, such as bureaucracy in particular governments, which could stall projects, the investments themselves may not aim to benefit the local populations. In some countries, electricity access rates are often very low, with 24 countries having below 50 percent access. Thus, governments and investors need to improve domestic infrastructure to ensure that people across the continent can fully benefit from these energy shifts. Moreover, it is still in the early stages of development, as the IEA noted, Africa has 60 per cent of the world's best solar resources but only 1 per cent of current solar generation capacity. Pipelines are currently aimed at exporting natural gas from West and North Africa to Europe, particularly as Algeria is a supplier of natural gas – a fossil fuel. However, the pipelines would need to be repurposed and could be used to transport hydrogen. Crucially, some observers have raised concerns over some projects essentially being 'extractivism' in nature, meaning Africa's local resources could aim to benefit global markets outside of the continent at the expense of local populations. Moreover, substantial debt could be incurred by African governments because of some of the investment projects. There are certainly positives, but while investment is obviously vital, actors should ensure that broader infrastructure developments are made to ensure that ordinary civilians can also benefit, especially given the more comprehensive climate vulnerability of the continent. If done ethically, it could see the global and African economies becoming more intertwined, and it could positively contribute to the continent's economic growth.

– Courtesy: TRT World

Netanyahu's 'crazy team' set to cross all red lines

Osama Al-Sharif

He has given Itamar Ben-Gvir, head of Jewish Power and a racist and supremacist by the definition of the Israeli media, the critical national security portfolio, which controls the police and security in the occupied West Bank. Ben-Gvir has vowed to relax all rules of engagement for the Israeli police and border guards when dealing with Palestinian protesters. An already-inflamed situation in the West Bank and East Jerusalem will certainly get worse when he is in charge. That means more extrajudicial killings of Palestinians – even more than have already taken place since the beginning of this year

Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's long-serving prime minister, has until Dec. 21 to form the most extreme government in the history of the country, complete with ultranationalists, religious Zionists and far-right Cabinet members. The Likud leader has no challenger, but if he fails to hammer together a coalition government before the deadline, Israel will find itself once more in the political wilderness. Last month, voters took to the polls for a fifth time in four years in a bid to hand a leader the 61 seats needed to form a stable majority government. But the meteoric rise of the Religious Zionist and neo-Kahanist Jewish Power has shaken up the Israeli political stage, throwing these far-right, once-fringe parties into the mainstream. Together, they have become the proverbial kingmaker, giving Netanyahu the necessary votes to form a coalition, but at a hefty price. The head of Likud already has the necessary votes to form his coalition, but negotiations continue over meeting his new partners' long list of demands. He has given Itamar Ben-Gvir, head of Jewish Power and a racist and supremacist by the definition of the Israeli media, the critical national security portfolio, which controls the police and security in the occupied West Bank. Ben-Gvir has vowed to relax all rules of engagement for the Israeli police and border guards when dealing with Palestinian protesters. An already-inflamed situation in the West Bank and East Jerusalem will certainly get worse when he is in charge. That means more extrajudicial killings of Palestinians – even more than have already taken place since the beginning of this year. Almost 200 Palestinians have been

gunned down by Israel in the West Bank so far in 2022.

To make things even worse for the Palestinians, Netanyahu has agreed with Religious Zionism party leader Bezalel Smotrich to hand him the Finance Ministry – and with the condition that Smotrich will appoint a minister within the Defense Ministry who will be responsible for the West Bank. Smotrich originally wanted the defense portfolio for himself but, under pressure from the Biden administration, Netanyahu rejected this demand. Still, both Ben-Gvir and Smotrich are now, directly and indirectly, in a position to dictate policy in the West Bank. This has been dubbed "the crazy team" by the leftist Israeli media. Even the more conservative outlets are appalled at how Netanyahu, who wants to pass a law in the Knesset giving him immunity from prosecution, is handing over real power to extremists whose agenda is open and clear. They want to legalize all settlements in the West Bank – a tent, a caravan and any Palestinian land Jewish settlers claim as theirs. They want to go as far as annexing most parts of the West Bank, including the Jordan Valley, and they want to expel Palestinian citizens of Israel who defy the occupation. It is feared Ben-Gvir will establish armed settler militias that will be above the law. Israel's military and intelligence establishments have warned that the new coalition will be a recipe for disaster. They say that a new Palestinian intifada could erupt at any moment. Centrist and leftist politicians have also warned that Netanyahu's outrageous subsmissiveness to the religious far right will spell the end of Israeli democracy and its secular foundations. They warn of a misogynistic, homophobic and openly racist government. Others likened it to an Israeli

version of Daesh. The leftist newspaper Haaretz described the incoming government as "radical, coercive and violent," while outgoing Prime Minister Yair Lapid simply called it "crazy."

But despite all the warnings, Netanyahu has no choice but to go ahead with putting together this dangerous coalition, with little concern for what it means for the future of Israel or for the embattled Palestinians. It is astounding that US Secretary of State Antony Blinken chose his words so carefully when he addressed the J Street national conference last week. Blinken underlined the Biden administration's commitment to a two-state solution, Israel's security and expanding the Abraham Accords. He added that "we fully respect the democratic choice of the Israeli people," and pledged "to gauge the government by the policies it pursues rather than individual personalities." The Israeli media reported last week that Washington had set two red lines for the incoming Netanyahu government. The first is not to annex any parts of the West Bank and the second is not to change the status quo at Al-Aqsa Mosque. It also said that Washington had warned that any escalation against the Palestinians would hamper America's efforts to cooperate with Israel in dealing with the Iran nuclear deal. These two red lines will almost certainly be crossed by the next Israeli government. How Washington and other Western capitals will react when this is done is something that could be the beginning of a major shift in policies toward Israel, although this is unlikely. What is most likely is that Netanyahu will put Israel and the region on the path toward an unpredictable conflagration.

– Courtesy: Arab News

Briefs

Pak-Tajik cooperation need of hour

FROM PAGE 01
establishing rail, road and energy connectivity with Central Asian countries. He hoped that the Tajik president's visit would usher in a "new era of cooperation and development" between the two countries. Regarding their earlier discussions, PM Shehbaz said the two leaders had "very productive and useful" talks which focused on strengthening relations between their countries, promoting investment and enhancing trade and cultural exchanges.

Tajik president receives...

FROM PAGE 01
Earlier, Federal Minister for Commerce Syed Naveed Qamar received the Tajik president as he alighted from his special aircraft, here at the Islamabad International Airport. Cannons boomed for a 21-gun salute in honour of the visiting dignitary, besides a salute presented by the static guard. Two children clad in traditional Pakistani dresses presented bouquets to President Eмомали Рахмонов.

Pakistan missions abroad...

FROM PAGE 01
So much so, the local staff in respective Pakistani missions has also not been paid for many months, which has created embarrassment. The Foreign Office Officials say the delay is caused due to the overall economic situation of the country. Sources say, there are some missions who even don't pay anything to the local staff. A top diplomat told this newspaper on the condition of not being named that the Pakistani mission in Geneva had hired services of the local staff however the staff was not paid.

India a 'terrorist State', uses...

FROM PAGE 01
the country had blocked the listing of four individuals at the UNSC. "The more terrorism it [India] perpetrates, the more victim card it plays," she said. She said may it be the Samjhota train incident or blatant support to Baloch militants, India's objective was to undermine the peace and security of Pakistan. She mentioned that 211 individuals of law enforcement agencies suffered the RAW-sponsored attacks including the attack on Chinese nationals, at PC hotel Gwadar, and Frontier Corps camp in Punjur. Contrary to India, she said, Pakistan always remained at the forefront of fighting terrorism. To a question, she dismissed the step to be called as the 'dossier diplomacy' and said with hard facts available about agents being caught red-handed, "I would call it an evidence-based intelligence sharing". Khar pointed out that India blatantly violated the human rights laws in IIOJK and continued to follow the rogue policies. She stressed that India had "mastered" the art of using international organizations for its political gains. To a question if she was denied meeting by a certain minister during her recent visit to Afghanistan, she dismissed such notion, saying that no such meeting was asked to be held from Pakistan side.

"I was very well received [in Kabul] and in the meetings, and we exactly achieved what we wanted to achieve," he said. Khar said she believed in "useful diplomacy without theatrics" where the focus was to protect the interests of Pakistan instead of mere countering the social media disinformation campaign. She said on managing the border areas, Pakistan would never compromise on its red lines. "We are in a process of engaging very deeply with all entities. Whether it is the security of diplomats or civilians, we have to make sure that such incident never happen again as we take it very strongly and seriously," she said. Asked if the Foreign Office continued previous policies of the government, she said the good steps were being pursued acknowledging that "some good work was done on Islamophobia".

Mountain youth urge help for startups in native towns

Dr. Khusro Pervaiz said that the SZAIST was engaging youth in conservation action advocacy interventions with communities. Our own faculty members and students have fully turned the SZABIST Islamabad campus on solar energy

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Speaking at the 8th Pakistan Mountain Youth Forum, the youth representatives from the mountain areas urged the authorities for an integrated socioeconomic development of the youth within their native areas. Lack of economic opportunities is causing rapid migration from mountain areas to main urban areas downstream. The education system itself in the mountain areas is not equal to the one available downstream.

The mountain youth forum was organized by the Development Communications Network (Devcom-Pakistan) at the SZABIST Islamabad campus in connection with 12th Pakistan Mountain Festival. Dr. Khusro Pervaiz, Head of Campus, was the chief guest. Devcom-Pakistan Executive Director and Founder Pakistan Mountain Festival Munir Ahmed and PPAF Manager Institutional Development and Integration Shahid Hussain were the guests of honour. The main speakers included Irum Ali Adnan and Anushah Nadir (Chitral), Anmol Heera and Samreen (Hunza), Sabahat Mirza (AJK), and



Anita Ikram from Baltistan. Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Khusro Pervaiz said that the SZAIST was engaging youth in conservation action advocacy interventions with communities. Our own faculty members and students have fully turned the SZABIST Islamabad campus on solar energy. The students are consistently engaged in community education on climate adaptation and tree-plantation. Devcom-Pakistan Executive Director and Founder Pakistan Mountain Festival Munir Ahmed urged

the youth to focus more on the conservation of natural resources in their native areas after completing their education. Instead of searching jobs, the educated should launch their own business engaging the local youth and women. It would help strengthen the socioeconomic profile of the local areas and markets. Across the world, societies depend more on women, yet have less access to resources they need for their socioeconomic development. It is our responsibility to provide them

with the required facilities. Sabahat Mirza said Kashmir is no less than heaven and it is surrounded by the beautiful mountains, orchards and lakes. In recent years, the timber mafia was very active and chopped down many of the lush green valleys. Land sliding and water shortage has emerged as the two major challenges for the AJK. The other main issue, she said, was the segregated families living in AJK and the Indian occupied Kashmir. Firing from the

Indian side is another cause of frustration. We are still living in doldrums seven decades after the independence of Pakistan. Anita Karim said Greta Thunberg is one example for today's youth making their move to fight against climate change. She was only 15 years old when she started her fight against climate change. She was speaking on climate change, but her real fight was against the people in power not doing anything serious to solve climate issues. The Siachen Glacier in Gilgit Baltistan, which is the world's second-largest glacier after Antarctica, is under huge threat due to climate change. At the beginning of this year, she said, we saw two major floods in the Hunza district due to the sudden advancement of the Shishper glacier making the Shishper Lake burst and causing destructive flooding of the downstream valley. This flood cut the link of major tourist areas of Hunza from the rest of Pakistan causing huge losses to every business related to both local and international. In addition to that, District Ghizer also came under major floods this year in its various parts.

Real Madrid identify Karim Benzema's replacement

PARIS: Legendary PSV player René Van de Kerkhof has claimed that Spanish giants Real Madrid have identified the Netherlands' Cody Gakpo as Karim Benzema's replacement. Benzema, who will turn 35 on December 19, is in prolific form but is heading towards the end of his glittering career. "I have reliable Spanish sources that report that Real Madrid want to get Cody Gakpo as Benzema's successor," René Van de Kerkhof was quoted as saying by Spanish daily Diario AS. Cody Gakpo was one of the stars of the FIFA World

Cup 2022 with three goals in five matches before the Netherlands got knocked out in the quarter-finals at the hands of Argentina. It must be noted that Benzema was ruled out of the ongoing FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar with an injured left thigh just days before France's first match in the mega event against Australia. The 34-year-old Real Madrid striker had been struggling with the injury for some time and had played less than half an hour of football in his club's last six games before the World Cup. The

French Football Federation (FFF) later said in a statement that the injury "will require a recovery period of three weeks", ruling out any prospect of him being fully fit for the tournament which finishes on December 18. "I am extremely sad for Karim, for whom this World Cup was a major objective," France coach Didier Deschamps was quoted as saying in the FFF statement. "Despite this new blow for the France team I have full faith in my squad. We will do all we can to rise to the huge challenge that awaits

us." He won the Ballon d'Or after scoring 44 goals in 46 games for Real Madrid last season as the Spanish club won the Champions League and La Liga. Benzema had previously been frozen out of the France team for five-and-a-half years because of his involvement in a blackmail scandal over a sex tape involving his former teammate Mathieu Valbuena. That saw him miss France's victorious 2018 World Cup campaign and led to him being handed a one-year suspended prison sentence as well as a fine of 75,000 euros.

Lionel Messi says final will be last WC game

DOHA: Argentina captain Lionel Messi says Sunday's final will be the last World Cup game of his career. The 35-year-old forward scored his fifth goal of Qatar 2022 and helped set up two others in Tuesday's 3-0 semi-final win over Croatia. Playing in his fifth World Cup, Messi has never won the game's biggest prize. "I am very happy for finishing my journey in World Cups in a final, to play the last game in a final. That is really very gratifying," he said. "Everything I lived in this World Cup has been emotional, seeing how much it has been enjoyed in Argentina. There are a lot of years from this year to the next one. I don't think I will be able to do that. To finish this way is brilliant." Argentina will play France or Morocco, who meet on Wednesday at 19:00 GMT, in the final, when Messi is set to make a record 26th appearance in a men's World Cup. The 2026 World Cup will be held in the United States, Canada and Mexico. Messi has won the Ballon d'Or - awarded to the world's best player - a record seven times and been named Fifa Best Men's Player once. Other honours include four Champions Leagues, 11 top-flight titles and Copa America glory with Argentina in 2021. The World Cup is the one glaring omission, Argentina having lost to Germany in the 2014 final in Brazil. - Agencies

Scaloni wants Argentina to stay focused

DOHA: Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni admitted it was difficult not to get carried away after his side beat Croatia in Tuesday's FIFA World Cup 2022 semi-final but called on his side to quickly gather their focus for the final. Captain Lionel Messi scored a penalty and then set up two goals for Manchester City striker Julian Alvarez as Argentina won 3-0 at Lusail Stadium to advance to Sunday's final against either holders France or Morocco. "The truth is that the result maybe didn't reflect the game. I think we deserved to win but maybe not by such a margin," said Scaloni, whose side took the lead from a penalty awarded just after the half-hour mark for a foul on Alvarez. Scaloni said he expected his side to find the going tough against a Croatian midfield inspired by Luka Modric. "They controlled possession at first, but we knew that could happen because they have three top-class midfielders who have been playing together for years and know each other very well. "We understood that was how the game would go, but the game opened up with the penalty." Argentina's players celebrated wildly with their fans who made up the majority of the crowd in Doha, and Scaloni added: "We celebrated because it is exciting to be in the final, but there is still one step to go. This is something to enjoy but it's over now, so we need to move on to the next one." The 44-year-old Scaloni is now hoping to win the World Cup just 18 months after leading Argentina to victory in the Copa America in Brazil. It will be Argentina's sixth World Cup final but the former defender rejected comparisons with illustrious coaches of the past, including Cesar Luis Menotti, Carlos Bilardo and Alejandro Sabella, who led them to the 2014 final. "I can't compare myself with other coaches," he said. "It fills me with pride to get to the final and represent the national team. But I can't put myself on the same level as them. I just feel privileged to be in the final." - APP

Türkiye continues to engage with Russia, Ukraine: Erdogan



DNA

AWAZA: President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on Wednesday told his Azerbaijani and Turkmen counterparts that they need to "start working on the transfer of Turkmen natural gas to Western markets." Erdoğan, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev and Turkmen leader Serdar Berdimukhamedov met in the western Turkmen city of Awaza to address steps to further deepen cooperation between the three countries

in various areas, particularly trade, energy and transportation. The Turkish leader said the trio needs to start working on transporting Turkmen natural gas to Western markets. "We are ready to cooperate with our Turkmen and Azerbaijani brothers in the field of friendship in the Caspian. In addition, we attach importance to the development of mutual electricity trade between our countries in our region." "In this context, we are ready to work on electric-

ity transmission from Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan to our country," Erdoğan said. Meanwhile, amid European sanctions on Russian oil supplies and the heightened importance of the search for alternative energy sources like natural gas, Türkiye has been at the forefront, with the Russian and Turkish leaders discussing several times the notion of the country becoming a natural gas hub. Moscow remains keen on creating a natural gas hub in Türkiye, accord-

ing to the latest statement by Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko on Tuesday. "The idea is absolutely on the table, and we hope it will be implemented," he told Russian news agency RIA, stressing that such an arrangement "will be in everyone's interests, both gas producers and consumers." Despite the chatter around green energy, particularly in the West, it is obvious that this transition will take longer than what the "dreamers of a carbon-free world" first believed, the Russian official said. "It is clear to all rational-minded economists that gas, as the cleanest carbon fuel, will remain the primary energy source for many years, even if it may be in a transitional period," said Grushko. "So we need to think about the things we have been for many years-stability in supply, stability in demand, stability in transit, stability in the legal climate in which transactions are conducted, and ... energy strategies," he added.

Imran to announce date of...

FROM PAGE 01
elections should take place within 90 days of the assemblies' dissolution. "So understand this: I will announce the date on December 17 and after that, 70% of Pakistan will go into election mode. Logic dictates that if 70% of Pakistan will see elections, then the country should move towards general elections." "But unfortunately, our leaders are corrupt and convicts. They do not care about what happens to Pakistan and when bad times take over the country, they will exit the country," he said. Khan said the coalition rulers were worried that if they step down then another government would be formed and their corruption cases would be reopened. "Their interests and the nation's interests are poles apart." Lamenting his helplessness, the ex-prime minister - who was voted out in April through a no-confidence motion - said when he was in power, former army chief General (retired) Qamar Javed Bajwa asked him to focus on the economy and not accountability. "Gen (ret'd) Bajwa told me to grant NRO II to the then-opposition [the government when [the opposition had to pass laws related to the] Financial Action Task Force. It was Gen (ret'd) Bajwa who gave NRO II to the then-opposition." Addressing speculations that he is seeking help from the establishment, Khan said: "I am not asking anyone for help." He, however, hoped that the establishment remains neutral. The PTI chief headed that in these last seven months "PTI was treated with open hostility". Khan said he has never seen cases of "big dacoits" being closed in his 70 years of experience. "I am sure that even banana republics don't do such things," the ex-premier said.

IHC fixes hearing...

FROM PAGE 01
the PTI chief, the citizen has taken a stand that Imran Khan has provided incorrect information while submitting his nomination papers for the previous general elections. He added that even though the former prime minister has three children, he had mentioned two in the papers and concealed the existence of his third child. During the previous hearing, the court asked the petitioner's counsel whether the IHC could hear the case on the basis of Article 199 or if it should go to the ECP.

Ukraine battles...

FROM PAGE 01
reported and the all clear was given. In Paris, about 70 countries and institutions pledged payments of just over 1 billion euros (\$1.05 billion) to help maintain Ukraine's water, food, energy, health and transport, French Foreign Minister Catherine Colonna said. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky had said Ukraine needed at least 800 million euros (\$840 million). "It's a lot, but the price is less than the cost of blackout," Zelensky told the meeting via video link. French President Emmanuel Macron said there was an agreement on removing heavy weapons from Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant and that talks were under way on the way to do this. Denis Pushilin, Russian-installed administrator of the portion of Donetsk controlled by Moscow, told Russian media that just over half of the Donetsk People's Republic had been "liberated." The self-styled republic is a breakaway Russian-backed entity that has fought Ukrainian forces since 2014. Reuters was unable to independently verify the report. Fighting in the region in recent weeks has left unclear which parts of Donetsk are under Russian and Ukrainian control. Three civilians were killed in Donetsk over the past 24 hours, regional Governor Pavlo Kyrylenko said on his Telegram channel, while in the southern Kherson region, governor Yaroslav Yanushevych reported three people killed by Russian artillery. Russian troops shelled the part of the Kherson region under Ukrainian control 57 times, he said. Russia's sustained shelling of the frontline in Donetsk has destroyed Bakhmut city and heavily damaged the city of Avdiivka, which lies in the region's center, Zelensky said on Friday.

FIFPRO 'sickened' as Iranian player risks death sentence

"FIFPRO is shocked and sickened by reports that professional footballer Amir Nasr Azadani faces execution in Iran after

campaigning for women's rights and basic freedom in his country," union wrote on its Twitter page late Monday

DNA

PARIS: The world union of professional footballers FIFPRO said it was "shocked and sickened" by the risk of Iranian footballer Amir Nasr-Azadani being sentenced to death in connection with protests which have shaken the country for three months. Nasr-Azadani was arrested in the city of Isfahan two days after allegedly taking part in an "armed riot" in which three security agents were killed on September 16, Isfahan's judiciary chief Abdullah Jafari said, quoted Sunday by Iran's ISNA news agency. Jafari said the 26-year-old had been accused of "rebellion, membership in illegal gangs, collusion to undermine security and therefore assisting in moharabeh" - or

"emnity against God" - a capital crime in the Islamic republic. "FIFPRO is shocked and sickened by reports that professional footballer Amir Nasr-Azadani faces execution in Iran after campaigning for women's rights and basic freedom in his country," the union wrote on its Twitter page late Monday. "We stand in solidarity with Amir and call for the immediate removal of his punishment." The alarm comes after a global outcry following the execution by Iran in the past days of two young men arrested over the protests. Nasr-Azadani, who played at Under-16 level for the national team, began his football career

with Tehran team Rah-Ahan, with whom he played for the first time in Iran's top flight league. The defender briefly played for Tractor SC under former Wales coach John Toshack and is currently at FC Iranjavan Bushehr. Former Iranian international star Ali Karimi, a strong supporter of the protests, backed the footballer in a tweet, saying "Do not execute Amir". The Iranian national team took part in the FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar and staged their own protest by refusing to sing the national anthem in their opening match against England. However, they rolled back to sing the anthem for sub-

sequent matches against Wales and the USA. Iran is facing protests sparked by the September 16 death of Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Iranian Kurd who died after she was arrested by morality police for allegedly violating the Islamic republic's strict dress code for women. According to Amnesty International, 11 people have been confirmed to have been sentenced to death over the protests and at least another nine, including Nasr-Azadani, risk being sentenced to death. Iran calls the protests "riots" and says they have been encouraged by its foreign foes. Prominent former international star Voria Ghafouri was arrested in Iran last month after he backed the protests and condemned the crackdown but was later released on bail.

played for the first time in Iran's top flight league. The defender briefly played for Tractor SC under former Wales coach John Toshack and is currently at FC Iranjavan Bushehr. Former Iranian international star Ali Karimi, a strong supporter of the protests, backed the footballer in a tweet, saying "Do not execute Amir". The Iranian national team took part in the FIFA World Cup 2022 in Qatar and staged their own protest by refusing to sing the national anthem in their opening match against England. However, they rolled back to sing the anthem for sub-

Briefs

EU wants to 'reconnect' with Southeast Asia

BRUSSELS :EU leaders meet their counterparts from Southeast Asia for a summit in Brussels on Wednesday, looking to bolster ties in the face of the war in Ukraine. Europe is keen to boost trade with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which counts some of the world's fastest-growing economies. "There is a need for Europeans to reconnect with ASEAN, one of the most dynamic areas in the world," the French presidency said. The EU has been on a diplomatic push to galvanise a global front against Moscow as its invasion has sent economic and political shock waves around the world. But ASEAN's 10 nations have been divided in their response to the Kremlin's war on Ukraine. An EU official said Brussels was satisfied in the end that it sent a "crystal clear message" of the need to respect Ukraine's sovereignty and independence. ASEAN and the EU suspended their push for a joint trade deal over a decade ago and Brussels has focused on striking agreements with individual members. So far deals with Vietnam and Singapore are in place, but the bloc is keen to make progress with ASEAN's largest economy Indonesia and to resume talks with Malaysia, Philippines and Thailand.—APP

Nepal bus accident kills 18

ISTANBUL :At least 18 people were killed and 21 others injured in a bus accident in the South Asian nation of Nepal on Wednesday. The accident happened at Bethanchok Rural Municipality in the central Kavre district on Tuesday evening when at least 39 people were aboard the bus, officials said. Bhagwan Adhikari, chairman of Bethanchok Rural Municipality, said: "The bus was carrying people who had gone to attend a 'bratabandha' (religious) ceremony in Chyalti in the rural municipality from Banepa Municipality-19." Of the 18 killed, 13 died at the accident site while five others died while undergoing treatment at various hospitals, the daily Kathmandu quoted Adhikari as having said. The identities of the deceased are yet to be ascertained. On Monday, 12 people died in a jeep accident at Lewa in the Chhedagad Municipality of the western Jajkot district.—APP

Economic managers created a fake impression of growth

KARACHI: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain on Wednesday said the threat of default is causing great damage to the economy. Thousands of containers are awaiting clearance at ports but are stuck due to the non-availability of foreign exchange and importers have to pay millions daily in demurrage and detention charges, he said. Mian Zahid Hussain said that the country is engulfed in a fire that cannot be extinguished by comforting statements as practical steps are needed to restore the confidence of local and foreign investors, which is not possible without revitalizing the IMF program. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that with the elections around the corner, the government is not taking tough decisions, which is making the situation worse. He said that the country is currently suffering from an economic and financial crisis, most of which is being blamed on the situation arising from the war between Russia and Ukraine. The fundamentals of the economy have become so weak that it cannot bear the burden of average economic activity. The focus of economic managers is not on the development of the country.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Mr. Fawzi al-Taher Al-Nuwairi, first Deputy Speaker of the Libyan House of Representative, visiting Senate Museum at Parliament house.—DNA

Denmark has a new govt, six weeks after elections

COPENHAGEN :Denmark will finally have a new government six weeks after inconclusive elections with a left-right alliance forged after tortuous negotiations, prime minister Mette Frederiksen said Tuesday. The left-wing Frederiksen told reporters that the political alliance was "what our country needs", following a narrow election victory for her Social Democrats in legislative elections on November 1. "Both because of the crises we face - inflation, war in Europe - but also because we have to make decisions that force us to look at things differently," she said. The new government

team will be announced on Thursday, she said, "made up of the Social Democrats, the Liberals and the Moderates". She spoke to the press after informing Queen Margrethe of the alliance. Frederiksen said the new government would have "a lot of compromises, but above all, a lot of ambitions". The monarch tasked her with trying to form a government in November, after individually meeting the leaders of Denmark's 11 other parties in parliament. "We are in a totally new and uncharted territory," Robert Klømmensen, professor of political science at Lund University, told AFP.

"It's extremely surprising - no one thought it would be possible to form this government." The last coalition government between the Social Democrats and the Liberals lasted just nine months, between 1978 and 1979. But the Social Democrats - used to leading minority governments - are by far the largest party with 50 seats out of the 179 in Parliament. While her government was largely hailed for handling the Covid-19 pandemic, the November election was triggered by the country's so-called mink crisis. The affair erupted after in November 2020 to cull the

country's 15 million minks over fears of a mutated strain of the novel coronavirus. The decision turned out to be illegal, and the Social Liberal party propping up Frederiksen's minority government threatened to topple it unless she called early elections to regain voters' confidence. The Social Liberals paid a price for the gamble, losing nine of their 16 seats. In contrast it was the Social Democrats' best election outcome in two decades, and allowed Frederiksen to enter negotiations from a position of strength. Frederiksen and her Social Democrats had said even

before the vote that it wanted to govern beyond traditional divisions. They had to negotiate with the main Danish party on the political right, the Liberal Party, and the newly-formed centrist party, the Moderates, created by former prime minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen. The Moderates won more than nine percent of votes and Rasmussen insisted he wanted to be "the bridge" between the left and right. The far-right has heavily influenced Danish politics in recent decades - but three populist parties together won just 14.4 percent of votes and have had little influence on the negotiations.—APP



SIALKOT: Renowned businessmen Ijaz Khokhar of Ashraf Group of Companies presenting souvenir to Ambassador of Denmark Jakob Linulf during his recent visit to Sialkot.—DNA

Zong 4G & Hands Pak partner with PHA

DNA

ISLAMABAD: With the environment being one of the most critical challenges faced by Pakistan; the significance of planting trees and preserving the environment is greater than ever. In-line with Zong's commitment to a clean and green Pakistan, Zong 4G and Hands have partnered with the Parks & Horticulture Authority (PHA), Multan to develop an urban forest in the Aam Khas Bagh. This initiative is yet another addition to the company's list of accomplishments in their efforts to address environmental concerns, which are crucial for Pakistan to counter the devastation of

climate change affecting the country. The Zong 4G team, along with Hands, successfully planted over 700 trees in the city to develop an urban forest. After coordination with PHA, a diverse selection of trees including Tabebuia Yellow, Sukhchain, Terminalia, Amaltas, Guava, and Lemon, along with eight other types of trees, were planted. The event was also graced by the presence of PHA Chairman, Mr. Ejaz Hussain Janjua and an esteemed representative from the disabled community, Mr. Nadir Ali Khan, District Project Manager, along with Zong 4G volunteers. "It is imperative that major stakeholders recognize the issues that our country is

currently facing and make an active effort to play their role in addressing them. I'm proud to say that Zong 4G is one of the few organizations that does their absolute best to give back to society," noted the official spokesperson for Zong 4G. "As a company that realizes the importance of preserving the environment and making it better for our future generations, Zong will continue on its agenda of countering the negative impacts of climate change facing Pakistan." Commenting on the plantation drive, Ms. Raima Mehmood, Manager Natural Resource Management Department, HANDS, shared, "This activity has been initiated as the part of the

HANDS Natural Resource Management Department's plans to promote tree plantations in urban settlements to reduce environmental stress, and our afforestation drive will contribute to making Multan more resilient to climate change. We thank our partners, Zong 4G for taking the initiative, and we hope that together we will continue to develop more urban forests in the future." The initiative known as "The Green Drive by Zong 4G" and its mission of "planting the seeds of hope for the future" is the latest part of the larger ongoing effort from Zong 4G of supporting environmental sustainability and striving towards creating a Greener Pakistan.

Fiji PM vows to respect result, as votes counted

SUVA, FIJI :Fijian Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama on Wednesday vowed to respect an election that could end his 16-year grip on power, as his rival ex-coup leader took an early lead with a small fraction of the vote counted. Bainimarama, 68, seized control of Fiji in a 2006 putsch, but legitimised his grip on power with election wins in 2014 and 2018. Standing in the way of Bainimarama's third elected term is his chief political rival, Sitiveni Rabuka, a 74-year-old former mili-

tary commander nicknamed "Rambo" after leading two coups in 1987. With just 70 of the more than 2,000 voting stations reporting, Rabuka's People's Alliance party had registered 4,450 votes, while Bainimarama's Fiji First party had 2,760 votes. Fiji now faces a nervous wait for a winner to be declared - ballots must be tallied from remote islands and highland villages. The final count is not expected for at least two days, although provisional returns

will come more quickly. The election is being seen as a test of the nation's fledgling democracy. Asked whether he would accept the outcome, win or lose, Bainimarama said "of course" as he cast his ballot in the capital Suva with his granddaughter in tow. He then lashed out at reporters, suggesting they ask "better questions." Rabuka said he would readily concede defeat if beaten, and Bainimarama should do the same. "I think he will not. So I'm hoping for a flood of votes

in our favour, so that it makes any attempt at that course futile," he said. "We cannot rule forever, we cannot rule forever, so successions from an opposition party should be accepted." In a contested vote the military could be key. The country's top commander has said the armed forces would respect the election result. Blake Johnson from the Australian Strategic Policy Institute said any arguments about the result would likely be dealt with through the courts, rather than another coup.—APP

UK inflation slows, remains close to 11 percent

LONDON :British inflation slowed more than expected in November but remained near the highest level in more than 40 years, official data showed Wednesday, as a cost-of-living crisis sparks fresh UK strikes. The consumer prices index eased to 10.7 percent last month, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said in a statement, against expectations of a drop to 10.9 percent. The ONS said motor fuel prices had risen at a slower pace than a year earlier. October's annual inflation rate had stood at 11.1 percent, the highest level since 1981, after energy prices and food bills soared across the world this year on supply constraints caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the lifting of pandemic lockdowns. Wednesday's data comes amid crippling UK industrial action by public and private sector workers demanding higher wages. Railway staff were staging a two-day national strike due to end Wednesday, kicking off a month of walkouts involving professions from nurses to passport control and postal workers that spells Christmas misery for millions of Britons. November's inflation data was meanwhile published on the eve of an interest rate decision from the Bank of England, which is widely expected to deliver its ninth hike in a row as policymakers try to tackle rampant prices. Economists expect the BoE will lift its key lending rate to 3.5 percent from 3.0 percent on Thursday, further squeezing Britons' disposable incomes with rising loan costs. Inflation is still running at more than five times the central bank's official target level of two percent.—APP

At least four dead in Channel boat incident

LONDON: At least four people died when a small boat apparently packed with migrants capsized in freezing temperatures in the Channel overnight, the UK government said on Wednesday. Dozens of others were plucked from the waters of one of the world's busiest shipping lanes in a large-scale rescue operation involving UK and French emergency services. UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak called it a "tragic loss of human life", just as he tries to tighten rules to prevent record numbers of migrants from attempting the crossing. British media said earlier that 43 people were rescued, including more than 30 who had fallen overboard, with fears the death toll will rise. Migrants have been intercepted regularly in the Channel in recent years, using small boats ill-suited for trips on the open sea. At least 27 people drowned while attempting to cross the Channel in a dinghy on November 24 last year.—APP

South Korea's 27th nuclear reactor begins operations

ISTANBUL :The 27th nuclear reactor of South Korea formally began operations on Wednesday with the president vowing to make the country a "global nuclear energy power." President Yoon Sukyeol said in a message to the opening ceremony held today: "The government will turn the nuclear power industry into a pillar that leads our exports and actively provide support so that the Republic of Korea can once again boast its status as a global nuclear energy power." Yoon could not physically attend the ceremony due to "extreme weather conditions," his office said. Shin Hanul No. 1 nuclear reactor with a power generation capacity of 1,400 megawatts located in Uljin, 307 kilometers (190 miles) southeast of the capital Seoul, began commercial operations last week. Its construction started in 2010 and was completed in 2020. The nuclear reactor, "country's next-generation reactor model that boasts a larger capacity, a longer lifespan, and cost-effectiveness," was scheduled to begin operations in 2017, "but the plan was delayed due to an earthquake in the southeastern city of Gyeongju," Yonhap News Agency reported. Of the total 27 reactors in South Korea, including the newly built one, 25 are currently in operation as the country aims to expand nuclear power generation to more than 30% of its total energy by 2030. The government is also building three additional reactors.—Agencies

Saudi, British ministers review bilateral relations

RIYADH :British Secretary of Defense Ben Wallace received Prince Khalid bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, Minister of Defense of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia at the Royal Cavalry Guard Square in the British capital, London, where an official reception ceremony was held in honor of the Saudi Minister of Defense during which the Saudi royal anthem was played, and the guard of honor was reviewed. Prince Khalid held a meeting at the headquarters of the British Ministry of Defense with the British Secretary of Defense, during which they reviewed the strategic and historical relations between the two friendly countries and discussed aspects of bilateral cooperation in the military and defense field, in addition to discussing a number of issues of common interest, and the latest developments at the regional and international levels. They also signed the defense cooperation plan, which aims to develop the capabilities of the Saudi Ministry of Defense, localize military industries, and strengthen the partnership between the two countries in the military and defense field.—APP

South Sudan violence leaves 166 civilians dead

NEW YORK: Violence in South Sudan's Upper Nile state has killed 166 civilians and displaced more than 20,000 since August amid an escalation in clashes between armed groups, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. "These killings, along with reports of gender-based violence, abductions, destruction of property and looting, are severe human rights violations and abuses and must stop," UN human rights chief Volker Turk said in a statement on Wednesday. Violence is rife in parts of South Sudan where clashes triggered by domestic disputes over grazing areas, water, cultivation grounds and other resources often turn deadly. The UN refugee agency said last week the conflict was a continuation of fighting that started in August in a village in Upper Nile, and has since spread to other parts of the state and areas of Jonglei and Unity states. South Sudan's army spokesperson Lul Ruai Koang said the level of violence had started to ease since the military deployed forces to the area, pushing the fighters from rival communities back.—APP

Briefs

Scholz: Putin has not achieved a single goal

WEB DESK

BERLIN: Russian President Vladimir Putin has failed in his mission to divide Europe, damage democracy and take Ukraine quickly, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz told lawmakers in Berlin. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said Wednesday that Vladimir Putin had made a fundamental miscalculation by sending troops into Ukraine, adding that the Russian president had not achieved "a single goal" set before the attack. Addressing lawmakers in Germany's Bundestag, Scholz said that Putin's conviction that Russia would win and Ukraine would fall within days, was a massive underestimation. Putin "believed he could dry up Europe's solidarity by turning off our gas tap," Scholz said but he was wrong "about the courage of Ukrainians, about Europe, about us, about the character of our democracies, about our will to resist big power mania and imperialism." Scholz emphasized the EU's support for Ukraine and said that attempts to undermine that backing are doomed to fail, in a thinly veiled message to Hungary who earlier this week dropped objections over the aid for Kyiv. "Anyone who thinks he can undermine the values of the EU, to which every member state has committed itself, by blocking its foreign and security policies, will fail," he said. In his address, Scholz also said that it's in Germany's and Europe's best "interest" for the Balkan countries that are currently not in the EU to join the bloc.

China diplomats leave UK over protester attack

LONDON: China has removed six officials from Britain - including one of its most senior UK diplomats - two months after violence at its Manchester consulate. The UK had requested the officials waive their right to diplomatic immunity to allow detectives to question them about October's incident. Foreign Secretary James Cleverly expressed his disappointment that none of the six would now face justice. The group included consul-general Zheng Xiyuan, who denied beating a protester. Pro-democracy protester, Bob Chan, a Hongkonger, was injured after being dragged onto the consulate grounds and beaten by men on 16 October. Mr Zheng, who was effectively in charge of China's Manchester outpost, denied attacking Mr Chan after he was identified in photographs, and accused of doing so by a senior Conservative MP. - Agencies

IMF official asks Pakistan to fix various indicators

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The International Monetary Fund (IMF)'s Resident Representative for Pakistan Esther Perez Ruiz has asked Pakistan to review its monetary and exchange rate policies. Negotiations between the global lender and Pakistan for release of the next tranche under EFF are expected to commence soon, as the representative termed the discussion with the Pakistani authorities to be productive to start the ninth review. Perez said that the meeting provided a better economic outlook in terms of evaluation of fiscal, monetary, exchange rate, and energy policies implemented following the completion of the seventh and eighth reviews. She went on to add that the country needs to fix multiple economic indicators and re-examine the targets for fiscal discipline and deficit control. The representative said that the discussion regarding Pakistan's economic goals after flood situation is underway.



ISLAMABAD: Foreign Secretary, Dr. Asad Majeed Khan, briefed diplomatic missions based in Islamabad on state-sponsored terrorism against Pakistan - planned, conducted and financed by India. The Foreign Secretary shared a Dossier of Indian involvement in last year's terrorist attack in Lahore and asked the international community to hold India accountable for its crimes. - DNA

No discussion of Christmas ceasefire, Russia says

Ukraine's President Zelensky has urged Russia to prove it is capable of renouncing aggression and begin withdrawing troops this Christmas

DNA

MOSCOW: The Kremlin said Wednesday it had not received any proposals from Kyiv to halt fighting in Ukraine during the coming holiday period and a ceasefire was not on Moscow's agenda. "No, no proposals have been received from anyone and no topic of this kind is on the agenda," the Kremlin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters in response to a question on whether Russia would pause hostilities for the New Year or Christmas. Christmas in Russia is celebrated on January 7, according to the Orthodox calendar, and public holidays in the country usually extend from New Year's Day until after Christmas. Russian President Vladimir Putin launched what was supposed to be a lightning offensive in Ukraine in February, and Kyiv has said it is determined to continue fighting until it recaptures swathes of territory under Russian control. Addressing G7 nations on Monday, Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky urged Russia to prove it is capable of renouncing "aggression" and to begin withdrawing troops this



Christmas. In nearly 10 months of fighting, Russia has yet to fulfil any of its stated key goals in what it refers to as its "special military operation" in Ukraine, including seizing the capital or the eastern Donbas region. The Moscow-installed leader of Ukraine's

Donetsk region on Wednesday however called for Russia to widen its goals and annex two more areas of Ukraine, the Black Sea region of Odesa and Chernigov in the north. In response to that call, Peskov said that any decision to incorporate those areas

would depend on "the will of residents" there. "The primary task is to protect people in the Luhansk People's Republic and the Donetsk People's Republic. Our military is concentrating on this," he said, referring to two regions that Russia claimed to have annexed in September. Meanwhile, Zelensky urged Europe to help set up a tribunal to try Russia's leadership for the "crime of aggression", as he accepted the EU's top rights award on Wednesday. "I call on all of you, your parties and states to effectively support this work. The tribunal must start working," Zelensky told the European Parliament in a speech via video link. Meanwhile, the Kremlin said Wednesday it had not received any proposals from Kyiv to halt fighting in Ukraine during the upcoming holiday period and a ceasefire was not on Moscow's agenda. "No, no proposals have been received from anyone and no topic of this kind is on the agenda," the Kremlin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters in response to a question on whether Russia would pause hostilities for the New Year or Christmas.

SC adjourns PTI's petition against NAB law amends

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Wednesday adjourned the hearing till the second week of January (2023) of PTI Chairman Imran Khan's petition against amendments in the NAB law. Chief Justice of Pakistan Umar Ata Bandial, who was heading the three-member bench which heard the petition, observed that many cases with regard to the resignations of PTI lawmakers were pending, but the court should not comment on political matters. The CJP said joining the parliament or not was the political decision of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI). There was a need that all institutions should be functional. How the parliament could be functional in the absence of a big political party, he added. Justice Ijaz-ul-Ahsan observed that no National Assembly constituency could be left vacant. The PTI's members were receiving salaries without

attending NA sessions, while the party argued that the assembly was incomplete, he added. He further observed that the IHC had asked the PTI MNAs to appear before NA Speaker for verification of their resignations. It was a constitutional matter instead of a political one. He asked why the PTI had not approached the court if the resignations of its members were not being accepted. Whether the party was ready if the speaker accepted the resignations in four days, he remarked. The court observed that people expressed confidence in their representatives. A member could leave the assembly only if he or she was not physically able to go there. The lawmakers should raise their voice in the House only as the political debate should be held at political forum, it added. - APP

US, Pak partner for \$40 million activity to build healthy families

ISLAMABAD: Mission Director for United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Reed Aeschliman and Sindh Minister for Health and Population Dr Azra Fazal Pechuho launched a new family planning, maternal, newborn, and child health programme. The US government-funded \$40 million "Building Health Families Activity (BHFA)" would operate in Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to enhance primary healthcare systems, said a press release. The activity would support voluntary family planning (FP) and improve maternal, newborn, and child health (MNCH) services in Pakistan, it added.

Mission Director Aeshliman said: "The United States has a long history of partnership with the government of Sindh. USAID is committed to strengthening this relationship by building upon the foundation and legacy of our partnership and a shared goal to save and improve lives." Minister Dr Azra Fazal Pechuho lauded the continued support from the US government through United States Agency for International Development and emphasized the Sindh government's commitment towards improving health care for the people. "Focus on healthcare equity is fundamental to BHFA's approach, and the activity is committed to addressing the needs of women, girls, and youth as well as people traditionally marginalized from accessing quality healthcare. Making health systems resilient to shocks from climate change is another core focus," the PR added. It further said the activity would meaningfully engage men and boys, strengthen human resources for health, deploy new digital health solutions, and ensure commodity and supply chain security for family planning / maternal, newborn, and child health services, eventually contributing to more resilient health systems. - APP

United States religious listing 'biased & politicised': Bilawal

ISLAMABAD: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari has rejected the United States' listing of Pakistan as a state of "particular concern" over religious freedoms and pointed out its bias as to how India has escaped the list. The US, in November, had grouped Pakistan along with 11 other countries, including China, Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and North Korea, as being states that were "engaged in or (have) tolerated particularly severe violations of religious freedom". "It does seem that this is a slightly biased and politicised list," Bilawal Zardari told Channel News Asia in an interview during his official visit to Singapore, posted on its website on Wednesday. "Otherwise I do wonder why India is not on the list when its human rights, particularly religious freedom for their Muslim minority" had been a source of concern internationally, he said. "Another ally of the US in the Middle East ... which perpetuates curbs against (its) Muslim minority (and) Palestine" also did not make the list, FM Bilawal added, referring to Israel. Nonetheless, he acknowledged Pakistan's longstanding issues with religious extremism and violence, and pledged his government's commitment to tackle them. "(We) don't need America to point out the problems that we in Pakistan face with religious extremism, with terrorism. That is a cause that is dear to my heart," he added. Bilawal said, "We're absolutely

cognizant of the challenges we face. And we're serious about facing those challenges. Not because the United States said so or anybody else (said so). It's because we believe that's important for the future of our country." On India, he said the country had changed for the worse. "The India I grew up with ... it was the largest democracy in the world. It was a secular country, home to all its citizens - Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Buddhists. Unfortunately, the India I see today is not the India I recognise growing up. "This is an increasingly fascist India. It is hostile to Muslims outside its borders and within its borders, it is hostile to the Christians within its borders," he added. On the Ukraine issue, Bilawal said although he sympathised with Ukraine, Pakistan had its own issues to deal with and did not want to be involved in other conflicts. "There is too much misery going around in my own neighbourhood for us to be driven to engage with what is of course a devastating situation being carried out in Ukraine." The foreign minister termed Pakistan's relationship with China "very comprehensive", with much economic potential. "We've seen a commitment to incredible economic opportunity in our engagement with China. For example, with the CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor), we have seen our communication and energy infrastructure really come up in the last decade," he said. - DNA

Federal govt to restart PMYP

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif-led government has decided to restart the Prime Minister's Youth Program to facilitate the youth with the easy loan and laptop schemes. This was announced by Federal Information Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Youth Affairs Shaza Fatima in a joint press conference in Islamabad on Wednesday. Information Minister Marriyum Aurangzeb said the federal government has decided to restart the Prime Minister's Youth Program and PM Shehbaz Sharif will give laptops to 1,00,000 students. Marriyum Aurangzeb added that a 50 percent share of women has been kept in the laptop scheme while her government will also provide easy loans to the youth for trade and agriculture. Criticizing the previous government of Imran Khan, the information minister said the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) did not make any plan during its more than three years of rule in the country. She said that the PTI's previous government made fools by placing their nameplates on the projects of the Nawaz League's previous government. The information minister also said that the PTI and Imran Khan have done nothing but create chaos and political accusations. PM's Special Assistant Shaza Fatima while talking to the media said that the PTI government had made the laptop program controversial and did not make any plan for the youth during its tenure. Shaza Fatima said Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) has been running the youth program for the past 12 years and now it is planned to provide employment to 2.5 million youth.

Trump's conservative base deserting him for DeSantis: poll

WEB DESK

CALIFORNIA: Most Republican-leaning voters would prefer Florida's governor over Donald Trump as their 2024 presidential nominee, according to a survey. By a 56%-33% margin, conservative voters picked Governor Ron DeSantis over the former president, who formally launched his new campaign last month. The Suffolk University/USA Today poll also found President Joe Biden had higher approval numbers than Mr Trump. It follows mixed results for Trump-backed candidates in midterm elections. "There's a new Republican sheriff in town," said David Paleologos, director of the Suffolk University Political Research Center. "DeSantis outpolls Trump not only among the general electorate, but also among these Republican-leaning voters who have been the former president's base. "Republicans and conservative independents increasingly want Trumpism without Trump." According to the nationwide survey, Mr DeSantis also leads Mr Biden by 47%-43% among all voters in a hypothetical election. Seven per cent were undecided.

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