



# Islamabad POST

Saturday, December 17, 2022

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 25

**FIFA announces plans for 32-team Club World Cup**

Detailed News On Page-06

**Bilawal's remarks prompt protest outside embassy**

Detailed News On Page-08

**Qureshi seeks big mandate to eliminate woes**

Detailed News On Page-08



**FIFA WORLD CUP Qatar 2022**  
3rd Place Play-off  
**Croatia VS Morocco**  
08:00 PM

**Briefs**

**FO summons Afghan envoy**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The Chargé d'Affaires of Afghanistan based in Islamabad was called in to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to register Pakistan's strong condemnation over recent firing incidents. The FO conveyed condemnation over the unprovoked cross-border shelling by Afghan Border Security Forces in the Chaman-Spin Boldak area, resulting in loss of life, injuries and damage to property. It was reiterated that protection of civilians remained the responsibility of both sides and that recurrence of these incidents must be prevented. It was agreed to use established institutional mechanisms in this regard.

**Toshkhana gifts cannot be sold**

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Newly-appointed Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Interior and Law Affairs Attaulah Tarar has said that former prime minister Imran Khan did corruption of billions of rupees through Toshakhana and used fake receipts for this purpose. While addressing a press conference in Islamabad on Friday, the special assistant said that gifts of Toshakhana cannot be sold. The gifts can be kept but they cannot be sold to anyone, he added. While taking a jibe at Imran Khan, he said that it is very easy to say "my watch... my will". He said that the jewelry set gifted to the wife of Imran Khan was worth more than Rs 1 billion.

**Holiday Notice**

The offices of daily Islamabad POST shall remain closed on Saturday on account of weekly off therefore there will be no newspaper on Sunday.  
- Editor

**Inside...**

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## Imran Khan says Ex-Army Chief blocked cases against 'thieves'

"General Bajwa was not allowing them [NAB]... he was sitting behind and would decide who should be released [from NAB custody] or suppressed," he added

ALI HAMZA / DNA

LAHORE: Former prime minister and PTI Chairman Imran Khan has accused former army chief General (retd) Qamar Javed Bajwa of controlling the National Accountability Bureau (NAB), saying he blocked the conclusion of corruption cases against "thieves" during his government's tenure. "NAB would tell us that the cases were matured but they were not being allowed to conclude them," the deposed premier said while addressing a lawyers' convention via video link on Friday. "General Bajwa was not allowing them [NAB]... he was sitting behind and would decide who should be released [from NAB custody] or suppressed," he added. Imran said the then opposition leader and incumbent prime minister, Shehbaz Sharif's money laundering case was an "open and shut" one. "His [PM Shehbaz] case was not listed for hearing... I was prime minister but I was completely helpless." The former PM said law of jungle was prevailing in the country "as all the thieves have gathered and now shutting down their corruption cases". Imran reiterated his allegations that his government was toppled by "buying conscience" of the lawmakers. "All segments of the society are

Continued on Page 06

## 'Imran copter expenses amount to Rs 430 million'

DNA

PESHAWAR: Helicopter expense details of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan were presented in the Senate by the Cabinet Division during a session Friday. According to the Cabinet Division's written reply submitted to the upper house of parliament, the expenses incurred on the former prime minister's helicopter rides from January 2019 to March 2022 were more than Rs430 million. It stated that Khan completed 1,579 VVIP mission hours on the chopper during the said time. The reply further mentioned that the VVIP copter flights in 2019, on which the former premier flew, cost over Rs130 million with 479 hours of VVIP flights. In 2020, as per

Continued on Page 06

## Minister claims Russia to give discounted oil

A day earlier, Foreign Minister had said Pakistan "is not receiving" any discounted energy



STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Petroleum Musadik Malik said on Friday that Russian officials had "clearly" told Pakistan they would provide discounted crude oil at the same rates as other countries or even lower. "We are taking talks [with Russia on crude oil] forward," he said while addressing a press conference in Islamabad. His comments came a day after Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari's interview in which he said

Continued on Page 06

## Talks afoot, IMF programme not suspended

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister of State for Finance Aisha Ghaus Pasha said on Friday that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programme has not been suspended and the talks were afoot ministry level, while technical review is being carried out. State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) Governor told National Assembly Standing Committee on Finance that the \$33 billion payments had to be made in the current fiscal year out of which debt is \$23 billion and current account deficit \$10 billion. He further told the committee that the

Continued on Page 06

## Russia fires scores of missiles in one of its biggest attacks

The head of a Russian proxy "people's militia" in Luhansk said a civilian had been killed by Ukrainian shelling in the town of Svatove, some 70 km (40 miles) further south

NEWS DESK

KYIV: Russia fired more than 70 missiles at Ukraine on Friday in one of its biggest attacks since the start of the war, knocking out power in the second biggest city and forcing Kyiv to bring in emergency blackouts nationwide, Ukrainian officials said. Two people were killed when an apartment block was hit in central Kryvyi Rih and another died in shelling in Kherson in the south, they said. Russian-installed officials in occupied eastern Ukraine said 12 people had died in Ukrainian shelling. Kyiv warned late on Thursday that Moscow planned a new all-out offensive early next year, around a year after its Feb. 24 invasion, which has destroyed huge areas of Ukraine but brought little of it under Moscow's control. Russia has rained missiles

on Ukrainian energy infrastructure almost weekly since early October after several battlefield defeats, but Friday's attack seemed to have caused more damage than many others, with snow and ice now widespread. Minister German Galushchenko said at least nine power generating facilities had been hit. Moscow says the attacks are aimed at disabling Ukraine's military. Ukrainians call them a war crime. "They want to destroy us, and make us slaves. But we will not surrender. We will endure," said Lidiya Vasileva, 53, as she headed for shelter at a Kyiv railway station. The governor of the Dnipropetrovsk region that includes Kryvyi Rih, President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's home town, said a missile had hit an apartment block there. "Two people were killed. At least five were wounded, including two children," Valentyn Reznichenko posted. A third person died in a fire after shell-

ing in Kherson, authorities said, and Kharkiv in the east was also badly hit. "There is colossal damage to infrastructure, primarily the energy system," city mayor Ihor Terekhov said. "I ask you to be patient with what is happening now. I know that in your houses there is no light, no heating, no water supply." Liudmyla Kovytko, cooking at an emergency food distribution point, said life had to go on. "We heard explosions, the power went out. People need to be fed. We are cooking on a wood stove." Russian forces occupy around a fifth of Ukraine in its south and east and many soldiers have been reported killed and wounded on both sides in brutal fighting, although neither issues detailed reports of their own military casualties. Russian-installed officials said latest Ukrainian shelling had killed civilians in two places.

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ISLAMABAD: Well Known Egyptian Businessman Naguib Sawiris calls on PM Shehbaz Sharif. - DNA

**ECP seeks census result for timely polls**  
PBS had to provide the provisional results of the census by Dec 31

NEWS DESK

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) Friday expressed its inability to conduct general elections as per the schedule if the final results of the seventh census are not provided to the body by March 31, 2023. In a letter to the Ministry of Planning, Development, and Special Initiatives secretary, ECP Special Secretary Zafar Iqbal Hussain wrote: "It would be difficult for the ECP to undertake the exercise of fresh delimitation of constituencies as per Article 51(5) of the Constitution, complete other electoral activities mentioned above and conduct of General Election-2023 in time as per Constitutional mandate in case official results are not provided on or before March 31, 2023."

He maintained that a meeting between the chief election commissioner and chief statistician was held on December 8, wherein the latter informed the former that the Council of Common Interests approved the timelines for the conduct of the seventh Population and Housing Census "digitally" in its 49th session. As per the initial plan, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) had to provide the provisional results of the census by December 31, 2022, to the ECP, read the letter. "In the meeting, PBS took the stance that initially PBS engaged NRTC for

Continued on Page 06

## PM instructs cabinet to adopt aggressive approach against PTI

The PM also directs the government's narrative to be spread among the masses

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Friday instructed cabinet members to adopt an aggressive approach against Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) narrative. In the session, according to sources, the PM discussed the government's future political strategy with his cabinet - including federal ministers, advisors and special assistants. Sources told that the government has decided to highlight PTI's political and economic failures during their four-year tenure in the federal government. The PM further ordered the government's narrative to be spread among the masses, especially on social media, sources said. The prime minister has been on an offensive against the PTI for a while now, a demonstration of which was seen in his press talk on Monday. He called the PTI leaders "heartless" and "minions" in the press conference primarily focused on Daily Mail's apology to him.

In the press conference alongside federal cabinet members, the prime minister said: "They thought that if this damaged Pakistan's reputation, it won't matter. They wanted to embarrass the Sharif family no matter what." The prime minister said when the article was published in 2019, PTI's ministers were upbeat about the publication of the article and started levelling baseless allegations against the Sharif family. The PM also called Khan's sale of the gift watch "a cheap move", adding that nobody can deny that the watch was not sold after the evidence that has come to the fore. "I do not use the word 'fraud', but this is what Imran did. The shop owner - whose receipts that PTI showed relating to the watch - has also clarified that it is not his handwriting on the receipt," PM Shehbaz said. The prime minister called for "introspection" to understand how did such a person rule Pakistan, who did not only commit "fraud", but hurt Pakistan on two important fronts - foreign policy and economy.

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# CPEC development work to be accelerated

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Development process on CPEC's Special Economic Zones to be accelerated; said the Minister for Planning and Development while chairing a meeting to review the progress on implementation status of CPEC Projects.

The meeting was held in the Ministry of Planning and Development that was attended by Mr. Tariq Fatemi, Special Assistant to Prime Minister, officials from Ministries of Interior, Foreign Affairs, Energy, Communication, Commerce, Aviation; Board of Investment, Embassy of Pakistan - Beijing, National Highway Authority, Transport department - Government of Punjab, LESCO, National Highway Authority, CEO, CPPAG, Islamabad



CEO, KPEZDMC, Peshawar were also in attendance in the meeting. The Minister for Planning and Development while referring the Prime

Minister's visit of China and 11th Joint Coordination Committee (JCC) observed that the PM's visit of China and 11th JCC have breathed a new lease of life in CPEC.

The Minister directed the concerned departments and Ministries to ensure review progress on the implementation of the decisions taken in the 11th JCC meeting. Minister directed the concerned officials to expedite the development process on 1000 Acre Islamabad Special Economic Zone while also directing the Pakistani Embassy in Beijing to follow up the matters pertaining to CPEC projects. Minister expressed displeasure over the inaction on the part of concerned departments on matters concerning the uninterrupted power supply to Orange Line Project.



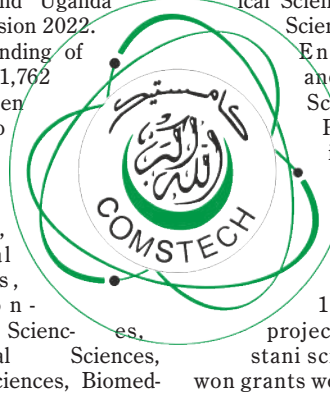
ISLAMABAD: Adviser to Prime Minister on National Heritage, Culture, Political and Public Affairs Amir Muqam meeting with Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif.—DNA

# COMSTECH funds Rupees 50 Million science projects

DNA

ISLAMABAD: OIC ministerial standing committee on scientific and technological cooperation (COMSTECH), Islamabad and International Foundation for Science (IFS), Stockholm, Sweden have selected 18 research projects from 12 OIC member states - Bangladesh, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Mali, Morocco, Niger, Nigeria, Pakistan, Togo,

Tunisia, and Uganda for the session 2022. A total funding of US\$ 221,762 has been granted to projects in the fields of Food Sciences, Biological Sciences, Environmental Sciences, Agricultural Sciences, Natural Sciences, Biomed-



ical Sciences, Physical Sciences, Genetic Engineering, and Health Sciences. Project funding granted in this session ranges from US\$ 10,000 to 15,000 each project. Two Pakistani scientists have won grants worth Rs. 6.06

million for their research projects. COMSTECH and IFS agreed in February 1998 to enter into a collaborative program to strengthen the capacity in developing countries which are members of OIC to conduct relevant and high-quality research in sciences related to the management, use and conservation of biological resources. The program is funded in equal parts by COMSTECH and IFS.

## Three day Theater festival kicks off

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) here Friday kicked off a three-day Theater Festival featuring thought-provoking plays by university students and theater groups. The National University Theater Festival "Tamasha 22" has been organized in collaboration with Quaidiam Dramatic Club, Quaid e Azam University Islamabad while dramas by students of universities, colleges, and youth groups from all over Pakistan will be staged till December 18. The festival includes mimes, plays, reenactments, and cultural dances by young students from across Pakistan. Presenting a fusion of performances by student theatrical groups of Pakistan, plays based on social issues will be staged providing the residents of twin cities with a quality entertainment experience. On the first day, a presentation on the essentials of the theatre was given followed by a mime performance by UET Lahore, musical performance by Nadir Abbas from QDC Islamabad, mime performance by QDC Islamabad, and a musical performance by Ghilman Rai from QDC Islamabad. On 17th December, stage plays including Eclipse by Iqra University, Chaker by QDC, Islamabad, Aasab by International Islamic University, Islamabad, and Bhangra Dance Performance by Agriculture University, Faisalabad will be staged. Director General PNCA, Ayub Jamali told APP that trend of quality and thoughtful theater plays an important role in highlighting and resolving the issues like education, training, and social problems. "The history of theater is connected with the history of human society and it also leads towards revolutions in shaping the society," he said.—APP

## Unmerited helicopter bill to be sent back: Governor

PESHAWAR: Governor Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Ghulam Ali, has said that he will send back the unmerited helicopter bill meant to provide blanket immunity to the illegal users of the provincial government's helicopter after clearly writing his suggestions on it by using the powers conferred to him by the constitution. This bill, he said, was prepared and passed through the provincial assembly in a hasty process overnight to provide blanket immunity to the leader of a specific party by the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government. Briefly talking to the media here on Friday, Governor Ghulam Ali said the constitution and law give privilege only to the governor and chief minister to utilize helicopter service during routine official affairs or in any emergency. The permission

of using government-owned helicopters was not for a common man or leader of any political party, the governor said and added that he will only use the powers conferred to him by the constitution and send back the bill after writing his note on it. He categorically said that only the governor and chief minister have the legal right to use the provincial government's helicopter as they were the constitutional chief executives of the province. To a question, the governor said there was no possibility of governor rule in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He said the general elections were due within around eight months and he would play his role in maintaining the political temperature normal. The PTI government, he said, tried to legalize the questionable use of

the provincial government's helicopters by unauthorized persons through this bill. So far, he said, around 1,800 people used the provincial government's helicopter and PTI chief Imran Khan, Ali Ameen Gandapur, Asad Qaisar and Ibrarul Haq were at the top of the list of its users. He said PTI chief Imran Khan travelled 137 times in the KP government's helicopter, expenditures of which amount to Rs 50 million on the official rate while on the commercial rate the amount counts at Rs 70 million. The governor continued that the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) in the inquiry report has hinted at recovering this amount. If a proper recovery was made from 1,800 people, the amount would increase manifold and a good precedent would be set for the future.—APP

## PDMA releases Rs 362.2 mln for affectees of Zarb-e-Azb

The PDMA said that each verified affected family was being paid an amount of Rs12,000 as part of financial assistance and an additional amount of Rs 8,000 in head of ration every month on a regular basis to minimize their financial agonies

PESHAWAR: Provincial Disaster Management Authority (PDMA) Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has released a fund of Rs 362.2 million under financial assistance and ration to the affectees of Operation Zarb-e-Azb in North Waziristan. The amount would be distributed among around 18,000 registered and verified affected families through SIM card messages in the next few days. According to

PDMA press release issued here on Friday, the recent release is the 100th installment issued in this connection; it is released on regular basis for the affectees



PDMA

of Operation Zarb-e-Azb in North Waziristan, who still have not been repatriated to their area. These affectees also include those affected families, which recently returned from Afghanistan via the Ghulam Khan Border. The formal verification of these has been completed through NADRA. The PDMA said that each verified affected family was being paid an amount of Rs12,000 as part of financial

## Solo art show on visual story telling concludes

ISLAMABAD: A solo show exploring visual story telling by artist Fazil Hussain Mousavi concluded here on Friday at Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA). As many as 20 art pieces were put on display in the exhibition titled "Healing the Wounds" which also included an art conversation by Fazil Hussain Mousavi with Muhammad Hassan Miraj on the unique collection that carried calligraphy, text, figurative art, symbolism and eye catching images that have deep meanings and messages. The art pieces were created with the medium of print, watercolor, ink wash, tea wash and gold leaf on paper. Fazil Mousavi is an artist from Balochistan with a niche of visual storytelling. His work has been displayed in many exhibitions, the last being Oxford University, UK. He is the founder of the Sketch Club in Quetta. The sketch club is an art initiative that expresses resilience through arts. The Sketch Club has received a lot of attention through its international exhibitions in Sydney, Melbourne and Los Angeles. Founded in 2009 in Quetta Pakistan the purpose was to give back to society by transferring skills and knowledge to the youth of the community. Fazil shares how the Hazara community responds to the different forms of 'stigmatization' through creativity, said the organizers.—APP

## JAC urges govt to reverse decision on Bharakahu Bypass

ISLAMABAD: The Joint Action Committee (JAC) Quaid-i-Azam University Islamabad on Friday demanded of the government to reverse the decision of constructing Bharakahu Bypass on the university's land. The demand was made during a press briefing held here to highlight the issue of Bharakahu bypass. The President of the Academic staff association, Officer welfare association, Employee welfare association and QAU alumni association briefed the media. QAU had started onsite teach-in, to protest the construction of the Bharakahu Bypass project, which entered its 13th day. The faculty, staff, students and alumni of Quaid-i-Azam University have started the "Onsite Teach-In" at the construction site. The students attended the classes at the protest site to register their protest and minimize academic loss. A symbolic peace walk was also organized by the Joint

Action Committee, comprising representatives of academics, officers, employees, and QAU alumni associations who showed severe reservations about the bisection of the university land. The participants highlighted that the QAU community was not against any public welfare project; however, the university land should not be used. The bypass should be realigned as per the original plan. They said that the project would split the university's land into two non-communicating parts, and that was not acceptable. The Joint Action Committee Quaid-i-Azam University (QAU) Islamabad released a fact sheet on important issues about QAU land and the ongoing Bharakahu Bypass Project. According to the fact sheet, Bharakahu Bypass project had far-reaching implications for the university, which violates the sanctity of the only National University of the country, bisecting the cam-

pus into two noncontiguous barricaded parts, and separating the entire front of the university on Murree-road from rest of the main campus thus diminishing any chance of having a dedicated road access (from Murree-road) for the university. It is detrimental to the natural environment of the university area, including the extremely valuable Botanical Garden of the university, violating the master plan of the university, including sites reserved for National Research Centers, and consuming about 600 Kanals of precious university land rendering significant additional land unusable, while leaving about 2000 Kanals of most precious (front) university land at the mercy of land encroachers, the sheet added. "Last but not the least, it destroys the peaceful academic and research environment by sowing the seeds of discord and unrest amongst students, faculty, alumni and employees of the university."—APP

## PARC develops 3rd aeroponic greenhouse

ISLAMABAD: National Agricultural Research Center (NARC) in collaboration with the Korean Program on International Agricultural (KOPIA) has established 3rd aeroponic greenhouse to produce virus-free seed potatoes for enhancing the local output of the crop. The initiative was part of Pakistan-Korea cooperation in the field of agriculture development and the transfer of technology to enhance the output of crops and farm income, particularly small landholders across the country to alleviate poverty in the rural areas, said Chairman Pakistan Agriculture Research Council (PARC) Dr Ghulam Mu-

hammad Ali. Talking to APP here on Friday, he said that potato seed through aeroponic technology would save Rs8 billion, which was being spent annually on the import of potato seed into the country. He said that only one percent of potato seed is produced locally as the potato is the fourth most important and cash-generating crop, but due to the lack of good quality seeds, it is facing problems like reduction in production and the initiative would help to produce enough seeds to tackle with local needs. Currently, he said pota-

atoes are cultivated on an area of 300,000 hectares, while 20,000 tons of potato seeds are imported into Pakistan every year, adding that the imported seed was costly and the crop was affected due to the spread of the virus, hence reducing the output as well as profitability. Dr Ali, further informed that in collaboration with the Korean government technical cooperation flagship project, potato seed production through aeroponic technology, post-harvest reduction in aflatoxin in chili, and quality fodder production for livestock is being implemented successfully in the country.—APP

## AIOU organizes seminar

ISLAMABAD: A seminar 'Importance of Oral History in Pashtun Culture' was held here at Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU) on Friday. Speakers at the seminar emphasized the need for joint efforts to find and preserve lost traditions. The seminar was organized by the Chair of Creating Archives of Intelligentsia of Pakistan AIOU and presided over by Professor Fateh Muhammad Malik, well-known Pashtun historian and writer Dr Abaseen Yousafzai was the keynote speaker. Talking about

the history of Pashtun cul-



ture, Dr. Abaseen Yousafzai said that the Pashtuns did not write their history until 100 years ago. He said that the culture of Pakhtun has reached to a new generation

through folklore and traditional stories, and the power of storytelling keeps history alive. "Shalwar Qameez is also a part of Pakhtun culture which has been given the status of national dress. Abbasin Yousafzai also highlighted the traditions of hospitality, hujra and jirga in Pakhtun culture." He said, "All our cultures are related to each other and are integrated." Other speakers included the head history chair, Inamullah Sheikh, and senior Advisor Muhammad Rafiq Tahir. Inamullah Sheikh said, "There is a need to preserve integrity."—APP

# Encroachments go unchecked in Attock

QAZI SHOAB KHAN

ATTOCK: The higher authorities kept mum over the mushrooming growth of encroachments on the state land within the jurisdiction of municipality of Attock, Hazro as well as along the inter provincial route of Punjab-KPK near Hassanabdal, Hattian, green belt Kamra Cantt, Gondal Mondi up to Attock Khurd causing huge financial loss to the national exchequer ignoring directives of the Government to retrieve occupied land from the clutches of the influential "Bhatta Mafia". During a detailed survey, it has been revealed that the commercial plazas, filling stations, restaurants, shops, private buildings worth of rupees millions illegally constructed by the land grabbers in flagrant vi-

olation of the Punjab Development of Cities Act, 1976, Punjab Building and Zoning Regulations 2007 even without getting any formal NOC from the Ministry of Defense, NHA, District Administration, NH&MW Police, Cantonment Boards, Provincial Highways Department, Public Health Department and Police. Earlier, in a massive operation of the Tehsil Municipal Administration of Hazro jointly carried out by the Punjab Highways department, public health engineering department, district administration and police demolished the scores of fences, sheds and other encroachments including sunshades, grills, walls and extended portions of shops with heavy machinery while meat stalls, cabins and pushcarts on footpaths were also confiscated which were causing traffic

gridlocks besides nuisance for the general public on major roads near Hattian chowk, Jehanian chowk, Tarbela Chowk, Fawara Chowk, Toll Tax Plaza, Dua Chowk, Stadium Chowk and Gondal Mandi Chowk. The anti-encroachment team also removed cement slabs from rain drains placed by owners of meat shops. The unbridled encroachers are also razing illegal shopping plazas along the inter linked road of Gondal Hazro with the blessing of Revenue Department, Tehsil Municipal Administration, Punjab Highways department through their front men involved in the real state business. The state land of Gondal Mandi being a trade hub having population of more than 10 thousands is also a focal inter-linked point with more than 84 villages of Tehsils Hazro and Attock is situated along the inter

provincial bordering route of KPK-Punjab contributing more than Rs.200 millions per annum to the budget. Unfortunately, the state land within the prescribed limits of National Highways Authority is being frequently grabbed by the "Qabza Mafia" for unlawful and authorized construction of plazas, filling stations, car washing service decks, restaurants, tea stalls, shops, car parkings, adjacent with the Grave yard, Rural Health Centre, Cattle lock up, Govt Boys School, Police Chowki, Service road, up to Nallah Chail Bridge with the connivance of their abettors. The flow of traffic usually remains blocked specially during the weekly cattle market on every Monday whereas the mobile squad of local police and motor police on duty seems helpless due to mushrooming growth of encroach-

ments. Even, the Bus Bays and foot paths of both sides are occupied by the illegal parking of public transports causing public nuisance besides fatal accidents of the senior citizens, women, children and general public at large. On the other hands, life threats of Dengue virus are also hovering on the drainage system near foot path of Bus Bay choked by the encroachers leading towards Nallah Chail resulting the redundant raining water spread over the link roads of the main National Highways. The complaints of encroachments in this area reached at the alarming situation within a few months under the shelter of the influential racket while the issues were also reported to all the relevant authorities through written, media, and other forums but nothing could be heard till to date

with the obvious reasons. The socio-political and general public of the area demanded of the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Chief Minister of the Punjab and other helm of affairs of the country with the humble request to kindly look into the consideration besides taking strict action against the delinquents posing life threats to common people as and financial loss to the national exchequer since long in particular. Meanwhile, the Director National Highways Authority Maintenance Division Rawalpindi Mr. Inamur Rehman and Assistant Director Raja Obaid while giving their version on these multiple complaints told that the entire case was forwarded to the District Administration Attock for demarcation of the state land before taking further legal action, accordingly.

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## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### December

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



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### Airlines

Turkish Airlines.....	8494949
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### Emergency

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



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WASA Rawalpindi.....	5555489
CAA.....	9281092



### Hospitals

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MH.....	561116
Chant Hospital.....	9270907-11
DHQ.....	5556311-4
RGH.....	9290301-7
Holy Family.....	9290322-7
PIMS.....	9261170-79
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Shifa International.....	4603666



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RDA.....	5555864
TMA.....	5770886
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### Islamabad Metropolitan

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

### Water Tank

Islamabad.....	0321-5744480
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# Libya interested to promote trade ties with Pakistan

Mirza M Afridi, Deputy Chairman Senate of Pakistan highlighted the business and investment opportunities for Libyan investors in Gwadar and CPEC project and stressed that they should take full advantage of them to achieve further growth

SAIFULLAH ANSAR

ISLAMABAD: Fouzi Altahir Rahoumah Salim, First Deputy Speaker of Libyan House of Representatives said that Libya considers Pakistan an important country for business relations and is interested to further promote trade and economic ties with it. He said this while addressing a dinner reception hosted by Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry in honor of the 12-member visiting delegation of Libyan House of Representatives to Pakistan.

Fouzi Altahir Rahoumah Salim said that Pakistan is a beautiful country and investors of Libya would try to take advantage of the business and investment opportunities available in its economy. He said that by investing in Pakistan, Libyan investors would play a role to further improve the economies of both countries. He thanked ICCI for hosting a dinner reception in honor of the visiting Libyan delegation and assured that he would play a role in promoting business linkages between the private sectors of both countries to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes. Mirza Muhammad Afridi, Deputy Chairman Senate of Pakistan



highlighted the business and investment opportunities for Libyan investors in Gwadar and CPEC project and stressed that they should take full advantage of them to achieve further growth. He said that many international companies are doing successful business in Pakistan and added that by investing in Pakistan, Libyan investors can export to many other promising markets.

Speaking at the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry said that the Libya's annual turnover is over US\$ 48 billion, but its existing level of bilateral trade with Pakistan is just around US\$ 14 million, which is not in commensurate with the actual potential of both countries. He said that Libya is importing many products including agricul-

tural products, construction material, consumer goods and Pakistan can supply these products to Libya at competitive prices. He stressed that both countries should encourage regular exchange of trade delegations to explore all untapped areas of mutual cooperation that would help further enhance bilateral trade and economic relations between the two countries. He assured that

ICCI would provide all possible support and cooperation in connecting the Libyan investors with right partners in Pakistan. Senator Afnan Ullah Khan, Faad Waheed Senior Vice President ICCI, Ajmal Baloch, Amir Hamza, Akhtar Hussain, Dr. Muhammad Usman, Raja Imtiaz, Humayun Kabir, Khalid Chaudhry, Saif ur Rehman Khan and others were also present at the occasion.

## Presiding officers assigned magisterial powers

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Friday authorized the presiding officers, appointed for Local Government Polls in Islamabad, to exercise the powers of first class magistrate under the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1898 from Dec 29 to 31. A notification in this respect was issued by ECP Deputy Director (Local Government Elections-ICT) Naveed-ur-Rehman.

The presiding officers shall exercise the powers of first class magistrate in respect of election-related offenses defined in section 169 punishable under Section 171, punishable under Section 174 of the Election Act, 2017 and may take cognizance of any such offense under Section 190 of the Code of Criminal Procedure. The offenses will be tried summarily under the relevant provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure. - APP

## ICT admin seals two sheesha bars

ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) administration on Friday sealed two sheesha bars and arrested the managers of both the bars. On the instructions of Deputy Commissioner ICT, assistant commissioners visited sheesha centers and cafes showed resentment over the situation, arrested managers of two sheesha bars, seized hukkas, their substances, flavored tobacco and coals, said a press release issued by the ICT administration. During the visit, the administration warned violators and directed them not to serve sheesha/hukkas till the finalization of rules, otherwise, stern action would be taken against offenders. Meanwhile, ACs inspected 107 different areas to ensure adherence to the government-notified rate list for essential items. During the visits, profiteers were fined of Rs15,000 for overcharging, whereas, eleven professional beggars were also arrested. Furthermore, the administration also sealed two illegal petrol selling agencies and two illegal LPG filling stations and arrested one person for violation. - APP

## NBF's countrywide campaign attracts book lovers

ISLAMABAD: The National Book Foundation (NBF)'s book fair campaign is attracting a large number of book lovers, especially students, from across the country by arranging a variety of books on discounted rates. The book fairs are being arranged on daily basis in different cities with the aim to attract the young generation towards book reading and instill in them a thirst for knowledge. The book fairs are also aimed at providing quality books on up to 50 percent discounted price so that no one is deprived from this facility. - APP

## RPO directs Murree admin to facilitate tourists

RAWALPINDI: Regional Police Officer (RPO) Nasir Mehmood Satti and Commissioner Saqib Manan have directed the authorities concerned of Murree district to utilize all available resources to facilitate tourists during snowfall season. The RPO and the commissioner during a visit reviewed arrangements finalized for snowfall season in Murree district. Deputy Commissioner Murree, Ahmed Hasan Ranjha, Senior Superintendent Police, Operations Rawalpindi, Wasim Riaz Khan, SDPO Murree, DSP Traffic Murree, In-charge Rescue 1122, representatives of Forest Department, Cantonment Board Murree, Highway, Motorway, IEESCO, and departments concerned were present on the occasion. The officers gave a detailed briefing to the RPO and the commissioner about the final arrangements. They also visited different points to review traffic arrangements and issued instructions to the officers concerned. All institutions should finalize best possible arrangements and measures to facilitate visitors, the RPO said and also instructed to ensure provision of all possible services to tourists. All the departments should perform their duties with commitment and dedication and promote mutual cooperation. It was informed that a special control room had been set up at the assistant commissioner office, Murree which was working round the clock to guide and assist the tourists. - APP

## E-commerce experts call Pakistani writers to exploit online potential

ISLAMABAD: E-Commerce experts have urged the Pakistani writers to enhance their digital skills and sell their books on online platforms as readers around the world spent \$405 million on e-books in 2020. Talking to APP here on Friday, an e-commerce expert Syed Moneeb Ali urged the writers to use online platforms for showcasing their literary work globally. He said that writers can register their accounts to sell books on e-commerce platforms including Amazon. He said that Amazon had added Pakistan to its seller's list and now writers were getting the benefit of Kindle - a series of e-readers designed and marketed by Amazon. He informed

that Amazon Kindle devices were enabling users to browse, buy, download, and read through wireless networking to the Kindle store. He said that publishing takes less than five minutes and the book appears in Kindle stores worldwide within 72 hours. He stated that 72 percent of the e-reader market belongs to Amazon Kindle while the share belongs to Barnes and Noble Nook is 10 percent. He said books with eye-catching covers and valuable content attract readers on digital platforms. Describing the benefits of e-books, a consumer Waqas Khan said that reading has become convenient for people due to easy search methods and the availability

of e-books. He said talented Pakistani writers can have a good share in e-book market. He said online books save the trips to the library and readers can customize the font size as per desire. He said e-books are portable and easy to carry and one e-book reader can hold thousands of books. "Text-to-speech and read aloud feature are also helpful for children and adults with a learning disability or with visual impairment", he added. Talking to APP, a writer Muhammad Akbar said that paper books were thought of as less strain by many readers and being into radiation by electronic devices was not healthy for the eyes and brain. He highlighted that

due to the easy publication of e-books, unauthentic and less credible literature was reaching the audience. He said that some books were tempered and distributed on the internet and readers were unable to analyze the difference. He said that piracy and disrespect of intellectual property had also become a common phenomenon due to the wider circulation of soft copies. Muhammad Akbar pointed out that in the age of technology, consumers should get benefit from the technology but also understand the hazards which can damage the ethics, rights and respect of others. He advised the readers to choose reliable platforms for searching and downloading the content.

## Int'l Human Solidarity Day to be marked on Dec 20

ISLAMABAD: International Human Solidarity Day will be marked on December 20 (Tuesday) to celebrate unity in diversity. It also aims to remind people of the importance of solidarity in working toward eradicating poverty. On International Human Solidarity Day, governments are reminded of their commitments to international agreements on the need for human solidarity as an initiative to fight against poverty. People are encouraged to debate ways to promote solidarity and find innovative methods to help eradicate poverty, interests, purposes or sympathies. In the Millennium Declaration, world leaders agreed that solidarity was a value that was important to international relations in the 21st century. In light of globalization and growing inequality, the UN realized that strong international solidarity and to achieve its Millennium Development Goals. The UN was founded on the idea of unity and harmony via the concept of collective members' solidarity to and security. On December 22, 2005, the UN General Assembly proclaimed that International Solidarity Day would take place on December 20 each year. The event aimed to raise people's awareness of the importance of understanding the value of human solidarity. The assembly felt that the awareness of the importance of development agenda and promoting a global solidarity. The assembly felt that the and the spirit of sharing was important in combating poverty. - APP



## Int'l moot calls for Russia, Muslim world cooperation

ISLAMABAD: The speakers at an international conference in Moscow called for strengthening cooperation and partnerships between Islamic world and Russia in the field of media for spreading the truth and countering "misinformation". The conference, titled "Russia and the Islamic World: Practical Steps in Media Cooperation", was co-organized by the Group of Strategic Vision Russia - Islamic World (GSV), Sputnik International News Agency, and the Union of OIC News Agencies (UNA). The event was attended by officials of the Russian Federation, the OIC, representatives of regional and international organizations and media professionals from various countries, said a press

release received here Friday. In his video address, President of the Republic of Tatarstan and Chairman of the Group of Strategic Vision "Russia - Islamic World" Rustam Minnikhanov emphasized that relations between Russia and the Islamic world had historically been known for their high level of trust and cooperation. Calling for collaboration to counter the spread of misinformation, he said cooperation with Muslim countries through mass media was one of the key aspects of Russia's international policy. For his part, the Chairman of the Federation Council Committee on International Affairs, Grigory Karasin, underlined that Russia was a multinational and multi-con-

fessional country and that its citizens traditionally supported strengthening ties with Islamic countries. He said the conference was aimed at discussing ways to establish equal cooperation between Russia and Muslim countries and to provide citizens with equal access to truthful, unbiased information through establishing direct cooperation between the Union of OIC news agencies and major Russian media outlets. Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the OIC Ramazan Abdulatipov recalled the recent visit of the OIC secretary-general and his deputies to Russia, when "...the main directions of interaction between Russia and the OIC were outlined." - Agencies

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Ph: 051-2261960, 051-2266165





## Briefs

## Police search 109 houses in different areas

RAWALPINDI :District Police on special directives of City Police Officer (CPO) Rawalpindi on Friday searched 109 houses and 27 shops in the jurisdiction of Saddar Baroni, Naseerabad, Gungmandi, and Bani police stations. According to a police spokesman, heavy police contingents, Elite Force, Special Branch personnel and Ladies police under the supervision of senior police officers conducted a search operation and searched 109 houses, 27 shops, besides checking the particulars of 23 tenants. Over 400 persons were also checked during the operations, he added. Senior Superintendent of Police, Operations, Rawalpindi Waseem Riaz Khan said that search operations were being conducted to net criminals and other law-breakers.—APP

## Seven arrested on cock fight gambling

RAWALPINDI :In a crackdown against the anti-social elements, Police on Friday arrested seven gamblers besides recovering bet money of Rs 38,710 and two motorcycles, nine mobile phones and other items from their possession, a police spokesman said. Gujjar Khan police got information that some people were gambling on the cock fight in the area. During the course of action, police arrested the gamblers identified as Zubair, Rashid, Rais, Ehtesham, Najam, Junaid and Akhlaq. Police had registered a case against all of them under the gambling act, he added. Superintendent of Police Saddar Muhammad Nabeel Khokhar appreciated the performance of the Gujjar Khan police team and directed them to take strict action against such anti-social elements who were violating the law.—APP

## 15 drug peddlers, bootleggers arrested

RAWALPINDI :Rawalpindi District Police in their ongoing operations against law-breakers, conducted raids in different areas and rounded up 15 drug peddlers, bootleggers and illegal weapon holders besides seizing over six kg charras, 30 liters liquor, two 30 bore pistols, a 12 bore rifle, ammunition and other items from their possession. According to a police spokesman, Rattaamral police held Suleman with 1050 grams charras while Morgah police sent behind the bars an accused named Kamran for having 1610 grams charras. Wah Cantt police recovered 1400 grams charras and netted Hafeez while Saddar Wah police rounded up Nasir for having 280 grams charras. Gujjar Khan, Rawat, Sadiqabad, R.A.Bazaar, Dharmial and Kahuta police conducted raids in their respective jurisdiction and arrested Shujat, Ibrar, Tufail, Babar Shehzad, Farhad, Feroz ud Din, Jameel and Numan and recovered 1180 grams charras and 30 liters liquor.—APP

## Sanaullah pays tribute to APS martyrs

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Interior Rana Sanaullah on Friday paid tribute to the Army Public School (APS) martyrs and their bereaved families and brave teachers on the eighth anniversary of the attack. "December 16 is the day, which will continue to remind us the great sacrifices of APS martyrs," the minister said in a message released on the eighth anniversary of a terrorist attack on the APS Peshawar. He said the APS tragedy united the entire nation against terrorism and religious extremism. The entire nation got united and defeated terrorism, he added. Terming the terrorists, who martyred innocent and young children during the attack, "beasts" and "brutal", Sana said the APS tragedy was one of the saddest incidents in the country's history.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Senior journalists Mohsin Raza Khan, Ansar M Bhatti, Mateen Haider, Tariq Mahmood and Ali Furqan posing for a picture with the Ambassador of Poland Maciej Pisarski. The Polish ambassador had invited these journalists for a briefing on Pakistan-Poland relations.— DNA

# Reforms, democratic nurseries critical for political system

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Improving the electoral system, empowering local governments, and revitalizing democratic nurseries - local governments, student, trade unions, etc., - are imperative to ensure the quality of representation and efficient working of legislators in parliament. This would lead to better governance, provided the instructions and guidelines given by the Constitution of Pakistan are followed in letter and spirit at higher as well as grassroots levels. These insights emerged during the third phase of the Grand National Dialogue on 'Pakistan's Political System and Governance', held with students at the National University of Sciences & Technol-

ogy (NUST), Islamabad, by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), Islamabad, in collaboration with Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI) and NUST's Department of Government & Public Policy. The youth interaction session was addressed by Khalid Rahman, chairman, IPS, Dr. Syed Tahir Hijazi, former vice-chancellor, Muslim Youth University, and former member (governance), Planning Commission of Pakistan, and Farzana Yaqoob, co-founder, Man-taq, and former minister of AJ&K, while Sana Maqbool, broadcast journalist at PTV World, moderated the session. Khalid Rahman pointed out that political system and governance are related terms; however, it is difficult to sequence them as cause and effect because each seems to equally depend

on the other. This chicken-and-egg situation depicts that work is needed to be done in every dimension of governance and legislation by adopting reformative measures and the correct mindset. He further mentioned that, in order to bring reformative changes for better governance, it is significant to dispense clarity to four fundamental questions: Who has the power? Who makes the decisions and how? To what extent the stakeholders are taken on board? How effective is the system of accountability, i.e. reward and punishment? Particularly significant to this is introducing reforms to the electoral process and legislative system of the country with an aim to ensure proportionate representation in parliament, competent decision-makers in

the legislature, inclusivity of all stakeholders, and accountability for decisions and actions. Pointing out the flaws of inherited policies and governance models, Tahir Hijazi stressed that in order to fast-track the delivery of services, the need of the hour is to redefine the roles of people in governance, bring proficient and skillful people as decision-makers, and hold everyone answerable through a system of accountability. In this regard, he argued that the youth have to play a prominent role in the future and, as an asset, they must be trained and schooled in politics, electoral procedures, and decision-making. This way the future leadership of Pakistan will originate from these educated, informed, and cognizant youth. In addition

to these aspects, there is also the context of culture behind every governance success and failure, stated Farzana Yaqoob. She further pointed out that the governance system is centered on chaos management since Pakistan's inception and has not moved towards planned development and cohesion. An important factor, as highlighted by her, within this context of culture, is the elite capture of government, even at the grassroots levels, which must be eliminated by including more people in the decision-making process. Talking about the role of youth, she also stressed that youngsters must be given exposure to political culture. Moreover, women's representation must be improved, however, they should also be more proactive, she added.

## National readers moot begins to promote reading habit

Anwar Masood known for his Punjabi humorous poetry will have a mushaira while a panel of speakers will include personalities of national fame including Babar Awan, Aitzaz Ahsan, Walid Iqbal, Sadaf Raza, Tauseeq Haider, Dr Ashfaq Virk, and Islamic Scholar from Saudi Arabia Dr Khalid Al Dossary

ISLAMABAD :National Readers Conference arranged by "Read Pakistan" will be held on Saturday with an aim to strengthen the habit of reading among people and to enhance quality literacy instruction among citizens. Chairman Read Pakistan Farrukh Dall said the conference would be held on December 17 at Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) consisting of various activities, including panel discussions, speeches, stage play, a book exchange program, and awards for those working to promote book reading. He

said Anwar Masood known for his Punjabi humorous poetry will have a mushaira while a panel of speakers will include personalities of national fame including Babar Awan, Aitzaz Ahsan, Walid Iqbal, Sadaf Raza, Tauseeq Haider, Dr Ashfaq Virk, and Islamic Scholar from Saudi Arabia Dr Khalid Al Dossary. He said the exchange of books supports the goal to promote literacy and encourage a healthy selection of easily accessible literature. "Participants of the conference are encouraged to read 50 books per year and the best reader will be awarded prizes," he added. He highlighted that the conference welcomed all exhibitors who love literature. "An eco-friendly stationery boutique, Warq Station, library solution providers, Full Stack technology, and craft makers Kostbar have joined hands with the Read Pakistan", he said. He said the book titled "Read Readable - A treasury of quotes on reading" authored by Farrukh Dall and Syeda Fatima Hassan Gillani will be launched at the event. He said volunteers working with dedication, commitment, and passion had been nominated for the awards

and they would receive souvenirs for their incredible and tireless work at the conference. He underscored that civil society, students, and multiple organizations stepped up to support the conference which is a sign indicating that the people of Pakistan love books and have a passion for reading. Talking about Read Pakistan, Farrukh said that it was a registered trust with a team of highly motivated professionals for an educated Pakistan moving ahead to train teachers, librarians, and parents to develop reading habits in the children/youth.—APP

and they would receive souvenirs for their incredible and tireless work at the conference. He underscored that civil society, students, and multiple organizations stepped up to support the conference which is a sign indicating that the people of Pakistan love books and have a passion for reading. Talking about Read Pakistan, Farrukh said that it was a registered trust with a team of highly motivated professionals for an educated Pakistan moving ahead to train teachers, librarians, and parents to develop reading habits in the children/youth.—APP

## Gwadar Port set to process 4,50,000 metric tons of wheat import

ISLAMABAD: Gwadar Port is formally empowered to handle and process 4,50,000 metric tons import of wheat as an official agreement between the Trading Corporation of Pakistan (TCP) and Gwadar International Terminal Limited (GITL) has been inked, opening a new chapter of high-octane logistic activities. According to Gwadar Pro on Friday, the first wheat consignment is highly likely to come from 25th December at Gwadar Port. As per the agreement, the formal processing timeframe will be between 1st February 2023 to 31st March 2023. This deal is a leapfrog toward the optimisation of Gwadar port's innate potential as a logistic hub in the region that will ultimately contribute US\$10 billion of GDP to the economy of Pakistan. IITL official told Gwadar Pro that TCP and GITL sealed the accord on 9th December. Later, on December 13, an important meeting was held with the participation of all stakeholders and discussed operational mechanisms for the import of wheat, he added. The meeting expressed, he said, satisfaction over the existing import procedures and modalities. The meeting also jointly agreed on not seeking any additional modification to make things happen, he mentioned. It is expected that Gwadar port will receive the first consignment of wheat from 25th December, GITL sources said.—DNA

## Pakistan & Turkey: Muslim Alliance in Eurasia

Virtuous routes lead to memorable places, economic and development sectors Pakistan and Turkey combined are progressing in art and culture, since they have much in common and in contrast

MUNAZA KAZMI

Contemporary coordination among Islamabad and Ankara had strengthened not only in the defense, diplomatic and commercial realm but also in social and cultural aspects. The syndicate aiding both countries in creating an advantageous situation, Pakistan's former dependency in procuring arms from NATO countries has quickly been shifted to the sale of artilleries made in Turkey, on the other side Turkey is buying training aircrafts, bombs and drone parts from Pakistan. The remarkable success in this alliance is that, together these two have combined their resources to create the largest warship MILGEM-class PNS Badar which was launched in Karachi in May 2022. Indeed, this is a brilliant illustration of the brotherly cooperation between the two countries in the defense sector, aspirations from bitter experiences of being sanctioned by the West. However, I would say that setback make them self-sufficient. Moreover, both are correspondingly increasing their technological support, let's say Turkish Aerospace Industries have signed memo-

randum for with NUST, Pakistan's leading institution for R&D and faculty exchange programs. In recent years beside defense, economic investment of Turkey in Pakistan has witness growth, for example exceeding Turkish FDI, construction of power projects and chemical production etc. Along with FDI, the bilateral trade between the countries has increased over time, where land-based routes added value. Virtuous routes lead to memorable places, economic and development sectors Pakistan and Turkey combined are progressing in art and culture, since they have much in common and in contrast. Rumi from Turkey and Iqbal from Pakistan shares the identical ideologies, that why many of the student exchange programs can be seen, many of the subjects relating Sufism now a days being lectured. In Islamabad there are many Turkish restaurants now can be found, Doner Kebab is the most notorious of the cuisines,

likewise there are some Historic Turkish serial that have become Pakistani's favorite. Which resulted in many people are flying to see in person those historic landscapes. Similarly, market in Turkey are selling various Pakistani colors and delicacies. In the outside world both Muslim counties seem supporting each other weather its regarding Syrian issue or Kashmir, in U.N. General Assembly, Erdogan has vocally advocated a negotiation settlement for Kashmir, where Abu Dhabi and Saudia backed off, which further tightened the bond. Pakistan and Turkey are key members of the Islamic World and share common outlook on problems confronting the Muslim Ummah. Together they have a deep-rooted relationship and share harmony on most of the subjects of regional and international importance. For the past 75 years, the two countries have experienced a healthy alliance, and stood side by side in times of need or cherish, that developed as a vigorous Muslim alliance in Eurasia. Lastly, I would like to advice all the Muslim countries around the globe to connect and form a circle of harmony that could never be shaken. So, there remain no force that could turn down.



## Senate session prorogued sine die

ISLAMABAD, Dec 16 (APP):The Senate session was prorogued sine die by chairman Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani on Friday after conclusion of its business amid protests of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) legislators. In exercise of powers conferred by Clause (1) of Article 54 of the Constitution, the president has been pleased to prorogue the Senate session on the conclusion of its business, read the prorogation order.—APP

## ANF seizes over 11 kg drugs; arrests three

RAWALPINDI: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) Pakistan while conducting three counter-narcotics operations throughout the country seized over 11 kg drugs and arrested three accused, said an ANF Headquarters spokesman here on Friday. He informed in a raid at a private courier office in Islamabad, ANF recovered 152 grams weed from a parcel received from America. In another operation, ANF foiled a bid to smuggle drugs from Peshawar to Punjab and recovered 9.6 kg charras from secret cavities of a truck and arrested an accused resident of Swat. ANF and FC conducted a joint operation and recovered 4.8 kg charras from the possession of two accused, residents of Khyber who were trying to smuggle narcotics from Kurram to Peshawar. Separate cases have been registered at respective ANF Police Stations and further investigations are under process.—APP

## Chairman Senate supports foreign investment bill

ISLAMABAD, Dec 16 (APP):The Senate has passed the Foreign Investment (Promotion and Protection) (Amendment) Bill, 2022 with majority vote which was presented by Finance Minister Muhammad Ishaq Dar on Friday. As per amendment, it shall only apply to the qualified investment of Reko Diq project as mentioned in the schedule and annexure of the Foreign Investment (Promotion and Protection) Act, 2022. According to the statement of objects and reasons, the purpose of this subject amendment is to clarify the scope and application of the Foreign Investment (Promotion and Protection) Act, 2022 (XXXV of 2022). After smooth passage of the Bill, Senate Chairman Muhammad Sadiq Sanjrani said that it was a good legislation as it would bring a huge fortune in the shape of foreign investment for the Balochistan province besides Pakistan. He further said that it would yield more fruits, particularly for the Chaghi district.—APP

## December 16 always to be remembered: Marriyum

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb said on Friday that the day of December 16 will always be remembered for the great sacrifices of the martyrs of Army Public School, Peshawar. In her message on the 8th anniversary of APS martyrs, the minister said that martyrs of APS tragedy united the nation against terrorism. She said despite the passage of eight years, even today the nation could not forget the tragedy of APS of 2014. The minister said that cowardly evil elements attacked the future of the nation, the young children and martyred them. "As a nation we have come a long way to defeat terrorism, we are moving towards lasting peace and development in Pakistan", she remarked. Marriyum Aurangzeb prayed to Allah Almighty to rest the departed souls of the martyrs of Army Public School in eternal peace and grant courage to the bereaved families to bear this loss with fortitude.—APP



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Editor-in-Chief: Ansar Mahmood Bhatti  
Deputy Editor: Abid Raza

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Email: dailyisbpost@gmail.com

Phone: 051-2266165 / 051-2261960

Off: Awan Plaza, Block 18-A, G-8 Markaz Islamabad

## Ecological civilization is a shared responsibility

The address President Xi Jinping made via video link at the opening ceremony of the High-Level Segment of the second part of the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity on Thursday shows the great significance China attaches to the event and the cause it represents.

It is estimated that more than 10,000 scientists, government officials and activists are gathered in Montreal for the world's most important biodiversity conference co-hosted by Canada and China — with its first part held in Kunming, Yunnan province, in October last year — eager to work for the conclusion of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, and identify targets and pathways for global biodiversity protection in the future. It is good to see in an increasingly volatile world countries have chosen to come together to pool their efforts to find ways to better protect the planet's biodiversity — on which we as a species depend and of which we are part — and foster a more nature-friendly way of development. As President Xi has repeatedly urged, countries need to take the development of an ecological civilization as the guide to coordinate the relationship between man and nature.

That requires solving the problems brought by industrial civilization, keeping human activities within the limits of the ecological and environmental constraints, and carrying out holistic conservation and systematic governance of the Earth's ecosystems. The new biodiversity targets agreed in Montreal need to be ambitious on the one hand and pragmatic on the other. What we have managed to achieve as a species has been remarkable. But at the same time catastrophic. We have been the harbinger of doom to many other species, and may yet be the harbinger of our swan song as a species. We are already living on a borrowed future, as the Earth's annual capacity to generate renewable materials and absorb waste cannot keep pace with our insatiable demand and abuse of its resources. China has been striving to step up to the plate in playing an exemplary role in building an ecological civilization. That involves painful changes to behavior. But it recognizes that those pains will be relatively short-lived while the gains will be long-lasting. China is willing to contribute its wisdom, experience and practices and join hands with the rest of the world to launch a new process of global biodiversity governance, and advance the building of a community with a shared future for all life on Earth.



## King Charles: still on probation

If his new reign was developing in the manner that King Charles III must have hoped, the main royal news of the week would have been his visit to the Houses of Parliament on Wednesday. There, the king did the kinds of things that British monarchs do, and received the kind of tributes they are accustomed to receiving. He talked to staff, met political leaders and unveiled a bronze plaque commemorating Elizabeth II's lying in state as well as two ornate beacons, gifts from the two Houses. In the words of the Commons speaker, Sir Lindsay Hoyle, the new beacons symbolised "the enduring and guiding light [the queen] has been to our nation — and indeed, the whole world — for the past 70 years".

Sadly for the king, this highly traditional visit to Westminster, with its deferential rhetoric of continuity and stability, was not the main royal news of the week at all. Instead, that was provided by Thursday's release of the final three distinctly undervalued episodes of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex's Netflix documentary series. The new episodes do not hold back. In one, Prince Harry lifts the curtain on a 2020 royal summit at Sandringham on the Sussexes' future at which, by his account, Prince William "screamed and shouted", and King Charles said "things that just simply weren't true", while the queen sat quietly thinking about how to safeguard the institution. In another, the duchess and her mother describe how Meghan's despair with the royal world — with its echoes of Diana, Princess of Wales a generation earlier — led her to think "all of this will stop if I'm not here" and to consider taking her own life. These are shocking allegations. Along with the racism and misogyny detailed in the earlier episodes, they cast a miserable light, to put it mildly, over the way the British monarchy conducts itself. It is true, as the late queen put it in a statement, that "some recollections may vary" about some matters. It is also true that the greatest villains of this whole saga are not King Charles, Princes William or Harry, or any of the individual royals, but the relentlessly intrusive and hyperbolic British tabloid press and the lying and abusive world of social media. Nor do any of the main players, including the Sussexes themselves, emerge free of questions and perhaps criticism from these televised assaults. Saddest of all, surely, is the sight of so many unhappy people inside such a dysfunctional institution. Damaging though the Sussexes' campaigns are for Windsor family relations, they may not have much impact on the standing of the monarchy itself. A Savanta opinion poll this week finds 59% of the British public think that the documentaries are a bad idea, against 33% who think they are a good one. These figures mirror public attitudes to the institution itself, where 55% favour the monarchy against 31% who favour an elected head of state. That these figures are unchanged from the reign of Elizabeth II may cause King Charles to feel his own reign is settling in well. But with Harry's book due to suck up fresh oxygen in the new year, the new king is on probation. He is still only feeling his way towards the levels of public approval that, under his mother, provided such a bulwark to the monarchical system.

# Off the pitch, Morocco emerges a winner in the World Cup

James Dorsey

Likewise, the empathy with Morocco's sporting success and spotlighting of the Palestinian cause fuelled rather than resolved debates about Moroccan identity, visible gaps between Arab elites and publics, and rivalries among Gulf states that continue to play out despite an end to open animosity. Little noticed in the celebration of the Moroccan fete as an Arab and African success was Moroccan goalkeeper Munir Mohammed el Kajoui's gesture when he put his Amazigh identity on public display by wrapping the ethnic group's tricolour around his waist during celebrations after Morocco defeated Spain

France defeated Morocco 2:0 on the pitch, but off the pitch Morocco is up 4:0. Ultimately, the effects of Morocco's off-the-pitch success may ripple much longer than the fallout of its stellar performance in the stadium. To be sure, Morocco shares its off-the-pitch success with others, including France, its on-the-pitch history-laden rival, as well as Qatar and Qatari activists. Fielding squads populated to large degrees by immigrants and their descendants, Morocco and France put migration in a different light at a time when Europe struggled to control immigration. Migration helped make both teams what they are, one of the world's top four soccer squads. The symbolism was not lost on the day four people died when a boat carrying dozens of would-be migrants

from France to Britain capsized in the English Channel. The incident boosted calls for policies that offer migrants safe and legal pathways rather than focus primarily on law enforcement and border protection. Imagine that France and Morocco had duelled four days later on December 18, International Migrants Day and the day of France's World Cup final against Argentina. The symbolism would have been even starker. Even so, the Morocco-France match added texture to the identity aspect of the migration debate and the symbolism of Morocco's on and off-the-pitch performance. Many Moroccans and non-Moroccans took pride and joy in the North African state's Cinderella-like march through the tournament against the backdrop of colonial history, decades of Islam having been put post-9/11 on the defensive amid rising Islamophobia, and as an expression of the rebalancing of global power between West and East. "Morocco's semifinal pairing with France has...taken on outsized geopolitical dimensions, seemingly pitting the once colonized against its former colonizer, the Global South taking on the Global North, East against West, David versus Goliath," said Paul Silverstein, an anthropologist, focused on North Africa. On one level, the support of a predominantly Muslim Arab and African nation constituted a rejection of militant, politically violent expressions of Islam that sought to exploit the World Cup to divide rather than bring people together in a fleeting moment of solidarity. An Islamic State poster accusing Jews and Christians of using sports to distract Muslims from waging jihad failed to resonate with fans in Doha and elsewhere. Sports scholar Mahfoud Amara and political scientist Youcef Bouandel noted that "even the most radical and conservative wings in Islam have not been successful in distancing these populations with their (quasi-religious) passion for football. Which for many is one of the few sources of entertainment when confronted with daily socio-economic difficulties." Likewise, the empathy with Morocco's sporting success and spotlighting of the Palestinian cause fuelled rather than resolved debates about Moroccan identity, visible gaps between Arab elites and publics, and rivalries among Gulf states that continue to play out despite an end to open animosity. Little noticed in the celebration of the Moroccan fete as an Arab and African success was Moroccan goalkeeper Munir Mohammed el Kajoui's gesture when he put his Amazigh identity on public display by wrapping the ethnic group's tricolour around his waist during celebrations after Morocco defeated Spain. Amazighs or Berbers account for 40 per cent of the Moroccan population. They saw their identity

buried under the Arab African label. To assert themselves, Amazighs celebrated Mr. El Kajoui's gesture on social media, prompting discussion about whether Morocco is an Arab country. The complexity of the identity issue at times sparked confusion. In one incident, in a twist of irony, Qatari security prevented fans from bringing the blue, green, and yellow Amazigh tricolour into the stadium in the mistaken belief that it represented the LGBTQ rainbow. In another, Moroccan striker Hakim Ziyech listened, impatiently drumming his fingers, to a journalist asking questions in Arabic. A speaker of Dutch, English, and Tarifit, a Berber language, Mr. Ziyech responded, "Now in English, please." Most Moroccans speak darija, a spoken rather than a written language widely classified as an Arabic dialect that most Arabic speakers beyond the Maghreb, the western part of North Africa that also includes Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, and Tunisia, are unable to understand. As a result, Beln, the Qatari sports broadcaster, adds Arabic subtitles when it broadcasts interviews with darija-speaking Moroccan players and fans. As genuine as World Cup fans' support of the Palestinians was, the emergence of Palestine as a touchstone for the gap between elites and public opinion constituted a throwback to the days when Palestinians were a lightning rod for widespread frustration with non-performing, autocratic Arab regimes. In a subtle, or perhaps not so subtle way, Palestine served Qatar's purpose. It allowed Qatar to point the finger at its Gulf rivals, particularly the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain. These two Arab states were at the forefront of the 3.5-year-long UAE-Saudi-led economic and diplomatic boycott of the Gulf state that was lifted in early 2021 and recognized Israel in 2020. To be sure, the subtext of animosity encountered by Israelis in Qatar was a far cry from the call on Muslims by the Islamic State to "cut... (the) necks of Christians and Jews and kick their heads through the battlefields... rather than surrender your heads to be played with in the soccer arenas." Implicitly, fans were taking to task those governments that had recognised Israel for failing to link normalisation to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In doing so, the fans unwittingly projected Qatar as a more open society. They further positioned the Gulf state as being on the right side of history by refusing to normalize relations with Israel before the Jewish state engaged in a constructive solution to the Palestinian problem. Qatari tolerance of public support for the Palestinians contrasted starkly with the UAE's banning of critics from travel and restrictions on expressing pro-Palestinian sentiment in Bah-

rain. Emphasis on the Palestinians allowed Qatar to portray itself as a country that enables civil society, albeit only if groups align themselves with the Gulf state's policies and only when the timing of their activities suits the government. One group that played a key role in galvanizing fan support for the Palestinians, Qatar Youth Opposed to Normalization (QAYON), discovered that early on as the government sought to bend the group to its will through coercion and intimidation. Founded in 2011 at the time of Qatari support for popular revolts in the region, QAYON saw in the World Cup an opportunity to bolster its campaign against engaging with Israel. The government rejected the group's initial World Cup-related demand that it bars Israelis from attending the tournament in violation of the rules of world soccer body FIFA. FIFA obliges host countries to allow fans to attend a World Cup irrespective of whether they are from nations the tournament host does not recognise or is at odds with the host country. Nevertheless, in contrast to spectators whom Qatari security prevented from wearing to matches OneLove armbands favouring LGBTQ rights, a sensitive issue in Qatar, or paraphernalia in support of anti-government protesters in Iran, authorities did nothing to stop QAYON from galvanizing fans attending the World Cup. Qatar justified its banning of the OneLove armband and anti-Iranian paraphernalia by pointing to FIFA's ban on all political expression on the pitch. It's unclear whether FIFA extended the ban to the pro-Palestine campaign or whether Qatar chose to ignore the FIFA rule selectively. In the final analysis, Qatar, unlike Morocco, never made it out of the World Cup's group stage. But like Morocco, it emerges from the World Cup, an off-the-pitch winner. Thank you to all who have demonstrated their appreciation for my column by becoming paid subscribers. This allows me to ensure that it continues to have maximum impact. Maintaining free distributions means that news website, blogs, and newsletters across the globe can republish it. I launched my column, 'The Turbulent World of Middle East Soccer, 12 years ago. To borrow a phrase from an early proprietor of The Observer, it offers readers, listeners, and viewers 'the scoop of interpretation.' If you are able and willing to support the column, please become a paid subscriber by clicking on Substack on the subscription button and choosing one of the subscription options.

—Dr. James M. Dorsey is an award-winning journalist and scholar, an Adjunct Senior Fellow at Nanyang Technological University's S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies.

# The need for Turkiye and the EU to work together

Sinem Cengiz

With its latest funding package, EU support for refugees in Turkiye and for Turkish border management has reached 1.2 billion this year. Since 2015, the bloc has mobilized 9.5 billion for refugees and their host communities in Turkiye. Turkiye has been exposed to the refugee influx because of its proximity to the crises in Syria, Iraq and Iran. EU concerns have grown in the past decade as large numbers of refugees who cross the border into Turkiye subsequently find their way to Europe.

Netflix is currently streaming "The Swimmers," a movie that dramatizes the true story of sisters Yusra and Sarah Mardini. It depicts their journey as refugees from Syria to Germany via Turkiye and Greece in 2015. In particular it tells how they faced the chilling waters of the Aegean Sea when the engine of the overcrowded boat on which they were traveling suddenly broke down. The Mardini sisters jumped into the water without hesitation and, along with two other passengers, grabbed the ropes and used their lifelong swimming skills to pull everyone to safety. Their 45-minute boat journey turned into a grueling three-and-a-half-hour swim. The film ends with Yusra competing at the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro as a member of the first-ever team made up of refugees. "The Swimmers," directed by Welsh Egyptian filmmaker Sally El-Hosaini, once again reminds us of the relentless challenges refugees have faced for the past decade as they fled Syria for Turkiye and, eventually, Europe. The movie also reminded me of a 19-year-old Syrian refugee named Doaa Al-Zamel. I met her in Athens in October 2014 and I still recall the words she spoke to me in Arabic. "In front of my eyes, I saw my fiancé and people with whom we took a journey for hope drowning one after the other," she said. "I spent four days and three nights in the water with dead bodies... The only thing that gave me courage to fight the waves was my belief." Doaa

was one of only 11 people to survive when a boat carrying 500 migrants sank in the Mediterranean near Greece in September 2014. She was a focus of international attention not only as a result of her incredible battle to survive but because she used her life jacket to save an 18-month-old baby girl. As a teenager who had witnessed the effects of a bloody war in Syria, faced difficulties after seeking refuge in Egypt, and survived a deadly boat disaster, Doaa's strength impressed me greatly. Four years after I met her in the house of a friend in Athens, I was pleased to learn that her story had been told in a book written by Melissa Fleming, titled "A Hope More Powerful Than the Sea." Her story, and that of the Mardini sisters, are just two to emerge from a tragedy that millions of Syrians face daily. The ever-worsening conflict in their country has caused millions to flee to neighboring states and Europe. "The Swimmers" effectively portrays the EU's policy towards those refugees who somehow manage to reach European soil despite the many challenges, including the bloc's selective approach to which of them are deemed "useful" and which are not. This week, the European Commission decided on a 220 million (\$233.5 million) package of funding to improve controls at Turkiye's eastern border with Iran and Iraq. It is part of a EU-Turkiye deal signed in March 2016 that was one element of the EU's response to a sharp increase in the number of people arriving on

European shores in 2015 in search of safety and protection. Almost 1 million refugees arrived in the EU around that time and more than 3,500 tragically lost their lives attempting to make the treacherous journey. More than 75 per cent of those who arrived in Europe had fled conflict and persecution in Syria, Afghanistan or Iraq. With its latest funding package, EU support for refugees in Turkiye and for Turkish border management has reached 1.2 billion this year. Since 2015, the bloc has mobilized 9.5 billion for refugees and their host communities in Turkiye. Turkiye has been exposed to the refugee influx because of its proximity to the crises in Syria, Iraq and Iran. EU concerns have grown in the past decade as large numbers of refugees who cross the border into Turkiye subsequently find their way to Europe. While the implementation of the Turkiye-EU deal might have contributed to a significant reduction in the number of people risking the dangerous journey to Greece, the price for those who do make it to the EU has been unbearable. Exactly 18 years ago, on Dec. 16, 2004, the EU announced its long-awaited decision to begin membership talks with Turkiye. Since then, relations have been tested by several bilateral and regional issues. The adoption of the recent funding package coincides with this historic date, which seems

destined to remain as a footnote in the dusty pages of the history books as there is no sign of any intention on the part of either side to move ahead. Refugee flow, border control and aid packages are the topics that dominate Turkiye-EU relations today, rather than the membership process or visa-exemption issues. The EU's border security/control approach might be necessary and useful to Turkiye but it should be accompanied by further projects and policies that focus more on the protection of, and provision of services to, refugees and asylum seekers. The deal should be a basis not only for creating a more protective system for refugees but also a solid reason for the improvement of Turkiye-EU relations. The sad reality is that the refugee crisis is unlikely to end any time soon, even if the governments involved reconcile and refugees are forcibly deported or otherwise returned from European shores to Turkiye. Such measures are not solutions to this crisis; the long-term solution lies in creating a new mindset within the EU to assist Turkiye in providing more effective solutions to the refugee crisis. This new mindset would also pave the way for a new chapter in Turkiye-EU relations.

—Courtesy: Arab News



## Briefs

## Ex-Army Chief blocked cases...

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scared and the most concerning figure is that 750,000 people have left the country as they have become hopeless and lost confidence in the system after what happened in the last seven months," he remarked. Imran said only the rule of law can lift the country out of prevailing "quagmire" without which the country's economy can never prosper "neither can we become an Asian tiger overnight".

## 'Imran copter expenses...

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the written reply, the PTI chief took 522 hours of flights which incurred more than Rs140 million in expenses. While in 2021, the helicopter used by Khan consumed 450 hours of VIP flights, the cost of which amounted to over Rs120 million. Meanwhile, the chopper carrying the former prime minister was flown for 127 hours from January to March 2022, during which the flight expenses amounted to Rs35.1 million. Earlier this month, the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) — after completing its probe into the illegal use of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) government's helicopters — revealed that those, who engaged the chopper for private use, owe Rs90 million to the provincial administration. The development came in reaction to the usage of choppers used by Khan, former and current provincial and federal ministers, including others.

## Russia fires scores of missiles...

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Eleven people were killed, 20 wounded and another 20 were unaccounted for in the village of Lantratvka near the border with Russia in the Russian-controlled Luhansk region of Ukraine, Russia's TASS news agency said, citing emergency services. The Russian-installed governor of the region, Leonid Pasechnik, called the attack "barbaric". The head of a Russian proxy "people's militia" in Luhansk said a civilian had been killed by Ukrainian shelling in the town of Svatove, some 70 km (40 miles) further south. Reuters was unable to immediately verify the latest battlefield accounts but recorded three explosions in the snow-covered capital Kyiv and smoke rising over the city. Ukraine had shot down 37 out of 40 missiles fired at the Kyiv area, Kyiv military spokesperson Mykhailo Sharmov said, calling Friday's missile attack one of Russia's largest. Economy Minister Yulia Svyrydenko said there had been "massive shelling". "The goal of the Russian Federation is for Ukrainians to be constantly under pressure," she wrote in a social media post, vowing that Ukraine would endure. The country has restored much of its power and water supply after previous attacks but that task becomes harder each time. Kyrylo Tymoshenko, deputy head of the presidential office, said emergency power shutdowns were being introduced across the country to allow for repairs. Poltava in the centre and the regions of Sumi in the north and Odesa on the Black Sea had been hit as well as power supply to some railway lines. With no peace talks in sight, Ukrainian defence chiefs on Thursday predicted Russia would launch a new all-out offensive early next year that could include a second attempt to take Kyiv, which they tried and failed to capture early this year. A new assault could happen as soon as January, Zelenskiy, General Valery Zaluzhnyi and General Oleksandr Syrskyi were quoted as saying in interviews with The Economist magazine. The push could be launched from the eastern Donbas area, the south or neighbouring Belarus, they said. A Russian defence ministry video showed exercises by Russian and Belarusian troops in Belarus using tanks, machine guns and drones and crossing a river. In Washington, White House spokesman John Kirby said there was no indication of any imminent move on Kyiv.

## Former Captain Azhar Ali retires from Test cricket



I retire from international cricket as a fulfilled cricketer who ticked most of goals he had set for himself. Not many cricketers go on to lead their countries, and that I was able to captain Pak is a matter of great pride for me

KARACHI: Azhar Ali, Pakistan's one of the most successful batters, will hang his boots following the third Test against England, which begins on Saturday. With 7,097 runs in 96 matches at an average of 42.49, Azhar is Pakistan's fifth leading Test run-getter behind Yousif Khan (10,099), Javed Miandad (8,832), Inzamam-ul-Haq (8,829) and Mohammad Yousuf (7,530). In 2010, Azhar, as a 25-year-old, made his Test debut in England against Australia at Lord's and scored his maiden Test half-century in only his second match. He would score 34 more half-centuries and went past the 100-run mark on 19 instances. Azhar, 37, is the only Pakistan batter to score a triple-century in a pink-ball Test - a feat that he achieved against the West Indies in Dubai in 2016. That unbeaten 302 remains his highest score in Test cricket. Over the course of his 12-year career, Azhar also made two double-centuries - 226 against Bangladesh in Dhaka (May 2015) and 205 not out against Australia in Melbourne (December 2016) - and has, at least, one century in Australia, Bangladesh, England, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, United Arab

Emirates, the West Indies and Zimbabwe. Against Australia in Abu Dhabi in 2014, Azhar scored a century in each inning (109 and 100 not out) to help Pakistan win the second Test by 356 runs and the two-Test series 2-0. Azhar captained Pakistan in nine Tests in two separate tenures from 2016 to 2020. He retired from One-Day Internationals in 2018 - a year after helping Pakistan win the ICC Champions Trophy 2017. In that tournament, Azhar had scores of 50 (v India), 9 (v South Africa), 34 (v Sri Lanka), 76 (v England in semi-final) and 59 (v India in final). Azhar Ali said, "It has been a great honour and privilege for me to represent my country at the highest level. Deciding on when to call it a day is always tough, but, after contemplating deeply, I realised that this is the right time for me to retire from Test cricket. "There are many people who I am grateful to in this strenuous, yet beautiful journey. I want to make a special mention of my family without whose sacrifices; I would not have been where I am today. My parents, wife, siblings, and children have been my strength throughout. "I have been blessed to share the dressing room with some of the most outstanding cricketers with whom I share a strong bond. I feel much richer by calling these people my friends. I am also blessed to have played under some wonderful coaches to whom I will always remain grateful. "I retire from international cricket as a fulfilled cricketer who ticked most of the goals he had set for himself. Not many cricketers go on to lead their countries, and that I was able to captain Pakistan is a matter of great pride for me. From being a kid who started as a leg-spinner to becoming a mainstay in the Test batting line-up, I had the loveliest moments of my life that I will cherish forever." PCB Chairman Ramiz Raja said, "Azhar Ali has been one of the most committed and loyal servants of Pakistan cricket. His grit and determination have been an inspiration for many young cricketers and he is a role model for up-and-coming cricketers. "While it is sad that Pakistan will not have a player of his experience in the dressing room to draw upon, it only reflects the circle of life. I hope to see Azhar continuing to play a role in the development of Pakistan cricket and sharing his vast knowledge and experience with budding cricketers." - APP

## Twitter suspends accounts of journalists covering Musk

SAN FRANCISCO: Twitter suspended Thursday accounts of more than a half-dozen journalists who had been writing about the company and its new owner Elon Musk. Silencing journalists at Twitter while claiming to be a free speech champion is the latest controversy provoked by Musk since he took over the company, which has seen staffing gutted and advertisers exit. Some of the journalists had been tweeting about Twitter shutting down an @ElonJet account that tracked flights of billionaire Musk's private jet and about versions of that account hosted at other social networks. Twitter did not say why the reporters' accounts were suspended.

"Nothing says free speech like suspending journalists who cover you," Sarah Reese Jones of news commentary website PoliticusUSA said in a tweeted response to posts about the suspensions. Checks at Twitter showed account suspensions included reporters from CNN, The New York Times, and The Washington Post as well as independent journalists. "The impulsive and unjustified suspension of a number of reporters, including CNN's Donie O'Sullivan, is concerning but not surprising," the news organization said in a tweet. "Twitter's increasing instability and volatility should be of incredible concern for everyone who uses the

platform." CNN said it has asked Twitter for an explanation of the suspension. The New York Times said in a statement it also wanted answers from Twitter regarding the "questionable" suspension of journalists. "I have no idea what rules I purportedly broke," independent journalist Aaron Rupar, whose Twitter account was suspended, wrote in a Substack post. "I haven't heard anything from Twitter at all." In a tweet late Thursday, Musk appeared to allude to the suspension of the reporters' accounts with this tweet: "If anyone posted real-time locations & addresses of NYT reporters, FBI would be investigating, there'd be hearings on

Capitol Hill & Biden would give speeches about end of democracy!" Musk on Wednesday tweeted that a car in Los Angeles carrying one of his children was followed by "a crazy stalker" and seemed to blame the tracking of his jet for this alleged incident. In the tweet, he said legal action is being taken against the person who ran ElonJet. The Twitter account that tracked flights of Musk's private jet was shut down Wednesday despite the billionaire's statement that he is a free speech absolutist. Twitter later sent out word that it updated its policy to prohibit tweets, in most cases, from giving away someone's location in real time. - Agencies

## Rangers recover against Hibs as Beale makes winning start

GLASGOW: Rangers' first competitive match under new manager Michael Beale ended in victory as they twice came from behind to beat Hibernian 3-2 at Ibrox on Thursday. Alfredo Morelos' goal shortly after the hour mark sealed a win that left Rangers six points behind leaders and arch-rivals Celtic, with the reigning Scottish Premiership champions in action away to Aberdeen on Saturday. Hibs defender Ryan Porteous - linked with a move to Rangers - broke the deadlock just eight minutes in with a header from a corner. Fashion Sakala drew Rangers level in the 15th minute only for Hibs striker Kevin Nisbet to regain the lead for the Edinburgh club moments later. Ryan Jack, however, drew Rangers level in the 58th minute, and four minutes afterwards Morelos tapped in the winner. "We had a nice chat at half-time and said to take the emotion out the game and play the game for what it was," Beale told the BBC. He added: "The reality that hit me tonight is there's a lot of anxiety to get through, but the character of the team is good and we dominated in the second half and we deserved to win the game." Beale spent three years at Rangers as a member of Steven Gerrard's coaching team and then followed the Liverpool great to Aston Villa. He then took charge of English Championship club Queens Park Rangers for just 22 games before, controversially, returning to Glasgow after Giovanni van Bronckhorst was sacked. - APP

## Ghana accuses Burkina of inviting Russian Wagner mercenaries

"I believe a (mineral) mine in southern Burkina has been allocated to them as a form of payment for their services," he said during a meeting with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken. "To have them operating on our northern border is particularly distressing for us in Ghana"

ABIDJAN: Ghana's President Nana Akufo-Addo has accused his country's neighbour Burkina Faso of inviting in mercenaries from Russian firm Wagner, calling the deployment "particularly distressing". "Burkina Faso has now entered into an arrangement to go along with Mali in employing the Wagner forces there," Akufo-Addo said Wednesday in remarks that Burkina Faso had not responded to by Thursday. "I believe a (mineral) mine in southern Burkina has been allocated to them as a form of payment for their services," he said during a meeting with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken. "To have them operating on our northern border is particularly distressing for us in Ghana." Burkina government spokesman Jean-Emmanuel Ouédraogo told media that "we have no reaction". "I'll leave him to take responsibility for what he said," Ouédraogo said. In several French-speaking African countries, Moscow has been actively courting public opinion on social media and enjoys growing popular support as France, the former colonial power, is increasingly reviled. Blinken, asked about the accusations by Ghana on Burkina Faso, repeated the strong US objections to the Wagner Group. "Wherever we've seen Wagner deployed, countries find themselves weaker, poorer, more insecure and less independent. That's the common denominator," Blinken told a news conference as he closed a three-day Africa summit in Washington. "What I heard in conversations this week, as I've heard in the past, is our partners in Africa tell us that they do not want their resources exploited, they don't want the human rights of their people abused, they don't want their governance undermined, and ultimately, as a result, they really don't want Wagner." Several countries accuse Mali's ruling junta of using the services of Wagner, which is reputedly close to the Moscow regime, which Bamako denies. - APP



LAHORE: A view of Polo match playing between Diamond Paints and Master Paints Black during the Coca Cola Lahore Open Polo Championship 2022 at Lahore Polo Club. - APP

CHITTAGONG: Shubman Gill and Cheteshwar Pujara each struck a century as India took control of the first Test against Bangladesh in Chittagong on Friday. The visitors declared their second innings on 258-2 in the third session of the third day to set a daunting 513-run target for the home side. Bangladesh were all out for 150 runs in their first innings, leaving India the overwhelming favourites to secure victory. Skipper KL Rahul called back his batsmen after Pujara brought up his 19th Test hundred with a four off Tajjul Islam soon after their lead surpassed the 500-run mark. Pujara, who also scored 90 in India's first innings total of 404, was unbeaten on 102 after smash-

## Gill, Pujara hit tons as India dominate Bangladesh

ing 13 fours, with former skipper Virat Kohli 19 not out at the other end. Gill earlier completed his maiden Test century before he was dismissed by Mehidy Hasan for 110 runs. Gill, who hit 10 fours and three sixes, shared a 113-run partnership for the second wicket with Pujara. Rahul holed out to Tajjul Islam at fine leg off Khaled Ahmed after making 23. Bangladesh survived the day unscathed in their second innings, reaching 42-0 at stumps to leave them still needing another 471 runs to pull off the

unlikelyst of victories. Najmul Hossain and debutant Zakir Hasan will resume on 25 and 17 respectively on the fourth day. India earlier bowled Bangladesh out cheaply to take a sizable 254-run first innings lead but decided not to enforce the follow-on. Left-arm spinner Kuldeep Yadav led India's bowling attack with career-best figures of 5-40, his third five-wicket haul in Tests, and the visitors needed barely an hour to mop up the Bangladesh tail after the hosts resumed on 133-8. - APP

## FIFA announces plans for 32-team Club World Cup

## SPORTS DESK

DOHA: FIFA chief Gianni Infantino announced plans on Friday for a 32-team Club World Cup from 2025, despite reported opposition from Europe's biggest clubs. An expansion of the competition has long been a pet project of Infantino's. A 24-team event, featuring eight sides from Europe, was planned for 2021 in China but was put on hold due to the coronavirus pandemic. Infantino said the new-look tournament would be even bigger than first planned. "We had agreed a few years ago to have a new 24-team men's Club World Cup," the FIFA president said at the World Cup in Doha on Friday. "It should have taken place in 2021 but was postponed because of Covid. The new competition will take place in 2025 and will feature 32 teams, making it really like

a World Cup." Reports in the British media this week said European clubs had rejected FIFA's proposal to launch the new-look competition. The plans are for an expanded tournament to be held every four years

instead of annually, as is the case for the current seven-team event. "The first edition will take place in 2025 in the summer and during that slot where in past years it was the Confederations Cup," Infantino said. "It

will be slightly longer because there will be 32 teams but they will be the best teams in the world who will be invited to participate." Infantino said next year's Club World Cup, in its current format, would take place in Morocco from February 1 to 11, 2023. Morocco hosted the tournament in 2013 and again in 2014, while the most recent edition was held in the United Arab Emirates in February, with Chelsea lifting the trophy. The 2023 tournament is set to continue in its existing format - up until now it has featured the six continental champions plus the top side from the host nation. Real Madrid will represent Europe after winning last season's UEFA Champions League. Flamengo of Brazil, Al Hilal of Saudi Arabia, Wydad Casablanca of Morocco, Seattle Sounders from the United States and New Zealand's Auckland City are the other current continental champions.



## ECP seeks census result for timely polls

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provision of software, hardware and allied services, however, NRTC pulled out and showed an inability to provide the services resultant four months delay occurred," said the special secretary. Afterwards, NADRA was engaged for the above services. Further, the transition of government and the economic situation of the country caused further delays, read the letter. The commission was informed that as per revised timelines the PBS would be able to provide provisional census results to the ECP by April 30, 2023.

## Minister claims Russia...

FROM PAGE 01  
Pakistan "is not pursuing or receiving" any discounted energy from Russia. In his presser, Malik said Russia had eight different types of crudes of which two could be used by refineries in Pakistan. "Before leaving for Russia, we met [officials of these] refineries. PRL (Pakistan Refinery Ltd) informed us that it can use up to 50 per cent light crude oil of Russian origin. "Parco (Pak-Arab Refinery Limited) said it can use up to 30pc. And Energioco said not only can it use the two types of light crude oil but also the other six types of crude oil." Malik said that as per the team's discussions with Russian officials, Pakistan would be provided light crude oil at discounted rates which would reduce energy prices in the country. Russia also said it would provide refined products - petrol and diesel - the rates of which would be decided when the Russian team visited Pakistan, he added. "When the energy cost goes down, the cost of transport and manufacturing will go down ... consequently, the price of every item in a shop will go down. This is the prime minister's vision." In addition, Pakistan was about to sign a trade agreement with Azerbaijan on LNG after which Pakistan would have the capacity to buy any distressed cargo throughout the world at cheap rates, the minister shared. Malik said a "special strategic cell" had been set up at his ministry that would be responsible for ensuring implementation of any agreements. "A meeting of a [Pak-Russia] inter-governmental commission (IGC) has been proposed to be held in the second week of January.

## Talks afoot, IMF...

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debt of \$6 billion has been returned while the debt of \$4 billion has been rolled over, adding that negotiations are ongoing to roll over the commercial loans of \$8.3 billion, while commercial loans of \$1.1 billion have to be returned. Jameel Ahmad went to explain the committee that \$4.5 billion have to be returned instead of \$13 billion, while loans of \$18 to 19 billion are likely to be received this financial year. Speaking on the occasion, Aisha Ghaus Pasha said that the technical dialogues with the international lender were ongoing virtually and a staff level agreement will be signed after resolving issues.

## Serie A 'warrior' Sinisa Mihajlovic dies at 53

ROME: Sinisa Mihajlovic died at the age of 53 on Friday after leukemia finally got the better of a charismatic and controversial figure who was one of the most recognisable players from the golden age of Serie A. Serb Mihajlovic, a powerful defender and mercurial set-piece taker, passed away in Rome after spending most of his adult life in Italy, where he was revered for his play and reviled for his friendship with notorious Serbian nationalist paramilitary warlord Arkan. His wife Arianna and their five children deplored the "unjust and premature death" of Mihajlovic who played for numerous clubs in Italy and competed in the 1998 World Cup and 2000 European Championships for the former Yugoslavia. - APP



## Briefs

## Pakistan-Kazakhstan people-to-people contacts to promote trade

LAHORE: National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervaiz Ashraf has said that people-to-people contact between Pakistan and Kazakhstan will promote bilateral political and trade relations. Addressing as the chief guest at the 31st Independence Day of Kazakhstan and the inaugural ceremony of Honorary Consulate of Kazakhstan here on Friday, he said that a delegation of Kazakh parliamentarians visited Pakistan on his invitation recently. He said that exchange of visits would be helpful in increasing trade between the two countries. He said that the country wanted to strengthen its relations with the Central Asian states in every field like trade, business, security and culture. The speaker said that Pakistani parliament would also support bilateral cooperation with Kazakhstan. He said that parliament would play its role to strengthen people-to-people relations and mutual friendship. He expressed his hope that joint future of both countries would be bright. He congratulated Kazakhstan on its 31st Independence Day. Former Prime Minister and Pakistan People's Party Parliamentary Party leader in Senate Syed Yusuf Raza Gilani, in his speech said that people-to-people contacts between two nations were very important as such relations sustained forever whereas governments changed after every few years. He said that Kazakhstan friendship group of the parliament would play important role in bilateral relationships of the both nations. He explained the struggle for democracy in the country and appreciated Kazakhstan for its efforts for democratic environment. He said that the nation would have to bring back the vision of Quaid-e-Azam, Zulfikar Ali Bhutto and Benazir Bhutto to Shaheed about true democracy. Kazakhstan Ambassador for Pakistan Yarzhan Kistafin thanked the participants for joining the celebrations of Independence Day. He assured that he would work for more strengthening the bilateral relationships with Pakistan and thanked the country for recognising Kazakhstan at first in the world. He said that today was also the anniversary of the bilateral relationships between the two nations. Newly-appointed Honorary Counsellor Rao Khalid Khan, in his address, thanked President Dr Arif Alvi and Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari for their recommendations as the Counsellor. He said that he would struggle for close ties and business between the two nations.—APP

## Wagner chief blames France after parcel attack in C.Africa

MOSCOW: The head of Russia's Wagner mercenary group, Yevgeny Prigozhin, on Friday urged Moscow to declare France a "sponsor of terrorism" after a parcel bomb wounded a Russian official in the Central African Republic. "I have already requested the Russian foreign ministry to initiate the procedure to declare France a state sponsor of terrorism," Prigozhin was quoted as saying in a statement released by his company, Concord. He said that a "thorough investigation" should be conducted into "the terrorist methods of France and its Western allies - the United States and others." Prigozhin, an ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin, released the statement after a parcel attack injured the head of a Russian cultural centre, Dmitry Sytyi, in the Central African Republic on Friday. The spokesman of the Russian embassy in Bangui confirmed the attack on Sytyi, saying he was hospitalised. Prigozhin said it was unclear if Sytyi would survive. "Russian doctors are doing everything they can in the Bangui hospital to save him," Prigozhin said.—APP

## EU grants Bosnia candidate status for the membership

Russia's war on Ukraine has breathed fresh life into the EU's willingness to consider letting in more of its eastern neighbours after years of stasis

BRUSSELS: European Union leaders on Thursday granted Bosnia candidate status to join the union, putting the volatile Balkan nation at the start of a long road to membership. Russia's war on Ukraine has breathed fresh life into the EU's willingness to consider letting in more of its eastern neighbours after years of stasis. Bosnia now becomes the third country after conflict-ravaged Ukraine and Moldova to be granted candidate status in the past six months. The EU is concerned that powers such as Russia or China might spread their influence into the Balkans if

countries hopeful of joining the bloc are thwarted. EU leaders gave their approval for Bosnia to become a membership candidate at a summit in Brussels. European Council president Charles Michel called the step "a strong signal to the people, but also a clear expectation for the new authorities to deliver on reforms." "The future of the Western Balkans is in the EU," he wrote on Twitter. The move comes despite long-standing concerns over the political situation in Bosnia, a country of three million people burdened with ethnic divisions since its devastating war three

decades ago. It remains partitioned between a Serb entity and a Muslim-Croat federation connected by a weak central government. It has a dysfunctional administrative system created by the 1995 Dayton Agreement that succeeded in ending the conflict in the 1990s but largely failed in providing a framework for the country's political development. The EU's executive branch, the European Commission, has laid out 14 priorities for reform that it insists Bosnia must make good on before it can move on to the next stage of opening formal accession negotiations. The Bosnian member of the country's

tripartite presidency, Denis Becirovic, said the decision was an "an opportunity we must not miss." "The authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina must take advantage of this hand extended by Brussels to speed up the country's march towards full EU membership," he said. The EU has complained that an internal stand-off caused by Bosnia's Serb entity, the Republika Srpska, has led to "virtual paralysis" in the reform process in recent times. There are also concerns over calls by Serb leaders for closer ties with Russia, and the entity's nationalist president Milorad Dodik has vowed to

stall the push towards the EU if it means more centralisation of power in Bosnia. Dodik welcomed the EU's decision while deriding the bloc for "wasting twenty years with empty stories." "It is time for the EU and us in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the entities to finalise this process together and as partners," he wrote in an internet post. Bosnia joins seven other nations with candidate status: Turkey, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Albania, Moldova and Ukraine. The process to join the European Union can take many years as candidates implement reforms that have to be rigorously evaluated

by Brussels. It can also lead to a halt, which is the case with Turkey's bid. Bosnia's candidacy was accepted as Kosovo on Thursday became the latest country to apply for membership in the bloc when it formally lodged an application to join. Kosovo - which has fractious ties to Serbia - faces a particularly hard path on its quest to get in the EU. Pristina declared independence in 2008, but Belgrade, along with its key allies Russia and China, still considers it a part of Serbia. Five members of the EU - Greece, Spain, Romania, Slovakia and Cyprus - do not recognise Kosovo as an independent country.—APP

## Top Jordan officer killed in fuel price protests

AMMAN: A senior Jordanian police officer was shot dead and two other police were wounded during protests in the south of the country, which has witnessed days of protests over rising fuel prices, authorities said Friday. Colonel Abdul Razzaq Dalabeh, the deputy police chief of Maan province, was shot in the head on Thursday while police tried to "calm down riots" in the southern town of Al-Husseiniya, the Public Security Directorate said in a statement. A separate statement said an officer and a non-commissioned officer "were shot while calming down 'saboteurs' who had staged riots", also in Al-Husseiniya. The PSD said that it protects freedom of opinion and peaceful expression but would use "appropriate" force with anyone who stages riots and vandalises property. "We will strike with an iron fist anyone who attempts to attack lives and public property and threatens the security of the homeland and the citizen," the PSD said.—APP

## Indonesia quake death toll jumps to 602

JAKARTA: The death toll from an earthquake that hit Indonesia's main island Java last month has jumped by hundreds to 602, a local administration official said Friday, after authorities verified unreported casualties across the worst-hit town. The shallow 5.6-magnitude earthquake hit the town of Cianjur in Indonesia's most populous province West Java on November 21, with most of the victims killed as buildings collapsed or landslides were triggered. Cianjur local administration spokesman Adam, who like many Indonesians goes by one name, told AFP the new toll - up from a previously reported figure of 334 - was based on data collected from residents across the town. He said many people had rushed to bury their relatives after the disaster without reporting their deaths to authorities. "If someone dies, residents in Cianjur often immediately bury them. Because of the panicked situation, those who died were immediately buried by relatives without notifying the local health agency," he said. "It was later revealed that around 600 people died, when it is officially counted," he added, citing the administration's new figure of 602. The local rescue agency, known as the BPBD, posted the new death toll on social media. An official from the agency, Wawan Setiawan, confirmed the new toll to AFP. State news agency Antara on Friday cited Cianjur district head Herman Suherman as giving a new death toll of 602.—APP

## US citizens trapped in Tigray, detained in Addis Ababa

NAIROBI: US citizens trapped in war-torn Tigray are being detained and interrogated by Ethiopian authorities while trying to leave the country, interviews with fleeing people and family members show. Leaked emails by US officials say that the Ethiopian government, citing national security grounds, insisted on holding and questioning US citizens from Tigray - a stance, they say, that caused Washington to abort plans to airlift Americans from the region last year. The lucky few to escape the region, cut off from the outside world for two years as government forces battled Tigrayan rebels, told AFP they had been singled out and interrogated when attempting to leave. Gebremedhin Gebrehiwot, an American citizen who made it out of Tigray earlier this year, said he was pulled aside and questioned at Addis Ababa's international airport while trying to board a flight home. "I had all the documents, there was no reason to stop me," the San Diego-based deacon told AFP. He believed his "typically Tigrayan" name was the reason he was detained. After a 90-minute wait, he was finally allowed to leave. "I just ran to the gate and barely made it."—Agencies

## Bangladesh's first-ever metro to open in capital

DHAKA: Bangladesh's first-ever metro will begin commercial operations on Dec. 28, easing gridlock in capital city Dhaka, an official said Thursday. "Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will formally inaugurate the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT Line)-6 of the metro rail from the capital's Uttara to Agargaon area at a function on Dec. 28," Bangladesh Road Transport and Highways Division Secretary ABM Amin Ullah Nuri told journalists Thursday. He said that all sorts of construction works were completed and the MRT Line-6 was ready for commercial operation. Dhaka Mass Transit Company Limited (DMTC), a Bangladesh state-owned enterprise is behind the 20.1-km metro, with work being carried out by Thai, Chinese, Japanese, Indian and Bangladeshi companies.—APP



BAKU: A delegation of rice exporters from Pakistan visited Azerbaijan. Ambassador of Pakistan to Azerbaijan Bilal Hayee briefs the delegation about mission's working.—DNA

## UNGA adopts Pakistan resolution reaffirming right to self-determination

UNITED NATIONS: The UN General Assembly Thursday stamped its approval on a Pakistan-sponsored resolution that reaffirms the right to self-determination for peoples who are subjected to colonial, foreign and alien occupation such as those in Jammu and Kashmir. The text, which was adopted by consensus, was recommended last month by the 193-member Assembly's Third Committee, which deals with social, humanitarian and cultural issues. Pakistan has been tabling this resolution since 1981 in an effort to focus the world's attention on the peoples still struggling for their inalienable right to

self-determination, including those in Kashmir and Palestine. Co-sponsored by 72 countries, the resolution calls on countries to immediately cease their foreign military intervention in and occupation of foreign countries and territories, as well as acts of repression, discrimination and maltreatment. "The consensus adoption of this resolution is another affirmation by the world community that the struggle of the people of Jammu and Kashmir for self-determination is just and legal and that their oppression and occupation is illegal and can be resisted by all means at their disposal under international law," Pakistan's UN Ambassa-

dor Munir Akram had said when asked by APP for comments after its adoption in the Third Committee last month. "It will keep alive the flame of freedom in Jammu and Kashmir," Ambassador Akram added. The resolution also declared the General Assembly's firm opposition to acts of foreign military intervention, aggression and occupation, since these have resulted in the suppression of the right of peoples to self-determination and other human rights in certain parts of the world. It called on those States responsible to cease immediately their military intervention in and occupation of foreign countries and territories, as well

as all acts of repression, discrimination, exploitation and maltreatment. The Assembly also deplored the plight of millions of refugees and displaced persons who have been uprooted as a result of these acts and reaffirms their right to return to their homes voluntarily in safety and honour. It urges the Human Rights Council to give special attention to the violation of human rights, especially the right to self-determination, resulting from foreign military intervention, aggression or occupation. The resolution also requests the Secretary-General to report to the next session of the General Assembly on this question.—APP

## 7th forum on China-Pakistan scientific &amp; economic cooperation

DNA

BEIJING: The 7th forum on China-Pakistan scientific, technological and economic cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) was held by the Pakistan Study Centre at Beijing Technology and Business University (BTBU) according to report published by China Economic Net (CEN) on Friday. The scientific, technological and economic cooperation between China and Pakistan has continuously injected new impetus into the closer China-Pakistan community of a shared future. In his welcoming speech, Liu Minhua, Vice President of BTBU, highlighted that the university attaches great importance to cooperation with Pakistani universities, scientific and technological organisations and other institutions. They continue to promote the exchanges between China and Pakistan in various fields. "BTBU will take the initiative to serve Chinese high-level opening-up, deeply integrate into the construction of the Beijing centre for international exchanges, release the achievements of think tanks, build cultural parks, expand people-to-people exchanges and deepen international cooperation," he added. Prof. Wang Qinlin, Counsel (Director General Level), International Cooperation Department, China Association for Science and Technology (CAST), stated that China and Pakistan are brotherly friendly neighbours and all-weather strategic cooperative partners. CAST will implement the spirit of the meeting between the two leaders with concrete actions and continue to work for the building of a China-Pakistan community with a shared future. Khan Muhammad Wazir, Deputy Scientific Advisor (International Liaison), Ministry of Science and Technology, Pakistan presented the formal institutional mechanism for existing science, technology, and economic cooperation between the two countries. Prof. Tian Wen, Beijing Association for Science and Technology (BAST) said that BAST actively promotes the BRI science and technology people-to-people exchange, and promotes dialogue and cooperation among science and technology organisations.

## Book on Pakistani scholars' student days in China launched

DNA

BEIJING: China-Pakistan relationship has proven to be time-tested and unbreakable, and has grown stronger with each passing year. In recent years, bilateral cooperation between China and Pakistan has increased many-fold in all fields, especially in the areas of science, technology, economy and education. This was stated by Prof. Akram Muhammad Shaikh, Director General of Pakistan Scientific and Technological Information Centre (PASTIC), at the online launch of a book on China-Pakistan friendship, according to a report published by Gwadar Post on Friday. Titled 'In Quest of Knowledge', the book is a compilation of the stories of 20 Pakistani scholars during their student days in China. Speaking at the launch, the professor also highlighted that around 274 Chinese universities offer scholarships to international students each year, as reported by the China Scholarship Council. Currently, almost 28,000 Pakistani students are enrolled



in several Chinese universities, benefiting from the world-class arts, intellectual and academic facilities. The rise in the number of students from Pakistan is mainly due to a series of policies introduced by the Chinese government. The event was organised by the Pakistan Study Center at Beijing Technology and Business University (BTBU), in collaboration with the ECO Science Foundation. Chairing the session, BTBU Executive Director Dr Di Yuna, who is also the co-editor of the book, briefed that Pakistani students in China are important emissaries of Sino-Pak friendship and play an important role in Sino-Pak cooperation.

"To enhance mutual understanding between the youth of China and Pakistan, we have jointly published this book together with the National Nanoscience Center of Chinese Academy of Sciences (NCNST) and PASTIC. We will also present the books to relevant institutions to enhance mutual understanding," added Di. Dr. Kamran Amin, Postdoc of the China Academy of Sciences (CAS), who is the initiator, mentioned that college for some of the students profiled in this book was a time of intense learning, personal growth and self-discovery, where they faced and overcame challenges and forged lasting connections and

friendships. He explained, "through their reflections, we get a glimpse into their experiences, their hopes, their dreams and their plans for the future. Their tenacity, ambition and dedication to learning inspire us. It is hoped that the book will serve as a source of information to inspire and guide more Pakistani students who want to study in China." In a foreword to the book, H.E. Moin ul Haque, Pakistani Ambassador to China, wrote that the Pakistani alumni of Chinese universities are serving at important positions in reputed multinational companies in China and worldwide. A significant number of such students are also engaged in many Chinese companies working on CPEC/BRI projects in Pakistan and thus serving as the true ambassadors of Pakistan-China friendship. The Ambassador is hopeful that 'In Quest of Knowledge' would become an inspiration for many more similar endeavours and become a source of guidance for young Pakistanis who wish to embark on the journey of knowledge and wisdom in China.

## Fire outside France's Lyon kills 10, including five children

LYON: Five children including a three-year-old were among 10 people killed when a fire broke out in a seven-storey apartment building in a suburb of the French city of Lyon, the government said Friday. Fourteen people were injured, including four who required emergency treatment, after the fire erupted in Vaulx-en-Velin in the northern outskirts of Lyon, in eastern France, the local authorities said. Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin told reporters in Paris before heading to the scene that 10 people were killed, including five children aged between three and 15. "We do not know the cause of the fire and the investigation will be able to find out," he said. "It's shocking and the toll is extremely heavy," he said, adding he had already discussed what had happened with President Emmanuel Macron. The fire has been put out, local authorities said, adding that the blaze erupted shortly after 3:00 am (0200 GMT) in Vaulx-en-Velin. Two firefighters suffered light injuries while battling the blaze, which broke out on the ground floor of the building, they said. Smoke as well as flames then surged upwards, putting all the residents of the building in danger. Nearly 170 firefighters had been deployed at the building. "It was horrific," said Mohamed, whose last name was not given, the cousin of a resident who managed to escape from the fourth floor to safety with his two children. A large security cordon was set up in the area, a district that had been undergoing a process of substantial urban renewal.—Agencies



Briefs

Qureshi seeks heavy mandate to overcome difficulties

DNA

MULTAN: Former External Affairs Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said on Friday the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) could steer the country out of economic woes if it was given a heavy mandate. Addressing a ceremony, he said loan helped country survive in PTI's government, adding that the PTI served people with good intentions. He said inflation rose during the tenure of the PDM-led government but the coalition set-up deflected blame on the PTI. He said his government gave relief to people even during hard times as the textile industry flourished. "Looms and textile industry are shutting now," he added. He said if the government was confident of its good performance, why was it reluctant to hold fresh elections.

Well-known Egyptian businessman calls on PM

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Mr. Naguib Sawiris, a well-known businessman from Egypt met Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif along with a delegation in Islamabad today. The Prime Minister while welcoming Mr. Naguib Sawiris and his delegation said that Pakistan is following investor friendly policies. He further stated that the government of Pakistan will provide all possible facilities to foreign investors. The Prime Minister further said that Pakistan has enormous investment opportunities especially in the fields of information technology, telecommunication, energy, agriculture, food processing, livestock, tourism and natural resources, which foreign investment companies can take advantage of. The business group of Mr. Najeeb Sawiris has made successful investments in telecommunication and real estate sectors in Pakistan. Mr. Sawiris expressed his interest to expand investment portfolio of his business group in Pakistan, especially in the mining sector.

UN force urges swift probe into peacekeeper's death

NAQURA: The United Nations' peacekeeping force in Lebanon on Friday urged Beirut to ensure a "speedy" investigation into an Irish soldier's shooting death in the country's south this week. The convoy of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) came under fire late Wednesday near the village of Al-Aqbiya, the Irish military said, wounding three other personnel. UNIFIL acts as a buffer between Lebanon and Israel, neighbours which remain technically at war. The force operates near the border, while Lebanon's south is a stronghold of Hezbollah. Caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati and army chief Joseph Aoun visited the UNIFIL headquarters in the border town of Naqura, denouncing the attack that claimed private Sean Rooney's life. Force spokesman Andrea Tenenti called it "a very serious incident" and told reporters it was "important" for the Lebanese authorities to bring the perpetrators to justice. "It is a crime against the international community, against peacekeepers who are here... to maintain stability," he added. It is the first death of a UNIFIL member in a violent incident in Lebanon since January 2015, when a Spanish peacekeeper was killed by Israeli fire.

BJP workers protest outside Pak embassy

"I would like to remind Mr Jaishankar that Osama bin Laden is dead, but the butcher of Gujarat lives, and he is the prime minister (of India)," the Pakistani foreign minister had said

NEW DELHI: Workers from India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Friday staged a protest against Pakistan near the country's embassy in New Delhi over Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari's remarks about Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, according to Indian media reports. A day earlier, FM Bilawal had responded to his Indian counterpart during a briefing at the United Nations after the latter accused Pakistan of perpetuating terrorism and sheltering Osama bin Laden. "I would like to remind Mr Jaishankar that Osama bin Laden is dead, but the butcher of Gujarat lives, and he is the prime minister (of India)," the Pakistani foreign minister said while responding to Indian Minister of Foreign Affairs S. Jaishankar's remarks. "He (Narendra Modi) was banned from entering this country (the United States). These are the prime minister and foreign minister of RSS, which draws inspiration from Hitler's SS," he added. In a report published today, India Today said the protesters carried placards and chanted raised slogans of "Pakistan hay hay" and "Bilawal Bhutto maafi mango" slogans. "The Delhi police put up barricades to stop the BJP workers from marching towards the Pakistan embassy. However, the protesters broke through the first round of barricades and began marching towards the embassy," the report said. The publication said that police stopped the protesters at the second line of barricades put up in Chanakyapuri area. "Water canons have also been placed here. Some BJP workers were also detained by the police," the report added. Separately, the Indian government heavily criticised Bilawal's remarks. According to NDTV, the Indian foreign ministry said that Pakistan "lacked the credentials to cast aspersions at India". Minutes before FM Bilawal's briefing on Thursday, Jaishankar had addressed the media at a UN stakeout site, repeating the allegations he made inside the UN Security Council on Wednesday, where he accused Paki-

stan of "hosting Osama bin Laden". Jaishankar also responded to the remarks Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar made in Islamabad on Wednesday, calling India "the biggest perpetrator of terrorism". Jaishankar said that Khar's remarks reminded him of the then-US secretary of state Hillary Clinton's visit to Islamabad more than a decade ago when she reminded Pakistan that "if you have snakes in your backyard, you cannot expect them to bite only your neighbours". He claimed that Pakistan was "not great at listening to good advice ... and now look what's happening there. Today, it's epicentre of terrorism ... and has its fingerprints over a lot of activities in the region and beyond". - DNA



Weekly inflation slides down by 0.40 percent

ISLAMABAD: The weekly inflation, measured by Sensitive Price Indicator (SPI), witnessed a decrease of 0.40 percent for combined consumption group during the week ended on December 15, Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported Friday. The SPI for the week under review in the above-mentioned group was recorded at 217.64 points as compared to 218.51 points during the past week, according to PBS data. As compared to the corresponding week of last year, the SPI for the combined consumption group in the week under review witnessed an increase of 29.42 percent. The weekly SPI with base year 2015-16=100 is covering 17 urban centres and 51 essential items for all expenditure groups. The SPI for the lowest consumption group up to Rs 17,732 witnessed 0.77 percent decrease and went down to 225.69 points from last week's 227.45 points. Meanwhile, the SPI for the consumption groups from Rs 17,732-22,888; Rs 22,889-29,517; Rs 29,518-44,175 and above Rs 44,175 witnessed decrease of 0.65 percent, 0.51 percent, 0.44 percent and 0.29 percent respectively. During the week, out of 51 items, prices of 22 (43.14%) items increased, 09 (17.65%) items decreased and 20 (39.21%) items remained stable. The items which recorded a decrease in their average prices on a week-on-week (wow) basis included tomatoes (28.71%), potatoes (16.63%), eggs (2.64%), vegetable ghee 1 kg (0.91%), vegetable ghee 2.5 kg (0.65%), pulse masoor (0.61%), pulse mash (0.44%), cooking oil 5 litre (0.32%) and pulse gram (0.22%). - APP

Another audio leak of Bushra Bibi over Toshakhana gifts

ISLAMABAD: Another alleged audio leak of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan's wife, Bushra Bibi, over the Toshakhana gifts has come to the fore in which she can be heard talking to the former administrator of the ex-prime minister's Bani Gala residence. The former first lady can be purportedly heard talking to the ex-administrator, identified as Inam Khan, for taking photos of the Toshakhana gifts coming into Bani Gala. This is the former first lady's second audio related to Toshakhana that has surfaced. In the first one, she could purportedly be heard speaking to PTI leader Zulfi Bukhari about selling the watches gifted to Khan as "they were of no use to him". Bushra could be allegedly heard chiding Inam and instructing him to not take photos of "things" coming inside their house and to only snap pictures of the "things" that are being taken out. - DNA

Powerful satellite launched to map world's oceans

WEB DESK

PARIS: A powerful satellite developed by NASA and the French Space Agency CNES becomes the first to monitor nearly all the world's water sources in a detailed manner. The information should help scientists track climate change. A satellite meant to map the world's oceans, lakes and rivers was launched into orbit on Friday. It aims to enable scientists to better understand climate change. The satellite, nicknamed SWOT - short for Surface Water and Ocean Topography - was developed by France and the United States. The satellite was launched before dawn in the US aboard a SpaceX rocket from Vandenberg Space Force Base in California.

The satellite uses advanced microwave radar technology to gather measurements of oceans, lakes and rivers, which is essential given that climate change has exacerbated droughts, flooding and coastal erosion. "SWOT will measure the height of water in freshwater bodies and the ocean on more than 90% of Earth's surface," NASA said in a statement. The information will provide insights into how the ocean influences climate change and how a warming world affects lakes, rivers and reservoirs, officials said. Most importantly perhaps, the satellite should monitor the location and the speed of rising sea levels and the shifting of coastlines, allowing scientists to relay information about potential flooding. The satellite also makes possible for people to bolster weather forecasts, study the ocean's topography and measure how bodies of water change over time. The mission will last three years, with the satellite's orbit meaning it can cover most of the globe roughly every three weeks. "We're going to be able to see things that we could not just see before... and really understand where water is at any given time," said Benjamin Hamlington at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory in California. SWOT, which orbits the globe around 550 miles (890 kilometers) in altitude, was developed by NASA and France's Centre National d'Études Spatiales (CNES) at a cost of \$1.2 billion, along with contributions from the Canadian and the UK space agencies.

US must be told India major sponsor of terrorism, says Mazari

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Senior Vice President Dr. Shireen Mazari said that US Central Command (Centcom) chief General Michael Erik Kurilla should be told clearly that its strategic ally India is the major sponsor of terrorism in Pakistan so US should act on this as first confidence building measure (CBM) viz Pak. Reacting to Centcom chief's visit to Pakistan-Afghan international border, PTI Senior Vice President, in a statement on Friday, stated: "We now confront a two-front India-US military alliance: QUAD and US, Israel, India." She said that the interesting timing of visit and especially being taken to Pak-Afghan international border. Dr. Mazari stated: "With repeated attacks by Afghan security forces on Pakistan forces and civilians Pakistan's Western border remains destabilised and imported government seems to have no cohesive Afghan policy." She raised question: "Is this how it has been planned to bring US military back into Afghanistan and Pakistan by giving them the bases they desperately seek and for which they became part of regime change conspiracy?" "Also let us not forget India's deep incursions into Afghanistan at all levels over a long period of time," she added. Dr. Shireen Mazari said: "What can one say - we have failed our children; terrorism continues from across our international borders and from within; we lost half our country but have learnt no lessons." State and society increasingly militarized and polarised so unwilling to realise our strength is our people and their diversity, she added. - DNA

WCCI to be helped for promotion of women-led businesses

FAISALABAD: Bulgarian embassy would work with Faisalabad Women Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FWCCI) to promote women empowerment and women-led businesses for export venture in addition to facilitate for B2B meetings and interaction with the chambers of commerce in Bulgaria. Ms. Irena Gendaeva Gancheva, Ambassador of Republic of Bulgaria said this while addressing the meeting of FWCCI members, here on Friday. She said that there were ample opportunities for improving the volume of bilateral trade between Bulgaria and Pakistan. In this regard, women entrepreneurs could contribute a lot with export to Bulgarian markets. She said that Bulgaria was member of European Union (EU) and Pakistan was also enjoying GSP Plus status under which a lot of export opportunities were available for Pakistani businesswomen particularly in the field of textile products. She said that Bulgaria was a cross road country in South Eastern Europe. Therefore, the Pakistani businesswomen should avail this opportunity and capture market potential in Bulgaria and adjacent countries. - APP

SC grants bail to blasphemy accused

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Supreme Court on Friday granted bail to a blasphemy accused who allegedly joined a Whatsapp group that posted blasphemous content. A two-member bench of the SC, headed by Justice Qazi Faiz Isa, heard the bail application of the accused. During the hearing, Justice Isa inquired from the public prosecutor why had the trial court not imposed any clause in the indictment. The apex court judge added how will the accused fight his case when he does not know what crime he has committed. To this, the deputy attorney general replied that the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) had inquired into the matter on the complaint.

LAHORE: Members Civil Society and Children holding placards and candlelight vigil at Liberty Chowk in commemoration of 8th anniversary of martyrs of terrorist attack on Army Public School Peshawar. - APP

Pakistan, Switzerland mull co-op in health sector

ISLAMABAD: Ambassador of Switzerland to Pakistan Georg Steiner on Friday called on Federal Minister for National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination Abdul Qadir Patel. During the meeting, issues of mutual interest were discussed including further promotion of bilateral cooperation in various fields, especially in the health sector. The minister said that Pakistan faced a tough time due to floods across the country as it affected major parts of Balochistan, Sindh, Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. He added massive damage had occurred which caused destruction of infrastructure,

animal livestock and precious human lives. In many areas, fields crops were ready to reap were destroyed, especially women and children were affected the most, he added. He said that Pakistan never faced such a natural disaster and added that the primary and basic health units were completely devastated, which immediately need the help of the world to restore the health system. He said that the government was utilizing all resources to restore the health system. He thanked the Government of Switzerland for its support to flood victims. Ambassador of Switzerland to Pakistan

Minister said that Pakistan faced a tough time due to floods across the country as it affected major parts of Balochistan, Sindh, Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

Georg Steiner said that their government was fully supporting the Government of Pakistan for the rehabilitation of flood victims. He expressed deep sympathies over the current floods in Pakistan and the loss of lives and property and assured that the Government of Switzerland would continue its support for the flood victims in Pakistan. He invited the minister to join Patients' Safety Conference being held in Switzerland in February next year. - APP

Japan approves a historic new military build-up

Kishida's plan will double defence outlays to about 2 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) over the next five years, and increase the defence ministry's share to about one-tenth of all public spending

NEWS DESK

TOKYO: Japan has said it would begin a once-unthinkable \$320bn military build-up that would arm it with missiles capable of striking China and ready it for a sustained conflict as regional tensions and Russia's Ukraine invasion stoke war fears. Prime Minister Fumio Kishida's government worries that Russia has set a precedent that will encourage China to attack Taiwan, threatening nearby Japanese islands, disrupting supplies of advanced semiconductors, and putting a potential stranglehold on sea lanes that supply Middle East oil. Japan's post-World War II constitution does not officially recognise the military and limits it to nominally self-defensive capabilities. In its sweeping five-year plan and revamped national security strategy, the government said on Friday it would also stockpile spare

parts and other munitions, reinforce logistics, develop cyber-warfare capabilities, and cooperate more closely with the United States and other like-minded nations to deter threats to the established international order. "Russia's invasion of Ukraine is a serious violation of laws that forbid the use of force and has shaken the foundations of the international order," it said in the national security paper. "The strategic challenge posed by China is the biggest Japan has ever faced." Unthinkable under past administrations, the rapid arming of Japan, which already hosts US forces, including a carrier strike group and a Marine expeditionary force, has the backing of most voters, according to opinion polls. Some surveys put support as high as 70 percent of voters. Kishida's plan will double defence outlays to about 2 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) over the next five years, and increase the defence ministry's share to

about one-tenth of all public spending. It will also make Japan the world's third-biggest military spender after the US and China, based on current budgets. The five-year spending roadmap did not come with a detailed plan for how Kishida's administration would pay for it, as ruling Liberal Democratic Party lawmakers continue to discuss whether to raise taxes or borrow money. The money will fund projects including the acquisition of what Japan calls "counterstrike capacity" - the ability to hit launch sites that threaten the country. The documents warn that Japan's current missile interception systems are no longer sufficient and a "counterstrike capacity is necessary". While Japanese governments have long suggested that counterstrikes to neutralise enemy attacks would be permissible under the constitution, there has been little appetite to secure the capacity. That has shifted with the continued growth of Chinese military

might and a record volley of North Korean missile launches in recent months, including over Japanese territory. Still, in a nod to the sensitivity of the issue, the documents rule out preemptive strikes, and insist Japan is committed to "an exclusively defence-oriented policy". Its language on relations with both China and Russia has hardened significantly. The strategy document previously said Japan was seeking a "mutually beneficial strategic partnership" with Beijing, a phrase that has disappeared from this iteration. Instead it suggests a "constructive and stable relationship" and better communication. China's foreign ministry on Friday urged Japan to "reflect on its policies". "Japan disregards the facts, deviates from the common understandings between China and Japan and its commitment to bilateral relations, and discredits China," ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told reporters.