



Islamabad POST

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Yemeni FM hails Turkiye's support for Yemeni people

Detailed News On Page-07

Elon Musk to step down as Twitter CEO

Detailed News On Page-07



Najam Sethi to become PCB Chairman

Detailed News On Page-06



Briefs

Governor rejects Speaker's ruling

NEWS DESK

LAHORE: Governor Punjab Baleegh ur Rehman rejected the ruling of Speaker Punjab Asstain Khan. The Governor said that the Speaker must follow the constitution and the ruling issued by the Punjab Speaker is against law and constitution. Earlier in the day, Punjab Assembly Speaker Sibtain Khan penned a letter to President Dr Arif Alvi, asking him to remove Balighur Rehman from the post of the governor. The speaker drew attention to the unlawful measures in a letter addressed to president.

Pak to work closely with the US

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto Zardari says Pakistan and the United States will continue to work together for regional peace and stability. In a telephonic conversation with his US counterpart Anthony Blinken, he said both countries will also keep up cooperation to further enhance and diversify bilateral relations. Bilawal Bhutto Zardari expressed gratitude for United States for its assistance of 97 million dollars for the flood affected people in Pakistan.

Rulers put Pakistan at stake: Rashid

DNA

RAWALPINDI: Awami Muslim League (AML) chief Sh e h i k h Rashid said on Wednesday the PDM and its allies were putting the country at stake just to save their rule. Taking to Twitter, the former interior minister said the PDM was unaware of ground realities as the country was striving for meeting its basic needs. He highlighted the shortage of wheat, gas and electricity in the country.

State will not surrender to terrorists: PM

Says govt will eliminate facilitators, hideouts of terrorists; announces to construct houses for flood victims

SHUJAAT HAMZA / DNA

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Wednesday said the State would not surrender to any terrorist group or organization and vowed that militants would be dealt with according to the constitution and law. Strongly condemning the activities of terrorists in Bannu and other areas, he said such attempts aimed at spreading chaos in Pakistan would be crushed. PM Sharif termed terrorism a crucial issue of national security, which required collective thinking and a plan of action. He said the federal government would eliminate the facilitators and hideouts of the terrorists. The entire nation, he said, would eradicate terrorism side by side with the country's brave armed forces. The prime minister paid tribute to the valour and determination of the country's armed forces fighting against terrorism. He prayed for the speedy recovery of the injured and directed the authorities concerned to provide them best treatment facilities. Shehbaz Sharif said, "We will not let the sacrifices of the martyrs go to waste" and mentioned in this regard the military operations of Rad-ul-Fasaad and Zarb-e-Azb as significant measures to eradicate terrorism. He said the great sacrifices of the per-

sonnel of armed forces, police, Rangers and other law enforcement agencies were unforgettable. The prime minister said though main responsibility for law and order lies with provinces, but the federation could not turn a blind eye to the problems. Separately, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif announced to construct houses for flood victims and a campus of COMSATS University in Khairpur. Addressing flood victims in Khairpur on Wednesday, he said around five billion rupees will be spent for construction of houses for the flood affectees. The Prime Minister announced construction of houses after seeking consent of the flood victims. He said the government will do every possible effort to provide relief to the flood affectees. Shehbaz Sharif said that the devastation and losses caused by recent floods are much higher than the steps taken by the federal and provincial governments for relief, rescue and rehabilitation. The Prime Minister said that Donors Conference would be held in Geneva next month where the case of flood affectees, losses, flood devastation and changing climatic effects will be presented by the government. Chief Minister Sindh Syed Murad Ali Shah, Governor Sindh Kamran Khan Tessori, Federal Planning Minister Ahsan Iqbal and other dignitaries were also present.

'No difference between Hamza Shahbaz, Bilawal'



DNA

LAHORE: In a move that will pave the way for the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) to nominate their candidate in the election for the next chief minister of Punjab, the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) said they will not field a candidate in the election. This was stated by former president and PPP Co-Chairman Asif Ali Zardari on Wednesday. In a statement, Zardari said that he does not see any difference between his son and PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto Zardari and the Leader of the Opposition in the Punjab Assembly and the son of PM Shehbaz Sharif Hamza Shahbaz. He said that after Pervez Elahi is removed from the post of chief minister of Punjab, the next chief minister of the province should be

Continued on Page 06

CM Elahi to be removed after new declaration: Rana

OUR CORRESPONDENT

LAHORE: Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah on Wednesday said that Parvez Elahi will not remain the chief minister of Punjab after the new declaration is passed. Speaking with Geo News, Sanaullah said that Governor Baligh-ur-Rehman will pass the declaration at 4pm after which Elahi will be removed as chief minister. The Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) leader said that the governor of Punjab can also request the prime minister to impose governor rule. Responding to a question regarding the latest audio leak of PTI Chairman Imran Khan, the minister said that the audio is a "reality". "Videos of Imran Khan are also available and its content is the same as the audio," Sanaullah.

Continued on Page 06

Zelenskiy in Washington seeking more weapons

White House spokesman John Kirby said diplomacy and defence capabilities would top agenda

NEWS DESK

WASHINGTON: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy headed to Washington on Wednesday to meet President Joe Biden, address Congress and seek "weapons, weapons and more weapons" in his first overseas trip since Russia invaded Ukraine 300 days ago. Zelenskiy said the visit was meant to strengthen Ukraine's "resilience and defence capabilities" amid repeated Russian missile and drone attacks on the country's energy and water supplies in the dead of winter. His political adviser, Mykhailo Podolyak, said the visit showed the high degree of trust between the two countries and offered him the opportunity to explain what weapons Kyiv needed. "This finally puts an end to the attempts by the Russian side ... to prove an allegedly growing cooling in our bilateral relations," Podolyak told news agency. "This, of course, is not even close. The United States unequivocally supports Ukraine." Biden will announce nearly \$2 billion in further military assistance for Ukraine that will include a Patriot missile battery to help it defend itself against barrages of Russian missiles, a senior U.S. official said. "...Weapons, weapons and more weapons.



Russia to continue improving nuclear forces, says Putin

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin said Wednesday that Russia will continue developing its military potential and the combat readiness of nuclear forces against the backdrop of Moscow's offensive in Ukraine. "The armed forces and combat capabilities of our armed forces are increasing constantly and every day. And this process, of course, we will build up on," Putin said during a televised meeting with his country's high-ranking officers. He added that Russia will also "improve the combat readiness of our nuclear triad". The Russian leader highlighted the new Zircon hypersonic cruise missile, which Russian troops will be able to use beginning January. "In early January, the Admiral Gorskov frigate will be equipped with the new Zircon hypersonic missile, which has no equivalent in the world," Putin said. Nearly ten months into the fighting, Russia has faced a series of humiliating setbacks on the ground in Ukraine. The Russian defence minister Sergei Shoigu said Wednesday that Russian servicemen in Ukraine are fighting "the combined forces of the West" there.

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RAWALPINDI: Army Chief General Syed Asim Munir inquires about health of injured officers and soldiers who got injured during CTD complex Bannu operation. - DNA

COAS meets injured officers, soldiers

STAFF REPORT

RAWALPINDI: Army Chief General Syed Asim Munir visited Combined Military Hospital Rawalpindi on Wednesday and met injured officers and soldiers who got injured during CTD complex Bannu operations. The Army Chief remained with them for some time and inquired about their wellbeing. He appreciated their high spirit and morale, and lauded their professionalism during operation against terrorists. The army's elite commandos killed 25 militants who had seized the Counter Terrorism Department police station in Bannu, the military's media wing said in a late night announcement on Tuesday. The Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said the soldiers from the Special Service Group (SSG) foiled the militants' attempt to escape the facility after their demand to provide them a safe passage to Afghanistan was rejected. The ISPR denied that the SSG commandos came under attack from the outside, adding that the great sacrifice rendered by the army soldiers "raise our level of love for the country". Giving details of the incident, Director General ISPR Major General Ahmed Sharif said on December 18, a detained terrorist overpowered a constable in the CTD complex inside Bannu Cantt.

Imran Khan to announce plan of action today

Fawad Chaudhry warns the governor to "refrain from any adventures"

ALI HAMZA

LAHORE: Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan will announce his next plan of action in an "important" address tomorrow (Thursday), a senior party leader said. In a press conference in Lahore on Wednesday, PTI Focal Person for Economy Hammad Azhar said that the party would hold a "huge" demonstration outside Punjab Governor's House at 5pm to record its protest. The PTI has decided to all-out oppose any move that the Pakistan Democratic Movement-led opposition throws its way and called for a protest outside the Governor's House. "A circus has been set up across the country," Azhar said, berating the opposition, including Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) Co-chairperson Asif Ali Zardari, for allegedly being involved in horse trading. In light of a trust or no-trust vote, the votes of the Pakistan Muslim

Continued on Page 06

PML-Q MPs repose trust in Punjab CM

BUREAU REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan Muslim League Q parliamentary party has confirmed that it will vote for Punjab Chief Minister ChPervaiz Elahi, Speaker Sibtain Khan, and Deputy Speaker Wasiq Qayyum, in case of a no-confidence move against them. A decision to this effect was taken in a meeting of the parliamentary party held here on Wednesday. ChPervaiz Elahi and the leader of the Parliamentary Party Sajid Mehmood Bhatti chaired the meeting.

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Iran, Saudi Arabia hold 1st high-level contact since 2016 - Page 07

Humanitarian cargo from Belarus arrives in Pakistan - Page 08

Pirzada inaugurates resource center for Autistic children

The worthy Minister emphasized the need of expansion of such services and provision of state of the art facilities to the children with Autism

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: The Honorable Federal Minister for Ministry of Human Rights Islamabad Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada inaugurated the Resource Centre for Autistic Children at Rehabilitation Centre for the Children with Developmental Disorder, H-8/4, Islamabad under the Directorate General of Special Education (DGSE) on 21st December, 2022. Representatives of M/O Human Rights, Govt. officials, renewed NGOs, social workers, parents,

representative of Planning Commission and staff of this centre attended the ceremony. While talking to audience Chief Guest Mian Riaz Hussain Pirzada said that the children with Disabilities are facing the challenges of accessibility, education, rehabilitation and inclusion in main stream. Mr. Pirzada appreciated the efforts of Director General Special Education, Sheikh Azhar Sajjad for Children with Disabilities and said that the Ministry of Human Rights is working on priority basis for these children. The worthy Minister was

happy on the occasion of inauguration of Autistic Unit and said that through such facilities inclusion of children with disabilities in main stream will change their life. The worthy Minister emphasized the need of expansion of such services and provision of state of the art facilities to the children with Autism. He further talked about the need of new avenues and projects for facilitation of Persons with Disabilities across the country under Ministry of Human Rights. Sheikh Azhar Sajjad Director General of Special Education in his welcome address said

that the Resource Centre for Autistic Children was initiated as PSDP Development Project and today it has been shifted to Non-Development on permanent footings. He further talked about that the number of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is increasing day by day, therefore he emphasized on the need of establishment of more autism units to fulfill the needs of Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. He appreciated the role of Ministry of Human Rights for catering the needs of children with special needs.



ECC approves supplementary grants

ISLAMABAD: The Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the Cabinet on Wednesday approved technical supplementary grants of Rs1022.750 million for Baluchistan fishermen and Ghurki Trust teaching Hospital (GTTH), Lahore. According to a press statement issued by the finance ministry, Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue, Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar presided over the meeting. Considering the summary of Ministry of Maritime Affairs, the committee approved TSG in aid of Rs. 822.750 million enabling Gwadar Port Authority (GPA) to disburse the amount of Rs. 250,000/- per head to 3291 fishermen registered with Baluchistan Fisheries Department for the purchase of boat engines.—APP

Girls in a clean sweep as UoG declares AD results

GUJRAT: Girls made a clean sweep, yet again, by claiming all top positions as the University of Gujrat (UoG) announced the results of Associate Degree Arts/Science/Commerce (part I&II) Annual Examinations for the year 2022 on Wednesday. The results for the BA/BSc/ (Part I & II) B.Com IT (part II) annual examinations were also declared. The exams were held in August and September this year. The results were announced by a notification issued by the controller of examinations, Ms Tanzila Qamar. In the Associate Degree Science exams, Emania Khalid of Superior Group of Colleges Mandi Bahauddin bagged the first position with 700 marks, Zoya Jabeen of Ibn-e-Imam Science College, Jalalpur Jattan, Gujrat captured

the second position with 696 marks while Nargis Mahnoor of the same college secured the third position with 675 marks. The first position in Associate Degree Arts annual exams was claimed by Maryam Zafar of Ghazali College for Women, Phalia with 629 marks. The second position was bagged by Nameera Mushtaq of Govt Degree College for Women, Dinga, Gujrat with 604 marks. The third position was held by an external candidate, Hurmat Jan, with 601 marks. In Associate Degree Commerce annual exams, Kinat Asghar of Punjab College (W) Lalamusa (Wahnd) secured the first position with 1153 marks. Sana Afzal of Superior Group of Colleges Kotla Arab Ali Khan bagged the second position with 1120 marks. Ayesha

Jabeen of Superior College, Gondal Road, Sialkot claimed the third position with 1068 marks. According to the controller of examinations, as many as 5078 candidates appeared in the part I exams of AD Arts, 1417 in AD Science and 610 in AD Commerce with the pass percentage of 30.49, 35.29 and 15.12 respectively. In the part II exams, a total of 4244 appeared in AD Arts, 1575 in AD Science, and 352 in the Commerce stream with a pass percentage of 38.06, 74.17 and 44.29 respectively. Meanwhile, a grand prize distribution ceremony was held at Hafiz Hayat Campus in which Vice Chancellor Prof. Dr. Shabbir Atiq awarded the position holders with merit certificates and cash awards.—APP

Pak-Turk International Conference held

WAH CANTT: The 5th Pak-Turk International Conference on 'Emerging Technologies in the Field of Sciences and Engineering' was organized here at the University of Wah on Wednesday. The Pak-Turk series of conferences are

being regularly organized since 2018 and provide a platform for mutual collaboration and research to academicians, researchers and practitioners from Pakistan and Turkey. The focus is on advances in new technologies in Engineering, Com-

puting and Basic Sciences. Prof. Dr. Inayatullah Khan, Vice Chancellor UET Taxila, was the Chief Guest of the Ceremony. Mahmut Kiraz, Educational Attaché Turkish Embassy, Islamabad was the Guest of Honor. In his opening remarks, Prof. Dr. Jameel-Un Nabi, Vice Chancellor, the University of Wah welcomed the participants and shared his views on engineering education and scientific developments. Prof. Dr. Mahmut Boyukata, Kirikkale University Turkey; Prof. Dr. Tuncay Bayram, Karadeniz



ISLAMABAD: Participants of International Maritime Symposium (IMS), on the topic Geo-economic Dimensions of Indian Ocean Region posing for a group photo. — DNA

Pakistan needs to ensure fool proof maritime security

The government is well aware of this imperative and is providing all out support to maritime security apparatus especially to Pakistan Navy

DNA

ISLAMABAD: National Institute of Maritime Affairs (NIMA), Islamabad organised two-day International Maritime Symposium (IMS), on the topic "Geo-economic Dimensions of Indian Ocean Region (IOR) - Opportunities for Region and Beyond" on 20 and 21 December 2022. Experts from home and abroad presented their views about the geo-economic importance of IOR. The focus of second day proceeding was on maritime security in the context of regional connectivity. Air Marshal Zahid Mahmood, vice chief of Air Staff was the chief guest. Whereas Vice Admiral Abdul Aleem (Retd) moderated the session discussion. Vice Admiral (Retd) Ifthikhar Rao spoke about the Maritime Threats & Challenges in Regional Perspective. He talked about the Malacca strait choke point and its importance to the world, especially to

China. He also emphasized that Gwadar is a commercial port and its security is vital for economic dividends. Dr. Christian Beuger, of University of Copenhagen, talked about the Security of Sealines of Communications (SLOCs) and emphasized collaborative strategy in IOR to meet the non-conventional threats, particularly to SLOCs. He opined that Pakistan is in a position to take the lead in this regard. While delivering talk, Prof. Dr. Azhar Ahmed, of Bahria University, was of the view that Geo-Economics is an instrument to achieve objectives of Geo-Politics. He underscored that without political stability no country can progress. Air Marshal Zahid Mahmood highlighted the importance of maritime security and its linkage with national security. He emphasized on the

need of developing operational strategies to meet the maritime security threats. Dr. Hassan Daud Butt, of Bahria University, spoke about the need of regional connectivity, both on land and over sea. Senator Mushahid Hussain Syed, key note speaker, while deliberating on the current global security scenario, opined that it is the most dangerous decade after World War II. World is witnessing historic changes; economic and global powers are emerging from East. He was of the view that next war is expected to be at sea and not on land, therefore, Pakistan needs to ensure fool proof maritime security. The message of Prime Minister of Pakistan was also read out during the session. While emphasizing the Maritime Security of Pakistan, PM opined that Pakistan is heavily dependent on its

sea lines of communications because over 90% of Pakistan's trade and almost 100% energy imports are through sea. Therefore, any disruption in maritime trade has serious repercussions for the national security. The government is well aware of this imperative and is providing all out support to maritime security apparatus especially to Pakistan Navy. Vice Admiral Faisal Rasool Lodhi, Vice Chief of the Naval Staff was the chief guest of the closing session. He emphasized that effective security is essential to protect the expanding maritime economic activities in Pakistan, region and beyond. Pakistan, therefore, needs proactive diplomacy, well considered economic policies and risk management as important ingredients to harness and sustain the pace of development and potential growth. The symposium was well attended by maritime professionals, security experts, academia, think tanks and media personnel.

MoIT, ITU holds digital inclusion week

Islamabad: The "ITU-Pakistan Digital Inclusion Week: Meaningful ICT for All" was organized by the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecommunication, Pakistan and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in Islamabad, Pakistan. This event was supported by the Government of Australia, represented by the DITRD-CA in their support to the ITU Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific to implement the ITU Asia Pacific Regional Initiatives.—APP

KPCSW launched report of its 5 years strategic plan

STAFF REPORT

ABBOTTABAD: The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Commission on the Status of Women launched the report of its 5 years strategic plan from 2022 to 2026. The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Commission on the Status of Women (KPCSW) launched its 5 years strategic plan 2022-2026 here on Wednesday December 21, 2022. The Strategic Plan sets the strategic priorities of the Commission for the

coming five years in area of advocacy, generating evidence based knowledge and its dissemination, facilitating awareness raising on the mandate of KPCSW and relevant legislative policy frameworks and its own institutional strengthening. His Excellency Mr. Muhammad Ali Saif, the Special Assistant to Chief Minister KP for information and PRs graced the event as Special Guest. The representatives of government departments, partner organizations, stakeholders,

media, academia, provincial election commission, judiciary, lawyers and representatives of various civil society organizations participated in the launch ceremony. In her remarks, the Chairperson KPCSW, Dr. Riffat Sardar said that the KPCSW under its previous strategic plans demonstrated a significant progress in reviewing the laws, improving collaboration with civil society, academia and research studies, which was revised into the existing one based on the feedback and lesson learnt.

Lost and found
It is hereby announced for the public information that I, Muhammad Habib (CNIC 37405-0370193-3) S/O Muhammad Aslam Khan have lost all documents of "Applied For" CG 125 bike (Model Number : 2022), (Engine Number : T261450) and (Chassis Number: EB-938659) in Rawalpindi. If any one found please contact 03125152165

RCCI observes Global Entrepreneurship Week work

RAWALPINDI: Special Assistant to the Prime Minister for Youth Affairs Ms Shaza Fatima while addressing the closing ceremony of Global Entrepreneurship Week 2022 at the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) said that the Prime Minister's laptop scheme has been revived with the aim of providing employment opportunities to the youth as well as to provide and promote entrepreneurship in the country. She lauded RCCI role for its efforts for promoting entrepreneurship in the region and asked Rawalpindi Chamber to become a partner for mentorship. The information about the student loan scheme will be shared with the Chamber, she added. Under the program, the government aimed at providing loans to more than 50 million to the youths in the age bracket of 15 and 29. Youth can access these opportunities by visiting pmp.gov.pk. There would be no interest or collateral on loans up

to Rs500,000. "This year, laptops will be distributed amongst 100,000 high achievers. There will be a 50 per cent share for women while transgender will also be accommodated," She said that it is unfortunate that the unemployment rate is four and a half percent while the unemployment rate at the graduate

level is thirty five percent which is alarming. The government is introducing structural changes in the education system in which there will be more focus on skills. President RCCI Saqib Rafiq in his speech said that the purpose of organizing the Entrepreneurship Week was to attract students to



local hotel founder Luqman Ali Afzal also addressed the ceremony. Senior Vice President Muhammad Hamza Sarosh, Vice President Faisal Shahzad, Former President Major Amanullah Khan, Executive Members, women members, Students and faculty members of the universities were also present.—DNA



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National Days and Armed Forces Days

December

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



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CPEC charges up IT, digital economy in Pak

Owing to multiple strategic, development and trade compulsions, China and Pakistan are specially focusing on development of IT sector for CPEC and beyond

DNA

ISLAMABAD: CPEC's positive stir in IT industry and digital economy in 2022 has set the tone of resilient growth and progression for 2023 on automation, e-governance, e-commerce, IT parks, Research & Development, Internet density and computer Technology in Pakistan. According to Gwadar Pro, benefited by CPEC-led cooperation on IT and digital economy, it is predicted that the total value of Pakistan's IT industry will reach \$10 billion by 2025. During onset and till end of current year, Pakistan has more than 2,000 software R&D centers.

At present, Pakistan is the fourth largest base for free IT practitioners in the world. Owing to multiple strategic, development and trade compulsions, China and Pakistan are specially focusing on the development of IT sector for China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and beyond.

In July 2022 the first-ever China-Pakistan Technology Investment Conference was jointly organised by Special Technology Zones Authority, the Pakistan Embassy in China, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Islamabad, and the Zhongguancun Belt and Road Industrial Promotion Association (ZBRA) in order to forge new connections with the Chinese technology sector and open the door for Chinese and Pakistani technology players to collaborate in the field of technology. July 2022 also marked an important development when The Ministry of IT and Telecommunication hosted the inaugural meeting of the Pakistan-China Joint Working Group (JWG) on the Information Technology. The decision was made that both nations would gain from one another's expertise in the areas of spectrum, policy regulations, cyber security, human resource development, and 5G. Similarly, in October 2022, Pakistani ambassador to China Moinul Haque shared a news that the two countries have decided to build three new corridors, including the China-Pakistan Digital Corridor, which would help improve collaboration in many information technology industries.

He also envisaged an international conference on artificial intelligence in March, 2023 where local and foreign businesses will attend. A lot of commitments and agreements were reached between the two countries in 2022 regarding IT and beyond. Now, 2023 is the year when we should consolidate on our previous work by enhancing the cooperation in the IT sector. If we look around the world, a lot is happening in the world of IT. For example, hybrid or multicloud management technology, tools, and procedures will be used by 70% of businesses in the near future. With expectations of speeds up to 100 times faster, 5G will simultaneously provide network speeds that are

around ten times quicker than those on existing 4G LTE networks. Another great news came in November 2022, when China-Pakistan Science and Technology Cooperation Centre was inaugurated in Beijing by Ambassador Moin ul Haque and Mr. Zhang Xiaodong, President of Zhongguancun Belt and Road Industrial Promotion Association (ZBRA), while Special Technology Zones Authority (STZA) joined virtually from Pakistan. "Pakistan's technology sector especially the newly built IT parks offer globally competitive opportunities for the Chinese partners and investors", said a senior official at the Ministry of Information Technology and Telecom (MOITT). At the launching ceremony of Pakistan's largest information technology park project in Karachi he said, the launching of three new corridors, including China-Pakistan Digital Corridor, will create many opportunities for the Chinese investors. The IT Park of Karachi is an

eleven-storey building covering an area of 106,449 square meters. The technology park will provide office space to approximately 225 startups, small to medium enterprises and other ancillary facilities like testing laboratories, classrooms, industry academia linkage center and auditorium. The official source from MOITT believed that this will provide a platform to the Chinese companies with the local companies in promoting research and development, technology sharing while giving a boost to IT exports. Pakistan's largest information technology park project in Karachi is expected to be completed in June 2026. Presently 22 software technology parks are operative in small cities and the government has set the target of taking the number of technology parks up to 40 by December 2022. President Dr. Arif Alvi recently said that Pakistan's information technology sector has the potential to increase its exports to \$50 billion.

Motor car imports witness sharp decline

ISLAMABAD: The imports of motor cars, both Completely Built Up (CBU) as well as Semi-Knocked Down (SKD) or Completely Knocked Down (CKD), witnessed a sharp decline of 81.79 percent and 31.43 percent respectively during the first five months of the current fiscal year compared to last year. According to Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, the imports of CKD/SKD were recorded at \$455.780 million during July-November (2022-23) as compared to the imports of \$664.740 million during July-November (2021-22), showing decline of 31.43 percent. In terms of numbers, Pakistan imported 101,569 units of CKD/SKD cars during the period compared to imports of 111,350 units during last year. Likewise, Pakistan imported 6,056 CBU motorcars worth \$27.407 million during July-November as compared to the imports of 25,133 cars valuing \$150.500 last year, showing decline of 81.79 percent. Overall, transport group imports declined by 46.77 percent during the period under review. The imports of the group were recorded at \$ 1,022.346 as compared to the imports of \$1,920.749 last year. It is pertinent to mention here that overall merchandise imports into 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 current year. - APP

Hafeez Jalandhari remembered on death anniversary

ISLAMABAD: Prominent poet and the writer of the national anthem Hafeez Jalandhari was remembered on his 40th death anniversary here on Wednesday where tributes were paid for his literary contribution. He was born in Jalandhar, Punjab, British India on January 14, 1900. After the independence of Pakistan in 1947, he migrated to Lahore, electronic channels reported. Talking to APP, Editor Urdu Pakistan Academy of Letters Akhtar Raza Saleemi said that besides being the author of the national anthem, Hafeez Jalandhari was a fine lyricist and the famous poem of Malika Pukhraj "Abhi To Mein Jawan Hoon" was written by him. He said that Hafeez wrote short stories and also produced literature for the children. He said the distinguishing feature of his work was patriotism. Saleemi said that Hafeez Jalandhari wrote, "Shahnama-e-Islam" which was an Islamic history book that contains Islamic history in poetic form. Hafeez got the title of Ferdowsi-e-Islam due to Shahnama-e-Islam, he added. He said Hafeez also had meetings with Allama Muhammad Iqbal and it seems that Hafeez inherited patriotism from Allama Iqbal. Hafeez had written numerous Nazms among which several collections have been published, such as "Naghmat-e-Raz" and "Soz-o-Saz". In his poems, he used the old forms neatly, chose eloquent expressions, and made his poems a source of joy. - APP

CG COMSTECH calls on the President of Pakistan



DNA

ISLAMABAD: Coordinator General COMSTECH, H. E. Prof. Dr. M. Iqbal Choudhary called on the President of Pakistan, H. E. Dr. Arif Alvi on Wednesday afternoon at the President Secretariat, Islamabad. The President of Pakistan who is the Chairman of COMSTECH, appreciated COMSTECH programs and mentioned that today COM-

STECH is one of the most active institutions in OIC system. Dr. Alvi appreciated COMSTECH Health Program for Africa and suggested to enhance it further to address the health issues being faced by the African and other OIC member states in crises. Dr. Alvi advised the Coordinator General, Prof. Choudhary to start digital skills program for OIC member states, so that the benefits from the

emerging employments in the fields of ICT can be harnessed as early as possible. He said that digital skills can help reduce unemployment rate in OIC states by providing income generation opportunities to youth. Prof. Choudhary briefed the President on the COMSTECH Africa Program, recent visit of the Secretary General of OIC to COMSTECH headquarters, implementation of the decisions of

the 31st executive committee meeting, holding of the 16th general assembly meeting of COMSTECH, announcement of the 20 fellowships for Kazakhstan, and holding of the first rectors' conference of African alliance. The President of Pakistan advised to continue these excellent initiatives and offered his full support to the COMSTECH programs focused towards the socio-economic uplift of the Ummah.

PGC partners with Microsoft to provide work-related training

ISLAMABAD: Punjab Group of Colleges (PGC) in partnership with Microsoft has launched the Digital Skills Initiative in Pakistan bringing their educators and students onboard to future-ready skills. The initiative aims to reimagine the education landscape, empower the next generation of students and bridge the gap between knowledge and employability. Punjab Group of Colleges is in an academic alliance with Microsoft to enable the next generation of computer science / IT, experts, to leverage state-of-the-art technologies including but not limited to, Cloud Computing, Artificial Intelligence, Cyber Security, Business Applications, Office Automation/Productivity tools, etc. Over 25,000 students and educators of Punjab Group of Colleges across Pakistan will have access to all the learning resources and tools through platforms like Microsoft Learn for Educators, Microsoft Showcase Schools Program, and Microsoft Learn for Students with free Fundamental Skills Certifications. PGC is aiming to upskill its educators and student community to be at par with peers across the globe to ensure that they are recognized internationally and are globally competitive and ready for the future. Mudassar Farooq, Group Chief Technology Officer Punjab Group of Colleges, said: "Today just acquiring a degree is not enough. About 80 percent of employers believe that graduates do not arrive fully equipped with work-ready skills. We at Punjab Group of Colleges understand that to remain relevant and in demand, we must innovate to keep pace with an ever-changing world and provide the right curriculum and skills-building resources to ensure students are prepared now for the future". "As digital transformation accelerates across industries, digital skills are more important than ever, almost every job requires some level of digital fluency," said Jibrin Jamshad, Country Education Lead Microsoft for Pakistan, Lebanon, and Jordan. "To drive the best employability outcomes in today's digital economy, colleges and universities need to ensure their students develop the right 21st century skills and knowledge for their career of choice after graduation. Our longstanding partnership with Punjab Group of Colleges comes in line with our commitment to provide the education sector in Pakistan with the resources and tools needed to build the next-generation workforce and allow students and educators to do more with less". - APP

Two FIRs registered over violations of anti-dengue SOPs

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi administration registered two FIRs and sealed three premises for violation of anti-dengue SOPs during the past week. District Coordinator of Epidemics Prevention and Control, Dr. Sajjad Mehmood, on Wednesday said that the district administration, in collaboration with concerned departments, issued tickets to 31, notices to 287, and imposed a fine of Rs 10,000 on violations of dengue SOPs. During indoor surveillance, he informed that 1,261 anti-dengue teams checked 34,048 houses during the last 24 hours and found dengue larvae at 34 homes. Similarly, he added that 512 teams, during outdoor surveillance, inspected 15,307 spots and detected no larvae at any place. The health department officer added that with the change in weather, dengue cases have reached their lowest level while no dengue cases have been reported in the district for the last five days. - APP

ANF seizes over 1069 kg drugs, arrests 40 peddlers

ISLAMABAD: Anti-Narcotics Force (ANF) recovered 1069.783 Kg of drugs and 10,700 kg of suspected substances worth US\$ 27.55 million internationally, arrested 40 peddlers including five women and impounded 14 vehicles while conducting 36 counter-narcotics operations throughout the country. An ANF spokesman told on Wednesday that the seized drugs was comprising 65,600 kg opium, 5,504 kg heroin, 926.034 kg hashish, 11,899 kg methamphetamine (Ice), 0.726 kg Amphetamine (Ice), 58,500 kg Ketamine, 0.152 kg weed, 800 Alprazolam Tablets (1.125 Kg), 1200 Lexotanil (Bromazepam) Tablets (0.243 kg) and 10,700

kg suspected material. In Balochistan, the ANF recovered 697.15 kg of drugs and 10,700 kg of suspected substances in nine operations and arrested 14 persons including a female in drug smuggling while seizing five vehicles. The seized drugs comprised two kg Opium, 695.15 kg Hashish, and 10,700 suspected substance. The ANF Punjab recovered 64.843 kg of drugs in eight operations while arresting 10 persons including a female in drug smuggling while seizing five vehicles. The seized drugs comprised 1.2 kg Opium, 7.4 kg Hashish, 6.243 kg Methamphetamine (Ice), and 50 kg Ketamine. The ANF Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

recovered 282.805 kg of drugs in eight operations while arresting six persons in drug smuggling and impounding three vehicles. The seized drugs comprised 60 kg Opium, 2.4 kg Heroin, 219.28 kg Hashish, and 800 Alprazolam tablets (1.125 kg). The ANF Sindh recovered 16.14 kg of drugs in two operations while arresting an accused person involved in drug smuggling. The seized drugs comprised three kg of Heroin, 4.640 kg of Methamphetamine (Ice), and 8.5 kg of Ketamine. The ANF North recovered 8.845 kg of drugs in nine operations, arrested nine persons including three ladies in drug smuggling, and impounded a vehicle. - APP

IMF against state control over dollar

ISLAMABAD: Chairman of National Business Group Pakistan, President Pakistan Businessmen and Intellectuals Forum, and All Karachi Industrial Alliance, and former provincial minister Mian Zahid Hussain on Wednesday said the growth rate will remain low in the coming year while inflation and unemployment will increase. Interest rates are likely to rise further in 2023, profits of many companies will decrease, many businesses will run on almost zero profit and many will bankrupt, he said. Mian Zahid Hussain said that in present circumstances, any further delay in reviving the IMF programme would be tantamount to

suicide. Talking to the business community, the veteran business leader said that at present the state of the country's economy is critical and Pakistan also has to repay a huge amount of loans which has become a big problem. Finance Minister Ishaq Dar wants to bring the dollar to two hundred rupees, while the majority of economists are calling it impossible, he said. The business leader said that the finance minister is not ready to leave the dollar unregulated at any cost because it will weaken the rupee and increase inflation in the country. On the other hand, the IMF wants to remove all controls on the dollar which will push its value

to Rs250 to 275 but this will also increase exports and remittances. The dispute has led to a deadlock in talks between the government and the IMF, which is unnerving investors. Mian Zahid Hussain further said that the difference between the official price of the dollar and the open market rate has increased to 25 rupees, which is establishing a parallel market. The present situation is a blessing for those who are involved in illegal hundi business while Pakistanis living abroad are also sending money through illegal channels due to which the remittances have decreased by 15% and the country's problems are increasing. - DNA

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Briefs

Marriyum condemns armed men's attempt to enter Shiffa house

ISLAMABAD :Minister for Information and Broadcasting Marriyum Aurangzeb on Wednesday strongly condemned the armed men's attempt to enter into anchorperson Shiffa Yousafzai's house and alleged torture of domestic workers.

The minister telephoned Shiffa Yousafzai and informed her that the police were investigating the incident and have been directed to arrest the culprits as soon as possible. The minister expressed solidarity with Shiffa Yousafzai and her family. Shiffa Yousafzai told the minister that she was not present at home at the time of the incident. "Suspects assaulted, threatened domestic workers and escaped," Shiffa Yousafzai told the information minister. The minister said that such incidents would be prevented with collective efforts.—APP

Christmas preparations at peak across capital

ISLAMABAD: The Christian community across Pakistan, like other parts of the world, has started preparations to celebrate the grand festival of upcoming Christmas festivity on Sunday (December 25) with traditional zeal and enthusiasm. The community has bought essential items like dresses, shoes, other accessories and also decorated Christmas trees and bought gifts for their loved ones. The festival will be celebrated with different activities such as decorating Christmas trees, cake-cuttings, illuminating houses and observing prayers in Churches. A number of stalls and Christmas trees have been set up, where the majority of the Christian community resides. The stall owners have displayed a variety of decorative ornaments, as well as the dresses of Santa Claus. The main markets of the capital have their stock of Christmas-related accessories on display. Meanwhile, sweet shops are also gearing up to attract large businesses through the sale of cakes and sweets on the occasion. Special services will be held in Churches across the country and prayers will be offered for peace, progress and prosperity of Pakistan as well as for the safety of all humanity from the life-threatening pandemic. The other festivities of Christmas day included the distribution of gifts among children, singing hymns, prayers and family gatherings.—APP

Pakistan earns \$854 million from IT services' export in 4 months

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan earned US\$ 854.100 million by providing different Information Technology (IT) services to various countries during the first four months of the current fiscal year 2022-23. This shows a growth of 2.92 percent as compared to US\$ 829.890 million earned through the provision of services during the corresponding months of the fiscal year 2021-22, the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics (PBS) reported. During July-October (2022-23), the export of computer services grew by 5.86 percent as it surged from US\$ 650.090 million last fiscal year to US\$ 688.160 million this year. Among the computer services, the exports of software consultancy services witnessed an increase of 9.65 percent, from US\$ 231.238 million to US\$ 253.549 million while the exports of hardware consultancy services also rose by 12.36 percent from US\$ 0.898 million to US\$ 1.009 million. The export and import of computer software-related services surged by 13.58 percent, from US\$ 167.475 million to US\$ 190.224 million whereas the exports of repair and maintenance services increased to US\$ 0.443 million from US\$ 0.404 million.—APP

Progress witnessed in jelly production with Chinese tech

"Online training can never replace offline practice. I'm very much looking forward to coming to China in the near future to meet with experts in the apiculture industry face to face", he added

DNA

ISLAMABAD: "With Chinese technology, we have witnessed a historic breakthrough in local royal jelly production. Thirty beekeepers have mastered the skill to extract royal jelly, and more will be trained in the future", said Dr. Muhammad Asif Aziz in an interview to China Economic Net (CEN). He is an Associate Professor of the Department of Entomology Pir Mehr Ali Shah Arid Agriculture University Rawalpindi, the person in charge of the Billion Tree Honey Initiative (trial phase), and a participant of the online training course on beekeeping and honey processing technology sponsored by Ministry of Commerce of People's Republic of China and organized by Hunan Agricultural Group Co., Ltd. in the summer of 2021. For him, the training came just in time as

he was eager to learn more about royal jelly production, bee breeding techniques, honey production technology, and bee-related product processing to reach the goal of the Billion Tree Honey Initiative, that is to produce 70,000 tonnes of honey through the introduction of modern beekeeping equipment, training in the latest technologies, standardization and product certification, and marketing. "It is challenging to receive technical training online, but I'm lucky to have a great online management team to make everything organized. Chinese professors demonstrated the country's beekeeping technology through theoretical explanations and demonstrations on apiaries. And there were interesting introductions of Chinese culture, so we not only learned Chinese beekeeping technology but also had a deeper understanding of China", he termed the training "beyond expectation"

and was awarded excellent trainee at the end of the training program. The training made him realize that to further develop the apiculture industry in Pakistan, the first step should be to improve the skills of local practitioners in the production of various bee products, including royal jelly and other higher-value bee products, through training and capacity-building programs. Therefore, he started to train local beekeepers in two categories. One is short-term course that teaches modern apiculture technology for professional bee farmers. The other is middle-to long-term training for green hands. Previously, local beekeepers used to think that royal jelly can only be produced in natural beeswax cups and in queenless colonies. Therefore, mostly they remained reluctant to produce this valuable product due to the fear to loose bee population in the absence of queens and consid-

ered royal jelly production costlier than net profits. After learning about China's royal jelly technology, Dr. Muhammad Asif Aziz along with his students Ali Raza and Usama Umer decided to use Chinese technology. Then, he invited several bee farmers to learn and practice together. To everyone's surprise, royal jelly was successfully produced with plastic queen cells in colonies with queens. "The approach of Chinese people to work for betterment of humanity through knowledge sharing is remarkable, which ultimately will pave the path towards social and economic stability of both the nations", he said, looking forward to more exchanges in the future. "Online training can never replace offline practice. I'm very much looking forward to coming to China in the near future to meet with experts in the apiculture industry face to face", he added.

470 drug addicts reunited with families

ISLAMABAD: As many as 470 rehabilitated drug addicts were handed over to their families after completion of rehabilitation courses including detoxification, mental counseling and imparting of skill training under drugs free Peshawar campaign. Commissioner Peshawar Division, Raiz Khan Mehsood was a chief guest in the social integration ceremony.

The Drugs Free Peshawar drive was launched on directives of Chief Minister Mahmood Khan for the rehabilitation of drug addicts to bring them back to normal life. The ceremony

was attended by a large number of people including relatives of recovered drug addicts, and officials of various social welfare organizations that extended support for the drug-free campaign. The Commissioner thanked his entire team, welfare organizations and all other stakeholders for the successful completion of the second phase of the drug-free Peshawar drive. Speaking on the occasion, he said that drugs were a menace and it was our collective responsibility to eliminate this menace from society by playing our due role. He said that role of

parents was of vital importance and stressed to pay special attention to their children and keep a vigilant eye on their unhealthy activities. He said that the third phase of the 'Drug-free Peshawar' drive was already started to make the provincial capital free from drug addictions. He also directed to shift of remaining drug addicts in the city to rehabilitation centres. On the occasion affidavits from the families of the rehabilitated drug addicts were taken that they would fully take care of their children and prevent them from indulging

in drug addiction again. Deputy Commissioner, Shafiqullah Khan said that more space and facilities are being increased at the rehabilitation centres for a maximum number of treatments. A committee headed by Additional Deputy Commissioner Relief, Imran Yousufzai was already constituted to identify categories for addicts and increased the rehabilitation time-period to six months. The district administration is also in the process to extend the project to the rehabilitation of addicts in the Peshawar Prison.

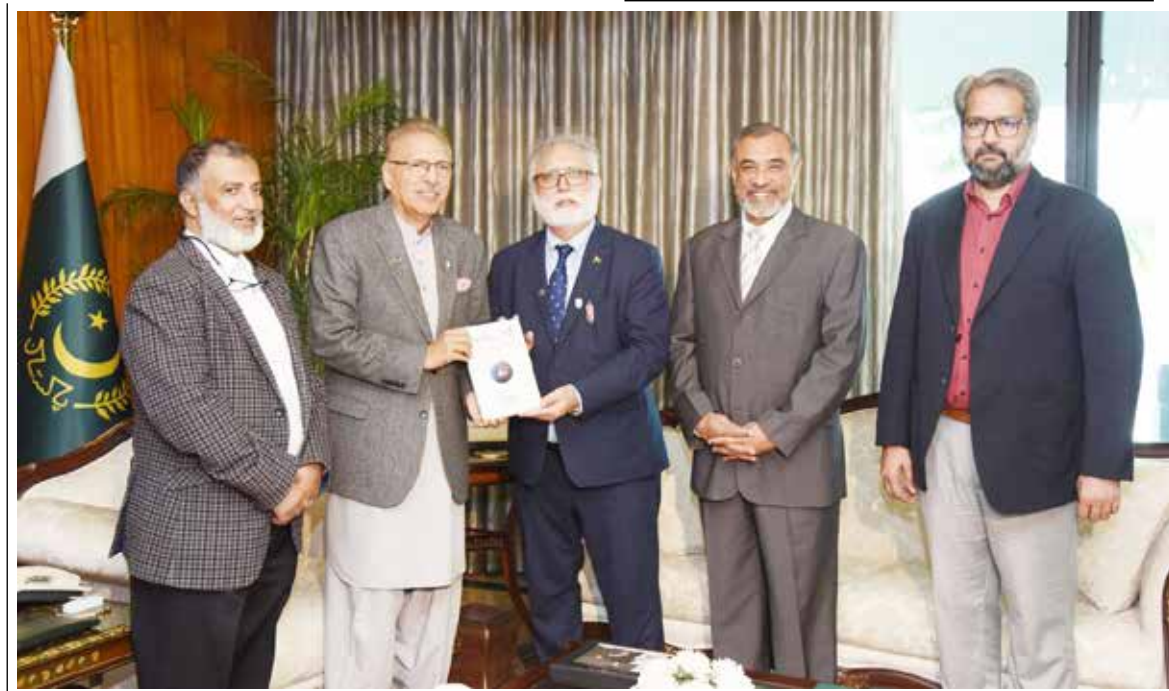
Saudi DG Narcotics Control visits Customs Intelligence headquarters

ISLAMABAD :Saudi DG Narcotics Control, Maj Gen. Mohammad bin Saeed Al-Qarni on Wednesday visited the Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) Customs Intelligence Headquarters here. A delegation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia led by Maj Gen Mohammad bin Saeed Al-Qarni, Director General Narcotics Control called upon Faiz Ahmad Chadhar, Director General of Customs Intelligence for a bilateral meeting at I&I-Customs Headquarters. During the meeting, various issues of mutual interests including matters pertaining to combating illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and chemical precursors, between the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and Pakistan came under discussion. It was unanimously agreed that there exists huge scope for the exchange of intelligence-based information to effectively control the illicit flow of currency and narcotics between KSA and Pakistan. Moreover, strengthening cooperation and liaison for the exchange of information, on a real-time basis, between both countries was underscored. Faiz Ahmad Chadhar informed the delegation that Customs Intelligence with a focused approach had accelerated the countrywide countersmuggling drive with a special focus on drug smuggling.—APP

NDMA holds national post-monsoon review

He underscored the need for collaborated and synergized response towards disasters while addressing the existing capacity gaps and structural challenges through the active involvement of NGOs and Donor organizations.

ISLAMABAD: The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) on Wednesday hosted National Post-Monsoon 2022 Review Conference. Chairman NDMA, Lieutenant General Inam Haider Malik presided over the meeting and delivered the opening remarks, a news release said. The Conference reviewed the lessons learnt during Floods 2022 and deliberated upon way forward to address the key shortcomings for better flood management in the next monsoon. Representatives of PDMA/SDMA/GBDMA, Provincial chapters of Rescue 1122, PMD, FFC, WAPDA, SUPARCO, NHA, Armed Forces, PTA, and Emergency Response Agencies attended the conference and briefed the forum about their respective fields during and after Floods 2022. They also put forward their recommendations for immediate and long-term interventions for the improvement of relief and disaster management systems in view of extreme climate change vulnerabilities in the country. Chairman NDMA lauded the efforts of all relevant Federal and Provincial departments and Armed Forces during Floods 2022. He underscored the need for collaborated and synergized response towards disasters while addressing the existing capacity gaps and structural challenges through the active involvement of NGOs and Donor organizations. The NDMA chair explained to the participants on the need for further and closer integration of all departments and briefed on his vision to expand the NEOC and make it live interfaced with all departments to remodel NDMA from a response-oriented entity to a proactive mode. NDMA asked the Provincial departments to provide plans for prepositioning of available resources to mitigate future floods and mainstreaming Disaster Risk Reduction in their development projects.—APP



ISLAMABAD: Toaha Bashir Qureshi, Member of the Order of The British Empire, along with his delegation presenting his book "Qiyam-e-Amn aur Aqam-e-Alam", to President Dr Arif Alvi, at Aiwan-e-Sadr. — DNA

Minister asks youth to play role in country's reformation

ISLAMABAD: Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal Wednesday called upon the youth of the country to play their due role in the reformation of the country. "Let's become part of the Make Pakistan Movement to ensure the reformation of Pakistan", Ahsan Iqbal said while addressing the inauguration ceremony of the 'Food, Pharma and Nutrition Conference' organised by Riphah University here. He said the world is competing on the economic fronts and gone are the days when countries were having a competition on

the basis of their political systems. Therefore, he said, we will have to make fast developments on the economic front to save Pakistan's future. He highlighted that any successful system has the capacity to make proper utilization of knowledge and then take benefit from it. The minister maintained that there was no scarcity of talent and other resources in Pakistan but the only thing we needed was the continuity of policies. "The only way to fast development is to ensure peace, stability, and continuity of policies", he added. Ahsan Iqbal reiterated the government's resolve

to provide a good base of sustainable development for the future generation of the country. He said the youth must get away with hatred and intolerance to ensure development, cooperation, and harmony in society. The minister added that the promotion of exports was the top priority of the government and that the pharma industry had immense potential to help increase the country's exports. Halal foods, he said, had also vast potential especially in Middle Eastern countries which should be tapped by increasing Halal food processing. Ahsan Iqbal pointed

out that Pakistan is rich in all kinds of natural resources which must be properly utilized by using state-of-the-art technology. He pointed out that during the tenure of the PML-N government, investment was made on a large scale. It added 11,000 MW of electricity to the national grid besides constructing a network of highways and motorways across the country. He said in 2018, more people were willing to invest in Pakistan, however, Imran Khan's wrong policies wasted away all the hard work done during the PML-N government.—APP

Speakers stress need to harness hydropower potential

STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD :Speakers at the second International Conference on Pakistan Hydropower Sector on Wednesday stressed the need to harness hydropower potential in the country for adding more clean and green electricity to the national grid system for sustainable economic growth. They were of the view that Pakistan was blessed with huge hydel and renewable energy (RE) generating resources and it was a dire need to exploit all these resources for generating clean and green energy. The conference which was organized by Energy Update with the collaboration of Private Power Infrastructure Board (PPIB) and International Hydropower Association (IHA) to discuss more opportunities to produce cheap and clean energy from hydro sector and to foster renewable energy resources in mitigating the climate change. Appreciating the efforts of the organizers of the conference, Minister of State for Power Divi-

sion Hashim Notezai said under the vision of Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the incumbent government pays special attention on producing energy from indigenous resources especially hydel, wind and solar in order to minimize reliance of imported fuel. Assuring full support of the government, he invited the investors to come forward and invest in clean and green energy. There are greater opportunities in the energy sector of Pakistan and the investors should take benefits from it, he said. Managing Director PPIB Dr Shahjahan Mirza said that his organization had successfully added over 18,000 Megawatt (MW) electricity to the national grid so far through Independent Power Producers (IPPs) which was around 50 percent of the total installed capacity. The PPIB is providing one window facilities to the investors and lenders in this regard, he said. He went on to say that currently, the share of hydel was 25 percent in the energy mix, followed by six percent solar and 69 percent of thermal. The government has now set a target of 62 percent of

energy through RE and hydel resources, he added. Dr Mirza said that the government also intended to increase reliance of indigenous resources and wanted to induce more green energy in the system in the next 10 years. He added that a concrete roadmap was devised in this regard and it was first step that all projects were being awarded through competitive bidding. However, he said that private sector's role in hydropower sector at global level was very limited. The China's private sector has made huge investment in hydropower sector of Pakistan and recent 720 MW Karot hydropower project has been commissioned on June 29, 2022 with a cost of \$ 1.2 billion under China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Work has also been carried out on 1100 MW Kohala hydropower project under CPEC, he added. He said that Pakistan has identified hydropower potential stood at 65,000 MW besides additional 21,000 MW from Gilgit-Baltistan. However, he said GB has not yet connected through national grid system of National Transmission and Despatch

Company (NTDC) and it would take around 5-6 years. He said PPIB has attracted huge foreign investment from UK, Korea and other countries in energy generating projects, CEO Pakhtunkhwa Energy Development Organization (PEDO) engineer Muhammad Naeem said dams and drains for mitigating of climate issue was the theme of the conference. Pakistan was a blessed country having surplus water and energy resources, he added. However, he said we could not plan to exploit the hydropower potential in the country in the last 75 year. No doubt climate change has some effect but we could mitigate its effects through proper planning, he added. He said we could not cope with climate change unless we stored and conserved water. There was dire need of more concentration on planning of water storage and development of hydropower projects. Naeem said that PEDO under public private partnership, has planned various small hydropower projects in remote areas having around 2,500 MW capacity which would start pow-

er supply in next 10 years. He said PEDO has completed solarization of many mosques, schools, basic health units and over 6000 house holds so far in KPK. Aamir Bashir CEO Diar Basha dam said that WAPDA had tapped around 9,400 MW hydel generation so far and the working on more mega projects was being carried out to store 11 million acre feet (MAF) water besides generating 16,000 MW electricity. He said that WAPDA was building mega projects including Diar Basha, Mohmand and Dasu dams to enhance water storage capacity in the country. Chairman National Electric Power Regulatory Authority (NEPRA) Tauseef H Farooq while speaking on the occasion, said that he was a big supporter of hydropower projects in the country adding that NEPRA was fully committed to promoting indigenous resource based affordable electricity to the consumers. He said currently, the total country's installed power generation capacity stood at 43,000 MW but it was mostly based on imported fuel.

NA Speaker felicitates security forces

ISLAMABAD :National Assembly Speaker Raja Pervez Ashraf and Deputy Speaker Zahid Akram Durrani on Wednesday felicitated the security forces for carrying out successful military operations against terrorists who attacked Bannu Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) Compound. In a statement, they lauded the gallantry of security forces for conducting a daring operation against terrorists. Speaker and Deputy Speaker National Assembly said the entire nation salutes its brave security forces for punishing the terrorists. Speaker and Deputy Speaker said the successful operation of the security forces is an expression of their professionalism and unwavering determination against terrorism. They said the sacrifices rendered by armed forces against terrorism for national defense and security would always be remembered. Pakistan's defense is in safe hands due to the sacrifices rendered by valiant armed forces. Pakistan Army has always demonstrated professional and technical capabilities and thwarted the nefarious designs of the enemies, they said. Both Speaker and his Deputy also acknowledged the sacrifices of nation for the elimination of terrorism from the country, saying that national unity and solidarity are key to defeating terrorism. The Speaker and Deputy Speaker paid homage to the officers who were martyred during the operation and prayed for elevation and prayers for the speedy recovery of the injured soldiers and commiserated with the families of the martyred soldiers.—APP

Govt urged to revisit decision for early businesses closure

RAWALPINDI :The trade bodies of the city have requested the government to review its decision about the closure of businesses at 8 pm. The people were already hit hard by inflation due to the Covid-19 pandemic and facing severe economic conditions. He said that early closure of business activities would further deteriorate the situation, President Markazi Anjuman Tajran, Punjab Sharjil Mir told APP. President traders association Moti Bazar Chaudhary Muhammad Iqbal called for taking practical measures to overcome the ongoing economic crisis. He suggested that the timings of the closure of business centers could be settled with the consultation of the business community. Iqbal said that if the energy or economic crisis were resolved with the closure of businesses at 8 pm, the traders would cooperate with the government in this regard.—APP

Multipronged strategy seems working to avert gas crisis

ISLAMABAD :Global economic recession and regional conflicts landed many of the world's nations in serious trouble to meet the energy needs of their people during chilly winters. Unlike many previous years, the post-COVID and Russia-Ukraine war era had rung alarm bells even across Europe and in many Asian countries. The situation was also not different for Pakistan, a country facing energy shortage over the years due to rising population and growing energy demands by domestic, commercial, and industrial sectors. Failure of the previous regime in making prudent decisions and embarking on exploration plans was another reason behind this phenomenon. Although all is not well yet the multi-faceted strategy of the present government seems like bearing fruit to tackle the situation. There is no denial about consumers' complaints regarding commodity shortages in a number of areas across the country. But sensible regulation of gas supply to domestic consumers had allayed the fears of acute shortage although there are still supply and demand variations due to depleting domestic resources and infrastructure issues.—APP

Trump's terrible, no-good year

In its closing months, 2022 is looking like an annus horribilis for Donald Trump – or to put it in the former president's terms, a terrible, horrible, no-good, very bad year. The January 6 committee's recommendation on Monday that criminal charges be brought against him over his attempt to subvert the 2020 election results and the deadly storming of the Capitol was unprecedented – the first time that Congress has referred a former president to the Department of Justice. Though largely symbolic, it has set down a marker. And it is the latest in a string of recent setbacks. His candidates triumphed in Republican primaries, but then tanked in the midterms. His announcement on his 2024 bid was lacklustre and bathetic. A New York jury found his business guilty of tax fraud. On Tuesday, a House committee was set to vote on whether to release six years of his tax returns to the public. And, of course, the list of civil actions and criminal investigations targeting him is growing. The congressional committee's referral does not change the legal position, though some of the evidence it turned over to the justice department theoretically could. In its impact on public opinion, however, it may have an indirect effect on whether charges are brought. His own aides have testified that he was repeatedly told he had lost, and that they urged him to tell the crowd to be peaceful. Instead, he pressed Republican officials to overturn the results, then his vice-president to block Congress from approving Joe Biden's victory. When those attempts failed, he summoned a crowd to Washington, urged it to the Capitol and for hours failed to call off supporters as they rampaged and hunted down elected politicians. Unlike Mr Trump himself, at least some participants have since admitted their responsibility. One described his involvement as "part of an attack on the rule of law"; another conceded that "I guess I was [acting] like a traitor". The referral will, if anything, spur on Mr Trump's fight for the Republican candidacy, further convincing him that power is the best form of protection. Charges, if laid, may reinforce rather than shift the minds of his diehard supporters. More than two-thirds of Republicans still believe that Mr Biden's victory was illegitimate. Nonetheless, they are turning away from the former president in the polls. It would be immensely foolish to write off the 45th president. For years he has defied the laws of political gravity, surviving scandals and offences that individually would have sunk any other candidate or office-holder. The Republican elite remain notably silent or mealy-mouthed about him. Even if he cannot recover, others are already using his playbook. Yet the prospect that he will rebound, or another like him take his place, is all the more reason to establish the full record of his actions – whether or not they ultimately lead to legal consequences.

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China-US audit supervision cooperation

China-US audit supervision cooperation has achieved positive results. On Thursday local time, the US Public Company Accounting Oversight Board (PCAOB) issued a report confirming that it was able to completely inspect and investigate the accounting firms headquartered in the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong SAR in 2022, thus vacating its relevant determinations made in 2021. Realizing such progress has not been easy. Since the US House of Representatives passed the Holding Foreign Companies Accountable Act in 2020, which put forward additional disclosure requirements on foreign companies listed in the US, the "risk of collective delisting of Chinese concept stocks" has become a topic of great concern to the outside world. If it does come to that point, Chinese companies and American investors will bear the brunt, and a lose-lose situation will inevitably take shape. But what has happened over the past four months? The PCAOB dispatched a team more than double the size of a typical team for similar work to Hong Kong for on-site inspections, stayed three weeks longer than the typical timeframe, and finally completed their work and left Hong Kong earlier than expected. When outlining the cooperation on Friday, the CSRC stated that the two parties have "acted in strict accordance with the legal and regulatory requirements of their respective jurisdictions and consensus reached in the agreement," "worked together efficiently and effectively on a number of field inspections and investigations, yielding good progress" and "both sides set up inspections and investigation plans upon thorough communication and coordination." The benefits brought by the implementation of the audit solution are obvious: the existing Chinese concept stocks may be able to avoid the risk of delisting, and a positive signal was sent to more Chinese companies to go public in the US. Meanwhile, the US financial liquidity channel was expanded, letting more US investors benefit from the development and growth of Chinese companies. Both China and the US will benefit from it. Some Americans treat every Chinese company as a threat, and even made an international joke that "Chinese magnets can't be used." There are many other examples of such absurdity, which have even been criticized by the US media: Many US officials and analysts think that "every Chinese technology is a loaded gun pointed at the heart of America," the "costs of US restrictive measures are commonly underestimated," and "if Washington doesn't take a breath and steady itself, it might tumble over the edge." In this way, China and the US will prove with actions that specific differences can be resolved, and that the two countries can benefit from cooperation. Its significance will probably go far beyond this individual case. And the most important thing is to have more sincerity toward each other and less suspicion driven by Cold-War mentality. After all, the common interests of China and the US are not reduced, but increased by it.

Political instability in Pakistan

Dr. Muhammad Akram Zaheer



This resentment towards the PDM has been well cashed in by the PTI leadership even though it has little knowledge of its linkages with the geopolitical, geostrategic and geoeconomic realities of the contemporary international system. The PTI leadership dreams of a utopian world which is far from reality. This is a dream that has been shown to the people of Pakistan

Pakistani Political system always has been protected the interests of elites. Although political leadership has been representative authority but they failed to raise hope for a democratic state that would provide socio-economic justice to all Pakistani citizens. The political leadership

failed to create harmony on the national language, the role of Islam, provincial representation and the division of powers between the center and the provinces, delayed the constitution and postponed general elections. In October 1956, Pakistan came out from its infancy, a consensus was build and the first constitution of Pakistan came into force. The experience of democratic government was short but not sweet. In October 1958, General Muhammad Ayub Khan easily staged a military coup. The political paradigm shifted during the 1960s-70s, where class (revolutionary) politics was replaced by authoritarianism as a result of the influx of capital and urbanization. Industrial workers, student unions and middle class socialist ideology emerged here. To counter the industrial class struggle of the 1960s, Zia furnished Pakistan with political-religious parties and place in politics through the street mosque culture within the power structure. For four decades after Zia, the Pakistani political scene was a hybrid of PML (N) and PPP patronage and intellectual politics. Once again, the landscape of Pakistan's politics has changed when the poor and the educated are uneducated, devoid of critical thinking skills, which are influenced by anti-American and anti-establishment rhetoric. Anti-establishment and anti-American sloganeering has breathed new life into Khan's April 2022 lows towards the end of his nearly 4-year rule. More than the dismissal of the PTI, there is public resentment over the return of the previous government, which was accused of corruption and nepotism. This resentment towards the PDM has been well cashed in by the PTI leadership even though it has little knowledge of its linkages with the geopolitical, geostrategic and geoeconomic realities of the contemporary international system. The PTI leadership

dreams of a utopian world which is far from reality. This is a dream that has been shown to the people of Pakistan. At present, Khan's popularity chart is skyrocketing due to PTI's constant tussle with state institutions, including the establishment, but the leadership strategy poses huge challenges in the field of foreign policy and security. People have hopes and calling the Azadi March a turning point for Pakistan. Even the blind can see the political engineering to bring PTI to power in 2018 as it is history of democratic regimes in Pakistan. Always the game of political engineering had been organized by the establishment. Now this Imran Khan was the beneficiary of this play and got the title "Ladla". The PTI government has enjoyed unprecedented support from the establishment during its more than 3.5 years in power. PTI's staunch supporters are also frustrated by the party's poor performance, ambiguity and delays in government affairs. PTI's popularity chart fell due to an unsatisfactory government but PDM comeback to rescue it. Here, inciting the youth and people against the institutions of the state, institutional heads and the center of power of the country can have disastrous effects. This is Pakistan's political history, political leadership frequent attacks on state institutions, especially on the establishment when they are away from the government. Opposition parties call them to rescue from the governmental brutal actions and illegal political cases. Bhutto's inclination towards class politics along with his open opposition to Ayub Khan soon made him immensely popular with the masses. With an absolutist mentality he also desired absolute power; an absolutist mentality is a problem. Bhutto had become a dictator in the country with his power hungry mind. The quest for absolute power led him to an uncompromising situation with a power-sharing crisis that directed to a war of independ-

ence in the eastern wing. The PTI's philosophy of absolute power has hurt Pakistan on the foreign policy front where our Arab allies were angered when Erdogan tried to hold an Islamic summit in Malaysia, while our close neighbor the Iran was angered when Pakistan participated in a joint military exercise with Turkey in Azerbaijan. In addition, PTI's poor performance during his tenure, he has several excuses including the lack of 2/3 majority. Now the PDM government which was considered most experienced has taken Pakistan on the point of devastation. Its experience, efficiency and administration have exposed. All the political parties are dictators in their political rooms now they have joint hands to protect themselves from the case of corruption. These political parties devoid of democracy always came to power for personal interests. Now PTI's turn to fundamentalist politics is based on direct confrontation with state institutions, including defamation campaigns against high officials and heads of institutions. The PTI young tigers being trained will soon trouble Pakistani society in the years to come. Our political leaders have a huge responsibility to build the political nursery of the state where they should nurture its political system on politics of reason instead of hatred, vandalism and fundamentalism. Radicalization of an already radicalized youth will permanently tear the fabric of our society. Pakistan can emerge as a strong state and nation only when the socio-cultural trends of intolerance, exclusivity, nepotism, extremist ideologies and violence that have warped the national fabric are transformed as a nation. To be done and the political nursery of inclusiveness, tolerance, enlightenment, and coexistence in state building should foster critical thinking skills, inclusiveness, and respect for opposing ideologies in future generations of Pakistan.

Reko Diq Project: A ray of hope for Baluchistan

Gul.i.Ayesha Bhatti



Undeniably, the restructured arrangement is heavily skewed in the investor's favor. Although, it's true that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, however, it's time to move on and utilize the agreement to its full potential. It is high time that Government should adopt the policies to make sure that Balochistan and its people will see these benefits quickly. Policymakers must start working to develop institutional capabilities

The federal and Baluchistan governments inked a deal on Reko Diq with the Canadian business Barrick Gold on 16 December, 2022, after the Supreme Court approved a settlement to begin mining at the site located in Chagai district. The Baluchistan administration described the arrangement as historic and the largest investment pact ever made by the state. The statement said, "The \$6.5 billion punishment levied by an international court has been ineffective after signing the Reko Diq accord. Officially, Barrick owns 50% of Reko Diq, 25% by three federal state-owned enterprises, 15% by the Province of Baluchistan on a fully funded basis and 10% by the Province of Baluchistan on a free carried basis. Reko Diq is one of the largest undeveloped copper-gold deposits in the world. On July 29, 1993, the Chagai Hills Exploration Joint Venture Agreement (CHEJVA) was signed by BHP Minerals, the Baluchistan Development Authority (BDA), and others. On November 23, 2006, the Tethyan Copper Company (TCC) paid \$240 million for BHP's shares in CHEJVA. Due to a novation deal between the BHP and the Baluchistan government, it has joined the CHEJVA. TCC filed its mining lease application and feasibility study on August 26, 2011, however, licensing authorities rejected them later. On November 6, 2011, a petition was submitted to the Supreme Court requesting to issue a directive prohibiting the Baluchistan government from awarding mining licences in an arbitrary and illegal way. The Supreme Court declared CHEJVA to be invalid from the beginning on January 6, 2013. On December 12, 2011, the TCC filed a complaint with the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) regarding alleged violations of the Australia-Pakistan Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) by Pakistan and with the

International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) regarding alleged breaches of CHEJVA contracts by the Baluchistan government. Initially, with respect to the ICSID procedures, the ICC tribunal suspended its own proceeding. The tribunal published a draught ruling on jurisdiction on February 12, 2016, holding that it had jurisdiction over TCC's claims and TCC had invested in Pakistan. In this regard, Pakistan has violated its BIT commitments by expropriating TCC's investment there. The TCC was awarded damages against Pakistan by the ICSID tribunal on July 12, 2019, totaling \$5.894 billion plus interest of \$700,000 per day. The London Court of Arbitration also fined Pakistan \$4 billion at the same time. Subsequently, the TCC started legal action to enforce the decision in a number of countries, including Australia, the US, and the UK (British Virgin Islands). The ICC reopened its case against the Baluchistan government and was anticipated to issue another award. Pakistan contested the ICSID Award at the time by starting legal action to have the award revoked. The out-of-court agreement puts an end to the protracted battle over restarting the development of the Reko Diq mine in Baluchistan's Chagai area by waiving the \$11 billion penalty imposed on Pakistan by a World Bank arbitration court in 2019 as well as the other obligations. The agreement, which takes effect on December 16, was reached just days after Pakistan's Supreme Court ruled that the March 2022 out-of-court settlement between the Pakistani government and the foreign corporations Barrick Gold and Antofagasta was legitimate. According to Mark Bristow, president, and chief executive officer of Barrick, "The project's 2010 and 2011 feasibility expansion studies are now being updated". "By 2024, it should be finished, with the first production set for 2028."

strip, and good grade, Reko Diq is expected to have a life of at least 40 years. We envisage a truck-and-shovel open pit operation with processing facilities producing a high-quality copper-gold concentrate." The project will be built out in two stages, with a total annual processing capacity of 80 million tonnes. The project is planned to begin production between 2027 and 2028, with an estimated initial capital cost of \$7 billion. During peak construction, the project is planned to employ 7,500 people and once in production, it will produce roughly 4,000 long-term employment. Reko Diq is predicted to have a profound influence on Pakistan's economy. In addition to the economic advantages, the project will significantly increase Balochistan's growth potential, by generating jobs, boosting the local economy, and expanding investments in healthcare, education, vocational training, food security, and the provision of clean water. Full funding of the province's stake in the mine will allow Balochistan to profit from its 25% ownership's dividends, royalties, and other advantages without having to contribute financially to its development or operation. Undeniably, the restructured arrangement is heavily skewed in the investor's favor. Although, it's true that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, however, it's time to move on and utilize the agreement to its full potential. It is high time that Government should adopt the policies to make sure that Balochistan and its people will see these benefits quickly. Policymakers must start working to develop institutional capabilities, though, so they can create international accords that serve the interests of the nation rather than those of the investors

—The writer is PhD scholar International Relations

Briefs

Zelenskiy in Washington seeking more weapons

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It is important to personally explain why we need certain types of weapons," Podolysak said. "In particular, armoured vehicles, the latest missile defence systems and long-range missiles." Zelenskiy's visit was expected to last several hours. He will hold a meeting with Biden at the White House at 2:30 p.m. (1930 GMT), participate in a joint news conference with the U.S. president and then go to Capitol Hill to address a joint session of the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives. White House spokesman John Kirby said diplomacy and defence capabilities would top the agenda. "Clearly we're going to make sure that President Zelenskiy, when he leaves this country, knows that he's leaving with the full support of the United States going forward," he told MSNBC in an interview ahead of Zelenskiy's arrival.

No difference between Hamza...

FROM PAGE 01

electing from the PML-N rather than the PPP, Zardari explained that said he would not like to select the next Punjab chief minister from his party because this seat deserves a candidate from the PML-N because it enjoys a majority across the province. The statement comes as the combined opposition of PPP and PML-N in Punjab seek to oust Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q) Chief Minister Parvez Elahi. They have submitted a vote of no confidence against him in the provincial assembly. Should he fail to survive it, elections for a new chief minister would be held. In the event he avoids the vote, he will be de-notified and fresh elections for a chief minister will be held in the assembly.

Germany to help with trade facilitation

DNA

KARACHI: Irfan Iqbal Sheikh, President FPCCI, has expressed his satisfaction that Pakistan's bilateral trade surplus with Germany has crossed psychological mark of \$1 billion and there are clear indications that Pakistani exports are on a growth trajectory with the world's fourth largest economy and the largest in Europe with a GDP of \$4.5 trillion. However, President Mr. Irfan Iqbal Sheikh noted, the exports of \$2.5 billion are still way too below the real potential as there is huge demand of Pakistani textiles in Germany, he remarked in a message on the occasion of the visit of H. E. Mr. Andreas Wegner, Deputy Consul General of Germany, to the Federation House. Mr. Suleman Chawla, SVP FPCCI, stated that Pakistan should be focused on the renewal and expansion of GSP+ to make full use of the very affluent German consumer market. He also stressed upon the need to export services and human resources to Germany in large numbers.

Panama marks 1989 US invasion

DNA

LONDON: More than three decades ago, 27,000 American troops, supported by fighter planes, tanks and heavy artillery, invaded the central American country of Panama, killing thousands of people, including women and children. For the first time this year, the anniversary of the 1989 US invasion to overthrow the government of Manuel Antonio Noriega was marked as the 'Day of National Mourning' in Panama. President Laurentino Cortizo said on Tuesday in a ceremony attended by about 300 relatives of the victims, government officials, diplomats, soldiers and activists that everyone should pray for the dead and try to move forward.

PCB chairman: PM 'approves Najam Sethi's appointment

Reports of Raja's replacement as PCB chairman had circulated a few times in past, however, he had rejected the claims and maintained he was not "going anywhere"

ISLAMABAD: Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif has approved the appointment of former journalist Najam Sethi as the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman and removal of incumbent Ramiz Raja, Geo News reported Wednesday citing sources. Officials, who spoke on the condition of anonymity, said that the Prime Minister Office will release four notifications related to the appointment. They said one notification will be issued notifying the abolishment of the 2019 constitution of the cricket board. The other will then notify the termination of the two names nominated for the chairmanship under the 2019 constitution. The third notification then will announce to restore the 2014 constitution. The fourth notification then will notify the establishment of a "set up" to run the existing board.



Reports of Raja's replacement as the PCB chairman had circulated a few times in the past, however, he had rejected the claims and maintained he was not "going anywhere". Later, it was also reported that the incumbent government had decided to sack the current PCB chairman. However, Raja had called PCB staffers to tell them that he had gotten a "green signal" from the government to continue working. "I have been told to continue working as [the] PCB chairman," Raja had told PCB staffers. The former Pakistan captain was elected as the chairman of the cricket board unopposed on September 13, 2021, during the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) government. The PCB's top post had fallen vacant after Ehsan Mani stepped down following the completion of his three-year term. - DNA

Putin says NATO using all its potential against Russia

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin on Wednesday vowed to fulfill the objectives of the country's "special military operation" in Ukraine even as Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy left for the US to lobby for more arms. In a speech at the yearly meeting with his defense chiefs, Putin said Moscow will meet all the goals of its military operation in Ukraine as he hailed the military leaders as "heroes". The Russian president said the NATO military alliance was using its full capabilities against Russia and urged the defense chiefs to use their experience gained in the past ten months in Ukraine and also in Syria. He said battlefield losses in Ukraine were "a common tragedy" and that he continues to see the Ukrainians as a "brotherly nation". Pertinently, Russia launched the operation in Ukraine in late

February, following Kiev's failure to implement the terms of the Minsk agreements and Moscow's recognition of the breakaway regions of Donetsk and Luhansk. At the time, Russian President Vladimir Putin said one of the goals of what he called a "special military operation" was to "de-Nazify" Ukraine. Putin on Wednesday said Russia's enemies wanted to see the country disintegrate, adding that his country was forced to launch the military action due to Western "provocations". He pledged to give the Russian armed forces anything they ask to support the military operation in Ukraine, where the fighting continues to intensify due to Western military support to Kiev. Putin also added that the defense ministry must accept criticism of its actions during the "special military operation" in Ukraine and that the recent

mobilization drive underlined specific problems. In his remarks, Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu said Russia's forces were destroying Ukraine's military potential and accused the West of trying to "drag out" the conflict. Shoigu admitted that the mobilization drive, which called up 300,000 reservists to the armed forces, proved a severe test for the country and the army but said it boosted Russia's combat capabilities. The minister proposed raising the age range for mandatory military service to cover citizens aged 21-30 as he said forces would continue fighting in Ukraine next year. Meanwhile, the Kremlin has warned that an increase in the supply of US arms to Ukraine will only aggravate the protracted conflict and "does not bode well" for Ukraine. "Weapon supplies (by the US) continue, the as-

sortment of supplied weapons is expanding. All this, of course, leads to an aggravation of the conflict and, in fact, does not bode well for Ukraine," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Wednesday. Peskov's comments were the first official Russian reaction to the news that Ukrainian President Zelenskiy was heading to Washington for a meeting with US President Joe Biden. It marks the first time Zelenskiy would leave the country since the start of the war in February. He also said that Putin had no plans to meet the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Rafael Grossi, who is expected to visit Russia on Thursday. Grossi is reportedly visiting Russia to discuss a security zone around the Zaporizhzhia power plant which is based in Russian-controlled territory.

F1 drivers barred from political statements unless approved

LONDON: Formula One drivers will need prior written permission from the sport's governing body to make 'political statements' from next season following an update of the International Sporting Code. The 2023 version of the code, which applies to all series sanctioned by the International Automobile Federation (FIA), was published on the governing body's website with changes highlighted. The FIA added a new clause regarding "the general making and display of political, religious and personal statements or comments notably in violation of the general principle of neutrality promoted by the FIA under its statutes." Drivers who make such statements will now be in breach of the rules unless the FIA, whose president is Mohammed Ben Sulayem of the United Arab Emirates, has granted previous approval in writing. The sport did not previously have such specific restrictions. Article 1.2 of the FIA statutes vows to promote the protection of human rights and to "refrain from manifesting discrimination" on a range of issues including 'political opinion'. Mercedes seven-times world champion Lewis Hamilton, and now-retired four-times champion Sebastian Vettel, have been among those making political statements at races in recent seasons. Hamilton, who has been an outspoken campaigner for human rights and diversity, wore a black T-shirt at the 2020 Tuscan Grand Prix with the words "Arrest the cops who killed Breonna Taylor" on the front. The shirt also had a photograph of the Black medical worker, who was shot dead in her Louisville, Kentucky, apartment by police officers, with "Say her name". The FIA set out new pre- and post-race rules for driver attire after that incident. Hamilton has also called for more change in Saudi Arabia, saying this year that he was shocked to hear of mass executions, and has raced in the Middle East with a rainbow helmet in support of LGBTQ+ rights. - APP

Imran Khan to announce plan of action today

FROM PAGE 01

League-Quaid-e-Azam (PML-Q) are extremely important and the opposition was eyeing getting their support through PML-Q chief Chaudhry Shujaat. If a no-confidence motion is moved in the provincial assembly, members agreed to vote in favour of the chief minister, speaker and deputy speaker. In this regard, addressing the press conference alongside Azhar, PTI Senior Vice President Fawad Chaudhry Shujaat also mentioned that all PML-Q MPs have backed CM Elahi, the speaker, and the deputy speaker. "We have the numbers," Chaudhry said, noting that the PTI and PML-Q have joint members amounting to 187. Earlier, PTI leader Fawad Chaudhry warned the governor to "refrain from any adventures". Speaking to the media in Islamabad today, he asserted that the vote of confidence would not be held today, saying that the speaker had also issued a ruling in this regard. Later, in a tweet, the PTI leader said that Elahi had the "complete support" of 187 members of the provincial assembly. "Ten lawmakers of PML-Q have also expressed confidence in the chief minister. Tomorrow, 177 PTI MPs will gather in favour of Elahi," he stated, adding that the political crisis in Punjab was a reflection of the need for snap polls.

PML-Q MPs repose trust in Punjab CM

FROM PAGE 01

The parliamentary party members expressing their confidence in the leadership of ChPervezElahi observed that they are united under his umbrella. The parliamentary party gave the authority of all the decisions to Chief Minister Chaudhry Pervez Elahi. PML-Q Parliamentary leader MPA Sajid Bhatti said that they stand with Ch Pervez Elahi and will continue to stand with him. Punjab Chief Minister on the occasion said his party stands with Imran Khan wholeheartedly and will continue to support him. Parliamentary leader PML-Q Hafiz Amar Yasir, Shujaat Nawaz, Muhammad Abdullah Waraich, Muhammad Rizwan, Ahsan-ul-Haq, Muhammad Afzal, Khadija Umar, and BasimaRiaz Chaudhry attended the meeting. MNA Hussain Elahi also participated in meeting.

CM Elahi to be removed after new declaration, says Rana

FROM PAGE 01

Speaking to a private television channel, Sanaullah said that the governor has asked CM Elahi to take a vote of confidence as per the constitution. He said that the governor has called a meeting at 4pm today for the vote of confidence. If the vote of confidence is not taken by 4pm, then the chief minister will not hold office according to the constitution. "If the resistance continues, then the governor can be asked to impose governor rule. He said that Hamza Shahbaz is the candidate for the CM post, however, the party will decide. The interior minister also said that CM Elahi will not get any relief from the court, adding that the speaker's ruling is of no use. He said that the PTI is not dissolving the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa assembly.

Russia to continue improving nuclear forces: Putin

FROM PAGE 01

Shoigu also said that Moscow plans to use two Ukrainian port cities on the Sea of Azov which its troop seized during the offensive. "The ports in Berdyansk and Mariupol are fully functioning. We plan to deploy there bases for support vessels, emergency rescue services and ship repair units of the navy," Shoigu added. - Agencies

Messi the greatest even without World Cup heroics, says Guardiola



MANCHESTER City manager Pep Guardiola has no doubt that Lionel Messi is the greatest player of all time and his opinion would not change even if the forward had not guided Argentina to the World Cup title in Qatar, the Spaniard said on Wednesday. Messi scored two goals and again in the shootout as he led Argentina to an emotional 4-2 win on penalties over France on Sunday, with the final ending 3-3 after 120 minutes of breathtaking action. The 35-year-old, who enjoyed a trophy-laden spell under Guardiola during their time at Barcelona, also won the Golden Ball award for the best player with supporters saying his performance had further elevated his status.

"Everyone has (an) opinion but nobody can doubt that he's there as the greatest of all time," Guardiola told reporters before Thursday's League Cup fourth-round clash against Liverpool. "For me, he's the best, it's difficult to understand that a player can compete with what he's done. "The people who have seen Pele, Alfredo Di Stefano or Diego Maradona... the opinions are sentimental, but the other side, if he (Messi) wouldn't have won the World Cup, the opinion and my opinion wouldn't change." Guardiola said City's 16 players at the tournament would slowly return for club duty. "Today, six players come back. They had an incredible, unique experience. Hopefully they come back and work well and in four years they can have another experience in Canada, Mexico and the United States," Guardiola said. "The players who were at the World Cup are in better condition than the players who were here. Sergio (Gomez), Erling (Haaland), Riyad (Mahrez) and Cole (Palmer), they're missing the rhythm a bit compared to Rodri or Manuel Akanji. "I'm not concerned about March or April. Now every player has had different managers, a different competition... we have an important game tomorrow, then (in the Premier League) against Leeds (United). The January schedule is demanding so we want them back as soon as possible." - APP

Mbappe returns to training days after World Cup disappointment

PARIS: France star Kylian Mbappe returned to training with Paris Saint-Germain on Wednesday just three days after he ended up on the losing side despite scoring a hat-trick in the World Cup final. The 24-year-old cast a deponent figure in the aftermath of France's loss to Argentina - led by his PSG team-mate Lionel Messi - in a penalty shootout, despite his goals twice bringing the 2018 champions level. However, although PSG players have been given 10

days off Mbappe was pictured at the French champions training ground. "Kylian Mbappe returned to training on Wednesday," tweeted PSG. Mbappe, who finished top scorer at the World Cup with eight goals, was not expected back till January and PSG did not say whether he would be available for selection for their Ligue 1 match with Strasbourg on December 28. His return to training comes the day after a documentary on France's campaign shows Mbappe

giving his team-mates a rousing half-time talk in Sunday's final following a limp first-half which saw them trail 2-0. "It is the World Cup guys, it is the match of a lifetime!" says Mbappe in French broadcaster TF1's documentary. "In any case we could hardly play worse than we have already done. "We are going back on the pitch and either we carry on playing like idiots or we up the intensity. "It is the World Cup Final! We are losing 2-0 but we can

come back. "Hey guys, this only comes around once every four years." Although Mbappe led the fightback it took till the 80th minute - when he scored a penalty to make it 2-1 - for the team to really find the fighting spirit. Mbappe was to go on and score his penalty in the shootout but, with Kingsley Coman and Aurelien Tchouameni both missing, Argentina were not to be denied, Gonzalo Montiel tucking away the winning spotkick. - APP

Russia's Natalya Antyukh stripped of London 2012 gold

MOSCOW: Russia's Natalya Antyukh has been stripped of 400m hurdles gold from London 2012 on the basis of historical data from a Moscow testing laboratory. Antyukh, now 41, is already serving a four-year ban after being named in a World Anti-Doping Agency (Wada) investigation into cheating by Russia. American Lashinda Demus will be promoted to gold in her place. All three gold medals won on the track by Russian athletes at London 2012 have now been rescinded on doping grounds. Mariya Savinova and Yuliya Zaripova, the initial winners of 800m and 3000m steeplechase gold, have been disqualified. Ivan Ukhov's high jump title and Tatyana Lysenko's hammer victory in

the field have also been wiped from the record books. The McLaren Report, commissioned by Wada and published in 2016, claimed that more than 1,000 Russian athletes across various sports had been involved in a state-sponsored programme of systematic doping. It added that London 2012 was "corrupted on an unprecedented scale". Brett Clothier, the head of the Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU), which disqualified Antyukh, said it was committed to "clean and fair competition and results, even if a decade later". "The AIU remains committed to investigating all cases of potential violations and securing the appropriate outcomes," added Clothier. "The integrity of the sport of

athletics is our utmost priority and we are pleased, in this instance, that athletes who competed fairly at the highest level will ultimately be acknowledged as the rightful medal winners." Antyukh has struck a defiant tone on social media. Her last Instagram post on 18 August is a photo of her showing off her silver and bronze medals from the 2004 Olympics. Those medals remain unaffected by the latest AIU decision. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) can now promote Jamaica's Kaliese Spencer to the bronze medal position after Antyukh did not appeal against her punishment, with Czech Republic's Zuzana Hejnova in line for an upgrade to silver. - APP

Pakistan name squad for New Zealand Tests

Pakistan squad announced for the two-match Test series against New Zealand

Test. However, fast bowler Naseem Shah, who missed the Multan and Karachi Tests due to a shoulder niggle, has been being declared fit and as such, retained in the squad.

Test squad: Babar Azam (captain), Abdullah Shafique, Abrar Ahmed, Hasan Ali, Imam-ul-Haq, Kamran Ghulam, Mohammad Nawaz, Mohammad Rizwan, Mohammad Wasim

Jnr, Naseem Shah, Noman Ali, Sarfaraz Ahmed, Salman Ali Agha, Saud Shakeel, Shan Masood and Zahid Mehmood. Umpire and match referee appointments for the series:

26-30 December - 1st Test, Karachi. Alex Wharf and Aleem Dar (on-field), Ahsan Raza (third umpire), Asif Yaqoob (fourth umpire); Mohammad Javed Malik (match referee)

3-7 January - 2nd Test, Multan. Alex Wharf and Aleem Dar (on-field), Ahsan Raza (third umpire), Rashid Riaz (fourth umpire); David Boon (match referee)

10 January - 1st ODI, Karachi. Aleem Dar and Asif Yaqoob (on-field), Ahsan Raza (third umpire), Faisal Afridi (fourth umpire); David Boon (match referee)

12 January - 2nd ODI, Karachi. Aleem Dar and Rashid Riaz (on-field), Asif Yaqoob (third umpire), Faisal Afridi (fourth umpire); David Boon (match referee)

14 January - 3rd ODI, Karachi. Aleem Dar and Ahsan Raza (on-field), Rashid Riaz (third umpire), Faisal Afridi (fourth umpire); David Boon (match referee)

PAKISTAN have named an uncapped middle-order batter Kamran Ghulam and fast bowler Hasan Ali in the 16-player squad for the two-Test series against New Zealand, which will commence at Karachi's National Bank Cricket Arena on Monday, 26 December. Kamran has replaced Azhar Ali, who announced his retirement last week, while Hasan Ali has taken over from Mohammad Ali, who, like Faheem Ashraf, has been advised to participate in the ongoing Pakistan Cup in Karachi. Haris Rauf has not been included in the squad as he is recovering from an injury he sustained while fielding in the Rawalpindi



Briefs

Yemen's FM
hails Turkish
support

NEWS DESK

ADEN: Yemen's foreign minister has hailed Türkiye's support to the Yemeni people amid the ongoing civil war in the Arab country. Ahmad Awad bin Mubarak is set to visit Türkiye on Wednesday for talks with Turkish officials. "We appreciate Türkiye's important role in supporting Yemen and hosting a large number of Yemenis," bin Mubarak told Anadolu Agency in an interview. Yemen slipped into a deadly civil war in 2014 when Houthi rebels captured much of the country, including the capital, Sanaa. A military coalition led by Saudi Arabia entered the war in early 2015 to restore the government to power. The eight-year conflict in Yemen has created one of the worst humanitarian crises in the world, with millions risking starvation. Bin Mubarak said he will discuss issues of bilateral cooperation with Turkish officials, particularly in the fields of development, culture and health. "The visit comes as part of efforts to strengthen the distinguished and historic relations between the two countries," he added. The top Yemeni diplomat blamed Houthi rebels for failure of peace efforts in war-torn Yemen. "Peace endeavors have never stopped since the Houthi coup, the latest of which was the UN-brokered truce, which the Houthi militia refused to renew," bin Mubarak said.

Strike
could leave
thousands
without a train

FOREIGN DESK

GENEVA: A strike by inspectors at French rail operator SNCF is threatening to spoil the Christmas weekend for the French, with only two out of three trains expected to be in service. The notice on SNCF's website could result in one in four passengers being unable to travel. Trains for about 200,000 people are expected to have to be canceled, according to TV channel TF1. Behind the strike, which threatens this upcoming Christmas weekend, is a collective of 3,500 rail employees who have come together on social networks to denounce their working conditions. "We are given more and more tasks, with most of the time we're alone on board to look after 500-600 travelers," said one SNCF inspector. The anger over their working conditions led the controllers to create the collective this September. The movement, active on Facebook, sees itself as apolitical and non-union. "The collective has made it possible to highlight all the complexity of our profession and unite it at the national level, because the unions have not been able to do it anymore," a member of the collective told news website France Info. According to the controllers' collective, negotiations with SNCF management stalled on Tuesday evening, leading to the strike.

Colombia's
ELN rebels
end 'armed
strike'

Bogotá (AFP) – Colombian rebel group ELN has ended the forced confinement of around 10,000 people in the northwest of the country, President Gustavo Petro said Tuesday. The lifting of the so-called armed strike in the Choco region followed ELN's announcement on Monday of a "unilateral ceasefire" for the Christmas and New Year's holiday period, starting December 24 and ending on January 2. ELN – the National Liberation Army – is in peace negotiations with Colombia's new leftist government, and Petro – a former urban guerrilla himself – has vowed to negotiate with armed groups in search of "total peace." "The armed strike was lifted," he tweeted, adding that humanitarian assistance would be provided to the affected areas. Interior Minister Alfonso Prada on Twitter called it "another gesture of peace from the ELN".—Agencies

Iran, Saudi Arabia hold 1st
high-level contact since 2016

Foreign-backed violent riots have also claimed dozens of lives from both security forces and ordinary people as Western media and Persian-language news networks continue to provoke riots in Iran

NEWS DESK

TEHRAN: Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian has held a meeting with his Saudi counterpart, Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, with the latter expressing Riyadh's readiness to continue dialog with Tehran, amid efforts by the two neighbors to fix their troubled ties. Hossein Amir-Abdollahian announced in a tweet, posted in Arabic language, that the meeting took place on the sidelines of the Baghdad II Conference in Jordan. "I attended the Baghdad-2 conference in Jordan to reaffirm our support for Iraq, and on the sidelines of the meeting I also had the opportunity to meet with some of my counterparts,

including the foreign ministers of Oman, Qatar, Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. The Saudi minister assured me of his country's readiness to continue dialog with Iran," the top Iranian diplomat wrote in his tweet. Iran and Saudi Arabia are among the countries attending the conference in Jordan, which was organized by France and Iraq with the aim of providing a forum for discussing the region's problems. Prince Faisal has already said his country will continue to extend its hand to Iran for a "positive relationship" that serves the stability of the region. Saudi Arabia severed diplomatic relations with Iran in January 2016 after Iranian protesters, enraged by the execution of prominent Shia cleric Sheikh Nimr Baqir al-Nimr by the Saudi regime, stormed its embassy in



Tehran. The kingdom then pursued a confrontational foreign policy toward the Islamic Republic, especially during the administration of former US president Donald Trump, with whom the Saudi rulers shared close ties. Saudi Arabia appears to have recently changed its antagonistic course, showing willingness through diplomatic channels and third parties to mend fences with

Tehran and resume bilateral relations. The two sides have already held several rounds of tension-easing negotiations in the Iraqi capital of Baghdad since last April. Back in July, Amir-Abdollahian lauded the "constructive" role played by Iraq in advancing the regional dialogue and said there has been "progress" in the last five rounds of talks with Saudi Arabia.

Ahsan Bakhtawari nominated
Hon business coordinator FTO

DNA

ISLAMABAD: Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry (ICCI) has been nominated as the Honorary Business Coordinator by the Federal Tax Ombudsman Secretariat, Islamabad to work in coordination with FTO for addressing the grievances of taxpayers and facilitate them in tax matters. Dr. Asif Mahmood Jah, Federal Tax Ombudsman presented the letter of nomination to Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President ICCI during a ceremony held at FTO Secretariat Islamabad. Speaking at the occasion, Dr. Asif Mahmood Jah, Federal Tax Ombudsman said that the purpose of nominating Honorary Business Coor-

dinators from the private sector is to give confidence to the taxpayers so that they could share their tax grievances, problems, issues, conflicts and concerns with them with ease and FTO would act proactively to address them. He said that ICCI should organize more awareness sessions on FTO so that maximum members of the business community could take benefit of its services for redress of their tax complaints. He said that this year, FTO dealt with around 6500 tax grievances. He said that FTO's decision can only be challenged before the President of Pakistan and 90% decisions made by FTO were complied with by the FBR to provide relief to the taxpayers. He said that former President

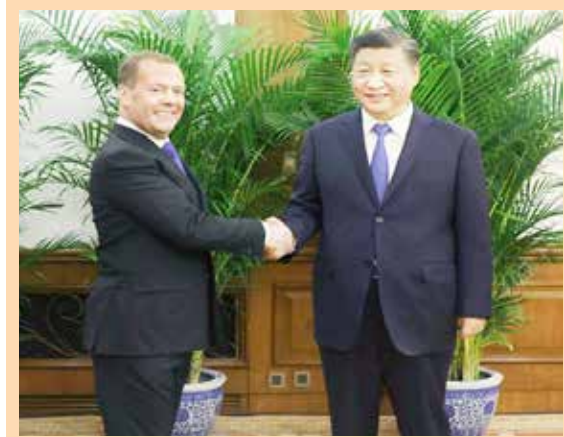
ICCI Muhammad Shakeel Munir had developed close liaison with FTO as Honorary Business Coordinator and hoped that Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari would further strengthen his coordination with FTO to address the tax grievances of the business community. Speaking at the occasion, Ahsan Zafar Bakhtawari, President, Islamabad Chamber of Commerce & Industry thanked Dr. Asif Mahmood Jah for nominating him as Honorary Business Coordinator for FTO Secretariat Islamabad and assured that he would play a role to address the tax problems of the business community that would help them in better promotion of business activities. He said that Dr. Asif Mahmood Jah was taking landmark decisions for

the facilitation of taxpayers, which was laudable. He further assured that ICCI would organize more awareness programs on the role of FTO so that the business community could take full benefits of its services to redress their tax issues. Muhammad Shakeel Munir, former President ICCI said that Dr. Asif Mahmood Jah has set great examples of a dynamic leader of FTO and added that the heads of other business related organizations should emulate his performance to make fast decisions for promoting ease of doing business in the country. Dr. Arslan Subcutageen Advisor (Customs) FTO, Sheikh Muhammad Ijaz, Hamayun Kabir, Raja Imtiaz, Ameer Hamza, Akhtar Hussain, Rizwan Cheena, Khalid Chaudhry, Zia Khalid Chaudhry and others were also present at the occasion.

Ex-Russian President
meets Xi for talks on
ties, Ukraine war

WEB DESK

MOSCOW: Former Russian President Dmitry Medvedev on Wednesday met Chinese President Xi Jinping in Beijing for talks on bilateral ties and the Ukraine war. Medvedev, who is currently the deputy head of the Russian Security Council, published a video of the beginning of the meeting, the talks and statement on the results on Telegram. "Today we had talks with the Secretary-General of the Communist Party of China, Chairman of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping. We discussed the issues of cooperation between two governing parties, between the Communist Party and United Russia, discussed issues of bilateral cooperation, our strategic partnership with China in all sectors, including economy and industry cooperation," Medvedev said. The Russian official added that they also addressed international matters, including "the conflict in Ukraine." In a separate statement, the Russian Security Council said Medvedev conveyed to Xi a message from Russian President Vladimir Putin, who marked "unprecedented level of the Russian-Chinese dialogue and practical cooperation." Putin also expressed certainty in "constant progressive development of inter-state and inter-party relations" in close cooperation with the new leadership of the Chinese Communist Party. The sides stated "the broad convergence of Moscow and Beijing's approaches to the most pressing global problems," discussed strategic foreign policy coordination, including within the UN and on other multilateral platforms, such as Shanghai Cooperation Organization, the BRICS emerging economies, and the Group of 20.

UK ambulance
workers begin
mass strike

FOREIGN DESK

LONDON: More than 10,000 ambulance workers in England and Wales will go on strike on Wednesday, with the public being warned patient safety cannot be guaranteed during the walkout. The strike will also involve 25,000 paramedics, as well as control room staff and support workers. Workers in ambulance services and some National Health Service (NHS) trusts voted to strike due to a government-imposed 4% pay raise. Employees asked for above-inflation pay raises. The country's inflation eased to 10.7% in November, from 11.1% in October, the highest since October 1981. Meanwhile, 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 of 7.5% that others are still evaluating.

Afghan women stopped from entering
universities after Taliban ban

KABUL: Hundreds of young women were stopped by armed guards on Wednesday from entering Afghan university campuses, a day after the nation's Taliban rulers banned them from higher education. Despite promising a softer rule when they seized power last year, Taliban have ratcheted up restrictions on all aspects of women's lives, ignoring international outrage. A team of AFP journalists saw groups of students gathered outside universities in the capital, Kabul, barred from entering by armed guards and shuttered gates. Many, dressed in hijabs, were also seen standing in groups on roads leading to the cam-

pus. "We are doomed. We have lost everything," said one student, who asked not to be identified. Men students also expressed shock at the latest edict. "It really expresses their illiteracy and low knowledge of Islam and human rights," said one, also asking not to be named. "If the situation continues like this the future will be worse. Everyone is scared." Most private and government universities are closed for a few weeks over winter, although campuses generally remain open to students and staff. The decision to bar women from universities came late Tuesday in a terse announcement from Neda

Mohammad Nadeem, the Minister for Higher Education. "You all are informed to immediately implement the mentioned order of suspending education of females until further notice," it said. Washington condemned the decision "in the strongest terms." "The Taliban cannot expect to be a legitimate member of the international community until they respect the rights of all in Afghanistan. This decision will come with consequences for the Taliban," Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in a statement. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, meanwhile, was "deeply alarmed," his spokesman said Tuesday.

"The secretary-general reiterates that the denial of education not only violates the equal rights of women and girls, but will have a devastating impact on the country's future," Stephane Dujarric said in a statement. The ban on higher education comes less than three months after thousands of girls and women were allowed to sit for university entrance exams across the country, with many aspiring to choose teaching and medicine as future careers. Most teenage girls across the country have already been banned from secondary school, severely limiting university intake anyway.—APP

Musk to step
down as
Twitter CEO

NEW YORK: Billionaire Elon Musk confirmed he will step down as chief executive of Twitter once he finds a replacement who is "foolish enough". But he will still run some key divisions of the social media platform. "I will resign as CEO as soon as I find someone foolish enough to take the job! After that, I will just run the software & servers teams," Musk wrote on Twitter. The Twitter owner on Sunday asked users whether he should step down as CEO and said he "will abide by the results of this poll". The poll closed on Monday morning, and 57.5 per cent of the votes called for him to stand down. He also said only Twitter Blue subscribers will be able to vote in future policy-related polls after more than 10 million people voted for him to step down as the social media platform's CEO. As the owner of Twitter, following his purchase of the company for \$44 billion (41.4 billion) in October, no one could have forced him to step down as CEO.

He has ignored results of polls he has run before, redoing ones that may not have had the result he wanted, including a poll on unsuspending accounts that he claimed had revealed his real-time location.—APP

Turkiye
rescues over
180 irregular
migrants

CANAKKALE: The Turkish Coast Guard said it rescued a total of 181 irregular migrants on Monday, including many who were illegally pushed back into Turkish territorial waters by Greek authorities. In the first incident, teams were dispatched off the coast of Ayvacik in the northwestern Canakkale province after the coast guard learned that there were irregular migrants in an inflatable boat. A total of 39 people from various countries who were pushed back by Greek authorities were rescued, it said. In the second incident in the same region, 54 migrants were rescued. Meanwhile, in Türkiye's Aegean province of Mugla, 88 irregular migrants who were pushed back by Greek forces were rescued. According to a statement on the Coast Guard Command website, teams were dispatched to the scene. Turkish Coast Guard teams were also dispatched off the coast of Marmaris following reports of irregular migrants on life rafts and inflatable boats, the agency said. A total of 37 irregular migrants in two life rafts and 40 irregular migrants in inflatable boats were rescued by the teams, and two suspects believed to be migrant smugglers were arrested. Meanwhile, 11 irregular migrants in an inflatable boat pushed into Turkish territorial waters by Greek authorities were also rescued off the coast of Dataca.—APP

Children
'trapped' in
Syria camps
at risk

BEIRUT: About 7,000 children of suspected foreign jihadists housed in overcrowded detention camps in northeast Syria are at risk of attack and must be repatriated, an aid organisation warned Wednesday. Since the Islamic State group's 2019 territorial defeat in Syria, around 56,000 relatives of defeated jihadists have been detained in the Kurdish-controlled Al-Hol and Roj camps. "These children are trapped in desperate conditions and put at risk on a daily basis," said Matt Sugrue from Save the Children, a charity working in the camps. "There is no time to waste". The camps are administered by the Kurdish-dominated Syrian Democratic Forces, with more than 10,000 foreigners from around 60 countries held in a separate section. In 2021, 74 children died in Al-Hol, eight of them killed, according to Save the Children. Last month, the United Nations condemned the "brutal murder" of two Egyptian girls whose bodies were found in sewers at Al-Hol, and the charity Doctors Without Borders described the camp as "a giant open-air prison". A record 517 women and children were repatriated in 2022, representing a 60 per cent increase from the year before, but Sugrue called for these efforts "to be sustained and stepped up".—APP

Pakistan urges action to reverse Afghan crisis

NEW YORK: Highlighting Afghanistan's dire humanitarian crisis, Pakistan Tuesday told the UN Security Council that engagement with the Taliban was the best option to stabilize the region, realize respect for human rights, especially women's rights, and to eliminate terrorism within and from that country. "Coercion and isolation have not proved successful in the past; they will prove to be counter-productive now and in the future," Ambassador Munir Akram stressed while participating in a debate on the situation in Afghanistan. "We need a coherent and practical plan to realize the objectives of the international community through patient engagement with the interim government," the Pakistani envoy told the 15-member Council. The key to reviving the Afghan economy is to inject the financial assets of Afghanistan — es-

pecially the \$7 billion that are held abroad — into the Afghan financial system. "Our first priority must remain to reverse the current humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan, where 95% of the population exists in extreme poverty," Ambassador Akram said. He said that during her recent visit to Kabul, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Hina Rabbani Khar, had assured Taliban leaders of Pakistan's all possible humanitarian assistance for Afghan refugees, improving trade prospects, transit access and technical assistance to Afghanistan. However, she had also made it clear that Pakistan will not compromise on the issue of women's rights to education and work and other human rights. In this regard, Ambassador Akram said Pakistan was "extremely disturbed" by the latest announcement on restrictions on higher education

for women in Afghanistan, but called for cooperation and persuasion instead of coercion to ensure women's rights. While there was no credible challenge within Afghanistan to the control of the Afghan interim government, the Pakistani envoy said that greater political inclusion will serve to advance the goal of peace and stability in the country. Expressing deep concern over the rise of terrorist violence within and from Afghanistan, he pointed out that while the international media focused on a much-diminished Al-Qaeda, "the major threat today emanates from ISIL-K (Da'esh) and the TTP, the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan." Pointing to ISIL-KP's recent attacks against the Russian Embassy, Chinese personnel in Kabul and Pakistan's head of mission, Ambassador Akram said that the terrorist group remains a potent threat

as it continues to receive funding from outside of Afghanistan and is thus equipped to attract recruits. Describing the TTP as "the largest terrorist group within Afghanistan," he said its safe havens are located in Nangarhar province, close to Pakistan's borders. Pakistan continues to suffer cross-border attacks by the TTP, which, he said, receives financing and sponsorship from "external sources." "The efforts of the interim government to neutralize the TTP — efforts in which we have participated — have not succeeded," Ambassador Akram said, adding, "Pakistan reserves the right to take decisive action to eliminate the terrorist threat posed by the TTP." Against this background, he highlighted the role played by UNAMA (UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan) in addressing the humanitarian challenges facing the people

of Afghanistan. Opening the debate, the new UN Special Representative in Afghanistan and UNAMA chief, Roza Otunbayeva, highlighted ongoing political and human rights concerns — as well as several positive developments — since the Taliban's seizure of power in August 2021. "We do not see eye to eye with the Taliban on a number of issues, but the focus is, and should be, on maintaining dialogue in the hope of a better future for Afghanistan, where everyone — women, men, girls and boys — can live a life with dignity and equality," she said. Ms. Otunbayeva took up her position in September and has travelled throughout Afghanistan since then. "What struck me most was the misery of so many Afghans who live in great poverty and uncertainty. Many told me during my visits around the country that they are simply surviving," she said.

While the Taliban are essentially in control, they are unable to satisfactorily address terrorist groups operating there, she reported. Recently, the Islamic State — Khorasan Province (ISKAP), an affiliate of the extremist terrorist group known as Daesh, carried out attacks against the Russian and Pakistani embassies, and a hotel hosting many Chinese nationals. The Taliban now face little domestic opposition, and have rejected the need for intra-Afghan dialogue, though the UN continues to push for wider consultation as well as representation. The UN relief chief, Martin Griffiths, provided an update on the implementation of the humanitarian exception (to financial sanctions against Taliban leaders) adopted by the Council last December, which has played a critical role in facilitating aid delivery and other support.—APP

Briefs

Europe's new Vega-C rocket lost shortly after lift-off

KOUROU: Europe's new Vega-C rocket was lost shortly after lift-off from French Guiana overnight with two satellites on board, in the latest blow to European space efforts. The failure on Tuesday night threatens to ground the Vega-C, which would leave Europe without a short-term way to launch satellites into orbit after delays to the Ariane 6 rocket and cancelled Russian cooperation over the Ukraine war. The rocket had been trying to bring into orbit two Earth observation satellites built by Airbus, which were intended to join an existing network capable of capturing high-quality images of any point on the globe several times a day. If it had been successful, it would have been the first commercial launch of the Vega-C since its inaugural flight on July 13. "The mission is lost," Stephane Israel, head of commercial launch service provider Arianespace, said from the Kourou Space Centre in French Guiana, a French department on South America's northeast coast. Ten minutes after lift-off, at 10:47 pm local time (0147 GMT Wednesday), the launcher's trajectory deviated from its programmed route and communications were lost, Arianespace said. An "anomaly occurred" in the second stage of the launcher, "ending the Vega-C mission", the company said. - APP

Gambian govt says has foiled coup attempt

BANJUL: The Gambia's government on Wednesday said it had thwarted a coup attempt the previous day and arrested four soldiers. "The situation is under total control," it added. There was no immediate confirmation of the purported plot from other sources. Scattered witness accounts reported soldier movements around the presidential headquarters in the centre of the capital Banjul on Tuesday evening, and rumours circulated during the night of a possible coup. "Based on intelligence reports that some soldiers of the Gambian army were plotting to overthrow the democratically elected government of President Adama Barrow, the (armed forces) in a swift military operation conducted yesterday arrested four soldiers linked to this alleged coup plot," the government said. "The apprehended soldiers are currently helping the military police with their investigations." "Meanwhile, the army is in pursuit of three more alleged accomplices." The tiny West African state is a fragile democracy, still scarred by a brutal 22-year dictatorship under Yahya Jammeh. - APP

Nepal court orders release of serial killer

KATHMANDU: Nepal's top court ordered on Wednesday the release and deportation of Charles Sobhray, the French serial killer portrayed in the Netflix series "The Serpent" who was responsible for a string of murders across Asia in the 1970s. The Supreme Court ruled Sobhray, 78, who has been in prison in the Himalayan republic since 2003 for murdering two North American tourists, should be freed on health grounds. "Keeping him in the prison continuously is not in line with the prisoner's human rights," read a copy of the verdict seen by APP. "If there is not any other pending cases against him to keep him in the prison, this court orders his release by today and... the return to his country within 15 days." Sobhray needed open heart surgery and his release was in keeping with the law allowing the compassionate discharge of bed-ridden prisoners who had already served three-quarters of their sentence, the verdict added. - APP

Humanitarian cargo from Belarus arrives in Pakistan

Diplomatic relations between Republic of Belarus and Islamic Republic of Pakistan were established on Feb 3, 1994. Both Belarus and Pakistan maintain friendly relations, which have developed to become a multifaceted partnership over a relatively short span of time



STAFF REPORT

ISLAMABAD: On behalf of the President and the Government of the Republic of Belarus, the Ministry of Emergency Situations organized the collection and delivery of humanitarian cargo to Islamabad due to severe consequences of floods in Pakistan.

On December 21, 2022, the cargo arrived at Islamabad International Airport accompanied by a Belarusian delegation headed by Deputy Minister of Emergency Situations of the Republic of Belarus, general-major of internal service Igor Bolotov. The Belarusian Side provided humanitarian cargo weighing 27.7 tons with a total cost of more than 400 thousand U.S. dollars. The IL-76 transport



aircraft delivered frame tents, petrol pumping plants, diesel generators, blankets, medicines, clothing for children and adults, kits for cleaning, conditioning and disinfection of water, hand sanitizers and emergency disinfection, antiseptics. Diplomatic relations between the Republic of Belarus and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan were established on February 3, 1994. Both Belarus and Pa-

kistan maintain friendly relations, which have developed to become a multifaceted partnership over a relatively short span of time. The volume of bilateral trade with Pakistan has varied from \$50 to \$120 million per year over the past 15 years. Belarus and Pakistan are closely cooperating on international arena in addressing pressing issues of global and regional agenda.

Islamabad court rejects Swati's bail plea

DNA

ISLAMABAD: An Islamabad court on Wednesday rejected the bail plea of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leader Senator Azam Swati, who has been under arrest since last month for sending controversial tweets criticising the military leadership, Express News reported. Special Judge Central Muhammad Azam Khan while dismissing the petition remarked that Swati had committed the same offence twice. Prosecutor Rizwan Abbasi appeared in the court and explained the account verification method on Twitter, saying that Swati's account had a "blue tick" and that he is followed by prominent personalities on the social media platform, including politicians and journalists. The prosecutor and the public advocate, while opposing the bail application, told the court that Swati had never denied that the Twitter account was not his. They said that there was no doubt that handle belonged to the PTI senator, who tried to create a narrative against Pakistan Army.

UN slams Israel's deportation of human rights defender

GENEVA: The UN Human Rights Office on Monday condemned Israel's recent deportation of Palestinian-French human rights defender Salah Hammouri to France. "We are deeply concerned by the chilling message this sends to those working on human rights in the occupied Palestinian territory," UN Human Rights spokesperson Jeremy Laurence said in a statement after the decision issued on Sunday. The Human Rights Office said Israeli authorities revoked Hammouri's residency in occupied East Jerusalem based on a "breach of allegiance to the

State of Israel." Hammouri, a lawyer with the Palestinian human rights organization Addameer Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association, was arrested by Israeli Security Forces in March and placed under administrative detention without any charge or trial. "International humanitarian law prohibits the deportation of protected persons from occupied territory and explicitly forbids compelling such persons to swear allegiance to the occupying power," said Lawrence. "Deporting a protected person from occupied territory is a grave breach of the

Fourth Geneva Convention, constituting a war crime." The rights office said Hammouri's deportation highlights the vulnerable situation of Palestinians living in East Jerusalem, as the occupying country has granted them a revocable residency status under Israeli law. "It also marks another serious deterioration in the situation for Palestinian human rights defenders," said Lawrence. The UN Human Rights Office called on Israel to reverse the deportation order and to stop using such allegations to halt legitimate human rights work.

EU energy ministers agree on gas price cap

ISTANBUL: EU energy ministers on Monday agreed on a gas price cap of 180 (\$190) per megawatt-hour (MWh), the Czech presidency of the European Council announced. The news was announced by Dmitrij Cernikov, the spokesperson of the council's rotating presidency, when he tweeted, simply: "DEAL." The regulation, agreed to come into force on Feb. 15, aims to limit episodes of excessive gas prices in the EU that do not reflect world market prices, while ensuring security of energy supply and the stability of financial markets, the European Commission said in a statement. "We have succeeded in finding an important agreement that will shield citizens from skyrocketing energy prices. We will set a realistic and effective mechanism, which includes the necessary safeguards that will steer us clear from risks to security of supply and financial markets stability," Jozef Sikela, Czech minister of industry and trade, said. "Once again, we have proved that the EU is united and will not let anybody use energy as a weapon," Sikela added. The cap is 95 lower than last week's failed proposal of 275 per MWh, which 12 member states had disagreed with. The measure will kick in if the Dutch Title Transfer Facility natural gas futures exceed the price of 180 per MWh and are at least 35 above the average price of liquefied natural gas for three days in a row. Calling the deal a "great success" in the last days of Czech presidency, Prime Minister Petr Fiala tweeted: "We have negotiated a cap on gas prices and managed to reach a very important deal to secure affordable energies for European households and businesses." The European Commission proposed implementing a correction mechanism for gas prices in the markets last month to avoid the kind of dramatic price spikes seen this summer. Italian Energy Minister Gilberto Pichetto described the agreement as a "victory of the Italian and European citizens" who are seeking energy security. - Agencies



ISLAMABAD: H.E. Mr. Nong Rong, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China called on Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue. Senator Mohammad Ishaq Dar at Finance Division. - APP

IHC reserves judgment on appeals in Noor case

The chief justice remarked that it was a matter of legislation and only the legislators could view this

ISLAMABAD: A division bench of Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday reserved its judgment on appeals in Noor Mukadam murder case. A two-judge bench comprising Chief Justice Aamer Farooq and Justice Sardar Ijaz Ishaq Khan heard the appeals against the conviction of accused Zahir Jaffar and others. At the outset of the hearing, the defence lawyer argued that the reason to award the death penalty to his client could be to set a lesson for others. Such punishment was used to be given only to habitual criminals, he said. He said that there was pressure on the Pakistan at international level to end up the death penalty here. The chief justice remarked that it was a matter of legislation and only the legislators could view this. Usman Khosa Advocate argued that his client Zahir Jaffar was a citizen of an American state where there was no concept of a death sentence under the law. He prayed the court to also view this point in its judgment. Chief Justice Aamer Farooq remarked that Pakistan was an independent country and it had its own law, and we were bound to implement it. The lawyer said that if the prosecution couldn't prove the crime then the benefit of the doubt should be given to his client. - APP

Five dead, 70,000 evacuated in Malaysia floods

KUALA KRAI: At least five people were killed and more than 70,000 rushed to evacuation centres in Malaysia after monsoon-triggered floods inundated the country's north, authorities said Wednesday. More than 31,000 people have fled their homes in Kelantan state while more than 39,000 residents have been evacuated to temporary shelters in neighbouring Terengganu after flooding began over the weekend, the official Bernama news agency said. Emergency services officials said a total of five people had been killed. "The water levels reached almost three metres (10 feet)," Muhammad Ameenudin-BadrulHisyam from Kuala Krai district in Kelantan told AFP, as he cleared debris from his home after a nearby river overflowed and forced his family to flee. - APP

UN adopts Pakistan-sponsored resolution on self-determination

ISLAMABAD: In diplomatic victory on the international stage, the United Nations General Assembly on Wednesday adopted a resolution on "Universal Realization of the Right of the People to Self-determination". The Foreign Office said that 72 countries from across the world had co-sponsored this resolution - primarily moved by Pakistan - which was adopted by consensus in the general assembly. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) Spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said that the annual resolution reaffirms unequivocal support for the realization of right to self-determination for people under foreign occupation, colonial domination, and subjugation. "It firmly opposes acts of foreign occupation, intervention and aggression, and calls upon responsible States to immediately cease such acts," Pakistan has been sponsoring this flagship resolution every year since 1970. "This annual initiative serves to draw international attention towards the plight and rights of peoples living in internationally recognized situations of foreign occupation, including in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir and in Occupied Palestinian Territories," Foreign Office statement reads. Adoption of this resolution is a reaffirmation of the inalienable right of occupied peoples to self-determination, as enshrined in international law, the United Nations Charter and numerous United Nations resolutions, Foreign Office said. - DNA

Petition moved to stop LG elections in Islamabad

ISLAMABAD: A petition had been moved to Islamabad High Court (IHC) on Wednesday seeking to stop local body elections in Islamabad under old voter lists. A candidate for UC chairman Shahzad Aurangzeb filed the petition and adopted the stance that the number of union councils in the federal capital had been increased from 101 to 125. He prayed the court to stop the local body elections under the old voter lists as the notification of the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) was limited to the 101 union councils. The federal government, he said, had also suggested some amendments in the local government act. - APP

UK backs more military aid for Ukraine in 2023

Russia's war on Ukraine and changes in the security climate in the North Atlantic, Baltic Sea, and High North regions were on agenda of coalition

NEWS DESK

LONDON: British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak on Monday called on Joint Expeditionary Force (JEF) member countries to deliver more military aid to Ukraine, including more air defense systems, artillery, and armored vehicles. Sunak urged the country leader in the UK-led joint force, who were meeting in the Latvian capital Riga, to either "sustain or exceed" 2022 levels of support for Ukraine through aid, economic resilience and political backing. "For our part in the UK, we have pledged to match or exceed the £2.3 billion (about \$2.8 billion) in aid that we provided this year next year and I would very much hope and encourage others around the table to do whatever they can to con-

tinue the strong support," he said in a written statement following the meeting with the leaders. Russia's war on Ukraine and changes in the security climate in the North Atlantic, Baltic Sea, and High North regions were on the agenda of the coalition. Operating since 2018, the JEF coalition that complements NATO consists of like-minded nations Denmark, Finland, Estonia, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, the UK, Sweden, and Norway to respond rapidly to crises in the High North and Northern Europe. Sunak said the JEF nations were some of Ukraine's closest



friends and allies, adding they would continue to support Kyiv. "We know that their security is our security. The resolve around the table today was clear: we will continue to stand with Ukraine," he tweeted separately. Underlining that any unilateral call for a cease-fire by Russia would be "completely meaningless" under current conditions, he said: "I think it would be a false call." Such a truce "would be used by Russia to regroup, to reinforce their troops and until they have withdrawn from conquered territory, there can and should be no real negotiation," added

Sunak. He also urged the JEF members to continue focusing on "degrading Russia's capability to regroup and to resupply and that means going after its supply chains and removing the international support." "Particularly I'm thinking of Iran and the weapons that it is currently providing to Russia, which we should be very strong about calling out as we have done in the UN," said the British prime minister. The UK has vowed to supply hundreds of thousands of rounds of artillery ammunition to Ukraine next year, also sending multiple rocket launch systems and, recently, 125 anti-aircraft guns, said a government statement. "We have also provided more than 100,000 rounds of ammunition since February, with the deliveries directly linked to successful operations to retake territory in Ukraine," the statement added.

Syria's President Assad issues general amnesty

DAMASCUS: Syrian President Bashar al-Assad issued a general amnesty on Wednesday that pardons those charged with terror-related crimes that didn't result in fatalities, as well as draft dodgers if they report to duty within three to four months. Syria's official news agency SANA, citing a copy of the presidential decree, reported that the amnesty applies to crimes committed before December 21, 2022. The decree noted that draft dodgers inside Syria will have three months to take advantage of amnesty, while those abroad will have four months. - APP