



# Islamabad POST

Monday, December 19, 2022

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

Price Rs. 25

**Lionel Messi inspires Argentina to their 3rd World Cup Win**

Detailed News On Page-01

**Rallies held in solidarity with Bilawal**

Detailed News On Page-08



**Elon restores accounts of journalists**

Detailed News On Page-08



## Briefs

**No risk of default for Pakistan**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb says Pakistan does not face any default risk. In a statement, she said Imran Khan should explain how he looted the money of the nation and sold precious gifts of Toshakhana. She claimed that Imran Khan has been asking the Election Commissioner for an NRO, which will not benefit him in any way.

**PPP ready to contest elections**

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister on Poverty Alleviation and Social Protection Faisal Karim Kundi on Sunday said that PPP was ready to contest elections in Punjab and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa if PTI dissolved assemblies in the two provinces. "PPP's leadership, workers, and candidates are ready to contest elections in Punjab and KP as per the wish of PTI chairman", he said during a news conference held here. Faisal Kundi said he would ask all the members of his party and coalition parties to fulfill Imran Khan's wish of conducting elections in the two provinces.

**PML-N to escape with ECP**

DNA

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf Vice President Fawad Chaudhry on Sunday said that the PML-N would not use its "subsidiary" ECP to run away from elections. The PTI leader took to Twitter to say that they are afraid that the PML-N might try to escape the people's court with the help of its "partner" ECP. He added that they would follow the PML-N. The former Information Minister said that in a democratic country, it is the people who have the ultimate authority to make decisions, and the PDM government should acknowledge the people's rights.

## Four cops martyred in Lakki Marwat

Nobody has claimed responsibility for the attack however it is believed TTP may be behind these attacks

BUREAU REPORT / DNA

LAKKI MARWAT: At least four police personnel were martyred and as many others wounded in an overnight terrorist attack on the Baragai police station of Lakki Marwat. Terrorists launched an armed assault on the police station from two sides. A fierce exchange of fire took place between the police and the outlaws that left four policemen dead and as many injured. The attackers escaped after the assault. Police have launched a search operation in the area for the saboteurs. Constables Ibrahim, Imran, Khairur Rahman and Sabz Ali are among the deceased. Condemning the attack, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Mehmood Khan sought report on the matter and ordered best medical aid for the injured cops. "The incident is extremely unfortunate. The sacrifices of the martyred will not go in vain," he vowed. The law and order situation in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has gone south over the last few weeks as an increase has been noticed in threats and attacks on security forces as well as high-profile political personalities. Provincial spokesperson of the Awami National Party (ANP) Samar Bilour has also shared that their provincial president Aimal Wali Khan had received a call about a plan of attack on his life. Samar said that their leadership's protection is the state's

President, PM condemn attack

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: President Dr Arif Alvi and Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif on Sunday strongly condemned a terrorist attack on Baragai police station in district Lakki Marwat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. The president expressed the resolve of continuing efforts to completely eliminate the remnants of terrorism, President Secretariat Press Wing said in a press release. The prime minister said the entire nation saluted the huge sacrifices of police officers and jawans in their fight against terrorism. Paying tribute to the supreme sacrifices of the police personnel, the prime minister said that terrorists were the open enemies of Pakistan and the nation. "Those who have been shielding the nation against terrorists are our heroes," PM Office Media Wing, in a press release, quoted the prime minister as saying. The prime minister further said that elimination of terrorists, their supporters and facilitators had been the national priority.

Continued on Page 06

Continued on Page 06

## Elahi defends fmr COAS

**No action against Gen Bajwa if came to power: Imran**

PTI chief says holding polls would be test of new army chief's neutrality

Ch. Shujaat tasked with blocking Assembly dissolution

DNA

LAHORE: Former prime minister and Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan on Sunday said that he has a "personal" dispute with former army chief General (ret'd) Qamar Javed Bajwa but he will not take any action against him if he comes into power again. He made these remarks during a meeting with a delegation of Council of Pakistan Newspaper Editors (CPNE) at his Zaman Park residence in Lahore.

LAHORE: Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) senior leader Chaudhry Shujaat Hussain has been tasked with preventing the Punjab Assembly from being dissolved at the hands of Imran Khan-led Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), well-placed sources revealed. The development came during multiple meetings between Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif, Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Co-chairperson Asif Ali Zardari and Shujaat Hussain. PM Shehbaz and Asif Zardari decided not to contact

Continued on Page 06

Continued on Page 06

**Imran failed to create controversy, says Kh Asif**

Says PTI Chairman Imran Khan, during his around four-year tenure in government, destroyed the national economy

SIALKOT: Federal Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif has said that former prime minister Imran Khan attempted to make the national institutions controversial, but failure was his destiny. Addressing a Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) workers' convention here on Sunday, he said that Imran Khan's biggest regret is that he could not get an opportunity to select the army chief of his choice, adding that he wanted to appoint an army chief who would allow him to extend his rule for another 10 years. Kh Asif said that Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan, during his around four-year tenure in government, destroyed the national economy. He said people were suffering as a consequence of Imran Khan government's failure and wrong policies.

He said Imran Khan used to say that he would commit suicide but not take loans. However, in the history of the country, no government took as much loan as the previous government of Imran Khan did. The federal defence minister said that the coalition government in Centre was trying day and night for the last eight months to improve and revive the country's economy. - APP

**PTI MNAs to appear before NA speaker**

DNA

LAHORE: The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) lawmakers have decided to appear before National Assembly Speaker Raja Parvez Ashraf for the verification of their resignations. Geo News reported Sunday citing sources. As per the sources, the members of the National Assembly (MNAs) will either appear before the speaker on Wednesday or Thursday. The date will be finalised by party Chairman Imran Khan during the consultative meeting today, said the sources. The sources further stated that the speaker of the National Assembly has not yet given time to confirm the resignations of the lawmakers.

## France dethroned

**Messi does it for Argentina**

Argentina wins the prestigious World Cup after 36 long years



SPORTS DESK

LUSAIL: Argentina beat France in the penalty shootout of the FIFA World Cup 2022 final on Sunday at Qatar's Lusail Stadium to become the winners. The final went to a penalty shootout after it finished 3-3 in extra-time. The match ended 2-2 after 90 minutes but Lionel Messi poked in a goal to put Argentina 3-2 ahead in the 108th minute before Kylian Mbappe completed his hat-trick two minutes

before the end of extra-time. The closing ceremony for the World Cup was earlier celebrated ahead of the final. Fans thronged the stadium before the match's start. Messi is seeking to win the honour that has so far eluded one of football's greatest-ever players. In his way stands the prolific Mbappe and a France team aiming to win back-to-back World Cups for the first time since Pele's triumph in 1962. Messi, 35, has collected seven Ballon d'Or awards for the best player in the world, but the last time he reached the World Cup final it ended in the bitter disappointment of defeat to Germany in 2014.

## Pakistan to import gas from Azerbaijan

Russian Petroleum Minister will visit Pakistan next month

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In order to cater to the rising energy demand during winter, the government has decided to import additional gas from Azerbaijan in next couple of months. Talking to a private TV channel, Minister of State for Petroleum Musadik Malik said that Pakistan will import 20,000 tons of additional gas from Azerbaijan during the

next two months to meet its demand in the country. He said Russian Petroleum Minister will visit Pakistan next month for holding negotiations on an agreement for the import of crude oil from Russia. Musadik Malik was confident that Russia would export crude oil to Pakistan at a discounted rate. He said the government is working on TAPI gas pipeline project to import 1300 billion MF Gas yearly from Azerbaijan to meet the gas shortage in the country. He said our gas reservoirs are decreasing every year which causes additional pressure to import maximum gas to meet the demand.

Continued on Page 06

## Inside...

PTA hosts Workshop on Gender Inclusion Strategy - Page 02

Transgender's inclusion in BISP to ensure equal rights - Page 03

Experts demand creation of Climate Change Authority - Page 04

Democracy is in jeopardy - Page 05

Shoaib and Sarah win Benazir Tennis C'ship - Page 06

N. Korea fires two ballistic missiles: Seoul's military - Page 07

Qatar says EU corruption probe threat to relations - Page 08

## Imran Khan pulls the trigger: what next?

COMMENT

ANSAR M BHATTI

DESPIITE all ifs and buts and a veiled resistance from the chief ministers of the Punjab and KPK provinces the PTI Chairman Imran Khan has finally decided to call it a day. During a televised address on Saturday, he announced to dissolve both these assemblies on December 23 saying he had decided to "sacrifice" his governments in the larger interest of the country. While a mixed reaction continues to pour in about this decision, Imran Khan seems to have failed those who believed he might take a big U-turn again by avoiding dissolution of the assemblies. Interestingly, the government officials have been pressing him to leave assemblies and try his luck in the elections and when he has done it, the entire official machinery is now seen taking U-turn



by cursing Imran's decision. As Imran Khan would put it, the PDM is scared of elections anticipating an ignominious defeat. That is why it wants to gain more time or at least drag the elections till October next year.

PTI Chairman was flanked by the chief ministers of Punjab and KPK, which prima facie means his decision, which a clear backing of both the heads of the provincial government. Nevertheless, the decision to dissolve assemblies on December 23 and not immediately has cast some doubts albeit Imran Khan is quite sure things will go as per his choosing come what may. While the PTI seems to link this delayed decision to the acceptance of resignations in the National, those well-connected to power corridors are of the view it was Punjab Chief Minister Peraz Elahi who had wished to continue for at least a week if not more in order to settle his ongoing projects. The Punjab government has launched huge projects incurring a cost of billions of rupees. The Punjab CM and his cohorts perhaps were dead sure they will bring Imran round for a delayed dissolution, at least till February next year. In this case

they would have enough time to execute their projects and thus make their fortunes. The KPK CM however did not lay any preconditions for the dissolution despite, or he had no guts to do so, despite the fact an early dissolution may deprive him and his team of making fortunes. Ostensibly, running a government happens to be a profitable business for those at the helm of affairs hence nobody would like to leave power.

The PDM has four days if it really wants to stymie this dissolution. They have legal options including tabling a no-trust move against the chief ministers, though legal experts believe they cannot do it when the assembly is in session. Another option turns out to be the imposition of the Governor's Rule. The government indeed can do it but the move may backfire since there are not solid grounds available for the government to take this extreme step. The third option, which appears to be more relevant, is re-engagement with the PTI leadership to evolve a consensus on an acceptable date for the general elections. That may be perhaps another reason that Imran Khan postponed the decision till Friday with a view

to giving the dialogue another chance. The PML N and its allied parties are not ready for early elections simply because with the baggage of nearly eight months of governance or bad governance, they cannot face the electorates. All their tall claims made before ousting the Imran government regarding turning around the fate of this country have evaporated in the air. Going to elections under these circumstances may turn out to be suicidal for the PDM.

But then that is the only way forward. Now it is up to the sitting government to rise to the occasion by sensing the gravity of the situation. By-elections in two provincial assemblies and on 123 National Assembly seats would mean about 70 percent of Pakistanis would be taking part in the electoral drill. In this scenario it would be difficult for the federal and Sindh governments to continue. As Imran Khan claimed in his speech that the former army chief Gen. Bajwa was solely responsible for the removal of his government and bringing in these 'thieves'. The incoming Establishment has made it clear it would not meddle in political affairs, so when it would be PTI

Vs rest of the political parties then of course PTI would have an upper hand and that is exactly where the shoe pinches. In the prevailing political situation it would be next to impossible for the PDM to defeat the PTI without any 'alien' support, as was the case with the PTI in the 2018 elections.

There is also a strong likelihood that the Federal govt would like to prolong a caretaker set up in case it is not able to stop the dissolution of both assemblies. The PTI chairman however warned about this during his speech saying there was no constitutional provision to linger on the by-elections beyond a period of 90 days. We still believe holding early general elections is the only way out. Any other adventure or misadventure would only multiply the economic woes and take political instability to new heights. Without political stability the economic stability would remain a distant dream. All said and done, we know how quickly intentions, fortunes and alliances change in Pakistan's politics. Therefore the PTI leadership needs to keep its fingers crossed till the time the dissolution finally takes place!!

## Swiss funding to boost for Refugees in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD :UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, has welcomed a contribution of US \$5.6 million from the Government of Switzerland as this contribution will be directly aimed at addressing the education and livelihoods needs of refugees and host communities in Pakistan, over a four-year period. In a unique undertaking, the Swiss Development Cooperation with the South and Swiss Humanitarian Aid joined forces in coordination with the Swiss State Secretariat for Migration to pilot the multi-year funding and combine development and humanitarian sources of funding – with UNHCR Pakistan being the first recipient of such mixed funding, said a press release. The Swiss contribution concentrates on refugee and Pakistani children and youth, to ensure their right to quality education, participation, protection and to enhance their prospects for life and work. This includes improving school infrastructure, removing financial barriers to school-attendance, and supporting children at risk of school drop-out, including girls and children with special needs to access quality education.—APP

## FESCO issues shutdown program

FAISALABAD :Faisalabad Electric Supply Company (FESCO) issued shutdown program for Monday due to necessary repair, maintenance and expansion of electricity lines. According to the program issued by the company here on Sunday, power supply from Hindoana feeder linked with 132-KV Chiniot grid station will remain suspended from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. while Marzi Pura, Raza Abad, Subhan Abad, Kashmir Road, GM Abad, Aminpur, Langrana, Qadir Abad, Madina Abad, Ahmad Abad, Faiz Abad, Siddapura, Sindhu, Rehman Abad, Shehbaz Pur, Khurdpur, Lyallpur Oil Refinery, Prokianwala, Elyas, Siddique Abad, Masha Allah and Tauseef Enterprises feeder attached with 132-KV Narwala Road grid station will observe shutdown from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. on Monday (December 19). Similarly, electricity supply from Katchery Bazaar and Fareed feeders connected with 132-KV Samundri grid station, D-Ground and National Colony feeders originating from 220-KV Jaranwala Road grid station, new Dijkot feeder linked with 220-KV Samundri Road grid station, Saeed Abad and Rasheed Abad feeders attached with 132-KV University grid station, Chiniot Road feeder connected with 132-KV Aminpur grid station, Islampura, ABC Road and Afghan Abad feeders originating from 132-KV Jhang Road grid station, GIC feeder linked with 132-KV Samundri Road grid station, Momin Abad feeder attached with 132-KV Factory Area grid station, Faisalabad Road feeder connected with 132-KV Chiniot grid station, Lahore Road, Theraj Shaheed and Canal Road feeders originating from 132-KV Jaranwala grid station.—APP

# PTA hosts Workshop on Gender Inclusion Strategy

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA), in collaboration with UNESCO Pakistan, hosted a consultative workshop in Lahore for the development of digital gender inclusion strategy. The workshop, held at PTA's Lahore Zonal Office, was the second of a series of five consultative workshops being organized to collect multi-stakeholder experts' input for a strategy to reduce digital gender divide in Pakistan. The workshop was conducted by Ms. Sadaf Khan, UNESCO consultant. Experts from



various stakeholder groups including Global System for Mobile Communications Association (GSMA), telecom operators, academia, and

digital gender rights groups participated in the workshop. The objective is to ensure that the gender inclusion strategy is responsive

to the needs of the people and can be effectively integrated into the systems that are already in place. This strategy will help PTA to

coordinate a holistic effort, with other public and private sector stakeholders, to tackle various barriers to women's use of mobile and ICTs.

Last month, the workshop was conducted in Peshawar and the next workshops are planned to be held in Karachi, Quetta and Islamabad.

## World should help migrants workers: ILO

ISLAMABAD :The International community must do better to ensure the world's 169 million migrant workers are able to realize their basic human and labour rights, says ILO Director-General, Gilbert F. Houngbo, in a message released for International Migrants Day on Sunday. Too many of the 169 million migrant workers in the world today are unable to exercise their basic rights. This leaves them invisible, vulnerable and undervalued

for their contributions to society. The vulnerability of migrant workers to various forms of discrimination is exacerbated when it intersects with other grounds such as race, ethnicity and gender. Migrants do not only go missing on high-risk and desperate journeys. Many migrant domestic, agricultural and other workers are isolated and out of reach of those who could protect them. Undocumented migrants are particularly vulnerable to abuses.

The International Labour Organization supports governments, employers and workers to make fair labour migration a reality. Like all workers, migrant workers are entitled to the protection of international human rights and labour standards, including freedom of association and collective bargaining, non-discrimination and safe and healthy working environments. Migrant workers should also be able to realize their rights to social protection, development and

recognition. To make these rights a reality, we need to acknowledge the key importance of fair recruitment including the need to eliminate recruitment fees and costs charged to migrant workers which can help eradicate human trafficking and forced labour. Access to decent work is a key strategy to realize migrants' development potential and contribution to society. We must recognize that injustices suffered by migrant workers are injustices to us all.—APP

## Arid Agriculture University to hold two-day workshop

RAWALPINDI :Pir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agricultural University is going to hold a two-day workshop on "Capacity Building and Risk Assessment of Punjab Probation/Payroll Officers" in the light of a research project approved by Higher Education Commission to reclaim criminals, convicts and inmates of Punjab prisons as useful citizens of the society. The workshop will be held from December 20-21, here at the University alongwith international and national partners of the project who will shed light on modern standards and methods to make prisoners, convicts and accused persons useful citizens of the society. Professor Mazhar Hussain Bhutta, Principal Investigator Officer and Chairman of the Department of Criminology and Sociology, Pir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agricultural University told APP that the workshop is being organised under the HEC-approved research project "Revamping Probation Services: Assessing risks, needs and strengths of offenders on probation in Punjab, Pakistan." He said that the international academic partner of this project is Dr. Shelley Brown who is Professor of forensic psychology, and Director, Gender and Crime Lab at Carleton University Canada. However, the other partners included the Department of Law, Policy and Procedure of Fatima Jinnah Women University, Probation and Payroll Services Department Punjab, National Police Bureau and research departments of related institutions are included. Prof. Dr. Mazhar Hussain Bhutta further informed about the two-day workshop that Prof. Dr. Shelley Brown will address online in this workshop while 15 probation officers nominated by Punjab Probation and Payroll Services Department, Additional IG of Punjab Prisons, Ministry of Director General of National Academy for Prisoner Administration, Deputy Director of National Police Bureau of Pakistan and Director of Training and Research NAB Headquarters and Head of Department of Law and Policy of Fatima Jinnah Women University will also share their thoughts on various topics.—APP



RAWALPINDI: A large number of people standing in queue for purchasing flour on subsidy rates by provincial government. — APP

## Indonesian housing project for flood victims

DNA

SUJAWAL: The Muslim philanthropic organization of Indonesia, Dompot Dhuafa has completed the construction of 10 climate resilient model houses for Pakistani flood victims in District Sujawal, Sindh Province. The Ambassador of Indonesia Mr. Adam M. Tugio chaired the hybrid session of project completion ceremony and symbolically handed over the keys to Mr. Muhammad Hasan Rind, representing the flood affectees. "As

brotherly nations, Indonesia shares sorrows of Pakistani people caused by recent floods and the reconstruction of these houses are manifestation of our solidarity", added the envoy. The housing program for flood victims in Pakistan by Dompot Dhuafa provided 10 brick houses, 4 public toilets and one water well. Each house has a size of 15x20 feet with two bedrooms and one living room. This model housing project worth around USD 35,000 has been completed in 27 days. In October,

Dompot Dhuafa also built two model houses in the nearby area. Indonesia and Pakistan have strong bonds of brotherhood and this humanitarian aid reflects the strong partnership and mutual cooperation to support each other in difficult times. "We hope that assistance from the government and people of Indonesia will reduce the sufferings of flood affected communities and support the rehabilitation and reconstruction process", Ambassador Tugio said in his concluding remarks. Earlier, in September 2022,

the Indonesian government dispatched the first batch of flood relief aid weighing around 90 tons followed by sending the team of 29 Indonesian health professionals to Sindh Province. The fourth batch of Indonesian additional logistic assistance is expected to arrive in Pakistan next week. President Joko Widodo also pledged to provide humanitarian grant of USD 1 million which will be sent directly to NDMA of Pakistan. The disbursement process is expected to be finalised before the end of the year.

## VC UAJK calls for effective strategies to train workforce

DNA

ABBOTTABAD: The Vice-Chancellor University of Azad Jammu and Kashmir (UAJK) Prof Dr. Muhammad Kaleem Abbasi has said that the demand for skilled human resources in the medical field is increasing with each passing day across the globe and we need to adopt effective strategies to train the clinical and non-clinical healthcare workforce to take advantage of it. He was addressing a reception given in honor of the Commandant Combined Military Hospital (CMH) Muzaffarabad Brigadier Zahid Hussain by UAJK Health and Medical Sciences Department the other day. Dr. Kaleem Abbasi remarked that all those institutions involved in human resource development in the highly demanding medical field deserved to be appreciated and supported by both civil society and the government. Acknowledging the quality healthcare services of the CMH Muzaffarabad along with its training program for the students of UAJK, the VC termed it the pioneer institution which first started medical services in the area for the masses with the assistance of the Army Medical Corps (AMC). Dr. Abbasi expressed his pleasure over the availability of quality teach-



ing hospitals like CMH, AIMS, and RIC for the UAJK students of various medical specialties where they are receiving quality medical technology training. The Vice-Chancellor thanked Brig. Zahid Hussain of the Army Medical Corps, and the Health Department for their consistent support in providing training opportunities to the students of the varsity. Addressing the reception as a chief guest, Commandant Brig. Zahid Hussain expressed pleasure to interact with the management, faculty, and students of the UAJK in one sitting and said that he was extremely satisfied with the collective efforts of CMH and UAJK that was not only bene-

fitting humanity but also a great service to the nation and country. Brig. Zahid Hussain stated that the health sector has now become an industry in the world and there is a great demand for medically trained manpower in the private sector as well. He urged the students to explore and get benefit from the opportunities available in the health sector worldwide. He added that equipping the hospital with adequate human resources and the latest diagnostic equipment is at the top of his priorities. "In three to four months times, a state-of-the-art MRI machine provided by Pak Army is being installed in the hospital" the commandant informed. Brig. Zahid further said that apart from this, new electro-medical

equipment is being installed in the Radiology Department, and new Ultrasound Machines and Laboratory kits are also in the process of installation to provide modern diagnostic facilities to the common man at their doorsteps. "Students of the Department of Health Sciences UAJK would greatly benefit from these facilities during their training period", he added. He assured the administration and faculty of UAJK that along with serving the suffering humanity, his institution will continue to provide the best training opportunities to the students. Speaking on the occasion, Associate Dean of Health and Medical Sciences Dr. Bashir ur Rahman

Kanth said that ninety percent of the graduates who completed their studies in various programs from UAJK Health and Medical Department have currently doing jobs in various government and private health institutions. The Dean of Medical Sciences particularly mentioned the reformist agenda of Commandant Brigadier Zahid Hussain through which, the people have access to the best treatment facilities in the capital city. "He has taken great measures for the best utilization of human resources and provision of facilities to the public which is indeed a commendable job", Dr. Kanth commented. After the ceremony, a detailed meeting between the Commandant CMH Muzaffarabad and the Vice-Chancellor UAJK was held in which various suggestions were taken into consideration to strengthen the cooperation between the university and CMH Muzaffarabad. Earlier, when Commandant CMH Brigadier Zahid Hussain arrived at the university, he was warmly welcomed by the students and faculty of the Department of Health Sciences. Lt. Col. Saeed in charge of the Rehabilitation Center and Dr. Qaratul Ain Shafiq, Deputy Medical Superintendent also accompanied him.

## Woman along with two kids abducted

WAH CANTT :A woman along with her two kids were abducted by unknown persons in the limits of Taxila Police station on Sunday. Muhammad Rafeeq has reported to Police that his wife along with his two sons including Aabid aged 7 years and Ghulam Mustafa aged 11 was going to seminary when they were abducted by unknown persons. Taxila Police registered a case and launched further investigation.—APP

## Gas companies laying 10,707-km pipelines

ISLAMABAD, Dec 18 (APP): The two state-owned companies, SNGPL and SSGC, are in process of laying almost 10,707-kilometer pipelines to reinforce gas transmission networks in their operational areas across the country during the current fiscal year. The Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) would place 9,605 kilometers and Sui Southern Gas Company (SSGC) 1,102 transmission and distribution pipelines in their respective areas during 2022-23 aimed at improving the efficiency of the commodity supply to domestic, industrial, and commercial consumers.

The companies would collectively spend funds amounting to Rs 113,899 billion on the upgradation of the gas transmission and distribution system. "The SNGPL and SSGC have planned to invest Rs 27,669 million on transmission projects, Rs 77,484 million on distribution projects, and Rs 8,746 million on other projects bringing the total investment of Rs 113,899 million during the fiscal year 2022-23," according to an official document available with APP.—APP

## Decorated Christmas tree brings festive sparkle

ISLAMABAD, Dec 18 (APP): With only a few days left in the grand festival of Christmas, the Christian community in the federal capital like other parts of the country has started decorating Christmas trees for their homes, offices and street corners with the help of embellishments, following the old tradition. The offices, shops, malls and hotels in the federal capital have also placed the ornamented Christmas tree to share the happiness of the festival with the members of the Christian community and attract visitors.—APP

The Smooth Moving Connection

# freeline MOVERS

PACKING, SHIPPING & FREIGHT FORWARDING







### Our Services

- Packing
- Shipping
- Freight Forwarding
- Land, Sea & Air Freight
- Custom Clearance
- Relocations
- Office Removals
- Fine Art Handling
- Project Management
- Pet Relocation
- Warehousing
- Storage



**Head Office**  
3rd Floor, Yasin Plaza, 74-West, Blue Area, Islamabad.  
Tel: (+92 51) 2822471, 2274221, 2878029, 2272273, 2822711, 2874289 - Fax: (+92 51) 2825132, 2274227.  
E-mail: moving@freelinemovers.com - Website: www.freelinemovers.com

**Branch Offices:**

<p><b>Karachi</b> Room No. 14 &amp; 15, 3rd Floor, Karamaheen Mall, Main Tariq Road, 179-B, Block-2, P.E.C.H.S. Karachi. Tel: (+92 21) 3498026, 34310479. Fax: (+92 21) 34517147. E-mail: karachi@freelinemovers.com</p>	<p><b>Lahore</b> F-4, Gulberg Centre, Main Boulevard, Lahore. Tel: (+92 42) 3575988, 35751085. Fax: (+92 42) 35711423. E-mail: lahore@freelinemovers.com</p>	<p><b>Peshawar</b> Office No. C-4, 2nd Floor, Zameer Plaza, Left Amd, Ring Road, Peshawar. Tel: (+92 91) 2527079. Fax: (+92 91) 2526958. E-mail: peshawar@freelinemovers.com</p>
<p><b>Katol</b> House # 4, Street # 4, Chandi Anwar Road, Shahr-e-Nasr, Katol - Jhelum. Tel: (+92 61) 773, 93, 79796. Fax: 93 17948. E-mail: katol@freelinemovers.com</p>		



## Briefs

## China to support Punjab for rapid industrialization

STAFF REPORT

Islamabad: China will support Punjab for rapid industrialization, a senior Chinese diplomat said, according to Gwadar Pro. Zhao Shiren, Chinese Consul General in Lahore during his visit to Punjab Board of Investment and Trade (PBIT) held discussions on different areas for increasing mutual cooperation between the two sides. During the interaction, the two sides resolved to enhance the collaboration for rapid industrialization in the province, especially for encouraging B2B level engagement of Chinese investors and businesses with their local counterparts from Punjab. The Consul General deeply appreciated the efforts of the former and current Secretary Industries for promoting the relocation of labour intensive industries from China to Punjab by leveraging a strong network of Special Economic Zones across the province both in the public and private sectors. Jalal Hassan Chief Executive Officer (CEO) PBIT, who is also the Secretary of Punjab Special Economic Zones (SEZs) Authority, apprised the participants about effective facilitation by PBIT for promoting private sector led growth model which entails the recent grant of three new SEZs licenses to private sector developers in Punjab, two of which are a result of direct investment and cooperation by Chinese business enterprises. Secretary Industries Punjab Sohail Ashraf emphasized that Punjab must develop its capacity to train a strong pool of skilled labor force as per modern industrial demands for local as well as international markets. A strong consensus was also developed between the two sides to further strengthen the technical education and vocational training canvas of Punjab by benefiting from the Chinese experience, especially to uplift the on-going partnership between Technical Education and Vocational Training Authority (TEVTA) Punjab and Tianjin consortium of technical universities for Punjab Tianjin University of Technology (PTUT) in Lahore. The Chinese Consul General assured of complete support for reinvigorating the PTUT project and other steps to encourage Chinese investors to relocate to Punjab and form Joint Ventures (JV) based partnership with local investors. Other areas of mutual collaboration including visa facilitation for Pakistan businesspersons, also came under discussion. The Consul General was received by Secretary Industries Punjab, Sohail Ashraf, Chairman PBIT Fazeel Asif Jah, Chairman SEZs Authority Punjab, S M Naveed and CEO PBIT, Jalal Hassan.

## Cleft lip and palate patients go get free treatment



ISLAMABAD: Islamabad Cleft Lip and Palate Association (ICLAPA) continued providing free medical treatment to the children with cleft lip and palate. An ICLAPA's team of surgeons are also available to operate affected children. According to the Association's senior member Mrs. Farhat Akhtar Rehman, the surgery takes place at the Fuji Foundation Hospital and Heart International. "We welcome the affected patients to get the treatment on urgent basis free of charge," she added. The parents of the affected children have been asked to contact Mrs. Farhat on her cell numbers 03335157676 and 0300-5192490 to get them registered for the normal treatment or surgery. Mrs Farhat Akhtar Rehman said his organization had been providing free medical facilities to the poor families since 2004 with the support of families, friends and philanthropists. The ICLAPA was a group of volunteers, which relied on donors to bring hope and happiness in the lives of people, for whom it was financially difficult to give treatment to their children.—APP



ISLAMABAD: The Students of University of Gwadar visited the Chinese embassy and got first hand information about the CPEC projects.—DNA

## Experts demand creation of Climate Change Authority

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's own environmental governance structure needs to be comprehensively operationalized to seek assistance through international climate financing, especially the 'loss and damage' fund ahead of COP27. The long awaited Climate Change Authority should be created without any further delay as mitigating climate change disasters and seeking climate financing and compensation from the international community needs comprehensive policy, legislative and governance mechanisms at all the levels of the state. This was demanded during a dialogue, titled 'Post COP27 Strategy for Pakistan: Climate Financing and De-carbonization', organized by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) to deliberate on necessary mitigation and adaptation measures to tackle the crises arising from climate change following the 27th UN climate change conference held in November in Egypt. The session, chaired by Mirza Hamid Hassan, chairperson, IPS Steering Committee on Energy, Water and Climate Change, and former federal secretary, Ministry of Water and Power, was addressed by Khalid Rahman, chairman IPS, Dr. Muhammad Irfan Khan, dean, Environmental Sciences, International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI), Syeda Hadika Jamsahid, climate policy specialist, Minis-

try of Climate Change, Syed Aqeel Hussain Jafri, director, Policy and International Cooperation, Alternative Energy Development Board, Dr. Shafiqat Munir Ahmed, director, Resilient Development Program, SDPI, Dr. Kanwar Muhammad Javed Iqbal, general secretary, Pakistan Panel for Climate Change (PPCC) and Lubna Riaz, researcher, IPS. The experts deplored that despite the passage of the Climate Change Act 2017 the formation of Climate Change Authority and Climate Change Council still seems an uphill task.

They were of the view that the Council of Common Interests (CCI) and other concerned bodies should prioritize this critical national issue. While sharing insights on climate financing, the speakers acknowledged Pakistan's advocacy and role at COP27 in making the international community, particularly the developed world, realize the disastrous consequences of climate change and the need for loss and damage financing for vulnerable countries. This realization marks active progress toward the cause; however, Pakistan must take conclusive actions at the national level as well because whatever the climate compensation may be, it would not ensure future security against climate-induced afflictions, argued the speakers. With an increasing poverty rate and poor human development, this has become particularly significant as Pakistan would remain vulnerable in the future. As

part of the future-oriented solutions to the crises triggered by climate change, it is important to adopt green measures within society as well as corporate sectors, along with formulating indigenous mechanisms and legislation, they advised. Moreover, as observed by the experts, the recovery from the floods including reconstruction and social development is estimated to require \$16 billion while the secondary recovery costs, including medical care and food supply, would surpass this figure. Therefore, things can't get better just with climate financing. While highlighting the de-carbonization strategy, the speakers maintained that Pakistan has already presented itself as a responsible nation by committing to de-carbonizing the power sector through renewable energy transition and aiming to achieve the goal of 60 per cent share of non-fossil fuel-based power generation by the end of this decade. Though such adaptation measures to the climate change impacts are the elementary necessity of time; in order to prepare for the future, mitigation measures are equally crucial. The speakers further stressed the need to reform the policy, legal, and institutional frameworks for better environmental governance, which is also a prerequisite to the efficient dispersal of climate finances in the country. As Pakistan would remain vulnerable in the fu-

ture, the stakeholders must continue to negotiate, lobby, and advocate for the cause in every capacity possible at the international level. In this regard, a climate authority must be established to ensure the proper management of the funds through the right strategies, stressed the experts. These strategies may be quantified into short, medium, and long-term initiatives for proper disaster recovery. Furthermore, the dissection of the losses from the climate disaster for the dispersal of funds should be based on correct data on life casualties, monetary loss, food scarcity, and medication requirements in the disaster-hit areas. Concluding the session, Khalid Rahman maintained that every stakeholder needs to build on the efforts for mitigating climate-induced vulnerability and disasters with increased momentum. Moreover, in order to advance the successful outcomes of efforts against damages due to climate, there is a dire need to strengthen climate change governance and resilience against climatic threats. He further highlighted that the international development paradigm is marked with a dilemma, in which states want to resolve climate change and its consequences while also aiming for growth-led production, which is inherently the cause of climate change. This dilemma of the international development paradigm should be challenged and be made a point of agenda in discourses and efforts against climate change.

## RCCI inks MoU with White Ribbon Pakistan

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the White Ribbon Pakistan. The main purpose of the MOU was to eliminate domestic violence particularly violence against women and patriarchal mindset prevailing in the society. President RCCI Saqib Rafiq and Omer Aftab, Founder/President White Ribbon Pakistan signed and exchanged the MOU documents at a ceremony held at Chamber house. Senior Vice President Muhammad Hamza Sarosh and members were also present on the occasion. Saqib Rafiq, said that there is a need to work on gender equality



at the workplace and create a productive environment in business communities. RCCI platform is available for policy advocacy and to bring more awareness about var-

ious laws and amendments to counter gender-based discrimination, violence against women, and economic and social empowerment of women. He suggested nationwide

campaign shall be initiated asking men from all occupations to pledge their allegiance to eradicate violence against women in every possible form.—DNA

## UN Women playing vital role to protect migrant women

ISLAMABAD: As part of the 'Making Migration Safe for Women' programme, the UN Women has been working with local organizations to develop a set of handouts for women to inform them of their rights and ensure they understand the risks and realities of migration. However, while all migrants may experience negative stereotypes and prejudice, women, girls, gender-diverse people and those living with disabilities too often face the brunt of discriminatory migration laws and policies, according to statement issued here on Sunday by UN Women on the occasion of International Migrants Day. There are estimated 281 million migrants worldwide, moving for many different reasons: some to escape poverty, unemployment, political instability or violence, while others leave to pursue opportunities: to study, develop their careers and to be with their families. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes the positive contribution of migrants for inclusive growth and sustainable development. Migration can potentially bring significant benefits to women; a demonstration of their agency and a means of empowerment whose benefits, such as remittances, radiate to their families. It is therefore vital that we take steps to address the risks of irregular migration, and respect, protect and fulfill the rights of all migrant women and girls, at all stages and in all types of migration. "We encourage all those working on migration issues to consult with migrant women and girls whose lived experiences can best inform the policies affecting them.—APP

## Railways retrieved 961 acres land

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Railways has retrieved as many as 961 acres of its land worth Rs19, 603 million during various anti-encroachment operations across the country from the land grabbers. "Around 474 acres retrieved in Punjab, 135 acres in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 329 acres in Sindh and only 23 acres in Balochistan acres land had been retrieved by the Pakistan Railways," an official in the Ministry of Railways told APP. He said that about 3,287 acres in Punjab, 832 acres in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, 5,180 acres in Sindh, and 687 acres of land in Balochistan were being encroached. The official said that in the light of orders of the Supreme Court, the anti-encroachment operations for retrieval of encroached railway land all over the Railway network were initiated.—APP

## CPEC Agri Corridor spurs economic growth

DNA

ISLAMABAD: As 2022 draws close, the agriculture sector has gained manifold tractions under China-Pakistan agriculture cooperation promising the phenomenal agri growth in the length and breadth of Pakistan, according to a report published by Gwadar Pro on Saturday. Given the comprehensive spectrum of cooperation under "CPEC Green Corridor" throughout the year in 2022, the agriculture sector has recorded a remarkable growth of 4.4% and surpassed the target of 3.5% as well as last year's growth of 3.48% during FY2022. According to Economic Survey, the growth in the agriculture sector recorded 4.4% and surpassed the target of 3.5%. This remarkable growth is mainly underpinned by China-led assistance to Pakistan in many facets relating transfer of hands-on experience in the fields of intercropping, high-yield seeds, pest control, hybrid cultivation, corporate farming, innovate irrigation technique, agri machinery training, agri research & development, protocol for Pak agri exports to China, digital farming and agri labor skills. Since Sino-Pak agriculture has continued to deepen in 2022, Pakistan's agricultural products exported to China from January to August 2022 reached \$730 million with a year-on-year increase of 28.59%. Pakistan's agricultural exports to China are expected to exceed a record high of \$1 billion next year. On the back of 2022 agri sector's milestone achievement, the focus of next year under CPEC Green Corridor will be continuing on improving land cultivation area, water management, better access to markets for inputs (seeds, fertilizers, farm mechan-

ization, credit, water) and outputs, improved infrastructure including storage and cooling facilities, reduction in post-harvest losses, greater investment in research, development and extension, improved quality and fulfillment of quarantine requirements for international markets and competitiveness, greater diversification, especially minor but high-value crops, farm input and effectiveness of markets. The announcement of three new corridors under CPEC including China-Pakistan Green Corridor (CPGC), which focuses on agricultural environment and food security speaks volumes about the significance of agricultural cooperation in CPEC. The inauguration of the Intercropping Research Center jointly established by Sichuan Agricultural University (SAU) and the Islamia University of Bahawalpur (IUB) in 2021 showed fantastic results in the 2022 season. According to a news report a few weeks ago, China's maize-soybean strip intercropping technology completed harvest at 65 demonstration sites in Punjab, Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa recently, and the production of maize and soybeans reached 8,490 kg and 889 kg per hectare respectively in the intercropped fields. Compared with the production of solely cropped maize and soybeans at these 65 sites which are 8,995 kg and 1,531 kg per hectare respectively, the intercropping technology definitely creates much more economic benefits. Good news is that the researchers are also developing the strip intercropping systems of maize-peanut, maize-pea, sugarcane-soybean, sugarcane-mustard, wheat-mustard, wheat-soybean, wheat-chickpea, potato-maize and canola-pea. Another healthy development in the agriculture sector happened in June,

2022 when a newly developed centre at Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi (AAUR), the CPEC-Agriculture Cooperation Centre (ACC), announced to perform policy research, assist Chinese businesses in working in the agriculture sector, and foster institutional cooperation. Pakistan is also looking forward to enhance banana production with Chinese cooperation. According to Noshewan Haider, CEO of the Sprouts Biotech Laboratories, Pakistan contributes less than 0.5% to the global banana market whereas China contributes about 4.5%. Cotton germplasm is another significant component in Pak-China agricultural cooperation. For many years, China and Pakistan have cooperated in the field of gathering and identifying cotton germplasm resources. In order to determine which cotton germplasms are resistant to heat, drought, diseases, and insect pests in various locations and environments, Institute of Cotton Research (ICR) of the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences (CAAS), collaborated with Cotton Research Institute (CRI), Multan, University of Agriculture Faisalabad (UAF), and some other universities and scientific research institutions. Dur-



ing July, 2022, Tianjin Modern Vocational Technology College (TMVTC), China and MNS-University of Agriculture, Multan (MNSUAM), Pakistan signed an online agreement for an agricultural machinery training program of Luban Workshop in Pakistan. The two institutions will jointly promote the sci-tech exchanges and cooperation on agricultural machinery, germplasm resources and agricultural environment. Earlier this year, Zhang Jishu from Sichuan Litong Food Co., Ltd. announced that his company would implement a 1,000-acre pepper cultivation demonstration garden in Multan during the 2022-2023 growing season. In partnership with local agribusinesses and farmers in Pakistan, it intends to take over 15,000 acres of pepper orders in South Punjab, with a planned harvest of 30,000 tonnes of dried pepper. Additionally, the company intends to construct two pepper processing plants in Lahore and Multan and is in the process of locating suitable sites. Pakistan is also working to grow the sorghum crops as, along with the three main basic foods of the globe, sorghum is a crop that has increasingly gained acceptance around the world. During the Symposium on Sorghum Industry Development of China and Pakistan organized during 2022, there was a consensus that, sorghum is a versatile crop that can be useful in supplying food and fodder. Hybrid farming is growing in Pakistan in a variety of sectors, as the Executive Member of the Asia and Pacific Seed Association and General Manager of Wuhan Qingfa Hesheng Seed Company, Zhu Xiaobo said that the hybrid canola variety developed by her company has been planted in Pakistan on about 10,000 hectares of land,

covering around 6000 households. In the next three to five years, they expect it to expand to over 40,000 hectares and provide more and healthier edible oil to Pakistanis. Similarly Sino-Pak cooperation in cauliflower farming through hybrid seeds is also expanding. As Pakistan faced one of the worst flood calamities in 2022, consequently losing drastic crop yield, Wuhan-based hybrid seed developer and supplier China also announced to donate hybrid rice seeds to mitigate flood impact on agriculture and food security. According to the Chairman of the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC), Dr. Ghulam Muhammad Ali, to raise the average productivity and output of Pakistan's crops and to mitigate the harm caused by the floods, experts from Pakistan and China are developing hybrid wheat types. To facilitate the swift development of agri-sector in the country, the Punjab cabinet approved the leasing out of state land for corporate farming as part of the CPEC initiative in the first week of March 2022. During recent times, food crisis was prevented in the country's southern regions thanks to China's thorough and prompt assistance in fighting locust swarms. To increase crop yield, climate resilience, water management, and aid in the fight against natural disasters like locust infestation, collaborations in precision agriculture and early warning systems should be further expanded. Pakistan may be more interested in receiving assistance in climate-smart agriculture as China's digital agro-economy is set to increase to over \$100 billion. Incorporating cutting-edge information technology could therefore contribute to a third green revolution.

## UoG students visit Chinese Embassy

DNA

ISLAMABAD: A group of 12 students from the University of Gwadar visited the Chinese Embassy in Islamabad where they were apprised of the many benefits of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) initiative for Balochistan. According to Gwadar Pro, the visit was part of the youth engagement programme initiated by the Pakistan-China Institute in collaboration with the Chinese Embassy. The initiative aims to inform the Baloch youth about the benefits of CPEC and to counteract the negative stereotypes about China and the mega project. Bao Zhong, Counsellor of the Political and Media Section at the Chinese Embassy, stressed the need for continued engagement with the youth to deepen understanding and increase people-to-people ties. She said that the visit will initiate a constructive dialogue aimed at benefitting from the opportunities created by CPEC. She also highlighted that CPEC was not only aimed at bilateral cooperation but also had significant importance in regional connectivity and development. Mustafa Hyder Sayed, Executive Director, Pakistan-China Institute emphasised that Baloch youth must be involved in the decision-making process related to CPEC and also be equipped with the necessary skills and expertise to benefit from the project. The students were provided with detailed reports published by the China-Pakistan Institute on how CPEC had positively impacted Balochistan's economy. On the occasion, two documentaries titled 'Dividends of CPEC for Balochistan' and 'How Shenzhen emerged as global industrial hub' were screened. The first documentary showed how CPEC was benefiting the people of Balochistan. The second documentary showed how Shenzhen went from a small fishing village to one of the most influential economic hubs in the world. The documentary highlighted key aspects of Shenzhen's development such as its strong connection to the global economy, introduction of special economic zones, and its eagerness to embrace technological innovation.



## Briefs

## Four cops martyred in Lakki Marwat

FROM PAGE 01  
responsibility, adding that they will be left with no other option but to take the protection of their leaders into their own hands if the state does not act. "Apart from Aimal Wali Khan, Sardar Hussain Babak and others have received threats as well while the house of MPA Faisal Zeb was attacked twice in the last few weeks," Samar Haroon Bilour had said last week. Apart from the attack on the house of ANP MPA Faisal Zeb in Shangla, a grenade was hurled at the house of party Senator Hidayatullah in Peshawar in recent months. Nobody has claimed responsibility for the attack however it is believed the TTP may be behind these attacks. After TTP has ended an agreement with Pakistani government, a marked increase in the terror acts has been witnessed especially in the KPK and Balochistan provinces. At least 26 policemen, 12 personnel of other law enforcement agencies and 17 civilians were killed in terror incidents across the KP. Moreover, 18 policemen, 10 civilians, and 37 law enforcement agencies personnel suffered injuries in these attacks. A dozen districts, including Peshawar, Mardan, Bajaur, Mohmand, Dera Ismail Khan, Tank, Kohat, Bannu, and Nowshera came under attack in November. Meanwhile, KP Police claims that they have accelerated operations against the terrorists saying at least 539 alleged terrorists and proclaimed offenders were arrested in the province during the first 10 months of 2022. They added 141 were also killed including 42 of those who carried head money.

## President, PM Shehbaz condemn attack

FROM PAGE 01  
He also urged the KP provincial government to provide Shuhada package to the families of martyred police personnel. The president and prime minister expressed their condolences with the bereaved families and prayed for the high ranks of the departed souls and the early recovery of the injured. According to APP district correspondent in Lakki Marwat, at least four policemen were martyred and different others got injured after terrorists attacked the Baragaj police station late Saturday night. The terrorists attacked the Baragaj police station with hand grenades and rocket launchers at midnight. The martyred policemen included head constable Ibrahim, constable Imran, Elite Force constable Khair ur Rehman and constable Sabz Ali while the injured policemen included PASI Gul Sahib, constable Balqiyaz, constable Ameer Nawaz, and constable Farman Ullah.

## Ch. Shujaat tasked with blocking...

FROM PAGE 01  
Parvez Elahi until a green signal is received from Shujaat Hussain, the sources added. Following the huddle, Zardari also called on Hussain and discussed various strategies to counter the PTI's plan. Talking to journalists, PML-N's Attaullah Tarar said that Punjab's situation was discussed during the meeting between the prime minister and the PPP's co-chairman.

## Pakistan to import...

FROM PAGE 01  
Meanwhile, Federal Minister for Finance Ishaq Dar has said that the government provided major relief on petroleum products during the last two and a half months to the masses. While sharing his views in a tweet, he said the petrol price had been reduced by Rs 22.63 per litre since September 30, as it went down from Rs 247.43 to Rs 214.80 per litre. The minister said the prices of diesel and light diesel oil were also reduced by Rs 19.63 and Rs 28.28 per litre respectively during this period.

## Shoaib and Sarah win Benazir Tennis C'ship

The first set started at a high pace, both Muzammil and Shoaib managed to break each other's serve countless times. It was a see-saw battle, both displayed top quality tennis which was witnessed after a long time as Shoaib won first set 7-5-4

AFZAL JAVED

ISLAMABAD: Muhammad Shoaib stunned Muzammil Murtaza in the close encounter to become champion in the Men's singles category of 8th Shaheed Benazir Bhutto National Tennis Championship, as he won 2-1 in the final played here at Islamabad Tennis Complex on Sunday. The house full final was witnessed at main tennis court of Islamabad Tennis Complex which played more than three hour, it was all left between the country's two elite youngsters, Muhammad Shoaib and Muzammil Murtaza. Muhammad Shoaib who had beaten Pakistan's number one Aqeel Khan in the semi-final had shown their wonderful skills in final against Muzammil as he also enjoyed overwhelming crowd support. The first set started at a high pace, both Muzammil and Shoaib managed to break each other's serve countless times. It was a see-saw battle, both displayed top quality tennis which was witnessed after a long time as Shoaib



won the first set 7-5-4.

In the second set Muzammil took a lead from the start and never allowed Shoaib to come back as he won the second set 6-1. In the decisive set Shoaib managed the championship title by winning the final set 6-4 and the title of the men's single category. In the ladies singles final, Sarah

Mehmooob thrashed Esha Jawad by 2-0 in, Sarah won the first set 6-0, while Sarah simply demolished in the second set by 6-1. Senator Taj Haider, Senator Farhatullah Babar, Senator Krishna Kumari, President Pakistan Tennis Federation Salim Saifullah Khan, Sir Syed Ahmed Khan grandson Ahmed Masood, ITC

Chairman and former Pakistan Davis Cup coach Fazle Subhan and other dignities were also present during the prize distribution ceremony.

**Results:**  
Men's singles final results: M. Shoaib bt Muzammil Murtaza 7-5, 1-6, 6-4  
Ladies' singles final results:

Sarah Mehmooob bt Esha Jawad 6-0, 6-1

**U12 single final results:** Hasnan Usmani bt Shayan Afridi 2-4, 5-3, 4-2

**U10 single final results:** Shayan Afridi bt Hajra 4-1, 4-2  
**Senior 45 Doubles final:** Azeem Khan/Mehmooob Khan bt Israr Gul/Rashid Malik 5-7, 6-1, 10-7

## Australia enter history books with Test win over South Africa



DNA

BRISBANE: Australia have maintained their unbeaten Test status at home this summer and closed in on booking a spot at next year's World Test Championship final with a decisive six-wicket victory over a disappointing South Africa in Brisbane on Sunday. The win sees Australia move further ahead at the top of the World Test Championship standings, while South Africa are overtaken by India and drop

to third as a result of the loss. Australia now hold a 76.92 win percentage, with India (55.77) now ahead of South Africa (54.55) following their 188-run triumph over Bangladesh in Chattogram earlier in the day. The Test match was over in less than two days as Australia's strong bowling attack - with some assistance from a bowler-friendly surface at The Gabba - made light work of South Africa's batters with an impressive team performance. Skipper Pat Cummins (5/42) and the consistent

Scott Boland (2/14) did the majority of the damage on Sunday, while Mitchell Starc (2/26) picked up his 300th Test wicket early in the day as South Africa were skittled for just 99 in their second innings. South Africa caused some concern in the Australia camp when they claimed four wickets. The hosts chased down the 34 required for victory, with Marcus Labuschagne (5\*) and Cameron Green (0\*) guiding the side home as the Aussies clinched the opening match of the three-game series.

## Beckham defends ambassadorial role

DOHA: David Beckham has made his first public statement on his controversial multi-million-dollar ambassador's role with FIFA World Cup 2022 hosts Qatar, telling the New York Times he believed "sport has the power to be a force for good in the world". In an article on Friday entitled "The World Cup's Missing Mouthpiece", the US newspaper alleged Qatar had been disappointed with its return on its investment because the former Manchester United and Real Madrid player had appeared very little in public during the World Cup. The paper claimed Beckham had placed strict conditions on his appearances and that he appeared to be shielded from questions on issues such as Qatar's laws on homosexuality. In response to the article, his publicist issued a statement saying: "David has been involved in a number of World Cups and other major international tournaments both as a player and an ambassador and he has always believed that sport has the power to be a force for good in the world. - APP

## Modric sets sights on Nations League title

DOHA: Luka Modric led Croatia to the bronze medal at the FIFA World Cup 2022 on Saturday and revealed he will extend his international career into 2023 in an attempt to win the Nations League. The 37-year-old won his 162nd cap in the 2-1 win over Morocco, four years after helping his country to the World Cup runners-up spot behind France. Croatia will now attempt to win the Nations League title next June in the four-team finals also featuring Netherlands, Italy and Spain. "That's the plan," said Modric when asked if he intends to keep playing international football. "It would be a nonsense not to play in the Nations League, and then we'll see how to proceed. I definitely want to stay for the Nations League." Croatia were defeated by a Lionel Messi-inspired Argentina in the World Cup semi-finals but Modric insisted that his team have cemented a place amongst the heavyweights of the sport. "We achieved something major for the Croatian football. We wanted the gold, we were close," he told broadcaster HRT. "In the end, we return to Croatia as winners. Croatia is not a miracle that appears every 20 years. We proved that we are constant, that we cannot be seen as dark horses but as a football power." Even though Modric intends to keep playing at international level, coach

Zlatko Dalic admits that time is ticking on other senior players. "It's the end of a cycle. It's the last World Cup for some older players," said the coach with one eye on the qualifying tournament for Euro 2024 which kicks off in March. "But we have very good young players who give hope, (Josip) Stanisic, (Mislav) Orsic, many players who are on the bench. We have a very good team for the future. "Croatia have nothing to fear with this generation. What awaits us is the League of Nations, and the qualifications of the Euro." Meanwhile, fireworks lit the sky above the Croatian capital of Zagreb and many other towns in the country that joyfully celebrated the win in the third-place play-off. "Croatia is on fire! Tears, songs, pride and joy throughout our homeland!" read the Vecernji List daily paper online edition. "A long, happy night is ahead Croatia." - DNA

## Brook ton powers England to narrow lead over Pak

Pakistan have dismissed England for 354 runs in the first innings of the ongoing third Test in Karachi on Sunday. The visitors, who bowled out Pakistan in the first innings for 304, have taken a lead of 50 runs

DNA

KARACHI: Harry Brook scored his third century in as many matches while Ben Foakes hit a half-century as England eked out a lead of 29 over Pakistan at the end of day two of the final Test of the series at Karachi's National Stadium on Sunday. Brook made 111 to continue his excellent start to Test cricket, with the 23-year-old proving to be the glue in England's innings, putting on partnerships with Ollie Pope and captain Ben Stokes before a stand of 117 with Foakes. Pakistan have dismissed England for 354 runs in the first innings of the ongoing third Test in Karachi on Sunday. The visitors, who bowled out Pakistan in the first innings for 304, have taken a lead of 50 runs. Spinners Abrar Ahmed and Nauman Ali claimed four wickets each for Pakistan. In reply, Pakistan's opening duo of Abdullah Shafique (14) and Shan Masood (3) reached stumps unscathed with the score at 21-0. At one stage it seemed as if Pakistan might be able to get a narrow lead in the first innings but Harry Brook led England's

fightback with an impressive century. The right-hander scored 111 runs in 150 balls with the help of eight fours and three sixes and helped England recover after being reduced to 145-5. Brook and wicketkeeper Ben Foakes, who scored 64 runs, added 117

valuable runs for the sixth wicket. Earlier, the visitors scored 114 runs in the second session on day two and lost only one wicket. The only wicket in the second session for Pakistan came courtesy a horrible mix-up between Ben Stokes, 26 off 33, and



Brook, which led to the former going back to the hut. In the morning session, Nauman Ali claimed two wickets, Ben Duckett and Joe Root, in two balls to reduce England to 58-3. However, Ollie Pope scored an impressive fifty to ensure that the scoreboard kept moving. Although, he was dismissed by a lovely delivery by Abrar Ahmed after scoring 51 runs. England, on their first Test tour to Pakistan since 2005, lead the series 2-0 after winning the first match by 74 runs in Rawalpindi and the second by 26 in Multan. The tourists made two changes from the last Test, bringing in wicketkeeper Ben Foakes and Rehan Ahmed in place of James Anderson and Will Jacks. Rehan, at 18 years and 126 days, becomes the youngest player to debut for England, beating Brian Close's record of 18 years and 149 days set in 1949. Senior Pakistan batter Azhar Ali, who on Friday announced the Karachi Test would be his last, is one of four changes in the home side. Shan Masood, Mohammad Wasim Junior and Nauman Ali also come in, while Imam-ul-Haq (injured), Mohammad Nawaz, Zahid Mahmood and Mohammad Ali were left out. Wasim, 21, is playing his first Test.

## No action against Gen Bajwa if came...

FROM PAGE 01

Imran said that Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Asim Munir himself has said that he will remain neutral. However, he added that holding elections within three months after the dissolution of assemblies will be the biggest test of his neutrality. He said that when Lt-Gen (ret'd) Faiz Hameed was removed as DG ISI, it became obvious that a plan has been hatched to topple the PTI government. "I told Gen Bajwa that if the plan to topple the government succeeds, no one will be able to manage the country's economy," he added. The former prime minister said that he explained to the former army chief how Shehbaz could be considered for the prime minister's post as he was named in Rs16 billion worth of corruption cases. However, he added, he later came to know that corruption was not an issue for General (ret'd) Bajwa.

"Gen Bajwa used to say that Aleem Khan should be made the [Punjab] chief minister. I found out about his illegal possession so I said how he can be made chief minister," he said. Imran said that Pakistan's economy would have performed even better if there wasn't a coronavirus pandemic and China was not locked down for two years. Economy of the country is on a decline and income of people is low then how can loans be returned in this situation, he questioned. "A country cannot prosper if there is no rule of law," he added. "I told Gen Bajwa that if we catch 10 to 12 top corrupt people, everything will get back on right track." Imran said that National Accountability Bureau (NAB) was formed in 1999 but it should be questioned whether corruption increased or decreased since then. "We had a decent relation with Gen Bajwa but I don't know what happened later." Talking about the Toshakhana case, the PTI chief said that if there was corruption during his tenure, then the opponents would have raised it rather than highlighting the Toshakhana issue only. "Toshakhana is not a museum. If I had not bought the watch it would have been bought by someone else during an auction," he said, adding that Nawaz Sharif and Asif Ali Zardari too bought expensive cars from Toshakhana.

Earlier, Punjab Chief Minister Chaudhry Parvez Elahi said that he and his party will be the first ones to defend General (ret'd) Qamar Javed Bajwa if anything further is said against the former army chief. The statement came during Parvez's unofficial conversation with journalists when he referred to Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan's criticism of former army chief Gen (ret'd) Bajwa in Saturday's address to party workers. "I felt very bad when Khan was speaking against Gen (ret'd) Bajwa," Parvez said adding that the former army chief was a "benefactor" and nothing should be said against benefactors. "Gen (ret'd) Bajwa gave many favours to him [Khan] therefore the favours shouldn't be forgotten," the Punjab CM reminded the PTI chief. He said that they are allies of PTI instead of opponents but they can't forget the favours of their "benefactors". The Punjab chief minister said that Khan did not allow former federal minister Moonis Elahi to sit with him but Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) backed Imran Khan. "We agreed immediately when Imran Khan asked to dissolve [Punjab] Assembly," he added. On Saturday, Khan in his address to PTI workers criticised the former army chief (ret'd) Gen Bajwa saying that he "foresaw the removal of his government" and was aware that some elements wanted to impose Shehbaz Sharif as the prime minister. The former premier was flanked by Parvez and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa CM Mahmood Khan. "General (ret'd) Qamar Javed Bajwa told me that he did not want this (Shehbaz becoming PM to happen). So who is responsible? Will anyone tell me this? Gen (ret'd) Bajwa would tell me that the [incumbent rulers] are corrupt." But not conceding defeat, Imran said that the Pakistan Democratic Movement (PDM) move to remove him "was in my favour" as I have received "unprecedented respect".

## Briefs

## Death toll in Peru protests climbs to 23

BOGOTA :The death toll in nationwide protests in Peru sparked by the ousting of former President Pedro Castillo has risen to 23, authorities said on Saturday. Peru has declared a 30-day nationwide state of emergency as clashes between police and protesters rage on in several areas over Castillo's Dec. 7 impeachment and arrest. At least 569 people, including 216 security personnel, have been injured in the capital Lima and other regions, including Apurimac, Ancash, Ayacucho, Cajamarca, Cusco, Moquegua, and Puno, according to the Peru Ombudsman's Office.

Protests have been most violent in Ayacucho and Apurimac, which together account for 13 of all reported fatalities. Peru's National Coordinator for Human Rights, a coalition of civil society groups, called for an immediate stop to the use of force against protesters, urging authorities to conduct thorough investigations and punish those responsible. The coalition blamed Peru's "highest political authorities" for the bloodshed and demanded an end to the military's intervention as thousands of soldiers swarmed the country after the state of emergency was announced. Protesters are demanding the resignation of Peru's new President Dina Boluarte, the dissolution of parliament, and a schedule for new elections. They are also pressing for Castillo's immediate release, with calls only growing louder after the Supreme Court ruled on Thursday that he will remain in detention for 18 months as he faces charges of rebellion and conspiracy.—Agencies

## Palestinian brothers killed

RAMALLAH: Two Palestinian brothers died Saturday in the occupied West Bank after being deliberately hit by a Jewish settler's car. Mohammed Mutir and Mohamad Mutair???? were killed when they were struck by the car at the Zatera crossing south of the West Bank city of Nablus, according to a statement from the Jerusalem Governor's Office. Zakaria Feyale, head of the Qalandiya Office of the Governorship of Jerusalem, said the brothers were attacked while waiting by the roadside to fix a tire of the vehicle they were riding in, according to the Palestinian official news agency. The brothers were returning home to Qalandiya from Nablus with other family members.

Mohammed died at the scene, while Muhenned was seriously hurt and died at a hospital, said Feyale, who noted that the Jewish settler who reportedly intentionally struck the Palestinian brothers fled the scene. Fayala said Mohammed's body was transferred to a hospital in Nablus, while Mohamad was taken to the Hadassah Hospital before his death was announced.—APP

## EU reaches deal on major carbon market reform

BRUSSELS :EU member states and parliamentarians on Sunday announced an agreement for a major reform to the bloc's carbon market, the central plank of its ambitions to reduce emissions and invest in climate-friendly technologies.

The deal aims to accelerate emissions cuts, phase out free allowances to industries and targets fuel emissions from the building and road transport sectors, according to a European Parliament statement. The EU Emissions Trading System (ETS) allows electricity producers and industries with high energy demands such as steel and cement to purchase "free allowances" to cover their carbon emissions under a "polluter pays" principle. The quotas are designed to decrease over time to encourage them to emit less and invest in greener technologies as part of the European Union's ultimate aim of achieving carbon neutrality.—APP

## N. Korea fires two ballistic missiles: Seoul's military

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said it detected two ballistic missiles that had been fired from the Tongchang-ri area in North Pyongan province

SEOUL: North Korea fired two ballistic missiles Sunday, Seoul's military said "Our military has strengthened surveillance and vigilance while closely cooperating with the United States and maintaining a full readiness posture," the JCS added in a statement. Sunday's launch came days after North Korea tested a "high-thrust solid-fuel motor", with state media describing it as an important test "for the development of another new-type strategic

weapon system". Despite heavy international sanctions over its weapons programmes, Pyongyang has built up an arsenal of intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). All its known ICBMs are liquid-fuelled, however, and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has placed strategic priority on developing solid-fuel engines for more advanced missiles. Kim said this year that he wants North Korea to have the world's most powerful

nuclear force, and declared his country an "irreversible" nuclear state. The wishlist he revealed last year included solid-fuel ICBMs that could be launched from land or submarines. The latest motor was a step towards that goal, but it is not clear how far North Korea has come in the development of such a missile, analysts said. After overseeing the launch of the Hwasong-17 "monster" missile last month, Kim declared he wanted North Korea to have

the world's most powerful nuclear force. The isolated country's policy direction for next year will be laid out at a key party meeting later this month, and the official Korean Central News Agency earlier reported Kim saying that 2023 would be a "historic year". In past years, Kim had delivered a speech every January 1, but has recently dropped the tradition in favour of making announcements at the year-end plenary meeting. In his most recent address, which

was released last New Year's Day, Kim focused on domestic affairs. Experts say while Kim refrained from directly addressing the United States last year, he could change his tone this time around. The United States and South Korea have warned for months this could come in North Korea conducting its seventh nuclear test. North Korea is under multiple UN Security Council sanctions over its nuclear and missile activity since 2006.—APP



GWADAR: Ambassador of Federal Republic of Germany Alfred Grannas posing for a picture during his recent visit to Gwadar. In this Twitter handle the German ambassador seemed all praise for the potential of the Gwadar Port.—DNA

## UN sets 10-year plan to save endangered languages

UNITED NATIONS :The United Nations on Friday launched the International Decade of Indigenous Languages (IDIL 2022-2032) aimed at helping peoples around the world to keep their mother tongues alive. Preserving their languages is "not only important for them, but for all humanity," UN General Assembly President Csaba Korosi said while marking the occasion. "With each indigenous language that goes extinct, so too goes the thought: the culture, tradition and knowledge it bears. That matters because we are in dire need of a radical transformation in the way we relate to our environment," he said.

According to the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, indigenous people speak more than 4,000 of the world's roughly 6,700 languages. However, conservative estimates indicate that more than half of all languages will become extinct by the end of this century. Korosi recently returned from the UN Biodiversity Conference in Montreal and left convinced that "if we are to successfully protect nature, we must listen to indigenous peoples, and we must do so in their own languages." Indigenous peoples are guardians to almost 80 percent of the world's remaining biodiversity, he said, citing

data from the UN Food and Agriculture Organization. "Yet every two weeks, an indigenous language dies," he remarked. "This should ring our alarms. The General Assembly President urged countries to work with indigenous communities to safeguard their rights, such as access to education and resources in their native languages, and to ensure that they and their knowledge are not exploited. "And perhaps most importantly, meaningfully consult indigenous peoples, engaging with them in every stage of decision-making processes," he advised. During the launch, indigenous persons and UN Ambassadors — sometimes one

and the same — made the case for protection and preservation. Language is more than just words, said Mexican Ambassador Juan Ramon de la Fuente, speaking on behalf of the 22-member Group of Friends of Indigenous Peoples. "It is at the essence of the identity of its speakers and the collective soul of its peoples. Languages embody the history, culture and traditions of people, and they are dying at an alarming rate," he warned. Leonor Zalabata Torres, an Arhuaco woman and Colombia's UN Ambassador, drew applause for her address, delivered partly in Ika, one of 65 indigenous languages spoken in her homeland.—APP

## Tunisia opp calls for Saied to quit

TUNIS : Tunisia plunged into political uncertainty Sunday as its main opposition alliance called on President Kais Saied to "leave immediately", a day after voters overwhelmingly snubbed elections for a neutered parliament that comes with Saied's government negotiating a nearly \$2-billion package to bail out the North African country's crippled public finances. Ahmed Nejib Chebbi, president of the National Salvation Front alliance, said Saied had "lost all legal legitimacy". The electoral board said 8.8 percent of the nine-million-strong electorate had turned out for Saturday's polls, the culmination of a power grab by Saied in the only democracy to have emerged from the Arab Spring. An abstention rate of more than 91 percent "shows that very, very few Tunisians support Kais Saied's approach", Chebbi told AFP by telephone. He said the result showed "great popular disavowal" of the process that began when Saied, elected in 2019, seized executive powers last year. The president in July 2021 sacked the government, froze parliament and surrounded it with military vehicles, following months of political deadlock and economic crisis exacerbated by the coronavirus pandemic. Saied, a former law professor, followed up by seizing control of the judiciary and pushing through a constitution that consolidated his near-absolute power in a widely boycotted referendum in July.—APP

## Greek protesters demand higher wages

ATHENS: Workers, civil servants and students staged protests Saturday in Athens to draw attention to the soaring cost of living. Demonstrators gathered in front of the parliament building, responding to the call of The All-Workers Militant Front (PAME), a trade union affiliated with the Communist Party of Greece (KKE), to protest. They demanded an increase in wages in the demonstration which was held during the 2023 budget negotiations in a parliament plenary. The budget is expected to be submitted to parliament later Saturday for approval. Europe has seen similar protests as a growing cost of living crisis and rising energy prices since the Russian-Ukraine war has led to strikes in France, the UK and Spain.—Agencies

## Leading Iranian actress arrested

TEHRAN: Authorities in Iran have arrested one of the country's most prominent actresses for allegedly spreading falsehoods about the nationwide protests that continue to grip the country. That's according to Iran state media, which said that Taraneh Alidoosti, who starred in the Oscar-winning movie 'The Salesman' was detained after she voiced her support on social media for the first man to be executed for crimes allegedly committed during the demonstrations. According to the report published on the state media's official Telegram channel, Alidoosti was arrested because she did not provide "any documents in line with her claims." IRNA also said several other Iranian celebrities had been summoned by the judiciary body over publishing provocative content. It did not say how many or provide further details. Alidoosti has made at least three posts on her Instagram account expressing solidarity with protesters since the demonstrations broke out in September.—APP

## Italian socialists suspend MEP Cozzolino

ROME: Italian MEP Andrea Cozzolino has been suspended by his own party, the centre-left Partito Democratico (PD), until the investigation into the corruption scandal engulfing the European Parliament comes to an end. The party's national guarantee commission announced the decision on Friday, saying it was a "precaution" and would be "immediately enforceable." The suspension is also meant to "protect" the image of Partito Democratico and allow Cozzolino to defend his own position in the ongoing case, the statement said. Cozzolino has not been charged as part of the Belgian prosecutor's probe into the scandal. "I have not been questioned. I have not been searched, nor has my office been sealed," the MEP told Italian media. "I'm ready to protect my integrity and my reputation in every venue." However, his former parliamentary assistant, Francesco Giorgi.—APP

## Iraqi conservators strive to preserve ancient manuscripts

BAGHDAD :In an annex of Iraq's national museum, a conservator pores over a 17th-century manuscript, carrying out delicate restoration work as part of efforts to preserve and digitise 47,000 precious texts. "Some manuscripts date back almost 1,000 years," said Ahmed al-Alyawi, who heads the House of Manuscripts body. "There are writings in Arabic, Persian, Turkish, Hebrew and Kurdish," he added, noting the texts' "immense cultural diversity". In a country that bears the scars of decades of conflict and has seen antiquities and cultural heritage regularly plundered, the House of Manuscripts' collection has managed to survive. It was safely stashed away in the Baghdad suburbs, while the national museum was ransacked in the turmoil following the 2003 US-led invasion. Employees and residents prevented subsequent looting attempts at the "underground shelter" where it was stored, Alyawi said. The collection, now enshrined in the national museum in the capital Baghdad, includes books, parchments and calligraphy boards, some of them damaged by humidity, pests and centuries of use. Some manuscripts date from the early Abbasid era, while some seventh-century calligraphy boards in Kufic script were written on parchment "even before the manufacture of paper", Alyawi said. The House of Manuscripts archive "is a leading collection in Iraq and the region", said Zakaria Haffar, Iraq project manager at the National Library of France (BNF). In October, the House of Manuscripts signed a partnership with the BNF, following financial support from the Aliph Foundation, which works to protect cultural heritage in conflict zones.—APP

## RCCI holds seminar on Islam and Trade

## STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: A seminar on Islam and trade was organized in Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce. Dr. Taj Afsar, Deputy Dean, Faculty of Usuluddin, International Islamic University, Islamabad said in his address at the seminar. Trade in Islam is a natural requirement and the basic principle of the religion of Islam is human respect. In which transparency and respect for hard work is emphasized, adulteration, cheating, usury and illegal profiteering are strictly prohibited in Islam. Chamber President Saqib Rafiq said in his opening speech that it is our duty and responsibility to implement the five principles of trade that Islam has set. stay busy. A question and answer session was also held on the occasion of the seminar, in which the participants asked questions regarding



transactions, advances, rent and partnership, sale and purchase of land, business of property files, profit on rental, Dr. Taj Afsar. In response to the questions, he

said that in any aspect of trade, the basic principle of Islam should always be kept in front, in which it is forbidden to make profit by taking advantage of co-

ercion, and the interests of the community should be cherished under free trade and transparency. Senior Vice President Muhammad Hamza Sa-

rosh, Vice President Faisal Shehzad, Chairman Kashif Rahim, Executive Members and a large number of Chamber members were present on this occasion.

## Briefs

### Accident in Afghan Salang Tunnel kills at least 12

WEB DESK

KABUL: An accident in the landmark Salang alpine tunnel that connects Afghanistan's capital to its north killed at least 12 people and injured dozens, authorities said on Sunday. Thirty-seven people were injured in the accident in Salang Tunnel, located about 90 km (56 miles) north of Kabul, according to Qari Yusuf Ahmadi, deputy spokesperson for the Taliban-run administration.

"The Islamic Emirate concedes its deepest condolences to the families of the victims and ... it also calls on all relevant agencies to make more and serious efforts to prevent the recurrence of such terrible incidents," Ahmadi said.

Local broadcaster Tolo, citing the Ministry of Public Works, said a fuel truck had overturned and caught fire in the tunnel on Saturday night. The blaze had been extinguished on Sunday but the tunnel was closed to traffic and casualties could rise, according to the Ministry spokesperson.

### Voting for S.Africa's ruling party leader to get underway

JOHANNESBURG: Voting to elect a new leader of South Africa's ruling party was to get underway on Sunday, with President Cyril Ramaphosa squaring off against his former health minister Zweli Mkhize.

Ramaphosa, 70, is expected to be confirmed in the role that opens the way to being head of state, despite a damaging cash-heist scandal and vociferous internal opposition. But observers said the race looked closer than expected, with local media reporting party delegates from several provinces had shifted support to Mkhize. "We're seeing Ramaphosa moving from enjoying a comfortable lead, to having Mkhize right behind him. It's up in the air right now," independent political analyst Pearl Mncube told media. - APP

### 'Saudi govt facilitating pilgrims to fullest extent'

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister's Special Representative for Interfaith Harmony and Middle East Hafiz Muhammad Tahir Mehmood Ashrafi said the Saudi government was facilitating the Hajj and Umrah pilgrims to the fullest extent possible. In his remarks at a Hajj Conference organized by the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Interfaith Harmony and the Hajj Organizers Association of Pakistan (HOAP) the other day, he said the Saudi government, particularly Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz and Saudi Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman, were making all-out efforts to create more facilities for pilgrims and religious tourists. - APP

# Qatar says EU corruption probe threat to relations

"Our nations cooperated during the Covid-19 pandemic and Qatar is an important supplier of LNG to Belgium," it emphasized. The scandal has caused shockwaves in the EU parliament amid calls for a general clampdown on dealings with third-country lobbyists

NEWS DESK

DOHA: Qatar on Sunday, December 18, condemned a corruption investigation by Belgium and the suspension of its access to the EU parliament, saying it could "negatively" impact relations and natural gas supplies. The decision to impose "such a discriminatory restriction" before the investigation has ended, "will negatively affect regional and global security cooperation, as well as ongoing discussions around global energy poverty and security," a Qatar diplomat said in a statement.

On December 9, after revelations by Belgian newspaper Le Soir and the magazine Knack, the Belgian federal prosecutor's office confirmed that police were investigating "allegation of participation in a criminal organization, corruption and

money laundering" since mid-July. Without naming Qatar, it suspects "a Gulf country to be influencing the economic and political decisions of the European Parliament, by paying large sums of money or offering large gifts to third parties with a significant political and/or strategic position in the European Parliament." Eva Kaili, a Greek MEP, is one of four people charged after raids that uncovered at least 1.5 million euros (\$1.6 million) in cash. The scandal has erupted as many European countries look to Qatar for liquefied natural gas supplies. It has also been a link in contacts with Afghanistan and brought thousands of European nationals out of the country when the Taliban took power. "The decision to impose such a discriminatory restriction that limits dialogue and cooperation on Qatar before the legal process has ended, will negatively affect regional

and global security cooperation, as well as ongoing discussions around global energy poverty and security," said the Qatari diplomat on Sunday. "We firmly reject the allegations associating our government with misconduct," the statement added. "Qatar was not the only party named in the investigation, yet our country has been exclusively criticized and attacked." "We have observed this week's selective condemnation of our country with great alarm," the statement said. According to media reports, Moroccan interests also face scrutiny in the investigation. Belgian prosecutors said they had been investigating EU parliament corruption for more than a year before the raids and arrests of the past 10 days. "It is deeply disappointing that the Belgian government made no effort to engage with our government to establish the facts once they became aware of the allegations," said

the diplomat. The statement highlighted the "close" relationship with Belgium. "Our nations cooperated during the Covid-19 pandemic and Qatar is an important supplier of LNG to Belgium," it emphasized. The scandal has caused shockwaves in the EU parliament amid calls for a general clampdown on dealings with third-country lobbyists. Qatar has already had one diplomatic showdown with Germany in recent months. Doha summoned the German ambassador after the interior minister cast doubt on whether Qatar should host the World Cup because of its treatment of foreign workers. "Qatar has strong and longstanding ties with many countries in the European Union, and we extend our gratitude to those who have demonstrated their commitment to these relationships during this current wave of attacks against our country," said the diplomat.

### Rallies held across country in solidarity with Bilawal

LARKANA: Rallies were held across the country to support Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari who exposed the real face of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi by calling him "butcher of Gujrat" while delivering a speech at the United Nations (UN). Pakistan People's Party (PPP) held a rally in Umer Kot which was joined by a large number of people from different walks of life. The public raised slogans against India and praised Bilawal for his outstanding speech at the UN. Similarly, a rally was also held in Larkana during which the public raised slogans against the anti-Muslim policies of India. The rally was also joined by the Pakistani Hindu community which was led by PPP city president Muhammad Sheikh and Ejaz Laghari. - DNA



LAHORE: Member Provincial Assembly of the Punjab Khawaja Imran Nazeer calls on Prime Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif. DNA

## Ulema to visit Afghanistan to end cross-border hostility

DNA

PESHAWAR: A four-member delegation of Pakistani Ulema will visit Afghanistan for reconciliation and end the cross-border hostility in Chaman since the attack by Afghan forces that killed one civilian and injured 15 others, district administration said Sunday. It was the second time in five days - that the Afghan border forces opened unprovoked and indiscriminate fire, using heavy weapons, at the civilian area in Balochistan's Chaman city. Levies officials reported that multiple artillery rounds were fired upon the civilian population around the Boghra Road and Custom House areas from the Afghan side, to which

the Pakistani authorities responded befittingly. The Chaman district administration said that the Ulema's delegation will meet the Afghan ministry of defence officials and others in Kandahar and Kabul and hold discussions with key Taliban leaders. They said that the flag meeting of Pak-Afghan border security forces was postponed upon the departure of Ulema delegation. Meanwhile, the routine affairs were restored in the civilian areas on both sides of Chaman border. The medical superintendent said that at least nine civilians were killed and over 45 civilians were injured in the firing of artillery shells by Afghan forces from December 11 to 15. He said that the injured in the cross-border attack are undergoing medical treatment.

## Elon Musk restores Twitter accounts of journalists

CALIFORNIA: Elon Musk reinstated the Twitter accounts of several journalists that were suspended for a day over a controversy on publishing public data about the billionaire's plane. The reinstatements came after the unprecedented suspensions evoked stinging criticism from government officials, advocacy groups and journalism organizations from several parts of the globe on Friday, with some saying the microblogging platform was jeopardizing press freedom. A Twitter poll that Musk conducted later also showed that a majority of the respondents wanted the accounts restored immediately. "The people have spoken. Accounts who doxxed my location will have their suspension lifted now," Musk said in a tweet on Saturday. Twitter did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment. A Reuters check showed the suspended accounts, which included journalists from the New York Times, CNN and the Washington Post, have been reinstated. The U.N. human rights chief welcomed the reinstatements, but said he continued to have concerns. "Twitter has a responsibility to respect human rights: @elonmusk should commit to making decision based on publicly-available policies that respect rights, including free speech. Nothing less," Volker Turk, the UN high commissioner for human rights, wrote. - Agencies

## France slams Israel's expulsion of lawyer

Israel's interior ministry earlier announced deportation following Interior Minister Ayelet Shaked's decision to withdraw his residency status

ROISSY CHARLES DE GAULLE AIRPORT: French-Palestinian human rights lawyer Salah Hamouri, held without charge in Israeli prisons since March accused of security offences, arrived in Paris on Sunday following his expulsion from Israel condemned by Paris. Hamouri, 37, had been held in Israel under a controversial practice known as administrative detention, which allows suspects to be detained for renewable periods of up to six months. He arrived at the French capital's Charles de Gaulle airport on Sunday morning, an AFP correspondent saw, the culmination of a lengthy judicial saga after his deportation. "I have changed location but the fight continues," an emotional Hamouri said at the airport, where he was welcomed by his wife Elsa, politicians, NGO representatives and supporters of the Palestinian cause. "I have an enormous responsibility to my cause and people. We can't abandon Palestine. Resistance is our right." Israel's interior ministry earlier on Sunday announced the deportation following Interior Minister Ayelet Shaked's decision to withdraw his residency status. "We condemn today the Israeli authorities' decision, against the law, to expel Salah Hamouri to France," the French foreign ministry said in a statement. An Israeli military court sentenced Hamouri, who holds French citizenship, to administrative detention in March, accusing him of being a member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), and said he "endangers security in the region." - APP

## Streets deserted in China's cities as new Covid surge looms

WEB DESK

BEIJING: Streets in major Chinese cities were eerily quiet on Sunday as people stayed home to protect themselves from a surge in COVID-19 cases that has hit urban centres from north to south. China is in the first of an expected three waves of COVID cases this winter, according to the country's chief epidemiologist, Wu Zunyou. Further waves will come as people follow the tradition of returning en masse to their home areas for the Lunar New Year holiday next month, he said. China has not reported any COVID deaths since Dec. 7, when it abruptly ended most restrictions key to a zero-COVID tolerance policy following unprecedented public protests. The strategy had been championed by President Xi Jinping. As part of the easing of the zero-COVID curbs, mass testing for the virus has ended, casting doubt on whether official case numbers can capture the full scale of the outbreak. China reported some 2,097 new symptomatic COVID infections on Dec. 17. In Beijing, the spread of the highly transmissible Omicron variant has already hit services from catering to parcel deliveries. Funeral homes and crematoriums across the city of 22 million are also struggling to keep up with demand amid staff shortages as workers and drivers call in sick. At Beijing's largest funeral parlour in Babaos-

han, also known for handling the bodies of top Chinese officials and leaders, several hearses a minute could be seen entering on Sunday, while the parking area for private cars was also full. "Right now it is difficult to book a hearse so many relatives transport the body with their own vehicles," said an employee on condition of anonymity. Smoke billowed out of crematoriums, where groups of people were gathered to collect the ashes of the deceased. It was not immediately clear to what extent a rise in COVID-related deaths was responsible. Social media posts also showed empty subways in the city of Xian in China's northwest, while in Shanghai, the country's commercial hub, there was none of the usual bustle in the run up to the New Year. "Festive vibes are missing," said a resident who gave her name as Alice. In Chengdu, streets were deserted but food delivery times were improving, said a resident surnamed Zhang, after services began to adapt to the recent surge in cases. Getting hold of antigen test kits was still difficult however, she said, explaining that she had been told the kits she ordered recently had been diverted to hospitals. In Shanghai, authorities said schools should move most classes online from Monday, and in nearby Hangzhou most school grades were encouraged to finish the winter semester early. In Guangzhou, those already doing online class as well as pre-schoolers should not prepare for a return to school, said the education bureau.



**SERENA HOTELS**

**OFFICIALLY AWARDED**  
World Travel Awards™ 2022  
Pakistan - Afghanistan - Tajikistan

Pakistan's Leading Hotel  
Islamabad Serena Hotel



Pakistan's Leading Hotel Suite  
Islamabad Serena Hotel





Tajikistan's Leading Hotel  
Dushanbe Serena Hotel



Afghanistan's Leading Hotel  
Kabul Serena Hotel





**SERENA HOTELS**

For bookings and details please email at  
sales@serena.com.pk

SerenaHotelsOfficial  
serenahotelsofficial  
serena\_hotels