



# Islamabad POST

Wednesday, December 21, 2022

Pakistan's Credible Daily Newspaper

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**Turkiye protects its borders under UN self-defense article**

Detailed News On Page-07

**Spanish PM calls for calm amid crisis**

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**Ben Stokes hail special test win over Pak**

Detailed News On Page-06



## Briefs

**US 'ready to assist' Pakistan**

DNA

WASHINGTON: Amid the rising terror incidents in Pakistan after the banned TTP ended ceasefire, the US has offered to help the country in dealing with the threats posed by the militant outfits. "Well, first on the ongoing situation in Pakistan, we are of course aware. We've been closely following reports that militants have seized control of the counterterrorism centre in Bannu. We offer our deepest sympathies to those injured," Ned Price said and urged those responsible for the attack to cease all acts of violence, to safely release those who remain hostage, and to end the seizure of the counterterrorism centre.

**Asif Zardari meets Ch Shujaat**

DNA

LAHORE: PPP Co-Chairman and former President Asif Ali Zardari met Leader of PML-Q Chaudhary Shujaat Hussain in Lahore on Tuesday. During the meeting, they discussed no-confidence motion and vote of confidence in Punjab Assembly (PA). Nasir Hussain Shah and Malik Ahmed Khan briefed the meeting on important issues. Federal Minister Chaudhry Salik Hussain and Tariq Bashir Cheema were also present in the meeting.

**Ahsan seeks economic activities**

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning and Development, Ahsan Iqbal says Pakistan can become the center of economic activities by taking advantage of geo-economics of the country. Addressing a ceremony in Islamabad on Tuesday, he stressed on the need to focus on increasing our per capita income. Ahsan Iqbal said we have to make collective efforts as to how we can move up on economic ladder. He said it was this vision that transpired our journey towards CPEC project.

## All terrorists killed at CTD centre Bannu

A unit of the SSG carried out the operation, in which 10-15 commandos were injured while two martyred

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Asif on Tuesday confirmed that "all the terrorists" of the outlawed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) who had taken hostages at a Counter-Terrorism Department (CTD) centre in Bannu were killed in an operation conducted by the Pakistan Army. Speaking on the floor of the National Assembly, Asif said that 33 terrorists were under arrest at the CTD compound and one of them had managed to snatch a gun from an employee after hitting him in the head with a brick. The defence minister said that a unit of the army's Special Service Group (SSG) carried out the operation, in which 10-15 of its commandos were injured while two were martyred. "This operation was initiated on December 20 at 12:30pm by the Special Service Group and all terrorists were killed," Asif said, adding that the entire CTD compound was cleared by 2:30pm. The defence minister criticised PTI Chairman Imran Khan and called the incident a "total collapse" of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government. "The unfortunate aspect of this is that terrorism is again making strides in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan," he said. [Terrorism] incidents have taken places in other provinces as well but there is clear evidence that terrorists from across the border or locally are rising again [in KP and Balochistan].

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**Pak, Afghan officials agree to resolve issues**

DNA

CHAMAN: After several days of hostility at the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in Chaman, authorities on both sides Tuesday agreed to resolve border and fencing issues through bilateral contacts and consultations. The development came during a flag meeting between officials of the two neighbouring countries at the Friendship Gate in Chaman after the successful intervention of the local tribal council which was tasked with ending tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan's border forces. District officials said that high-level civil and military officials participated in the meeting, along with the deputy commissioners of Pakistan's Chaman and Afghanistan's Spin Boldak. Religious scholars and elders also attended the conciliatory meeting. The officials of both countries also agreed to resolve border issues through mutual consultation.

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ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif chairs a meeting of cabinet. - DNA

**Cabinet tasks FIA to probe Toshakhana gifts**

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: A cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Tuesday authorised the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) to probe the Toshakhana gifts received "in violation of the defined procedure in law". While directing the cabinet division to present a list of the gifts received, PM Shehbaz asked the FIA to present a report on its investigation within two weeks. "State gifts must not be used for business," the PM said. The meeting was also briefed on proposed energy conservation plan. Mr Sharif directed Federal Minister for Defence Khawaja Muhammad Asif to consult the chief ministers of all provinces regarding the plan. The prime minister said the government got the charge in difficult times and it was trying its best to improve the economic situation of the country.

**CM House to be sealed if Elahi evades no-trust move**

DNA

LAHORE: Minister of Interior Rana Sanaullah threatened on Tuesday to seal Chief Minister House if Punjab Chief Minister Chaudhry Parvez Elahi evades the vote of no-confidence motion. Speaking to the media in the provincial capital of Punjab, the Interior Minister lambasted Punjab Assembly Sibtain Khan, claiming that Sibtain's viewpoint on the Punjab governor's decision to summon the PA was wrong and contrary to the fundamental principles. "The Punjab Governor has the authority to summon the PA. If Parvez Elahi will not take the vote of confidence, then the Punjab Governor has the authority to announce the election of new CM", Sanaullah added.

## PTI lambasts govt for resurgence of terrorism in Pak

Chaudhry Fawad says PTI, PML-Q to face confidence vote, no-trust move together

KHAYAM ABBASI

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Fawad Chaudhary came down hard on the imported government for enjoying sweet slumber when PTI senior leader Murad Saeed warned repeatedly of the looming danger, as the self-centered and power hungry crooked leaders were mere interested in prolong their rule for few more months, resultantly, Pakistan was now in the grip of terrorism. Fawad Chaudhary, in a statement on Tuesday, said that Pakistan was in the grip of terrorism; hence political stability was needed at this time, which can only come from elections. He said that PDM had no option but to face the public as how much they could run away from elections, adding that they should not play with Pakistan for the sake of few months of power. Lashing out at the Khawaja Asif for his remarks that border control should be done by the provincial government, Fawad stated that he should better to be put at pan shop instead of making him defense minister. He said that powers with zero understanding were dangerous as he was sleeping when Murad Saeed was shouting that there would be destruction. Talking about imported government vote of no confidence, Fawad stated that until tomorrow,

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**Imran Khan pledges to face no-trust move**

ALI HAMZA

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman and deposed premier Imran Khan said on Tuesday his party would win the political "war" and also ace the constitutional front. He was presiding over a meeting with his legal team at Zaman Park residence. Punjab Assembly Speaker Sibtain Khan, law minister Raja Basharat, Advocate General Ahmad Awais, and Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) leader Moonis Elahi participated in the meeting. During the meeting, Ahmad Awais briefed the participants on the legal position of the no-confidence move and declared the governor's move illegal. He further briefed Mr Khan on the ongoing assembly meeting at Aiwan-e-Iqbal. "The session summoned by the governor for the Punjab CM election has been challenged and there is no

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## Energy conservation: Markets, restaurants to close at 8pm

The timings of the restaurants may be extended an hour or so

SHUJAAT HAMZA

ISLAMABAD: The federal government on Tuesday unveiled its energy conservation plan, according to which all the markets and restaurants will be shut down at 8pm. Speaking during a press conference after the cabinet meeting, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif said that the wedding halls will be closed at 10pm. The timings of the restaurants may be extended an hour or so, he added. "If 20% of the workers are sent to work from home on a rotational basis, this will save Rs56 billion," said the minister. The minister also shared that the federal government was recommending switching street lights on alternately which will save about Rs4 billion. "The government is also introducing e-bikes which will phase out the bikes that use petrol. The government is negotiating with the companies to phase out the bikes that use petrol and modify the existing bikes," said Asif. The minister said that the government is reaching out to all four provinces to inform them about the policy and take them on board. He said that it

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is a National Energy Conservation Plan and will be launched with consensus. Asif added that this plan will be finalised on Thursday after consultations with the rest of the provinces. Asif said that the country cannot afford the current living conditions as it is going through a serious economic situation. "We need to change our habits if we want to live within our means," said the defence minister. Asif said that billions of rupees can be saved by conserving energy through different sources. "Austerity will become a part of our nation

## Iranian envoy for enhanced Pak-Iran defense co-op

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Referring to the history of friendly and fraternal relations between Pakistan and Islamic Republic of Iran, the new Pakistani Army chief emphasized the need to develop bilateral cooperation, especially in the economic field. "Syed Mohammad Ali Hosseini" met with COAS General "Syed Asim Munir" at the General headquarters in Rawalpindi. Some officials of the general staff, as well as Colonel Mustafa Ghanbarpour, Iran's military attaché in Pakistan, were present in this meeting. The commander of Pakistan's army emphasized the country's support for Iran in regional and global forums, especially in the discussion of human rights and peaceful nuclear programs, and Islamic



bad's opposition to anti-Iranian sanctions. General Asim added: There are many capacities for the development of relations between the two countries, especially in the economic sector, and these capacities should be activated. Congratulating COAS General Munir on his appointment as

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Fate of Europe should be in its own hands - Page 05

Pak suffer first-ever series whitewash on home soil - Page 06

Qatar gate: EP official makes partial confession - Page 07

Ukraine President visits frontline city of Bakhmut - Page 08

## Pakistan keen to enhance ties with Int'l community: Alvi

Envoys of Canada, Austria, Syria, Serbia & Slovak Republic present credentials to the President

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

ISLAMABAD: The newly appointed envoys of Canada, Austria, Syria, Serbia, and the Slovak Republic presented their credentials to President Dr Arif Alvi during the Presentation of Credentials Ceremony, held at Aiwan-e-Sadr, today. Later, the High Commissioner-designate of Canada, Ms Leslie Scanlon, Ambassador-designate of Austria, Mrs Andrea Wicke, Ambassador-designate of Syria, Dr Ramez Alraee, non-Resident Ambassador-designate of Serbia, Mr Dragan Todorovic, and non-Resident Ambassador-designate of Slovak Republic, Mr Ladislav Ballek, also made separate calls on the President. While talking to the Ambassador of Canada, the President highlighted that there was great economic potential in Pakistan, a market of 220 million people, and investment opportunities, adding that Canadian businesses should be encouraged to explore the opportunities available in Pakistan. He further said that the resolution of the Reko-Diq project was a positive development, and expressed the hope that it would encourage further Canadian investment in Pakistan. The President stated that Pakistan and Canada enjoyed cordial and friendly relations and that Pakistan looked forward to greater bilateral cooperation in the areas of the economy, commerce, and investment.



Ambassador of Syria

While welcoming the Austrian Ambassador, the President said that Pakistan attaches high importance to its relations with Austria, both bilaterally and in the context of the European Union. He informed that Pakistan's investment regime was very liberal, and Austrian companies should benefit from it and consider making investments in the Special



Ambassador of Austria

Economic Zones being set up all over the country. He further said that Pakistan offered significant opportunities for investment in the fields of hydro-power, railways, communication, renewable energy, and waste management technologies. He added that there were ample opportunities for cooperation in start-ups and information technology sectors, and



High Commissioner of Canada

expressed hope that the two countries work towards enhancing cooperation in these fields. The President also urged the need to further enhance bilateral trade and economic cooperation, adding that the true potential of bilateral trade was still unrealized.

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# Thar Block-1 Project soon to be commercialized

SYED KAMAL SHAH

ISLAMABAD: "After the successful synchronization of the second 660 MW unit of Thar Block-1's 1,320 MW coal-fired power plant this month, the Thar Block-1 Integrated Mine-Power Project is on track to achieve its commercial operating date (COD) very soon." This was stated by Meng Dong Hai, Chairman of Thar Block-1 Integrated Mine-Power Project and CEO of TCB-1 in an interview to Gwadar Pro. According to Chaudhary Qayyum, vice president of mine project, after the project is put into commercial operation, it will alleviate the current situation of power shortage in Pakistan, meet the electricity demand of nearly 4 million households in Pakistan. He added that, "at present, it would cost Pakistan about \$826 million a year to import fossil fuel similar to that mined and supplied by Thar. The commercial operation of the pro-



ject will play an important role in alleviating the local energy crisis and saving foreign exchange in Pakistan." The Thar Block-1 Integrated Mine-Power Project consists of a 2x660MW high-parameter coal-fired generating units with a supporting lignite open-pit coal mine having annual output capacity of 7.8 million tons. It is a key project in the energy cooperation project of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). It is also the larger power generation project under CPEC with the larger single capacity, the higher parameters and the higher Chinese investment rate using local coal. During the coal mining process, Shang-

hai Electric has taken adequate precautions to ensure the safety of coal miners. Li Ji Gen, CEO of Mine Project, explained that, "under the supervision of a qualified and efficient safety team made up of professionals from both China and Pakistan, who are working hard to comply with international mine safety standards, providing workers with the best personal safety protective equipment in the market, constantly following innovative site safety standards, and conducting regular training." During the implementation of the project, Shanghai Electric has worked with the local community in Thar to promote sustainable development, promote and preserve the rich local culture and ensure this through royalty payments to the Sindh government, as well as their own fund. "In addition, we provide employment and business opportunities for local residents in the form of commercial supplies or

small construction projects according to their financial means. Up to now, we have already hired more than 8,000 local employees and also brought local women to work in the project," highlighted by Sufyan Ansar Warraich, Administration Manager of TCB-1. As an investor, Shanghai Electric offers one-stop solution for the investment, construction and operation of the Thar Block-1 Project. As an equipment manufacturer, Shanghai Electric has provided related equipment to all the nuclear power plants built in Pakistan, as well as power equipment and related technical support to the "Belt and Road Initiative" and other power projects of CPEC. It has also been involved in the transformation of the power grid in Karachi, which has considerably improved the reliability and stability of Karachi's power transmission infrastructure and greatly eased the power supply shortage in Karachi.

## Crypto assets can generate over \$100 billion in Pakistan

DNA

ISLAMABAD: The potential of crypto assets in Pakistan can generate over \$100 billion in total income for technology talent over the next twenty years, contributing significantly to the national economy. The last few months have exponentially increased societal, investor, and policy interest in crypto, blockchain, and Web 3.0 technologies because Pakistan ranks third in terms of crypto adoption in the Chainalysis 2021 Global Crypto Adoption Index. These observations were expressed by speakers at Pakistan's largest Web 3.0 and blockchain event titled "W3 Summit" held at the National Incubation Center (NIC) in Islamabad. It was attended by leading entrepreneurs, corporate leaders, technology professionals, and students. The summit was organized by Teamup and National Incu-

bation Center in partnership with S&P Global and Fasset. The event aimed to lay down the foundation for emerging technologies in Pakistan. Zouhair Khalid, former CEO of Jazz, a veteran corporate executive, and Founding Partner, Teamup & National Incubation Center Pakistan, welcomed the guests and delegates at the summit. He highlighted the role of the National Incubation Center, "I am glad to see NIC catalyzing innovation in Pakistan and this event is part of our attempts to turn Pakistan into a tech destination. There is tremendous potential in this field, and we must ensure Pakistan's place in this rapidly developing landscape." Mujeeb Zahur, Managing Director S&P Global shared his firm belief in understanding and supporting the development of technology as the best way forward, "Technology is the only field that gives your economy and social progress an instant

boost irrespective of your geo-political situation. It is a world without divisions and works on pure merit and talent. Pakistan has no dearth of either. I hope to see such events regularly and look forward to S&P Global partnering with them in the future." Monis Rahman, a leading entrepreneur, and Founder, Rozee.pk & Dukan.pk, spoke on the future of fintech and Web 3.0 in Pakistan. "I have complete faith in the overwhelmingly young and tech-savvy population of Pakistan to take technology and innovation to new levels and enable a strong position for Pakistan as an emerging technology." Noshad Minhas, Country Head Pakistan Fasset, was very optimistic, "Pakistan is amongst the top 3 Web 3 adopting nations in the world. It is home to some of the world's best and brightest developers, researchers, and scientists in tokenization, digital assets, and blockchain technology. In

tandem with National Incubation Center, Fasset hopes to build awareness and educate the next generation of Web3 adopters on safe, responsible, and innovative development as well as the adoption of the future of this game-changing space. We believe that with the right building blocks, the talented youth of Pakistan can unlock \$100bn of potential economic growth." It is noted that sectors from financial services to retail and e-commerce, media and entertainment, healthcare, IT, government, and energy, almost every sector is expected to adopt Web3.0 blockchain. Industry leaders and users see potential in the highly transparent nature of a decentralized Web3.0, where all transactions are recorded and registered and can be easily traced. On the other hand, developers and IT teams invest in Web3.0 due to the strengths of its rapidly developing technology.

## Zong 4G & HANDS partner to develop an urban forest

LAHORE: To combat climate change, Zong 4G, the country's leading telecommunication and digital company, has initiated a tree plantation drive in collaboration with Hands to develop an urban forest in Lahore. The plantation drive was attended by Rana Shahid Tabasum, Divisional Forest Officer, Lahore, Amir Naseem, Executive Manager, Central Punjab, HANDS, Zong 4G volunteers; and other representatives of government departments. Zong's volunteers have stepped up to plant more than 700 evergreen and fruit trees in the

Wildlife Park as part of the company's commitment to creating a greener and safer environment for future generations of the country. The plantation campaign aims to develop the urban forests to fight the on-going environmental concern of smog and climate changes that have impacted Lahore. Pakistan has been hit hard by the worst effects of climate change, including rapidly rising temperatures and, most recently, widespread flooding. One of the first lines of defence against the climate crisis is the planting of trees, especially native trees. Zong 4G is working

towards improving the environmental sustainability of the country, one tree at a time, emphasizing the need to protect and conserve the environment, the official spokesperson of Zong4G said, "As a responsible corporate citizen of Pakistan, Zong 4G is committed to helping advance the country's Sustainability Development Goals. The tree plantation drive is one facet of our mission to help bring about an environmentally sustainable Pakistan and a better-shaped future that makes a difference in people's lives, communities, and on our

planet." Commenting on the partnership, Amir Naseem, Executive Manager, Central Punjab, HANDS said, "Pakistan is in dire need of environmental sustainability efforts. We thank Pakistan's leading telecom company, Zong 4G, for sharing our vision to help protect and save the environment. Through consistent and sustained efforts, we can help fight climate change." Other than leading the digital transformation in the country, Zong 4G is also leading on the sustainability front in the telecom industry. —APP

## NIMA Islamabad organises third international maritime symposium

DNA

ISLAMABAD: National Institute of Maritime Affairs (NIMA), Islamabad organised third International Maritime Symposium-2022 (IMS-22) on the topic "Geo-Economic Dimensions of Indian Ocean Region - Opportunities for the Region and Beyond". Prof Ahsan Iqbal Federal Minister for Planning Development and Special Initiatives graced the Occasion as a Chief Guest. The symposium was well attended by galaxy of participants including academia, maritime professionals, foreign diplomats, researchers from think tanks, faculty & students from universities, serving & retired civil and military personnel. The symposium was also widely attended by the reps of print and electronic media. Eminent speakers from home and abroad, expert in maritime domain, addressed the participants. In the inaugural session Vice Admiral (Retd) Ahmed Saeed, DG NIMA, welcomed the chief guest, worthy

speakers and participants. He highlighted the objectives and importance of the symposium.

The CNS message, read to the audience, underscored the importance of Indian Ocean Region as it provides major connectivity routes for global trade, and contains vast natural resources such as oil, gas, minerals and seafood. It is imperative for the IOR countries to cooperate so as to accrue maximum dividends from the im-

mense maritime economic potential. The Federal Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives highlighted that immense resources were available in the huge sea area at our disposal and along the over 1000 KM long Pakistani coast. He emphasized that our younger generation is very promising with tremendous innovative capabilities. He emphasized that the political stability is mandatory for the economic growth.

The Keynote speakers, former Ambassadors, Nadeem Riaz President IRS, and Ambassador Inam ul Haq highlighted the significance of strong economy of a country and extra regional powers rivalry in IOR. Admiral Asif Sandila former CNS and President Board of Advisors of NIMA, while highlighting the importance of the Indian Ocean Region said, that it is hub of major sea routes which connect oil rich Middle East, with rest of the world through choke points, like Strait of Hormuz, Babel Mandeb and Malacca straits. The smooth flow of trade is important not only for the IOR but also for the global economy. The learned speakers of second session, deliberated on the geo-strategic environment of IOR especially interest of major powers like USA and its allies and China. It was underlined that all the littorals of IOR and extra regional powers want to ensure uninterrupted flow of maritime traffic and no illegal activities like terrorism, drug and human trafficking and piracy.



ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister of Azad Jammu and Kashmir Sardar Tanveer Ilyas Khan called on President Dr. Arif Alvi at Aiwan-e-Sadr. —APP

## Parveen Shakir Trust to pay homage to late poet

DNA

ISLAMABAD: 26 th December 2022 marks the 28 th Death Anniversary of the renowned national poet Parveen Shakir. On this occasion The Parveen Shakir Trust will organize a floral wreath laying ceremony and Fateha Khawani at the poet's grave in H-8 graveyard at 11.30 am. Poets, writers, friends and people from different walks of life will assemble together to pay their tribute to the legacy and everlasting poetry of Parveen Shakir, whose sudden death in a tragic car accident shook the field of Urdu literature and left a vacuum that is difficult to fill. Officers from the Customs Department will pay homage to the star of their Department. Later during the day Quran Khawani will be held at the residence of the Chairperson of the Trust for ease-of-sawab of the poet.

## Mountaineer Sajid Sadpara calls on Punjab CM

LAHORE: The famous mountaineer Sajid Ali Sadpara called on Chief Minister Punjab Chaudhry Parvez Elahi at his office. The CM appreciated Sajid Ali Sadpara's mountaineering skills and announced a grant of Rs1.5 million for the K2 clean-up campaign. Sajid Ali Sadpara had brought laurels home by scaling without oxygen. Brave youths like Sajid Ali Sadpara are an asset of the nation as mountain climbing is a sport of courageous youth and I pray for his further successes, he said. The CM assured to support the K2 clean-up campaign to protect the natural beauty and noted that mountains are also affected by climate change. Sajid Ali Sadpara appreciated the support of CM for promoting the mountaineering and K2 clean-up campaign and added that waste would be removed from camp 4 to the base camp. A campaign was being started in collaboration with local and international mountaineers to clean the K2 to promote international mountaineering; he added and thanked Parvez Elahi for the grant. —APP

## China donates Rs 21m for rehabilitation of infrastructure damaged during rains, floods

KARACHI: Administrator Karachi Dr. Syed Saifur Rahman on Tuesday thanked the Mayor of Shanghai and the Government of China for donating Rs 21.7 million for rehabilitation of infrastructure damaged during rains and floods. Consul General of China, Li Bijian handed over the cheque given by the Shanghai Municipal Government to Administrator Karachi and said that it was a gift from the Shanghai citizens for restoration of Karachi's infrastructure affected by the rains. The Chinese CG formerly called on Administrator Karachi who said that the money given as a donation by the Shanghai Municipal Government will be spent on the development and infrastructure maintenance of Karachi. Li Bijian also invited Administrator Karachi to visit China. Dr. Syed Saif said that Karachi and Shanghai are twin cities, the friendship between China and Pakistan is undying. He said that the people of both the countries have love for each other and a spirit of brotherhood. "Mayor of Shanghai, Gong Zheng had visited KMC which is a source of great joy and pride

for us. KMC and Shanghai local governments will work together for the development of Karachi. Technical support of China for improving the infrastructure will continue for Karachi," he added. The Administrator Karachi also handed over a letter of thanks for Mayor Shanghai Gong Zheng in which he maintained that as the Administrator Karachi, it is his responsibility to ensure that the donated money is spent on the maintenance and development of Karachi's infrastructure. He said that due to the monsoon rains, Karachi has been badly affected and its infrastructure has been damaged. He said that Karachi and Shanghai have been declared twin cities and twin city agreements can lead to further development of economic, political, social and cultural relations between Pakistan and China. "Karachi and its citizens extend their heartfelt greetings to the Government of China and the people of Shanghai for this donation, which will be used to rehabilitate the infrastructure damaged by rains and floods," the administrator said. It may be

noted here that due to the monsoon rains in 2022, the Mayor Shanghai, Gong Zheng wrote a letter to the then Administrator Karachi, Barrister Murtaza Wahab and expressed his heartfelt sympathy with the citizens of Karachi who suffered from the damage. In the letter, Mayor Shanghai Gong Zheng maintained that being the twin city of Karachi, Shanghai will help Karachi as much as possible in dealing with natural disasters and all possible support will be provided in the rehabilitation works in this regard. Mayor Shanghai Gong Zheng also expressed the hope that the efforts made by KMC to restore the infrastructure of the city would be successful and the citizens of Karachi would soon have facilities in their daily life. Meanwhile, the Consul General of China along with the Administrator Karachi also visited the newly renovated Council Hall at the KMC Head Office. Dr. Syed Saifur Rahman briefed them about the historical background and other details of the City Council Hall. — APP

## Next elections to be held in October 2023

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning Development Special Initiatives, Professor Ahsan Iqbal has reiterated the next general elections in the country will be held in October 2023 based on the 7th Digital Population Housing Census 2022. Addressing the digital media influencers on Tuesday, the Minister said that due to recent floods which badly affected two

provinces the elections are not possible before October 2023. "What message will go to the flood-affected people if elections are announced before the completion of the incumbent government's term," said the Minister, while referring to the demand of ex-Prime Minister Imran Khan who has been demanding early elections. Former premier Imran Khan has been demanding immediate elections since his government was removed through a vote of no-confidence in March this year. The Minister further added that the last

general elections were held on the basis of an old census and Sindh province had conditionally agreed to hold the next election of 2023 based on a fresh Digital Census. Therefore, he said that the government will not take any step which makes the whole election controversial. In April 2023, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) formally handover the Digital Census to the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) and subsequently (ECP) will take four months for the delimitation, remarked the Minister. —APP

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## National Days and Armed Forces Days

### December

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



### Hotels & Restaurants

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



### Airlines

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

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



### Enquiry

Edhi Ambulance.....	115
PIA Flight Info.....	114
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Railway Inquiry.....	117
Railway Exchange.....	9270831-5
WASA Rawalpindi.....	5555864
CAA.....	9281092



### Hospitals

CMH.....	5611111
MH.....	561116
Cantt Hospital.....	9270907-11
DHQ.....	5556311-4
RGH.....	9290301-7
Holy Family.....	9290322-7
PIMS.....	9261170-79
Polyclinic.....	9218300-09
Shifa International.....	4603666



### Departments

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

### Islamabad Metropolitan

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

### Water Tank

Islamabad.....	0321-5744480
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## Need stressed for capitalizing on US market for exports

Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, ICCI said that the annual turnover of USA in 2021 was over US\$ 4600 billion, but Pak-US bilateral trade was reportedly up to US\$ 12 billion, which was not reflective of the actual potential of both countries

### DNA

ISLAMABAD: US market offers many openings for exports to Pakistan and the entrepreneurs should accelerate efforts to capitalize on these opportunities to increase exports and earn more foreign exchange for the country. This was said by Asim Ali Khan, Pakistan's Consul General-designate to Los Angeles, USA while addressing the business community during his visit to Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCCI). Asim Ali Khan said that the business community should identify specific products that may have good potential to penetrate the US market and assured that he would extend all possible facilities to them for improving exports to the USA. He said that the business community should share problems and issues being faced by them in doing business



with the USA and he would try to take up them with the relevant authorities for redress. He said that ICCI should arrange his meeting with local IT companies to discuss ways and means to further improve exports of the IT sector with the USA. He assured that he would share business related information with ICCI so that its members would be able to take advantage of the available business prospects in the US market. Speaking at the occasion, Ahsan

Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce and Industry said that the annual turnover of USA in 2021 was over US\$ 4600 billion, but Pak-US bilateral trade was reportedly up to US\$ 12 billion, which

was not reflective of the actual potential of both countries. He said that Pakistan has good potential to improve exports of IT products and services to the USA and Pakistan's foreign mission in the USA should cooperate with the private sector in improving exports with this huge market. He said that many other products of Pakistan including pharmaceuticals, cutlery, women-made products and others can find good markets in the USA. He assured that ICCI would like to work closely with Pakistan's Consul General in Los Angeles to explore new avenues of promoting trade and economic relations with the USA. Sheikh Muhammad Ijaz, Akhtar Hussain, Khalid Chaudhry and others also spoke at the occasion and shared useful ideas for further increasing business and investment relations with USA.

## PNCA holds art fundraiser for flood affectees

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan National Council of the Arts (PNCA) on Tuesday organized an Art Fundraiser photography exhibition for extending financial help to the flood affectees. The show "Panorama Pakistan", a photography exhibition portrayed colors, life, and people of Pakistan by various professional photographers. Fareena Mazhar, Secretary of the Ministry of National Heritage and Culture Division inaugurated the show which is a collaborative effort of PNCA, Syed Abu Akif, former federal secretary, and Rabia and Tahira Families Trust to support those affected by the floods that destroyed most parts of the country, resulting in the loss of precious lives and livelihoods. Fareena Mazhar called the general public to visit the Exhibition, with exquisite photography, and to invest generously in acquiring works of their choice for homes or offices. This is an investment in humanity, as well, and it is our sincere prayer that whatever we collect was aiming to help alleviate the miseries faced by the victims of the huge catastrophe, she said. PNCA was set up to spearhead the development of arts in Pakistan. The council aimed to build an environment conducive to the flourishing of the arts, where the arts are accessible to everyone and artists and art groups have the commitment, financial support, and resources to excel at home, and on the world stage, said Director General PNCA, Ayub Jamali. - APP

## Syed Fayyaz Hussain Shah appointed DG Pak PWD

All engineers, clerical staff and class IV employees are very happy. Now Pak PWD is on the way to improvement

### MUMTAZ AHMED BHATTI

ISLAMABAD: When Syed Fayyaz Hussain Shah took charge of Pakistan PWD as DG, there was a wave of happiness in the entire department. Hope arose among all the employees of Pak PWD that now Pak PWD will improve day by day. Syed Fayyaz Hussain Shah is a professional engineer who is very sincere with his profession. Good manners, gentleness and respect are his hallmarks. He has never compromised on the quality of work in his career and has never accepted pressure from influential contractors. Some employees of Pak PWD while talking to the media said that there is no other person like Syed Fayyaz Hussain Shah



who is hardworking, honest and respects juniors in our department. Syed Fayyaz Hussain Shah has a routine

from the beginning that he reaches the office on time and works till late at night. Do not withhold anyone's file unnecessarily or for personal interest. For the first time, it is pleasant to see that the Pak Pwd's employees of every grade of Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan, KP and Islamabad are not only celebrating the appointment of Syed Fayyaz Hussain Shah as DG PAK PWD but they are full of hope. That the time for improvement in the department has begun. If DG Syed Fayyaz Hussain Shah starts trying to solve the problems that have worsened for decades in Pak PWD and continues to struggle for further improvement as he has laid the foundation for improvement, then his name will always be remembered.

## Inflation to witness gradual decline

ISLAMABAD: Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif on Tuesday expressed confidence that inflation would start witnessing a gradual decline as the government intended to introduce a comprehensive relief package for the people in the coming days. Talking to media outside the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP), he said, "It is the number one priority of the federal government to provide relief to the masses and reduce the prices of the commodities used by the common man." The minister recalled that the government, a few days back,

had reduced the prices of petroleum products and electricity for benefit of the common man. Commenting on the current political situation, he said, a no-confidence motion had been moved in the Punjab Assembly against Chief Minister, Speaker and Deputy Speaker and its result would come in the next two-three days. Khawaja Asif said the last card to dissolve the provincial assemblies by Imran Khan had also not worked, rather every day a new thing was revealed about his (Imran Khan) Toshakhana gifts. He said people have come to know that

"Murshid" [wife of Imran Khan] was doing what kind of business under the leadership of Imran Khan by selling the Toshakhana gifts. He said it was unfortunate that the people [PTI leadership], who do not care about political norms and values, had reached the power corridor and occupied high positions during the last tenure. The minister said with the grace of Allah Almighty the no-confidence motion moved by the PDM against the elements, who come into power by committing corruption, would succeed. He said now Imran Khan was now speaking against the people who were kind enough to bring him into power. "If you (Imran Khan) have failed to deliver, it is your mistake, not the others" he added. The minister said the PDM government was trying to heal the wounds given by the past regime of PTI to the national economy. - APP

## ETC, GB govt sign agreement

Iftekhhar Mahmood reiterated commitment from ETC to conduct requisite tests through an accelerated effort. HEC Pakistan has established ETC under the mandate of its Ordinance and as directed by SC

ISLAMABAD: The Government of Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) has signed an agreement with the Education Testing Council (ETC), Higher Education Commission whereby the Council will conduct the screening tests for recruitment in the government departments. The signing ceremony held at HEC Secretariat was attended by Chief Secretary GB Mohiuddin Wani, Executive Director HEC, Dr Shaista Sohail and CEO of ETC Iftekhhar Mahmood. Honorable guests expressed the hope that the agreement would help bring standardized testing to the process of recruitment in the public sector of GB enabling enforcement of across-the-board merit and transparency. Wani stressed that the process of testing needed to be undertaken expeditiously to help initiate the long-awaited process of recruitment. Iftekhhar Mahmood reiterated the commitment from ETC to conduct requisite tests through an accelerated effort. HEC Pakistan has established ETC under the mandate of its Ordinance and as directed by the Supreme Court of Pakistan. It is an autonomous institution with oversight by its Board of Governors (BOG). The BOG consists of experienced and accomplished professionals, including federal and provincial secretaries, executive director HEC, vice chancellors both from the public and private sector universities with representation from the four provinces, and eminent personalities. - APP

## Renowned poet, naat khawan Muzaffar Warsi remembered

ISLAMABAD: A prominent Urdu poet, critic, essayist, lyricist, and scholar of Pakistan Muzaffar Warsi was remembered here on his 89th birthday. He was born on 20 December 1933 in Meerut as Mohamad Muzaffar ud din Siddiqui and used the pen name 'Warsi' for his writings. He used to work for the State Bank of Pakistan as Deputy Treasurer. Muzaffar Warsi started his poetry by writing lyrics for songs for Pakistani movies but gradually changed direction and his style of poetry became more oriented towards writing Hamd and Naats. Talking to APP, Naat Khawan Uzair Khan said that Warsi was one of the

few "distinguished voices of the present century" and one of the most prominent poets of Pakistan. He said that if a list of Urdu poets is prepared impartially, it would be impossible to skip his name. He said that Warsi experimented with every genre of poetry including ghazal, nazam, naat, and haml. Unique style and diversity of themes made Warsi prominent among the poets of his era, he added. He said Warsi enlightened

'Natia Poetry' with a new style and naats like "Ya Rahmatullah Al Alameen" would always be remembered among people having literary taste. He received the Pride of Performance award from the Pakistan Government. His published books include Barf ki Nao, Baab-e-Haram, Lejha, Noor-e-Azal, Alhamd, Hissar, Lahoo ki Haryali, Sitaron ki Aab-joo, Kaaba-e-Ishq, Khule dareechey band hawa, Dil sey dar-e-Nabi tak, Zulm na sehna Kamand. - APP

## WB approves \$1.69 billion to support flood affected people

ISLAMABAD: The World Bank's Board of Executive Directors has approved \$1.692 billion in the financing, for five projects to support people living in flood-affected areas of Sindh Province in Pakistan. Three projects support rehabilitation and housing reconstruction and the restoration of crop production for vulnerable communities, while another two projects support health services for mothers and children, a press release issued by the World Bank on Tuesday said. "Sindh was the province worst affected by the 2022 floods. There were huge damage to the housing, health, and agriculture sectors and people lost their livelihoods. Beyond the rehabilitation and reconstruction

of damaged houses and infrastructure, our engagement in the flood response effort is an opportunity to strengthen resilience, and reform institutions and governance structures", said Najy Benhassine, World Bank Country Director for Pakistan. The Sindh Flood Emergency Rehabilitation Project (\$500 million) will help rehabilitate damaged infrastructure, provide short-term livelihood opportunities, and strengthen the government's capacity to respond to disasters. The project will help restore and improve critical irrigation and flood protection infrastructure, water supply schemes, roads, and related infrastructure. At least 2 million people—approximately 50 percent of whom are women—in the most

flood-affected districts will benefit from the restoration and the resilient reconstruction of critical infrastructure. A community-level cash-for-work program will provide short-term income support to approximately 100,000 households. This will include semi-skilled and unskilled labor and will support livestock restocking for affected smallholder livestock farmers. The Sindh Floods Emergency Housing Reconstruction Project (\$500 million) will support owner-driven and multi-hazard resilient reconstruction of core housing units. A housing subsidy will provide reconstruction and restoration grants for 350,000 housing units (almost 20 percent of the total housing rehabilitation needs for Sindh). - APP

## CTP raising awareness to avoid safety hazards

RAWALPINDI: The City Traffic Police (CTP) under its ongoing smog awareness campaign is visiting different areas and trying to sensitize people to avoid any health or safety hazards during smog season. According to a spokesman, the CTP had launched a campaign on the directives of City Traffic Officer (CTO) Rawalpindi Taimoor Khan with an aim to raise awareness about best practices to keep oneself safe and healthy during smog season. Therefore, the citizens should bring the vehicles on the roads while keeping them in good condition, he said adding, that in this regard, the teams were visiting different city roads, and bus terminals and distributing pamphlets and face masks among motorcyclists, motorists, and pedestrians. The citizens were also urged to avoid waste burning to control the smog formation to protect themselves from breathing problems, and eye, nose, and throat infections, he added. The teams were briefing the citizens that heart and breathing patients should take extra measures to avoid any situation and use sunglasses while going outside which would be helpful to avoid any sort of eye infection, he said. - APP

## Solo show by Dr Arshed Maqbool

ISLAMABAD: "Twilight and Beyond", a solo art show by Dr Arshed Maqbool will be displayed here on December 21 featuring exquisite collection at Islamabad Art Gallery. Maqbool has a certain passion for painting the fading architecture of the city of Lahore. The artist has skillfully managed to depict details with economic use of strokes which has become his hallmark. The paintings mainly aim at reproducing an effective ambience without having to overload the space with unnecessary objects to achieve a Picturesque result.

In order to maintain a mystical softness in the image, Maqbool sparingly resorts to chiaroscuro (a painting technique to emphasize volume through deliberate contrast). He avoids harsh lighting and chooses to keep his colors within a pastel spectrum which further fortify his signature style, says M Saeed Kureshi, Art Critic / Painter. With the onslaught of contemporary architecture, LED lighting, modern street accessories etc. the cityscape is drastically transforming into a concrete jungle. However, Maqbool's documentation of the receding cityscapes will serve as valuable archives for public to cherish for many years to come. Recalling the true spirit of dynamic atmosphere of the city requires probing deep into the cerebral depths of the visual memory—a characteristic that Dr Arshed Maqbool has mastered over years of painting. Grasping the nuances of the continuously altering light is a fetish of a few; Maqbool has definitely tamed the brain's eye to harness even the most daunting charade of light when it moves across buildings and streets - a visual montage that represents the city's character and identity. - APP

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## Briefs

## IT parks - a revolutionary step towards excellence in digital era

ISLAMABAD: With digital growth going through a rapid evolution, Pakistan is inching towards establishing a vibrant network of state-of-the-art Information Technology (IT) parks aimed at providing young professionals a launching pad to execute their innovative ideas and contribute to the national economy efficiently. The software technology parks would not only generate employment opportunities for IT professionals but also attract millions of dollars in precious foreign exchange, boost the IT industry, and increase exports, once they are completed and become fully operational.

Currently, work on establishing the IT parks in Karachi at the cost of Rs. 41 billion and Islamabad at the cost of Rs 13.72 billion is underway. Experts believe that after their completion, they would provide job opportunities to around 35,000 IT professionals collectively. Federal Minister for Information Technology and Telecommunication Syed Amin-ul-Haq said the Karachi IT Park would be a gateway for an innovative future and strengthen the economy. "Karachi IT Park is the largest IT project of its kind in Pakistan, which will benefit not only the citizens of Karachi but also the IT professionals and companies of Sindh and the rest of Pakistan," he added.

The establishment of IT Park, Karachi was approved by ECNEC on June 4, 2021 at a capital cost of USD 186.658 million including USD 158.416 million from Korean Exim Bank as a loan and PSPD local share of USD 28.242 million. The project, for which land has been acquired near Jinnah International, would be completed in June 2026. A senior official of the IT Ministry the technology parks must comply with basic infrastructure requirements such as cleanliness facilities and ample working space. These should be equipped with the latest technology and telecommunication facilities that make it easy to establish and manage a business.—APP

## SNGPL making all-out efforts to maintain gas pressure

ISLAMABAD: A spokesman for the Regional Office of Sui Northern Gas Pipelines Limited (SNGPL) on Tuesday said the company was making all-out efforts to ensure the provision of gas supply to domestic consumers with regular pressure during the peak winter season. For this purpose, the company has established a control room to resolve consumers' complaints related to low gas pressure in its operational areas including Islamabad, Attock, Fateh Jang, Wah, Taxila, Murree and Kahuta. "The control room is operating round-the-clock and taking prompt action by mobilizing field teams to resolve the gas-pressure-related issues. Consumers can lodge their complaints at the Call Center at 1199 and Control Room's landline number 051-9257774," spokesman Shahid Akram told APP. He feared there could be gas pressure issues in the remote and tail-end of the gas distribution system of the Islamabad region due to changing weather patterns. The spokesman advised the consumers to avoid excessive use of gas and install fuel-efficient gas appliances like geysers and heaters in the peak winter season. He asked the consumers for adopting all possible precautionary measures to avoid any untoward incident caused by gas leakages by discouraging the rubber-pipe use with gas appliances and keeping the room windows open. The company has also started a service to provide Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) cylinders for its consumers, which can be obtained by calling on Helpline-1210 or sending a Whatsapp message at 0333-7641199. Shahid Akram said a Special Task Force of SNGPL launched a crackdown the other day against users of illegal compressors, who were involved in depriving other consumers of gas and putting people's lives at risk.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Ladies posing for a picture on the occasion of the National Day of Bahrain. — DNA

## Chinese company visits Gwadar to materialize \$4.5 bn project

China Overseas Port Hold Company (COPHCO and ESGL have already mutually developed understanding to make things happen at Gwadar Free Zone phase II

DNA

ISLAMABAD: In order to materialize the \$4.5 billion oil refinery project in Gwadar, five-member delegation of Chinese Company "East Sea Group Limited (ESGL)" is visiting Gwadar. Gwadar Pro reported on Tuesday. ESGL official Jason Zhou said that ESGL chief engineer Mr Liu along with other officials will be in Gwadar from December 20. The delegation consisting of technical team with marine engineering, commerce and petroleum professional background will be headed by Group's General Manager Fang Haixia. Delegation will stay for three or four days in an effort to tune in conceptual and practical frameworks. They will hold meetings with leadership of China Overseas Ports Holding Company and Gwadar Port Authority to review the proposed site for the establishment of oil refinery in Gwadar Free Zone phase II. As per initial plan, ESGL will install 5 million tons capacity oil refinery in Gwadar. Later ESGL will upgrade it with annual oil processing capacity of 8 million tons in Gwadar. China Overseas Port Hold Company (COPHCO and ESGL have already mutually developed understanding to make things happen at Gwadar Free Zone phase II. East Sea Group Limited (ESGL) is a

diversified multinational company, mainly engaged in energy trade, energy storage logistics and oil refining, and has invested in many countries such as South America, the Middle East and Indonesia. Chinese entry came at a time when uncertainty was brewing about fate of oil refinery in Gwadar after international players dragged their feet and went indecisive on the offer of establishing oil refinery in Gwadar. And following Chinese move, many international firms have signaled for interest afresh to develop oil refinery in Gwadar. Sources in GPA told Gwadar Pro that oil refinery project will be constructed in two phases. The first phase will have an annual refining capacity of 5 million tons. East Sea Group will place at least six crude oil transshipment vessels totaling 2 million tons at Gwadar port in Pakistan every month, starting from and supporting its own oil source business, and will also provide oil transshipment and transshipment services for major Middle East oil producing countries. According to sources in Ministry of Energy (Petroleum Division), the refinery will provide a substantial storage capacity to Pakistan, enabling it to maintain reserves for longer time and save foreign exchange. The multi-billion dollar project, upon implementation will provide an impetus to further investment in the petrochemical industry in Gwadar. In order to

greenlight the mega project by government of Pakistan, concerned institutions are gearing up to scrutinize the detailed business plan and feasibility study for further processing. For this purpose the services of an international consultant has already been hired and both documents are in the process of preparation. For planning and construction, Oil and Gas Regulatory Authority (OGRA) will fulfil the licensing requirements under OGRA Ordinance 2022. The move of launching the oil refinery seems to have encouraged other foreign investment that had stalled due to many reasons in the oil refinery sector during recent past. In January 2019, Saudi Arabia's Energy Minister Khalid Al-Falsh announced that the Arab nation was planning to set up a \$10 billion oil refinery in Pakistan's deep-water port of Gwadar. However, the plan was rolled back. Later it was indicated with vagueness that instead Gwadar, oil refinery may be established somewhere else in Pakistan. As a bolt from the blue, few days back Saudi Arabia has sprung back into action with signaling renew engagement to come up with oil refinery project in Gwadar amid fresh activism of newly appointed Secretary Petroleum Capt (r) Muhammad Mahmood. On October 27, Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Senator Mohammad

Ishaq Dar also held a virtual meeting on First Joint Economic Sub Committee of the Saudi - Pakistan Supreme Coordination Council with HRH Prince Abdulaziz bin Salman bin Abdulaziz, Minister of Energy Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. Meanwhile the UAE has also shown willingness to set up a deep-conversion, state-of-the-art refinery that would have an output of 500,000 barrels per day in Hub (a town in Balochistan with Pak-Arab Refinery Limited (PARCO). Currently, there are five local players operating in the oil refining sector in Pakistan including, Pak-Arab Refinery Limited (PARCO), Attock Refinery Limited (ARL), National Refinery Limited (NRL), Pakistan Refinery Limited (PRL) and Cnergico Pk Limited (CPL). All of the refineries are hydro skimming refineries, except for PARCO which is a mild-conversion refinery. Pakistan's oil refining capacity is about 450,000 barrels per day (bpd), equivalent to 20 million tons per annum. Local refineries have supplied about 60 percent of the country's requirements of Diesel, 30 percent of Motor Gasoline and 100 percent of Jet fuel for defense. The rest is imported as refined products. Pakistan has been importing significant volumes of petrochemicals, worth more than USD 2 billion annually, as there is no primary petrochemical production facility in Pakistan.

## Pakistan, US diaspora conference held

In his remarks, Chargé d'Affaires Schofer highlighted the long history of the United States and Pakistan working together to advance Pakistan's economic growth and solve development challenges

ISLAMABAD: United States Organized U.S-Pakistani Diaspora Engagement Conference in Islamabad today where United States Embassy Chargé d'Affaires Andrew Schofer emphasized that the United States considered the US-Pakistani diaspora as a key partner in humanitarian, social, and commercial sectors in Pakistan. The conference showcased key contributions and investments by the US-Pakistani diaspora in humanitarian, social, and commercial sectors and explored venues for future joint engagements. USAID Mission

Director Reed Aeschliman said "The conference was an opportunity to highlight some of the contributions and investments already made by the Pakistani diaspora, facilitate collaborations between Pakistani diaspora entities, and develop a road map for collective action to address the current humanitarian and social challenges in Pakistan". In his remarks, Chargé d'Affaires Schofer highlighted the long history of the United States and Pakistan working together to advance Pakistan's economic growth and solve development challenges. He

also highlighted opportunities for future partnership: "As the Green Revolution improved lives in the past, a 'Green Alliance' between the United States and Pakistan will help us jointly strengthen climate resilience, develop clean energy alternatives, and foster economic growth." The United States remains firmly committed to engaging and partnering with the US-Pakistani diaspora to address Pakistan's challenges in the humanitarian, social and commercial sectors and further Pakistan's development goals. More than

100 participants attended in-person, including members of the U.S.-Pakistani diaspora, and prominent local business leaders. At the closing session, USAID signed two partnership memoranda of understanding with US-Pakistani diaspora entities: one with Datarocx to set up digital centers in Pakistan in the Special Technology Zones and the other with Global Semiconductor Group and HUM Network Limited for Pakistan Katalytic Fund to improve access to growth capital for established businesses in the technology sector.

## Christian community to plant 1m trees

RAWALPINDI: Archbishop Rawalpindi/ Islamabad Dr Joseph Arshad on Tuesday announced that the Christian community would start a campaign to plant one million saplings on the occasion of Christmas to make Pakistan greener and greener. Addressing the Interfaith harmony conference at a local hotel, he said that the Christian community was "striving for the development and prosperity of the beloved country" and the role of religious leaders was important for promoting inter-faith harmony. On the occasion, the business community expressed solidarity with the Christian community and their determination to participate in the joys of Christmas. In his address, President of Anjuman Tajran Rawalpindi Cantt Sheikh Hafeez extended Christmas greetings and said that the Christian community played a vital role in promoting religious tolerance and unity. Speaking at the event, focal person of the district peace committee, Maulana Hafiz Muhammad Iqbal Rizvi lauded the role of the district administration in devising the best security arrangements at Christian worship places. He said the promotion of inter-faith harmony was the "need of the hour", and religious leaders must play their role in promoting religious tolerance. Ali Hussain Arif, Pandit Rakesh Chand, Anoop Singh, Inspector Muhammad Iqbal in charge of Rawalpindi Police religious wing, Dr. Farhad, Akmal Shehzad Ghuman, Director Admin Press Information Department Saghir Wattoo, Pir Azmatullah, Shaukat Jafri, Malik Babar.—

## Pakistan Railways to start shuttle service

ISLAMABAD :Pakistan Railways is all set to start Shuttle Service between Malakwal via Pind Dadan Khan during the next week to provide maximum facilities to the passengers of the areas. "The decision was taken on the directions of Minister for Railways Khawaja Saad Rafique who asked the Divisional Superintendent, Pakistan Railways Rawalpindi Division and concerned deputy commissioner to contact notables of the area regarding starting the train service soon," an official in the Ministry told APP. He said Pakistan Railways has decided to provide modern travelling facilities to the passengers and pursuing the rigorous exercise on making Pakistan Railways a profitable entity. The official said that Pakistan Railways had also decided to install modern Closed-Circuit Television (CCTV) system in all the passenger trains for making the journey extra comfortable and safe. He said that Malakwal via Pind Dadan Khan railway track, which was closed due to lockdowns imposed during the coronavirus pandemic, could not be restored until now. Thousands of people in the three districts of Rawalpindi Division have been deprived of economical railway travel due to the closure of the train service and the previous government did nothing to restore the track. It is pertinent to mention here that due to the presence of Haranpur (Victoria) Bridge, the train was the only mode of public transport from Malakwal to Pind Dadan Khan.—APP

## NUMS, S.K-IVI to collaborate vaccine development

RAWALPINDI: National University of Medical Sciences (NUMS) and International Vaccine Institute (IVI) South Korea agreed on Tuesday to collaborate in the indigenous development of vaccine through transfer of technology and by building capacity of Pakistani scientists. This understanding was reached after a delegation from NUMS led by its Vice Chancellor Lt Gen Wasim Alamgir, HI(M) held a meeting with Director General of International Vaccine Institute (IVI) South Korea Dr Jerome H. Kim along with his team in Seoul on Tuesday. "Both sides agreed to cooperate in areas of capacity building in-

cluding on-site training for group of scientists from Pakistan, along with technology transfer for vaccine development," said a message received here from Seoul. The Vice-Chancellor presented Dr. Jerome H. Kim NUMS' shield while Dean NUMS Faculty of Multidisciplinary Studies Dr. Prof. Aisha Mohyuddin and Consultant Strategic Planning and Development Jaweed Akhtar were also present on the occasion. Meanwhile, in another initiative, NUMS and the University of Mostar of Bosnia and Herzegovina inked a Document of Understanding (DOC) at an impressive ceremony held at Mostar (Sarajevo)

on Monday to promote scientific research and academic cooperation. The DOC was signed by Lt Gen Wasim Alamgir HI(M) Vice Chancellor NUMS and Rector Bosnia and Herzegovina University Of MOSTAR (SUM) Prof. Zoran Tomić PhD during a former visit to Bosnia. Pakistan ambassador to Bosnia and Herzegovina Maj Gen Akhtar Jamil Rao HI(M) (Retd), Dean NUMS Faculty of Multidisciplinary Studies Prof. Dr Aisha Mohyuddin and Dr Lalarukh Consultant Clinical Trial Unit(CTU) were also present on the occasion. The DOC envisaged "the areas and matters of mutual cooperation as well

as the forms and manners of its implementation". Under the DOC, both universities can choose their staff for participation in the staff exchange "with an aim of studying or lecturing at the other university, on a reciprocal base". Both sides agreed to call professors from the other University for giving lectures or consultations for a certain period or choose one or more of their employees for mutual visits for improving the study or research in their respective institutions. The universities will exchange students, either in undergraduate or graduate studies, in the appropriate fields of study, said the DOU.—APP

## POL import bill shrinks by 8.11% to \$7.7 billion in 5 months

ISLAMABAD: The imports of the overall petroleum group declined by 8.11 percent during the first five months of the current fiscal year (2022-23) as compared to the corresponding period of the last year, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. The total imports of the petroleum group during July-November (2022-23) stood at \$7,700.272 million, as against the imports of \$8,379.847 million during the same period of last year, according to PBS data. Among petroleum commodities, the import of petroleum products declined by 14.52 percent, from \$4,155.917 million last year to \$3,552.326 million during the period under review. Likewise, the imports of liquefied natural gas declined by 17.38 going down to \$1,584.800 million this year against the imports of \$1,918.188 million recorded during the corresponding period of last year. On the other hand, the products that witnessed positive growth included petroleum crude, the imports of which grew by 10.55, from \$2,056.288 million last year to \$2,273.329 million whereas imports of liquefied petroleum gas increased by 16.19 percent, from \$249.309 million to \$289.671 million. The imports of all other petroleum products increased by 0.81 percent, from \$ 0.145 million to \$0.146 million. Meanwhile, on a year-on-year basis, the petroleum group imports witnessed a decrease of 24.58 percent during the month of November 2022 as compared to the same month of last year. The petroleum imports during November 2022 were recorded at \$1,646.185 million against the imports of \$2,182.562 million during November 2021.

On a month-on-month basis, the petroleum imports into the country increased by 38.56 percent during November 2022 when compared to the imports of \$1,188.107 million October 2022, according to the data. It is pertinent to mention here that during the first five months of the current fiscal year, the merchandise trade deficit witnessed a decline of 30.14 per cent and was recorded at \$ 14,406 million this year against the deficit of \$ 20,621 million last year. According to PBS data, the exports from July-November (2022-23) were recorded at \$11,932 million against the exports of \$12,362 million in July-November (2021-22), showing decline of 3.48 percent. On the other hand, the imports of the country decreased by 20.15 percent during the period under review by going down from \$ 32,983 million last year to \$ 26,338 million during the current year.—APP

## SMEDA to organize training

ISLAMABAD: The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) will organize a one-day training programme on "Effective Business Communication Skills" for profitable business growth on December 27 (Tuesday). The workshop will be held at the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI), Rawalpindi. The session will be organized by SMEDA under National Business Development Programme (NBDP) for SMEs, to extend non-financial advisory services to small and medium businesses, according to a source in the authority. The training programme will provide information about the importance of communication in the 21st century, introduction to effective communication, understanding communication, effective presentation skills, the role of listening in communication, and developing written communication skills. The program also highlights communication styles, assertive communication, communication barriers, and business success depends on communication. The training session would be attended by emerging and existing entrepreneurs, members of RCCI, small business owners, and all those desirous of improving their knowledge on the subject.—APP

## Fate of Europe should be in its own hands

When commenting on the Ukraine crisis at a news briefing on Friday, United Nations Spokesperson Stephane Dujarric said the world body would like to see peace in Ukraine, not the deployment of new weapons in the region. Yet recent developments show the United States is intent on fanning the flames of the conflict and it will not stop supplying Ukraine with weapons any time soon. Negotiators in the US Congress unveiled a \$1.7 trillion government funding bill on Monday that includes \$44.9 billion in emergency assistance to Ukraine and the US' NATO allies. Since the Ukraine crisis broke out on Feb 24, the US has already committed more than \$21.8 billion in security assistance to Ukraine, with much of that going to US arms manufacturers. And with Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky continuing to urge Washington and other Western capitals to supply his country with a wide range of weapons systems and other military support, it seems the US is only too happy to oblige. Last week, US officials confirmed that the Pentagon has prepared plans to transfer Patriot missile batteries to Ukraine if approved by US President Joe Biden. Nor is it just the US defense giants and defense contractors such as Lockheed Martin and Raytheon that are making huge profits. US companies in the energy sector, which are price gouging European countries in their time of need, are also raking in the money. With the hostilities showing no sign of abating, some politicians in Europe have already become aware of the truth that their transatlantic ally seeks to prolong the conflict to drag down Russia, weaken Europe, and strengthen the dependence of Europe on the US. At the same time, the US Inflation Reduction Act is drawing increasing displeasure and opposition from the European Union as the US plan to pour billions of dollars into environmentally friendly industries will cause a drain on the bloc's industry as many European companies will be drawn to the US. Not to mention that the US, while peddling its zero-sum thinking, is lobbying its European allies to increase export controls against China and dragging it deeper into a fierce confrontation with China, even though Washington clearly knows the painful price Europe will have to pay. The fact of the matter is the US is taking advantage of the Ukraine crisis to advance its own interests, and in doing so it has no qualms about sacrificing the interests of its allies on the altar of that agenda. The European countries should dissuade themselves of any notion that there is a transatlantic friendship. In Washington's eyes, they are simply pawns to be used. It is time they took the fate of the continent into their own hands.

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## Cop15 deal: nations must do more for nature

The 23 targets in the Cop15 biodiversity agreement announced in Montreal on Monday are insufficient to prevent further irreversible losses, including among the many species threatened with extinction. The deal is not legally binding, leading to concerns about the prospects for implementation. The track record of global biodiversity plans is terrible. Every one of 20 targets set at Aichi in Japan in 2010 was missed. The new agreement was finalised despite complaints from African countries including the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), home to one of the world's largest rainforests, which is threatened by oil and gas exploration. The description of the US's role as "an interesting asterisk" by the Canadian prime minister, Justin Trudeau, was too mild. It is shaming and alarming that the US was at the talks as an "influencer" and not a participant, because the Senate has refused to ratify the UN convention on biological diversity. These are more than caveats. The Cop15 process and its outcomes are deeply flawed – arguably even more so than the UN climate negotiations. In both cases, it is easy to be overwhelmed by the magnitude of present challenges and past failures. Many of the decisions and promises being made now would have been prescient had they been made decades ago. That said, international cooperation is so vital to ongoing efforts at limiting further damage that the signing of the agreement at a conference co-hosted by Canada and China must be welcomed as a positive development. The target known as "30 by 30", which means a commitment to protect 30% of the planet – both land and sea – for nature by the end of the decade, is a good one and stands a decent chance of being taken on board by civil society in many countries, in the way that net zero has. The concept of national biodiversity plans, with a similar function to the nationally determined contributions in the UN climate process, is also sound. The removal from the final draft of a target of a 5% increase in natural ecosystems by 2030 was a missed opportunity. Without specific goals, the danger is that fine intentions will fizzle out. Other problems include the lack of a commitment to tackle consumption patterns, above all in the rich west, which make huge demands on finite resources, as well as producing large amounts of carbon. Diets, in particular meat-rich western ones, will have to change if we are to have any chance of conserving habitats including the Amazon, where cattle farming leads to deforestation. But the agreement is a step forward, and the hope must be that the orientation of politics will now shift – as it has done in regard to climate – to place more emphasis on the conservation and restoration of nature. African governments collectively played an important role in securing progress in Montreal, and the treatment of the DRC in the final session must not be glossed over. Justice is at stake in the nature crisis, as in the climate one. If the Cop biodiversity process is to work, the UN must ensure that all voices are heard.

## How World Cup cynics took their eye off ball

Faisal j. Abbas

As for the off-pitch drama, Qatar has clearly obtained value for money (a staggering \$220 billion by most estimates) in publicity.

Sadly, despite one of the most impeccably planned, safe and successful World Cups ever organized, most of that publicity was negative.

Of course, Qatar is aware of its shortcomings when it comes to human rights, to hosting terrorists wanted by the UN and the US, and to its previous government's blatant attempts to interfere in its neighbors' affairs. No sporting tournament can erase any of that.

And so the curtain falls on Qatar 2022, indisputably one of the most dramatic World Cups in football history – both on and off the pitch! In terms of the actual football, the suspense, the shocks and the superb performances by most teams were so exciting that even non-followers of the sport (such as myself) were hooked. Indeed, from the historic Saudi victory over Argentina (making the Green Falcons the only team to defeat the new world champions), to the epic rise of Morocco to the

semifinals, to Japan's victory over Germany, it has been an unprecedented, nail-biting month for the sport. Cynics give the host country, Qatar, credit for none of the above. They argue – perhaps correctly – that any achievements on the pitch are due solely to the efforts of the footballers themselves, their coaches, and perhaps the new drama brought by VAR technology that either reversed or validated so many decisive goal and penalty decisions. As for the off-pitch drama, Qatar has clearly obtained value for money (a staggering \$220 billion by most estimates) in publicity. Sadly, despite one of the most impeccably planned, safe and successful World Cups ever organized, most of that publicity was negative. Of course, Qatar is aware of its shortcomings when it comes to human rights, to hosting terrorists wanted by the UN and the US, and to its previous government's blatant attempts to interfere in its neighbors' affairs. No sporting tournament can erase any of that. However, the only way to fix such problems is ... to fix them; and we have seen pleasant winds of change blowing across the Gulf since the AIUa Agreement between Qatar and its GCC neighbors and Egypt in January 2021. Nevertheless, my argument here is that accusations of "sportswashing" levelled repeatedly against Qatar in Western media, particularly British publications, are both short-sighted and hypocritical. First, if Qatar did indeed spend all that money on enhancing its image, then what an incredible waste it was. As the Nation Brands Index founder Simon Anholt told Arab News in an interview in November, major events such as sport tournaments do nothing to enhance a country's brand image. "The evidence is that running or hosting a big sporting event, such as the football World Cup or the summer Olympics, has no impact, generally speaking, on the image of the country, at least not beyond a few months," he said. "Within about six months or so, people have forgotten about it." Second, as the richest country in the world in terms of per capita GDP, Qatar doesn't need to sportswash anything. I doubt



that anyone in Doha is losing sleep about how they are perceived in, for example, London, when they already own swaths of the city; or about the loss of tourism when they don't need the income, and don't have enough hotel rooms for a viable tourist industry in any case. Let me be clear: This is not so much a defense of Qatar as it is an attack on the mind-boggling double standards and hypocrisy of some of its critics in the UK. Leaving aside their deafening silence when the 2018 World Cup took place in Russia despite its annexation of Crimea and invasion of eastern Ukraine, it is a mystery why a World Cup in Qatar would bother British human rights activists more than the fact that the tiny Gulf state owns the crown jewels of their own capital city. The British newspaper The Observer reported this month that the state of Qatar was the 10th-largest landowner in the UK, with nearly 2.1 million square meters of property.

Among the holdings in the portfolio of the Qatar Investment Authority are the luxury Knightsbridge department store Harrods; Britain's tallest building, the Shard, which was built with nearly £2 billion of Qatari investment; Forbes House mansion; Chelsea Barracks; and the Savoy and Grosvenor House hotels. It is also a co-owner of the Canary Wharf business district and has a 20 percent stake in Heathrow airport – and none of this includes the personal holdings of individual Qatari royals. Surely, British based activists would have an easier time lobbying their government to block such investments than trying to prevent a sovereign state from hosting a football tournament. I am not suggesting that British media should stop discussing human rights in Qatar; I am saying that, if you are going to do that, then concentrate on the issues that really matter – and let the rest of us enjoy the football!

—Courtesy: Arab News

## Ukraine must investigate alleged war crimes by its forces

Mark Kersten

Back in 2019, the International Criminal Court (ICC)

determined that Ukrainian forces committed possible war crimes against Russian soldiers in eastern Ukraine. To be clear: none of these allegations draws moral or legal equivalency between the acts of Ukrainian and Russian forces. Any alleged crimes committed by Ukrainian officers pale in comparison to the aggression and barbarity Russian forces have demonstrated in Ukraine.

But all atrocities must be accounted for, not just those of one's enemies. In response to the videos showing potential war crimes committed by Ukrainian forces

While nowhere near the scale of the Russian atrocities, there is mounting evidence that Ukrainian forces have committed war crimes over the course of the Ukraine-Russia war. The allegations, and the evidence supporting them, will not go away.

What matters now is how Ukraine responds to them. Its allies also have a role to play in shaping that response. Unlike Moscow, Kyiv is capable of addressing atrocities committed by its forces in its own courts. Since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, allegations that Ukrainian forces have committed war crimes against Russian officers and prisoners of war (POWs) have grown. A controversial Amnesty International report asserted that Ukrainian military tactics put civilians in danger. Video footage has since been published suggesting that Ukrainian troops may have executed surrendering Russian officers in the town of Makiivka. Back in 2019, the International Criminal Court (ICC) determined that Ukrainian forces committed possible war crimes against Russian soldiers in eastern Ukraine. To be clear: none of these allegations draws moral or legal equivalency between the acts of Ukrainian and Russian forces. Any alleged crimes committed by Ukrainian officers pale in comparison to the aggression and barbarity Russian forces have demonstrated in Ukraine. But all atrocities must be accounted for, not just those of one's enemies. In response to the videos showing potential war crimes committed by Ukrainian forces, Ukraine announced that it would investigate. However, authorities have said they will open an investigation specifically into the war crime of "perfidy", implying that Russian soldiers seen in these videos were killed only after they deceived Ukrainian forces by pretending to surrender. The announcement of an investigation is a good first step. But Ukraine must avoid drawing conclusions before any investigation has taken place. It is important to avoid tunnel vision and allow an impartial investigation to speak for itself. As former Human Rights Watch Director Kenneth Roth notes: "An investigation is needed ... One Russian fired on his Ukraini-

an captors – possible perfidy – but that doesn't justify executing other soldiers if they posed no immediate threat."

With respect to alleged crimes committed by Ukrainian forces, Kyiv's allies have a role to play. Rather than condemning Ukraine, they should encourage it to take responsibility and launch independent investigations. This encouragement can take multiple forms. First and foremost, Kyiv's international partners should clearly and unequivocally state that international criminal law and international humanitarian law apply to all parties of a conflict, not just some. This holds true even in severely asymmetrical wars like that in Ukraine. Not all states have done this. The United Kingdom, France, and Canada, among others, have been conspicuously silent on the subject. They might, however, consider the example of US War Crimes Ambassador-at-Large Beth Van Schaack, a staunch supporter of accountability efforts in Ukraine. Van Schaack recently stated that "the laws of war apply to all parties equally: both the aggressor state and the defender state and this is in equal measure ... [A]ll parties to the conflict must abide by international law or face the consequences." Second, states can offer to assist Ukraine in its investigations into any alleged crimes committed by the country's armed forces. London, Ottawa, and Paris could send their investigators to help Ukraine examine allegations against its own troops. That would not only help in conducting the investigations, but could also offer credibility, burden-sharing, and impartiality to any inquiry. It might also help alleviate any pressure on political authorities in Ukraine to sweep allegations against the military under the rug. Third, Ukraine's allies should encourage Kyiv to ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Given the level of ICC ac-

tivity in Ukraine, observers may be forgiven for not realizing that the country is not a member state of the ICC. There are multiple reasons for this, but none good enough to justify remaining out of the Rome Statute system. Being a member of the ICC could help galvanise and further genuine domestic accountability efforts.

Finally, Ukraine's allies should make clear that investigating any alleged crimes is in Kyiv's interest. Ukraine consistently presents itself as a state with international law on its side. By investigating and prosecuting its own alleged perpetrators, Ukraine can prove its point and show that it will not tolerate violations of international law no matter who commits them.

As it stands, Russia has used allegations of Ukrainian war crimes to peddle vacuous justifications for its own atrocities. When confronted with evidence of Russian war crimes, Moscow's ambassador to the UK deflected by raising Amnesty International's report alleging Ukrainian war crimes against Russian soldiers. Russia has also planned numerous show trials of Ukrainian POWs on trumped-up charges. Ukraine cannot stop these cynical ploys, but it can undercut their influence on public opinion by independently and impartially investigating any allegations against its own troops. Ukraine can and should be willing to address its own atrocities. Wayne Jordash, an international criminal lawyer supporting Ukrainian war crimes investigations, has stated that Ukrainian legal authorities "are very careful to try and ensure a fair trial and there's not a culture of vengeance. I see a determination to hold people to account in a way that is credible." The opposite holds true of Moscow.

Being on the side of international law and justice means accepting that all – and not just some – victims of atrocities deserve justice. Ukraine can prove this. With help from its allies, it should.

—Courtesy: Al Jazeera

## Briefs

## All terrorists killed at CTD centre Bannu

FROM PAGE 01

"These 33 were under arrest regarding this situation and they had a link with multiple groups. The provincial government completely failed in its responsibility regarding the CTD [compound takeover]." Asif credited the army for the operation, adding that the provincial government had "no role" in it. "This is a failure of the provincial government there and the failure of nine years." "It is a total collapse of the KP government," he said. Meanwhile, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), in a brief statement, said that details of the operation will be shared soon. Prior to Asif's confirmation of the operation's conclusion, a senior police officer had confirmed on the condition of anonymity that the operation had concluded.

## Pak, Afghan officials...

FROM PAGE 01

The Pakistani authorities said that the Afghan delegation expressed deep sorrow over the loss of life and property in Chaman's civilian population. The neighbouring country's delegation also acknowledged the sacrifices of the Pakistani nation and security forces for Afghanistan.

## Iranian envoy for...

FROM PAGE 01

the new army chief, the ambassador of Iran presented him with the warm greetings of the Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces and the Commander of the Islamic Republic of Iran Army. Mr. Hosseini, explaining the growing trend of brotherly relations between the two friendly and neighbouring countries Iran and Pakistan in recent years, expressed confidence in the strengthening of defence, military, and security relations between the two countries. Both sides discussed the latest regional developments, cooperation between Tehran and Islamabad to establish peace and stability in the region, and also the situation in Afghanistan.

## Energy conservation: Markets...

FROM PAGE 01

which will end the economic problems," he said. Meanwhile, Adviser to PM Qamar Zaman Kaira assured that Pakistan will not default. He urged the people to accept the government's policy. "The biggest issue of Pakistan is the import bill which is \$26 to \$28 billion and it keeps increasing. There is no other option for us than to take these steps and the nation will have to cooperate with the govt," said Kaira.

## PTI lambasts govt for...

FROM PAGE 01

Rana Sanaullah and Ahsan Iqbal were saying that if assemblies were dissolved they would go to the election, but today they were running away from the elections. He said that the purpose of no-confidence was to avoid elections; the PTI would not let them run away from the elections.

About the Taliban government, Fawad said that the Taliban government was also cooperating with Pakistan and wanted Pakistan's role in relations with the world. He said that at Pakistan's request, thousands of people succeeded in leaving Afghanistan easily.

## Imran Khan pledges...

FROM PAGE 01

legal value of summoning frequent meetings," he said. The PTI chairman said they would win the political and constitutional "war". Earlier, The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) lawmakers from Multan voiced their concern with former Prime Minister Imran Khan over the assemblies' dissolution on Dec 23.

## Pak suffer first-ever series whitewash on home soil

Teenage leg-spinner Rehan Ahmed finished with 5-48 and Jack Leach with 3-72 as Pakistan lost their last seven wickets for 52 on a spin-assisted National Stadium pitch

DNA

KARACHI: Pakistan have suffered their first-ever series whitewash on home soil after England won the third Test in Karachi on Tuesday by eight wickets. Chasing a modest target of 167 runs, the visitors reached home for the loss of two wickets. Despite losing his opening partner, Zak Crawley, after an explosive start of 87 runs, Ben Duckett continued the assault on Pakistan bowlers with a swash-buckling innings of 82 runs in 78 balls. Crawley scored run-a-ball 41 with the help of seven fours, meanwhile skipper Ben Stokes was unbeaten on 35 runs. Abrar Ahmed claimed two wickets for Pakistan in the second innings. Earlier, England were set a target of 167 runs to win the third and final Test after dismissing Pakistan for 216 in their second innings.

Teenage leg-spinner Rehan Ahmed finished with 5-48 and Jack Leach with 3-72 as Pakistan lost their last seven wickets for 52 on



a spin-assisted National Stadium pitch. At 18 years and 126 days, Rehan became the youngest bowler in men's Test history to take a five-wicket haul on debut. The leg-spinner beat the record held by Pat Cummins when he picked

up his fifth wicket on day three of the Karachi Test. Rehan became the 53rd England bowler to take a five-wicket haul on debut, a feat that Will Jacks had achieved earlier in the series. For Pakistan, skipper Babar Azam scored 54

and Saud Shakeel 53. Babar Azam became the first Pakistani in six years to score 1,000 Test runs in a calendar year and the fourth batter to reach the milestone in 2022 during the second innings. He is the sixth Pakistani batter to

reach 1,000 in a year, crossing the total when he reached 45 during an innings that ended on 54.

Azam and Shakeel added 110 runs for the fourth wicket to put Pakistan in a decent position but the former's dismissal, when the score had reached 164, started a collapse with the home being bowled out for 216.

Pakistan lost their last seven wickets in the second innings while adding only 52 runs. It must be noted that England took full advantage of winning the toss – and their batting depth – to win the first Test by 74 runs on a dead wicket that offered nothing to the bowlers. Rawalpindi yielded 1,768 runs in four innings – the third most in Test history – with seven individual centuries and five fifties. He Ben Stokes-led unit won the second Test in Multan by 26 runs after Pakistan failed to chase down a target of 355 runs. England were on their first Test tour of Pakistan since 2005, having declined to visit in the interim years on security grounds.

## Ben Stokes hails 'special' test win over Pakistan



DNA

KARACHI: Terming England's 3-0 win over Pakistan "special", captain Ben Stokes says it is something to be really proud of. England completed whitewash in three-match Test series against Pakistan on Tuesday with an eight-wicket win in Karachi. This is also Pakistan's first ever series whitewash at home. And, Ben Stokes says that

it will not really sink in until they get home. "Coming into subcontinental conditions and having to think about the game different compared to playing in England, trying a few different things that haven't been tried before, assessing conditions, to be a bit out there and to see them work, they won't always work but everything we've tried has come off. I've learned a lot in terms of the tactical side - that's the best thing to

come out of it," he said in a press conference after the series," said Stokes. "In particular this game [Karachi Test] it was losing the toss and having to bowl first. We know how important the toss can be in the sub-continent, being under a different type of pressure - having to bowl a team out and then bat with runs on the board, that was different to the first two games. But the most impressive thing was that we stuck to

how we played. The way in which we managed to apply ourselves under different pressure from the toss, was very pleasing. To bat last on a sub-continent wicket was very good," he added. He mentioned that it is important to letting the lads feel that the only pressure is what comes in the game is what they have to deal with, it's not putting more on them. Stokes praised his teammates and said that every member of squad has contributed to England's win. "Being out in the sub-continent is one of the hardest places to do it. They've been amazing as well. Just a great place to be at the moment for a team, where everyone wants everyone to succeed, and everyone understands their position in the team, even if they're not playing. It's been a great team effort to come here and win 3-0, very pleasing," the England captain said. The England captain also praised the young debutant Rehan Ahmed and said that having someone like Rehan is great sign for English cricket.

## Babar Azam takes responsibility of faulty performance

KARACHI: The transition from white-ball cricket to red-ball cricket seems quite tough for Pakistan as they suffered first-ever whitewash in a Test series at home. After adopting 'Bazball' formula, England rattled Test sides with latest inclusion of Pakistan to their list. The English storm was unstoppable on Karachi shores just like they toppled the hosts in Rawalpindi and Multan. Ben Stokes led his team to a convincing whitewash, forcing Pakistan team and captain Babar Azam to take responsibility of their faulty performance.

Speaking to the media after a bitter defeat in a historic Test series at home, Babar took responsibility and eyes more opportunities to learn as a captain. "I am disappointed as a captain. We made mistakes, that's why we weren't able to win," stated Babar. "At the same time, we need to appreciate England team, the way they played throughout," he added. For quite some time now, Babar has been facing criticism on his captaincy which people think might also hurting his batting performance. But, Babar thinks otherwise. "I don't think there is any captaincy pressure on me, in fact it's an honor. I tried to give my best every time possible," said Babar. "Being a captain, I am here to defend our performance. I know we made mistakes, but we have a new bunch of players who need some time to transform into a strong team." Babar said that he accepted that injury is an issue he avoided blaming department over this. "We missed which might have is a lot of cricket hard to switch in Babar sees a bright cricket. - DNA

## Lionel Messi's World Cup celebration post becomes Instagram's most liked ever

NEW YORK: Lionel Messi's Instagram post celebrating his World Cup win has become the most liked post on Instagram. Messi, who captained the Argentina team to victory in Sunday's final in Qatar, has become the leading character of Argentina's World Cup narrative. "WORLD CHAMPIONS!!!!!!!" Messi wrote in Spanish on his Instagram. "I dreamed it so many times, I wanted it so much that I still haven't fallen, I can't believe it..." "Thank you very much to my family, to all who support me and also to all who believed in us. We demonstrate once again that Argentines when we fight together and united we are capable of achieving what we set out to do. The merit belongs to this group, which is above individualities, it is the strength of all fighting for the same dream that was also the dream of all Argentines... We did it!!! "GO ARGENTINA," said the post which, at the time of writing, had 58+ million likes. Messi's play in the final broke records by giving him the most appearances in the tournament at 26 games, displacing previous record holder, the German player Lothar Matthaus. Many speculate that this World Cup may be the now 35-year-old's last, as the football legend stated on South American streaming service Star+ in October: "This will be my last World Cup – for sure. - Agencies

## Macron intervened to ask French team to greet fans: federation

PARIS: President Emmanuel Macron intervened to ask France's footballers to greet fans after their defeat in the World Cup final, leading to a brief public ceremony, the French football federation chief said Tuesday. France's players initially wanted to head straight home Monday after their loss on penalties to Argentina the previous evening, the head of the French Football Federation, Noel Le Graet, told AFP in a statement. "Under the weight of the disappointment, the sadness and such strong emotions, I understood this choice and I respected it," he said. "The situation changed around 10:00 am (on Monday) after an exchange with the president, who wanted a moment of communion. Naturally I accepted along with the team," he added. After a confusing day of contradictory statements,

the French players eventually appeared for a few minutes on Monday evening on the balcony of the five-star Crillon hotel at the historic Place de la Concorde. Around 50,000 people packed the public square to wave, cheer and sing the national anthem, many having waited for more than four hours in the dark and cold. Despite a mostly festive atmosphere, some in the crowd grumbled that the players were barely visible as they waved regally from the balcony behind a wide police cordon. Several French players said they were delighted by the sight of the crowd. "Frankly, it's magnificent, it warms the heart, it's a great pleasure to see that we were able to make so many French people proud and happy," forward Marcus Thuram told TF1 TV. Reaction in France has been over-

whelmingly supportive of the national team which came close to retaining the World Cup despite a series of injuries to senior players such as Ballon D'Or winner Karim Benzema and a virus in the camp last week. Macron's performance at the final at the Lusail Stadium outside Doha on Sunday has sparked almost as much commentary as that of the team. The 44-year-old football fan could be seen jumping from his seat during the game before descending to console the distraught players at the end as they crumpled to the turf following the penalty shoot-out. The centrist then delivered a post-game pep talk in the changing room, leading to criticism from some domestic opponents and commentators that he was intruding too much into team's space. - APP

## Bosnia won't join EU for a long time: Analyst

Young people strive for adequate living conditions, and if they can't find them in their own country, and some other country offers them, they will leave it regardless of everything

FOREIGN DESK

SARAJEVO: Due to Europe's perception of the Western Balkan country, Bosnia and Herzegovina is unlikely to become a member of the European Union anytime soon, according to Admir Lisica, a political researcher on the region. "I honestly believe that Bosnia and Herzegovina will not become a member of the European Union for a long time, and one of the reasons is the current European perception of Bosnia and Herzegovina," Lisica, a researcher of international policy and diaspora communities, told Anadolu Agency in an exclusive interview.

"I think (the country's candidacy) is positive, but I'm not euphoric because Bosnia and Herzegovina will not become a member in the near future unless certain EU members make a serious turn in their policy towards Bosnia and Herzegovina," he added. After the European Council last Thursday granted Bosnia-Herzegovina candidate status for EU membership, Lisica said that Bosnia and Herzegovina's main priority should actually be to join the NATO military alliance. "Joining NATO would instill some kind of security for citizens, but also for foreign investors. Although we see from the

example of Montenegro that even NATO membership does not guarantee complete political and security stability," he commented. "Bosnia and Herzegovina is committed to joining NATO and the European Union, which are the main aspirations of the majority of the population in the country. This is positive news, but we must not be euphoric. There is a long way to joining the European Union."

Bosnia-Herzegovina's top priorities are joining the political and economic community of European states, along with joining NATO. Lisica said that Europe owes Bosnia and Herzegovina a certain debt due to everything that happened in the 1990s. "After the concessions recently granted to Ukraine and Moldova, it was expected that Bosnia and Herzegovina would finally receive the long-desired candidacy status," he said. According to Lisica, Bosnian authorities should see this status as

an incentive to adopt necessary reforms for EU membership.

"These are all necessary reforms and there is nothing controversial about them. Political representatives must find a how to implement all the points that the European Union stipulates because ultimately, all these reforms are in the interest of the citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina," said Lisica. He expressed hope that some progress would be made and that the reforms will take place in a reasonable time. Asked whether the EU decision could help encourage young people not to immigrate to Western countries, Lisica said neighboring Croatia became a member of the union but this did not prevent its young citizens from migrating. "Young people strive for adequate living conditions, and if they can't find them in

their own country, and some other country offers them, they will leave it regardless of everything. I emphasize again, Croatia is a member of the EU, so its residents are leaving en masse, and there are other similar examples within the EU. It is certain that a certain number of young people will change their attitude in the context of departures, but not to a greater extent," said Lisica. Young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where thousands of people immigrate to Western Europe for economic reasons, said they thought immigration from their country would continue even after it became an EU candidate. Ifeta Neimarlija, a student at the International University of Sarajevo (IUS), said that Bosnia and Herzegovina's candidacy status will not prevent what she called the country's biggest problem, youth migration. "Joining the EU will have both positive and negative effects for Bosnia and Herzegovina. EU member Bosnia and Herzegovina will have a higher status, and the economy will only get better. On the other hand, I believe this will (also) have negative effects for my country, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and we Bosnians will move closer to Western values and away from the values that make us who we are," said Neimarlija.

## Pakistan keen to enhance ties with Int'l...

FROM PAGE 01

He noted that Austria has remained supportive of Pakistan's GSP+ status, Pakistan looked forward to Austria's continued support towards the successful completion of the ongoing 4th biennial review and for the new GSP Plus Scheme post-2023. The President underscored that Pakistan would like to work together with its international partners, including Austria, to address the global issue of climate change. He expressed gratitude to the government and the people of Austria for providing Euro 2 million in humanitarian assistance for the flood victims in Pakistan. Talking to the Syrian Ambassador to Pakistan, the President urged the need for regular contact between the two countries at different tiers of leadership in order to further cement cordial relations. He said that Pakistan's relations with Syria were multi-faceted and deep-rooted and that cultural, religious, and historical ties bound the people of the two countries. He appreciated the friendly gesture by the Syrian government to open group visas for Pakistani Zaireen and commended the decision taken by the airlines of both countries to operate direct flights between Karachi and Damascus.

While talking to the Non-Resident Ambassador-designate of Serbia to Pakistan, the President said that both countries need to work diligently to strengthen their bilateral economic and trade relations in order to bring them to par with the actual trade potential. He further highlighted that Pakistan offered tremendous opportunities for investment and cooperation in the fields of hydropower, communication, higher and technical education, industrial and commercial interaction, renewable energy, information technology, circular economy and waste management technologies. The President further said that Pakistan, having a population of over 220 million, was an ideal market to hire skilled and semi-skilled workers, which the Serbian corporate sector could utilize. "Skilled youth from Pakistan can help the construction sector which is presently booming in Serbia", he added.

The President thanked the Serbian side for agreeing to support Pakistan's candidature for the Council of International Maritime Organization in September 2021. He also expressed gratitude to the Serbian side for supporting Pakistan's candidature to the commission on the Limits of Continental Shelf (CLCS).

Talking to the Non-Resident Ambassador-designate of the Slovak Republic, the President expressed the hope that the Ambassador-designate would be able to contribute towards expanding bilateral ties between the two countries. He noted with satisfaction that the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of both countries had set up a mechanism for Bilateral Political Consultations, which would provide a good opportunity to review the overall relationship and take new initiatives.

The President further said that the investment policies of Pakistan were very liberal, and the Ambassador-designate may like to urge the Government of Slovakia and businesses to take advantage of them. He suggested that bilateral cooperation and investment in a variety of sectors, including the automobile industry, machinery, energy, construction, infrastructure, agriculture, electric industry, tourism and food processing.

The President also highlighted that Pakistan's start-up and information technology sector was expanding very fast, and urged the Ambassador-designate to meet the concerned people in this regard. He also informed that Pakistan has also established Special Economic Zones and that Slovak investors were welcome to invest in them. He also noted that GSP Plus has played an important role in the growth of trade between Pakistan and the EU countries and that Pakistan looked forward to Slovakia's continued support towards the successful completion of the ongoing 4th biennial review and for the new GSP Plus Scheme post-2023.

## Briefs

## Spanish PM calls for calm amid constitutional crisis

OVIEDO: Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez called for calm in a televised speech on Tuesday, after the Constitutional Court moved to paralyze a vote in the Senate.

"This is serious because, for the first time ever, democratically elected members of Parliament are impeded from representing the public, debating and legislating," said Sanchez.

The Spanish leader said the clash between the legislative and judicial branches is not only unprecedented in Spanish democracy, but in all of Europe. "To all citizens, I want to send a message of calm. Spain is a great European democracy and we have mechanisms to overcome situations of this nature," he said. The Constitutional Court, which has been mired in deadlock for more than four years because the conservative Popular Party refuses to back the election of two new judges, blocked an upcoming Senate vote regarding how new judges would be named. The conservative judges have a majority. They ruled six to five that the move to reform the court was not constitutional as the reform was included as an amendment to a non-related bill.

Sanchez said the government has no choice but to comply with the court's decision. However, he added that the government "will adopt as many measures as needed to end the unjustifiable blockade of the judicial power and the Constitutional Court." In October, the head of Spain's Supreme Court resigned in protest over four years of judicial deadlock. His move, however, failed to nudge politicians to agree to renew the members of the court.

While it is the ruling progressive government's turn to appoint new members of the court, the Popular Party is demanding to reform how members of the judicial governing body are elected before agreeing to renew the judges. —DNA

## Powerful earthquake hits northern California

CALIFORNIA: A 6.4 magnitude earthquake shook northern California early Tuesday, knocking out power for thousands. The earthquake's epicenter was 12 kilometers (7.45 miles) west-southwest of Ferndale, a city in coastal Humboldt County. It was at a depth of about 16.1 kilometers (10 miles), according to the United States Geological Survey (USGS). The earthquake struck the city at around 2:34 a.m. (10:34 GMT), the USGS said. Most homes and businesses in Humboldt County were without power early Tuesday, CNN reported. Over 60,000 outages were reported, out of 99,000 customers tracked in the county, CNN quoted utility tracker PowerOutage.us as saying. It was not immediately clear whether anyone was injured by the earthquake. —APP

## Death toll rises to 26 in Peru protests

BOGOTA: The death toll in nationwide protests in Peru sparked by the ousting of former President Pedro Castillo has risen to 26, authorities said on Sunday.

The Health Ministry said in a statement that 61 people are receiving treatment in hospitals. Thousands of people took to the streets in many cities demanding the resignation of new President Dina Boluarte and the release of Castillo, who is in custody. The Peru Ombudsman Office on Twitter demanded an "urgent investigation" due to the fatalities in the protests. On Dec. 7, two ministers resigned from their duties following deaths in protests. Boluarte's proposal to hold the elections next December was rejected in a Congress vote.

Peru has declared a 30-day nationwide state of emergency as clashes between police and protesters have raged on in several areas over Castillo's Dec. 7 impeachment and arrest. —APP

## Qatargate: EP official makes partial confession

## NEWS DESK

GENEVA: A high-ranking European parliamentarian arrested earlier this month in an influence-peddling scandal has made at least a partial confession to a judge, reported continental dailies covering the high-profile story.

According to Italian daily La Repubblica and Belgium's Le Soir, Greek MEP Eva Kaili told a Brussels judge, "It's true. I knew about Mr. (Antonio) Panzeri's activities," referring to a longtime Italian MEP who is reportedly at the center of the corruption investigation. "I knew about the money suitcases in my house," she is also reported to have said about bags full of cash found at her home when she was arrested.

But the dailies said Kaili was only confessing to what investigators have long known. She is said to have warned her father about the searches and instructed him to take the money away; he was arrested around the time she was, with a bagful of cash in hand. Kaili is also said to have warned Panzeri and two other deputies. A total of 1.5 million (\$1.59 million) in cash was found in the course of the scandal. Kaili is suspected of being paid by Qatar to lobby for the Gulf state's interests. She remains in custody in Belgium. Kaili, 44, from Greece's center-left PASOK-KINAL party, and one of the 14 vice presidents of the European Parliament, was arrested Dec. 9 by Belgian police after her home was searched on corruption charges related to

## Italian court approves extradition

BRUSSELS: A suspect in the major corruption scandal rocking the European Union's parliament could be handed over to Belgium, an Italian court ruled. The court in the northern city of Brescia decided that Maria Dolores Colleoni could be taken to Belgium based on a European arrest warrant linking her to the scandal through her husband, former EU lawmaker Pier Antonio Panzeri. The court in Brescia specified that any sentence would be served in Italy. It also said in its decision that an allowance for house arrest could eventually be made also in Belgium, where prosecutors are investigating a plan to peddle influence on behalf of Qatar and Morocco. Prosecutor Giovanni Benelli made the decision public without providing details, but Colleoni is not likely to head to Belgium soon. Her defence lawyers have said they are considering an appeal to Italy's highest court. Panzeri and three other people were charged 9 December with corruption, participation in a criminal group and money laundering. Belgian prosecutors are investigating if they were "paid large sums of money or offered substantial gifts to influence parliament's decisions". The allegations that cash and gifts were exchanged for political influence are at the heart of one of the biggest scandals to hit the European Parliament. Lawmakers last week suspended work on Qatar-related files and vowed to toughen lobbying laws. Qatar vehemently denies its involvement. Colleoni's lawyer, Angelo de Riso, told reporters that she is "worried" about the case. Her defence team also expressed concern that she might be placed under house arrest while in Belgium awaiting trial. Colleoni's lawyers have five days to appeal the decision. Italy's high court would then have 10 days to rule on whether she should be handed over. "My client is worried. — Agencies

Qatar. Last Tuesday, she was barred from the parliament's vice presidency over the allegations. Amid news of the scandal, EU parliamentarians voted by a large majority on Thursday to suspend access privileges for Qatari lobbyists for the duration of the investigation. The final decision on the matter rests with Roberta Metsola, the EP president. Metsola on Monday told German Funke Mediengruppe dailies that she had "a clear message for all the malicious actors in third countries who believe they can get their way with money." The European Parliament will stand in their way, she added. Qatar has dismissed the "baseless and gravely misinformed" allegations, "categorically rejecting any attempts to associate it with accusations of misconduct."

## Los Angeles to move 40,000 homeless into hotels

NEW YORK: The city of Los Angeles will begin to move homeless people into hotels this week under a newly launched program, said the city's new mayor Sunday. Called "Inside Safe," the new program for the homeless will kick off today. Karen Bass told NBC news that the program aims to significantly reduce the number of homeless living outside in certain areas of Los Angeles.

The Democratic mayor stressed that there are around 40,000 homeless people in the city, which boasts a population of some 4 million, and that the new program aims to resettle 17,000 homeless temporarily or permanently for the first year. The program will not force homeless people to move into hotels, or punish them for not moving, she said. Advocates for the homeless also welcomed the move to resettle the unhoused from encampments into hotels but stated that the move should not be done by force. California Governor Gavin Newsom first launched the idea of placing homeless into hotel rooms in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic. He encouraged city administrations and regional governments in the state to use suitable hotels and turn the buildings into shelters for the homeless. —DNA

## WB cuts China's growth forecasts

NEW YORK: The World Bank on Tuesday cut China's growth forecast both for 2022 and 2023, citing domestic and external conditions which weaken economic outlook.

The Chinese economy is projected to grow 2.7% this year according to the bank's December economic update. The previous forecast was a 2.8% growth for 2022. The growth is expected to recover to 4.3% next year amid a reopening of the economy, revised down from 4.5% in the bank's previous report. The World Bank warned that the outlook was subject to significant risk. "Recurrent COVID-19 outbreaks, the possibility of renewed mobility restrictions and precautionary behavior to slow the spread of the virus could lead to longer-than-expected disruption in economic activity," it said. "Persistent stress in the real estate sector could also have wider macroeconomic and financial spillovers," the bank added. —APP

## China reports 5 more deaths from COVID

BEIJING: China on Tuesday said five more people died due to COVID-19 in the capital Beijing as infections spread. National Health Commission (NHC) said in a statement that while 2,722 new coronavirus cases were reported across the country on Monday, the five people who died were locally transmitted cases. On Sunday, at least two deaths were reported in the capital. The latest coronavirus-related deaths include two veteran Chinese journalists Yang Lianghua, 74 and Zhou Zhichun, 77. China has reported a smaller number of deaths related to COVID-19 in comparison to other developed nations, mostly because of its strict 'zero-COVID-19' policy which has been rolled back recently after unprecedented protests. With gradual opening and an increase in public engagement in the recent past, the number of virus cases has also shot up. The world's largest populated nation has reported 383,175 confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 5,242 deaths, since the first cases were reported in December 2019. Responding to questions about how the number of deaths was low in the country, Chinese health authorities today said fatalities caused by pneumonia and respiratory failure due to the virus are classified as COVID-19 deaths. "But deaths caused by underlying diseases are not classified as COVID-19 deaths," they added. Chinese pharmaceutical companies are working at full capacity to increase the medicine supply as the country shifts its focus from stopping the spread of COVID-19 to treating patients infected with the virus. —DNA



JAKARTA: Candy Hernandez, Head of ASEAN Autism Network Secretariat, calls on Pakistan ambassador to Indonesia Muhammad Hassan & discussed collaboration between Pakistan and ASEAN to build the capacity of health professionals in autism management. —DNA

## Türkiye protects borders under UN self-defense article

ANKARA: Türkiye carries out cross-border operations against terrorists with the right to self-defense under the relevant UN article, the nation's defense minister said.

"The terrorist organization YPG/PKK targets Türkiye's peace and security. For the protection of our country and borders, we use our right to self-defense arising from Article 51 of the UN Charter. In doing so, it is out of the question to get permission from anyone," Hulusi Akar told the Italian newspaper Il Messaggero. Türkiye expects the allies cut all ties with the terrorist organizations and show sincere solidarity and cooperation with Ankara in its fight against terrorism, he said. "Recognized as a terrorist organization by the EU, NATO, and the US, the PKK operates under different names to mislead the international community. The key point is that the PKK and its Syrian offshoot, the YPG, are one and the same organization," stressed the defense chief. Türkiye has long criticized the US support for the terrorist PKK and its offshoot in Syria, known as the YPG. While Washington claims it fights Daesh/ISIS terrorists with the help of its YPG/PKK allies, Ankara says using one terror group to fight another makes no sense. In its more than 35-year terror campaign against Türkiye, the PKK — listed as a terrorist organization by Türkiye, the US, and the EU — has been responsible for the deaths of more than 40,000 people, including women, children, and infants. Akar said Türkiye is the only country fighting Daesh/ISIS in the field. Türkiye also became one of the first countries to declare Daesh/ISIS a terrorist organization in 2013. "We deported 9,500 foreign terrorists from Türkiye and prevented more than 100,000 from entering our country," he said. Turning to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, Akar said Türkiye has been conducting "active diplomacy" since the start of the war in February. "In particular, we focused on an urgent, at least humanitarian, cease-fire and a diplomatic solution ... Our aim is to continue the Istanbul process, where the two sides came together for the first time after the start of the conflict," he added. —Agencies

## Nurses to go on strike in Britain for 2nd time in week

The Royal College of Nursing (RCN), the world's largest nursing union and professional body, said it had been given no choice but to strike after the government dismissed their demand for a 19% pay rise as unaffordable

## FOREIGN DESK

LONDON: Thousands of nurses in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland are going on strike for the second time this week amid an ongoing pay dispute with the government.

In their biggest walkout in the National Health Service's (NHS) history, nurses began their strike on Dec. 15, when at least 19,000 patients had their surgeries and appointments canceled, according to figures released by NHS trusts in England and Northern Ireland. The Royal College of Nursing (RCN), the world's largest nursing union and professional body, said it had been given no choice but to strike after the government dismissed their demand for a 19% pay rise as unaffordable.

The RCN urged further strikes, saying that if the UK government failed to

respond within 48 hours of their walkout ending, further action would be scheduled for January.

"The prime minister should ask himself what is motivating nursing staff to stand outside their hospitals for a second day so close to Christmas. They're prepared to sacrifice a day's pay to have their concerns heard," said the union's General Secretary Pat Cullen. Cullen said Prime Minister Rishi Sunak was under growing pressure after the first strike and said: "he should listen to people around him."

"Let's get this wrapped up by Christmas. I will negotiate with him at any point to stop nursing staff and patients going into the new year facing such uncertainty," she added.

Health Secretary Steve Barclay, however, maintained the government position, saying: "I hugely value the work of our NHS

staff and it is disappointing some union members are going ahead with further strike action when we know the impact this has on patients.

"The RCN's demands are unaffordable during these challenging times and would take money away from frontline services while they are still recovering from the impact of the pandemic."

Strikes in Scotland were cut short after the Scottish government returned to the negotiating table, with some unions accepting an offer to raise pay by an average 7.5% that others, including the RCN, are still evaluating.

While the strikes were sparked by a bitter ongoing cost-of-living crisis amid soaring inflation, the nurses' walkout was the result of a clear domino effect after a decade of pay erosion and deterioration in the economy, as well as piling workloads triggered

partially by Brexit and the coronavirus pandemic. According to a study conducted by the London School of Economics, real earnings for nurses have lagged behind employees in other professions in the UK, especially those in the private sector.

"In the private sector, real median earnings fell by 3.2% between 2011 and 2021, while nurses' median earnings diminished by 6%," it said.

As nurses' salaries declined substantially in real terms from 2010-2011 to 2021-2022, their annual rate of departure increased from 8.5% to 10.9%, the research showed. The total number of leavers rose from 27,000 to over 38,000 over that period, marking a 42% rise.

Another striking conclusion was that about 47,000 NHS nurse positions remained vacant as of June 2022, the highest figure on record.

## UN chief speaks about expansion, climate summit

NEW YORK: Amid continuing deadlock in the talks to reform the UN Security Council, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has said that the possibility of expanding the 15-member body was now seriously on the table. "I think that the possibility of enlarging the Security Council is now seriously on the table. I'm still not optimistic about [reforming] the right of veto," the UN chief said in response to a question about making the Council more effective to deal with crises, such as the Ukraine war, at his year-end press conference at UN Headquarters in New York on Monday. Full-scale negotiations to reform the Security Council began in the General Assembly in February 2009 on five key areas — the categories of membership, the question of veto, regional representation, size of an enlarged Security Council, and working methods of the council and its relationship with the General Assembly. Progress towards restructuring the Council remains blocked as G-4 countries continue pushing for permanent seats on the Council, while the Italy/Pa-

kistan-led Uniting for Consensus (UfC) group firmly opposes any additional permanent members.

s a compromise, UfC has proposed a new category of members — not permanent members — with longer duration in terms and a possibility to get re-elected. The Security Council is currently composed of five permanent members — Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States — and 10 non-permanent members elected to two-year terms. On Monday, the secretary-general said the central questions about reforms are related to the composition of the Security Council and to the right of veto. Now this is a matter for member states, the UN Secretariat has no influence in these negotiations, he said. "I think that during our General Assembly session in September, for the first time I heard from the United States and from Russia clearly the indication that they were in favour of an enlargement of the number of permanent members of the Security Council," the UN chief said. In this regard, Guterres said that there was a proposal from France and UK some



time ago for some restrictions in the use of the right of veto. "But I remain pessimistic about the possibility of the right of veto to be seriously put into question," he said. The UN chief added that reform of the Security Council needs two-thirds of the votes of the General Assembly plus the five positive votes of the permanent members of the Security Council. "So I think that there is now space for a much more serious discussion in relation to the Security Council reform," he added. At last round of Inter-Governmental Negotiations (IGN) last month, Pakistan's

Ambassador Munir Akram made a strong case against creating new permanent seats on the Security Council, saying an increase in the number of non-permanent members would make it more representative, democratic and effective. "The only criteria for Security Council membership set out in the UN Charter is for the election of non-permanent members," he told delegates. On other subjects on Monday, The UN chief said he was determined to make 2023 "a year for peace" and a "year for action", highlighting the need for practical solutions to a raft of pressing problems facing all regions of the world.

"We owe it to people to find solutions, to fight back, and to act", he said. "At times, discreetly but always with determination, we will fight back." Building on his general call to action, Guterres announced that he would convene a Climate Ambition Summit next September, and called on every leader to "step up — from governments, business, cities and regions, civil society and finance." Nothing less than tangible and credible climate

action would do, but dispensing with diplomatic niceties, he made it clear that the price of entry for every nation, was "non-negotiable credible, serious and new climate action and nature-based solutions that will move the needle forward and respond to the urgency of the climate crisis." He said it would be "a no-nonsense summit. No exceptions. No compromises. There will be no room for backsliders, greenwashers, blame-shifters or repackaging of announcements of previous years." The UN chief said it would be convened alongside a General Assembly opening-week summit already in the calendar, designed to accelerate action at the half-way point towards the ambitious Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He began his end of year press conference at UN Headquarters by looking back at 2022, saying that although there may be "plenty of reasons for despair", amid the Ukraine war, and associated cost-of-living crisis leaving the poorest nations on "debt row", that was not an option. —APP

## Briefs

### India beefs up military at tense China border

**MONITORING DESK**  
NEW DELHI: India's foreign minister has said that the country has scaled up troop deployment along a disputed border with China to an unprecedented level. S Jaishankar added that India wouldn't let China "unilaterally change" the status quo at the border. His comments came days after Indian and Chinese forces clashed in a disputed area along the border in Arunachal Pradesh state. India said that the encounter began due to "encroachment" by Chinese troops. China's foreign ministry has said that according to their knowledge, the situation on the border was "generally stable" and the two sides were maintaining dialogue on the issue. India and China share a disputed 3,440km (2,100 mile) long de facto border - called the Line of Actual Control, or LAC - which is poorly demarcated. Soldiers on either side come face to face at many points, and tensions sometimes escalate into skirmishes or clashes. Both sides have been trying to de-escalate since a violent brawl in June 2020 in the Galwan Valley in the Ladakh region much further to the west - 20 Indian soldiers and at least four Chinese soldiers died in the battle.

### EU concerned about Peru protesters 'killed'

LIMA: The European Union added its voice Monday to calls for calm after nearly two weeks of protests prompted by the ouster of leftist ex-president Pedro Castillo. Security officials say 21 people have died in clashes since Castillo was abruptly removed from power and arrested early this month after seeking to dissolve Congress to rule by decree. His impeachment and detention drew criticism from leftist Latin American allies including Mexico, as well as from thousands of supporters who took to the streets to demand his release. A subsequent security clampdown, including the deployment of armed soldiers during a state of emergency declared under Castillo's successor Dina Boluarte, has killed several protesters. "The EU condemns any use of violence and any excessive use of force," the bloc said in a statement Monday. It expressed concern about "reports that more than two dozen civilians have been killed so far, some of them by firearms, and many more injured during recent protests." The EU called for a "spirit of dialogue and cooperation to stop violence." In addition to the deaths, the repression of demonstrations has also left 646 people injured, including 290 policemen, according to the office of Peru's human rights ombudsman. - APP

### Nazi typist guilty of complicity in 10,500 murders

**NEWS DESK**  
ITZEHOE: A former secretary who worked for the commander of a Nazi concentration camp has been convicted of complicity in the murders of more than 10,500 people Irmgard Furchner, 97, was taken on as a teenaged typist at Stutthof and worked there from 1943 to 1945. Furchner, the first woman to be tried for Nazi crimes in decades, was given a two-year suspended jail term. Although she was a civilian worker, judge agreed she was fully aware of what was going on at the camp. Some 65,000 people are thought to have died in horrendous conditions at Stutthof, including Jewish prisoners, non-Jewish Poles and captured Soviet soldiers. As Furchner was only 18 or 19 at the time, she was tried in a special juvenile court.

# Ukraine President visits frontline city of Bakhmut

Presidential spokesman Serhiy Nikiforov said Mr Zelensky had left the city before his visit was announced. The president has previously visited other recently liberated cities, such as Kherson and Izyum

**WEB DESK**

KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has made an unannounced visit to the frontline city of Bakhmut, where Ukrainian and Russian forces have fought a fierce, months-long battle. He met troops and handed out awards to soldiers, the presidency said. For months, Bakhmut has been a key target for Russian forces in the Donetsk region, and has been extremely badly damaged. However, Ukrainian forces have been able to hold back the advance. The visit is a significant show of defiance - and a demonstration of support for Ukrainian forces engaged in some of the fiercest battles in recent weeks. His trip will be compared with recent public appearances by the Russian President Vladimir Putin - who on Monday travelled to Minsk for the first time in more than three years to meet Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, a long-time ally. In video footage shown on the Freedom TV channel on Telegram, Mr Zelensky wished his troops well. "I think that the heroes of Bakhmut should have what every person has, that everything should be OK for their children, their families, that they're warm and healthy," he said. "I'd like to wish them light, but it's such a difficult situation that there is light and then there isn't. The main thing is for there to be inner light." He said the Russians had already lost 99,000 troops in the war. However, this figure cannot be independently verified, and neither Russia nor Ukraine have revealed the full extent of their casualties. Mr Zelensky added: "Since May, the occupiers have been trying to break our Bakhmut, but time goes by and Bakhmut is breaking not only the Russian army, but also the Russian mercenaries who come to replace the wasted army of the occupiers." He was apparently referring to the shadowy Wagner mercenary group, which has been active in fighting near Bakhmut. Presidential spokesman Serhiy Nikiforov said Mr Zelensky had left the city before his visit was announced. The president has previously visited other recently liberated cities, such as Kherson and Izyum. Bakhmut has been a focus of the Russian campaign for months and Moscow has thrown huge resources into capturing it. It could open the way to Sloviansk and Kramatorsk, the most important cities in the Donbas region still under Ukrainian control. But with Ukraine strengthening its defences in the surrounding area, it is thought that any Russian victory here now would be only symbolic. Both sides have sustained heavy losses, leading both Russian and Ukrainian commanders to describe it as a "meat grinder". Few civilians are now left in the city, which had a population of 70,000 before the war.

## Three dead as blast shuts part of gas pipeline

MOSCOW: A blast ripped through a gas pipeline in central Russia, killing three people and disrupting some of the limited amount of Russian gas that is still reaching Europe, local officials said on Tuesday. The flow of gas through a section of the Urengoi-Pomary-Uzhhorod pipeline that takes gas from Russia's Arctic to Europe via Ukraine had been halted as of 1:50 p.m. (10:50 GMT), the local officials said on the Telegram messaging app. Oleg Nikolayev, governor of the Republic of Chuvashia, told state TV that three people, who were carrying out servicing work, had died in the accident, while another, a driver, "was in a state of shock". He said it was unclear when gas supplies via the pipeline could resume, and authorities were trying to work that out. The Chuvashia regional Emergency Ministry said an explosion had ripped through the pipeline during planned maintenance work near the village of Kalinin, about 150 km (90 miles) west of the Volga city of Kazan. It said the resulting gas flare had been extinguished. The pipeline, built in the 1980s, enters Ukraine via the Sudzha metering point, currently the main route for Russian gas to reach Europe. Europe's gas prices have surged this year after Russia cut exports through its main gas pipeline route into Germany, leaving only pipelines via Ukraine to ship Russian gas to European consumers. The head office of the state-owned gas producer Gazprom and its local branch did not immediately respond to requests for comment. - DNA

lies, that they're warm and healthy," he said. "I'd like to wish them light, but it's such a difficult situation that there is light and then there isn't. The main thing is for there to be inner light." He said the Russians had already lost 99,000 troops in the war. However, this figure cannot be independently verified, and neither Russia nor Ukraine have revealed the full extent of their casualties. Mr Zelensky added: "Since May, the occupiers have been trying to break our Bakhmut, but time goes by and Bakhmut is breaking not only the Russian army, but also the Russian mercenaries who come to replace the wasted army of the occupiers." He was apparently referring to the shadowy Wagner mercenary group, which has been active in fighting near Bakhmut. Presidential spokesman Serhiy Nikiforov said Mr Zelensky had left the city before his visit was announced. The president has previously visited other recently liberated cities, such as Kherson and Izyum. Bakhmut has been a focus of the Russian campaign for months and Moscow has thrown huge resources into capturing it. It could open the way to Sloviansk and Kramatorsk, the most important cities in the Donbas region still under Ukrainian control. But with Ukraine strengthening its defences in the surrounding area, it is thought that any Russian victory here now would be only symbolic. Both sides have sustained heavy losses, leading both Russian and Ukrainian commanders to describe it as a "meat grinder". Few civilians are now left in the city, which had a population of 70,000 before the war.

ISLAMABAD: The Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Tuesday rejected the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) plea to restrain the Federal Investigation Agency (FIA) from action in the Prohibited Funding case. According to a private news channel, a three-member larger bench headed by Chief Justice Aamer Farooq heard the case. IHC Justice Mian Gul Hasan Aurangzeb and Justice Babar Sattar were also included in the bench. PTI's lawyer Barrister Anwar Mansoor Khan submitted written arguments in the court. Barrister Anwar Mansoor Khan told the court if the amount received in funding is found to be prohibitive, it can be confiscated. On this, IHC Chief Justice (CJ) Aamer Farooq said it means, if any such amount is found, it will be deposited in the national treasury. Barrister Anwar said the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) had no authority to send the case to the federal government. The IHC CJ asked the lawyer that is the FIA's action based on the ECP's report still ongoing. - DNA

## Prohibited funding: PTI's plea to restrain FIA from action rejected

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LAHORE: Indian Hindu pilgrims arrived in Pakistan through Wagah Border to participate in Shivratri (Night of Shiva) celebrations at Katas Raj temple in Chakwal. Shri Katas Raj Temple is considered to be the oldest and holiest place of Hindu religion in Pakistan. - APP

## Mideast, Europe leaders meet on security in Iraq

**NEWS DESK**

DEAD SEA: Leaders from the Middle East and Europe gathered in Jordan Tuesday in a conference focused on bolstering security and stability in Iraq. The meeting included high-level officials from Saudi Arabia, France, Iraq, Turkey, Egypt, Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, the European Union, and Iran. The countries' stated goal was to show "support for Iraq, its sovereignty, security, and stability, as well as its political process, its economic and development progress, and its efforts to rebuild." Iraq's stability and security have been shaken for decades by internal and external conflicts. The 2003 US-led invasion led to years of intense violence and sectarian strife, including the creation of Daesh and the

empowerment of Iran-backed political factions and militias. More recently, the country has been paralyzed by political gridlock, with the main dividing line running between Iran's allies and opponents. Tuesday's gathering was held as a follow-up to the Baghdad Conference for Cooperation and Partnership convened in Iraq last year with France co-organizing. Paris has taken an increasingly active role in the region in recent years, with President Emmanuel Macron also attempting to intervene to resolve the political crisis in Lebanon. Speaking at Tuesday's conference, Macron said France is attached to the stability of the region, which he said is struggling with "deadlocks, divisions, foreign meddling and security issues" in the interests of promoting peace and security in the broader Mediterranean basin.

## Joint session of Parliament passes 10 bills

ISLAMABAD: The Joint Session of the parliament (Majlis-e-Shoora) on Tuesday passed as many as 10 Bills with majority vote after rejecting amendments in some bills. Some amended bills were returned by President Arif Alvi seeking amendments for "consideration and detailed deliberations" by the parliament and its committees. The joint sitting of the Parliament passed the

Bill to amend the Global Change Impact Studies Centre Act, 2013 [The Global Change Impact Studies Centre (Amendment) Bill, 2022]. The Bill was moved by Minister for Climate Change Senator Sherry Rehman. The House passed a Bill the Bill further to amend the Public Procurement Regulatory Authority Ordinance, 2002 [The Public Procurement Regulatory Authority (Amendment) Bill, 2022]. It was moved by Minister of State for Law and Justice Shahadat Awan. The House passed another Bill seeking to amend and consolidate the laws relating to registration and training of nurses, midwives and Lady Health Visitors (LHV's) [The Pakistan Nursing Council (Amendment) Bill, 2022]. - APP

## China's Covid surge sparks global concern

"New strains' immune escape ability becomes stronger, more contagious," Xu said. "But the possibility of them becoming more lethal is low. The possibility of strains that are more contagious and more pathogenic is even lower"

BEIJING: Cities across China scrambled to install hospital beds and build fever screening clinics on Tuesday as authorities reported five more deaths and international concern grew about Beijing's surprise decision to let the virus run free. China this month began dismantling its stringent "zero-COVID" regime of lockdowns and testing after protests against curbs that had kept the virus at bay for three years but at a big cost to society and the world's second-largest economy. Now, as the virus sweeps through a country of 1.4 billion people who lack natural immunity having been shielded for so long, there is growing concern about possible deaths, virus mutations and the impact on the economy and trade. "Every new epidemic wave in another country brings the risk of new variants, and this risk is higher the bigger the outbreak, and the current wave in China is shaping up to be big," said Alex Cook, vice-dean for research at the National University of Singapore's Saw Swee Hock School of Public Health. "However, inevitably China has to go through a large wave of COVID-19 if it is to reach an endemic state, in a future without lockdowns and the economic and political damage that results." US State Department spokesperson Ned Price said on Monday the potential for the virus to mutate as it spreads in China was "a threat for people everywhere". Xu Wenbo, an official with the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, told reporters new mutations would occur but played down concerns. "New strains' immune escape ability becomes stronger, more contagious," Xu said. "But the possibility of them becoming more lethal is low. The possibility of strains that are more contagious and more pathogenic is even lower." Beijing reported five COVID-related deaths on Tuesday, following two on Monday, which were the first fatalities reported in weeks. In total, China has reported 5,242 COVID deaths since the pandemic emerged in the city of Wuhan in late 2019, a very low toll by global standards. But there are rising doubts that the statistics are reflecting the true impact of a disease ripping through cities after China dropped curbs including most mandatory testing on Dec. 7. Since then, some hospitals have become inundated, pharmacies emptied of medicines, while many people have gone into self-imposed lockdowns, straining delivery services. - DNA

## US-Pakistani diaspora engagement conference held

The United States Mission in Pakistan, through the USAID and in close collaboration with the US-Pakistani diaspora, hosted a one-day US-Pakistani Diaspora Engagement Conference at the Marriott Hotel in Islamabad

**STAFF REPORT**

ISLAMABAD: At a U.S.-Pakistani diaspora conference today in Islamabad, United States Embassy Chargé d'Affaires Andrew Schofer emphasized that the United States considers the U.S.-Pakistani diaspora as a key partner in the humanitarian, social, and commercial sectors in Pakistan. The United States Mission in Pakistan, through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and in close collaboration with the U.S.-Pakistani diaspora, hosted a one-day U.S.-Pakistani Diaspora Engagement Conference at the Marriott

Hotel in Islamabad. The conference showcased key contributions and investments by the U.S.-Pakistani diaspora in the humanitarian, social, and commercial sectors, and explored avenues for future joint engagements. Zeeshan Shah, Prime Minister's Ambassador at Large for Investments, spoke at the closing session. More than 100 participants attended in-person, including members of the U.S.-Pakistani diaspora, and prominent local business leaders. At the closing session, USAID signed two partnership memoranda of understanding with U.S.-Pakistani diaspora entities: one with Datarocx to set up digital centers in Pakistan in the Special Technology Zones

and the other with Global Semiconductor Group and HUM Network Limited for Pakistan Catalytic Fund to improve access to growth capital for established businesses in the technology sector. USAID Mission Director Reed Aeschliman said "The conference was an opportunity to highlight some of the contributions and investments already made by the Pakistani diaspora, facilitate collaborations between Pakistani diaspora entities, and develop a road map for collective action to address the current humanitarian and social challenges in Pakistan". In his remarks, Chargé d'Affaires Schofer highlighted the long history of the United States and Pakistan working together to advance Pakistan's economic growth and to solve development challenges. He also highlighted opportunities for future partnership: "As the Green Revolution improved lives in the past, a 'Green Alliance' between the United States and Pakistan will help us jointly strengthen climate resilience, develop clean energy alternatives, and foster economic growth." The United States remains firmly committed to engaging and partnering with the U.S.-Pakistani diaspora to address Pakistan's challenges in the humanitarian, social and commercial sectors and to further Pakistan's development goals.

## Trump should face insurrection charges, Capitol riot panel says

**WEB DESK**

WASHINGTON: The US House of Representatives committee investigating the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the US Capitol on Monday asked federal prosecutors to charge Donald Trump with obstruction and insurrection for his role in sparking the deadly riot. The Democratic-led select committee's request to the Justice Department is non-binding, but comes as a special counsel is overseeing two other federal probes of the Republican former president related to his attempt to overturn his 2020 election defeat, and the removal of classified files from the White House. The panel asked the Justice Department to charge Trump with obstruction of Congress, conspiracy to defraud the United States, making false statements and aiding or inciting and insurrection. "An insurrection is a rebellion against the authority of the United States. It is a grave federal offense, anchored in the Constitution itself," said Representative Jamie Raskin, a Democrat on the select committee member, as he announced the charges. A Justice Department spokesperson declined to comment on the committee's move. A Trump spokesperson did not immediately respond to a request for comment. Monday's meeting was the last final public gathering of a nine-member panel that spent 18 months probing the unprecedented attempt to prevent the peaceful transfer of power by thousands of Trump backers, inspired by his false claims that his 2020 election loss to Democratic President Joe Biden was the result of widespread fraud.

## 13 Pakistanis included in world's top 2000 scientists

**DNA**

BAHAWALPUR: As many as 13 scientists of Islamia University Bahawalpur have been included in the world's top 2% of scientists in the Stanford University ranking. Top scientists, doctors, engineers, and mathematicians from around the world are included in the ranking. The 13 Pakistani scientists from the Islamia University Bahawalpur include Prof Dr. Rubina Bhatti, Dean Faculty of Social Sciences, Prof. Dr. Saeed Ahmed, Chairman Department of Pharmaceutical Chemistry, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Akhtar, Chairman of the Department of Medical Laboratory Technology, Prof. Dr. Muhammad Altaf, Chairman of Green Healthcare System, Department of Pharmacy Practice, Prof. Dr. Zaheer Abbas, Department of Mathematics, Prof. Ismat Bibi, Associate Professor, Department of Chemistry, Dr. Muhammad Nadeem Akhtar, Associate Professor, Department of Chemistry, Dr. Muhammad Azhar Khan, Associate Professor, Institute of Physics, Dr. Ghulam Abbas, Department of Mathematics, Dr. Mohammad Adil, Department of Chemistry.

## LG polls in Islamabad to be held on Dec 31: ECP

ISLAMABAD: The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) on Tuesday announced that the local government (LG) polls in Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT) would be held as per the declared schedule. The ECP in a written verdict declared the Ministry of Interior's notification as illegal, saying that the LG polls would be held on Dec 31, adding that the decision had been taken under Article 218, sub clause III, 219 and 222. The federal government has increased the number of union councils of the federal capital from existing 101 to 125. - APP